Advancing Girls' Education in Afghanistan

*How past projects can inform future initiatives*

ACKS, Reillie  BAUGHMAN, Keri  DIABO, Rihana  F. T.

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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AKDN: Aga Khan Development Network
AKF: Aga Khan Foundation
APWA: All Pakistan Women's Association
ARTF: Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
BELT: Basic Education Learning and Training Project
BVPS: Banjosa Valley Public School
CB: Community Bank
CBE: Community-based Education
CHAON: Children's Action against Oppression and Neglect Project
CPU: Child Protection Unit
CRAN: Child Rights Advocacy Network
CRS: Catholic Relief Services
CTE: College of Teacher Education
DFID: UK's Department for International Development
EFA: Education For All
EMIS: Education Management Information System
EQUAL: Enhancing Quality, Access, and Learning Project
EQUIP: the Education Quality Improvement Project
EQUIP II: the Education Quality Improvement Project II
GBP: Great British Pound
GEC: Girls' Education Challenge
IRC: International Rescue Committee
KEF: Kashmir Education Foundation
LCEP-II: Learning for Community Empowerment Program
MDGs: Millennium Development Goals
MoE: Ministry of Education
NESP: National Education Strategic Plan
NGO: non-governmental organization
NSF: National Science Foundation
PACE-A: Partnership for Advancing Community-based Education in Afghanistan Program
PTCs: Parent-Teacher Councils
PVPS: the Pearl Valley Public School
SHG: Self Help Groups
SIGAR: U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
SVPS: Soan Valley Public School
UNESCO: United Nation's Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF: United Nations Children’s Fund
UN: United Nations
USAID: United States’ Agency for International Development
USD: United States Dollar
The Womanity Foundation is a non-governmental organization (NGO), established in 2005, that has been working to advance girls’ education in Afghanistan through their "School-in-a-Box" project. The project first started in Al-Fatah School for Girls in 2011 and has since expanded to twelve schools. With the aim to support and complement previous research, as well as reinforce its proposition and appeal to investors, gauge its impact towards best practices, and improve its metrics and monitoring, the Womanity Foundation commissioned a group of three students from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland to undertake this report. The report provides a general overview of the donors and actors in the K-12 education system in Afghanistan with a special focus on girls’ education, metrics and monitoring tools, future funding scenarios, and successful practices.

The report begins with a literature review, which concludes that despite the overwhelming progress that has been made since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, Afghanistan still lacks the capacity to adequately promote a functional, quality education system that retains students, especially girls. Several barriers to girls’ education are presented and include, but are not limited to, continuous conflict, insecurity, poverty, the low status of women and girls in Afghan society, and harmful traditional practices including early marriage, baadal and baad marriages. This is followed by an overview of the national education policies in Afghanistan and a critical review of the Ministry of Education. The history of education policies is outlined, from the early 1900s to 2004. Recent National Education Policies are analyzed, including their programmatic focus and plan for monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, a review of challenges in actual implementation of national policies, as well as an appraisal of their successes and failures, are included.

The remainder of the report is structured by donor type: one part for multilateral donors, one part for bilateral donors, and one part for NGOs in Afghanistan. In addition, several NGOs in Pakistan were included as a comparable country example. For each organization, the recent and relevant education projects were reviewed and their challenges, metrics and monitoring tools, and future funding scenarios were outlined. Each section concluded by highlighting the best and successful practices from the education projects.

In the section on multilateral donors, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is included. Two projects from the ARTF, the Education Quality Improvement Project (EQUIP) and Education Quality Improvement Project II (EQUIP II), are reviewed, and the Back-to-School campaign from UNICEF is reviewed.
In the section on bilateral donors, we focus on the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). USAID's Increasing Access to Education and Gender Equality project, Learning for Community Empowerment Program (LCEP-II), and the Basic Education Learning and Training project (BELT) are reviewed. DFID's Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) is also reviewed.

In the section on NGOs in Afghanistan, CARE International, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), and Save the Children are included. The Partnership for Advancing Community-based Education in Afghanistan (PACE-A) project implemented by CARE International, the IRC, and the AKF is reviewed. In addition, Save the Children's Rewrite the Future (known as Better Education Better Future in Afghanistan) project is reviewed.

Finally, in the section on NGOs in Pakistan, the All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA), CARE Pakistan, Save the Children Pakistan, the Taaleem Foundation, and the Kashmir Education Foundation (KEF) are included. CARE Pakistan's Infrastructure Support and Professional Improvement to Revitalize Education Project (INSPIRE) and the Enhancing Quality, Access, and Learning (EQUAL) projects are reviewed. Lastly, Save the Children Pakistan's Children's Action against Oppression and Neglect (CHAON) project is reviewed. The analysis of best and successful practices from these various education projects resulted in a total of six recommendations. They are all evidence-based and are intended to inform the Womanity Foundation on ways to further advance girls' education in Afghanistan, and specifically through their "School-in-a-Box" project. The recommendations are as follows:

1. **Collaborate with other actors**

Given the volume of interventions regarding education in Afghanistan, it is tempting to conclude that all major concerns are being adequately addressed. This is untrue, as barriers to education are still apparent and major challenges exist, as shown throughout this report. In order to address these shortcomings, there is a dire need for more coordination among international organizations, NGOs, and the government of Afghanistan to ensure that projects are well-aligned with national priorities, implementation is efficient, and tracking is precise. Information, including successful and unsuccessful projects, should be shared among organizations in order to learn from other initiatives and maximize positive results. There is an enormous amount of resources being directed into the education sector, and increased coordination would make all efforts more efficient.

The Womanity Foundation should therefore first seek to increase communication and coordination with the Ministry of Education (MoE), both at the national and local levels, in order to define a clear integration strategy for working within Afghanistan. The multilateral donors, ARTF and UNICEF, both provide successful examples of partnerships with the Afghan
government. This is also crucial for capacity-building of the Afghan government, which is vital in effecting long-term change and results in the country. In addition, building on existing partnerships, the Womanity Foundation should seek further partnerships with other NGOs and private organizations specializing in education-related endeavors, such as technology companies. Partnerships of this nature have proven successful in several other cases, specifically among CARE International, International Rescue Committee, AKF and the Taaleem Foundation in Pakistan. Increased coordination would make efficient use of other organizations' technical know-how and experience, thereby increasing the Womanity Foundation’s impact.

2. Listen to girls and women, work with the community

It is recommended that the Womanity Foundation promote communal ownership in schools when appropriate, helping everyone understand their different roles as stakeholders. This should make continued use of tools such as parent-teacher associations and student representative councils - which the Womanity Foundation already makes use of - helping everyone within the community understand their unique roles as parents, teachers, students, or community members. Past projects have also targeted women and girls' increased agency with positive results, using the community perspective as a tool. The LCEP-II program implemented by USAID is a prime example of this. The apprenticeship portion of the project involved mentors from the local community teaching learners, specifically women, practical skills that were linked to local market demands. The fact that these skills were demand-driven means that these women were learning marketable, useful skills that will continue to have returns throughout their lives. These types of projects show that in advancing the education of women and girls, women and girls themselves are the most valuable resource and should be directly consulted and involved in all projects.

3. Research, understand, contextualize

An important missing component from the Womanity Foundation's "School-in-a-box" approach is the lack of attention given to increasing the body of knowledge around girls’ education in Afghanistan and understanding what really works in which setting and why. Therefore, an emphasis on research examining this would help design and implement more effective projects in the future and build on local knowledge.

In addition, while the general barriers to girls’ education are well documented, there are other indirect factors that may be affecting enrollment rates in specific regions. Therefore, it is recommended that the Womanity Foundation completes thorough "needs assessment" surveys before enlarging, or undertaking a new project. These surveys must be carried out in the exact area where the project is to be enlarged or implemented and be thorough - target a variety of local actors and institutions, utilize qualitative methods and observation - in order to uncover the specific needs of the community. For example, an audit of the PACE-A project uncovered that a main barrier to education for girls and boys in the area was the long distance to the school. This
is not a barrier in many other areas, however, the success of future projects there depends on taking this into account. Another example was from Save the Children Pakistan where needs assessment surveys uncovered that child labor is a huge barrier to education in certain provinces. The organization then addressed this by providing trainings to parents to increase their incomes which subsequently lessened their dependence on their children as laborers. Finally, needs assessment surveys would also allow for setting clear standards, guidelines and definitions of actions, which would promote more appropriate education provision in Womanity supported projects.

4. Implement boldly

Using the needs assessment results effectively will necessitate boldness in project design. Thus, it is recommended that the Womanity Foundation implements a multi-pronged approach that explicitly addresses direct and indirect links to educational attainment, such as maternal and child health, child labor, distance, and/or disaster risks that are context-specific.

Furthermore, since using a multi-pronged approach in project implementation means addressing the fragile or conflict context of Afghanistan alongside education, successful initiatives should be narrow in scope. Projects, such as "School-in-a-Box", with a broad focus both thematically and geographically and a short lifetime have limited success since they are difficult to implement on one hand, and face challenges in monitoring and evaluation on the other. In contrast, many of the successful initiatives presented in this report have been specific in focus, implemented over a long period of time with impact that is consistently monitored and assessed. Since goals for these projects are clear, this type of project design enables projects to be more flexible, allowing them to be modified along the way to ensure that the most effective strategies are being used, which will be discussed in more detail below. One challenge with this approach would be designing clean exit strategies, which may be difficult considering the approach requires continuous resources. One way that some projects in this report have attempted to deal with this issue has been trying to integrate project schools into the formal education system provided by the Afghan government. This both fosters a capacity-building environment for the Afghan Ministry of Education as the state transitions into becoming a primary provider of educational services and allows continual monitoring of project outcomes.

5. Measure

Educational assessments aim to measure how well, and what specifically, students are learning. The results provide valuable information to the students themselves, teachers, schools, communities, and the Afghan government. They should therefore be important components of any educational endeavors. One way to assess educational outcomes is through measuring the learning achievement of students. Although no nation-wide standardized learning assessment yet exists in Afghanistan, this report has discussed some of the ways some NGOs as well as
the government of Afghanistan assess learning achievements for elementary school students. The Womanity Foundation currently lacks any way to track achievements of the students in their sponsored schools. As tracking such data is paramount to making substantial claims regarding the impact of the "School-in-a-Box" on the educational achievement of students in schools supported by the Womanity Foundation, the recommendation is to introduce a learning assessment into the monitoring of its education projects in Afghanistan. Such an assessment could either build upon the methods used by other organizations, or rely on the MTEG which was developed for the MoE.

However, as important as learning achievement tests may be in measuring students' educational levels, it must also be acknowledged that skills in math and reading, which are what is typically measured in existing learning assessments, are only a part of what quality education should offer. Effective assessments should therefore consider tracking other indicators that are more challenging to measure with quantitative indicators, but are just as important components of a quality education, such as problem-solving or analytical skills, leadership skills and creativity. This is an area where the Womanity Foundation can innovate from other organizations active in Afghanistan.

6. Monitor and follow-up efficiently

Effective monitoring and evaluation of projects is only valuable if projects can be adapted to reflect lessons learned at different stages of project implementation. It is therefore key to be flexible in program implementation and to be willing to change, adapt, and delete components of a project in order to incorporate knowledge coming from monitoring and evaluation results. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that monitoring should not only be confined to current recipients of support from the Womanity Foundation. One of the NGOs surveyed from Pakistan, the Kashmir Education Foundation, has such an approach. They track each student who goes through their school long after they have left them in order to measure the long lasting impact of their education provision. It also allows them to make convincing statements about the impact of the Foundation, which is reassuring to donors.

Efficient monitoring of girls who have benefited from the program long after they have left schools supported by the Womanity Foundation can better assure that the impact in their life is long lasting and sustainable. Things to be monitored include how girls in schools supported by the Womanity Foundation rank with regard to others regionally or nationally, whether girls continued their studies after leaving Womanity supported projects, and/or what types of jobs they pursued with the education provided to them. Tracking these indicators would provide a more in-depth understanding of the ability of Womanity Foundation supported projects to generate long-term change in the lives of Afghan girls.
INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH

The Womanity Foundation is a non-governmental organization (NGO), established in 2005, that has been working to advance girls’ education in Afghanistan. Between 2011 and 2014, the Womanity Foundation, through their "School-in-a-Box" project, provided education for 23,003 children in Afghanistan. Through this project, net enrollment rates increased in Womanity sponsored schools and absenteeism decreased; almost 3,000 teachers were provided with training; community engagement was strengthened through the introduction of Parent-Teacher Councils (PTC); a hygiene education program was introduced and the Womanity Foundation heavily invested in the infrastructure and maintenance of their sponsored schools by providing science laboratories, computer laboratories, libraries, sports facilities, and first aid kits (The Womanity Foundation, 2015).

With the aim to support and complement previous research, as well as reinforce its proposition and appeal to investors, gauge its impact towards best practices, and improve its metrics, the Womanity Foundation commissioned a group of three students from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland to undertake this report. The report provides a general overview of the donors and actors in the K-12 education system in Afghanistan with a special focus on girls’ education, metrics and monitoring tools, future funding scenarios, and successful practices.

This report begins with a literature review that outlines background information on the social and political context of Afghanistan as well as girls’ main barriers to education throughout the country. This is followed by an overview of the national education policies in Afghanistan and a critical review of the Ministry of Education (MoE). The remainder of the report is structured by donor type: one part for multilateral donors, one part for bilateral donors, and one part for NGOs in Afghanistan. In addition, several NGOs in Pakistan were reviewed as a comparable country example. We conclude each section by highlighting the best practices from the education projects presented. “Best practices” here is understood, according to the definition provided by Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan in their book Professional Capital: Transforming Teaching in Every School (2012), as existing practices that already possess a high level of widely-agreed
effectiveness. It is important to note that best practices vary depending on characteristics such as funding, size of the organization, and implementation capacity. Thus, some practices may be at conflict with others and should be understood in the context of the program and implementing body. The last section includes six recommendations to the Womanity Foundation on how to further advance girls’ education in Afghanistan, specifically through their "School-in-a-Box" project, as well as concluding remarks.
This literature review presents an overview of the main social and political issues affecting education in Afghanistan. It is divided into two parts and includes recent history and political climate as well as presenting the main barriers to education, with a focus on girls.

