

## Expanding Access to Quality Education

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**CHALLENGE**

Thirty years of conflict and political unrest destroyed the Afghan education system. In 2001, after the fall of the Taliban, net enrollment was estimated at 43 percent for boys and a dismal 3 percent for girls. The situation for females was especially dire: they had been forbidden to attend school or teach during Taliban rule. Moreover, there were only about 21,000 (largely under-educated) teachers for a school-age population estimated at more than 5 million—or about 240 students for every marginally trained teacher. In 2001, the international community responded, with IDA financing multiple initiatives. However, great risks have emerged because of the deteriorating security situation, particularly in the south. As a result, many schools have closed again, reversing nascent gains.

**APPROACH**

Recognizing that education would play a vital role in the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan, IDA launched since 2001 a series of education programs aimed at providing access and quality education to Afghan students at all levels. To accommodate Afghanistan's fragile and fluid situation, these IDA education programs had broad objectives underpinned by principles of participation, coordination among donors and with government agencies, and a focus on females. Specifically, these programs aimed to reconstruct the education sector, by:

- Increasing access to education opportunities in the formal and non-formal systems for under-served groups, especially women and girls;
- Supporting the development of a policy framework and the reform of education management at all levels, in partnership with civil society, NGOs, and the private sector;
- Improving quality of education by training current teachers, developing quality curriculum and textbooks, and encouraging communities to supervise quality education for their children; and
- Introducing modern information technologies for communications in the ministries, including establishing distance-learning facilities for building the capacity of civil servants.

**RESULTS**

Since 2001, the projects have brought new life to general, technical, and vocational education, and particularly benefited girls. Enrollment in grades 1-12 increased from 3.9 million in 2004 to 6.2 million in 2008. Girls' enrollment skyrocketed from 839,000 to more than 2.2 million, and boys' from 2.6 million to 3.9 million—the highest enrollment in the history of Afghanistan.

### Highlights:

- **Community participation expanded.** 5,796 School Management Committees were established, which contributed up to 20 percent in-kind or cash towards school infrastructure and quality of education.

- **Teachers trained in large numbers.** 32,467 teachers took a comprehensive training module. National and international NGOs have been contracted by the Ministry to train the remaining teachers in Afghanistan (there are about 160,000 teachers total).

- **Tertiary enrollment increased.** Block grants to all 18 public tertiary-level institutions helped reopen after years of conflict. Tertiary enrollment increased from 23,000 in 2002 to almost 40,000 in 2005, including 8,000 females. Female enrollment amounted to 8,000 or 22 percent of this total, after a five-year ban on girls' education. Tertiary faculty increased by 25 percent to 1,978.

- **New schools built.** 58 schools (mainly for girls) were rehabilitated or constructed in under-served areas.

- **Technical and vocational training established.** The project launched the Afghanistan Skills Development Program to promote standard technical and vocational education by establishing a National Qualification Framework. Under the related National Institute of Management and Administration in Kabul there are currently 2,700 enrolled.

- **Innovations in delivery piloted.** The project contracted out to NGOs to deliver education services and empower the community in five provinces.

- **Government reform advanced.** The five-year National Education Strategic Plan was developed which highlights eight national priority programs. Government is now encouraging decentralized school management through provinces, districts, and communities, and

- **First-ever IT capacity built.** The first Education Management Information System was developed to help the Ministry in policy, monitoring, and evaluation.

## IDA CONTRIBUTION

IDA was at the forefront of post-conflict financing in Afghanistan, helping coordinate donors and fast-track support for new programs in a vulnerable state, having financed \$140 million in five complimentary education programs since 2001.

The first three projects were relatively small, entirely financed by IDA, and served as pilots: Emergency Education Rehabilitation and Development (2002-2006, US\$15 million), Education Quality Improvement Program (2004-2009, US\$35 million), and Strengthening Higher Education Program (2005-2010, US\$40 million). IDA contributed US\$30 million to the Second Education Quality Improvement Program (2008-2012), which has a total project cost of \$186.7 million. To the Afghanistan Skills Development Project (2008-2013), IDA contributed US\$20 million of the total project cost of US\$36 million.

## PARTNERS

The Second Education Quality Improvement Program benefited from the partnership of the United States Agency for International Development (US\$22 million) and the Afghanistan Reconstruction Fund (US\$134.7 million). Partners for the Afghanistan Skills Development Project include USAID (US\$6 million), Norway (US\$6 million), and the Afghanistan Government itself.

## NEXT STEPS

The ongoing follow-up project, the Second Education Quality Improvement Program, covers the entire education sector from primary to tertiary. Its aim is to scale up methods that were tested during the Emergency Education project. Moreover, the mechanism of giving grants to communities has been scaled up to all 34 provinces of Afghanistan. A remaining challenge is to continue to involve community elders to open more previously closed schools in the south, and engage communities to protect the students, teachers, and schools.

## LEARN MORE

Emergency Education Rehabilitation and Development (2002-2006, US\$15 million)

[Project documents](#)

Education Quality Improvement Program (2004-2009, US\$35 million)

[Project documents](#)

Strengthening Higher Education Program (2005-2010, US\$40 million)

[Project documents](#)

Second Education Quality Improvement Program (2008-2012)

[Project documents](#)

Afghanistan Skills Development Project (2008-2013)

[Project documents](#)