



# **LINKING RELIEF, REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (LRRD) IN AFGHANISTAN**

EDUCATION SECTOR REVIEW  
IN AFGHANISTAN (2001-2006)



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## Acronyms

ADA	Afghan Development Association
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
CBS	Community Based School
CGSD	Cash Grant School Development
CHA	Coordination body for Humanitarian Assistance
DED	District Education Department
EC	European Commission
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GoA	Government of Afghanistan
INGO	International Non Governmental Organisation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PED	Provincial Education Department
PRR	Priority Reform and Restructuring
PTA	Parents and Teachers Association
SCA	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
SMC	School Management Committee
TEP	Teacher Education Programme
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNO	University of Nebraska at Omaha
USAID	United States Agency for International development
USD	United States Dollar
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Specific objectives and scope of the study

The Afghan educational system has been deeply affected by the long-lasting conflict and repressive regimes over the past decades. A large proportion of the education infrastructure has been destroyed or severely damaged, access to education was restricted for girls during the Taliban regime and the core values transmitted via the education curriculum were repeatedly changed with the establishment of each new regime. Education is a major tool for nation building and ideology support. For these reasons, education is both a critical sector within the overall framework for nation building, and a sensitive sector, given that past experiences have resulted in an underlying distrust amongst the population. Since 2001, a new education framework has been set up, and the reconstruction process is evolving rapidly, even though it is at present still incomplete.

The objective of this study is to draw a picture of the current education system and look at how the sector has evolved over time, especially since 2001. It provides an outline of the current institutional framework and the main actors intervening in this sector, with a special focus on aid stakeholders.

Rebuilding a coherent education system, complying with people's expectations and needs, and those of the country as a whole, is a major challenge. Does the reconstruction process currently implemented in Afghanistan, which receives significant external support from foreign donors and actors, succeed in meeting these needs? This study will highlight the main obstacles, difficulties and successes of the education sector in Afghanistan today.

**Groupe URD** (Urgence-Réhabilitation-Développement) is a French research institute whose main activities include research, evaluation and training. Groupe URD has worked regularly in Afghanistan since 2000. Groupe URD has carried out lesson learning exercises on humanitarian aid, evaluations and training sessions in Central America, the Balkans, as well as in Afghanistan, from 2001 to 2003 under the ECHO-funded 'Quality Project'.

**LRRD research project.** Having carried out widespread research on the early response in Afghanistan, Groupe URD commenced its new LRRD Programme. The LRRD Programme is a two-year EC funded programme that aims to draw lessons from current experience to inform the aid stakeholders and government institutions. It focuses on the linkages between Relief, Rehabilitation and Development in policy and programming within six different sectors: Agriculture, Water supply and irrigation, Nutrition, Health, Education and Urban development.

### **Three main objectives:**

- Learning and sharing lessons in this period of political and technical transition, through iterative multi-sector reviews. This report will focus on the education sector.
- Increasing and sharing knowledge and experience by carrying out applied research in rural and urban settings in specific fields (including food and economic security, agriculture, and housing), with a focus on the key issues identified during the lesson learning process.
- Contributing to the capacity building efforts of the relevant ministries and Afghan NGOs through training.

The study focuses on education aspects that fell within the scope of the Ministry of Education. This includes basic education from grade 1 to 9, high education from grade 10 to 12, non formal education, literacy courses and vocational training. In theory, religious schools

are now the responsibility of the MoE but this shift has been very slow. Higher education, which depends on Ministry of Higher Education was only looked at briefly.

## 1.2. Methodology

After an extensive literature review, a five-week field study was carried out: fifteen days were spent in Kabul, and the rest travelling to Bamiyan, Samangan, Balkh, Baghlan and Nangarhar. Interviews were conducted at central and local levels with people working in Afghan institutions - Ministry of Education and of Higher Education -, in United Nations Agencies - UNESCO, UNICEF, World Food Program -, and in international and Afghan NGOs. Schools were also visited, some supported by NGOs or UN agencies, others depending only on the MoE. A certain number of interviews were also conducted with members of Parents and Teachers Associations (PTA).

## 1.3. Study limitations

- Security was the main constraint as it was not possible to visit the southern regions. In the regions visited, school enrolment rates, for both boys and girls, are close to national standards which may not be the case in other areas. Therefore, the picture presented in this report may be somewhat distorted.
- The five-week timeframe limited the scope and choice of visits made, in terms of geographical locations and organisations.
- The field visits took place in April and some roads were closed or in bad condition.

## 2. Before 2001

Before focusing on the current period, it is worthwhile looking at the situation before 2001.

### 2.1. Different sources of education

In his document *Education reform in the context of globalisation and Afghanistan*<sup>1</sup>, Amir Mansory makes an interesting distinction between “indigenous”, “Islamic” and “western education”.

He defines indigenous education as “the transmission of skills needed for survival in a subsistence agricultural or nomadic setting”. He recalls that “this education was common in Afghanistan long before any formal education system was introduced. Teaching of skills, values and culture, traditions and beliefs, was and is transferred from generation to generation, often through oral transmission of poetry and stories. The illiterate Afghan society has a living tradition of oral storytelling and poetry; many poems with origin in the classical literature are known by heart throughout many layers of the population”.

Islamic education consists today of mosque schools and *madrasas*. Mosque schools are a kind of preparatory school for boys and girls aged from 4 to 6. Children are taught some of the basic principles related to the Muslim religion. In traditional *madrasas*, children are taught a broad spectrum of religious subjects, Arabic language, logic, rhetoric, literature and poetry. The local community is responsible for running the school. Girls have always been excluded from *madrasas*. The female illiteracy rate is very high in Afghanistan, even though in some cases, girls received some education through non formal channels.

Western style education is relatively new to Afghanistan. The first schools were opened at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its development has been quite slow until 2001.

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<sup>1</sup> *Educational Reforms in the Context of Globalisation and in Afghanistan*, Pia Karlsson and Amir Mansory, February 2004, Stockholm University

## 2.2. Brief history of western style education

Modern education expanded slowly until the mid-20th century. The State has traditionally been the sole provider of western style education and radical alterations have been introduced to the education sector with each political and regime change. The latest series of crises effectively brought education development to a halt.

The first primary school for boys opened in Kabul in 1903, and the first girls' school in 1921, also in Kabul. During Amanullah Khan's rule (1921-1928), education was developed based on western principles with a view to modernising the country. In 1927, roughly 322 elementary schools had 51,000 students throughout the country. There was a strong backlash after the civil war and a period of extreme anti-intellectualism followed after 1929. In 1930, there were only thirteen schools left. This period was also a rejection of western values and the modernisation process introduced by Amanullah Khan. Pashtu was chosen as the teaching language for several years.

Kabul University opened in 1946. Initially all higher education establishments in Afghanistan received external support. In 1956, there were 762 schools in Afghanistan enrolling about 121,000 students<sup>2</sup>, and of these, about 111,000 (92%) were elementary schools.

In 1962 and 1963 as the demand for education increased considerably and there were insufficient teachers, the government introduced an accelerated training programme for teachers. In rural areas, 9<sup>th</sup> grade teachers attended a one-year training programme to become primary school teachers.

Twenty years later, in 1975, about 17,600 teachers with various qualifications taught about 650,000 elementary school students. Around one third of all children attended primary school, of which only 15% were girls. In 1973-74, only 11% of Afghans aged 6 to 65+ were literate. Of this, the literacy rate for males was 18.7% and that for females 2.8 %<sup>3</sup>. In the same year only 6% of males and 1% of females had sixth grade education. In 1976, a reform was launched in the education sector in order to increase primary school enrolment, to provide opportunities for vocational training after primary school and to improve opportunities in universities for students qualifying from secondary school.

When the Communists seized power in 1978, the old curriculum based on Islam was replaced by a curriculum taken from the Soviet Union. The aim was to train individuals to continue the class struggle. This caused the Afghan population to distrust the education system as schools were seen as vehicles for promoting communist ideology rather than Afghan values. The reaction was stronger in rural areas, and people started to withdraw first their girls and then the boys from the official schools. A parallel education system developed during the war in the Mujahideen-dominated regions, relying on textbooks developed by Afghan representatives.

"From the 1980s, the main part of education can be described as unintentionally decentralised, politically as well as physically. Internal and external powers made decisions about financing, management, administration and content of education. Schools had become private with varied degrees of community participation. Decisions were made locally on school level or by NGOs. The syllabus of the schools in the liberated areas included more Islamic subjects than the government schools; in fact, more time was spent on Islamic subjects than in the 1970s. Islamic education in the form of regular *madrasas* expanded and was mainly supported by local communities but also by some foreign (Arabic) NGOs. The two parallel systems - the governmental in the cities and the Mujahideen controlled in rural

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<sup>2</sup> *Education in Afghanistan During the Last Fifty Years, v., I.; Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education*, Afghanistan, Ministry of Education, Kabul, 1968

<sup>3</sup> *Demographic and Family Guidance Survey of the Settled Population of Afghanistan, v., I.*, Kabul: 1975

areas, the latter financed by a variety of actors – were both characterised by strong political agendas. The government schools promoted values such as internationalism and the dictatorship of the proletariat while the nongovernmental schools based their ideas on pan-Islamism and the Islamic state<sup>4</sup>”.

During the 1990's, the situation deteriorated and the number of students dropped considerably. With the arrival of the Taliban in 1994, girls' education was banned, even though NGO support to education during this time allowed some girls to receive education in rural areas. The Taliban introduced *modern madrasas*, where at least 50% of the timetable was dedicated to religious subjects and the rest of the time was dedicated to ordinary primary school subjects. They tried to impose a new curriculum with textbooks written in Arabic but these were not really successful except in their own schools.

