



The World Bank in South Asia

Afghanistan Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Note Series, No. 1
TOWARD GREATER GENDER EQUITY IN EDUCATION



Afghan girls in the classroom (Source: Education Quality Improvement Project, Ministry of Education, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan)

Building Human Capital in Afghanistan

The Afghanistan Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Note Series disseminates the findings of sector work in progress and best practices to staff of the Government of Afghanistan (GoA), its implementing partners and agencies, and other practitioners, all of whom are responsible for developing and implementing government programs. The objective of this particular Note is to influence policy and program design in order to increase girls' educational attainments, especially in higher secondary schools in rural areas, where female access to education is most limited. The lack of access to education for girls and women in Afghanistan is the result of a number of barriers, outlined below. In discussing these barriers, the Implementation Note will present a range of recommendations that can be used to improve education outcomes for girls and women.

Background

More than 30 years of war have devastated Afghanistan's education system, although recent years have seen significant progress in making education more accessible to all school-aged children. The current education sector faces a number of challenges, however, that keep the country among the world's lowest ranked in terms of educational attainment at every level – primary, secondary, and tertiary. Although Ministry of Education (MoE) statistics show a tremendous increase in girls' enrollments since 2001, gender disparities still remain an issue in education. MoE's School Survey for Afghan year 1386 (2007) shows that overall the student population is approximately two-thirds male, with the exception of Community Based Education (CBE) schools, which are supported by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (MoE 2007) (*Box 1*). In 2007, a total of 3,667,862 male students (64.62 percent) and 2,008,089 female students (35.38 percent) were registered in general education. This 2:1 male-female ratio persists across the general education and teacher train-



Box 1: Community Based Education (CBE)

CBE schools were developed during the 1990s, when the public school system had collapsed and home-based education was the only option for girls' schooling under the Taliban. Organized by NGOs, CBE schools are run by communities at the primary level, and girls comprise a higher proportion of the students. Because there are more government schools for boys than for girls in rural areas, the CBE schools are usually created for girls. Although policy requires NGOs to establish CBE schools at least three kilometers away from government schools, many NGOs use the fact that there are no girls' schools as a rationale for setting up CBE classes for girls right next to government schools for boys (Source???)

ing programs (MoE 2007). The gap is even greater at the tertiary level: in 2008/9, there were 43,553 male students (82 percent) and 9,802 female students (18 percent) enrolled in the country's 23 higher education institutions (MoHE 2005). There is considerable variation across regions in girls' enrollments at all levels (Table 1): the South, Southeast, and East zones have the lowest

percentages of female students, while the Central, West, North, and Northeast zones have relatively higher percentages of female students.¹

Poverty, limited access to education, and lack of employable skills are all high risk factors for girls, increasing vulnerability to early marriage and other forms of exploitation. High-quality basic education better equips girls with the knowledge and skills necessary to adopt healthy lifestyles, protect themselves from illness, and take an active role in social, economic, and political decision making as they transition to adolescence and adulthood.

Table 1: Number and Percent of Female and Male Students by Zone and Education Category in All Ministry of Education Schools (2007)

Education zones ¹	General education (grades 1–12)			Islamic education (grades 1–14)			Teacher Education (grades 10–14)			Higher education (up to BA)		
	F	M	%F	F	M	%F	F	M	%F	F	M	%F
Central	508,417	898,239	36.1	2,817	24,353	10.4	2,280	3,085	42.5	5435	19992	21.4
Southeast	151,054	432,766	25.9	1,015	8,360	10.8	88	1,152	7.1	166	2176	7.1
South	44,555	295,715	13.1	243	2,071	10.5	126	186	40.4	1348	3974	25.3
West	352,735	538,960	39.6	6	2,079	0.3	269	667	28.7	1723	3562	32.6
North	332,243	527,933	38.6	318	8,308	3.7	943	1,043	47.5	676	7966	7.8
Northeast	380,440	558,568	40.5	1,145	14,370	7.4	1,124	1,907	37.1	376	4374	7.9
East	238,645	415,681	36.5	1,372	19,802	6.5	65	1,116	5.5	78	1509	4.9
National	2,008,089	3,667,862	35.4	6,916	79,343	8.0	4,895	9,156	34.8	9802	43553	18.4

Source: Ministry of Education 2007; Ministry of Higher Education 2009. Key: F = female, M = male.

