



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

AFGHANISTAN

Education

June 2011



Photo: USAID/Afghanistan

Under the Taliban girls were not allowed to go to school. Today, 37 percent of the students enrolled in schools are female.

EDUCATION SNAPSHOT

- More than seven million students are now enrolled in primary and secondary schools (37 percent are female)
- University enrollment has grown to 62,000
- Printed more than 97.1 million textbooks for grades one through 12
- Supported 43,800 students annually in remote community-based schools
- Trained over 53,000 teachers in 11 provinces using a cascade model
- Built or refurbished more than 680 schools
- Benefitted at least 1,700 professors and 10,000 students through computer literacy and English proficiency programs

Data as of June 2011

BACKGROUND

Literacy among Afghan youth and adults remains low after more than two decades of conflict, which resulted in near destruction of the country's educational resources, human, as well as infrastructure. Today, the demand for education varies by region, but clearly is increasing. Afghanistan has one of the youngest populations in the world, and a rapidly growing cohort of school-age children whose parents expect them to attend school. Consequently, the supply of quality education will be in deficit for years to come. Even the remarkable response of the Afghan government and donors in building 4,000 schools and recruit and train more than 100,000 new teachers since 2002, has yet to catch up with the growing expectations of the public. Interestingly, a 2010 national survey (Asia Foundation, November 2010) showed 85 percent of Afghans rate the government's performance in education as good or very good. In Kabul, there is high demand for both secondary and primary education, and nearly equal interest in expanding girls' opportunities to attend school. Evidence suggests higher education and technical-vocational training produce both public and private benefits, such as better health and improved quality of life, as well as improved economic development.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

USAID's education strategy meets the urgent and expanding need for textbooks, schools, trained teachers, and innovative approaches to expand access. The education program develops the capacity of the Afghan Government to improve education quality while increasing access to opportunities in basic and higher education, and employment skills.

IMPROVING BASIC EDUCATION

Increasing access to quality schooling is a national priority. USAID is improving basic education through training and technical support to enhance teacher performance and knowledge and the capacity of the Ministry of Education (MoE). USAID also supports community-based education (CBE) and provides 12 million school textbooks annually. To help Afghans recover lost years of formal schooling, USAID supports accelerated and remedial learning projects that enabled 7,000 female students to complete two years of study in one year.

To address the critical need for qualified teachers, USAID helped train more than 53,000 MoE teachers, of which, 31 percent were female. USAID's CBE project allowed approximately 104,000 students (68 percent female) to attend schools in remote locations without MoE schools. In 2011, teacher training, community-based education, literacy training, and textbook printing will be largely shifted to direct, on-budget assistance with the MoE.

USAID advisors worked with the MoE to develop a human-resource management system that includes design and implementation of a teacher credentialing system, salary reforms, and other measures to enhance teaching as a career choice, particularly among women. USAID is also collaborating closely with the MoE and other donors to implement the second National Education Strategic Plan (2010-2014).



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Education (continued)



Photo: USAID/Afghanistan

Students receive new textbooks. Between 2002 and 2010, USAID published more than 75.6 million textbooks in Dari and Pashto on various subjects for grades one through 12.

SUPPORTING HIGHER EDUCATION

USAID's activities in higher education are aligned with the Afghan National Development Strategy, which notes that a reinvigorated higher education system would contribute immensely to the emergence of a pluralistic, democratic, and stable society. USAID has contributed to improving the quality of university instruction. Early this year, 22 professors of education graduated with master's degrees in education; 22 others are half way through the program; and 23 just started the program.

Through USAID technical assistance, the Ministry of Higher Education is supporting 12 universities to undertake self-assessments, which are the first step toward regularizing quality assurance and accreditation practices.

The American University of Afghanistan held its first graduation for 32 students (eight female) in June of this year and actively is recruiting the first group of students for a new master's of business administration program scheduled to begin later this year. To increase revenue generation from Afghan clients, the Professional Development Institute is expanding tailor-made programs on a pay-per-service basis to serve ministries, corporations, non-governmental organizations and other organizations.

In June of this year, Hirat University dedicated new architecture and engineering facilities provided by USAID. The new facilities include a design studio, digital library, and a computer lab, which will allow students and faculty from a new architecture program to access state-of-the-art facilities. USAID technical advisors also helped the university in updating the curriculum and taking critical steps to ensure that the engineering program is relevant to Afghan labor markets and economic trends.

With new USAID equipment, the Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University was able to increase its collection of digitized reading materials and articles on Afghanistan and make them available to researchers worldwide.

EXPANDING YOUTH AND ADULT LITERACY

USAID's large-scale literacy, numeracy, and productive skills (vocational, business, and microfinance) program improves the livelihoods of women and men aged 15 and older. A USAID-funded technical advisory unit within the MoE is helping the National Literacy Center develop and implement the National Literacy Program. It also provides access to training, materials, and modern teaching techniques in 20 provinces.

A USAID youth project created male- and female-led youth development councils that provided practical learning opportunities for youth to engage with local government leaders by implementing small grants projects.

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

To further expand access, USAID is building six faculties of education and five provincial teacher training colleges around the country, two large secondary schools in Kabul and one school in Jalalabad.

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