The following issues are critical to the education system in Afghanistan:

- teaching language
- proportion of time dedicated to religious subjects
- girls' access to school.

### **2.3. Background and history of external aid**

The origin of foreign assistance to Afghan education dates back to the early years of formal schooling in the country at the end of the 19th century. Turkey and India were among the first donors. Subsequently, the United States, France, Germany, England, Japan, Egypt and a handful of other countries contributed to education by underwriting some of the expenses of some of the schools in Kabul<sup>5</sup>.

After 1978, international NGOs got involved in education in Afghanistan with support mainly to primary schools in areas liberated by Mujahideen forces. “During this time, the NGO support to education (mainly in rural areas) had a political, humanitarian and emergency character and had no relations with the national education system<sup>6</sup>”. NGOs were mainly working in rural areas and gave girls the opportunity to access education in these areas. During the Taliban regime, NGOs increased their support and improved the quality of their interventions. From 1995, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan clearly exceeded all other foreign interventions in the education sector.

## **3. Overview of education situation since 2001 and main challenges**

It is important to highlight some general features to better understand the education sector in Afghanistan.

- Today's enrolment rate is the highest enrolment rate in Afghan history as far as western style education is concerned (without taking Islamic education into account), with more than half of the 7 to 13 year olds enrolled (35% to 40% are girls).

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<sup>4</sup> Amir Mansory, *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Education in Afghanistan*, a version of this was published in Encyclopaedia Iranica, volume VIII, Fascicle 3, Mazda Publishers, 1998

<sup>6</sup> Amir Mansory, *ibid.*

**Table 1: School enrolment curve since 1978**

Year	School age population (million)	Number of schools	Number of enrolled children	Number of teachers	Enrolment growth compared to 1978 (%)	Growth in no. of schools compared to 1978 (%)
1978	2.8	3,352	995,000	29,900		
1980	2.8	3,824	1,115,000	35,300	+12	+14
1985-90	4	586 <sup>1</sup>	622,000	15,100	-62	-83
1991-2001	4-4.5	2,200-3,000	5-700,000	15-20,000	? <sup>2</sup>	?
In 2002	4.5	6,784	2,900,000	73,000	+291	+202
In 2003		> 8,000	3,700,000	80,600		+240

Source: Ministry of Education, 2003

<sup>1</sup> Schools supported by government, mainly in cities. Schools supported by communities, local commanders and NGOs are not included here, which were estimated at some 1,500 schools.

<sup>2</sup> In 1992-96, civil war was raging. There was complete anarchy and no data was available. During the Taliban regime, madrasas and schools were not differentiated and no data is known.

Since 2002, Afghanistan has undergone a very rapid expansion in the education sector. Today, 44.6% of the population is under 14 years old<sup>7</sup>. The government has actively advertised for education, aid agencies have provided financial support and campaigns have encouraged children to enrol in schools. The result of these efforts was an enormous influx of new students, particularly at the beginning of the school year in March 2002. In 2004, over 4.3 million children were enrolled in grades 1-12<sup>8</sup>. However, more than 2.5 million boys and girls of school age (7–18 years old) were still not enrolled, despite the fact that, as stated in the Constitution of Afghanistan, education to grade 9 is compulsory. The enrolment rate is currently even higher but up-to-date reliable statistics are hard to find. Some interlocutors believed that over five million children attended school in 2006 with roughly 105,000 teachers. The number of school children has increased considerably in the past few years and will continue to rise. The rehabilitation of pre-war facilities falls hopelessly short of targets and financial and human inputs are still required in the education sector. Teaching staff have been highly affected by wars, with some migrating to other countries and many were killed. In addition, the average age of teachers nowadays is relatively high. In a study carried out by the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan in 2002, the average age of teachers was 39 years, a considerable age according to Afghan standards (life expectancy under 45). Teacher training remains very weak: around 30% of teachers have less than twelve years of formal education and 10% have no formal education at all. Female teachers are hard to recruit. The fact that the overwhelming majority of students have enrolled in the first grades adds to the challenge.

- The urbanisation rate is weak. This is an obstacle to school enrolment and education service delivery. Education delivery would be easier in a more urbanised country. One of the main problems in the education sector is access to schools. Parents do not want their children, especially girls, to walk two hours to the nearest school. Moreover, qualified teachers do not want to work in remote rural areas, where access is difficult particularly during winter. It is also difficult to monitor and supervise schools in these areas with a view to improving teaching methods, supplying materials etc. Moreover, in rural areas, there is less of a demand for education than in urban areas as the benefits are less visible.
- As far as education is concerned, there is a high diversity among regions depending on different factors:

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/af.html#People>

<sup>8</sup> *Securing Afghanistan's Future: Accomplishment and the Strategic Path Forward* (Technical Annex/ Education), Kabul: TISA and International Agencies, 2004

- Destruction of infrastructure: the conflict did not have the same impact in all regions. In front line areas, most education infrastructure has been destroyed and, thus, the rehabilitation or reconstruction of these buildings is essential.
  - Geographical constraints. In the mountainous regions, such as Bamiyan province, topography is a major constraint and it is sometimes a real challenge to reach remote villages and provide education.
  - Security is also an important obstacle. Difficult access or high security constraints discourages the government or NGOs from providing education, especially for girls (for example in Zabul, Helmand and Khost).
  - As mentioned in the previous criteria, girls' enrolment is still problematic in many regions. At the national level, an estimated 40% of girls are enrolled but this varies significantly depending on the area. For example in Herat and Kabul provinces, girls' enrolment can exceed 50% but in other provinces such as Zabul (3%), Helmand (5%) or Khost (7%) the rate is close to zero. Girls' enrolment is related to security situation, cultural factors, geographic and economic constraints. Parents are reluctant to let their girls walk long distances to school, and this is linked to cultural but also security factors.
  - As a result of this diversity, one major constraint for the education sector is the length of the school year. In the central mountainous regions, the school year is very short due to harsh conditions during winter which prevents children from attending school. In most of the districts in Bamiyan, the school year starts on 21 March, if the weather permits, and ends on 21 December while in colder districts, such as Panjab and Waras, school starts one month later and ends one month earlier. In the colder districts of Bamiyan province, the school year lasts seven months whereas in Jalalabad it starts in October and ends in June (nine months) because the weather is too warm.
- The high diversity amongst school children should also be highlighted as an important constraint for the education sector. Years of war led to numerous **over aged children**. They need specific care in education and specific teaching methods. One of the strategies is the accelerated learning process that can be adopted to reintegrate these children into the formal system after two to three years. Another strategy is to provide them with minimum knowledge through literacy courses without necessarily attempting to cover the whole curriculum. The high rate of illiteracy is also a major challenge. The objective is to have 50% of adult women literate by 2008.

Of the estimated four million refugees in October 2001, 2.3 million have returned. **Population migration** has presented a dual challenge for education: some of the former teachers who migrated to other countries have now returned and some refugees became qualified teachers in foreign countries. Their reintegration can be problematic and at present, the process for ensuring that foreign diplomas are recognised in Afghanistan has not yet been formalised and is very time consuming. It is also difficult for students to adapt to the Afghan situation. Moreover some refugees had better access to education in camps or in neighbouring countries such as Iran and Pakistan than people who stayed within Afghan borders. Some of the refugees have returned to Afghanistan with a good education and this causes problems in classes, where students may be better educated than the teachers or are unable to find a class at their level.

The **minorities** raise the problem of the teaching language. In fact there are more than seven minority groups in Afghanistan: Pashtun 42%, Tajik 27%, Hazara 9%, Uzbek 9%, Aimak 4%, Turkmen 3%, Baloch 2%, other 4% and more than four main languages: Afghan Persian or Dari (official) 50%, Pashtu (official) 35%, Turkic languages (primarily Uzbek and Turkmen) 11%, 30 minor languages (primarily Balochi and Pashai) 4%, and much bilingualism.

The **nomadic people** are also a very specific population. An inventive and flexible approach is required in order to satisfy their needs.

- Heavy dependence on external support, in terms of funding and expertise. Since 2001, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education have depended largely on external aid. Given the current financial weakness of the Afghan State, dependency is a risk for sustainability of the programmes. Ministries have also been relying on foreign expertise.

## **4. Restructuring of education administration since 2001**

### **4.1. Ministries of education increasingly structured**

#### **4.1.1. Reorganisation MoE and MoHE**

Since 2001, two main factors have been and are still exerting a considerable influence on the restructuring of the MoE and the MoHE: external expertise and the PRR process. One major problem for these two ministries is the number of civil servants. After the fall of the Taliban, President Rabbani called for all the civil servants from before the Taliban to take up their posts again. Even though the Ministries had changed and many departments or jobs no longer existed, a number of former employees returned. Most of the qualified people had left the country and many of the employees who subsequently returned were either under qualified, their expertise was out of date or in some cases, they had never worked in the Ministry before and pretended they had. For example, in 2004 the administrative department of the MoHE employed 30 out of its 120 employees for cooking, cleaning and transporting documents.

Since 2001, several stakeholders have engaged in technical cooperation in the education sector, placing technical advisers in the ministries whose role is to work on various different topics: curriculum, school construction, teacher training, etc. These consultants can either be integrated into the ministry structure or work within a special unit created inside the ministry. UNICEF for example has an office inside the MoE building. For basic education, advisers are sent by the main donors: USAID, JICA and DANIDA. For higher education, bilateral cooperation is predominant. Some technical advisers work within the MoHE, but in some cases direct support is provided to some faculties. France is supporting the French department of the Language Faculty and the Faculty of Medicine in Kabul University for instance.

