



ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

RESPONSE TO  
**EFA GLOBAL MONITORING REPORT - 2011**  
(AFGHANISTAN SECTION)

HIDDEN CRISIS: ARMED CONFLICT AND EDUCATION



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Ministry of Education of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has a strong commitment to meeting the Education for All (EFA) goals, and welcomes the release of the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011 on global education progress towards EFA. The release of this report highlights Afghanistan's achievements in education and brings attention to some of the challenges that still lie ahead.

Due to decades of conflict and unrest and massive disruption of the education system, generations of children were not able to access education across the country. In spite of substantial aid support, rehabilitation of a totally destroyed system and having to deal with an eight-fold increase in school enrolments present unique and complex challenges for the Ministry of Education. Despite the very low starting point, accomplishments in education development in Afghanistan have been remarkable.

Ministry of Education has taken systematic steps in this direction to meet the EFA goals. Policy planning and education development in Afghanistan aim to prepare its people for society and employment, based on a non-discriminatory and inclusive approach where the needs of the learners are placed first. Whilst Afghanistan is committed to the EFA targets, due to severe challenges suffered by the country as a result of decades of conflict, a revised date has been set to 2020. This was accepted by the international community in acknowledgement of the additional challenges faced by Afghanistan.

## 1-Progress towards EFA goals

### Goal 1: Early childhood care and education

*Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.*

Ministry of Education understands the importance of pre-school education for children's cognitive and psychomotor development, and for reducing dropouts and increasing completion rates in basic education. Mosques are playing an important role in pre-school education by providing basic literacy and Islamic education to children from an early age. In addition, the government supports early childhood education initiatives including kindergartens in the major cities for children of working mothers and setting up pre-school education classes. To assist in the development of early childhood education, a new section was added to the organizational structure of the MoE that is tasked with developing learning materials for pre-school education. Finally, NGOs and private schools also play an important role in providing early childhood education in this country.

MoE has plans to expand support to pre-school education in the future through curriculum development and pilot testing, preparing early childhood teachers, establishing more pre-school centres and strengthening data collection on indicators related to early childhood education.

### Goal 2: Universal primary education

*Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.*

Student enrolment in Afghanistan has increased eight-fold from less than a million in 2001 to over 7.3 million, with a current enrolment of 38 percent girls. Over 9,000 new schools have been established to facilitate easy access to education. Currently over 12,500





general and Islamic schools are operational in all parts of the country. To cater for enrolment of new students, over 200,000 new teaching and support staff have been recruited and deployed to schools over the past nine years.

Despite significant progress, Afghanistan still has a large number of out of school children (4.5 million that are mostly girls). Strategies to increase enrolment and retention of students, particularly girls, include public awareness activities and advocacy for girls education, community-based schools, food for education, recruitment of female teachers from urban centres and relocation to rural schools, and expansion of teacher education colleges to provinces and districts with provision of incentives to female teacher trainees.

MOE has made efforts to address the needs of children from minority groups and children at risk to increase access to education. For example, MoE has developed a Road Map towards Inclusion in Afghanistan in collaboration with partner members of the Inclusive Education Coordination Working Group (IECWG). Support to education of children at risk include establishment of Kuchi schools, schools for children with special needs, cross-border schools for Afghan refugee children, and schools for working children.

### Goal 3: Youth and adult learning needs

*Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.*

In 2001, only 1,500 male students were enrolled in technical and vocational schools taught by a few qualified teachers in a small number of schools mostly based in three large cities. Currently under MoE, there are 98 technical and vocational schools/institutes in 32 provinces with approximately 26,000 (16% female) students and over 1,200 teachers teaching in as many as 70 trades to meet the needs of Afghanistan for more skilled workers for economic growth and sustainable development. Efforts are underway to connect the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) curricula to labour market requirements, to establish a professional development system for teachers, and to improve opportunities for skills-building through practicum and internships in partnership with the private sector.