1. CHALLENGES WITH EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN POST-2001

Since the 2001 overthrow of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the state of affairs with regards to K-12 education has been precarious. Continuous war and domestic conflict has left a path of insecurity and instability. However, following 2001 there was an influx of financial and strategic aid in order to rebuild and reconstruct. The Bonn Agreement (2001) was an agreement made under United Nation’s (UN) auspices to recreate and re-establish the state of Afghanistan with special emphasis on peace-building, stability, and human rights (Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, n.d.). One of the more notable efforts in the education sector was the United Nations Children's Fund’s (UNICEF) Back-to-School Campaign launched in 2002 (Jackson, 2011). Under the Taliban, schools were suppressed and the gross enrollment rate dropped from 32 per cent to 6.4 per cent (OXFAM, 2011), but thanks to UNICEF’s program, by 2004 there were 200 per cent more school buildings and 500 per cent more teachers than two years prior as well as dramatic increases in enrollment rates (Islam, 2007). However, UNICEF is not the only organization working to re-establish Afghanistan’s education system; there have been more than 3,000 NGOs active in Afghanistan since 2001, triggering the launch of the NGO code of conduct in 2005 encouraging coordination among NGOs (Rose & Greeley, 2006). These various actors will be discussed in more detail later in this report.

Despite the overwhelming progress that has been made since 2001, Afghanistan still lacks the capacity to adequately promote a widespread education system that retains students, especially girls. Pauline Rose and Martin Greeley examine this phenomenon in their research examining the state of education in post-conflict countries, including Afghanistan. From the 1980s until
2002, few educational services were provided by the Afghan government, despite the fact that education was proclaimed a national priority in 2002, the main actors providing educational services have been international NGOs (Karlsso

n & Mansory, 2004). However, since 2004, financial allocations to education from both the Afghan government, international organizations and NGOs have been cut tremendously (Islam, 2007). This is due to continuing conflict in Afghanistan and the lack of trust in government leadership, that puts donors at risk when providing funds (Rose & Greeley, 2006). For example, UN agencies’ budgets working on advancing education in Afghanistan dropped from approximately 90 million United States Dollar (USD) in 2002 to about 10 million USD in 2005 (Islam, 2007). Where funding is available, it is mostly off-budget and not coordinated with the government to address actual needs. For instance, the United States funded the American University in Afghanistan while funding for primary schooling or existing universities was desperately needed, and arguably more urgent (Rose & Greeley, 2006), reflecting a struggle between donors’ political priorities and focuses versus the actual needs of Afghans (Jackson, 2011). This struggle continues as previously successful projects, such as UNICEF’s Back-to-School campaign, run out of energy and focus (Jackson, 2011; Rose & Greely, 2006).

Furthermore, with approximately half of the Afghan population under the age of fifteen (Jackson, 2011), Afghanistan’s commitment to quality education is crucial in order to cater to human and social needs of the population. While the progress mentioned above - higher enrollment rates coupled with more schools and teachers immediately following the fall of the Taliban - was promising (Islam, 2007), the existing literature indicates that funding cuts have left schools extremely lacking in the necessary resources to administer a high quality education. According to Rana Deep Islam’s 2007 analysis of education in Afghanistan, schools are ill-equipped and understaffed, and teachers undertrained and underpaid. Schools lack necessary supplies such as quality textbooks, and in many cases the textbooks used are from refugee camps from the 1980s and are laden with religious, anti-Communist discourse (Islam, 2007). Islam also explains how Afghanistan’s post-conflict status has left schools with destroyed buildings, and a lack of water, sanitation, and/or electricity (Islam, 2007).

When it comes to the quality of Afghanistan’s educators, the low wage rate means there is little motivation to become a teacher. However, the demand for education is growing, and a lack of
sufficient teachers means that education will be less accessible. In many cases, teachers do not have any previous pedagogic knowledge and are self-taught (Islam, 2007). Moreover, the majority of teachers were educated in Muslim schools (madrasas) that are known for a religious, conservative curriculum. Because of this, there have been growing worries about teachers fostering “fundamentalist ideology and anti-liberal thinking” and thereby leading “to a spread and strengthening of radical ideas, contributing to a further destabilization of the country” (Islam, 2007, p.7). Thus, most teachers have no relevant training, and those teachers who are feared to harbor ideals contrary to the government’s mission of promoting education for all, which will be discussed further later on in this report. This tension between "traditional" or Muslim and "contemporary" liberal education styles is rather unique to Afghanistan, and has been the source of much debate as scholars attempt to distinguish whether or not they are necessarily conflicting or if there is the possibility of a complementary relationship (Karlsson & Mansory, 2004).

The struggle for advancing education in Afghanistan is also due to constraints that prevent children from attending school. In a Joint Briefing Paper published by OXFAM in 2011, field research conducted in seventeen provinces (drawing on interviews with 687 school-aged females, 630 parents, 332 teachers, and 105 key informants) concluded some of the top obstacles to education; most notable are barriers such as poverty and security. Economic barriers pose immense burdens on households when it comes to schooling. Additional spending associated with schooling includes school fees, transport and the purchasing of uniforms and other supplies (Jackson, 2011). Some efforts have been made by various programs to alleviate this burden by either providing meals for students at school or sending students home with food rations enabling the household to make a decision about where the extra food would be allocated, though there are some sustainability concerns with these practices (Jackson, 2011). Economic constraints lead to further challenges because economic burdens are closely tied to early marriage practices. While all children living in poverty face these barriers, however, poverty’s effects on schooling affects girls and boys differently. For example, one way that families have attempted to lower their economic burden is in the form of marrying off their daughters at an early age. As a direct result, most girls are unable to continue their schooling due to the fact that, once married, girls are expected to assume their new roles as mothers and wives with little time to dedicate to school (Jackson, 2011). This challenge will be elaborated on in the following paragraphs.
As mentioned above, security is a main barrier to education. Afghanistan is continually struggling with war and domestic conflict. Prioritizing education therefore necessarily requires a discussion on stability and security (Islam, 2007). Risk perception associated with attending school dictates households’ decision-making about whether or not to send a child to school, meaning that when parents view school as unstable or insecure they are more likely not to send their child to school. This is exacerbated by the increasing number of armed attacks on schools since 2005. Furthermore, when it comes to groups such as the Taliban specifically, girls’ movements with regards to education are more socially limited than those of boys, a point which will be further expanded upon in the next section. This is especially relevant in rural and remote areas of Afghanistan where the Taliban has more influence. Unfortunately, Jackson noted, “planning structures and government capacity at the Kabul level have improved, but there is little evidence that these plans have systematically translated into positive outcomes at the community level” (Jackson, 2011, p.7). Most communities, especially those in rural areas have not experienced the same level of progress as Kabul rendering them even more susceptible to security threats. While cities have the capacity to monitor and provide oversight, the curriculum in rural areas is often under strong influence of radical forces such as local warlords or Taliban fighters. This increased threat in remote areas poses significant challenges for girls, as mentioned above, but also for other vulnerable populations such as former Afghan refugees coming from Pakistan or former child soldiers (Islam, 2007). Therefore, the recent history and political climate, including the presence of the Taliban, make education a challenge for both the government and households.

2. GENDER RELATIONS, EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES FOR GIRLS, AND HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

Taking into consideration the political climate and barriers to education discussed in the previous section, education opportunities for girls are especially limited. In almost all cases girls have less schooling than boys. According to the available literature, and confirmed in several reports by donors to education sector in Afghanistan, two of the main barriers to girls’ education in Afghanistan are poverty and early marriage (CSO & UNICEF, 2013; Landinfo, 2011; UNAMA & OHCHR, 2010). Despite national policies declaring primary school free and compulsory, girls
are often left out. This is perpetuated by religious leaders, law, and government officials who fail to enforce national legislation that aims at protecting women and girls (Landinfo, 2011).

In 2010-2011 the Central Statistics Organization and UNICEF carried out a national survey in Afghanistan. Results from questionnaires and interviews were collaborated into a report: *Afghanistan: Monitoring the Situation of Women & Children* (CSO & UNICEF, 2013). More than 13,314 households were sampled including 22,053 women and 15,327 children. The report highlights the links between mother’s education level, early marriage and children’s health status. 82 per cent of women participants had received no official schooling in their lives. Throughout the country, only 20 per cent of women aged 15-24 are literate, and the rates are three times lower in rural regions. There is a strong correlation between mother’s education level and children’s health status. Due to the high prevalence of early marriage, 10 per cent of Afghan women have given birth before the age of 19. There is also a strong correlation between mother’s education level and early childbearing highlighting the importance of girls’ access to school, which remains limited throughout the country. Girls are systematically left out as indicated in the gender parity at 0.74 for primary school and 0.49 for secondary school. Girls with no formal education are three times more likely to be married by age 18 than girls who attend primary and secondary school (CSO & UNICEF, 2013). When girls are not enrolled in school they are more likely to give birth at a young age and their children are more likely to be unvaccinated and/or in ill health. Therefore, poverty and certain traditional practices make girls more susceptible to harm and lessen their chances of receiving an education.

Landinfo, an independent organization, recently provided a report to the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration regarding marriage practices in Afghanistan (Landinfo, 2011). The report, titled *Report Afghanistan: Marriage*, was published in 2011. The report explains different marriage traditions that are practiced throughout the country. For the most part, marriage represents a contract between two families, not solely the two people involved. Therefore, most marriages are arranged with often limited involvement of the girl. Forced and early marriages are prohibited by sharia law and national laws, but these are not systematically enforced. Children as young as one year old are arranged for marriage to happen later in their lives, ultimately making them officially "engaged". According to traditional practices, in most instances a bride must have a dowry and grooms must pay a bride price. Bride prices vary, but are supposed to
represent a payment from a groom to the bride’s family in compensation for raising her. However, these traditional practices are harmful for girls because it encourages poor families to marry off their young girls in order to receive financial support, and are also linked to higher rates of domestic violence as men take out their frustration at being in debt. Other traditional practices include baadal, or exchange marriages, in which two females are exchanged between two families, marrying into the other. Poverty is a main factor in baadal marriages. Baad are marriages concluded as compensation for a violation or crime and involves a family, tribe, or clan giving away a young girl as consequence for a wrongdoing. Due to these prevalent practices, there is reported consensus that individuals, in particular girls, have little choice over their chosen spouse (Landinfo, 2011). These practices also result in girls being occupied with marriage and household matters and leave little time for studying or continuing their education. A report completed by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights further details cultural practices and gender relations from a legal perspective.

In Harmful Traditional Practices and Implementation of the Law on Elimination of Violence against Women in Afghanistan, harmful marriage traditions including early marriage, giving girls away as compensation, and baadal exchange marriages are confirmed as detrimental to girls’ wellbeing and are barriers to education (UNAMA & OHCHR, 2010). The report elaborates on the unequal gender relations in Afghan society. One practice exemplifying this is that of "honor" killings, sometimes leading to girls running away from their families and/or self-immolation. Honor killings take place throughout the country and are carried out after a girl or woman is seen to have brought shame to her family. These practices underline the low status of women and girls in Afghanistan. The importance of religious leaders, community elders and traditional justice system is cited as a main cause of the continued subjugation of women and girls. In addition, law enforcement officers are often unwilling to enforce or evoke the law for the protection of women and girls, perpetuating the harmful practices. This report connects these practices to self-immolation incidents, which are on the rise in the country. Doctors who treat burn victims confirmed that women and girls turn to self-inflicted violence usually after being subjected to early, forced marriage. In lesser extreme cases, girls run away from home. Girls who are caught running away, regardless of the situation, are usually charged with attempting to commit zina, or sexual relations with a man. Incidentally, more than 50 per cent of Afghanistan’s female prisoners are serving sentences for "moral crimes". In conclusion, women and girls'
wellbeing is completely dependent on reducing harmful traditional practices, that are often international human rights violations, and limit girls’ educational options (UNAMA & OHCHR, 2010). In general, women play a marginalized role in Afghanistan resulting in less educated, often illiterate, generations of women. In turn, this affects Afghanistan’s progress overall towards combatting poverty and emerging from a post-conflict status. The international community must make educating girls a priority (Islam, 2007).

In conclusion, the overall state of the education system in Afghanistan is not surprising considering the context and turbulent recent history. Continuous conflict and specific traditional practices negatively affect the provision of education for all children, but especially for girls. However, there is an increasing demand from the Afghan population for improving access to and quality of education in the country. Next we will examine the national education policies and the MoE as well as provide a brief literature review regarding the MoE.
1. OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION POLICIES IN AFGHANISTAN

The history of education policies in Afghanistan is closely tied to that of political regimes governing the country. The modern period, preceding the signing of the most recent constitution in 2004, can be divided in three main parts: the monarchy from the early 1900s to 1973, the communist era from 1978 to the mid-1990s, and the Taliban rule from the mid-1990s to 2004.

1.1 EDUCATION POLICIES DURING THE MONARCHICAL RULE

Historically, most of the education provision in Afghanistan happened through mosques in madrasas – Islamic educational institutions (American Institutes for Research, 2006). Modern education in Afghanistan dates back to the end of the nineteenth century. The first formal boys school was built in 1904 in Kabul, while the first institution catering to girls opened almost twenty years later in 1921 (American Institutes for Research, 2006).

In the 1920s, efforts by Amanullah Khan, the sovereign of Afghanistan, signaled the beginning of state led efforts to promote education (Giustozzi, 2010). Results were unpromising with the number of enrolled students increasing by only 12,000 between 1929 and 1940 (from 45,091 to 57,000 students), mainly because of a lack of resources invested in modern education. Real improvement in access to education in the country became observable in the 1960s and 1970s (Giustozzi, 2010), starting with the 1964 constitution which made education compulsory (American Institutes for Research, 2006). Following this declaration, formal education provision was extended outside of the cities to reach rural areas, and enrollment rates rose to over 30 per cent (Giustozzi, 2010).
1.2 EDUCATION DURING THE COMMUNIST ERA

When the USSR invaded Afghanistan in 1978, the literacy rate stood at 18 per cent for males and 5 per cent for females, with total elementary level completion rates as low as 0.3 per cent. (American Institutes for Research, 2006). The soviet occupation of Afghanistan from 1978 to 1992 was characterized by continuous conflict and destroyed much of the infrastructure in the country including 80 per cent of school buildings and resulted in weakening of the teaching workforce due to numerous killings and exiles. During this time, modern education in Afghanistan was provided through two separate, opposing channels: the communist system and an education system managed by the Mujaheddin groups which had Western backing.

