

Inclusive & Child-Friendly Education in Afghanistan

Success Stories



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Ministry of Education
UNESCO

Member organisations of the Coordination Working Group on inclusive Education (IECWG)

Preface

In close collaboration with our partners in the Inclusive Education Coordination Working Group (IECWG), the Ministry of Education and UNESCO have developed a Booklet with success stories on Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education in Afghanistan.

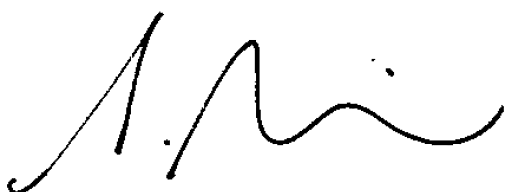
The stories in this Booklet highlight the achievements that have been made related to inclusive and child-friendly education over the past few years. These stories prove that lives can be changed through education. The children that have been interviewed have overcome tremendous barriers to learning, development and participation, and their stories inspire us to take further action.

The current draft of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP II) encourages schools to become inclusive and child-friendly in accordance to the Road Map in the Needs & Rights Assessment on Inclusive Education. These are indeed positive signals to national and international stakeholders, and to the millions of children throughout Afghanistan who are yearning for an education. UNESCO is confident that the progress we have seen over the past few years will continue in the years to come.

The development of this document has been a collaborative effort. I would therefore like to thank the Ministry of Education, PBK (Associazione Pro Bambini di Kabul), Save the Children, SERVE, and the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan for contributing their stories; Afghanistan Demain, the Kabul Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre and the Nejat Centre for allowing us to interview some of the children and youth they work with; and the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan and UNICEF for contributing their photos. I would also like to thank my colleagues, Razia Arooje, Parween Azimi, Celina Jensen, and Terje Magnussønn Watterdal for interviewing children, as well as narrating and editing stories; and Marina Patrier who coordinated the work of the Booklet. Our final heartfelt appreciation goes to all the children who welcomed us into their lives and told their stories to encourage others to follow in their footsteps, and who encouraged us to action.

In addition to UNESCO's regular programme funds, Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) funds supported the development and printing of this document.

We sincerely appreciate the assistance and efforts of all those who have been involved in developing this Booklet. We are confident of the impact this Booklet will have for its readers in understanding the barriers to education, development and participation that children experience in Afghanistan, but also the tremendous potential and achievements teachers and children bring every day to schools across the country. The brave stand of these children on their right to education is truly an inspiration to us all.



Shigeru Aoyagi
UNESCO Country Office Director
UNESCO Representative to Afghanistan

Foreword

The Booklet on Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education has been developed by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and UNESCO in close collaboration with our many partner organisations in the Inclusive Education Coordination Working Group (IECWG).

This document will help key government and non-government stakeholders, as well as national and provincial legislators, school principals, teachers, parents, and community leaders to realise that inclusive and child-friendly education is an invaluable means to achieve the goal of equal access to quality Education for All (EFA). The recent Road Map in the Needs & Rights Assessment on Inclusive Education (2009) as well as the latest draft version of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP II) suggests coordinated, systematic and effective steps towards Education for All (EFA) in Afghanistan.

Reading the stories of Ahmed, Badam Gul, Humira and all the other children is both humbling and encouraging. These stories highlight the importance of the Ministry of Education (MOE) moving forward with the agenda of inclusive and child-friendly education in close collaboration with national and international partners. This initiative will ensure that the millions of children who remain out of school in Afghanistan will be able to receive an education, and that the ambitious goals set forth in the Afghan Millennium Development Goals are achieved by 2020.

This Booklet broadens our understanding of inclusive and child-friendly education, as well as the positive effects it has on individual children and their families, and on our society as a whole. These stories remind us that behind all the data and the numbers there are girls and boys, all with unique skills and abilities who are filled with hope and aspiration. In other words, these children are the future of Afghanistan and it is therefore our obligation to ensure that they have equal access to quality education.

The Booklet on Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education is a most timely initiative. We hope that it will become a tool for creating more comprehensive understanding and awareness among legislators, education planners, teacher educators, school administrators, teachers, as well as student teachers about the importance of inclusive and child-friendly education. We can only achieve the goal of Education for All (EFA), which is reflected in our Constitution and in our Education Law, if all those involved in education realise that the diversity of needs, abilities and backgrounds found in our cities and villages must be reflected in our schools, and must be responded to effectively by all levels of our education system.



Farooq Wardak
Minister of Education

Introduction

Millions of children in Afghanistan are out of school. Some do not have the opportunity to enrol in the first place, while others drop out or are expelled from school before they complete their primary education. The reasons for this are many and complex. However the results are always the same; the dreams and aspirations of children are crushed, and as a society we miss an opportunity to discover the abilities and talents of so many young girls and boys.

No country can develop and prosper unless all its citizens thrive, participate and contribute - regardless of their gender, abilities, disabilities, backgrounds and circumstances. This is the essence of inclusive education - embracing the uniqueness and diversity of each individual girl or boy, man or woman.

In preparation for the Needs & Rights Assessment on Inclusive Education (2009) we asked a group of key government and non-government stakeholders which groups of children they thought was most vulnerable to exclusion from and within the Afghan education system.