In its establishment of a School Management *Shura* (SMS), or Council, for every school, the Education Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP) of the Ministry of Education aims not only to increase the quality of education, but also to change community attitudes toward girls' education so that support for girls' schooling becomes the norm rather than the exception. When communities are involved in school management, communities themselves become mobilized behind the issue of improved education and demand greater attention and allocation of resources to their children's needs (World Bank 2007). MoE's Teacher Education Department (TED) already has established 47 satellite Teacher Training Centers (TTCs) in districts to provide in-service teacher training to women teachers that is close to their homes or villages.² At the tertiary level, the Strengthening Higher Education Program (SHEP) of the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) aims to progressively restore basic operational performance at a group of core universities in Afghanistan by forging partnerships with world-class universities and giving block grants to universities to support the installation of basic administrative systems and procedures and to improve academic programs (MoHE 2009).

Improving Afghanistan's education system is essential to national development. A pool of well-informed,

1. **Central:** (Bamiyan, Parwan, Panjsher, Kabul, Kapisa, Logar, Wardak); **Southeast:** (Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Ghazni); **South:** (Uruzgan, Zabul, Kandahar, Helmand); **West:** (Badghis, Daykundi, Ghor, Farah, Nimroz, Herat); **North:** (Balkh, Jawzjan, Sar-e-Pul, Samangan, Faryab); **Northeast:** (Badakhshan, Baghlan, Takhar, Kunduz); **East:** (Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, Nurstan).
 2. NGOs assist TED in implementing district teacher training teams, which focus on pedagogy and basic knowledge training (INSET-I), content knowledge training (INSET-II), training for underqualified female teachers (Accelerated Learning-AL) and other credentialing activities.

skilled workers is needed to assure economic progress. In addition, education plays an important role for long-term and sustainable social change, including gender equity.

Barriers to Education for Women

As in any conflict-affected country, both men and women in Afghanistan face great obstacles to education. Historically, Afghan culture has undervalued girls' education, and girls were forbidden from education altogether during Taliban rule. Since 2002, more females have enrolled in schools than ever before. Significant barriers remain, however, resulting in lower enrollments for girls, especially in MoE schools, as discussed below.

Shortage of Female Teachers

The dramatic difference between boys' and girls' enrollment rates reflects the low number of female teachers at all levels of education. Research indicates that the presence of female teachers positively affects enrollment and retention in girls' schools (given variation from one socioeconomic and cultural context to another), though other factors such as distance to school, relevance of curriculum, availability of learning material, and opportunity cost also affect girls' school attendance (UNESCO 2006). Of the 109,355 teachers in the MoE system in 2007/8, only 26.81 percent were women. Similarly, women made up only 15 percent of faculty at the tertiary level in 2008. In many rural areas, the lack of female teachers is a barrier to girls' enrollment and retention at the primary and secondary levels. Low enrollments of women in higher education is a legacy of long-term social and political exclusion of women. Gender inequalities at the tertiary level are evident in that only two percent of faculty with doctorates and 12 percent with master's degrees are women. Although education programs emphasize increasing numbers of female teachers, in many parts of the country it is extremely difficult to recruit them.

The shortage of qualified women candidates in both urban and rural areas and female teachers' lack of motivation to work in rural or remote areas are major constraints on girls' educational attainments.³ Although MoE has introduced regional incentives for teachers in provinces with teacher shortages, it is still difficult to recruit female teachers, primarily due to the deteriorating security situation in rural areas. In addition, lack of dormitories for female students at Teacher Training Centers (TTCs) is an obstacle to attracting more female students to the teaching profession. Currently, of the 37 existing TTCs, 20 lack dormitories for women.⁴

Poor Physical Infrastructure

Inadequacy of facilities also interferes with girls' access to education at all levels. There are four key issues regarding physical infrastructure, as outlined in the following subsections.