1.2.1 SOVIET EDUCATION POLICIES

Soviet educational policies were marked by aggressive literacy campaigns in urban and rural areas and aimed to propagate pro-communist ideologies (American Institutes for Research, 2006). Existing village governance structures were subsequently replaced by centralized structures (American Institutes for Research, 2006). The new governance structure and curriculum were met by hostility in rural Afghanistan because of the perceived contradictions between communist ideologies and traditional Afghan values, which resulted in an estimated 30 per cent decrease of enrollment rates in rural areas during that period.

1.2.2 MUJAHEDDIN EDUCATION POLICIES

The second provider of education services between 1978 and 1992 was the resisting group that, in response to the Soviet occupation, used education as a “mean for countering Marxist influence and preserving traditional culture” (American Institutes for Research, 2006, p.3). Twenty eight NGOs and three UN agencies began to play a central role in education in Afghanistan, providing non-communist style education for Afghans. By 1990, 70 per cent of all
schools in Afghanistan were supported by non-governmental bodies that provided teacher salaries, training, supplies, and books (American Institutes for Research, 2006). Continued fighting in the country undermined the progress achieved in educational outcomes during that time, and by the beginning of the 1990s the educational system proved unable to rebound from the war even after the defeat of the Soviets.

1.3 EDUCATION DURING TALIBAN LEADERSHIP ERA

In the years of Taliban rule, school enrollment rates decreased dramatically, with girls' enrollment taking the biggest toll; girls' gross enrollment rates went from 32 per cent to 6.4 per cent between 1995 and 1999 (UNESCO, 2000). The Taliban policy for education was directed through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the existing formal education system was dismantled in favor of madrasas. Funding for education fell drastically due to external donors' unwillingness to invest in anything other than direct service delivery under a policy of principled engagement, which left no room for activities such as capacity building. Long-term financial commitment, although necessary for rebuilding infrastructure, was non-existent (American Institutes for Research, 2006). Nonetheless, UN agencies as well as some NGOs continued to provide limited education services for children in both in urban and rural areas.

2. EDUCATION POLICIES POST-2004

2.2 OVERVIEW OF MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

The Afghan MoE is the governmental agency responsible for the national education system from primary school through the last year of schooling before university. As such, it also oversees religious, technical, and vocational training in the country. The vision of the ministry, as stated on its website, is to “develop human capital based on Islamic principle and respect for human rights by providing equitable access to quality education for all to enable them to actively participate in sustainable development, economic growth, stability and security of Afghanistan.” It strives to “accomplish this vision by implementing an inclusive plan that aims to enhance access, quality, relevance and management of educational delivery mechanisms in the years to come” (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, n.d., para 1).
The MoE is structured according to the National Education Strategic Plan for Afghanistan (NESP). The Minister of Education is the head of the institution and relies on the help of five deputy ministers each leading one of the five priority programs of the NESP. Under deputy ministers are provincial education directors who each have a number of directors in charge of implementing programs. Community, NGOs and the private sector are invited to participate in the NESP and participate in its development and implementation across the country (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2010). The MoE is the biggest employer of civil servants in Afghanistan (67 per cent), but only holds 15 per cent of the national budget (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, n.d., para 19). Because of the lack of financial resources, the MoE relies extensively on donors to implement its national plans.

The post-Taliban period, beginning in 2001, offered great promise for improvements in education outcomes in Afghanistan, mostly because of promising commitments from external donors to fund the rehabilitation of the education system. Important investments were made to improve primary and secondary level education, which in 2010 represented 89.3 per cent of the total national education budget (Giustozzi, 2010). Table 1 compares the size of Afghanistan's investment in primary and secondary education compared to similar countries in the same geographical region.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-primary</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>56.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>43.6</td>
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*Note:* Figures shown are percentages of education budgets  
*Source:* National Budgets
In 2007, the MoE drafted the NESP for the period 1385-1389\(^1\) (solar calendar years). The introductory message from the Minister of Education described this strategy as the:

…first attempt to collate corporate thinking and assess the current situation and challenges that affect this Ministry’s ability to meet the government's obligations towards education as stated in the 1382 [2002] Constitution, its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals for 1399 [2015] and the intermediate targets set in the Afghanistan Compact benchmark for 1389 [2011], [and a] foundation for rebuilding the education system of Afghanistan. (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2007, p.9).

This quote is especially telling of the historical importance this strategy had for entirely rethinking the structure of the education system in Afghanistan as the country began a new political era. The primary goal of the plan was to “ensure that all children and adults have access to education” (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2007, p.9). As such, the strategy was presented as one that was national in scope but local in focus and delivery. New strategies continued to be developed from 2007 onward, approximately every five years.

### 2.3 MOST RECENT NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICIES IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan’s most recent education policies are established in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and national Education for All (EFA)\(^2\) goals for

<table>
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<th>Highlights</th>
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<tr>
<td>• National Education Policies are outlined in five year NESP and aim to ensure access to education to all children and adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Recent NESP structured around five programs tackling access to education, quality of curriculum and teaching, vocational and technical education, adult literacy and education administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Monitoring of education has improved in recent years through the creation of a monitoring body and the introduction of national learning assessment pilots in 2012</td>
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\(^1\) Afghanistan follows the Solar Calendar which is approximately 621 years behind the Gregorian calendar. Thus the 1386 goes from March 2007 to March 2008. Quotes from the national strategic plans will have years stated according to the solar calendar with western years in square brackets.

\(^2\) The Education for All (EFA) movement is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. The movement was launched at the World Conference on Education for All in 1990 by UNESCO.
The EFA goals aim to: expand and improve early childhood care and education; ensure that all children have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality; ensure equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programs; achieve a 50 per cent improvement in adult literacy, especially for women; eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education and ensure gender equality in education; and finally improve all aspects of the quality of education (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2007). For the past decade, the country has elaborated and implemented national plans targeting the provision of education aligning with these goals.

Before discussing national programs for improving the state of education in Afghanistan, it is important to take a look at the financing structure. Afghanistan, as previously noted, is a post-conflict state, meaning that there still exists a continued risk of conflict and overall low government capacity (Rose, 2006). Thus, financial pressure is an additional burden on a government that already has many issues competing for attention. The demand for education is continuously increasing while national financial resources are decreasing due to the withdrawal of international partners. National policies are therefore developed in a way to attract investment from donor agencies. This is observable through the emphasis on national policies on demonstrating or establishing reliability and monitoring for the use of financial resources. Furthermore, the recent strategic plan has focused on securing additional funding assistance: a particular sub goal of the most recent plan is to attract funding from other Islamic countries in order to develop the Islamic curriculum taught in schools.

2.3.1 NATIONAL EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2010-2014

Following the first NESP, the MoE presented in 2009 NESP II, which covered the period 2010-2014. The goal of this revised plan was to identify, establish, and plan for the realization of substantial targets “encompassing both equitable access to education and the quality of

UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank. Participants endorsed an 'expanded vision of learning' and pledged to universalize primary education and massively reduce illiteracy by the end of the decade. (quoted from UNESCO website)
education delivered and received” (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2010, p.3) The change in language in the second NESP showed an interest in improving equity of access, instead of the previous goal of universal access. The second NESP was elaborated with inputs from a variety of stakeholders including a diversity of development partners such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank and the National Education Board (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2010).

NESP II articulated five specific programs: (1) to provide all school-age children equitable access without discrimination to quality education to acquire competencies needed for a healthy individual, family and social life, and to further their higher education; (2) to provide quality textbooks and learning materials according to the new curriculum, based on Islamic principles and national values, in light of modern educational standards and the present and future needs of the society; (3) to provide relevant and quality technical and vocational education for both males and females in order to enable them to meet the requirements of the labor market in Afghanistan and the region, and to contribute to the equitable and balanced development of the country; (4) to provide literacy to male and female aged fifteen and above in order to enable them to develop their knowledge and potential and participate fully in their community and wider society; and finally (5) to provide a proper conducive and safe learning and administrative environment for all students and educational staff through balanced development of education infrastructure throughout the country (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2010).

Each program was planned to be implemented by a deputy minister with cooperation from NGOs, the community, and the private sector. Program performance was set to be reviewed every six months and midterm and final evaluations were scheduled in order to assess progress in implementation (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2010).

2.3.2 NATIONAL EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2020

The most current NESP, NESP III, was published in June 2014 and covers the period 2015-2020. It was developed from lessons learned during the implementation of NESP II. An
important difference from the previous NESP is the increased emphasis placed on monitoring and evaluation. The most recent NESP shares the same programs as the previous one (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2014). This is because the dire situation of education in Afghanistan has required immense investment just to ensure the minimum; reconstruction and construction of schools and ensuring that teachers are paid. Girls and women’s access to education also remains an important part of the national strategy, with sub-goals specifically addressing the situation of girls and women in the first, second, and fourth programs (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2014).

Monitoring and evaluation in NESP III places a greater emphasis on coordination between different levels of governmental departments as well as among all non-governmental actors including multilateral and bilateral organizations, NGOs, and the private sector for monitoring activities.

2.3.3 ROLE OF COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND MADRASAS IN THE AFGHAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

The MoE defines a community-based school as an outreach school or class, jointly established by the MoE, communities and facilitating partners, and/or the MoE and the community, in remote, rural and sparsely populated areas (villages). A community-based school can be established provided the MoE determined criteria of need, demand, distance as well community commitment and participation are met. Community-based schools are monitored by the Community-Based Education Directorate of the MoE (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2012). The goal of establishing community-based education (CBE) is to “provide access to quality basic education (grades 1-9) for girls and boys in remote and marginalized rural and semi-urban areas, including Kochis and minorities, where access to existing MoE facilities is impractical due to distance or the children are older than the policy permits and they cannot join formal MoE schools” (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2012, p.10). MoE sees CBE as an integral part of the general education system in the country (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2012).
In the latest NESP, the MoE encouraged implementing partners to participate in the setting up of CBE in remote rural areas, and reaffirmed that these CBEs would be gradually incorporated to the official education system (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2014). While CBEs are, in principle, not directly targeted towards religious education, the madrasas are. In 2014, there were 772 government and fifteen private madrasas officially registered with the Afghan government. The actual number of madrasas is believed to be much higher since most are not formally registered. Despite efforts to register madrasas and better control the content of their curricula, the government admits that it currently only has limited capacity to oversee and influence the madrasas. Government efforts to reform and provide better oversight on the quality of education given in madrasas aims not only to improve the educational situation in Afghanistan, but also to slow down the movement of students to madrasas in Pakistan, which tend to be more radical in their teachings (Borchgrevink, 2013). NESP III plans to increase the number of registered madrasas to 1,165 by 2020 (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2014).

2.4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

A central tool for monitoring and evaluation at the MoE is the Education Management Information System (EMIS) which was deployed in 2012 at the provincial level to improve and accelerate data collection for monitoring and evaluation. The EMIS is managed by the Central EMIS Directorate, working in cooperation with the Academic Supervision Department. Other monitoring tools put in place include the Employee Registration System and the Literacy Information System. The EMIS system, because of its recent creation and other issues plaguing education in Afghanistan, is faced with numerous challenges that make some of the data produced unreliable or not available in a timely manner. Key educational indicators remain hard to track including net enrollment rate, dropout rate, net intake rate, and data regarding children with disabilities (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2014).

Data collected through the EMIS is used to guide the review of national education policies. The MoE, together with the Education Development Board, organizes annual meetings to review education performance in Afghanistan. Invited to such meetings are officials from the MoE,
NGOs, private sector education partners, and external funding partners. These meetings review progress made in the previous fiscal year, propose work-plans and budgets for the next fiscal year, review monitoring of progress against targets, monitoring of use of resources and expenditure, and monitoring of partners’ contributions to the budget for education. External reviews and studies are also commissioned to assess actual outcomes of the NESP and are used as tools during performance review meetings. A mid-term and final assessments are also carried out. Lessons learned from these are incorporated in the drafting of upcoming NESP (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, n.d.).

Learning assessments were not, until very recently, tracked on a national scale. Certain NGOs and other actors use various measures for learning outcomes, but this remains rare and inconsistent. In 2012 the MoE hired the Australian Council for Educational Research to support the development of a national learning assessment program in Afghanistan. The result of this engagement, called the Monitoring Trends in Educational Growth (MTEG) program, was a program designed as a “long-term monitoring program with one focus on trends in achievement outcomes in single class levels over time, and another focus on the growth of achievement in cohorts throughout the school cycle, from Class 3 through Class 9” (Lumley, Mendelovits, Stanyon, Turner, & Walker, 2015, p.3).

MTEG assessment of students in Afghanistan follows the following schedule

![Graph 1: MTEG Assessment Schedule in Afghanistan](image)
The first assessment of grade six students happened as seen in the schedule in 2013. A total of 110 schools and 5,979 students participated in the assignment and were used as a proxy for assessing the 361,172 students estimated to be in the Class six population across the thirteen provinces. The examination consisted of a 1.5 hour test containing questions assessing mathematical, reading, and writing skills. This test was followed by a background questionnaire of approximately half an hour that asked about student background, including his or her family, living conditions, and attitudes towards school, reading, and mathematics. The results of MTEG 2013 of class six can be summarized in three key points:

1. Students in the Class six population demonstrated a wide range of mathematical, reading and writing literacy.

2. The majority of students demonstrated “basic proficiencies” defined as the ability to do basic mathematical operations, identify directly stated information in short texts on familiar topics; and write one or two very basic sentences.

3. A substantial minority of students in the same population are however, incapable of demonstrating such “basic proficiencies”.

The MTEG is expected to improve the tracking of achievements in the future, which will truly allow monitoring for the quality of education provision in the country (Lumley, Mendelovits, Stanyon, Turner, & Walker, 2015).

Future plans to improve the monitoring and evaluation system of the MoE as outlined in the latest NESP include computerizing administrative procedures such as student registration and teacher recruitment at provincial, district, and school levels; and collecting data on key indicators in a disaggregated manner to better track data in disadvantaged groups (children with disabilities, linguistic, and ethnic minorities, etc.). Furthermore, ongoing plans to centralize all monitoring tools by integrating them to the central EMIS are underway. Finally, underlying these efforts is a commitment to keep all data publically available (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2014). Currently, all data and information are available online to stakeholders through the websites of the MoE and EMIS.

2.5. SUCCESS IN THE POST-TALIBAN ERA
Success in the Post-Taliban era is described enthusiastically on the MoE website. They claim that right after the Taliban era in 2002, “the newly established Government of Afghanistan inherited a disabled and defunct education system” with less than a million students for 20,000 teachers with almost no female participation; only 34,000 schools – most of which were located in “unusable buildings”; no standard national curriculum or textbooks; only four training centers for teachers with a total of 400 students; only 1,500 boys enrolled in technical or vocational schools; and finally, 220 unregulated madrasas lacking formal curriculums (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, n.d., para 3).

