

Report Card : Progress on Compulsory Education Grades 1-9



**Signed by :
The Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium**

**Afghanistan
March 2004**

Report Card: Progress on Compulsory Education (Grades 1-9)

Overall Mark:

$\frac{50}{100}$

Year: March 2004
Country: Afghanistan

Subject:	Remarks:
Enrollment	<i>Excellent progress since 2001. This government has achieved the highest enrollment rates in the history of Afghanistan. The number of girls in schools has increased dramatically in 1st and 2nd grades. Disparities between rural and urban areas need more attention, and more needs to be done to increase girls' enrollment especially in rural areas.</i>
Completion	<i>Drop out rates are high, particularly for girls. More effort is required to keep children in school beyond grade 3. Drop out rates should be monitored and addressed by the government.</i>
Quality	<i>Improvements to the quality of education have not kept pace with improvements in enrollment. Systems for assessing children's learning against nationally agreed standards should be established. Improving teaching methods must be a top priority. Learner-centred and relevant curricula, textbooks, and teaching materials are needed.</i>
Management	<i>Donors should coordinate all expenditure through the Ministry of Education (MoE). The government should make it clear that it recognises non-formal education systems as part of the strategy to achieve education targets. The development of an Education Management Information System (EMIS) is a top priority for effective planning and measurement of progress in education.</i>
Resources	<i>The international community has failed to meet its pledges. Sufficient and long term funding is needed to ensure that Afghanistan meets its education targets.</i>
Signed by...	<i>The Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium</i>

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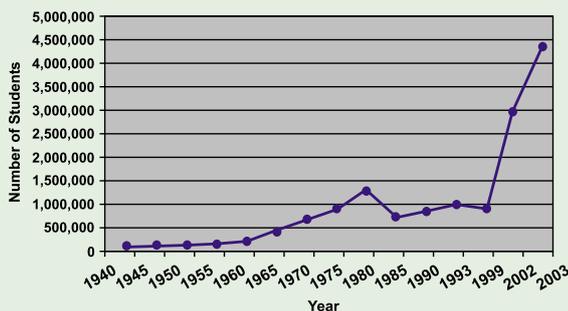
Subject : Enrollment

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The Millennium Development Goals¹ (MDGs see Box 1) set the targets to be achieved in education internationally by 2015. There is much to be proud of in terms of progress towards these MDGs in Afghanistan since 2001. More children are in school than ever before - Afghanistan has seen the highest primary net enrollment rates² in its history with more than 4.3 million children attending primary and secondary school in 2003 (see Figure 1). The right to education is in Afghanistan's new Constitution, which mandates for compulsory education up to grade 9.

Figure 1. The Growth of Student Enrollment (1940-2003)



Source: Securing Afghanistan's Future, TISA, 2004

However, despite these achievements only just over half of all Afghan children age 7-13 attend school. The figures for girls are worse than for boys – only 34% of those enrolled in primary school are girls. The picture is more bleak in Zabul and Badghis provinces where 99 out of 100 girls are not enrolled³.

Where a child lives in Afghanistan has a huge impact on his/her access to education (see Map 1). There is a great divide between urban and rural areas in terms of enrollment figures. Major cities such as Kabul and Herat have seen enrollment rates of 87% and 86% respectively while just a few kilometers outside of these cities less than half of all children get no schooling. As well as an urban-rural divide there

Box 1: Millennium Development Goals (MDG) for Education.

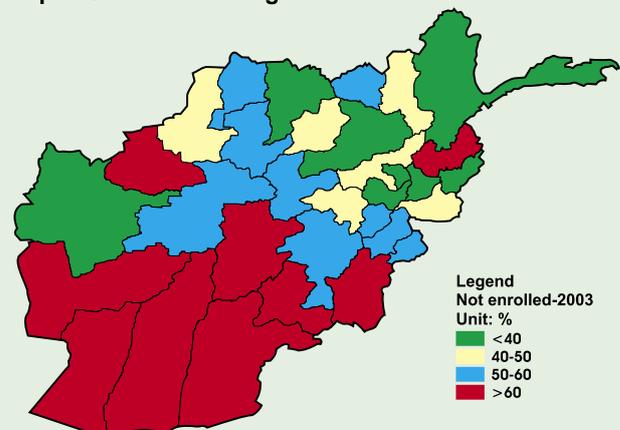
Target 3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015.

is a very significant geographical division between enrollment rates in northern and southern provinces. For example, in Kandahar Province the total net enrollment rate is 38% and in Helmand Province it is 19%⁴. In fact out of the nine provinces with the lowest enrollment rates, seven are southern provinces (see Map 1).

