

Country Report: Afghanistan

Mohammad Shafi Sharifi*



1. Background

Afghanistan is an extremely poor, landlocked country, highly dependent on foreign aid, farming and livestock raising and trade with neighboring countries. The population is around 25 million people with an estimate following structure.

Under 15 years : 41.8% (male 5,328,000 ; female 5,122,000)

15-64 years : 55.4%(male 7,208,000; female 6,642,000)

65 years and over : 2.8% (male 360,000 ; female 340,000)

Population growth : 3.38%

Birth rate : 40.63 birth /1000

Death rate :17.15 death/1000

Sex ratio : 1.07 male/female

Within two decades of war and conflict, Afghans society suffered great human and material losses as well as major demographic modification. "War has killed at least a million people, maimed and disabled many more, created an army of orphans and widows, half population into internally displaced persons and refugees, including six million out side of the country " (UNDP 1993). Eventually in result, almost more than 80% of the governmental institutions and infrastructures either completely collapsed or disfunctioned.

Education is one of those infrastructures that have been largely affected .Afghanistan's education system is in a state of near total poor condition and among the worst in the world. War and disruption of the Afghan society during the last two decades seriously hampered educational development. The education of girls has particularly suffered due to war and the discriminatory policies of the ruling authorities. The majority of teachers are untrained, under qualified and under-paid. The textbooks are outdated and scarce in supply There are serious shortages of teaching materials and other educational facilities. To promote and deliver "Education For All" national goals and strategies need to be established, human and materials resources mobilized, and innovative methods, including the use of new technologies, considered. The quality and relevance of education and development of shared values, particularly respect for ethnic diversity and a culture of peace, will be crucial for Afghan children and youth. For a society which for more than two decades experienced ethnic and ideological conflict, education and training will be one of the pillars on which to build the future.

* Faculty of Engineering, EE Department, Kabul University, Afghanistan

It is sad to say that more than 95% of the total population are illiterate, more than 65% of the children do not have access to basic education, more than 75 %of the population have no access to safe drinking water, more than 80% of the population are living in a very poor sanitation condition. More than 50% of the students are studying under a tent or in damaged rooms or have no shelter to study in at all. Despite the education system having been destroyed, and almost total lack of resources and teachers salary arrears of over two months in Kabul and more than six months in rural areas, demand for education is surging. For example, thousands of teachers are registering for classes. Parents are eager to return their children to school, From 4.5 million school age children more than 3 million were encouraged by “Back To School“ campaign supported by UNICEF to attend to schools.

The return to peace permitted significant achievements in capacity to supply basic inputs. Almost one thousand of new schools constructed, over 2000 schools rehabilitated all over the country since March 2002.

With the restoration of peace and security and establishment of the interim government which followed by the transitional government once again it was an exceptional opportunity. Education system re-establishes and slowly strengthens, with the support of UNESCO, UNICEF and Non Governmental Organization, a number of workshops happened, the curriculum was revised, a number of textbooks developed, specific education polices and guidelines have been developed or being developed, which guarantees the ESD. With no doubt I can say that the role of Japan government is significant, Japanese are assisting Afghan people in education challenges.

2. Education:

2.1 Structure of Education System

Primary education lasts for six years and is compulsory. Student must pass a final examination each year to progress to the next grade. Middle school is at present not compulsory. Students must pass a final examination each year to advance to the next grade. High school is not compulsory. Education in Afghanistan was free in the past as well as its freeness guaranteed in the new constitution.

Level	Type of school	Length of Program	Age level
Primary	Primary school	6 years	6-12
Middle secondary	Middle school	3 years	13-16
Upper secondary	High school	3 years	17-19

For Afghan society that for more than two decades experienced war and conflict and lost its all assets and values, education is essential. For improving the education system, we faces many challenges which is a head. Happily we are not forgotten more than that. UN agencies (UNESCO, UNICEF) and international communities are with us. Their commitment and philosophy are to build the capacities of the war ravaged country related to infrastructure in education. The objectives are to support the government efforts to achieve Education for All, reduce mass illiteracy, contribute to basic education, increase access for girls to education, providing employment opportunities to women as paraprofessional teachers and involve communities in their own socioeconomic development.