The demand for TVET is very high in Afghanistan and the current TVET facilities cannot meet the needs. MoE plans to increase the new student absorption capacity of TVET from 2 percent of general school's grade 9 graduates, to 9 percent by 2014. Moreover, TVET facilities will be constructed and equipped to accommodate the increased enrolment.

### Goal 4: Improving levels of adult literacy

*Achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.*

Only 22,000 male learners were attending 2,000 literacy courses in 2001; however, in 2010 over 500,000 learners (58% female) were attending 21,000 literacy courses. The literacy programs have been expanding from urban centres to rural areas. New literacy curriculum and learning material are being developed to target specific learners (i.e. women, farmers, etc.) with a focus on life skills. Innovative approaches in teaching and learning introduced through Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), Literacy and Community Empowerment (LCEP1 and LCEP2), Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan (ELA) and other MoE initiatives such as engaging communities and religious leaders in literacy programs, have played a significant role in increasing enrolment.







Literacy programs are also being carried out by other Ministries, including MoD, MoI, MoH, MRRD, MoA and MoWA. Moreover, under the overall framework of LIFE Afghanistan, local NGOs, national and international organizations, and UN agencies are also implementing literacy courses to support the Education in achieving this EFA goal. Ministry of Education will strengthen its coordinating and clearing house roles to support other providers of literacy training.

#### Goal 5: Assessing gender parity and equality in education

*Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.*

Ministry of Education has successfully implanted programs to address gender disparity and enrolment. In 2001, girls were not allowed to go to formal schools. Today, 38 percent (or 2.7 million) of total students are girls. The increase in girl's enrolment was due to the establishment of more schools near villages, construction of more girls schools, engaging parents and community elders through school shuras in the decision making about their children's education, and expansion of teacher education programs to educate and develop more female teachers. Addressing gender disparity in Afghanistan is challenging and requires time and resources to, for example, train and recruit more female teachers in rural areas, provide additional incentives to female teachers, and provide culturally sound and conducive learning space. Female staff have been recruited in senior management positions such as heads of departments in Ministry of Education and directors of TTCs. However, MoE is committed to further increase the number of female employees at all levels including leadership and decision making positions.

#### Goal 6: The quality of education

*Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.*

Ministry of Education with the support of development partners has heavily invested in improving the quality and relevance of education. A new curriculum for general and Islamic education is developed through extensive consultation with students, parents, teacher, scholars and education experts using best regional and international practices and experience. Children receive quality textbooks each year containing information and stories relevant to their lives. The new textbooks were developed based on active learning methods and encourage teachers to be more inclusive and student centered. This meets one of the preconditions for improving students' learning achievements.

To enhance the knowledge and skills of existing teachers and train new teachers, MoE has invested in expanding the network of teacher education colleges and district teacher training support centers. 42 teacher training centers and 89 district teacher training support centers have provided two-week long training and follow on support to over 150,000 teachers in improving teaching practices and classroom instructional activities. Meanwhile, over 50,000 students are enrolled in teacher education colleges for two-year diploma course. The investments are producing fruit. In Kabul city, all teacher qualification has been upgraded to at least grade 14 – the minimum requirement for a qualified teacher. Similar progress has been made in other provinces but the efforts need to continue. Teacher competence assessment system has been developed and three rounds of this test have been administered to more than 134,000 teachers who were later put on a new salary scale. Lastly, MoE is developing nationally administered testing system to assess student learning achievement for grades 6, 9 and 12. The quality of education