These are the 12 main groups they identified (listed in alphabetical order):

- Children affected by Conflict, War and Emergencies, Internally Displaced Children, Refugees and Returnees
- Children affected by Drugs
- Children from Ethnic, Language, Social and Religious Minorities
- Children from Poor Economic Backgrounds
- Children in Conflict with the Law / Children in Incarceration
- Children living far away from School - in Villages where there are no Schools
- Children suffering from Neglect, Abandonment and/or Abuse - including Orphans
- Children who are over-aged
- Children with Disabilities
- Girls
- Nomadic (Kuchi) Children
- Street and Working Children

We believe that the only way to reach the goal of access to quality Education for All (EFA) is by making all schools more inclusive and child-friendly. To encourage implementation in schools throughout Afghanistan we have selected success stories from partner organisations related to these 12 groups to show that inclusive education is possible, also in an Afghan setting and in spite of all the challenges the education system faces at this time, and that the first steps have already been made.

An inclusive and child-friendly education system ensures that all children have equal access to quality education regardless of their gender, abilities, disabilities, backgrounds, health conditions and circumstances.

H.E. Farooq Wardak, Minister of Education

Inclusive and child-friendly education is a means to achieve quality Education for All (EFA). It is a rights-based approach to education and thus in full accordance with; the Constitution; the Afghan Millennium Development Goals; the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Education for All (EFA) Goals; the Education Law; the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP II), and; the Road Map of the Needs & Rights Assessment on Inclusive Education.

These are the six principles of inclusive and child-friendly schools:

1. Rights-Based, Inclusive and Child Seeking;
2. Effective - Focusing on the intellectual, social, emotional and physical development of all children;
3. Healthy, Safe and Protective;
4. Gender Responsive;
5. Community Based and Family Focused, and;
6. Child-Friendly Assessment and Evaluation Systems, Curricula and Support Systems.

What does an inclusive and child-friendly school look like?

- Inclusive and child-friendly schools welcome all children in the community regardless of their gender, abilities, disabilities, HIV and health status, as well as their social, economic, ethnic, religious or language background.
- Inclusive and child-friendly communities and schools embrace diversity not merely tolerate it.
- Children learn at their own pace and according to their own abilities to achieve optimal academic, social, emotional and physical development.
- Children with disabilities and other special or individual learning needs as well as their parents and teachers have free access to school and community based as well as external support systems, all to ensure that their individual needs are responded to effectively.
- Children and parents are actively involved in the teaching-learning process, the knowledge and skills children carry with them from home is therefore valued, and recognised.
- Curricula, assessments and examinations are flexible and child-centred, encouraging children to learn and to develop self-esteem and confidence.¹

It is important to realise that no school can be inclusive unless it is child-friendly, and that no school can be child-friendly unless it is inclusive. It is equally important to realise that schools and education system do not change overnight, the stories you can read in this booklet are therefore examples from schools and programmes that are moving “Towards Inclusion.”

We hope that personal stories of children you can read about in this booklet will encourage you to support the process of making all Afghan schools inclusive and child-friendly.

**Booklet Development Team
Coordination Working Group for Inclusive Education (IECWG)**



Children affected by emergencies, conflict and war

Bibi Hawa was born in Shamoli in the northern part of Afghanistan. She lived with her mother and father, and six brothers and sisters in a small house. Her life was good. One day when she was only three years old a rocket hit her house, a big beam fell down and wounded her father. He lost his eyesight and injured his head. Their lives were never the same again. They left Shamoli because of the war, and came to Kabul in search of peace and a better life, but ever since life has been a struggle for Bibi Hawa and her family. Her brother became ill because the little house they lived in was cold, and because they had too little to eat, soon after he died. Because her parents were still unable to feed the six children they had left, they gave one of their sons away to a relative.

Every day Bibi Hawa and her father begged on the street. Bibi Hawa had polio when she was a little girl and had difficulties walking, so she did not like to go begging because the children in the neighbourhood would tease and laugh at her. One day a social worker from Afghanistan Demain came to her house. He talked to her parents and encouraged them to send her to school. Her father and older brother did not see the point, and told the social worker that; "It was not good for a girl to go to school." However, the social worker explained that she would receive a healthy breakfast if she came to school, and told her parents that she only had to stay for a few hours every day. They finally agreed, although reluctantly.

The first day Bibi Hawa came to school, the boys on the street would make fun of the way she walked. When the social worker found out, he called all the children in the neighbourhood together and talked with them. He also spoke to the elders in the community. Now, no one teases her anymore.

Bibi Hawa loves school. She also enjoys the beans, rice and bananas she gets to eat. She likes her lessons and has decided that she wants to become a teacher when she finishes her education. Bibi Hawa is now 15 years old, and is going through an accelerated learning programme run by Afghanistan Demain. Her principal also took her to a doctor where she received a splint for her arm, and because she now eats at least one good meal every day, she has gained strength and can move and walk much better than before.

In the meantime, her brother got a job as a cleaner in a cinema, and her family received additional help after a TV station broadcasted her family's story in one of their programmes. Her father does not have to beg very often anymore, but sometimes, when money is short, he still has to, and when he does he always asks Bibi Hawa to join him.