The PRR process should also prove to be a main incentive for the reorganisation of the ministries. If the choice of Minister is a political decision, civil servants working in the ministries should be hired on the basis of their skills. The PRR process started within the MoE when Mr Qanooni was the Minister. This reform is led by an independent commission, “the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission”. Having received a request from the Minister to work on the reform, the first step is to help the Ministry prepare a legal framework for the reform: set up a task force for monitoring the reform process and preparing a two-year work plan. The second phase of the reform is to design a strategy and a new organisation chart with precise job descriptions for every position. This way, the reform should lead to a well-defined structure, with the necessary qualified staff. Indeed, all staff must be recruited on the basis of merit. Having qualified teachers is one of the main issues at stake for the education sector. As the number of staff needs to be reduced for greater efficiency, salaries will also be raised as a consequence. An accreditation system (salary will be based on skills and experience) is planned as a means of improving teacher recognition but the sector does not have the necessary resources to introduce it yet. As the MoE is the

ministry with the highest number of civil servants (around 105,000 teachers), the PRR process is critical for greater efficiency within the sector.

The first step of the PRR process has been completed. A committee was formed within the MoE and a new organisational framework for the ministry was proposed. Nevertheless the following steps have not been completed. The recommendations put forward by the committee have not been implemented and the reform process has failed up to now. A new PRR process will be launched with the arrival of the new Minister.

#### **4.1.2. Structure of the MoE and MoHE**

The MoE is divided in nine main technical departments: General Education; Curriculum Development and Publication; Functional Literacy; Planning, Inspection, Monitoring and Evaluation; Technical and Vocational Education; Reconstruction and Maintenance; Administration and Employment; Teacher Training; Islamic Education. In the MoHE, a chancellor represents the thirteen universities and the six higher education institutes (cf. Annexes 1 and 2).

Since 2001, efficiency within the education ministries has improved. For instance, one major problem up to 2004 was the payment of teachers' salaries. Today, salaries are paid on a much more regular basis and salaries have even been raised slightly, even though this is still insufficient. The MoE has improved its capacity in this sector, especially since a large number of NGO-supported schools were handed over to the government from 2004 onwards.

#### **4.1.3. Absorption capacity is increasing but remain insufficient**

The Afghan State mainly relies on external funds. The core budget is barely sufficient for salaries which are too low in the education sector - a teacher earns around 50 dollars a month. Indeed, the education sector is one of the most costly sectors for the Afghan State, with the highest number of civil servants (105,000 teachers). The education sector is highly dependent on donor funding. Its financial absorption capacity has improved but remains limited.

**Table 2: Donor involvement in education sector: commitments and strategies**

Donor	Key areas of support	Approximate commitments (year)
<b>USAID</b>	School construction; Printing textbooks Accelerated learning; Radio Based teacher training Capacity building MoE/MoHE	2002: 6,5M\$ 2003:8,4M\$ 2004:107,4M\$ 2005:97,9M\$ 2006:97M\$
<b>UNICEF</b>	Back to school campaign (tent, learning material) School rehabilitation and construction; Curriculum and textbook development; Winter/summer teacher training	2002-2003: USD35m 2004: USD11.5m
<b>DANIDA</b>	Curriculum development; Textbook printing Teacher training; Capacity building School construction	2004-2006: USD15m
<b>JICA</b>	School construction (Kabul, Kandahar, Balkh, Bamiyan) and teacher training; Capacity building Equipment for higher education institutions; Non formal education	2002-2005: USD15m
<b>World Bank</b>	Schools grants; University block grant Training for teachers and principals; Support for policy development and Education Management Information System Support for PEDs and DEDs	2002-2004: USD15m 2004-2009: USD40m

*Source: World Bank, Technical annex for a proposed grant in the amount of US\$ 35 Million to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for an Education Quality Improvement Program ("EQUIP"), July 2004*

Some of the main donors are currently involved in providing financial support for the education sector. Areas of responsibility and geographical areas were shared out amongst donors. USAID is by far the most important donor in the education sector and since 2004, USAID has invested almost USD100m per year. The same year, the European Commission withdrew its support from the education sector. The second biggest donor is the World Bank. Those two donors have a significant influence in terms of funding and thus ideology. National programmes launched by those two stakeholders are moulding most national trends and policies in the education sector.

JICA's funds are increasing in the education sector. It supports activities such as school construction, vocational training and teacher training in Kabul, Kandahar, Balkh, Bamiyan and Jalalabad. UNICEF is channelling funds from other donors but is today facing a reduction in its resources, despite the key role they played in the first phase of reconstruction.

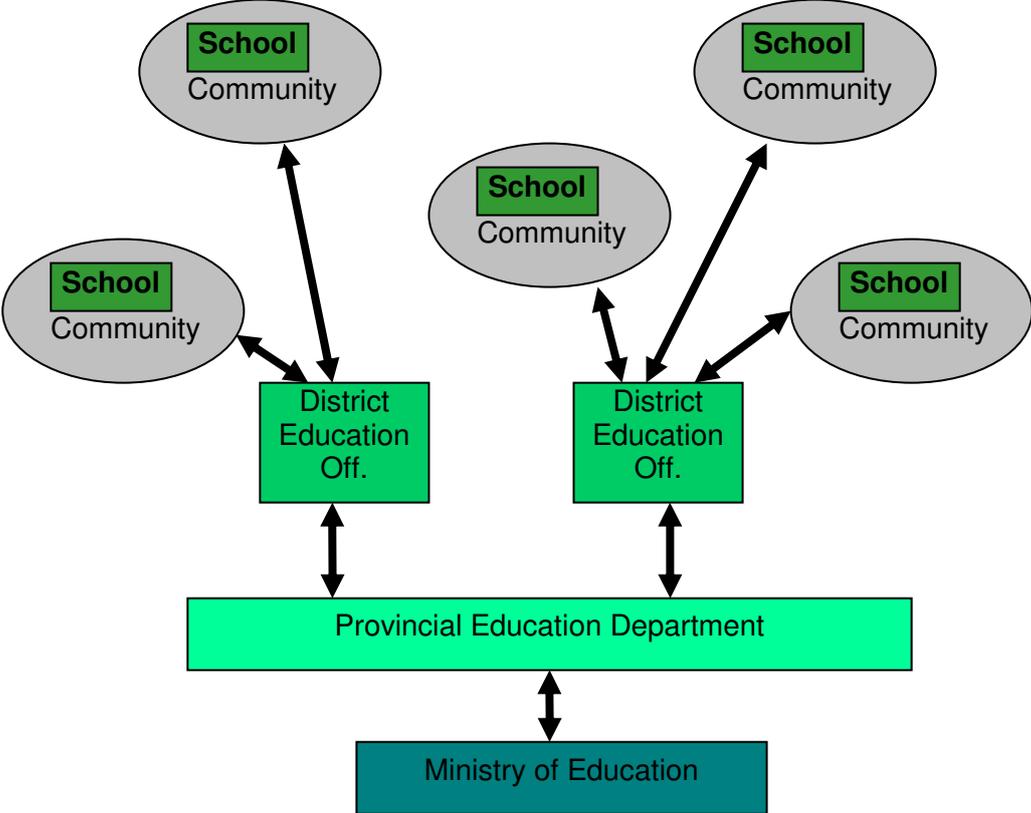
There are three types of funds within the education sector: 1) the core budget which is exclusively managed by the Ministry; 2) the external budget from donors that are working with the Ministry of Finance; and 3) the outside budget which is provided to the education sector by donors, although the Ministry does not have any say in this budget. These external funds are critical for running the education sector. However, coordination with the MoHE and the MoE, and between donors is insufficient. This sometimes results in the duplication or conflicting strategies. The absorption capacity of the state has improved considerably but is

still insufficient. Some donors are channelling funds through outside budget or ad hoc entities - USAID for instance -, or create special bodies inside the Ministry, such as the Grant Management Unit inside the MoE, in order to avoid delays due to slow and cumbersome administrative procedures. For instance, the World Bank allocated USD40m for the program EQUIP (2004-2007), and reportedly, as of April 2006, only USD2m had been disbursed. These different factors elements are hampering coordination and collaboration and are jeopardising the Afghan government's ownership of sector reforms.

#### **4.1.4. Centralisation versus decentralisation**

During the period 1950-1978/80, the education sector was highly centralised. From 1980 to 2001, it became on the contrary highly decentralised. As a consequence of the war, in many regions, communities had to organise themselves to run schools and were wholly responsible for providing education, sometimes with the support of aid agencies. Since 2001, the MoE and MoHE are highly centralised in terms of decision making, but administrative decentralisation was introduced in the new constitution. At the same time, communities are increasingly asked to participate in education-related issues. Some stakeholders are pushing towards more decentralisation although the government is reluctant to adopt this strategy. The World Bank is certainly the leader of this ideology, putting the school at the top of the education system (see Figure 1), encouraging the decentralisation of the MoE, giving more decision-making responsibilities to Provincial Education Department (PED) and District Education Office (DEO) and asking the community to participate more in making decisions about how schools are run. The PED and the DEO are supposed to monitor the decision-making process led at the school level and to endorse the decisions taken by the community. This decentralisation process is still weak and ineffective given the lack of resources and skills amongst civil servants working at the local level. Nevertheless, some aid agencies are beginning to provide them training. The decentralisation process can make sense if it is accompanied by a solid capacity-building process at the local level.