2.2 Teacher Education and Training

The prewar teacher education system in Afghanistan was based on a network of 14. year teacher training college in 11 provinces. Late in 1980, six of these colleges were transferred to the ministry of higher education and converted to pedagogical institutes with 4 years programs of study. By 1984, only three teacher training colleges were functioning and after six years of the Taliban, two of these institutions still functioning. but only partly; they have suffered physical destruction and neither has active staff, although several have applied to accept students in 2002. The issue of teacher education and training is a difficult one. On the one hand, rapid expansion of the basic education system will require immediate recruitment and functional training of more than 4,000 new teachers each year; a goal for which the traditional teacher education system is unsuited and which it is wholly incapable of achieving under current circumstances. Simply put, the education system cannot wait 2 or 4 years for new teachers. More over it is not clear that separate facilities with multi year programs are the most effective or efficient means of education teachers. The alternatives of incorporating teacher education into general college or even secondary school programs, coupled with incentive in service training, may be more effective in both the short and long term. These options need to be explored to avoid making large investments in obsolete institutions.

On the other hand, Afghan educators have considerable professional and emotional attachment to the former system, and are strong in favor of rebuilding and restoring the full network of 14 teacher training institutes. MoE will require assistance to conduct a programmatic of the options and to develop both immediate and long term plans to address the shortage of teachers in an efficient way. In the short term, the urgent need for primary and secondary school teachers will require flexible and innovative approaches for rapid deployment, training, and support of teachers who lack traditional qualifications. This is an urgent priority for MoE and external funding agencies to insure that acceptable levels of quality are maintained in a rapidly expanding education system.

In 2003 the government of Afghanistan upgraded teacher training centers to university level for training as many teachers as possible to meet the need of education in coming few years.

2.3 Proposing and Implementation of Projects

Since improving of education system was recognized as a key point for sustainability and as well as stability, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education with other relevant ministries and departments, with the support UN agencies, USAID, Asian Develop Bank, World Band, Japan government, a number of quick impact projects have been proposed for improvement of education system in Afghanistan. Many of these projects have already been completed and some is going to finish. These projects are in the following areas.

2.3.1 Early childhood development:

Project 1. Young Child Play Kits: To develop a culturally relevant sets of play and learning materials for children between 1-6 years of age growing up in difficult times, and show parents and other caregivers how materials can be used to stimulate their children's motor skills, language thinking and creativity.

Project 2. Child Development Communication Strategy: To enhance early child development by supporting parents in their role as primary caregivers through a series of radio spot and supportive print materials.

Project 3 .Mother and Young Child learning centers: To give the intersecting educational needs of young women especially those whose education was interrupted or never begun-and their young children, a nationwide strategy of maternal and young child learning centers is proposed. To provide young children with stimulating early opportunities while enabling their mothers to participate in a carefully designed basic nonformal education and life skills program.

2.3.2 Basic Education Projects :

Project 1. Education Sector Support Program: To meet the strong demand for education in Afghanistan today (i)strengthening the capacity of Ministry of Education to provide quality primary and secondary education to Afghan children (ii) by supporting MoE in implementing a large back to school campaign aimed at increasing access; (iii) providing materials support for teachers and students, teacher training, and basic upgrading of educational facilities; and (iv) improve the quality of primary and secondary education for all Afghan school children, with a focus on girls and female teachers.

Project 2. Community based Basic Education Rehabilitation: The objective this project is to provide financial support for cost-efficient rehabilitation of the 80% of schools estimated to be in urgent need of repair and for furniture, education supplies, and equipment in these schools.

Project 3. Quality in Service Primary Teacher training: To support the development and immediate implementation of a coordinated, integrated in-service training program for teachers already in service that introduces effective learning and teaching strategies focusing on the quality of students learning.

Project 4. Second Chance Education for Out of School Children, Youth, and Hard. to-reach Population: To develop a framework and coordination mechanism to enable joint action by government and nongovernmental entities to deliver accepted and recognized education to children and youth who have not been enrolled in school, or who have suffered significant interruption in their education.

Project 5 . Primary Curriculum and Learning Materials Development: This project supports MoE's curriculum review and reforms process including the development of a new national curriculum and development of textbooks and other learning materials that implement the new curriculum.

2.3.3 Institutional Strengthening of the Ministry of Education.

Project 1. Policy Development through Stake holder Development Dialogue: To develop a new policy framework, based on social and gender equity, access, and quality, among others.

Project 2. Education Resources Survey: To establish a system and methodology for conducting and analyzing systematic education resources surveys of educational needs and assets in all communities and to initiate data collection, especially on children who never attend school.