The war has done much damage to the life of Bibi Hawa and her family, but now there is hope. She is optimistic about the future and hopes that one day when she has completed her education she will be able to teach other children like her so that they can have a chance in life as well. Bibi Hawa we pray that you will stay safe and that all your dreams in life will be fulfilled.



Children affected by drugs

Rahmatullah is a young man, aged 18. When he was a young boy he lived with his mother, father and ten brothers and sisters as refugees in South Waziristan, Pakistan. After going to school for 2 short years in Pakistan he had to quit school to get a job to help support his family because his father was a driver and did not earn enough money to feed all of his children. So, Rahmatullah went to Karachi to work in a shop.

The owner of the shop where he worked was a drug addict and soon after Rahmatullah started to work for him he invited Rahmatullah to try drugs as well. Drugs quickly became a welcome escape for Rahmatullah from the harsh realities of hunger, abuse and hard work. The drugs also helped him to forget how he missed his family at home. However, he soon no longer desired his old life back in his village.

Rahmatullah used diluted heroin, which was less expensive than purer forms of heroin. However, costs were still high and hard to cover through honest means. Five years ago when Rahmatullah came back to Kabul he used more than 200 Afghanis every day on drugs. In order to not embarrass him, we did not ask him how he managed to earn so much money every day in addition to the money he needed for food, clothing and shelter. The money he earned by collecting scrap metal and plastic for recycling was clearly not enough to pay for an expensive drug habit, so he must have earned additional money by other means.

Soon after he arrived in Kabul a friend told him about the Nejat Rehabilitation Centre. Rahmatullah decided to join his friend and came along to the centre to talk with one of the social workers. They managed to convince him to join the programme. The first few days of the rehabilitation programme he was given counselling by former drug users and a team of medical doctors and social workers. At the same time they reduced the amount of drugs he used a little bit every day to slowly lower his dependency on drugs. He has now completed the first part of the programme and is living in the boarding house at the Rehabilitation Centre while his body is getting used to managing without the daily dose of drugs, which is the second part of the detoxification programme. He is soon starting the third part of the programme where he will learn how to read and write. In addition to learning basic literacy skills, he will also learn a trade so that he can earn a living. His dream is to become a car mechanic, and start a family.

Rahmatullah and all his friends at the centre agree that drug prevention education must be offered to all children in Afghanistan, as the problem with drugs is enormous, and that drug prevention education should be taught earlier than secondary school since most Afghan children drop out of school during or immediately following primary education. If we do not sensitise them to the dangers of drugs in primary school, they may like Rahmatullah become victims of adults and youth who push drugs on them for their own financial gain.

Rahmatullah has been luckier than many of his old friends who are still on drugs. With support from the Nejat Centre he will now be able to get an education and will be able live a normal life free from drugs and crime.

Nejat Rehabilitation Centre and UNESCO



Children from language, ethnic, and religious minorities

“My name is Gulbudin. I live in the village of Khetai in the District of Keshende Payan. I studied up to Grade 8 in school, before continuing with religious studies in Madrasah (religious school). In Khetai, the majority of the population is Uzbek and they generally speak Uzbek language. When I was young, I was not able to speak Dari and it was very hard for me to communicate with people outside the village. Dari was like a foreign language to me and I had to struggle to communicate with my classmates and teachers. In order to survive in school, I decided to take on the challenge and started making a conscious effort to learn Dari. Low and behold, after a long struggle, I learnt Dari.

Last year, I was appointed as a teacher in the SCA sponsored Community Based School in Khetai where the majority of students speak Uzbek. The children are very young when they start Grade 1. I can imagine the problems these Uzbek children face, when they have to learn to speak in Dari at such a young age, because I had been through this experience myself.

I am very glad to teach in the CBE classes in the village. The children have no other school in the area to go to. The nearest school is four to five kilometers away and the little children cannot walk that far every day. Learning from my own experience, I help the children learn the Dari language which will enable them to continue schooling, as well as to communicate with their classmates.

My students have to learn from standard national textbooks which are all in Dari. To assist them, I have made a simple language teaching plan for them keeping the difficulties I experienced in mind. The first thing I do is to speak to them in both the Uzbek and Dari languages and explain to them the concepts by repeating the words several times so that they understand and learn the words and sentences. I also use a lot of supplementary material which I display on the walls and decorate the classrooms with. This helps the children remember the words better when they have the visual display in front of them every day. I also use a pictorial Dari alphabet, words, paintings and drawings labeled with the Dari words. In the art and craft classes, I talk with the children about what they are drawing, and how they are painting especially in Dari, which helps them express themselves in Dari. I provide enough opportunities for them to speak in Dari, as well as in Uzbek. Finally, I encourage students to visit their relatives on weekends who live in the nearest Chailato village. These relatives study in the formal Government school and can speak Dari. They do their homework there and interact with them in Dari.

By these very simple methods, I help the students learning Dari, breaking their isolation and enabling them to be included in the mainstream education system.”

Well done Gulbadin.

Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA)



Children from poor economic backgrounds

Humira is 11 years old and is the youngest of 10 children. She is from Pulekhumry District in the central parts of Baghlan Province. She came to Kabul from Baghlan when she was a small child, and does not remember why her family moved to Kabul. Her father is old and frail, but still works as a cleaner in a school when he feels strong enough to go to work.