**Figure 1: The World Bank’s vision of the education hierarchal system**



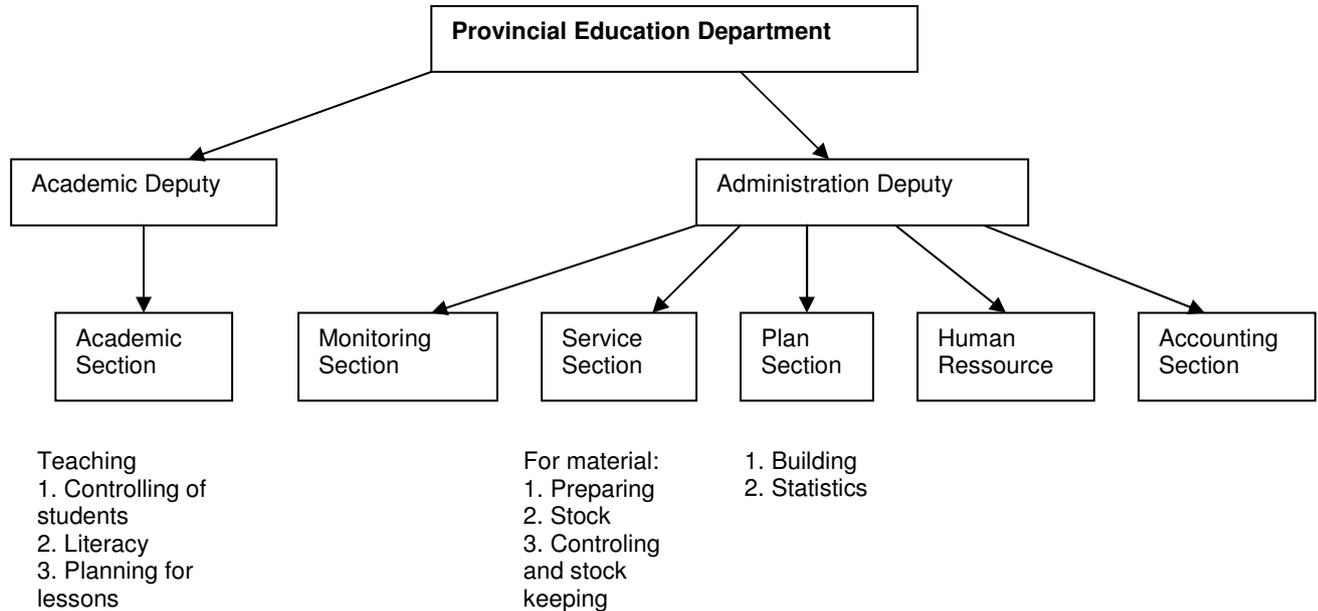
*Source: Investing in Afghanistan’s Future, World Bank, Keiko Miwa, Feb. 2005*

The World Bank is including this process in a larger plan, “a) a rationalization of the role of the ministries; b) a bottom-up, school-based approach requiring decentralization and sharing of the planning, decision-making and financial responsibilities among levels of government (national, provincial, and district) and communities; c) building long-term partnerships with private actors, such as the business community, educational foundations, and NGOs; and d) a stronger focus on results rather than inputs, giving institutions greater discretion in management but holding them accountable for results<sup>9</sup>”.

<sup>9</sup> Investing in Afghanistan’s Future, World Bank, Keiko Miwa, Feb. 2005

## 4.2. Provincial Education Department

Figure 2: Provincial Education Department hierarchical system



The PED is supposed to fulfil critical functions, both in ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ directions. The PED is likely to become a key level, gathering information from schools, from needs assessments at the local level and transmitting these data to the central level. The PED will also be responsible for monitoring activities, acting as a control unit for the central Ministry. The PED is required to report, in writing, on a quarterly basis to Kabul; nevertheless very little communication was observed between the local level and Kabul, and information is primarily circulated from the top to the bottom. The PED is supposed to monitor teacher quality and absenteeism in schools, and gives information and estimates to the Ministry of Finance for the planning of the ordinary budget. Nevertheless the lack of expertise and resources at the provincial level prevent the PED from fulfilling all these tasks correctly. In some provinces, the PED does not even have a car to access remote villages in order to monitor and gather information.

Stakeholders are increasingly focusing on these units, and if the coordination is still insufficient or inefficient at the provincial level, donors and aid agencies alike are trying to develop capacities and skills at this level. Some are providing training for government staff at the provincial level; others are trying to get the PED more involved in the design or in the implementation of the projects.

## 4.3. District Education Office

Generally, these are comprised of a small team of between five and seven people that includes school supervisors, one or two administrators and a storekeeper. DEOs position themselves as the primary executioners of all government policies and decisions, and as the primary link between the government and schools. They suggest teacher appointments to the PED, propose new schools and maintain contact with the NGOs within the district. DEOs are required to report in writing on a monthly basis to the PED. However the actual role played by the DEO remains unclear. The World Bank, in its attempt to foster the decentralisation processes, tries to involve also the district level in its programmes. A certain degree of responsibility is also given to the DEO through the TEP but this link is weak and it remains to be seen how this will evolve in the future.



## 5.2. Improving access and geographic coverage

### 5.2.1. Access to schools

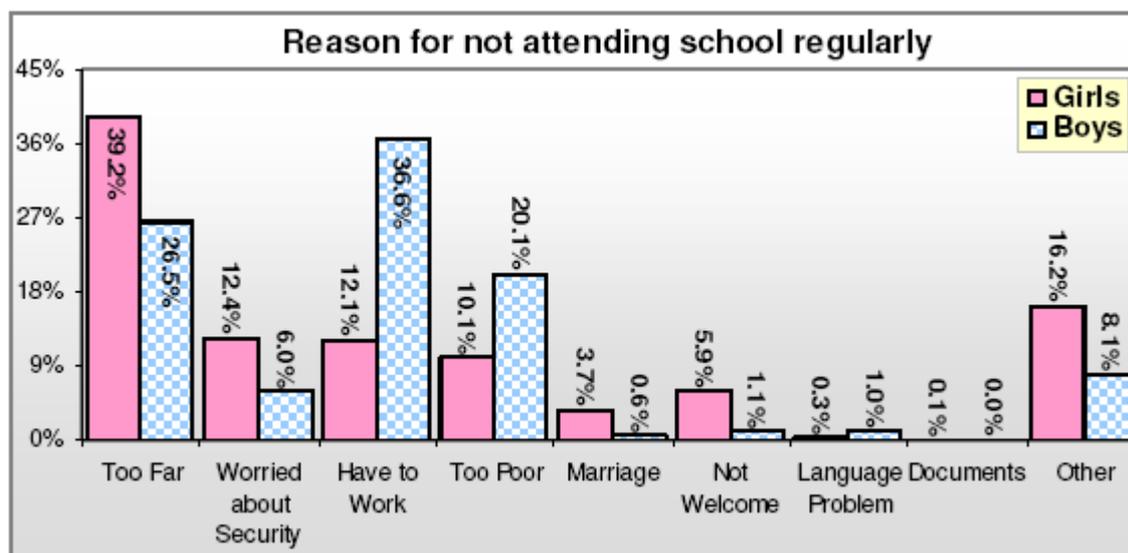
Immediately after the war, the enrolment of children in schools has been an utmost priority for the government and the international community alike. In March 2002, with the beginning of the first school year after the fall of the Taliban, UNICEF supported the national “Back to School” campaign. Girls were especially targeted by this campaign as they had been excluded from schools for several years. Considerable resources were used to make the population aware of the education issue: announcements through the radio, meetings with local communities and *shuras*, distribution of school materials, tents, etc. As mentioned above (cf. section 1: Overview of education situation since 2001 and main challenges), in one year the number of students increased by over 200% and the infrastructure was sadly inadequate to accommodate them correctly. The fact that 40-45% of children enrolled in grade one added to the challenge.

Several factors must be taken into account regarding access to education:

- **Physical access.** Until 2004, the construction of school buildings and distribution of materials were the main priority for aid stakeholders. In terms of infrastructure, the situation varies considerably depending on the province. In Baghlan, there is still a considerable shortage of education facilities, whereas in Balkh this is no longer the main problem. In other provinces, such as Bamiyan, the mountainous landscape is a major challenge for access. The biggest problem is the shortage of infrastructure and children sometimes have to walk several hours to reach the school. Parents are obviously reluctant to let their children, especially young girls, walk two to three hours in the mountains to attend classes. Despite of all the efforts made, people’s needs are still considerable in rural areas. Even in big cities such as Kabul most schools are overcrowded, have no buildings or no means to rebuild damage buildings. Most schools are set up on rented property. If efforts are undertaken to renovate buildings, the rent becomes too high and a new location has to be found for the school. Although access to schools has greatly improved throughout the country, it is estimated that one million children still do not have access to education and present levels of infrastructure are still insufficient.
- As mentioned above with reference to the Back to School campaign, **cultural factors** can also be a limiting factor, especially for girls. Again, the situation varies dramatically, with girls’ enrolment being more difficult in Pashtu areas, especially in southern provinces where it is aggravated by fighting and insecurity. In provinces such as Kandahar, Uruzgan and Helmand, where people remain strongly attached to traditional cultural values, the girls’ enrolment rate is low. However, efforts are made to improve the situation. In Kandahar city, the PED organised transport for girls to take them to far away schools. Insecurity is also a main obstacle as lately schools have been the target of attacks. Awareness is part of the national strategy and the different stakeholders are still (and maybe increasingly) working at the local levels with communities to improve children enrolment and limit drop out. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs has an education department and is also trying to raise population awareness on the importance of literacy for women and access to education for girls. The MoWA has no implementing capacities but it works in collaboration with the MoE and the PEDs to develop girls’ education and create women’s councils in communities to lobby for girls’ education. The MoWA also supports the organisation of literacy courses on the request of the Women Council Communities and develop vocational or training courses for girls who failed the University entrance exam. Nevertheless, the MoWA does not have sufficient staff to tackle these challenges adequately and its involvement in the field is still weak.