In some districts food incentives have been used to encourage increased enrollment. The World Food Programme's (WFP) Food for Education programme dispersed food supplements to 1.2 million children in 2003⁵. It is not clear for how long this programme will be implemented, what the long-term effects will be on enrollment rates if/when it stops, and if this is an effective investment in education.

Map 1: % of Children Age 7-13 Not Enrolled In School



Source: MICS' Education 2003, UNICEF

¹The MDGs were articulated in a UN General Assembly resolution on September 18, 2000

²The ratio of the number of children who are enrolled in primary school to the total population of children of official school age

³Securing Afghanistan's Future, TISA, 2004

⁴Ibid

⁵2003 Annual Report, WFP

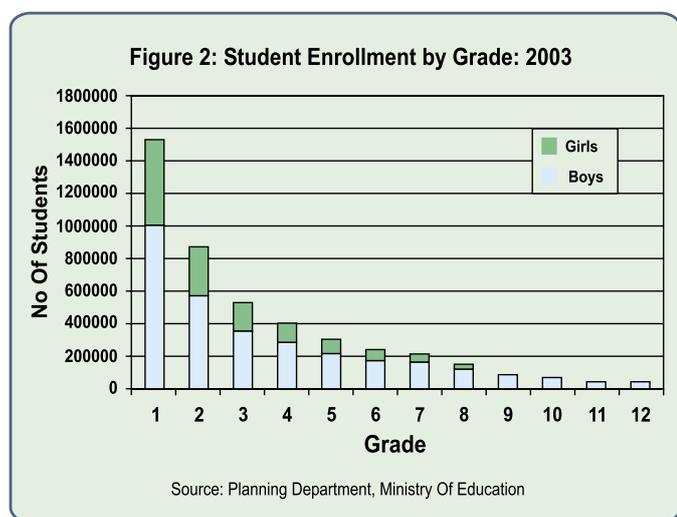
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If children are to have skills that enable them to assume responsible and productive roles in society then they must attend school beyond grades 1 and 2. But in Afghanistan, although enrollment is relatively high for grades 1 and 2, it drops off substantially in the higher grades (see Figure 2).



While the comparatively high enrollment in grades 1 and 2 can probably be attributed to interest in education after the fall of the Taliban, drop-out rates have been high in the past and it is likely that they will continue to be a major issue. There is very limited reliable data available on drop-out rates, but the last available data estimated that 74% of girls and 56% of boys drop out of school by the time they reach grade 5⁶. Based on these figures for every 4 girls in grade 1 today only 1 will remain by grade 5 if the situation does not improve (see Table 1).

Table 1: Estimates Of Drop-out

	Girls	Boys
Grade 1, (actual, 2003)	533,226	877,118
Grade 5, (projected)	138,638	385,931

Source: Planning Department, Ministry Of Education



School in Nimroz

Photo courtesy of Ockenden International

Children do not enroll and/or drop-out of school for a whole range of reasons including: cultural constraints, economic constraints, security, distance to school, poor teaching and inadequate buildings and supplies.

When children's time or labour contributes to the household economy, going to school is an opportunity cost that many families can ill-afford. There are also direct costs associated with school. For poor families extra expenses such as clothes (sometimes uniforms), pencils and notebooks can place a huge burden on an extremely low income. These direct costs increase as a child progresses through school as the need for more books and equipment increases (see Table 2).

Table 2: Estimates of the Cost of Sending a Child to School

	Av Kabul Province (per year)	% of GDP per capita (\$180 per year)
1st grade	350 Afs	4%
5th grade	1000 Afs	12%
6th grade	1150 Afs	13%
9th grade	1,770 Afs	20%

Source: Interviews With Parents In Kabul Province, March 2004

⁶Report of the EC Rapid Reaction Mechanism Assessment Mission, April 2002

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The Constitution has acknowledged that girls' education is a right. Educating girls, as well as contributing to a country's economic and intellectual potential, has also been shown to be a critical factor in human development: "There is an unmistakable correlation between child deaths and the education status of parents especially mothers"⁷.

Factors affecting enrollment and drop-out impact much more on girls than boys, and girls face additional problems as they try to access education (see Box 2).