She lives in the small house in Chilsuton in Kabul. The ceiling in her house has caved in so when it rains the whole family has to seek shelter under plastic sacks because the rain seeps through the roof. Her older brother contributes to the family income by selling pakora (deep fried vegetables) from a small hand pulled cart. However, her father's salary and the income from the pakoras is not enough to feed her family of twelve, so every day Humira begs for bread in her neighbourhood. Sometimes she gets some bread or even a little bit of money, but most of the time people chase her away. "When I knock on a door people sometimes look out the window of their two-story home and say: "Go away! We are also poor!" And I wonder how they can say they are poor when they can afford to live in a two story house?"

One day a social worker from Afghanistan Demain came to Humira's house and spoke to her parents about whether they would permit her to go to school. At first, her parents did not give their consent because they needed the bread she was able to collect. They did not see the benefits of education, and asked: "What good is an education for a girl." Humira however did not give up and pleaded with her parents to allow her to attend school, promising that she would go to school in the morning and beg for bread the rest of the day. Her mother supported her, and she was finally able to go to school for the first time.

Humira loves her school and she loves to learn. Her favourite subject is religious studies. She says that her religious studies teacher is very nice, and she has learned a lot. She reads well and is both quick and witty. Humira is already in grade 4 even though she has only been going to school for 2 years. When she grows up she wants to become a doctor. She said: "I don't want to be a doctor for rich people. They have enough. I want to help poor people because when they get sick, they have nowhere to go."

Humira is a very intelligent and reflective young girl. If she is given the opportunity to continue her studies, and no more barriers are put on her path she will do well in life, and she will become a great resource for the future of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan Demain

This picture is from the Celebration of the International Peace Day in one of the Pilot Schools for Inclusive Education in Kabul and not directly linked to the Story



Children in conflict with the law

Ahmed and Javeed² are two young boys. When we spoke with them in April 2010, they were incarcerated in a Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre (JRC) in Kabul. These are their stories, as told by them:

My name is Javeed and I am 15 years old. I am from the Province of Ghazni, but have lived in Kabul since 2005. My father used to work with the national police but now he is unemployed. I have 4 brothers and 1 sister. My brothers are working and paying all the expenses at home. I am a grade 7 student at the Abdul Rahim Shaheed High School. I am a member of the Fajar Football Team and when I come home from school I like to play football. One day I skipped school together with my best friend. We went Kote Sangi where we met a friend of his. Soon after we found out that he had just stolen USD 4,000 from someone. When the police came the boy ran away, however, me and my friend were arrested and brought to the JRC. I have been here for more than 6 months. The Ministry of Education has provided us with a teacher who comes twice a week to teach us. In addition to school, we have Quran classes and sports activities. My dream is to be able to leave this place, continue my studies and become a teacher, but I am not sure what will happen to me ...

My name is Ahmed, I am 12 years old. I am from the Province of Panjsher, but presently I live in Kabul. I have 2 brother and 3 sisters, and I am a student of the Abdul Qader Bedil High School which is located in district 11 of Kabul Province. One day on my way to school a car stopped and two people in the car forced me to get in. When I got into the car I saw that the people were relatives who had a dispute with my father some days before. They took me far from the school and raped me. I managed to escape and told a police man. The police brought me here to the Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre. The incident happened more than 1.5 months ago and I am still here. Twice a week a teacher comes to teach us, but I wish I was free and could go back home and continue my schooling there ...

All children, including Javeed and Ahmed, have the right to education, regardless of whether they have committed crimes or not. The MoE teachers will help Javeed and Ahmed and other children like them to continue their studies which will in turn help them to reintegrate into a regular school once they are released from the Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre.

Recently, a Letter of Agreement regarding the rights of juvenile offenders was signed between the Ministry of Interior (MOI), Attorney General's Office, Ministry of Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MOLSAMD), Ministry of Justice (MOJ), Ministry of Education (MOE), and the Supreme Court. The goal of the Letter of Agreement is to "... contribute to a child-oriented and right-based [sic] juvenile justice system that respects children's rights and best interests, prioritises their rehabilitation and reintegration based on the individual child's needs and circumstances; and insure [sic] that detention and custodial sentences are only used as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time."

However, the system is still far from child-friendly and the education the children receive is minimal, but the first steps towards making the juvenile justice system more inclusive and rehabilitative are being made.

UNESCO / Interviews with boys benefitting from a Ministry of Education outreach education programme

² The names have been changed to protect the identity of these young boys



معمول - ۳۰
درخت - واکسن اودو
ناروغیو شکی
۵۰۰

Children living in communities far away from school

Many children in Afghanistan live in communities that are far from the nearest school. In the past, most of these children, especially girls, were denied access to education. Here is the story of a young Gojar girl who is now in school due to a Community Based School programme supported by the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA). The forefathers of the Gojar community are originally thought to have come from India and Pakistan but moved to Afghanistan centuries ago. Their mother tongue is Gojri, while Dari and Pashto are their second languages. They live in the mountains of the provinces of Takhar and Badakhshan. They do not own any land and mostly depend on livestock for their livelihood. To search for food for their livestock they move during the summer months to greener pastures. Most of them are very poor, and many have never learned how to read and write.