- The situation is also very unequal between **rural and urban areas**. The situation is generally better in cities, where physical access and cultural factors pose less of a problem. In rural areas in general, conservative values still prevail but issues for education vary according to the provinces. In Kabul, the situation is of course much better. Girls represent at least 50% in the city schools and some students can access well equipped schools, supported by foreign countries such as the Afghan – Turkish High School, the French or German supported schools like Malalai high School, Amani High School, etc. In cities, recruiting teachers is also less of a problem. For example, in Pul-e-khumri, Oman-e-Farik boys’ high school has 8,000 students in three shifts. There are eighteen female teachers out of a total of 220, whereas in general, recruiting female teachers is a major difficulty, sometimes contributing to the low girls’ enrolment rate. The particularly high number of students in this school is due to its location behind the bazaar. Large numbers of pupils travel in from the outskirts of the city and work part-time in the bazaar as well as attending classes.
- The **drop out** rate is another major problem in the education sector in Afghanistan. A high percentage of children, boys and girls, enrolled in school, do not even complete the first six grades (45% of girls, 10% of boys). This means that these children do not reach a very high level of education and the risk of them forgetting all that they have learnt is high. The main reason stated for girls dropping out of school is physical inaccessibility; if the school is too far, the family worries about security. Household economy and poverty is an important reason for drop outs, especially amongst boys. (see Figure 4). When the cropping season starts, children are often required to stay at home to help with the work.

**Figure 4: Reasons for not attending school regularly**



Source: *Economic and Social Rights in Afghanistan*, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, May 2006

Despite all the efforts carried out by the Afghan government and the international community, today, the enrolment rate is still low. In a study conducted by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights commission in May 2006, 90% of interviewees stated that education facilities were available but only 56.3% of these interviewees (4,467) said that all their primary school-age children are attending school regularly. 43.7% of families interviewed (3,462) reported that not all primary school-age children in their family are attending school regularly<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> *Economic and Social Rights in Afghanistan*, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, May 2006

### **5.2.2. Access to education**

Once in school, teaching and learning materials are a prerequisite to providing education. Children and teachers need textbooks and stationery in order to follow the curriculum. As mentioned in section 5.1, a new curriculum and textbooks have been designed. Certain donors (USAID, DANIDA) provided support to the GoA for the printing process. The distribution of textbooks still poses certain problems and aid agencies, such as UNICEF and WFP, are participating. When they receive the textbooks, the PEDs are in charge of delivering them to schools. The distribution of school materials has greatly improved as most schools now receive the main books although it is still common to have a few books missing, or arriving late. Most books usually arrive safely at their destination even if in small quantities. Stationery is sometimes provided by aid agencies. The general situation is that schools are now equipped with teaching and learning materials but in insufficient quantities, which makes both the learning and the teaching processes difficult. It is not rare for communities to rally round and try to fill the gaps. Sometimes a library is set up on the community's initiative and books are bought thanks to individual contributions; this is sometimes true for laboratory equipment. Ad hoc solutions are found in some cases, in an attempt to ensure that teachers and children have the capacity to cover the whole curriculum, but in other cases, it is impossible to ensure that pupils are getting all the instruction they should receive.

### **5.2.3. Increasing geographic coverage**

In an attempt to overcome all these obstacles to children's enrolment and children's attendance in schools, the concept of home based schools, which were used extensively during the war periods, has been revived. They are now known as Community Based Schools and rely on community participation and involvement. A CBS can only be set up if there is no government school within a 4km radius (some exceptions can be made to this rule if it is proved that the overcrowding in neighbouring schools is resulting in high drop out rates). The community is asked to supply a room, a teacher and even sometimes contribute towards the teacher's salary. The NGO supplies the materials and provides training for the teacher.

Thanks to these CBS and to school construction, geographical coverage has increased. In some areas, such as Kandahar, it has been proven that even when local schools are under threat, home based schools continue to thrive because classes are held in private homes and are thus more discreet. A large number of literacy courses are also held in private homes. According to the AIHRC, 84.8% of interviewees (6,723) stated that formal primary education facilities were available for their girl children and 91.9% (7,286) stated that formal primary education facilities were available for their boy children.

The key issue is linking all the CBSs to the rest of the formal system. The teachers are being trained in the formal curriculum. CBSs usually provide education for a few years, beginning with grade 1 and continuing onto higher grades until an alternative solution is found. After the 3rd or 6th grade, the children will have to join a neighbouring government school, unless the government decides to build a new school to replace the CBS. The capacity of the MoE to integrate these children and teachers into the formal system is a cause for concern and this can also affect parents' motivation to send their children to school. If children are unable to continue their education after the CBS, what is the purpose of sending them to school at all? How useful will it be to the child?

### **5.2.4. Non-formal education**

In Afghanistan there is a range of different educational opportunities for children and adults but there is sometimes confusion over the difference between formal or non-formal education programmes "Formal education follows the MoE education curriculum, either in or out of school. This is examinable and therefore provides accreditation to the student to continue

their studies. Non-formal is normally out of school, does not follow the MoE curriculum and is not examinable. Non-formal education is normally for overage children or adults who have very little or no education and who will never return to a formal school. Non-formal, or functional literacy programmes are normally based on life skills learning and are developed around the specific interests of the learning groups, such as women, youth, ex-combatants, nomads or farmers. Recently there has been a move to link teachers in home-based schools, who are teaching the formal curriculum, but who are not employed by the MoE, into MoE teacher training programmes. Linking the in-school and out-of-school activities may assist in expanding access to education for children who cannot go to school, as well as expand the teacher resource base of the MoE<sup>11</sup>”.

In efforts to expand education in Afghanistan, the literacy department of the MoE has been increasing its activities since 2002. Under the Russian occupation, it was widely believed that literacy courses were used for propaganda purposes. Since then, the Afghan people and the government are closely monitoring the content of these courses. Two textbooks have been developed: one textbook is specifically aimed at women and includes recipes, child care, etc. and the second textbook is “gender free”. These textbooks were developed with UNESCO’s support at the end of 2003. The MoE runs its own literacy centres. In Kabul for example it has eighteen main centres and around 3,000 smaller structures for around 54,000 students, of which 38,000 women (70% of women). These literacy courses target over aged students, that is to say people over 14 years old who have not received any formal education. These courses also aim at transmitting life skills. Most of these literacy programmes target women. In fact, the Millennium Development Goals aim for a rate of 50% literate women in 2015 whereas the current rate in Afghanistan is 14%.

### **5.3. Improving quality**

If access to education was the main priority after the war with the Back to School campaign, quality has rapidly become a major priority. After the large influx of students in the years immediately following 2001, quality became a critical problem. “Although no output indicator (student learning achievement, completion rate, etc.) is available to ascertain the current status of quality of education in Afghanistan, the available input indicators (teachers’ backgrounds, curriculum, textbook quality and availability, status of physical learning space, time on task, etc.) indicate poor quality of education. The lessons learned from other post-conflict countries suggest that an early focus on the quality of education - not only access - is key for rebuilding the education sector and gaining the confidence of parents that the system can deliver. In Afghanistan, this is particularly important because parents need a good reason to keep their children in school<sup>12</sup>”.

During the war, coordination was very weak in the national education system and many schools were managed with local resources and decisions were taken locally. There were insufficient numbers of teaching staff as a result of the wars (many were killed and many left the country) and today as in 2001, there are still too few professional teachers to cover the country’s education needs, particularly in rural areas. Considering that there are more students in the lower grades (up to 70-80 per class), there is an urgent need to reduce the student-teacher ratio which implies recruiting even more teachers. Two main problems still prevail today among teachers: 1) less than 50% of teachers are high school graduates; and 2) professional teachers are old (average age of 39, while life expectancy in Afghanistan is less than 45 years) and their teaching methods are not always in accordance with current international standards (rote learning methods, corporal punishment, etc.). Teachers are doing what they can, teaching what they know, within the limits of their capacities. There is a

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<sup>11</sup> *Afghanistan Teacher Education Project, Situational Analysis, Teacher Education and Professional Development in Afghanistan*, Jeaniene Spink, Nazar Mohd Karyar, Zuhail Atmar, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), 2004

<sup>12</sup> *Investing in Afghanistan’s Future*, World Bank, Keiko Miwa, 2005

huge demand for training despite all the efforts that have already been carried out. NGOs who have been working in Afghanistan for years have consistently tried to improve teaching abilities by providing in-service teacher training programmes. At present, 25% of the teaching force consists of female teachers but 40% of these female teachers are based in Kabul. In rural areas, female teachers represent less than 10%, and there are provinces with none or just a handful of woman teachers. This represents is a severe obstacle for girls' education and one that is not easily resolved, considering the high female illiteracy in rural Afghanistan. This said the commitment of Afghan teachers to their profession is often outstanding given their low salaries. Lots of teachers have to carry out several activities in order to feed their families.

In an attempt to coordinate the efforts of the different stakeholders and to tackle the issue of quality, in spring 2004, the Ministers of Education and Higher Education (Mr Qanooni and Mr Fayez respectively) and major donors (World Bank, DANIDA, USAID, UNICEF & JICA) established the Teacher Education Program (TEP) as a transitional framework to bring about comprehensive reforms in the teacher education system, that is currently implemented by multiple stakeholders and managed by government. The overall aims of this initiative for the next ten years are:

- to raise the quality of teaching and learning, and
- to increase the number of qualified teachers, particularly female.