Distance to school. Primary schools are built in localities. While their proximity ensures physical access for girls, it does not imply that there is adequate provision of primary education in rural areas, as the number of operable primary schools still is not adequate to accommodate all primary school-aged girls. Secondary schools are located in district centers, often requiring girls over age 11 to travel long distances for secondary schooling. Hence, girls drop out of high school for security, transport, and cultural reasons. These factors are aggravated in higher education, when girls must leave their hometowns and reside in dormitories. Educational



Source: Ministry of Education, EQUIP.

3. Qarizada, Shafiq. Personal interview. 15 August 2008. The World Bank supervision mission for EQUIP, conducted in August 2008, interviewed EQUIP Coordinator Shafiq Qarizada and other EQUIP staff in the Ministry of Education.
4. Wardak, Susan. Email interview. 3 April 2009. Statistics were provided by Teachers Education Department Director Susan Wardak.
5. "Refugee school" is a term used by the Ministry of Education.



buildings are also grossly inadequate for the number of students ready to enter university. With the exception of Kabul University, women’s dormitories at institutions of higher education are not sufficiently rehabilitated and functional (with regard to security, provision of bathrooms for women, and adequate water and sanitation) to accommodate female students.

Lack of school buildings. During previous conflicts, many MoE school buildings were burnt in fires or captured by warlords, leaving schools without buildings. Currently, there are many instances where a school must operate in another school’s building as a “refugee school,” whereby two full-time schools – one for boys, one for girls – occupy one building simultaneously.⁵ (Each school has two or more shifts and more than 4,000 students). In many cases these are higher secondary schools, where both boys and girls have reached puberty, and thus it is not culturally acceptable for them to attend school together. In such circumstances, girls drop out of school because their parents do not allow them to attend the same school as boys. According to interviews conducted by an EQUIP supervision mission (August 2008), out of 4,000 female students in one such school in Mazar-e-Sharif, 316 girls left school because of this problem in 2008.⁶ This was also the case for 100 girls in Kabul, all at the high school level. At present, only 14.75 percent of MoE’s general education schools are female-only schools. MoE has advised schools without buildings to rent facilities until new school buildings are constructed. This is not an effective solution, however, as many schools cannot find large enough buildings to accommodate more than 1,000 students. Schools’ limited personnel, moreover, are not able to manage when more than one building for a school is rented.

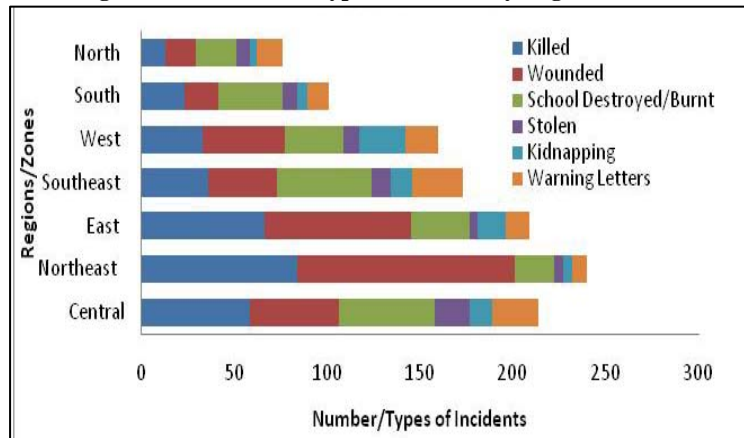
Boundary walls. Many girls’ schools in Afghanistan do not have boundary walls, which also has a negative effect on girls’ enrollment, attendance and completion of schooling. Having boundary walls for girls’ schools not only adheres to cultural norms, but also protects girls from outside harassment. Out of 1,337 girls’ schools nationwide, 935 have no boundary wall (MoE 2007). Boundary walls are absolutely necessary, and the lack of walls has become a serious issue in female education. Yet, MoE must continually try to convince donors to cover the costs of boundary walls for girls’ schools, often to no effect, so that the costs are left to local communities. In a few cases, SMSs have mobilized local resources and built boundary walls for girls’ high schools.

Toilet facilities. In addition to boundary walls, female toilet facilities and a reliable water supply are necessary for keeping girls in higher secondary schools. It is socially unacceptable for girls to attend a school without toilets for females only, especially after girls reach puberty, yet many girls’ schools still lack them.