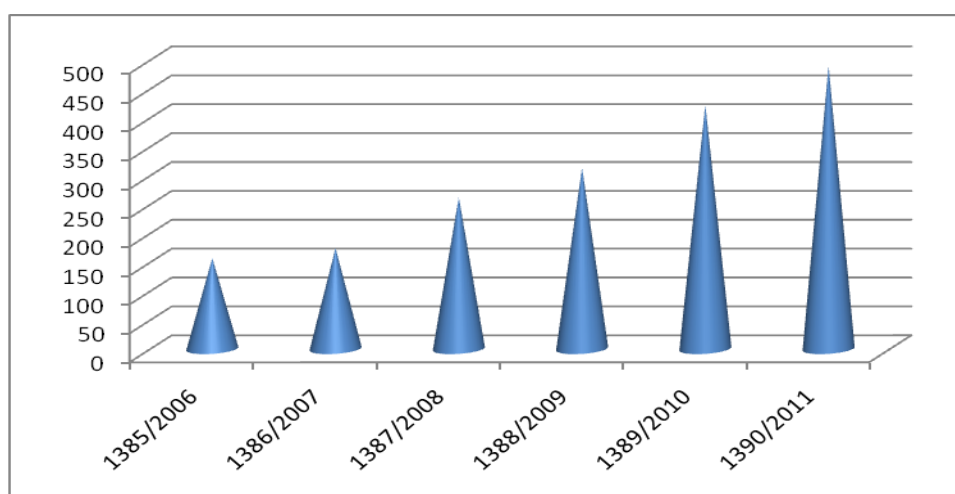


remains a challenge. The parents', students' and society's expectations are high for a quality education. The curriculum needs to be regularly updated and revised to address the emerging needs of the country. The accreditation and quality assurance system for TTCs and TVET institutes needs to be fully developed and operationalized.

## 2-Closing the EFA financing gap

### a. National spending on education

The government is committed to financing education and funding has improved significantly since 2001. The chart below indicates the increase in the operating expenditure.



The Mid Term Fiscal Framework (MTFF) has a provision of US\$360 million each year for the years 1390-1392. This is equal to the initially allocated budget to MoE in 1389 (excluding the increase in salaries due to pay and grade and additional staff recruitment, which will be paid from a special account as top-up to the allocated budget). MTFF also includes reserve fund accounts (US\$650, US\$744, and US\$790 million for 1390, 1391, and 1392 respectively), which will be used to cover unforeseen costs.

The government of Afghanistan is not in a position to fund all operating budgets from its revenue and has been dependent on international assistance to fill the gap. The prospect shows that Afghanistan will continue to need international assistance for the coming 3 to 5 years to fill the shortfall in the operating budget. The development budget has been funded 100 percent by the international community and will continue into the future.

### b. Revenue mobilization and a stronger commitment to education

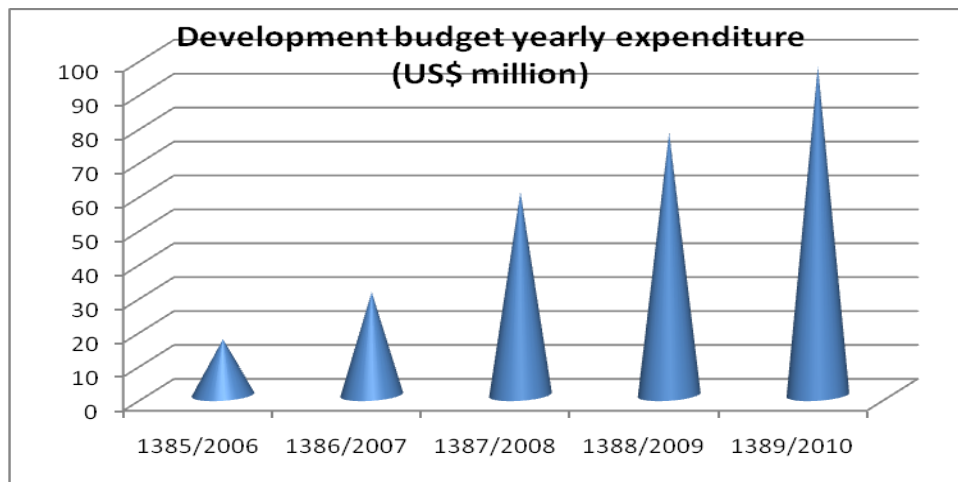
The government is committed to increase the budget allocation for education in order to allow recruitment of at least 10,000 new teaching and non teaching positions each year to cater for the enrolment of new students. To do so, the government of Afghanistan is strengthening the efforts for revenue collection. Meanwhile, investments on extraction and exploitation of mines are facilitated by the government. This will help to increase internal revenue generation over the medium and long term.