Boys in school

Photo courtesy of Richard Lord/SC USA

Box 2: Parents voices on girls education

- **Distance** – "I do not want my daughter to travel far from home."
Father, Badghis Province
- **Early marriage** – "In our village it is normal for a girl to be married when she is 11 or 12 years old."
Mother, Badghis Province
- **Money** – "School is expensive. I will send my boys first. When I can afford to send my girls I will."
Father, Kabul City.
- **Lack of female teachers** – "I will not allow my daughter to be taught by a man."
Father, Badghis Province.
- **Segregation** – "Our school is only for boys. There is no time for girls."
Mother, Kabul Province

Views collected from parents in Kabul and Badghis Province

The distance to school has major implications for girls' attendance particularly in rural areas where the population is often sparse and scattered. Schools very close to or within villages with female teachers would have a dramatic positive impact on girls' attendance, particularly in southern provinces.

The MoE should focus initially on building schools that serve both boys and girls. Separate girls schools tend to be under-resourced and in some areas have become the target for attacks. School buildings should be used equitably. This needs to be clear to the local community and a shift system agreed, whereby, for example, boys attend in the morning and girls in the afternoon. Experience shows that unless a community knows that a school building can be used by boys and girls, all too often it becomes just a boys' school.

Box 3: Why Distance Matters.

"The next higher school is at the district center, about 4km away. Our girls will not be allowed to go to a higher school because it is too dangerous for young girls to walk this distance. Our sons will go but our girls will not."

Father in Badghis Province

Box 4: Children's Voices

"I will finish school at 4th grade because my parents told me that then I will be too old to go to school."

Girl, aged 10, in grade 2 in a village in Kabul Province

"I'm the oldest in my family and my father is dead. I do not go to school. I work because I need to support my family."

Boy, aged 10, Kabul City

⁷The Oxfam Education Report, Kevin Watkins, 2000

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The test of the quality of an education system is children's learning and development.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 28 obliges States to 'make primary education compulsory and available free to all'. Afghanistan has made considerable progress on this. However, Article 29 specifies that it should be the kind of education that helps children develop and take up responsibilities within the community. There has been significantly less progress in this area.

Appropriate Curriculum. A quality education requires a relevant and appropriate curriculum, textbooks and teaching materials. These are currently being developed. However, there have been no national consultations involving provincial and district education authorities (let alone parents and children) on the overall direction and relevance of the curriculum framework or the quality of new materials.



Girl at blackboard

Improving Teaching Skills. Quality education also requires teachers who have the right skills to promote learning. With the surge in enrollment rates, and the enrollment of older children who missed out on school under the Taliban, teachers need skills to cope with mixed age classes and large numbers. Children know the qualities of a good teacher (see Box 5). Most teachers in Afghanistan still rely on rote

Box 5: Children's Perceptions On Quality Teaching

Good Teacher



- Is kind
- Teaches children to be polite
- Teaches well
- Does not beat or insult children
- Gives homework and marks it
- Enters class with a smiling face
- Has good manners
- Watches over all children all the time

Bad Teacher



- Beats or insults children
- Does not teach
- Makes children stand on one foot
- Leaves the class
- Enters class angry
- Writes the lesson on the board and leaves the class
- Is late
- Does not give homework

Source: Interview with children in Belcheragh, SC/USA, December 2003

learning and memorization teaching methods. Good progress is being made on delivering in-service training (training for teachers already employed). MoE statistics claim that more than 50,000 primary school teachers (almost half of all teachers) received some kind of training during 2003.

However, institutionalizing new teaching techniques is a long term process that requires more than short workshops. As part of addressing the need for more trained teachers the government proposes to have a functioning teacher college in each province. However, experience has shown that residential teacher training has high attrition rates and is very costly and time-consuming. "Even if teacher training were well resourced it would take a minimum of 20 years to replace existing teachers with newly trained teachers assuming that no teacher left the system"⁸.

Traditional 3-4 year courses at teacher training colleges will not address the shortage of teachers in the short term. A mix of strategies for training is required including school-based, in-service courses,

⁸D. Evans, Director of the Centre for International Education, University of Massachusetts, personal communication

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short, pre-service courses, as well as longer, institution-based courses.