Culture and Gender Discrimination

Dropout rates for girls at the high school level are higher than at primary and lower secondary levels, while high school attendance rates are below those at lower levels. Studies of households in Afghanistan find the lack of a girls’ school in the community, distance to school, male teachers, household responsibilities, and cultural barriers to be the primary reasons for girls dropping out of or not enrolling at school. Early marriage of girls in their teens and departure from the household also are determinants of girls’ lower completion rates nationwide (Hunte 2005). Low income is another barrier to girls’ education in both urban and rural ar-

Figure 1: Number and Types of Attacks by Region (2007/8)



Source: Ministry of Education: Attacks on MoE institutions. December 2008.

6. Qarizada, Shafiq. Personal interview. 15 August 2008. The EQUIP Coordinator provided all information on infrastructure issues in girls’ schools.
 7. Qarizada, Shafiq. Email interview. 5 January 2009. MoE’s Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator, Farrahnaz Farah, and Hamayoon Majidi, The Education Management Information System (EMIS) documents statistics related to attacks on or around schools through December 2008 in hard copy only.



eas. Poorer families are more willing to spend on boys than on girls for books, uniforms, and stationery, given that boys are held responsible for supporting their families in the future. Even in the capital city of Kabul, families are hesitant to pay tuition for daughters to attend private universities, while they would go as far as to borrow money for sons' education for the reasons mentioned above. Although great progress has been made, a strong preference for boys' education remains, given the sense that girls' future roles will be in the private sphere as wives and mothers, and thus they do not require education. There is greater willingness to send girls to primary school; however, as they reach puberty, gender norms about women's roles in the private sphere prevail, undermining girls' attendance at secondary school.

Attacks on and around Schools

Incidents such as burning of tents and buildings used as schools, explosions near schools, killing, kidnapping, and threats to teachers — especially female teachers — still occur all over Afghanistan. In addition, schools receive warning letters to close down, and MoE personnel face various types of security constraints in rural areas. MoE reports a total of 670 attacks on educational institutions in 2008, including burning school and killing teachers and students.⁷ Between January 2006 and April 2008, 103 teachers, principals, and MoE district staff and 110 students (on their way home) were killed. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), burning school buildings and tents is the most frequent type of attack; throwing rockets and grenades into school buildings is also common (CARE 2009).

Of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, 12 have had to close down schools due to insecurity and incidents around them. Figure 1 displays the type and number of attacks on or around schools in 2007/8. The type of attack varies from region to region, with the Northeast and East experiencing the highest number of incidents during this period. In 2008, 651 schools were closed down, with Helmand (195 schools), Kandahar (161 schools), and Zabul (148) having the highest number closed. Such incidents have prevented 234,272 students in 2007 and 173,443 students in 2008 from attending school. Girls' schools are attacked more often than boys' schools because anti-government forces are opposed to girls' education to the extent that they even threaten NGOs that support girls' education (CARE 2009).

All of the above factors significantly undermine communities' confidence in sending girls to school. At the tertiary level, inadequate security negatively influences girls' attendance more than the lack of female teachers. Insecurity affects girls' attendance more than boys' attendance. The threat of attacks makes families even more worried about sending daughters to school, when families already are more prone to keeping girls than boys home from school. So far, no province has been able to prevent attacks (CARE 2009).

Box 2: PROMOTE IN BANGLADESH

The Program to Motivate, Train and Employ Female Teachers in Rural Secondary Schools (PROMOTE) in Bangladesh (1995–2005) attracted female teachers to rural areas by providing hostel accommodation, expanded training facilities, and an incentive package (which included provision of safe housing for female teachers in rural areas and helping women find jobs in rural areas) to enhance the appeal of the profession to women in rural Bangladesh. Training local women in Bangladesh is perhaps one of the best-known programs of women teacher recruitment, training, and support, and has significantly increased enrollment of girls in rural areas. Through PROMOTE, female students are encouraged to study for their Bachelor of Education, specializing in mathematics, science and English, with positive results. (Grontmij-Carlbro 2005).

Box 3: FHP IN NEPAL

Nepal's Feeder Hostel Program (FHP) (1975–2006) effectively promoted girls' education by providing meals and residential facilities to girls, who then attended local secondary schools to upgrade their academic qualifications (Bista 2006). FHP's key principle was to provide secondary education and 10-month-long teacher training to girls who were expected to return to their villages to serve as teachers upon completing their education and training.