Project 3. Institutional Strengthening of the Ministry of Education for School Rehabilitation and Reconstruction: To build capacity in the central MoE and the provinces to carry out efficient planning, coordination, management, implementation, and monitoring of cost-efficient school rehabilitation, construction, and temporary facilities management including provision of school furniture and equipment, and teacher housing as necessary.

Project 4. Capacity Building of Ministry of Education: To support Ministry of Education in building its

institutional and professional capacity at the central, provincial and local levels, with institutional support to communities and schools, and possibly NGOs. The capacity building process is meant to support the smooth and effective implementation of the future education policy and its learning process.

3. How Environmental Education Developed in Afghanistan

"Environmental education is a learning process that increases people's knowledge and awareness about the environment and associated challenges, develops the necessary skills and expertise to address the challenges, and fosters attitudes, motivations, and commitments to make informed decisions and take responsible action (UNESCO, Tbilisi Declaration, 1978)."

In 1979, Ministry of Education of Afghanistan realized that EE is effective and providing students with opportunities to construct their own understanding. For the first time introduced EE through a subject "understanding the nature" in primary schools. At that time it was taught that Environment is only related to nature, wild animals and pollution. This subject was mostly affected by Russian and its content was based on Marxism theory. Then in 1988 it was revised and replaced by another subject "Nature" which some how close to concept of EE. This time the content was intended to help students in become aware of hoe they affect their environment and how it affects them.

In December 2002, MoE successfully developed a more comprehensive curriculum with the support of UNICEF, UNISCO, USAID. Increasing access and raising quality in all sub-sectors of education is taken inconsideration. The education curriculum and policy particularly emphasizes the initiation of EE. In a apart of the curriculum we read: "Life skill is a new subject area in the curriculum, aiming at helping students to get familiar with their social, natural and artificial environment and to develop important skills for their personnel, social intellectual and emotional development.

In July 2003 Ministry of Education held Work shop on Curriculum and textbook Development with the support of UNICEF Afghanistan, UNISCO Afghanistan, IBE-UNISCO, DANIDA, Columbia University / Teachers college and French Ministry for foreign affairs. The workshop focused on: How to upgrade the capacity of curriculum and textbook developers; to share experiences on selecting and organizing meaningful learning experiences with experts from other countries.; to draft syllabi several curriculum areas for primary education as models for good practice; to create a basis for a shared curriculum culture and vision of meaningful learning experiences among curriculum developers and education stakeholder.

In 2003, MoE of Afghanistan while developed a new curriculum, based on that more attention was attracted to Science and Technology Education (STE) and EE. Because EE is effective education and is learner centered, providing students with opportunities to construct their own understanding through hands. on, minds-on investigation. Students are engaged in direct experiences and are challenged to use higher order thinking skills. EE supports the development of an active learning community where learners share ideas and expertise. EE recognizes the importance of investigating the environment within the context of human influence, forming an examination of culture, economics, political structure, social equity and natural processes and systems. The main objective of EE is to develop an environmentally literate citizenry. Through EE students or learners:

1. students are engaged in hands. on, active learning that increases their knowledge and awareness about the environment.
2. recognize and explore how experience, feelings, perceptions and attitudes influence environmental issues.
3. understands human processes and system.
4. posses the skills necessary for citizenship.
5. develop a sense of their rights and responsibilities as citizens who are able to weigh varies sides of an environmental issues and make responsible decisions as individual and as members of their community.
6. capable to understand principles and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic.
7. develop critical things, problem solving, and effective decision making skills.

Based on above goals, objectives and importance of EE, MoE developed a textbook. The subject is called "Science, Health and Environment". The teaching of the subject will take place in module schools in the year 2004 from grade 4 to 6. Then will be reviewed and after that will be introduced to all schools. The content of the book covers the following topics:

> For grade 4

- Living thins
 - o Man and the five external senses
 - o Animals (Domestic and Wild)
 - o Plants and their structure
- Heat and Luminous
- Machines (simple and complicated machines)
- The Earth
- Food (Resources , fruit , cereals , fish , malnutrition)
- Hygiene (Food hygiene, personnel hygiene, cloth hygiene, and domestic hygiene)
- Diseases and prevention
- Environment
 - o Aquatic ecosystem, atmosphere, terrestrial ecosystem
 - o The best use of environment

> For grade 5

- Human body anatomy
- Characteristic of living things(movement, nutrition , respiration , growth and sensitivity of living things)
- Non-Living things
 - o Mater and its physical states
- The weather and Climate
- Solar System
- Sound , Magnet, and electricity
- Micro-organism and parasites
- Drugs and their detrimental

> For grade 6

- Visceral system of human body
- Mater and the types of mater
- Natural resources
- Minerals
- Energy
- Communicable diseases and childhood diseases
- Vaccination
- Drugs and their detrimental
- Science and the society of science

In short words I can summarize the objectives of the courses as:

- I. to understand the meaning of the word “Environment”
- II. to find how their lives are affected by features and conditions of the various environments.