The Teacher Education Programme (TEP) was developed and a series of donors, including DANIDA, JICA, UNICEF, USAID, the World Bank, and the Teacher's Training College of Columbia University agreed to support this programme for 5 to 10 years. This programme is integrated and managed by the MoE. USAID and UNICEF engaged to cover the costs of certain activities without depositing their allocated funds at MoF. This prevented the disbursement of funds from being delayed but had a negative impact on the capacity of the MoE to manage the programme and its ownership.

The main objectives of the TEP were to set national teaching standards, a unitary teacher education curriculum, a national in-service training system that would provide continuous training and support for all teachers and a comprehensive national pre-service training system, including institutional accreditation system and individual teacher certification.

Once the curriculum for teacher training was finalised many organisations committed to using only this curriculum. Unfortunately, a lot of organisations do not agree on some points of the curriculum or feel some key points are lacking and add elements of their own curriculum.

The TEP is a very ambitious programme which needs enormous capacity building. Even though a lot of capacity building was conducted in the MoE, the PED and the DEO, capacity is not yet sufficient to implement efficiently this programme. Additionally, monitoring and supervising capacities of the MoE are too low. The in-service teaching programme was conceived as a pyramid scheme, with the training of 30 core trainers in Kabul, training in turn 140 master trainers at the provincial level, who train 2,200 teacher educators at the district level who are in charge of the training of the 105,000 teachers. It was planned to set up 360 Teacher Resource Centres. For the moment, the inset 1 of the TEP was implemented in only nine provinces. Inadequate capacity at the local level resulted in some delays. Moreover, each time a new Minister of Education is brought into office, the TEP is reviewed. Therefore, the TEP programme has failed to meet its expectations. There are hopes that with the new Minister and the restructuring of the MoE, the programme will go forward.

As the MoE does not have the capacity to train all the teachers, many NGOs and organisations run teacher training programmes. Even if they follow the TEP curriculum there is a lack of coordination between organisations. Several organisations are sometimes working in the same school, providing the same type of training.

#### **5.4. New role of schools and communities**

There are different schools of thought in the setting up of the new education system and efforts to decentralise what was traditionally a highly centralised system should be seen as an attempt to foster greater flexibility. There is a general trend toward increased responsibility of headmasters, teachers and parents at the school level. Community participation is currently seen as a major asset for education sector reconstruction. The creation of a Parents and Teachers Association was made compulsory by law in each school. Over the past two decades, community participation has been essential because of weaknesses in the Afghan state and the methods employed by international NGOs working in the education sector. Although it is not too difficult to mobilise the community on education-related issues, this depends on which type of participation is required. Raising financial contributions from the community is hard to attain (example of the Community Based Schools). At the school level, School Management Committees are also created in some cases. With the new trends within the education sector and new aid agencies practices, headmasters and teachers are increasingly responsible for management aspects. PTAs are seen as a means of monitoring teacher and student absenteeism and tackling drop out. PTAs and School Management Committees are asked to get involved in the running of the school and in the decision making process.

#### **5.5. New directions**

For the year 2006, the MoE has set the following priorities in its budget planning:

- Development of vocational and technical education
- Basic equipment (furniture, tents, carpets, blackboards, water, etc.)
- Teacher training, setting up Teacher Training Centres
- Development of religious schools
- Curriculum development and new textbooks
- Construction and rehabilitation of schools

The focus on religious schools and vocational and technical education is new. Indeed, to date, vocational and technical education has not been fully developed and remains mainly informal, with no education prerequisites. NGOs and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs are in charge of training some specific populations, such as demobilised children, disabled people, and ex combatants within the framework of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration programmes. Vocational training remains a highly fragmented. The education system needs to set up an economic task force for the society. As the level of education is very low in Afghanistan, training students to enter directly the labour market is a key issue. Vocational and technical training is planned to begin after grade 9 in the new education system, and the objective is to have 30% of the 9th grade graduates enrolled in vocational and technical schools.

Religious studies are also a key issue that the MoE is beginning to take seriously, and to date, this sector is still highly decentralised. The communities take care of religious education: each village sends its boys to the mosque and the Mullah teaches them the Holy Koran. There are very few official organisations responsible for monitoring these courses. It is harder for communities to access international funds for religious education. Very few Western donors are prepared to invest in religious schools (infrastructure, curriculum development, teacher training, etc...) which might be an oversight given that this issue is highly sensitive and of great importance for nation rebuilding. It would be desirable to set up a state entity responsible for monitoring this sector, with an official curriculum, structure and supervision. Based on the needs of the country (mullah, imams, teachers, etc.), the MoE aims to have 10% of the 6th grade graduated enrolled in religious schools and to develop a new curriculum for those schools.

## **6. Aid agencies**

As previously mentioned, aid agencies increased their support to the education sector considerably at the end of 1970s. INGOs were heavily involved during the war periods in an attempt to fill the gaps left by a weak or warring state. The strategies adopted by INGOs have not always been wholly neutral. Since 2001, with the emergence of a new state, INGOs had to adapt progressively to the new order, handing back responsibility to the government and harmonising its strategies with national policy.

### **6.1. Harmonisation**

The successful “Back-to-School” campaign materialised with a large influx of students at the beginning of the school year in March 2002. Massive support from UN agencies and NGOs accompanied this rapid rise in enrolment over the following years. This includes both support to government schools, in terms of teaching materials, stationery, textbooks, facilities, training and monitoring, and the setting of parallel educational structures, through schools entirely supported by NGOs (including teachers’ salaries), home based schools, literacy courses and all types of non formal education projects. The already predominant NGO, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, played an even more important role after 2001. SCA has been one of the largest providers of primary education in rural Afghanistan with support to over 400 schools.

The government has started a process of coordinating and monitoring aid by drawing up a Memorandum of Understanding. From 2004 to date, the main NGOs and donors working in the education sector have signed an MoU with the MoE. As a result of this agreement between SCA and the MoE for instance, SCA initiated the process of handing over and phasing out salary supported SCA schools to the government. In spite of the signature of an MoU, there are still some discrepancies among NGOs and donors. For example, in the case of Community Based Schools, some stakeholders are asking the community to pay the teacher’s salary and yet others are covering these costs. The MoE encourages the community contribution approach, but some NGOs have negotiated a clause in their MoU which allows them to pay the salary.

This is a positive trend so long as the coordination and efficiency of education activities are improved as a result. However in some cases there is a risk that the continuity of the project may be jeopardised, or that it is too time consuming for the different stakeholders. Given that there is little consensus on long term political orientations and strategies, each time that there is a change of Ministry, this raises challenges for the relationship between NGOs, UN agencies, donors and the MoE and MoHE.

### **6.2. Different strategies, different types of aid agencies**

#### **6.2.1. In terms of funding**

Some NGOs submit requests for funding to big donors, such as USAID or the World Bank. This guarantees a certain degree of continuity for their projects, given that the main donors allocate funds for a period of five to seven years. Other NGOs trying to maintain their independence, especially with regard to how they design and implement their projects, and thus choose to work with their own funds, bilateral funds or more minor donors. These funds tend to be more “volatile”.

These funding choices have an impact on the humanitarian sector. For example, USAID funding procedures enabled certain NGOs, especially Afghan NGOs, to scale up their activities. To be eligible for USAID funds, a consortium must be set up, comprising an American NGO and Afghan partners. Given the geographic coverage and the sums of money involved, this implies that only stakeholders with a certain capacity will be selected.

For example, the Afghanistan Primary Education Programme was launched in 2003. Creative Associate was selected as the implementing partner, in a consortium with Afghan Development Association (ADA) and Coordination body for Humanitarian Assistance (CHA) among others. Before 2003, ADA employed roughly 500 people whereas today, ADA employs 4,300 staff. Similarly, CHA's staff has risen from 800 employees in 2003 to 5,000 employees today. This scaling up is not simply the consequence of an increase in education activities (these NGOs are also working in other sectors) but also the result of USAID funds and programmes are certainly partly responsible of that.

### 6.2.2. In terms of projects

Project design and strategic choices vary considerably depending on the stakeholder.

#### *Direct support to government schools*

Some NGOs work directly with government schools. For instance, NGOs involved in implementing the World Bank's 'Cash Grant for Schools' Development' Programme (CGSD) provide direct support for government schools. Within the CGSD programme, NGOs are responsible for facilitating the creation of two committees per school: the PTA and the School Management Committee. The WB allocates USD7 per student to selected schools. The PTA and the SMC decide what to do with the amount, in agreement with the PED. NGOs support this process from the setting up of committees to achieving project results. They facilitate the decision making process and help the committees to define their priorities and write the proposal for the PED. The aim is to reach a consensus among the community in agreement with local authorities. This programme has recently changed its name to "Education QUALity Improvement Programme" EQUIP. The World Food Programme (WFP), with its school feeding programme, aims to encourage children to attend school and reduce drop out. By providing pupils with one nutritious meal each day, the WFP expects to push up attendance rates and improve children's ability to concentrate on their lessons. Take-home rations are also provided as an additional incentive to parents to send their children to school.

#### *Participation in national policy*

**Accelerated learning** was initiated as a support to the Back to School campaign with a view to integrating over-aged children in the formal education system. USAID has provided substantial support to the accelerated learning initiative.