Keeping the challenges facing the Gojar community and their typical living conditions in mind, SCA initiated a Community Based School for the community. This opportunity is the first of its kind for this particular group of nomads, especially the girls, to go to school. Badam Gul is one of these lucky girls. Here is how she describes herself and her dreams:

“I am Badam Gul and I am thirteen years old. I am a student in Grade 1 in a Community Based School. I am a bit old for this grade, but I never had an opportunity to go to school until now. Within one year I have learned how to read and write and do simple arithmetic. It is wonderful! Even though my mother tongue is Gojri, I have started learning Dari. This language skill helps me when speaking with the other children at school. Most of the male members of our community can understand and speak Dari and Pashto as they come into contact with many different people at work. However, women are usually deprived of this ability, but not me!

My school teacher is not from my village and cannot speak Gojri, which is the mother tongue for most of the students. To overcome the language barrier, the parents assist the teacher from time to time so that he can assist his students in both languages. The teacher also asks students like me to help because I now understand Dari. I am thankful to SCA and my teacher for giving children like me an education and for opening the door for us for the future.

During the summer, while we are moving in search for fodder for our goats and sheep, we try and read the books that we received at school and also do some homework that our teacher gives us to do while we are away. Sometimes, my father who knows Dari and Pashto also helps us.

My dream to get an education has been fulfilled and I am thankful to God for this opportunity. One day I would like to become a nurse so that I can serve my community.”

Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA)



Children suffering from neglect, abandonment, and abuse

Shazia³ was born in a small town in the Province of Panjshir. She is a young girl at the age of 14. She moved to Kabul together with her father, three sisters and four brothers, just after her mother died. Soon after her father married again. Her step mother gave birth to two more children. Shazia did all the work around the house, she did all the cleaning, all the cooking, and she did all the laundry. In spite of working so hard her step-mother mocked her, and called her bad names, and she soon started to beat Shazia, mostly for no apparent reason. Two of Shazia's older brothers got married and moved away from the family, while another of Shazia's older brother joined their step-mother in making Shazia's life miserable. He used drugs, and when he was "high" on drugs he would beat her and even try to abuse her sexually. Shazia went to her father and spoke about it, but he did nothing. One day she could not stand it anymore and decided to run away from, she was soon caught, and beaten by her father, step-mother, and her brother. Because the abuse continued, she tried to run away a second time, again she was caught, and again she was beaten.

Because she was afraid of what her brother and step-mother would do to her, the third time she ran away she decided to go to the police. This time she was supported by her two older married brothers. The police contacted an organisation working with the government, and finally she was given the help she needed. The government representative contacted a non-governmental organisation, who found a place for her in one of their safe-houses.

Shazia is finally safe, she has food, she has shelter, and for the first time in her life she can go to school. It was not easy for Shazia to tell her story. Some of the things that had been done to her were too gruesome, and too hard to talk about. Shazia still suffers from trauma and anxiety. When she talked about her family, she cried, because she still miss her three sisters and her younger brother, and because she knows that because she dared to speak up against the abuse she had suffered from for years, she may never see any of them again.

There are many young girls and boys like Shazia. Most children suffer in silence, or they manage to run away, for a life on the streets, vulnerable to drugs, prostitution and even more abuse. If we are serious about providing quality education for all, we also need to do our best to help children like Shazia.

Shazia is an incredibly brave young girl, she dared to speak out, she refused to continue to be a victim of abuse - therefore she deserves our deepest respect. She agreed to talk to us, and tell her story to help other children in her situation. Shazia, we wish you all the best for your future.

We are unable to name the NGO in order to protect the identify of those living in their safe-houses

³ Shazia is the real name of the girls in this story, she has herself chosen this name as an alias, as we cannot use her real name in order to protect her identity from retribution from her family



Children who are over-aged

Safiullah is 14 years old, and is small and frail for his age. He lives with his mother and father, and his four brothers and sisters in Chilsuton in Kabul. He is the youngest child in the family. His father has some back problems and does not want to work anymore. As a result, Safiullah never started school but works instead in a mechanical repair shop to provide for his family. Safiullah makes between 20 to 40 Afghanis a day, all of which he brings home to help feed his parents and sisters and brothers. Sometimes when the shop is closed and he comes home empty-handed his father beats him.

Safiullah is not only beaten at home, but also in the repair shop. When the owner is unhappy he sometimes slaps Safiullah or beats and kicks him. His parents never come to the shop, to see if he is treated well, and if he talks to his parents about what he experiences during the day, and that he is sometimes beaten, he gets beaten again by his father. Safiullah said: "When I become a father I will not beat my children because I know how badly it hurts and how badly it makes me feel."

For as long as Safiullah can remember he has been leaving home at 6:30 every morning and is never home before 18:30 at night. He also never eats breakfast at home because food is scarce. The whole day he stays outside without any parental supervision. The only thing his father expects from him is that he brings home some money, and he shows no interest or care in how Safiullah gets the money.

Two years ago a social worker from Afghanistan Demain came to Safiullah's house to talk with his parents about schooling for Safiullah. At first his parents were not in favour of the idea, because he already too old to start school, but when they said that he would get a good and healthy breakfast they agreed since they were not able to provide proper food for him anyway, and Safiullah bears many of the hallmarks of being undernourished. Safiullah likes school very much and enjoys eating a good and healthy breakfast in the morning. He also likes his teachers and has many friends at school even if he is the oldest boy in his class. One day when he grows up he wants to become an engineer because he is good at repairing things.