Recommendations: Toward Gender-Sensitive Interventions in Education

Increasing Numbers of Female Teachers

Attract female teachers by promoting the teaching profession. The teaching profession does not appeal to talented young people because of its low pay, lack of promotion opportunities, poor working conditions, and the decreasing social status of the profession. MoE and its donors should encourage prospective teachers to pursue the profession by (a) providing scholarship schemes and other incentive packages, and (b) building women's dormitories and housing for female teachers (*Box 2*). The Teacher Education Department of MoE

already offers US\$60 per month to female students in teacher training centers in 25 provinces, but it is still unclear as to whether this has attracted more students to the teaching profession. If successful, this approach should be replicated in the remaining provinces. Although MoE has taken measures to increase sheer numbers of female teachers – and aims to focus later on the quality of teachers – it may be more effective to attend to quantity and quality of female teachers simultaneously.

While the ultimate goal is to enhance the quality of female teachers as well as increase their numbers, interim solutions must ensure that children at present do not lack opportunities for education. As a short-term measure, MoE should replicate the PROMOTE model of teacher training, where locally recruited teachers undergo rigorous training throughout the year and are provided with classroom-based support (*Box 3*). In order to address teacher shortages in rural areas, MoE and its partners also should put CBE-trained teachers

on the MoE payroll and focus on upgrading these teachers' qualifications through accelerated learning programs and opportunities to obtain grade 12 certification. MoE needs to improve incentives to pursue the teaching profession and attract more female students to teaching jobs. Culturally speaking, the teaching pro-

Box 4: Balochistan Primary Education Program, Pakistan

The Balochistan Primary Education Program of the World Bank has increased the supply of female teachers and raised girls' enrollment rates by 80–100 percent in villages with new schools. Under this program, potential teachers are recruited from *within* the village by parents on the newly formed village education committees. The program also provides mobile teacher training *in* the girl's village. After graduating, the teacher becomes a government employee, assigned to teach in the school established by her sponsoring village education committee (World Bank Institute 1996).

Box 5: Classroom Assistants in Sierra Leone and Guinea

In Sierra Leone and Guinea, women with lower qualifications than those required for teachers are recruited as classroom assistants. While working in the classroom with a teacher, they have the option of completing their own schooling and taking the necessary training courses to become teachers. In addition to the teacher training option, classroom assistants can also be assigned to each class in grades 4 through 12 as protection agents for girls, working with families to advocate the importance of keeping girls in school. If a girl misses several classes in a row, the classroom assistant is responsible for paying a visit to her home to encourage the student's parents or foster-parents to allow her to return to class. In Sierra Leone and Guinea, classroom assistants have also been effective in encouraging families to delay early marriages (Jones 2006).

profession is an acceptable occupation for women all over Afghanistan. Given appropriate policy and strategies, the government can enhance the profession's appeal in rural areas as well. To ensure retention and continuity of teachers, efforts should be made to recruit female teachers from their places of residence. In the process of recruitment, deployment, and transfer, both husband and wife could be stationed in the same location, or male teachers' wives could be trained as teaching assistants.

Given Afghanistan's dependence on foreign aid and the complexity of MoE's ordinary and development budget, these recommendations may seem financially unsustainable; however, with support from its donor partners, GoA will sooner or later have to increase the percentage share of national budget devoted to MoE and MoHE in order to achieve its goal of improved education outcomes. Without long-term investment, the general and

8. Qarizada, Shafiq. Personal interview. 15 August 2008.



higher education systems cannot meet the human capital requirements of a rapidly growing economy.

Develop creative community-level recruitment campaigns. Such campaigns would specifically target women and promote the active role that they can play in education. The campaigns should target secondary school leavers as well as older women in the community, and, where needed, ethnic minorities using local languages. Community-level recruitment can best be led by Community Development Councils (CDCs) and SMSs, who have a better knowledge of the community and know which local individuals could be influential in recruiting female teachers. Thus far, SMSs in a majority of schools have been very effective in mobilizing resources and promoting girls' education at the local level. The broader outreach of CDCs to rural communities would help schools reach communities at large. Communities should be required to identify one female teacher for each male teacher identified locally, as centralized recruitment creates an imbalanced distribution of teachers and leaves rural areas with a shortage of female teachers (*Box 4*).