Other NGOs are supporting national policy and strategies through their projects. Many major NGOs are working with **Community Based Schools** or **Home Based Schools** and thus support national policy that aims to increase enrolment rates both for girls and boys, to improve geographic coverage of education service delivery and improve access in remote areas. Some NGOs have received funds from USAID to create CBS, other are working with their own funds. The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan is still dependent on Swedish government funds, a strategic decision which allows it to maintain a certain degree of independence vis-à-vis international priorities and to support national strategies. SCA, as many other aid agencies, is also working on **teacher training**. Teacher training is seen as a means of improving the quality of education, in terms of knowledge and teaching methods. Some NGOs are working in the framework of the TEP, in collaboration with the MoE and main donors, but others are still working outside this programme, even through efforts are made to coordinate their activities with the TEP. The material designed for the TEP (inset 1, inset 2, etc.) is not always used by aid agencies and some have even created their own training materials. Coordination of teacher training is often very weak. There is a large number of aid agencies working in this sector and overlaps are common. It is not unusual for several organisations to provide training in the same school, in the framework of the TEP or otherwise. With regard to USAID's new programme, the ABEP, there is a significant focus on teacher training. There is less of a focus on support for children but the overall objective is to improve the quality of education through teacher training and by participating in the TEP.

Subsequent **literacy** programmes were also launched. Several UN agencies - UNICEF, WFP, UNIFEM, UNESCO and FAO - have joined efforts in order to draw up a wide literacy project, focusing on women's access to literacy (among 475,000 beneficiaries, of which 10,100 are male). This programme is managed in collaboration with the literacy department of the MoE. The objective is to increase the literacy rate of females in Afghanistan by 50% from the current rate of 14%. UNICEF and WFP are in charge of the first phase of this programme, namely literacy courses. The plan is that UNESCO, FAO and UNIFEM will then take over with more developed programmes such as vocational training (UNESCO), nutrition programmes (FAO) and micro credit programmes (UNIFEM). The programme is due to start soon<sup>13</sup>. AKDN is also providing mother and adult literacy courses. According to MoE procedures, literacy courses last nine months, with a new turnover of teachers after this period.

*Setting an example (for better quality and better practices)*

The quality of education is currently a sensitive issue in Afghanistan. Teacher training is a means of improving quality. Selection and support to '**model schools**' is an alternative option that some NGOs have adopted. Using 'model schools' as an example for the government and for government schools, stakeholders hope that this strategy will foster new trends in quality improvement, a better learning environment and teaching conditions. 'Model schools' are equipped - or will be, given that most 'model schools' have only just been set up - with a library, a laboratory (often absent in the majority of the high schools, preventing teachers from covering the whole science curriculum), and even with a generator and computers in some cases. One option is to group these facilities in a resource centre that is shared by several schools; alternatively, these facilities are set up in individual schools. Resource centres are seen as a central place that allows several schools to benefit from these facilities and also a location for holding teacher training courses, PTA meetings, etc. Fully equipped 'model schools' are destined to function as a reference school for a given area. The objective is firstly to generate other quality initiatives and thus ensure that schools become better equipped, and secondly to ensure the sustainability of NGOs programme. SCA select the location of the model school between several SCA-supported CBS. The school should serve as a model but should also ensure that children studying in CBS are integrated into the formal education system. According to the MoE, CBS are temporary structures that should evolve into formal schools after a few years or disappear with the integration of children into neighbouring formal schools. By supporting the model school near the CBS, SCA seeks to ensure that children are integrated into formal schools.

Save the Children UK is working on best practices and rights based approaches. SCUUK is working with specific marginalised groups, for example street working children and out of school children. The objective is both to provide opportunities to these groups through accelerated learning courses and thus integrate them into a formal school after certain period, and to develop child friendly learning and teaching methods in the schools likely to receive these children. SCUUK works with teachers and headmasters in these schools on teaching methods and on protecting children's rights. SCUUK has also launched a pilot project in certain schools on children's access to health facilities. The agency is building its strategies on a rights based approach, championing the protection of children's rights, working closely with local and national authorities, in order to raise awareness about these issues and change practices.

NGOs often implement several different projects at the same time and one of the major differentiating factors is the source of funding. With the major donors, NGOs work more as implementing partners than as independent aid agencies. The history of aid agency involvement in Afghanistan is also an important factor in strategic choice. NGOs that have

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<sup>13</sup> The report was written in June 2006.

been working in Afghanistan for a long time have been more vocal in their reservations about the transitional government and the sustainability of Afghan state rebuilding. They are now engaged in a closer collaboration with the GoA. For instance, the transition of the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan from independent actor to implementing partner has certainly been a difficult process. Previously the main education provider in Afghanistan, SCA provided support to more than 400 schools throughout the country. SCA had to hand over the management of all these schools to the new government and become involved in new projects. Building trust among the community is a lengthy process and SCA wanted formal assurance from the government that they would run these schools properly.

## 7. Conclusion

The education sector has become more structured since 2001 and the transition period provided an opportunity for widespread reforms, especially in terms of the new curriculum and textbooks. The Back to School campaign was overwhelmingly successful and the huge influx of new students raised a series of new challenges for the existing system. The enrolment curve is unlikely to stabilise for several years. The involvement of all stakeholders is still required in order to cope with the extra demands put on the system and to provide children with a good quality education. Nevertheless, education is a critical sector for the rebuilding of a nation and stakeholders need to pay careful attention to Afghan expectations and needs.

Additionally, stakeholders also need to pay attention to the following cross-cutting issues:

- The gender issue is crucial in Afghanistan, especially in the education sector. Access to education for girls is an opportunity for a deeper social change. A strong focus was put on gender in education programmes. The data still reflect a high disparity between boys and girls primary school attendance ratio (70% for boys, 40% for girls – UNICEF data<sup>14</sup>), especially in southern regions, where girl enrolment rate is sometimes close to zero (Zabul 3%, Helmand 5% or Khost 7%). Regional and gender disparities are still high and it is important to carry on focusing on these elements. Nevertheless, in some cases, excessive or clumsy focus on gender led to unbalanced situations, with girls' enrolment and schooling massively supported and boys' education neglected in the same village or in the same area. Unbalanced development can be a source of tension and efforts must be made to watch out for these inequalities.
- Security is also a major concern, for the reason mentioned above, but also from a broader point of view. In southern regions, insecurity is a major threat to children's enrolment, especially girls' enrolment. "In the last six months, education has been under attack in southern and south-eastern Afghanistan in an apparent attempt to erode what hope people still have in the weak central government and to panic them about their children's safety. Up to 50 schools have been set on fire, according to the country's Education Ministry. Up to 300 have shut down at some point, largely out of fear. Many parents are nervous about sending their children to school." "The education system in some southern provinces has not completely collapsed, but it is push and pull," said Mohammad Sediq Patman, the deputy education minister. "One month, the enemy warns people not to go to school, and kids stay at home. The next month, school is back to normal. It is a way of fighting for the enemy<sup>15</sup>." "Thousands of students are deprived of education and are sitting in their homes. The situation for education is getting worse day by day," said Hayat Allah Rafiqi, head of the education

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<sup>14</sup> The data refer to attendance ratio and not enrolment ratio. Drop out is taken into account in the attendance ratio.

<sup>15</sup> Chicago Tribune, *Afghan schools torched in war against education*, 12 April 2006

department in Kandahar, calling on the government to do more to ensure the safety of education institutions<sup>16</sup>. At the national level, schools and education facilities are increasingly targeted too, even though to a lesser extent. Some teachers and students have recently been killed by rockets while attending school. Growing insecurity and targeting of school and health facilities is a major concern. This is certainly an effective means of contesting the legitimacy of central government and the current reconstruction process.