Donor aid to basic education





The success of education in Afghanistan so far has been made possible with the generous support of the donor community. Donor support to the core budget has increased over the past years.



Donors also provide “off budget” support to education through externally managed programmes.

Due to lack of internal resources, donors’ contributions to education are preconditions for success in achieving the Education Interim Plan objectives and MDG and EFA goals. The education Interim Plan (IP) was developed by the MoE and partners through a consultative process. Local donors have endorsed the plan and pledged their technical and financial assistance. MoE is working closely with the donors to secure specific funding commitments for the next three years. Afghanistan’s membership to EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI) partnership has been endorsed. MoE and local donors are preparing an application for securing additional funds from FTI - EFA single fund.

In order for the National Education Interim Plan (the low case scenario of NESP-2) to be successfully implemented, US\$3.25 billion (1.42 billion development budget and 1.83 billion operating budget over the next 3 years) is required. The development funding should be fully aligned with the Interim Plan. If education does not receive the necessary financial resources, Afghanistan will face delays in achieving its commitments for MDG and EFA.

#### c. New and innovative education funding solutions

The demand for education in Afghanistan has increased significantly, and the Government of Afghanistan has taken a multifaceted approach to meet this demand. This includes the provision of education by the private sector which now provides pre-primary, primary, secondary, tertiary, and vocational training. Afghan businesses are also paying for construction of schools and provision of school supplies. Communities have also contributed by providing land or free labour for the construction of school buildings. A cross sector approach has permitted communities to prioritize education and direct development funds from other areas, for example, accessing funds through the MRRD National Solidarity Program, Afghanistan Stabilisation Program, or the counter narcotics fund.





### 3-Protection of human rights affecting education

Article 2.5 of the Education law states the government's stance on protection of human rights:

*Strengthen the spirit of respect to human rights, protection of the women rights, democracy and elimination of every kind of discrimination, in light of the Islamic values and prevention of adduction to narcotics.*

Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commissions (AIHRC) established in 2002 by article 58 of the Constitution has the mandate to 'monitor and respect for human rights in Afghanistan as well as to foster and protect it'. The commission has regional and provincial offices and a specific Child Rights Desk, regularly monitors and reports on human rights abuse and follows up with relevant government institutions for necessary action.

Afghanistan ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict in 2003. In 2007, together with 58 other states, Afghanistan endorsed the Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups and the Paris Principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups.

The government has taken measures to coordinate laws, policies, strategies, and national mechanisms in compliance with the Convention's provisions and other human rights treaties that Afghanistan has ratified. The Child Protection Action Plan (CPAN) was established in several regions in 2003 by the MoLSAMD in cooperation with other government institutes, UNICEF and other national and international organizations. CPAN is an inclusive network of government and non-government organizations that have a mandate and perform field interventions in the area of child protection. CPAN's overall goal is to prevent and respond to exploitation, abuse, and violence against children and ensure the protection of all children in Afghanistan. Between the periods of 2007 to 2008 the network has addressed nearly 2,000 reported cases of child sexual abuse, children in conflict with the law, separated children, physical violence against children, hazardous labour, and other child protection issues. Currently, the Government is working on the formation of a commission which will investigate sexual violence against women and children.