The MoE claims “substantial progress” since 2002 in the shape of a seven-fold increase in the number of enrolled students, the recruitment and training of teachers and building of thousands of schools. Specific claims from the MoE include:

- Enrollment of seven million children, 37 per cent of whom are girls,
- Construction of 4,500 school buildings,
- Eight-fold increase in the number of teachers to 170,000, 30 per cent of whom are female,
- Increase in the number of training centers for teachers from four to 42 with at least one per province and with male and female boarding facilities,
- Increase in the number of technical and vocational schools to 60 with 20,000 students, 30 per cent of which are female,
- Registration of over 480 madrasas,
Re-opening of 673 schools that had been closed due to insurgency (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, n.d. para 3).

How much should we trust the stories of success coming out of Afghanistan? According to recent reports, a number of education issues remain unresolved, misreported, or even overlooked. Key among these issues is the perceived lack of accountability from the government of Afghanistan, misrepresentation of actual quantitative progress made by Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban in education, and an imbalance of power in some regions of the country where the Taliban continues to control the population.

In a 2014 statement, The US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) reported seven areas of high risk to the success of the U.S. reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan; the first of which was the level of corruption as well as absence of rule of law. The report called corruption “one of the most serious threats to the US-funded Afghanistan reconstruction effort” (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2015, p.9). This corruption “alienates key elements of the population, discredits the government and security forces, undermines international support, subverts state functions and rule of law, robs the state of revenue and creates barriers to economic growth” (DOD, 2014, p.1).

2015 was the year of multiple investigations and revelations arguing that education success stories in Afghanistan had been exaggerated through an inflation of statistics regarding the number of schools, students, and teachers. For example, regarding the opacity of statistics provided by the MoE in Afghanistan the SIGAR observed in May 2015 that the Afghan education system marks absent students as "enrolled" for up to three years before dropping them from the school rolls. About 1.55 million “absent” students (students not attending schools) were thusly included in the 8.35 million students reported by the government as enrolled in 2014 (Putz, 2015).

Furthermore, education officials from the new government under Ashraf Ghani have reported to the SIGAR that some insecure parts of the country entirely lack any active schools, and that
former education officials (from the Karzai administration) fabricated statistics, embezzled money, and interfered with university entrance exams (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2015). This means that much of the funds were not used to build schools or train teachers as intended (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2015). These issues have thereby led to criticism from academics and education policy professionals.

### 2.6 Critiques of Education Policies

The efficient implementation of education policies is problematic in a post-conflict and reconstruction context, in addition to the many traditional practices and unequal gender relations that exist in Afghanistan. Many education specialists have paid attention to these constraints, but have nonetheless articulated critiques of both the government for failing to implement policies efficiently and financial partners, who often fail to coordinate and provide their support in a manner that facilitates the implementation of government-led educational policies (Munsch, 2005). The instability of Afghanistan affects education negatively as the Taliban and other insurgent groups attack schools, often forcing parents to send their kids to the madrasas in order to continue with their education. It was reported in 2009 that just in the south of Afghanistan, attacks by insurgent groups have closed more than 630 schools, depriving 300,000 students of an education (Irin News, 2009).

Efforts by insurgents to shut down formal school include armed attacks, intimidation, and propaganda. These attacks serve the double purpose of attacking the presence of the democratic government while encouraging parents to send their sons to madrasas in Pakistan, which as mentioned previously, often tend to teach religious extremism (Irin News, 2009). The madrasas, while offering more safety from the Taliban, also provide free room and board, making this option more attractive to poorer families.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Key critiques of education provision in Afghanistan</th>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Focus on quantity rather than quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Shortage and low quality of teachers and faculty</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Lack of adequate physical and learning facilities</td>
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<td>➢ Outdated curricula</td>
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<td>➢ Lack of suitable textbooks</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Absence of a comprehensive national strategy for science, technology, and vocational training</td>
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<td>➢ Political weakness of government in areas controlled by the Taliban</td>
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The government has succeeded in reopening some schools in the South that were closed due to attacks, but these re-openings were only made possible through a series of compromises made on the part of the government to appease insurgent groups (Giustozzi, 2010).

Security issues, however, do not completely explain some of the failures to improve the state of education in the country. While most sources have recognized that big strides in improving the education profile in Afghanistan have been achieved since 2002 (Giustozzi, Oxfam, Samady), they have also condemned the focus on quantity rather than quality as well as many significant shortcomings including a shortage and low quality of teachers and faculty, lack of adequate physical and learning facilities, outdated curricula, lack of suitable textbooks, and the absence of a comprehensive national strategy for science, technology, and vocational training (Oxfam, Care, et al., 2011).

One author in particular has discussed a perceived softness from the government of Afghanistan, which, in the search for compromise, has demonstrated lack of strong political will allowing certain communities to renegotiate the terms of education provision, including the curriculum for the wrong reasons. For example, the government has been forced to compromise on the amount of religious studies tolerated in the curriculum in order for Taliban to agree to the reopening of schools in the South. The author insists that this uncertain attitude towards the conservative challenge is an important problem that the government has yet to successfully tackle. Furthermore, he argues that this uncertainty, coupled with low quality of education provision - which is especially apparent in rural areas - has decreased the population’s enthusiasm for state-provided education in favor of the madrasas (Giustozzi, 2010).

In general, it is agreed that the implementation of education policies is highly dependent on national security but also political, social, and cultural issues as well (Samady, 2013). There remains an important gap in education quality that needs to be addressed in order to ensure proper functioning of the educational system. Success in improving education in Afghanistan greatly depends on good governance but also on the ability to secure enough financial resources to fund national strategies. Therefore, multilateral and bilateral donors as well as NGOs have an important role to play in assisting the MoE in achieving in goals.
When reviewing the contributions of outside donors and actors on the education system in Afghanistan, the paramount role of multilateral donors is evident. There are several multilateral donors, including the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) and UNICEF, currently implementing and overseeing projects in the education sector in Afghanistan. This section will outline these two multilateral donors’ recent projects, challenges, metrics/monitoring tools, and future funding scenarios if known, and will conclude by highlighting their best practices.

1. ARTF

The largest of the multilateral donors is the ARTF, which is managed by the World Bank. Overall, the ARTF provides the largest source of on-budget financing for development in Afghanistan (ARTF, 2014). Therefore, the projects implemented are large-scale and have huge available funds. The ARTF has been present in Afghanistan since March 2002 and contains three components: the Recurrent Window that funds wages, operations and maintenance projects except for security; the Investment Window that funds the Afghan government’s National Priority Programs; and the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan that funds security including the police and prisons (Brannelly, Ndaruhutse & Rigaud, 2009).

There are more than thirty donors that contribute to the ARTF (ARTF, 2014), with the majority of funds coming from the U.S., UK, Netherlands, Canada and the European Community. When making contributions to the fund, earmarking by donors is prohibited. Of the three components, the largest budget is for the Recurrent Window funding the National Priority Programs, which includes paying teacher salaries. Salaries are low, but thanks to the ARTF, are regularly distributed on time. The ARTF channels some of their funds through NGOs, especially in rural areas, setting them apart from other multilateral donors (Brannelly et al, 2009).
The financing strategy of the ARTF was designed in collaboration with the 24 donors, the Afghan government, and the World Bank. The ARTF funds began being dispersed in 2002 with approximately USD 184 million disbursed per year, to the most recent proposal for 2015-2017 totaling USD 2.7 billion. Therefore, future funding is planned until at least 2017. The ARTF’s goal (as put forth in a World Bank publication) is to align as closely as possible with the national government’s priorities and development plans. Since 2012, donors have agreed that at least 80 per cent of funds must align with the Afghan government’s priorities. This is crucial, as one of the challenges highlighted in the literature review was the large amount of off-budget funding. Governance reform and fighting corruption are key priorities for the ARTF in Afghanistan. Importantly, the financing strategy mentions the importance of gender mainstreaming in all funded projects and uses a Gender Stock-Taking Report to “ensure gender mainstreaming across all relevant projects” (ARTF, ARTF Financing, n.d., p.14). While not providing details on what the “relevant” projects are exactly, gender indicators are put in place and gender disaggregated data is encouraged. ARTF attempts to mainstream gender throughout its projects by including gender-specific targets and indicators, providing gender-specific technical support, including gender teams during project implementation and including gender aspects in evaluations and studies (ARTF, 2014). The ARTF is setting a good example by aligning the majority of their funds with the Afghan government’s national priorities. This sets their programs up for long-term success. However, their gender mainstreaming is vague and they do not provide sufficient details on indicators/benchmarks used in evaluation. In addition, fighting corruption is one of the ARTF’s main goals, but corruption indexes continue to rate Afghanistan as a highly corrupt country (Scanteam Analysts and Advisors, 2012).

The ARTF’s projects are wide-reaching and impact approximately 8.1 million Afghans across 34 provinces, among which 38 per cent are women. The Investment Window is currently funding 23 projects in different sectors, including education. Thanks to the ARTF education projects, 7.8
million children (38 per cent of which are female) have been enrolled in a school, 6,805 classrooms have been repaired or constructed, 160,515 teachers have been trained, and 18,980 Afghans have received skill development training (30 per cent of which are female) (ARTF, *ARTF Financing*, n.d.). While the ARTF projects have great success, it is disappointing that they do not achieve 50 per cent female beneficiaries in their programs; this highlights the shortcomings in their approach.

Monitoring of the ARTF and funded projects is done by third parties. One Monitoring Agent oversees the Recurrent Cost Window, while a Supervisory Agent oversees activities for the Investment Window. The Monitoring Agent monitors the civilian operating budget for eligibility, performs automated desk reviews of all recurrent cost expenditures, and performs risk-based reviews of expenditures, including site visits. The Supervisory Agent carries out asset verification, quality assurance, and data mapping of projects including education projects. In addition, the Supervisory Agent provides the ARTF with credible and verified data that is used for policy making (ARTF, *ARTF Financing*, n.d.).

One evaluation of ARTF projects, the ARTF Scorecard, is done internally by the World Bank in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance of the Afghan government. A concern should be raised as to the honesty and accuracy of internal evaluations. In any case, this evaluation provides a macro-level analysis of ARTF funded projects. The scorecard is evaluated on four pillars:

- 1st pillar: measures progress in development based on the Afghan government’s national priorities and the MDGs,
- 2nd pillar: measures the success achieved towards intended results,
- 3rd pillar: measures the satisfactory performance of ARTF’s entire portfolio,
- 4th pillar: measures how efficiently ARTF is performing in the Afghan context.

The data used in these evaluations is generally provided by the ARTF-funded projects themselves in addition to drawing on the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment survey carried out in Afghanistan as well as other World Bank data sources. General results regarding education shows overall improvement over the past five years (from 2007-2011) with all
education indicators, including gender markers, showing a positive advancement. This is mainly due to higher school attendance rate increases from 42 per cent for girls and 60 per cent for boys in 2007, to 48 per cent and 64 per cent in 2011 respectively. In addition, significant improvements were made through other ARTF projects that indirectly benefit the education sector, such as access to electricity, access to water and sanitation services, and access to roads. However, overall levels of poverty remained the same at around 36 per cent of the population living below the poverty line. It is important to understand these successes within their context; huge amounts of resources were put into ARTF projects and they were carried out over five years. As already discussed in the previous chapter, the main challenges noted in the evaluation in implementing projects are security and political instability (ARTF, 2014). In addition, it should be noted that the increases in enrollment rates claimed by ARTF are very similar to numbers boasted by the Afghan national government. While ARTF does indeed work directly with the Afghan government, we should question the increases in enrollment rates that are a direct result of ARTF projects, which is impossible to discern from their published results.

The Education Quality Improvement Project (EQUIP) was ARTF’s first project focused on primary and secondary education in Afghanistan. The project was approved on June 1, 2005 and ended on March 31, 2010. The grant amounted to USD 44 million with a project objective to "improve the quality of educational inputs and processes as the foundation for a long-term strategy to enhance the quality of educational outcomes" (ARTF, 2015, Project Objective, para 1). The results of this project included 6.11 million children enrolled in school, 48,473 female teachers trained and employed, and the completion and implementation of a National Education Strategy (ARTF, 2015). Monitoring and evaluation of this specific project was done using surveys completed as a baseline and at the end of the second year, yearly surveys to monitor cost, impact and implementation of the new funding scheme, annual school mapping, evaluation of construction, and student assessments (World Bank, n.d.). While the ARTF claims to monitor student assessments, there are no details available on how this is measured. In addition, further information on results achieved, such as dropout or completion rates, is not readily available.

The follow-up project, Education Quality Improvement Project II (EQUIP II) was approved on August 14, 2009 and closed on August 15, 2014. This grant was much larger at USD 408 million and a project objective to "increase equitable access to quality basic education especially for
girls through school grants, teacher training and strengthened institutional capacity with support from communities and private providers" (ARTF, *Active Portfolio*, n.d. Project Objective, para 1). This project, fully aligned with NESP, built upon EQUIP by offering community grants to all government registered schools throughout the entire country. The MoE was in charge of overseeing the implementation of the entire project. Half of the grant focused on primary education, while the other half was dedicated to secondary education. The main goal of EQUIP II was to increase quality education throughout Afghanistan, especially for girls. The expected outcomes from the project include a 25 per cent increase in enrollment for girls and a 20 per cent increase in enrollment for boys. Gender considerations played a more distinct role in EQUIP II than in the first EQUIP project. There were several challenges for this project, including security and political concerns as well as socio-cultural challenges for women and girls in Afghanistan. It was noted that promoting girls’ education without "triggering a political and social backlash" requires flexibility. Implementation of this project was monitored by the Afghan MoE as well as World Bank representatives (ARTF, 2008, p.9).

