



Australia Afghanistan Education Program

Fact sheet: January 2015

Overview

Afghanistan has made significant progress towards MDG 2 – achieving universal education. Enrolment rates have increased from an estimated one million in 2001, with almost no girls; to eight million enrolled in basic education in 2013, including three million girls. Increases in access to basic education in Afghanistan over the past 10 years have constituted one of the most remarkable development gains seen anywhere in the world.

Objectives

Australia is helping Afghanistan to improve service delivery in education by expanding access to schools, improving the quality of education and improving the Afghan Government's capacity to deliver education.

Australia's major bilateral initiatives in education target communities that, due to geographical isolation and conflict, are not reached by Afghan government programs.

Bilateral Education Initiatives

Australia supports the **Children of Uruzgan program** (\$35.7 million 2011-15), implemented by Save the Children. The program enhances access, quality and use of basic health and education services in the seven districts of Uruzgan province and has (since it started in 2011):

- Constructed six schools that support 2,890 students; provided 24 schools with water and sanitation facilities; and established one midwifery school for 24 female students.
- Provided community-based education to 2,775 children (573 girls) and established 75 early childhood groups with an educative role.
- Provided teacher training at 28 schools as well as to 215 Uruzgan-based teachers from the Ministry of Education.
- Provided on-going health and nutrition support to students at 24 schools and treatment to 397 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition; and trained 270 community health workers who in turn conducted 39,340 home visits.

The Children of Uruzgan program's extensive health services (including health clinics, nutrition and vaccination programs) support communities to enable children to access education.

The **Empowerment Through Education program** (\$5.7 million 2011-15) is implemented by CARE Australia, filling a critical gap in basic education services across the three provinces of Parwan, Kapisa and Khost, particularly for girls in remote and rural communities:

- Community-based education classes are held in villages that are beyond the current reach of the Afghan Government's education services.
- Over the life of the program, it will provide community-based education for more than 10,000 students, with a focus on education and leadership for girls, establishing village education committees to increase community/local engagement on education, and recruiting and training teachers.
- The program works closely with the Ministry of Education and follows the national curriculum.

- The program's strong gender focus is increasing the number of girls in primary education, building leadership skills and advocating for the rights of girls and supporting girls social development.

Educating the Children of Uruzgan

Setting up education opportunities in remote areas is part of the four-year 'Children of Uruzgan' program, which is being delivered by Save the Children Australia to improve the health and education of 300,000 people, particularly women and children, in Uruzgan Province.

The day after Lal Jan announced that there would finally be a school and he would be the teacher, he had 42 children sitting in his yard, waiting for the first lesson. Never in their lives had there been a school in the village. Of the 90 families living in the village, only three people can read and write.

The village in Uruzgan's Tarin Kowt district is about six kilometres away from the formal school. What wouldn't be a problem in Australia poses insurmountable obstacles in Uruzgan. Lal Jan explains: "The parents don't have the money to send their children to school by 'public transport' - by taxi or donkey cart. And, more importantly, they fear for their small children's safety if they were to walk the route."

Together with the lack of qualified teachers, the insecurity in this remote Afghan province is a key factor behind such poor levels of education. Only 8% of all men and 0.3% of women can read and write in Uruzgan. Eight out of 10 children do not go to school.

Setting up community based education classes in remote areas is key to improving education levels. The classes are established in villages where the closest formal school is too far away for the children to walk and, like in Lal Jan's village, they jump at the opportunity to attend classes organised close to the children's homes.

The villagers identify a teacher from their own community and provide a place for the classes – typically a room in one of the village houses, or a space in the local mosque. Save the Children arranges for learning materials, training for the teacher, and ongoing supervision. When the children have completed the early grades at the community-based classes and are big enough to make the journey, they join the closest formal school.



AFGPuti Kalatsha Community Education Classes. Photo: Elissa Bogos \Save the Children