In identifying local teachers, MoE should also utilize older women in communities, as sociocultural norms allow these women greater physical mobility (*Box 5*). Older women—female CDC members or female SMS members, for example—could be encouraged to serve as advocates of girls' education because they have the mobility required for such advocacy, while younger women with more restricted mobility could be trained as teachers. While financing the participation of older women as classroom assistants may still be an issue, MoE's social mobilizers could work with communities to hire these older women as volunteers until their capacity is enhanced and they are able to join the government payroll.

Box 6: Cambodia Scholarship Program

In Cambodia, the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction Scholarship Program has had a significant positive effect on girls' enrollment and attendance at secondary school. Families receive cash transfers provided their daughters are enrolled in school, maintain passing grades, and are absent without "good reason" fewer than 10 days in a year (Filmer and Schady 2006).

Improving Physical Infrastructure

Give priority to appropriate construction of girls' school buildings. Of particular importance is the inclusion of boundary walls and toilet facilities because of their positive effect on girls' attendance and retention. MoE's current approach to physical infrastructure emphasizes community participation and decision making in construction of schools. This focuses attention on the construction of rural schools (where infrastructure is most lacking), using cost-effective standard designs and local materials. MoE's guidelines on cost-effective design also require boundary wall construction, particularly for girls' schools, to ensure privacy and security; latrines, based on the number of classrooms; and hand pumps for safe drinking water. These guidelines help ensure sustainability and community ownership in general, but they are not specific measures to make schools more gender sensitive. Donors need to recognize the importance of boundary walls for girls' schools and cover the costs of boundary walls as part of donor-funded school construction.

MoE could also promote the construction of boundary walls, toilet facilities, and water supply systems by communities, where possible. This is already a prevailing practice in some schools, where communities have taken responsibility for not only constructing boundary walls but also building guardrooms and providing guards for schools' protection (primarily girls' schools).⁸ Some SMSs have encouraged local businesspersons to construct school buildings or water and sanitation facilities for schools. Although MoE's current provisions take into account the distance of schools from communities, providing transportation to female students might be a reasonable measure to facilitate girls' attendance at schools outside their communities. This may not be a realistically practical solution, however, as girls' school buses could easily be targeted by attackers in the current security situation. MoE and its implementing partners therefore should build girls' schools in locations as close to their communities as possible to ensure girls' attendance. There still are more boys' schools in Afghanistan than girls' schools, and MoE should rectify the imbalance between the two.

9. CARE offers one example of such arrangements, where the Chief Executive Officer of CARE met with some members of the Taliban and reached an agreement with them on establishing community-organized primary schools.



Box 7: PROGRESA in Mexico

Since 1998, Mexico's PROGRESA program has provided cash grants to families conditional upon sending their children to school, resulting in a 14.8 percent increase in girls' secondary school enrollments. Due to its success, the Mexican government has decided to preserve and expand the program, and similar programs are being introduced elsewhere in Latin America. Stipend programs also have increased retention of girls in secondary schools in Bangladesh (Population Council 2005; Tietjen 2003).

Share best practices. Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) and District Education Departments (DEDs) should share best practices in community initiatives regarding construction of boundary walls and water and sanitation facilities with other schools or SMSs, who could then replicate the

practice in other areas. Schools could share best practices through bimonthly meetings at PED or DED offices.

Decreasing and Eliminating Gender Discrimination

Increase numbers of qualified female students. Provisions such as scholarships, uniforms, stationery, and lunches should be made to encourage girls to attend school and continue schooling (*Box 6*). It is important to ensure, however, that girls do not attend school only to receive the incentive; their attendance and completion should be linked to the incentives provided with meaningful measures to encourage the value and reward of education. In particular, tutoring facilities should be extended to female students in remote areas to encourage their continuance of education and to improve their learning achievements. At the tertiary level, providing group scholarships would encourage families to let their daughters continue education beyond high school and reside in dormitories. The advantage of group scholarships is that families will not fear local gossip about sending their daughters to dormitories in big cities and even abroad for higher education (*Box 7*).