Safiullah goes to school for 3 hours before he runs quickly to the mechanical repair shop to work, so that he can still bring home money and make his father happy. Even though Safiullah is only 14 he has been one of the main providers for his family for many years. He has never had much supervision, care and parenting from his mother and father, but he is lucky because he now has both a school and job to go to. Many other children like Safiullah must find other and much less safe and pleasant ways to earn money. We hope that Safiullah will remain at school and continue with his education, until he has completed 12th grade so that he can have a career and build a good future for himself and his family. We also pray that Safiullah will stay true to his promise and become a better father for his children than his father has been for him.

Afghanistan Demain



Children with disabilities

Developmental Impairment

In 2007, a woman came to the PBK Centre and Pre-School in Kabul with her daughter, whose name was Fatimah. The girl was 8 years old, but she seemed weak and looked much younger than her age. According to the mother Fatimah she weighed a mere 1.3 kg at birth, and had never grown like her other children.

When Fatimah enrolled in our pre-school she had difficulties walking, she was a slow eater, and learned at a very slow pace. She was given full attention by her teacher, who also helped her to build relationships with the other children in her class. Gradually, she made friends with her classmates. She was encouraged to participate in all the different non-curricular activities in our school, such as sports, music and games. Over time she gained confidence and physical strength. Within 2 years she improved considerably. She could read and write the numbers from 1 to 50. She could recognise the Dari alphabet, and she had learned how to write her own name as well as the names of her parents. When we realised that Fatimah had learnt all the basic things she would need to start school we spoke to her mother about it, but her mother was worried and said: "My daughter is too weak to go to a normal school. The children will beat her, push her and make her fall and she will break her bones." Although happy with her daughter's progress, she was afraid for her safety and wellbeing. However, the director of our pre-school knew that if Fatimah was given a chance she would benefit more from going to a regular school than she would remain in our centre. So he tried to convince her parents that it would be best for their daughter to go to a regular community school. Finally, the parents agreed and Fatimah was admitted into the neighbourhood school like all the other children in the community.

Thanks to the preparation she had received in the pre-school, Fatimah was accepted. At the age of 10 Fatimah finally had a chance to start her primary education. Her mother noticed that Fatimah was happy when she went to school, and when she came back home, she did her homework nicely. The mother went to the school to ask the teacher about how her daughter performed in school. According to Fatimah's teacher, she is active in class and has a good self esteem. Whenever she asks her students to do something or to write on the blackboard, Fatimah is always the first to raise her hand and say, "I CAN DO IT."

We are so happy to tell you this story because it proves to us that our efforts bear fruit, and that work we do here at the PBK Centre and in our pre-school gave Fatimah the preparation she needed to succeed in school and gave her new confidence in life. Her mother said that if Fatimah had not come to our centre, she would not even have been able even to stand on her own two feet because she was too physically weak, and she would not have been able to learn and develop her intellectual abilities.

Last year we had our first experience with sending children to regular schools, and just like Fatimah's parents, many of the other parents were worried and sceptical about the idea of their children joining a "normal" school. But when they see all the positive results children have made, they begin to have faith in their children and their abilities to learn and play with other children. The parents are happy to find this kind of pre-school that helps children with disabilities prepare for an education in the regular neighbourhood schools. With just a little help, the lives of children have changed, and the fear of rejection has been replaced with hope.

The picture is not directly related to the story from the Ministry of Education. The picture is taken at the ANAD Primary Education Programme in Kabul.



Children with disabilities

Hearing Impairment

I would like to tell you a story about a child in my class. He is 12 years old and he is deaf. When he first came to my class he just knew a few family (informal) signs, which is not enough if he wants to learn in school or communicate with others. In the beginning his parents were not sure if it was right to send him to school. They were afraid that he would be teased and bullied because he was deaf, and they did not know how he could possibly understand the teacher since he could not hear, so they refused to bring him to school. But together with some of my teacher colleagues I talked with his family and discussed the matter, especially with his father. He had planned for his son to become a tailor and he did not think there was need for any further education. He said: "What is the purpose of sending him to school? What can he possibly learn? He needs to learn some vocational skills, that is enough. I am not educated and I have survived, and he will do the same."

After much convincing, the father finally agreed to send his son to school, but he did not want to participate in any training for parents, and he did not want his wife to join the training either. He said: "I am not going to allow my wife to go to that kind of class. We are busy, we don't have time, and it is better for our child not go to school anyway." However, one of his older sons volunteered to come to the training instead. He was a student in grade 7 in the same school. He soon wanted to learn more about Sign language. After a short while he was able to communicate easily with his brother and to help him with his lessons. He does not know all the official signs in the Afghan Sign language yet, but he has found a way to communicate with his deaf brother.

In the beginning the young boy was afraid of the other children and of the new environment. He felt ashamed when he used Sign language, and when he had to ask for help. He did not know anything about rules and regulation in the school and would sometimes behave a bit "naughty." However, he learned fast and now feels self-confident, and he is always interested in learning new things. He is doing all the tasks he is given in the class, he participates actively in all the different school events, and he now knows how to read and write.