The Ministry of Education has established a Directorate of Security and Protection to systematically raise awareness about security issues, develop protection systems and coordinate with security institutions, and mobilize local community for the protection of schools and students. Many schools have been reopened in insecure areas, increasing access to education. In addition, MoE in collaboration with the Human rights Commission has incorporated human rights awareness in the new curriculum. Students learn basic human rights through the school curriculum, and convey the message to their family members. As more students and their families become aware of human rights, it contributes to a reduction in human rights abuses. Other initiatives include training of teachers on elimination of violence against children in schools, making schools child friendly, and strengthening the role of parents in education. This has contributed to a reduction of corporal punishment.

Insecurity, violence, poverty, cultural and traditional attitudes particularly on girl's education are the main challenges that continue to hinder access to education. The







government of Afghanistan is committed to continue its effort through education institutes, human rights watch agencies and judiciary system to end human rights abuse. At the same time, MoE will continue to make schools a safe place for children, take disciplinary measures against perpetrators of corporal punishment and report severe cases of human right violation in schools to the judicial system.

#### 4-Providing education in armed conflicts

Ministry of Education has made efforts to closely follow support to education of refugee children. The Afghan delegations in Iran and Pakistan each have an education attaché with support staff to assess education needs of refugee children and to coordinate with the government and international organizations supporting refugees. Afghan refugee schools in Iran and Pakistan are registered and communicate with Ministry of Education for support in the areas of national policy and curriculum, teacher education and students reintegration in formal schools after repatriation. MoE recently began working with the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) to provide literacy and community-based education to previously combating returnees and their communities in Badghis. A five-year plan is in development to provide educational services and psychosocial well-being and peace education to the household that return to peaceful living and to their communities. In collaboration with the Ministry of Refugee and Returnees, MoE has integrated returnees to formal schools or has established new schools to provide access to newly established camps or settlements.

Through accelerated learning classes, thousands of children have been assisted to catch up and join mainstream schools, especially in Helmand, Kandahar and Hirat. In close collaboration with Ministries of Counter Narcotics and Public Health awareness on dangers of narcotics abuse and narcotics demand reduction is incorporated in the new curriculum and special measures are taken at school level to prevent school children from addiction to narcotics.

Ministry of Education has been mobilizing local communities to influence the armed groups and negotiate reopening of schools closed due to insecurity. Over 200 schools were reopened during the past two years and the process is ongoing.

Ministry of education has been assessing the needs of children in emergency, including recording attacks on school, and need for emergency assistance as result of natural disasters and in collaboration with the partners has responded to the education needs of children through provision of tents and school supplies. In addition, with support from the partners emergency education is provided for children in insecure areas and those displaced as result of armed conflict are mainstreamed into the regular education system. A unit for education in emergency is established in MoE to institutionalize emergency response. MoE is expanding capacity of provincial boarding school to accommodate students from insecure areas.







## 5-Integrating education into the wider development agenda

Education falls under pillar 3 (social and economic development) of Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). The pillar aims to reduce poverty, ensure sustainable development through a private sector-led market economy, improve human development indicators, and make significant progress toward achieving the MDG and EFA goals. In order to operationalize ANDS and harmonize human resource development and make it relevant to socio-economic development needs, the Human Resource Development Cluster including Ministries of Education, Higher Education, Women Affairs and Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled was established to cohesively focus on national priorities such as improvement in service delivery, job creation and economic growth.

National Education Strategic Plan II 2010-2014 (NESP-II) was developed by MoE. It builds on the lessons learned from the implementation of the original NESP (1385/2006-1389/2010) and is designed as an operational strategy to keep the education system on track towards achieving MDG and EFA goals whilst also contributing to the economic and socio-economic development of the country. The Education Interim Plan 2011-2013 (low case scenario of NESP-II) was developed by MoE and endorsed by over 16 donors/partners. The MoE is also developing annual operational plans at national, provincial and district level to assist the different levels of education management to better understand and implement the priority activities.