Data for monitoring and evaluation of EQUIP II was collected from a variety of sources including school *shuras* (community decision-making bodies), through public auditing, NGOs, and other MoE and EQUIP personnel. Evaluations took place by independent third parties at the macro-level and gave an overview of certain provinces and areas that will be generalized for the whole country (ARTF, 2008). This project is still open and being evaluated so future evaluations will provide additional information. However, several notable successes of the two ARTF projects have already been reported. For example, school enrollment rates have increased from one million in 2002 to more than seven million by 2011, 37 per cent of which are girls; more than 137,000 teachers have been given training, including 39,000 female teachers; more than 11,600 school principals completed training, although only 618 are female; more than 3,300 female teachers are being offered scholarships to attend training sessions; and more than 1,600 new schools have been constructed (ARTF, *Results*, n.d.). Again, this ARTF project uses national enrollment figures and attributes the overall enrollment increases as directly due to their projects, however, this causation cannot be verified. Lastly, of the 11,600 school principals trained, only a fraction of these were women. This is disappointing considering the emphasis ARTF claimed to place on positively impacting gender equality.
However, despite these successes, the World Bank’s *Evaluation of World Bank Programs in Afghanistan 2002-2011* outlined several shortcomings and challenges in implementing the two EQUIP projects (2013). One main issue is that EQUIP and EQUIP II focused on access to education and enrollment numbers with less attention given to the quality of the education being offered. Also, despite the emphasis on girls’ education improvements in the project design, more than 30 per cent of schools constructed through EQUIP grants "do not comply with the gender-equity criteria necessary for girls’ attendance" (World Bank, 2013, p.51). In particular, 50 per cent of schools were missing separate girls’ latrines and boundary walls; two significant barriers to girls’ attendance rates. A second issue involved monitoring and evaluation of the projects. It was noted that the overall design of EQUIP "placed little emphasis on results or on monitoring and evaluation" (World Bank, 2013, p.50). Other donors also called attention to the little emphasis and lack of concern regarding monitoring and evaluation as well. In particular, challenges in the monitoring and evaluation systems for learning achievements such as literacy rates and numeracy were noted. In addition, monitoring does not account for girls’ dropout rates, which are estimated to be significant. Other shortcomings of the projects were highlighted, including the project’s lack of "strategic vision" and lack of clear policy options in the initial Needs Assessments completed; little coordination with other donors and actors working in the education sector; and evidence of "leakage in the use of funds" that most likely limited the tangible results that were actually accomplished (World Bank, 2013, p.50). In conclusion, ARTF undertakes large scale projects, however, results should be understood within their context and can be compared to other large-scale actors, such as UNICEF.

2. UNICEF

Another multilateral UN agency working in the education sector in Afghanistan is UNICEF. Following the Taliban’s downfall in 2001, UNICEF began a strong partnership with the Afghan government in the education and health sectors. Similar to the ARTF, UNICEF’s projects are implemented in partnership with the government of Afghanistan. UNICEF specifically focuses on supporting the MoE, capacity development for school administrators and creating an information management system. UNICEF claims all projects are gender-sensitive and there is a noticeable emphasis on enhancing girls’ educational prospects in addition to other vulnerable children (UNICEF, 2011). UNICEF generates all of its revenue from donations by individuals,
businesses, foundations and governments. The yearly budget for education projects in Afghanistan amount to approximately USD 40 million and focuses on the following four areas in the education sector: (1) access and retention, (2) improving the quality of education, (3) increasing female literacy rates, and (4) education in emergency settings (UNICEF, 2011).

In 2001, UNICEF began the Back-to-School campaign that resulted in great success. Claimed to be one of UNICEF’s largest operations anywhere, Back-to-School efforts mobilized communities, enrolled children, prepared and improved school conditions, and created a curriculum and entirely new educational structure across all 32 provinces in the country. More than three million children began school for the first time in their lives, more than one third of whom were girls. In 2002 there were more children enrolled in school than at any other time in Afghanistan’s history, largely thanks to UNICEF’s Back-to-School efforts (UNICEF, 2003). Similarly to the ARTF, UNICEF’s budgets are extremely large and therefore results must be weighed against the amount of resources contributed.

The success of UNICEF’s project is attributed to the fact that UNICEF was working directly with the interim government that was in place which allowed for nation-wide coordination. Through the project, a variety of learning environments were supported including home schooling and other informal settings. UNICEF and the government of Afghanistan worked together in mobilization and communication activities to spread the word about schools re-opening through radio programs, arts, posters and advertisements, community meetings and more. School supplies were provided to students and teachers through distributed stationary kits, as well as almost three million textbooks, and 18,000 chalkboards. Teachers were also reached and encouraged to return to teaching (UNICEF, n.d.). This outreach approach proved a successful tool, but is certainly only possible with large-scale budgets.

In the following years UNICEF continued to be a main partner of the Afghan government in the education sector. In 2004, the Back-to-School campaign continued with the goal of enrolling an additional one million students. Construction and improvements for school buildings continued, in addition to teacher training programs. Girls were specifically targeted through accelerated learning courses for girls (girls only) over the average school age and through the establishment of community-based schools in villages with low enrollment rates for girls (not clear if girls only;
possibly enrolled girls and boys). Besides the Back-to-School campaign, UNICEF was active in other smaller-scale projects as well.\(^3\) UNICEF funded approximately USD 34 million in education-related projects in 2004 (UNICEF, 2004).

In order to continue reaching out-of-school children, UNICEF’s future funding budget for 2015-2019 amounts to USD 132 million. Therefore, like ARTF, funding from UNICEF is planned well in advance and is ensured until at least 2019. The focus will be specifically on the poorest and hardest to reach regions of the country. In addition, UNICEF will work with the government on addressing children’s rights violations and other social protection issues. A focus on girls’ education will continue and more female teachers will be targeted. CBE programs will continue because of the success achieved in the previous years. UNICEF will continue working with the Afghan government and ensure that the projects are aligned with national policies and priorities (UNICEF, Afghanistan, 2014).

Monitoring of UNICEF projects is done by UNICEF itself in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As with the ARTF, internal evaluations should be read with caution. Reviews are completed twice yearly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to monitor progress. The UN Development Assistance Framework monitoring and evaluation framework is followed. In the future, UNICEF claimed they will support independent and government sponsored evaluations of all projects (UNICEF, Afghanistan, 2014). All of UNICEF’s projects are evaluated using the Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS). GEROS is a UNICEF organization that manages and oversees evaluation reports and ensures that all evaluations are assessed by an independent third party. The GEROS evaluation of UNICEF regarding gender and education in Afghanistan between 2003-2012 assessed "the extent to which UNICEF has engaged strategically in education sector policy articulation and

\[^{3}\text{See, for example, the ‘1,000 classrooms’ project implemented in coordination with the government of Japan}\]
advocacy. It also assessed how far upstream engagement efforts have supported better policy and practice in the education sector and helped to strengthen systems across the sector” (UNICEF, Unicef’s Upstream, 2014, p.3). The evaluation goal was to measure the sustainable impact that UNICEF projects have had regarding the overall impact on policies and educational standards, and the overall capacity of the education sector (UNICEF, Unicef’s Upstream, 2014).

Evaluation results from a Mokoro Limited evaluation concluded that UNICEF has had a large influence and made a valuable contribution to rebuilding the education system in Afghanistan since 2003, especially through strengthening systems, advocating for specific policies, and delivering services through their projects. Negative remarks included criticism for not communicating or sharing reports sufficiently with other donors. Also, UNICEF was judged to not be monitoring their interventions in a satisfactory manner. However, UNICEF was effective in reaching girls and advocating for female teachers in addition to influencing policy for CBE. Overall, UNICEF has maintained its reputation as a reliable and efficient actor in the Afghanistan education system (UNICEF, UNICEF’s Upstream, 2014). Indeed, UNICEF’s efforts at advancing girls’ education specifically in Afghanistan have had a larger impact than ARTF’s projects. This could be due to the insistence on targeting women and girls specifically. However, disappointingly, results regarding dropout and completion rates of students in UNICEF sponsored projects is not available. Also, it is important to highlight the criticism that UNICEF is not collaborating with other donors because it would be interesting to know the impact that coordination between large multilateral donors could make on reforming the education sector.

In addition, other sources have highlighted the challenges UNICEF faces in implementing projects. A 2015 report released by UNICEF confirmed that continuing conflict throughout the country negatively impacts children’s access and ability to attend school. Attacks on schools are frequent, with more than 1,200 reported since 2010. Conflict has led to more than 600,000 people being internally displaced within Afghanistan. Child labor rates are also very high meaning that working children, in addition to children with disabilities, children living in rural areas and children affected by conflict, are still often deprived of an education. In rural areas, an average of fifty girls go to school for every 100 boys, and around 3.5 million children are still out of school completely, 75 per cent of whom are girls. Despite increases in overall enrollment between 2010 and 2012 from 7.3 million to 8.6 million, girls’ enrollment rates increased only one
per cent during these three years (UNICEF, *Afghanistan*, 2014). UNICEF acknowledges several challenges to their work including weak security and continuing conflict in addition to harmful traditional practices such as early marriage and other deeply rooted cultural biases against girls' education (UNICEF, 2011).

As stated throughout, the projects implemented by ARTF and UNICEF represent two of the largest contributions to the education sector in Afghanistan. These projects, as well as future projects, including the implementation, monitoring and results, should be continuously examined by the international community as there is no denying their influence and impact on the education sector.

3. BEST PRACTICES AMONG MULTILATERAL DONORS

Best practices among the two multilateral donors were chosen based on successes highlighted in independent evaluations and mainly focus on how aid is aligned and their coordination with the Afghan government. The ARTF and UNICEF are extremely important donors in the education system in Afghanistan because of the huge amount of financial resources they bring. Therefore, their successes need to be reviewed in this context of their enormous budgets and long-term projects. A best practice for ARTF and UNICEF is the fact that the majority of their funds are on-budget, meaning they align with the Afghan national government’s priorities and development plans. Both organizations have strong partnerships with the Afghan government (ARTF, *ARTF Financing*, n.d.; UNICEF, *Afghanistan*, 2014) and at least 80 per cent of ARTF funds are aligned (ARTF, *ARTF Financing*, n.d.) This is important for sustainability purposes; if ARTF or UNICEF limits their direct involvement, it is more likely that the programs will continue to have positive impact if they are also supported by the Afghan government.
Over the past several years, bilateral donors have played a pivotal role in administering aid to improve the teaching and learning environment in Afghanistan, as well as building capacity within the Afghan MoE. As Laura Brannelly, Susy Ndaruheutse, and Carole Rigaud, authors of the United Nation's Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) document *Donors’ Engagement: Supporting education in fragile and conflict-affected states* note, “the ultimate responsibility for ensuring access to education for all lies with governments, but for many countries, especially the poorest, progress also depends heavily on support from the international community, especially donors” (Brannelly, Ndaruheutse, & Rigaud, 2009, p.23). The education system in Afghanistan is no exception, with total aid disbursed steadily increasing since 2002, and totaling USD 26.7 billion for the period 2002 to 2009, including bilateral aid, multilateral aid, and aid from other sources (Poole, 2011). The top five bilateral donors to Afghanistan are the United States, whose bilateral aid between 2002 and 2009 constitutes 40.9 per cent of all aid to Afghanistan during that period; EU Institutions at 7.8 per cent; the UK at 6.9 per cent; Germany at 4.8 per cent and Canada at 4.4 per cent (Poole, 2011). We will focus on aid from the U.S. and UK. This section will outline these two bilateral donors’ recent projects, challenges, metrics/monitoring tools, and future funding scenarios if known, and will conclude by highlighting their best practices.

1. USAID

The United States is overwhelmingly Afghanistan’s largest bilateral donor, and also the country to which the U.S. disburses the most aid (The World Bank, 2015). USAID is the primary agency responsible for administering foreign civilian aid on behalf of the United States. Before 2001, Afghanistan was the 69th largest recipient of Official Development Aid worldwide, but became the world’s leading aid recipient by 2008 (Poole, 2011). Since the September 11, 2001 attacks, foreign aid from the U.S. to Afghanistan and Iraq has increased as it is seen as a tool to promote peace and security. Furthermore, following the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan in
As of 2011, the U.S. had disbursed approximately USD 10.926 billion in bilateral aid to Afghanistan (Poole, 2011). Disbursements reached a peak in 2011 with USD 3.075 billion, decreasing to USD 2.773 billion in 2012 and USD 1.7 billion in 2013 (The World Bank, 2015).

Afghanistan’s turbulent history means that progress in both reconstruction, including of the education sector, as well as in MDG attainment is heavily reliant on foreign aid. However, while some aid is specifically allocated to human development sectors such as education, many bilateral donors prioritize peacebuilding and government capacity building. For example, of the sector allocable aid Afghanistan receives worldwide, the majority received between 2006 and 2009 went to social infrastructure and services (USD 12.025 billion); and of this portion, USD 5.198 billion was allocated to government and civil society while only USD 0.763 billion went towards rebuilding the education sector (Poole, 2011).

While most of the U.S.’s aid to Afghanistan is off-budget (in contrast to the ARTF and UNICEF), meaning that it does not go through the Afghan government, aid disbursement strategies have been shifting away from this type of donor-driven development toward capacity building for Afghan institutions (Senate Foreign Relations Committee, U.S. Senate, 2011). This can be noted in 2012 where, of the USD 2.137 billion aid administered by USAID, USD 1.028 billion went to democracy and governance while USD 0.0991 billion went to education and social services (USAID, Dollars to Results, 2012). Despite this change in approach, USAID continues to disburse funding for education, with USD 0.1625 billion being allocated to education and social services in 2014 (USAID, 2014). Of this total amount disbursed, USD 0.1227 billion was directed toward basic primary and secondary education while USD 0.0185 billion was allocated toward higher education (USAID, 2014). Since the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan has made significant progress in education with the help of donors such as USAID. In particular, since 2002, USAID has specifically contributed to this progress by having helped train more than 74,000 MoE teachers, with more than 22,000 being women, and distributing more than 114 million textbooks to school (USAID, n.d.). Furthermore, USAID targeting CBE between 2006 and 2011 has enabled approximately 105,000 students, more than 65 per cent of which are female, in remote villages to attend school (USAID, 2015). In 2013 alone more than one million
Afghan children enrolled in schools due to USAID assistance (USAID, 2015). Similarly to the multilateral donors, USAID's projects are implemented with huge amounts of resources which should be kept in mind when evaluating their success.

This progress is achieved through education-focused projects. USAID currently has eight ongoing projects in Afghanistan relating to education. Among them are the Basic Education Learning and Training (BELT) project, and the Increasing Access to Education and Gender Equality project. The longest of these projects is BELT, whose implementation period is from 2011 to 2020 with a budget of USD 500 million. Therefore, future funding scenarios for USAID include this project until at least 2020. BELT works with the MoE in doing activities such as teacher training, CBE, textbook printing and distribution, and overall capacity building (USAID, 2015). As of September 2015, the program saw 6,874 administrators and officials trained on education leadership, administration, and teaching strategies (approximately 20 per cent of whom are female); 61,880 educators received pre- and in-service training through the MoE Teacher Education Department (approximately 35 per cent of whom are female); and 48 million textbooks were provided to primary and secondary students across Afghanistan (USAID, 2015). Meanwhile, the Increasing Access to Education and Gender Equality project, which is taking place from May 2014 to May 2019, focuses more heavily on supporting the MoE in providing CBE to directly target the enrollment gap between girls and boys (USAID, 2015). This project is also included in future funding scenarios for USAID as the project is planned until at least 2019. The program has thus far completed the initial start-up phase of identifying communities where CBE schools will be located and hiring staff. The schools have been projected to open in ten provinces in March 2015, providing schooling for 20,000 students (USAID, 2015).