He is coming to school every day, even when he is sick, because he believes that going to school is going to change and improve his life. He said: "Now I have friends, and I am responsible for some of the work at home and in the class. Now I have a role to play in my family, and they respect me, and I have learned to respect them. Although they don't know signs they have changed their attitude toward me. I am happy to be Deaf, I hope all the other parents think positively about their Deaf children and try to support them. I hope one day I can finish school and get a good job."

After two years in school his family is very happy, they believe in him and encourage him in everything he does.

Teacher in one of the 29 Pilot Schools for Inclusive Education in Kabul
Ministry of Education, UNESCO, UNICEF, and MACCA

The picture is not directly related to the story from SERVE. The picture is taken at the Rahyab Organization's School Preparedness Programme in Kabul



Children with disabilities

Visual Impairment

In the past, children with visual impairment had few, if any possibilities, to get an education in Afghanistan. Traditionally some blind boys would be enrolled in Madrassas to learn how to recite the Holy Quran. However, most children with visual impairment stayed at home without any opportunities for a formal education. A few decades ago, however, a government school for the blind was established in Kabul, but unfortunately the vast majority of children with visual impairment (children who are either blind or have low vision) still remained out of school. However, when inclusive education programmes were introduced a few years ago the situation started to improve. Now, more and more young boys and girls with visual impairment are enrolled in regular government schools where they are playing and learning together with their sighted peers. Here are the stories of two such children:

Freshta is 14 years old. Her father died when she was just a small child due to an accident at work. She mourned her father because she loved him dearly. Her life was also affected by the fact that he was the only breadwinner in the family, and after his death there was no one to support them. She loved to study and dreamed of becoming a teacher when she grew up, but in the Province of Khost where she lived most people believed that girls should be kept at home, and did not agree with the idea that girls go to school to get an education. But she was encouraged to learn at home by her grandmother. In spite of her young age she even learned how to read from the Holy Quran, and to write her own name. When her paternal grandmother died, her mother brought Freshta and her siblings to Kabul to live with her maternal grandfather. Soon after Freshta came to Kabul she was enrolled in primary school. However, after a few years she suffered from a bad fever. Her mother took her to different doctors, but no one seemed to be able to find a cure for her. Eventually she did recover, but she lost her vision and became blind. All hopes for an education seemed dashed for Freshta. However, one day she was assessed by a resource teacher from SERVE-EMAD and was offered to join their support programme for children with visual impairment. She learned how to read and write Braille and was provided with educational materials. Now she is going to grade 4 in an inclusive school together with her sighted friends, and she is very happy. Resource teachers from SERVE-EMAD visit her in school on a regular basis to help her with different subject matters, and they teach her orientation and mobility (how to walk and move around independently by using a white cane), as well as different skills she needs to manage in her daily life.

Samim is a young boy at the age of 10. He comes from the Province of Panjsher, but now he lives in Kabul with his mother, his two brothers and his two sisters. Samim's family is very poor. His father died many years ago when Samim was just a small child. Samim is from the Hindu minority, and lives in one of the Hindus Temples in Kabul where his mother works. She earns a mere 150 Afghanis a week, which is not enough to feed the whole family, but kind friends and neighbours help them from time to time, with food and money, so that they can survive. Samim lost his eyesight due to vitamin A deficiency at the age of 6. He was brought to the SERVE-EMAD training programme where he learned basic skills so that he could start school. He now attends a regular school where he is enrolled in grade 3. Samim is an intelligent young boy, and he loves school, so in spite of his visual impairment he is the best student in his class.

Thanks to the SERVE-EMAD project Freshta and Samim have been given the opportunity to go to school, and to learn and play together with other children. We hope that many more children with visual impairment will be given that same opportunity in future.



Girls

Many girls in Afghanistan, as in many other countries around the world, are denied their rights to enrol in school, or complete their education. These are the stories of four young girls in Nangahar Province in the southern part of Afghanistan. The stories tell how the girls have managed to stay in school with the help and assistance of friends, schools, and communities.

Shapari went to school until she was in the 8th grade, but then she had to leave school because her older sister who used to help her mother at home had become sick and could no longer work. When she left school, many of her friends encouraged her to stay and continue her education. Some of her friends as well as her teachers contacted her father, spoke to him and convinced him to allow his daughter to go back to school. Shapari was so happy when she was able to return to school to complete her education. She is currently still attending school regularly.

Suraya was a student in the 4th grade when she left school. Her class had become very small because many of the girls were taken out of school by their parents. As a result, her principal integrated her class into other one of the grade 4 classes: “When I went back to school after the holidays I didn’t find my class. I asked my headmaster for my new class but no one wanted to help me, no one helped to search for my name or for my new class. I felt lost and disappointed, so I gave up on school and stayed at home instead.” When her friends found out, they visited her and encouraged her to go back to school. Suraya agreed to re-start school and now attends school regularly.

Hadiqa and Atifa sometimes experienced difficulties when they walk to school because a group of boys often harassed them. This problem became so serious that their parents decided to take them out of school. To try to solve the problem the women in the village gathered together the Women Shura. Meryam, the Head of the Shura, explained that some girls were absent from school due to the problems they encountered on their way to school. It was decided that three of the members of the Shura should go to meet the families of the girls and try to encourage them to send their daughters back to school. After numerous discussions with the families, the girls were allowed to come back to school. The men’s Shura also shared this issue with the local people in the Mosque, and also talked about the issue with the Mullah. He supported their efforts and encouraged the men to prevent their sons from teasing the girls. Hadiqa and Atifa are now back in school and happy to be with their friends and continue their education.

