

## Policy Brief January 2018

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This Brief is based on data collected as part of Afghanistan Rights Monitor (ARM) and Citizens and State Engagement for Transparency and Accountability in the Health and Education Sector (CS). For more information, please refer to the website of the National Advocacy Committee: [www.nac-pp.net](http://www.nac-pp.net)

## Public Education in Afghanistan: Addressing Quality

Despite significant improvements over in terms of access over the past 17 years, the low and uneven quality of education remains a major concern in Afghanistan. Overcrowded classes, make-shift facilities instead of permanent structures, long distances from home to school, and unavailability of basic teaching material such as books continue to undermine education service delivery, particularly in more remote areas.

Availability, access, and use of education as a fundamental right enshrined in Afghanistan's Constitution varies significantly across the country. Strategic Objective 2 of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2017-2021 focuses on "increasing equitable and inclusive access to relevant, safe, and quality learning opportunities for children, youth, and adults in Afghanistan, especially women and girls."

UNICEF criteria for access to quality education include the following:

- Learners are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn.
- Learners are supported in learning by their families and communities.
- Environments are healthy, safe, protective and gender sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities.
- Education material is available, and content reflected in the curricula and materials contribute to the acquisition

of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life.

- Teacher are skilled, use child-centered teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and conduct skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities.

In Afghanistan, each of these areas is affected by challenges that require urgent attention to ensure male and female students have access to adequate and quality education throughout the territory. Some key challenges include:

- **Widespread poverty forces many of the poorest families into withdrawing their children from school** as a means to economize by eliminating the costs of schooling. Girls are often adversely affected, with boys privileged when a choice has to be made between children within a household.
- **Most schools lack access to clean drinking water and balanced food rations.** Canteens are rare, and where they exist, the quality of food is often very low. Many parents can further not afford to provide their children with money to purchase food on or nearby school premises.
- **Conservative values restrict women and girls' mobility and girls' access to education** after puberty. This is further aggravated by the lack of skilled female education staff, particularly at the district level, family concerns concerning the security of

girls on the way to school, and lack of incentives for girls' education.

could incite parents to send both male and female children to school.

- **Basic facilities for public education are lacking, and infrastructures are inadequate.** Libraries and laboratories are rare, including in provincial centers. Most classes are overcrowded. In the districts, many students continue to study under tents or in the open. Basic facilities including proper toilets, clean water, chairs, desks and sport grounds are often lacking or in a derelict state and affect learning conditions for students.
- In provinces of high return, **displacements and the inflow of the internally displaced persons and returnees from neighboring countries** have added additional pressures on the already under-resourced and over-stretched school system.
- **Insufficient, untimely and inadequate provision of teaching material**, including text books, boards and basic teaching utensils.
- **A general lack of skilled professional teachers**, particularly female. At the district level, poor working conditions and limited incentives further dissuade professionals from practicing in remote areas.
- **Inadequate recruitment processes** account for the appointment of unskilled personnel, particularly at the primary level. Corruption and nepotism adversely affect the quality of education provided because of unjustified appointments.
- **Insufficient and inadequate monitoring of performance** in the education sector.
- **Conduct an assessment of existing infrastructure** and develop a plan for the renovation, and where needed, construction of education infrastructure.
- **Develop and implement specific emergency provisions to address the needs of returnees and displaced.**
- **Conduct an assessment of existing teaching material**, including quality and availability, and develop mechanisms to ensure schools are furnished and material is provided.
- **Develop a clear policy for transparent recruitment of personnel.**
- **Consider increasing budgets for the recruitment of female staff**, including incentives/ compensations for appointments in remote and insecure districts, or provisions for being accompanied by a *mahram*.
- **Build the capacity of provincial staff and provide incentives to retain professional personnel**, including adequate remuneration for public service employees. Teachers and municipal personnel are particularly poorly paid, with no recourse to generate additional income from their profession as is the case with many medical staff such as doctors, nurses, and midwives. Currently, public sector employees take on second and third jobs to make ends meet or work with the private sector. Adequate remuneration is also likely to reduce petty corruption in the public sector.
- **Include budget provisions for regular training of staff**, including specialized and refreshment trainings.

#### Recommendations

- **Consider providing incentives to increase students' attendance in school.** This may include the provision of free meals for students, which
- **Develop clear monitoring mechanisms**, and consider involving civil society and communities in M&E.