<table>
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<th>USAID</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Yearly budget:</strong> approximately USD 2 billion</td>
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<td><strong>Funded</strong> through the U.S. government</td>
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<td>Large-scale projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partners with multilateral donors and NGOs</td>
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<td><strong>Notable projects:</strong> PACE-A (see NGOs section) LCEP-II</td>
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<td><strong>Future Funding:</strong> Until at least 2020</td>
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<td><strong>Challenges:</strong> Transitioning to on-budget funding through the Afghan government</td>
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Over the past few years, USAID has completed several education projects in Afghanistan. Two specific programs are the Learning for Community Empowerment Program (LCEP-II) and the Partnership for Advancing Community-Based Education in Afghanistan (PACE-A) program. Both of these
projects were completed while coordinating with other agencies and organizations. While LCEP-II was carried out in partnership with UN Habitat, PACE-A was implemented in coordination with the NGO's CARE International, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Catholic Relief Service (CRS), and the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF). For this reason the PACE-A program will be further covered in the NGO section of this document. The LCEP-II program was carried out between January 2008 and January 2013 and was aimed at empowering young people across Afghanistan through the implementation of an “integrated literacy and productive skills program” (USAID, 2013, para 1). The main goals of the program were to expand the capacity of the MoE, launch a National Literacy Program in partnership with local communities and increase LCEP-II through new partnerships and networking with other actors in the education sector (Gillies, Dunn, Jebran, & Nomani, 2011). As the USAID project page for the LCEP-II further explains:

All participants acquire core literacy skills through a specially designed six-month curriculum, and then have access to small loans through a network of 14,000 Self Help Groups (SHG), the majority of which are managed by highly motivated women. LCEP-II learners can opt for apprenticeship training or for learning practical skills linked to local market demands given by skilled mentors from the local communities. Of the 15,000 young people who have participated in apprenticeships, at least 50 per cent have already found employment. LCEP-II includes an innovative ‘Skills for Employment’ module for 20,000 profoundly disadvantaged young people that promotes the concept of active citizenship, and that provides training in budgeting, communications, new technology, healthy lifestyles and working with local authorities. To date LCEP-II has enrolled more than 223,100 learners, 60 per cent of whom are women. Approximately 37 per cent of LCEP-II participants are from vulnerable communities that include internally displaced people, handicapped people, landless nomads, and women who run households on their own (USAID, 2013, para 1)

As the statement above shows, the project focused on training and teaching practical, marketable skills as well as improving access to credit. Women were strongly represented in different learning and participation groups of the project.
Funding for these USAID education projects pertain directly to their three main goals outlined in the USAID Education Strategy for 2011-2015. An updated strategy for 2016 and beyond is not readily available, however, the BELT and Increasing Access to Education and Gender Equality projects are planned for the following several years indicating USAID’s intention to remain in Afghanistan. USAID used the strategy to dictate investment choices for improving learning outcomes and institutional sustainability in partner countries (Butler et al., 2011). The three goals are as follows: “improved reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015; improved ability of tertiary and workforce development programs to generate workforce skills relevant to a country’s development goals; and increased equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments for 15 million learners by 2015” (Butler, et al., 2011, p.16). The LCEP-II program focuses specifically on Goal 2 since it focuses on the workforce and higher education objectives (USAID, Education Strategy Implementation Guidance, 2012). Metrics (outlined below) associated with measuring the effectiveness of programs toward the completion of this goal evaluate both the strengthening of tertiary education as well as workforce development (USAID, Education Strategy Technical Notes, 2012).

Following the 2011 USAID Education Strategy Implementation Guidance, a final evaluation of LCEP-II was performed by an external team: the Afghanistan Services Under Program and Project Offices for Results Tracking (SUPPORT) program and Checchi and Company Consulting, Inc. with sub Louis Berger Group. The evaluation found that focusing on roles of the SHG and the Community Bank (CB) in saving and lending was beneficial in generating income among the poorest of the poor. Training programs became demand driven, also benefitting the trainers by supplying free labor and community goodwill. The evaluation also noted that when it comes to women’s empowerment, the program showed promise. For example, 3,078 (60 per cent) of the Village Facilitators/literacy teachers were women along with 136,074 (60 per cent) women literacy learners, with 3,549 of them continuing on to government schools. However, how these gains in literacy for women do not necessarily translate into women being more empowered where there is no demand or productive role for literate women, which is difficult to measure but of upmost importance. However, LCEP-II helped in establishing 8,618 SHGs while about 2,800 (50 per cent) of the CB executive positions are held by women. And finally, 10,127 women participated in apprenticeships while 17,196 LCEP-II female literacy graduates participated in vocational training (Gillies et al, 2011).
The particular attention paid to girls follows directly from the 2011 USAID Education Strategy Implementation Guidance stating that since gender roles frequently change during crisis and conflict, “assumptions and observations should be revisited on an ongoing basis and assessed for continued validity,” and “women must not be excluded from the peace-building and stabilizing processes” (USAID, Education Strategy Implementation Guidance, 2012, p.29). The final evaluation also showed overall measures of success, with 100 per cent of individuals who participated in the apprenticeship program earning higher incomes than previously as well as showing improvements in other measures of livelihoods. For example, increased functional literacy enables people to more easily navigate their community (being able to distinguish shop signs) and also in completing other everyday tasks such as topping off a mobile phone on their own, helping children with homework, and participating in communal and civic affairs. While these results cannot necessarily be ascribed to the treatment, they are indicative of positive outcomes. Despite these praises, LCEP-II faced some challenges, especially when it comes to capacity building within the MoE and the Afghan government itself. The transition to on-budget funding is a challenging obstacle to overcome due to the lack of strong management skills and clear planning. While the long-standing presence in Afghanistan of UN-Habitat and LCEP are strategic for a tactical delivery of transition, the evaluation specifically calls for more assertiveness “about the need for a disciplined approach to this high profile and high risk initiative” (Gillies et al, 2011, p.3). Despite this weakness, LCEP-II has demonstrably helped communities across the twenty provinces in which it was implemented, as clearly shown above.

2. DFID

In addition to USAID assistance, the British government’s Department for International Development (DFID) has been a major actor in rebuilding the Afghan education system, especially in increasing access to and enrollment rates for young girls. DFID launched the Girls’ Education Challenge (GEC) in 2012 by selecting successful ongoing projects by NGOs, charities and the private sector to sponsor. This approach is in contrast to the projects undertaken by the multilateral donors which typically start from scratch in the sense that they initiate new ideas rather than building on what is already active. The projects were selected based on their past performance and potential to reach more girls in their respective region. GEC categorizes their selected projects under three funding windows: (1) Step Change which
includes funds to scale up existing successful projects; (2) Innovation which provides funds to projects that are using new interventions to reach hard-to-reach communities and marginalized girls, and (3) Strategic Partnerships which funds projects that focus on creating public-private partnerships (Department for International Development, 2015). Funding for these projects is planned until March 31, 2019 indicating DFID's intention to remain active (although indirectly) in Afghanistan until at least that date (UKaid, n.d.).

Through this process, a total of four projects in Afghanistan are being supported by the GEC (Griffiths, Krause, Poli, Greenwood & Baptist, 2015). The first project is titled "Steps Towards Afghan Girls’ Education Stages" and is funded through the step change funding window. This project targets 56,000 primary and secondary school-age girls as well as teachers in the Dari and Pashto speaking communities. The project enhances the quality of learning environments, increases literacy among adults in the community, trains teachers on gender-conscious teaching methods and also improves the relationship among relevant government actors in the education sector. This project was selected by DFID because of the innovative way in which it is using mobile phone technology to increase the communication between teachers and the community. In addition, the project has a teacher apprenticeship program for young girls to train and enable them to enter the teaching profession following the completion of school. In total, DFID has given more than Great British Pound (GBP) 34 million to further this project (UKaid, 2015).

The second project, "Community Based Education for Marginalized girls in Afghanistan", is also funded through the step change window. This project targets more than 105,000 marginalized girls among the Dari and Pashto speaking community by establishing CBE schools for girls in ten provinces, training teachers and mentors, and increasing the capacity of local partners and communities to make this project successful. DFID has given more than GBP 16 million for support. The third project is "Empowering Marginalized Girls in Afghanistan" and is also funded.
through the step change window. The main focus of this project is 15,000 primary school-aged girls among the Uzbek, Dari, and Pashto populations. With more than GBP 5 million in funding from DFID, the project increases access to school for girls, provides literacy courses, and six month long vocational training for marginalized girls (UKaid, 2015).

The last project, "Equal Access to Education for Nomadic Populations in Northern Afghanistan", is funded through the innovation window. The main focus is primary education in the Dari and Pashto speaking community and with more than GBP 1 million in funding, the project has reached approximately 1,200 marginalized girls in addition to 800 boys. This project targets girls among the nomad community, who typically face difficulties following the national school program due to their frequent movement. This project offers tuition for students to attend school, trains adults from the nomad community to act as teachers, and works with children's families to increase support for education. This project qualifies as particularly innovative because it offers year-round courses for nomad students to continue their education while not interfering with their traditional community way of life (UKaid, 2015).

GEC is still ongoing, but is being monitored and evaluated by Coffey, in partnership with RTI International, ORB and the University of East Anglia. The first three projects discussed above, all implemented under the step change window, were included in an evaluation published in January 2015. Coffey evaluated attendance rates, enrollment rates, retention, and learning outcomes for all 37 projects that GEC is supporting as well as inquired into possible barriers to girls’ education (because the projects were already established, this baseline survey was measuring their previous progress to use as a starting point). The data for the report came from primary sources collected by the projects themselves and also information collected by Coffey. This included 6,400 household surveys, 800 interviews, classroom observations and 13,000 learning assessments (UKaid, 2015).

The most frequently used methods for measuring learning assessments were the Early Grade Reading Assessment and the Early Grade Maths Assessment, or another similar testing mechanism of the project manager’s choice. Since this was only a baseline survey, the learning assessments were measuring girls’ previous progress and their current levels. Future evaluations will be able to measure progress directly attributable to project success after
receiving additional funds from DFID. For the Early Grade Reading Assessment girls were asked to identify specific letters, asked to read small words and texts, and given a test for their comprehension. Following this test, the resulting words read per minute by each student is compared to international benchmarks for their age in order to assess their level. When taking the Early Grade Maths Assessment, girls identified numbers and quantities, completed number patterns and identified missing numbers, and answered basic addition and subtraction problems. Results from the learning assessments completed on students in DFID’s three projects in Afghanistan showed that, in general, Afghan students begin with an above average literacy and reading rate, but do not increase their capacity much further in school. The reason for their initial high literacy may be because of the traditional family practice of reading the Qur’an (UKaid, 2015). It is difficult to know at this stage the impact that DFID’s support has had, therefore further evaluations that report on progress achieved should be reviewed. However, DFID’s overall focus on evaluating learning outcomes is quite rare, and despite the fact that it only focused on math and reading skills, it still demonstrates how this can be undertaken within the Afghan context.

Key qualitative findings from the project evaluations concluded that girls’ main barriers to education include poverty, insecurity and negative attitudes towards girls’ education – all barriers highlighted in our literature review and noted in several other studies. Certain communities were reportedly more strongly against girls’ education, such as the Pashto and the traditionally nomadic Kuchi. For others, their decisions of whether or not to send their daughter to school depended on the school’s alignment with their Islamic beliefs. Lastly, girls are often expected to marry young and tend to their households duties, leaving no time for furthering their education. For some, schools are simply located too far away from their home. For those who do attend school, they noted inadequate numbers of female teachers, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of school materials as barriers to education (UKaid, 2015). Again, further evaluations to be completed should be consulted for more conclusive results on the extent to which DFID-sponsored projects overcome these barriers.

The last of the four projects, "Equal Access to Education for Nomadic Populations in Northern Afghanistan" was funded through the innovation window and thus evaluated in a different report also published in January 2015. This evaluation was conducted by the same organizations (led
by Coffey) as those under the step change window. Qualitative data was collected through interviews in early 2014 to review the project of interest in Afghanistan. The use of qualitative data here is significant because most other evaluations rely on quantitative indicators. Detailed information was uncovered about the communities and culture (shown in chart below) that would not have been possible through quantitative data, such as what is "socially acceptable". The data showed that around 10 per cent of girls interviewed had never enrolled in school before, while approximately 37 per cent of girls had completed 1\textsuperscript{st} grade, with lower numbers having completed 2\textsuperscript{nd} and even lower for 3\textsuperscript{rd} grade. More than 80 per cent of families reported migrating during the year (Coffey, 2015).

The main challenges that were cited in the evaluation (that pertains to all 19 innovation window projects, not only those in Afghanistan) included: difficulty in reaching high goals of attendance and enrollment; inconclusive available evidence on the marginalized population; difficulty in targeting the most marginalized population and lack of data availability in certain areas (Coffey, 2015). The planned follow-up evaluations should be consulted for a more longitudinal and accurate review of DFID and GEC progress, however, DFID's specific focus on girls is unique, as well as their efforts at assessing learning outcomes.

As outlined in this section, bilateral aid has the potential to play a large role in the development of the education sector in Afghanistan. USAID and DFID are two of the most prominent bilateral donors and are implementing, or financing, multiple projects ongoing in the country. As explained above, all projects face challenges in their implementation. Despite these hardships, USAID and DFID plan to continue their presence in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future.

3. BEST PRACTICES AMONG BILATERAL DONORS

The best practices of the bilateral donors were chosen based on reports and evaluations of projects implemented by the two donors. Successful approaches and strategies are outlined below and highlight the focus on gender equality and working with smaller NGOs.
First and foremost, the centrality of gender to the aforementioned projects is vital to their success. This is seen in the way USAID uses the gender focus of its Education Strategy to dictate their projects and planning and the explicit focus by GEC on girls. Both bilateral donors partner with smaller NGOs on the ground who have long-standing presence in Afghanistan and can more effectively monitor project implementation and follow-up. For example, DFID’s GEC program specifically coordinated with NGOs working to advance girls’ education in Afghanistan and selected projects based on their past performance and potential to reach more girls in their respective region (Department for International Development, 2015). This approach allows for greater success because it can target specific projects that are already creating a positive impact and attempt to up-scale the projects rather than starting from scratch. In both cases, the gendered nature of the problematique is addressed in a straightforward manner and therefore achieved more effective results when it came to empowering women.