As we can see from all these cases it is vital that schools, families and communities work together to ensure that girls have access to quality education, and that they are not taken out of school before they have completed their education. We wish Atifa, Hadiqa, Shapari and Suraya success in their lives as students, and as women.

Jalalabad Office
Save the Children in Afghanistan



دوسي كتابونه د پوهنې په لار
بازار کې يې اخیستله او غوښتلې وه چې کلونه سمه شي
په دې کتابونو کې د پوهنې لارښوونکي دي

Nomadic (Kuchi) children

My name is Hanifa Khudaidad and I belong to the Kuchi community. Like other Kuchis my family moves from one place to another with the change of seasons. During the summer my family lives in the Samarkhail village in Jalalabad in the province of Nangarhar, and in the winter we move back to Chak district in the province of Wardak. One of the biggest dreams of my parents was that their children would get an education, particularly a religious education. Unfortunately, access to education was denied to us because we were moving from place to place, and to places that were not close to villages or cities where schools were located. Kuchis have never before had access to education, until now! Thanks to Allah, SCA thought about us and our need for education, and has established a Mobile Community Based School (CBS) in Chak district in Wardak province.

The establishment of the school has been “a dream come” true for me, my brothers, and many other Kuchi children. Now, as a Kuchi girl, I have an opportunity to go to school. I can learn the alphabet and many other interesting subjects from my teacher. I’m even learning to read the Holy Quran and how to pray. During the war, we thought we were going to lose the opportunity to learn. However, with the efforts of the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) we have continued to learn despite the insecurity.

At the onset of winter, my family realised that the time had come for us to move from Wardak to Samarkhail in Jalalabad, which has a warmer climate. I was greatly disappointed to discover that my teacher was not going to be able to move with us because of personal problems. However, another teacher was found who had recently returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan after completing Grade 12. The teacher promised us that when we returned to Wardak he would continue teaching us. God has been great, he heard our prayers! The teacher is very good. I have learnt many things from him like Math, language, religious studies, and life skills as well as other interesting topics. Now I can count up to 200, offer my prayers five times a day, and I know the importance of keeping myself clean and healthy. I also help my younger brothers and sisters to keep themselves clean. When I take the animals for grazing, I can count them on my way back home and make sure I do not lose any. When I go to the shop I know how much I should pay the shopkeeper and I can count the change to make sure it is correct. I also know how to respect my neighbours and how to behave towards fellow children, elders and people with disabilities. I help my parents and respect them.

I hope that Allah will be happy with me, and bless my family. My mother and father have always encouraged me to continue my education, and they give me less work so that I can study. They say; “Allah likes educated people, especially those who have more knowledge of the Quran and Islam.” I will be very happy if I can continue my education and my wish is to become a teacher like the teacher I have in my mobile school, so that I can teach my other Kuchi brothers and sisters.

The mobile CBS opens the door for us who in the past have been deprived of education.

Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA)



Street & Working children

The Abdul Ghafor Nadeem School is located in the centre of the business district of Kabul. Two years ago the Ministry of Education introduced the school principal to the idea of inclusive education. The school was later selected to be one of the first pilot schools for inclusive education in Afghanistan.

The inclusive education programme has helped the school to implement its plans to improve access to quality of education for all the children living in the neighbourhood of the school.

There was a construction site located nearby to the school, and many of the workers brought their children along to help them with their work during the day. The Principal noticed that these children did not go school, and instead worked during the day. As a result, he went to the construction site and talked to the workers about the importance of education. At first most of the men were sceptical about the idea because they needed their sons to help them run errands and to help with the work by often performing some of the lighter and simpler tasks that needed to be done on the construction site.

The principal suggested to the men that if they allowed their sons to come to school during the first shift then they could work and help their fathers during the second shift, which would allow the children to both help their fathers as well as obtain an education. Many of the men accepted his suggestion and enrolled their children in school.

Since the teachers at the school had been trained in inclusive and child-friendly practices, they understood that the boys would not be at the same level as some of their classmates who had already been attending the school and who did not have to work in the afternoon. As a result, the teachers were flexible and gave the boys observation tasks related to their work and to what they had learned in the morning. This practice helped the boys create links between the lessons they learned at school with their work experience.

These young boys are among the privileged few because they now have access to education, which had been denied them in the past. Millions of other young boys and girls are still unable to attend school because they have to work at home by helping with household duties, taking care of livestock, or working in shops, factories and construction sites where they do not have any access to education. Let us hope that more principals and teachers will learn to become as innovative and flexible as those in the Abdul Ghafor Nadeem School so that one day all children in Afghanistan will have access to quality education.

Abdul Ghafor Nadeem School - Pilot School for Inclusive Education
Ministry of Education, UNESCO, UNICEF and MACCA

I am Badam Gul and I am thirteen years old. I am a student in Grade 1 in a Community Based School. I am a bit old for this grade, but I never had an opportunity to go to school until now. Within one year I have learned how to read and write and do simple arithmetic. It is wonderful!

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