Measuring Learning. Producing trained teachers is important, but the real goal is to increase children's learning. Yet currently there are no nationally agreed levels of achievement against which children's progress can be measured and no obligatory testing of children until grade 9 by which time many have already dropped out. Without nationally agreed standards for children's learning it is difficult to measure how well they are doing in school and whether the system is improving. It also makes the development of teacher training programmes and new textbooks less effective. "Training not tied specifically to outcomes of one kind or another are a luxury under the conditions existing in Afghanistan"⁹.

Recruiting More Teachers. The lack of teachers seems to be at crisis point. Teacher to student ratios are already high in some schools (see Box 6). The MoE has stated that for 2004 an additional 33,000 teachers are required to accommodate an even higher rate of children (5.4 million) enrolling in schools.

Box 6: Voices of Teachers

"I was trained recently to involve the children more in lessons. How can I do this when I have 60 children of different ages in my class?"
Teacher, Badghis Province

"Last year I had around 65 girls in 1st class. It was very difficult for me to ensure that all girls are learning."
Teacher in a village, Kabul Province

For 27 teachers HRRAC interviewed in Badghis and Kabul provinces, the average class size was 54 students.

Table 3: Number of Female Teachers for grades 1-9

	Female Teachers	Total No. of Teachers
Kabul	7,028	8,821
Badakhshan	569	3,315
Zabul	37	860
Khost	9	1,374

Source: Planning Department, Ministry of Education, 2003

To improve the gender balance in enrollment more female teachers must be recruited. For example in Khost Province there are 1,374 teachers for grades 1 to 9. Nine of these are women (see table 3).

The challenge is great. Low salaries and low status make teaching, particularly in rural areas, an unattractive option. Many teachers have second jobs. In 2002 the MoE made a decision to recruit teachers with lower qualifications than were previously required. The MoE might also consider selecting teachers on the basis of competence rather than documented academic qualifications. This is likely to increase the pool of potential recruits to teaching, especially women. The assumption, that longer courses always produce better teachers, and that better qualified recruits always make better teachers needs to be challenged as evidence suggests otherwise¹⁰. Afghanistan can learn from the costly and ineffective training mistakes made in other countries and begin to solve the problems of teacher quality and shortage.

⁹Education for Afghans: A Strategy Paper, 998, UNICEF Afghanistan and Save the Children USA.

¹⁰Baseline Study of Teaching-Learning in SC/US Afghan Refugee Schools of Balochistan, Andrea Rugh and John Gillies, Academy for Educational Development/Save the Children USA, December 2000

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Subject : Management

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At the end of 2001 the education system in Afghanistan had all but collapsed after years of war and neglect. Progress has been made in revitalizing the education system – the basic administrative structure is operating, some data is being collected and teachers are being paid. Curriculum development and teacher training are underway, as is a programme of school construction.

Planning. The government has designated its role in education as a strategic policy maker. This is the most appropriate role at this point in time especially given its weak implementation capacity. The government has produced a comprehensive seven year plan for education (Securing Afghanistan's Future)¹¹. While this plan outlines where the government intends the education system to be in seven years, it does not outline strategies to get there. The government must articulate a clear and feasible plan that shows how it expects to achieve the goals stated in Securing Afghanistan's Future and provide targets to measure progress along the way. This will help convince donors to fund education over the long term.



A mixed class

Coordinating Expenditure. It is not clear exactly how much is being spent on education. Last year many donors funded education programmes outside the National Development Budget (NDB) – committed funds spent outside the NDB were US\$ 49.37mil-

lion for 2003¹². Expenditure reporting to the MoE is weak. This means that there is hardly any correct data available on what has been spent and where and on what in the education sector. Proper reporting of resources within the MoE is necessary to ensure the best use of all resources. NGOs and donors must be proactive in sharing information about funds they receive or commit to education.



Boy at blackboard

Develop Information Systems. Good management and effective resource allocation depends on good information about how well the system is performing. Currently, some information is being collected, but there is very little analysis of it for planning purposes. The development of an Education Management Information System is a top priority. This information must flow back to teachers and administrators in the provinces and districts, to ensure that they too become users of information and not just collectors and senders of information.

Working with Communities. The government also needs to look at how to further promote increased enrollment and completion. None of the teachers or parents HRRAC interviewed for this brief knew that education was compulsory to grade 9. Communities have the capacity to contribute to children's education. This should be capitalized on to promote enrollment and accountability mechanisms within the system.

¹¹Securing Afghanistan's Future, Draft, January 2004

¹²Donor Assistance Database, MoF, 7 Dec 03

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Subject : Resources

Country : Afghanistan
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The government is committed to achieving real gains in education. To meet the targets it has set for itself the government is requesting international donor support of \$2.7 billion over 7 years.