Another important strategy has been the adjustment from off-budget to on-budget funding. Although USAID is struggling with this transition, it still marks an important change in funding strategies toward capacity building of and coordination with the Afghan government. This theme is carried further in the way USAID trains teachers through the MoE Teacher Training Department (USAID, 2015).

Finally, both USAID and DFID relied on both qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods to better monitor outcomes and achievements of their projects. This reflects the changing focus of not only increasing access to education across Afghanistan but also the quality of education offered. For example, USAID projects aim at teaching marketable skills with training being demand driven. Participants in USAID program LCEP-II measured their different outcomes as income levels before and after the program, which generally increased, and general opinions of livelihoods, which also generally increased (Gillies et al, 2011). However, as mentioned briefly above, these evaluation methods do not necessarily ascribe outcomes to the project itself. It should be noted that more robust measures should be employed to definitively conclude how the project influenced livelihoods. DFID’s evaluation methods varied as well. Efforts were made to document and assess learning outcomes through the Early Grade Reading Assessment and the Early Grade Maths Assessment (UKaid, 2015). While this practice is notable given the context, the assessments utilized are quite limited. Nonetheless, it is noted as a successful
practice. Finally, an evaluation for one of the four DFID-sponsored projects collected qualitative information. This is a good practice because it revealed information that cannot be collected through strict quantitative indicators that the majority of donors rely on (Coffey, 2015).
NGOS IN AFGHANISTAN

The NGOs presented in this section are the most comparable to the Womanity Foundation when it comes to budget, size, and project scope. While NGOs’ direct impact tends to be less dramatic than those of bilateral and multilateral donors, they still play a significant role in advancing education in Afghanistan. NGOs are often smaller in size and scope than the previous actors discussed, however, their on-the-ground presence and local know-how are unparalleled. Because of this, their position within Afghanistan is quite different than the large multilateral and bilateral donors, who, as highlighted in the previous section, often rely on NGOs to carry out their projects. Overall, the volume of funds channeled through Afghan NGOs remains relatively low, but roughly doubled in 2008 and again in 2009 (Poole, 2011).

In Afghanistan, NGOs have been integral in providing social services that are often scarce and limited due to conflict. In particular, NGOs are providing formal and non-formal education programs that reach children, especially girls, in isolated, rural communities (USAID, *Education in Afghanistan*, n.d.). As many as 500,000 children were in NGO-assisted schools at the fall of the Taliban in 2001. After the fall of the Taliban, NGOs started coordinating much more with the MoE by working as partners with formal agreements. The continued presence of NGOs throughout the conflict and the subsequent reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan enables them to adapt to changing political contexts as well as lay foundations for future development. This interaction resulted in the establishment of multiple local NGOs and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in Afghanistan (USAID, *Education in Afghanistan*, n.d.). Four NGOs in particular have contributed to improving the education sector in Afghanistan; CARE International, IRC, AKF, and Save the Children. This section will outline these NGOs’ recent projects, challenges, metrics/monitoring tools, and future funding scenarios if known and will conclude with the best practices.

1. CARE, IRC AND AKF

CARE International, an international NGO, as well as its affiliate CARE Afghanistan, play a large role in Afghanistan. Their programs are focused on four main areas: (1) education, (2) women’s
Recognized as a leader in promoting community-based development, CARE programs directly cover eight provinces of Afghanistan while seven more are covered through partners. Activities carried out include mobilizing communities, training teachers, building schools, establishing libraries, and protecting schools and students from armed attack (Bonpin, 2010). Furthermore, as outlined in their Education Strategy 2020 guidelines, CARE has a strong commitment to transforming current education paradigms that create and/or perpetuate gender inequality. Subtitled “Addressing Inequities; Empowering Learners,” the strategy defines CARE’s number one priority in education as strengthening “gender-transformative adolescent empowerment programming.” To achieve this, CARE strives to design programs that recognize “that gender norms and practices play a pivotal role in defining if and how girls access their rights and participate fully in their communities” and programs that thereby “influence the underlying social issues and norms that govern community structures, perceptions and practices to promote gender equity” (CARE USA Education Team, 2014, p.1). CARE’s intent to stay active in Afghanistan until at least 2020 is clear, therefore future funding scenarios for Afghanistan should include this.

Often working in partnership with CARE International, IRC is also active in Afghanistan. Also spread across the country, the IRC works with more than 4,000 communities across Afghanistan, helping more than 63,000 children access education (IRC, The IRC in Afghanistan, 2015). The IRC is involved with establishing CBE opportunities where little or no schooling is available, focusing especially on high-risk areas in informal settlements and communities in the Helmand province (IRC, Programs in Afghanistan, 2015). The IRC works closely with the MoE in integrating these schools and classes into the official government education system. Since 2004, the IRC has integrated more than 550 community-based classes into the national education system, and in 2007 alone 61 classes were integrated, constituting 1,866 students (IRC, Programs in Afghanistan, 2015). IRC published a report that highlighted the concern with future funding scenarios in Afghanistan; several donors are reducing funding and other donors are pulling out of Afghanistan completely. While the report hints at IRC's...
intention to remain active in the country beyond 2015, we were unable to find any official funding or program plans (IRC, 2014).

Another organization, AKF, an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), works in partnership with both CARE and the IRC. The AKDN works in Afghanistan administering humanitarian aid as well as implementing projects involving social, cultural, and economic development (AKDN, AKDN in Afghanistan, 2007). Most social development programs administered by AKDN began in Afghanistan in 2002. With reference to education specifically, AKDN has worked to construct and rehabilitate schools, constructed two government teacher training institutions, implemented adult literacy classes, and administered training and tutorial assistance in English and information technology (AKDN, Social Development, 2007). The AKDN works deliberately in cooperation with the Afghan MoE’s NESP especially on matters highlighting the importance of gender for both teachers and students. To date, AKDN projects have targeted more than 93,000 students and 3,800 teachers (AKDN, Social Development, 2007). However, a thorough search turned up no information regarding future plans or funding scenarios for AKF in Afghanistan.

As shown above, most NGO projects are implemented in partnership with other NGOs and organizations. CARE, IRC, and the AKF, for example, have collaborated on numerous projects including the PACE-A. PACE-A was funded by USAID and carried out between April 2006 and September 2011 by CARE as the prime grantee, IRC, AKF, along with CRS (USAID, PACE-A Audit, 2010). PACE-A was aimed at expanding the quality of learning and therefore the opportunities for marginalized communities in Afghanistan. As stated by the program audit, it was specifically designed to “expand access to quality primary education, particularly for girls and women” (USAID, PACE-A Audit, 2010, p.1). Following this aim, the objectives of the project were to “expand access to community-based schools particularly for girls and women; strengthen community structures and processes that support basic education; improve the quality of CBE, particularly teaching; build long-term capacity of civil society organizations to support and sustain CBE; develop modes of cooperation between community-based and MoE schools and promote MoE recognition and support for CBE” (USAID, PACE-A Audit, 2010, p.1). The strength in this project lies in the partnership agreement which allows smaller organizations to coordinate their resources and maximize their impact and program reach.
According to evaluations, PACE-A was quite successful. For instance, by April 2008, the program was providing CBE to 45,000 children in areas with no formal MoE schooling, two-thirds of the children being girls (CARE, 2008). The program also included the implementation of a one-year emergency community based education initiative (USAID, Fact Sheet, 2011). A formal evaluation of the PACE-A program was carried out by researchers Dana Burde and Leigh Linden in partnership with the CRS, National Science Foundation (NSF), the Spencer Foundation, and the United States Institute of Peace. The randomized evaluation of PACE-A looked at a sample of 31 villages who received the CBE; thirteen of the villages were randomly assigned to receive the treatment one year earlier to allow the measurement and estimation of longer-term impacts of the program (Burde & Linden, 2013). The study found that PACE-A community-based schooling increased overall enrollment in formal schools by 42 per cent. Furthermore, the study highlighted that distance is a major barrier to school attendance, and found that enrollment rates fell by sixteen per cent and test scores by 0.19 standard deviations for every additional mile a child had to walk to school (Burde & Linden, 2013). This evaluation method and the findings are significant because distance was not generally a main barrier to education according to the authors consulted in our literature review. This highlights the importance of using various and contextualized evaluation methods.

The study also provided important impact information regarding gender, citing that girls were disproportionately affected by the treatment, and generally benefited more than boys (Burde & Linden, 2013). For example, enrollment rates for girls increased by 16.8 more percentage points than boys’ enrollment rates, and girls’ overall average test scores improved by 0.25 standard deviations more than boys’ test scores. While girls benefited more from the treatment, the study also found that when it comes to distance, girls’ enrollment and test scores are more sensitive; enrollment rates for girls fell by nineteen per cent with every additional mile, and test scores fell by 0.24 standard deviations with every additional mile. In sum, the study finds that PACE-A virtually eliminated the enrollment gap between girls and boys, reducing it from 21 per cent to four per cent, and PACE-A reduced the test score gap between girls and boys by a third after only one year (Burde & Linden, 2013). This approach was shown to be highly successful in advancing girls’ education.
A formal audit was also carried out by USAID, and evaluated the program’s success in achieving the specific program goals mentioned above. The audit’s findings were in support of the conclusions drawn by the NSF evaluation in that they found that PACE-A had provided educational opportunities to children living in rural villages in different regions of Afghanistan, including girls who probably would not be in class otherwise. More specifically, by March 31, 2010, the program had established 3,695 classes attended by 98,212 students, with the majority being girls, in a total of 1,672 communities. In this regard the program can be described to have met and even exceeded expectations. However, the audit noted some weaknesses of the program not cited by the NSF evaluation. Mainly, the program fell short in the areas of teacher training and integration of program’s classes into the MoE system. For instance, a review of training records by all of the aforementioned partners of the project revealed that out of 3,052 primary teachers who underwent training, only three per cent had received all five workshops of basic training and 21 per cent had received none of the training (USAID, PACE-A Audit, 2010).

As for integration into the MoE system, the program showed a promising 51 per cent of primary classes being integrated into the formal system. Unfortunately, these classes were often shifted into the closest MoE sponsored school and therefore resulted in longer distances, as much as five kilometers for some children, in order to reach the school, which, as reflected above in the NSF evaluation, comes at a serious cost to enrollment rates and test scores, disproportionately affecting girls (USAID, PACE-A Audit, 2010, p.2). Recommendations from the audit advise that implementers establish clearer standards as well as agreed-upon definitions of teacher training in their plans. Also included in the recommendations is the need to create a more effective integration strategy for integrating primary classes into the MoE system (USAID, PACE-A Audit, 2010). As stated previously, the partnership among these NGOs can attribute to the success of their programs. However, the different evaluations outlined above also demonstrate the multitude of viewpoints that can be taken when completing an evaluation (examining enrollment rates, number of trainings undertaken, or using randomized control trials) and the subjectivity of evaluations when they focus only on one aspect of the program.

2. SAVE THE CHILDREN
In addition to CARE International and other NGOs discussed above, Save the Children is one of the world’s most respected NGOs and has worked in Afghanistan since 1976 (Save the Children Afghanistan, 2012). The organization’s current work in the education sector is varied, but generally takes a holistic approach to children’s needs. Save the Children works directly with the Afghan MoE on creating an Early Childhood Education policy. It is not clear whether this is the same policy that is also being worked on by the multilateral donors in coordination with the government. In addition, throughout Afghanistan, Save the Children sponsors Early Childhood Care and Development centers for young children. Offering a library, activities for children, and parenting classes to discuss issues such as child labor, nutrition, and language development, the centers are complementary to the project’s special focus on improving the learning environment. To date, Save the Children has set up 547 centers and more than 350 CBE/Accelerated Learning Classes for children who normally do not have access to a school, or for students who are older than the average student for their grade. More than 101,000 children and parents have benefited from these initiatives (Save the Children, Education, 2015). As shown here, the focus on CBE is common among NGOs, whose focus is more likely on rural, hard-to-reach, and/or marginalized children who may not be able to benefit from traditional schools, than are the larger donors.

In 2005, the Save the Children Alliance (Save the Children US, Save the Children UK and Save the Children Sweden-Norway) began a project entitled "Rewrite the Future" (known as "Better Education Better Future" in Afghanistan) which focused on improving their education projects in twenty conflict-affected countries, among them Afghanistan. The stated goal of the project was described as follows: "All children affected by armed conflict have an opportunity to fulfill their right to an education that enables them to learn, play and develop" (Save the Children, Rewrite, 2009, p.ii). To do this, Save the Children Alliance supported state-run schools in need of construction and provided school supplies and training programs. In addition, like the NGOs discussed above, the Save the Children sponsored the set-up of CBE for students who would

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Save the Children Alliance with Save the Children U.S., Save the Children U.K., and Save the Children Sweden-Norway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project:</strong> Rewrite the Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals:</strong> supporting state-run schools in need of construction and providing school supplies and training programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Future Funding:</strong> Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenges:</strong> over-looking hard-to-measure aspects of education outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
not otherwise be able to access school, but who are able to attend in a nearby mosque or dedicated home. In this case, the teachers are locals who are trained in the primary school curriculum and able to carry out the duties of teaching. Save the Children provides supplies, trains the mentors/teachers, and pays salaries. These classes offer an alternative to traditional school by providing an educational environment for girls and women teachers. They are regarded as more secure and also a more culturally acceptable form of education for certain Afghan families. Similar to the USAID audit of PACE-A, it was noted here that distance is a barrier to education; many parents worry about their daughters walking far distances to school, so these community-based efforts provide a viable alternative (Save the Children, Rewrite, 2009). The approach of supplying culturally-appropriate educational environments is a successful practice that demonstrates the success possible when projects are contextualized and based on the community's needs.

Save the Children also helped renovate and construct new school buildings as well as provide necessary equipment and supplies including textbooks and library boxes. To promote healthy development, Save the Children sponsors playgroups for young children before they reach primary school age. Save the Children trains teachers and other school figures and has worked with schools to develop school improvement plans. Following their holistic approach, Save the Children also donates playground equipment, provides drinking water flasks, and helps in latrine construction to promote sanitation and good health practices which contribute to education and learning outcomes (Save the Children, Rewrite, 2009). Similar to other donors, Save the Children does not disclose the training programs that teachers undergo, therefore it is difficult to assess the efficacy and relevance of such programs.