The success in education planning has been the result of strengthened technical capacity in policy planning. MoE has developed Education Management Information System (EMIS). A comprehensive schools survey was conducted in 2006 and the data entered into the system. The EMIS has been the primary vehicle for monitoring education indicators and planning. A staff registration system was developed and all employees were recorded by position, profession, and duty station. Ministry of Education also use Afghanistan Financial Management Information System (AFMIS) developed by Ministry of Finance based on international standards, to track expenditure on education programs at national and sub-national level. EMIS is currently functional at the central level, and the Ministry plans to expand it eventually to the provincial, district and school levels and make it a web-based system. This includes the expansion of modules for recoding student enrolment, exam results, attendance, teacher registration and attendance.

A new curriculum was developed by the MoE through a consultative process to make it more relevant to the needs with a conscious decision to avoid the politicisation of the curriculum that occurred under previous governments. This includes the mainstreaming of Islamic education curriculum to ensure that general education and vocational subjects are also included in the curriculum to give graduates a broader range of skills needed for entry into the labour market. Textbooks were edited to integrate cross cutting issues such as human rights, gender, cultural and Islamic values.. The primary languages of instruction are Dari and Pashto. To promote other local languages Ministry of Education has also developed language textbooks for seven other local languages. Curriculum reform is a continuous process and MoE needs to further invest in training of teachers to teach other local languages in the schools where the language is spoken.

Classroom construction has been a high priority for MoE and its partners. Over 6,000 schools have been constructed from development funding for education and other windows such as National Solidarity Program (NSP), Afghanistan Stabilization Program





(ASP) and Counter Narcotics Funds. The pace of school construction has been slower than the student enrolment in schools. Therefore, still around 50 percent of the schools do not have suitable buildings and classes are conducted in rented premises, tents or open air. Increased international assistance in the form of development funding is needed to accelerate construction of classrooms and water and sanitation facilities particularly for girls' schools. This will help increase girls enrolment in primary schools and their retention in secondary education.

The government's financing to education has been increasing on a yearly basis in the past 9 years. Donors have also generously funded education programs on and off budget. However, the decision on financial allocation to education has been on an annual basis. Mid-term funding commitment by the government and donors will allow MoE to plan more realistically, prioritise activities, and make effective use of resources.

Various pooled fund modalities have been established in support of sector programs. Donors are contributing to education quality improvement programs through Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). This funding mechanism allows a greater amount of development funding through the core budget and enables MoE to allocate this funding to priority areas. The MoE and donors are working together to increase their funding support through the core budget.





## 6-Building peace in Afghanistan

World communities have learned the art of living in peace and have developed foundations to sustain peace and security. Afghanistan after three decades of war and conflict also needs to learn the art of living in peace. The key lies in education.

Ministry of Education through a consultative process has developed an inclusive education policy and plan of action to make sure children from all ethnic groups including those at risk have access to quality education and are treated equitably in the schools. Teacher education programs provide teachers with the knowledge and skills to promote inclusiveness in schools and make schools a home for children of all ethnic groups.

For the first time in the history of Afghanistan textbooks on Life Skills were developed for grades one to three in 2004- 2006. These textbooks cover issues related to peace with oneself such as emotional intelligence and peace with others such as problem-solving, decision-making, conflict resolution and reconciliation skills. During several rounds of field-testing these textbooks were ranked the highest. Also, peace, psycho-social well-being, non-violence and reconciliation-related topics were incorporated into language, social and religious textbooks. The teacher education package on pedagogy includes sessions on diversity, fear-free classrooms and justice in the classroom. The impact of this training and exposure on children's attitudes and behaviour, is still to be documented.

Through these initiatives, over 7 million children are being provided with awareness and education on importance of peace building and living in peace; and through children, peace awareness is being raised in nearly all families in Afghanistan. Schools have been serving as the platform for bringing together people from different social groups to discuss the education for their children, and meanwhile have facilitated dialogues and interactions among community members on peace and security in the community. Members of the school Shuras have been trained on topics of human rights, peace, inclusion and the importance of education.

The government of Afghanistan is committed to promoting peace by providing quality education to all children and teaching them tolerance, mutual respect, and how to live peacefully with each other.







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