Funding Gap. Previous responses to requests to the international donors have left huge funding gaps. Of \$250 million requested by the government in its National Development Budget in 2003 (NDB) only \$77.47million¹³ (31%) was committed by donors leaving a gap of \$172.53 million. Another \$49.37 million was spent on education outside of the NDB, but this still left a funding gap of \$123.16 million.

Long term Funding. There are no quick fixes for improving the education system. Improvements in quality in particular require a long term plan implemented over many years, often decades, before there is a lasting effect in a system. Yet most current funding is for one to two years. Securing increased and long- term funding commitments are critical for education in Afghanistan.

Inputs vs Quality? The proposed budget for 1383 (2004/2005) emphasizes inputs over quality - 40% of the budget is allocated to school construction and only 6% to teacher training and development (see Figure 3). There is nothing budgeted for support to non-formal education or Early Childhood Development.

After 23 years of war and neglect of the education system there is an important need to construct school buildings in Afghanistan. The budget allocation to school buildings indicates that this is a priority area for the government. The number of schools has increased from 3,800 schools in 2002¹⁴ to 7,134 currently¹⁵. In Badghis Province the Provincial Director for Education reported that the number of school buildings had increased from 72 in 2002 to 178 schools currently.

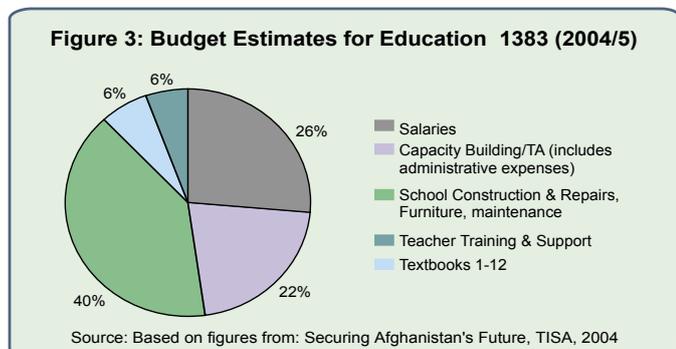


Girls after school

Photo courtesy of Richard Lord/SC USA

There is a standard government design for a concrete primary school with 8-10 classrooms that is built at a cost of \$100,000 per school. These schools are often intended to serve a number of villages. In a resource-poor context the question needs to be asked whether this is the most appropriate use of resources. In rural areas where populations are small and scattered and when distance to school matters particularly for girls, more appropriate models for reaching children must be developed. This includes ensuring that the recognition of non-formal education is effectively communicated and that certificates from non-formal schools are widely accepted.

Buildings require teachers, students, furniture, stationary and textbooks to turn them into schools. A standard design built regardless of the capacity to support the school can result in situations such as one village in Badghis Province in which there were 220 students in a 10 classroom school, but there are only 3 male teachers.



¹³Securing Afghanistan's Future, TISA, 2004

¹⁴Report of the EC Rapid Reaction Mechanism Assessment Mission, April 2002

¹⁵Planning Department, Ministry of Education, 2003

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Recommendations :

Country : Afghanistan

Areas for Improvement	Who's Responsible
1. Allocate 5-7% of GDP to education.	Government
2. Provide long term funding to develop the education system, coordinated through the MoE, and ensure adequate funding for improvements in quality through the development of teacher-training, curriculum and materials.	Government and International Assistance Community
3. Focus resources on enrolling and retaining girls in school. These resources must address the barriers to girls' access to education including lack of female teachers, distances to school and the need for older girls to be educated separately from boys.	Government and International Assistance Community
4. Develop nationally agreed standards for learning at each grade, beginning with primary grades.	Government
5. Prioritise those geographical areas that lag behind in enrollment rates with extra resources and efforts to motivate the community to enroll its children in school.	Government and International Assistance Community
6. Ensure that an Education Management Information System is functioning and informs planning.	Government
7. Involve communities in education to promote increased enrollment and completion and make the system accountable to parents and students.	Government and Communities

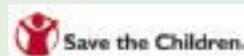
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The Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium is a group of international and national organizations working in the fields of humanitarian relief, reconstruction, human and women's rights, peace promotion, research and advocacy. It was established in early 2003 to engage in proactive research and advocacy on human rights issues over a sustained period.

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