Addition to that a series of readers and booklets are developed and distributed to teachers and students (e.g. Living and Nonliving things, Living Together, Health Growth of Children, Values of plants and Animals to Human Beings, Population Explosions.)

3.1 Strategies:

Ministry of Education of Afghanistan with the cooperation and collaboration of relevant universities and a number of teacher training institutions are planning to develop:

3.1.1 Guidelines :

One of the prerequisites for having a good environmental education system and launching it is to have good and well designed guideline for the that purpose. So MoE of Afghanistan with having the responsibility as a national lead agency working on that to develop guidelines to supplement environmental education materials with following specifications:

- > be accurate and faire in describing environmental issues, problems and conditions.
- > be effective and efficient in reflecting the diversity of perspective.
- > help the growth and development awareness of the natural environment.
- > focus on understanding of environmental conditions and concept.
- > care of awareness of attitudes, values, feelings and perceptions at the heart of environmental problems.
- > Attention to different scales.
- > Insist on skills building which enable learners to prevent environmental problems.
- > Emphasis on critical and creative thinking.
- > Encourage to apply skills to issues.
- > Promote civic responsibilities.
- > Encourage learners to use their knowledge and personnel skills as a basis for environmental problem solving and action.
- > Promote learning centered education system.

- > Instruct different ways of learning.
- > Instruct assessment of environment.
- > Expand learning environment.
- > Connection to learners' daily lives.
- > Instruct goals and objectives.
- > Be well designed and easy to use.
- > To be long life and adoptable.

3.1.2 Development of materials

Ministry of Education in conjunction with and support of UNESCO and UNICEF. on the light of mentioned guidelines is undertaken the compilation and publication of textbooks and magazines for students and teachers which will make the word "environment" more understandable and meaningful. Education materials which will enable the students to map the various levels of their own environment. Education staff that will promote the ability of learners to examine how their lives are affected by the features and conditions of the various environments in which they live. Books in which learners and teachers will find many examples of the human attempts to change the environment to suit the human needs. The education materials being considered to be adoptable and applicable according to the age and level.

3.1.3 Workshops and Seminars

With development of the texts book MoE plans to conduct a series of workshops and seminars to initiate the initiate and introduce environmental to all teachers and educators:

1. What Environmental Education is, why it is relevant to our live and how effectively be demonstrated and communicated.
2. How human can live compatibly with nature?
3. Why environmental education is important?
4. How the every body lives could be improved by environmental education.
5. The principles and components of environmental education.
6. How to promote and asses environmental education in Afghanistan.
7. How to increase environmental literacy.
8. How to ensure long term effectiveness and sustainability of EE programs.

4. Constraint and challenges

Despite massive attention was paid in the last two years on education by the government, ministry of education and relevant education institutions, UN agencies, NGOs, we had/have large level of weaknesses and constraints as well. These constraints contributed to not achieve all the goals and objectives were designed. These challenges and constraints are outlined as:

- > Lack of environmental education materials.
- > Lack of environmental education guidelines and policies.
- > Lack of environmental education resources for educators.

- > Lack of necessary expertise and skills to support environmental education.
- > Non-Availability of qualified and trained teaching force especially in environmental education was a major problem identified already. These problems become more acute for the availability of teachers in the rural areas.
- > Non-availability of demonstration materials equipments and tools to arouse students' interest and to create an understanding of environment.
- > Financial constraints to implement the designed projects.

5. Recommendations

Keeping in views the importance of environmental education and the role it can play the following recommendations are proposed:

General Recommendations

- > The MoE, together with its advisers, and relevant education departments and other education institutions should develop specific policies and guidelines to govern the environmental education system in Afghanistan at an early stage of its development to allow all actors in the environmental education system to work toward achieving the same goals and objectives.
- > Particular considerations should be paid to improve knowledge and skills that education professionals need in order to effectively teach about environment and support the goals of sustainable development.
- > Environmental education should be a compulsory subject from school to university.
- > Integrate environmental education for sustainable development in other subjects.
- > Provision of audio/video programs.

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