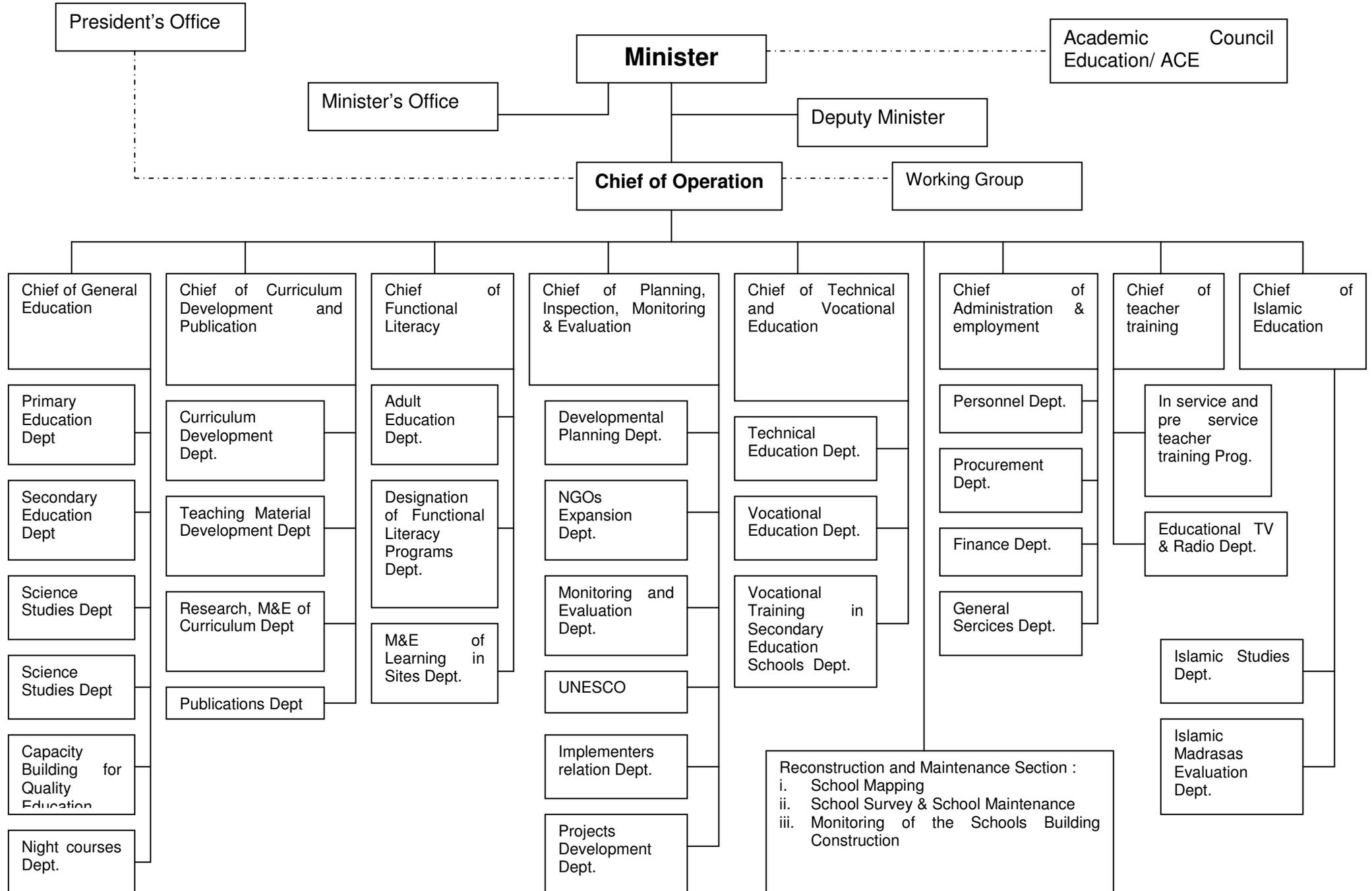
- With the increasing focus on quality, it is important not to overlook the fact that in some areas basic needs have not yet been fulfilled. As mentioned above, in southern regions for instance, there is still much work to be done. There are also high levels of disparity within the regions themselves. There is apparently no consensus between the different stakeholders on what quality in education is and how this should be achieved. Quality must not be sidelined or minimised because of weak national education delivery system, but some urgent needs are still not being met in several parts of Afghanistan.
- Coordination and monitoring are still very weak both within the education system itself and within the international community – donors, aid agencies, etc. Many difficulties and weaknesses in the education sector could be resolved more easily with better and stronger communication, coordination and collaboration between stakeholders. Coordination and monitoring are critical for improving teacher qualification, as well as for the building of a countrywide, unified and coherent education system.

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<sup>16</sup> IRIN, Afghanistan, *Education crisis in the south with 200 schools closed*, 8 Feb. 2006, Kandahar

# ANNEXES

# Organisational Chart of the Ministry of Education



## Annexe 2

### Meetings and field visits

Date	Organisation	Persons met	Position	details
09/02/2006	SCAC	Vincent	responsable prog. education coopération française	Meeting office Kabul
12/02/2006	Kabul	Fahrad Family	Primary Class teachers and headmasters	Meeting office Kabul
18/02/2006	MoHE	Dr. Musawi	Advisor to Minister	Meeting office Kabul
19/02/2006	MoE	Mr. Wahidi	teacher training department in the MoE	Meeting office Kabul
19/02/2006	SAB	Abdul Hak	Head of education training programmes	Meeting office Kabul
22/02/2006	Unicef Bamiyan	Atiqullah Amiri	Programme Officer Unicef Bamiyan	Meeting office Bamiyan
	Governor Office Bamiyan	Habiba	Gouverneur of Bamiyan	Meeting office Bamiyan
	Univ. Bamiyan	Mr. Youssoufi	Chancellor of Universtiy of Bamiyan	Meeting office Bamiyan
	PED	Mr. Waseq	Head of department education in Bamiyan	Meeting office Bamiyan
25/02/2006	Save the Children Japan	Shunsuke Yamamoto	Fiel Coordinator in Bamiyan	Meeting office Bamiyan
01/03/2006	Unicef	MG Wahidi	Project officer education kabul	Meeting office Kabul
29/03/2006	Univ. Kaboul	Habib Soughadgar	Directeur département de français de Kaboul	Meeting office Kabul
30/03/2006	AKDN	Habib Rahman	Assistant education Manager	Meeting office Kabul
	Care International	Abdul Raziq Azizi	Education deputy programme Manager Kabul	Meeting office Kabul
	IRC	Gul Habib	Education Technical Advisor	Meeting office Kabul
02/04/2006	SCA	Dr. Ahmad Khalid Fahim	Tech Advisor Primary Education	Meeting office Kabul
	Un Habitat	Dr. Suman Kr. Karna	Urban development Advisor	Meeting office Kabul
	USAID	Shahnaz Hakim	Education Program Management Specialist	Meeting office Kabul
05/04/2006	AKDN Bamiyan	Ezatullah Arman	Regional Education officer Bamiyan	visits: mother literacy course and adult literacy course in Shibar and a rehabilitated school
	Care Int. Bamiyan	Jumaddin	Master teacher trainer	Meeting office Bamiyan
06/04/2006	DEP	Mr. Waseq	Head of education department Bamiyan	Meeting office Bamiyan
	Care Int. Bamiyan	Jumaddin	Master teacher trainer	visit: Care supported school, implementing the CGDS prog of the World Bank
	Save the Children N/S	Noor Mohammad	Admin/Data Management Officer	Meeting office Bamiyan
08/04/2006	BRAC Aybak	Kader	Regional Programme Manager	BEOC schools visits BRAC à Aybak
08/04/2006	PED	Yahre Nazar	Head of Education in Aybak	Meeting + visit of 2government's schools supported by USAID and AKDN
09/04/2006	Unicef Mazar	Eng. Ahmad Shah Azizar	Project Officer Mazar	Meeting office Mazar
	PED coordination meeting	Head of education, DRRD, Dfinance, Unicef, Civil Society, admin PED		Meeting office Mazar
	PIN	Marketa Pohankova	Program Officer relief and development	Meeting office Mazar

10/04/2006	Brac SC UK WFP ACBAR	Mostafa Muzundar Morali Mohan Ahmad Jama Abdul Rauf Qaderi	Program Officer education Program Manager Mazar Head of Programme Regional Manager	Meeting office Mazar Meeting office Mazar Meeting office Mazar Meeting office Mazar
	CHA	Ghulam Yahya Abbassy	Education Sector Acting Coordinator	Meeting office Mazar
	CHA	Moh. Rashid Scandary	Regional field officer	Meeting office Mazar
11/04/2006	Univ Mazar	Fahim	Programme Sayara et prof de journalisme	Meeting Mazar
11/04/2006	AKDN	Atiqullah Ludin	Regional Education Program Officer Baghlan	Meeting office Pul-e-Khumry
12/04/2006	SCA	Naqeeb Ahmad Mushfeq	Education manager	Meeting office Pul-e-Khumry
	SCA	Amir Ahmad Safawi	Deputy Regional Director	Meeting office Pul-e-Khumry
	SCA		school consultant	visit of a girl model school in Baghlan
	AKDN	Atiqullah Ludin		visit of the Teacher Training Centre
13/04/2006	PED Pul e Khumri	Abdul Sabur	Head of administration	Meeting + visit: government's high schools (one for boys, one for girls) in Pul e Khumri
15/04/2006	team meeting			
16/04/2006	ADB départ jalalabad	Meloney Lindberg	Deputy Country Representative	Meeting office Kabul Meeting office Kabul
17/04/2006	JICA Kabul	Mariko Senda	advisor	Meeting office Kabul
17/04/2006	BRAC Kabul	Mr. Shahaduddin	Education Programme Manager	Meeting office Kabul
17/04/2006	IRC	Abdul Ahad Samoon	Eastern Field Coordinator	Meeting office Jalalabad
17/04/2006	IRC	Akram Abdul Rahmimzai	Education Manager	Meeting office Jalalabad
17/04/2006	IRC	Akram Abdul Rahmimzai	Education Manager	Home Based Schools and teacher training course visit
18/04/2006	PED Jalalabad		Administration Deputy	Meeting + High school visit
18/04/2006	MoWA	Karima Solek		Meeting office Jalalabad
18/04/2006	SCA	Mr A. Rahman Haroon	Education chief officer for Eastern region	Meeting + female teacher training center visit
18/04/2006	ADA		Deputy Regional Director	Meeting office Jalalabad
19/04/2006	TEP	Mr. Mansoori		Meeting office Kabul
20/04/2006	MoE Planning Department	Mr. Karbalawi	director for planning department MoE	Meeting office Kabul
20/04/2006	World Bank	Sherezad J. Monami Latif	Education Specialist	Meeting office Kabul
20/04/2006	World Bank	Habibullah Wajdi	educatino specialist	Meeting office Kabul
20/04/2006	IOM	Mamta Singh	Programme Support Officer Schools and Clinics	Meeting office Kabul
20/04/2006	IOM	Bodgan Danila	deputy Program Manager Schools and clinics	Meeting office Kabul
20/04/2006	STEP - JICA	Mr. Sattar Hayat	Consultant STEP JICA	Meeting office Kabul
25/04/2006	Literacy Department			Meeting office Kabul
25/04/2006	Vocational Department			Meeting office Kabul
26/04/2006	PED Kabul			Meeting and visits
26/04/2006	MoWA	Ahmad Jawid Attawi	acting director of education department	Meeting office Kabul
26/04/2006	MoE	Lutfula Safi		Meeting office Kabul
30/04/2006	unicef	Attaullah Wahidyar	Assistant Project Officer	Meeting office Kabul

## Annexe 3

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