Cash transfers to families are germane to the case of Afghanistan, as families' inability to pay for daughters' school expenses and uniforms has been identified as an obstacle to girls' education (Hunte 2005). Such schemes can also encourage girls' completion of schooling. One potential problem with conditional transfers, however, is that people administering the program may not enforce the conditionality in practice. The schemes also may become too expensive for MoE, given the sector's dependence on foreign aid. Cash transfers are short-term measures. They should be coupled with effective medium- to long-term measures, such as raising awareness among communities about the importance of girls' education and identifying families who allow their daughters to attend schools as role models for other families. On an academic level, a rigorous study and analysis of social and behavioral change at the community level is required to first provide insight into the behaviors of communities and then create a framework to allow MoE to better understand how behavioral change at the community level can affect girls' education, and to design programs accordingly.

In addition, flexible school times will allow rural girls to attend school while also fulfilling their household responsibilities. Provision of child care during school hours has, in some contexts, increased enrollments and retention of girls without increasing costs (Tietjen 2003). In Afghanistan, flexible schedules have proven successful in CBE schools, where those who might not normally attend school (for example working children) are now able to do so. The effect of such programs in other settings in Afghanistan would have to be confirmed through further studies and piloting.

Develop outreach activities to raise awareness among communities. Supportive parents should become local advocates for girls' education. Female members of CDCs and SMSs should receive basic training in community analysis, rapid appraisal, and related participatory techniques to raise community awareness about the importance and benefits of girls' education. Local imams and religious leaders also can be very effective in conveying the importance of girls' education under Islamic law. In addition, measures should be taken to encourage adult education and income-earning opportunities for parents, especially mothers, to increase their willingness to educate their daughters.



Preventing Attacks on and around Schools

Facilitate community participation in school protection. In some areas, communities already have provided schools (especially girls' schools) with guards and guards' facilities. In addition, in some parts of Afghanistan (for example Ghor province) SMSs provide escorts to students on the way to school. These measures can be enhanced by gathering lessons learned and best practices on community participation in the protection of schools and making these lessons available to all communities. A reasonable solution could be for MoE to establish security *shuras* with links to SMSs and other local community institutions. It must be emphasized, however, that communities should not be armed in order to participate in school security.

Negotiate and write memoranda of understanding with attackers. As the CARE (2009) report suggests, negotiations may be used to prevent attacks on education. A strategy and guidelines should be developed, however, to ensure that understandings with attackers do not come at the cost of gender equity and other human rights (as has been the case in some southern provinces, where communities and local MoE officials conceded to the Taliban in calling schools *madrastas* and teachers *mullahs*, and changing school curricula in return for school security). There is much to learn from the experiences of NGOs that established girls' schools under the Taliban. Some NGOs reached an understanding with the Taliban to allow the establishment of girls' primary schools in remote areas by emphasizing NGOs' impartial position of simply helping poor people.⁹ Raising community awareness about school security also is beneficial. Alternative approaches under development by MoE include monitoring threats and mobilizing local communities to confront attackers by means other than arms, and regrouping classes inside villagers' houses, out of sight of attackers.

Build local ownership and mitigate risk. In their efforts to improve local teaching capacity, MoE and PED should facilitate the hire of local staff, which would also serve as a risk mitigation mechanism in school management. Although this may not always be effective in preventing attacks on educational institutions, it can help to improve local acceptance of female education and to further educational equity by overcoming disparities in access by gender, region, age, ethnicity, and economic status. The hiring local staff, moreover, would be a useful complement to culturally sensitive approaches to getting girls into school and keeping them there.

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Production and Publication Arrangements

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The Afghanistan Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Note Series is a product of the *Operationalizing Country Gender Assessment Recommendations in Afghanistan* program (2007-2009) of the Social, Environment and Water Resources Unit (SASDI), South Asia Sustainable Development, The World Bank, with Asta Olesen as Task Team Leader (TTL), Jennifer Solotaroff as co-TTL, and Nadia Hashimi as Team Member. The Series is published by the World Bank, Washington, D.C., USA and has been made possible by generous support from Gender Action Plan (GAP) trust funds of the World Bank's Gender and Development Group, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network.

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