In addition, evaluating the success of this project is impossible without knowing the financial resources spent. A thorough search turned up no budget specific for the Rewrite the Future project, and Save the Children only has financial statements available on their website going back to 2011. However, the financial report from 2011 shows that the budget for Afghanistan was approximately USD 25.7 million (Save the Children, 2011). This budget cannot be equated directly with Rewrite the Future, as other projects were also ongoing and thus consuming financial resources and because this statement comes long after the implementation of Rewrite the Future. However, it is noticeably smaller than the multilateral and bilateral donors and gives
a general idea of the budget spent and should be kept in mind when reviewing the results. In addition, it is difficult to find future funding plans for Save the Children in Afghanistan.

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Rewrite the Future project was completed by a global monitoring system that Save the Children designed. As with all evaluations that are conducted with influence from the organization under review, results should be read with caution. The evaluation consisted of a mid-term report in 2008 and a final project review in 2010. The evaluation looked at the extent to which Save the Children was successful in promoting participation of children and parents in educational activities, the participation/enrollment rates, an examination of student activities such as student councils, parent’s participation levels in education through an examination of PTCs and also student and teacher participation levels in classrooms. Data for the evaluation was collected in Bamian, Faryab, Kandahar, Balkh and Kabul provinces. Therefore, results are generalized to all project areas. Of notable interest was the evaluation method aimed at measuring learning achievements. Similar to the assessments undertaken by GEC, the assessment focused on reading and mathematic skills. The assessment was undertaken on students in grade three who were asked to read a story out loud, answer four simple comprehension questions and fifteen mathematics questions (Save the Children, Rewrite, 2009). The following table presents the mean scores in learning assessment in four geographical areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Words read per minute</th>
<th>Comprehension questions correct (max=4)</th>
<th>Mathematics (Max=15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bamian</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faryab</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balkh</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kandahar</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only the mid-term report (published in 2009) is available.
Evaluation results were recorded for Save the Children sponsored schools as well as chosen comparison schools. In Save the Children sponsored schools, at least forty per cent of students could successfully read the story and answer at least one of the comprehension questions correctly. In comparison, only one out of 32 students in the comparison school could complete these tasks. In addition, results were aggregated by sex as presented in the following table:

**TABLE 3: MEAN SCORES IN LEARNING ASSESSMENT BY SEX (FROM SAVE THE CHILDREN, *REWRITE*, 2009, P.25)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>age</th>
<th>Words read per minute</th>
<th>Comprehension questions correct (max=4)</th>
<th>Mathematics (Max=15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance level</td>
<td>Not significant</td>
<td>Not significant</td>
<td>Not significant</td>
<td>Significant to 5 per cent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table shows that there was no significant statistical difference in reading and comprehension between boys and girls, but that girls scored slightly higher on the mathematics test. After collecting the results, statistical analysis showed a relationship between school size and learning outcomes, with larger schools being more successful. This is attributed to larger schools being closer to cities, and generally catering to students of a higher socio-economic status who are expected to fare better on learning achievement tests because of their backgrounds (Save the Children, *Rewrite*, 2009). It notable that learning assessment results are disaggregated by gender, however, there are other aspects of education that are challenging to measure and are therefore overlooked. This is the common shortcoming with using only quantitative indicators. For example, reasoning ability, creativity, and critical analysis skills are not reflected. In any case, the results highlight the success of Save the Children sponsored schools regarding reading and mathematics.

Other evaluation results showed that comparison schools rarely had the level of student and parent-teacher participation outside the classroom, such as through student councils and PTCs, as were present in Save the Children sponsored schools. These out-of-school activities were
reported to be beneficial in several areas, including keeping children in school, communicating about socio-cultural challenges, and reducing absenteeism among students. Enrollment rates for male and female students were documented to be significantly higher in Save the Children sponsored schools than comparison schools:

TABLE 4: ENROLLMENT RATES IN SAVE THE CHILDREN SUPPORTED SCHOOLS (FROM SAVE THE CHILDREN, REWRITE, 2009, P.12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>per cent of students enrolled</th>
<th>Project schools (n=11)</th>
<th>Comparison schools (n=5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marked as present on day of visit</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marked as absent on day of visit</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marked as permanently absent</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another evaluation method was lesson observation. This was used as a way to observe the quality of teaching and especially the teaching methods utilized. The evaluation concluded that results were more promising in Save the Children sponsored schools than comparison schools. Teachers in Save the Children schools used a significantly higher number of participatory methods, called students by their names more often, provided students with a choice of activities more often, and encouraged students to ask questions, which is viewed by Save the Children as more efficient teaching methods (Save the Children, Rewrite, 2009).

As our literature review revealed, one of the main challenges for women and girls are cultural barriers to participation. PTCs tended to be male-dominated, so in some instances all-female associations were created as well as all-male associations in order to encourage participation for both parents. In addition, student councils experienced similar problems. Girls were sometimes limited from accessing resource centers or participating in activities if they are run by a male teacher or leader. Another challenge is geographical access to schools for children in rural areas. Save the Children is addressing this problem by supporting CBE and Accelerated Learning Classes initiatives that offer educational environments in remote areas (Save the
As stated previously, the NGOs outlined in this section are more comparable to the Womanity Foundation than the multilateral and bilateral donors because of their smaller size, project scope, and budget. The Womanity Foundation can therefore learn from the different initiatives and approaches, successes and failures, from the projects reviewed.

3. BEST PRACTICES AMONG NGOS IN AFGHANISTAN

Best practices of NGOs in Afghanistan are outlined below, with CARE, the IRC, and the AKF being analyzed together as partners followed by Save the Children. Highlighted among these NGOs is the theme of non-traditional approaches to providing education, namely CBE.

Each NGO brings different strengths and strategies to the context of Afghanistan according to their missions and aims. As mentioned in previous sections, the centrality of gender to programming and implementation is crucial given that education is very much a gendered issue in Afghanistan. CARE International and Save the Children both highlight the importance of gender in their projects. Gender dictates the education strategy of CARE International as a whole organization, focusing on gender transformative adolescent empowerment programming (CARE Education Strategy 2020).

For the Rewrite the Future project, Save the Children set-up community-based schools for students who would not otherwise be able to access school, but who are able to attend in a nearby mosque or dedicated home. These classes offer an alternative to traditional school by providing an educational environment for girls and women teachers. They are regarded as more secure and a culturally acceptable form of education for certain Afghan families and are therefore more likely to be sustainable and successful (Save the Children, Rewrite, 2009). This practice shows that Save the Children understands the context in which this project is implemented and highlights their efforts at catering to the needs of the community.
Another strategy among successful NGOs is capacity-building through coordination with the MoE. The IRC and the AKF both focus on coordinating with the MoE by working to integrate project schools into the formal MoE system. The AKF further uses the MoE NESP for project guidance, especially on matters highlighting the importance of gender for both teachers and students. Finally, Save the Children's efforts at measuring learning outcomes are a good initial practice. Specifically, the practice of evaluating teaching methods through observation is notable, and is unique among the organizations reviewed here (Save the Children, *Rewrite*, 2009).
NGOS IN PAKISTAN

In order to better understand the dilemma Afghanistan faces with regards to education, it is useful to also consider the challenges facing its neighbor, Pakistan, when it comes to implementing effective education strategies. Obtaining reliable, current information about ongoing projects in Afghanistan is difficult, and although the same is true for Pakistan, looking at what is available in both countries offers a larger body of knowledge to inform the Womanity Foundation’s programming. Pakistan and Afghanistan show homogeneity with regards to barriers to education, being the only two countries in the South and West Asia region to show major gender disparities in primary education at the expense of girls (Global Monitoring Report, 2010). Therefore, it is useful for the Womanity Foundation to examine approaches used in Pakistan to overcome these obstacles. Similar to Afghanistan, women and girls are strictly prohibited from accessing education in some areas of Pakistan (Latif, n.d.). This is most apparent in rural areas, specifically in the Northwest Frontier Province which borders Afghanistan, and Baluchistan, where female literacy ranges at a low average of three to eight per cent (Latif, n.d.).

On a country level, women in Pakistan are about twice as likely as men to be illiterate (Global Monitoring Report, 2010). Furthermore, international aid disbursed to conflict-affected areas is highly concentrated in Pakistan and Afghanistan which, together with Ethiopia, accounted for more than half of total aid to basic education in conflict-affected countries in 2006 and 2007 (Global Monitoring Report, 2010). The following NGOs are implementing educational projects in Pakistan and can provide the Womanity Foundation with different approaches. All the projects outlined below are similar in their multifaceted approach to improving girls’ education by tackling issues such as security, hygiene, and poverty among others. This section will outline their recent projects, challenges, metrics/monitoring tools, and will conclude by highlighting the best practices of NGOs in Pakistan. Future funding scenarios are not included as it is not directly relevant to the future funding in Afghanistan.
The All Pakistan Women’s Association (APWA) is an NGO that was originally founded in response to the refugee crisis after the partition of Pakistan and India. The APWA works under the official government of Pakistan through a public-private partnership and also coordinates closely with many international organizations including the UN. The work of APWA specifically addresses social and economic issues, gender injustices and discrimination, and the inadequate participation of women in national and decision-making positions. To confront these areas of concern, APWA has deployed a wide range of projects such as schools, maternal and child health care centers, maternity homes, family planning services and orphanages (APWA, A Short History, n.d.). Since its foundation, APWA has opened branches in 56 districts across the country including rural-urban fringe areas. To fund all of these projects, APWA relies on donors, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists (UNIC Pakistan, n.d.).

The education program of APWA is quite vague but shows promise, the aims of which are to promote gender equality, empowerment of women, and socio-economic development (APWA Punjab, 2014). Some achievements include establishing some of Pakistan’s higher education institutions for women including the Ra’ana Liaquat Ali Khan College of Home Economics in Karachi and the APWA College for Women in Lahore. Furthermore, advocacy by APWA and its partners lead to the establishment of a women’s division by the government in 1989 which later became the Ministry for Women’s Affairs (APWA, Achievements, n.d.). The APWA has also been crucial in developing primary and secondary education projects across Pakistan. The organization has over thirty primary and secondary schools across Pakistan, most of which are in low income communities providing education to underprivileged children, especially girls (APWA, Provinces, n.d.).

In Karachi alone there are four APWA schools. Yousuf Goth School serves 100 underprivileged children of the village and charges relatively low fees. APWA School Orangi serves 185 students and has just acquired a large, new building. APWA School Sadiqabad serves 125 students in an underprivileged area. Finally, Ayesha Siddiqa Schools (Liaquatabad) serves 400
students. It has been registered with the Board of Secondary Education for the past 29 years and was built with "modern" objectives and includes quite sophisticated facilities. It contains a playground, cafeteria, library, science laboratory, and a computer laboratory (APWA, *Education Program*, n.d.). These numbers have all been provided by the APWA website; therefore a more detailed vision of APWA's success in Pakistan is unclear. There is little information available regarding the monitoring and evaluation of these schools and the methodology used to implement these projects, although we have reached out to APWA for more information on their initiatives, challenges, and successes, however, we received no response.

2. CARE PAKISTAN

CARE International and CARE Pakistan have been working extensively in Pakistan in many sectors such as emergency response, economic empowerment, health, and education. Guiding these projects are CARE Pakistan's programming principles: promote empowerment, work with partners, ensure accountability and promote responsibility, address discrimination, promote the non-violent resolution of conflicts, and seek sustainable results (CARE International, *Programming Principles*, 2013). CARE also works within a public-private partnership arrangement with the government of Pakistan. This partnership has led to a unique low-cost model for developing education where CARE adopts existing government schools that are failing and, relying on the existing infrastructure, allows CARE to save on construction and land costs. This means that CARE is able to increase education for as many children as it receives funding. This approach has been rather successful; currently CARE provides education for more than 180,000 students in 394 schools across the country (CARE Pakistan, 2015).

CARE Pakistan

- Works in partnership with the Afghan government
- **Programming Principles**: promote empowerment, work with partners, ensure accountability and promote responsibility, address discrimination, promote the non-violent resolution of conflicts, and seek sustainable results
- **Projects**: INSPIRE and EQUAL
- **Challenges**: supporting local communities to understand and execute their role in supporting education, ensuring adequate teacher participation, providing more detailed monitoring and evaluation information
One of CARE’s completed projects is the Infrastructure Support and Professional Improvement to Revitalize Education Project (INSPIRE), which was aimed at rebuilding schools in the Swat valley who had been destroyed by conflict and flooding. The reconstruction was physical, but the project also focused on community rebuilding, “helping the affected communities to recover from lingering insecurities and fears, and to attend once again to the education of their children with fresh vigor” (CARE International, *INSPIRE*, 2013, para 1). The project specifically focused on improving or renovating 42 permanent schools, training and engaging PTCs in those communities, providing equipment for schools, training teachers, and holding district-wide competitions to promote community and social cohesion. Furthermore, these goals were tackled while promoting local understanding of disaster risk and reduction (CARE International, *INSPIRE*, 2013). The project was carried out from January 2011 through December 2013 with a budget of USD 1,647,000 funded by Reach Out To Asia (ROTA). Unfortunately, monitoring and evaluation information for this project is not readily available.

Another project carried out by CARE is the Enhancing Quality, Access, and Learning (EQUAL) project. This project’s aim was to strengthen the education system in Abbottabad by initiating a holistic learning process for communities, especially women and girls, to empower them to address education-related issues, particularly in community-owned schools. The communities, in turn, helped the government departments better understand the ground realities of community education. The project specifically sought to enhance 20 Parents-Teacher Councils (PTCs), empower communities through rigorous social mobilization process to participate effectively in education-related decision-making, and enhance coordination between communities and local government departments on education quality and access issues. The project took place from January 2009 to October 2010 in partnership with Mountain Institute Education Development (MIED), funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) (CARE International, *EQUAL*, 2013).

The only evaluation available for this project was provided by MIED, and, although not very rigorous, reveals important developments about the project and implementation. The evaluation found that the intervention made PTCs better organized, leading them to take on tasks such as fundraising and door-to-door campaigning for increased enrollment in the schools (MIED, 2010). Although no statistical analysis has been done to show the significance, enrollment rates
increased in every school after the intervention except one school where enrollment stayed the same. The evaluation also notes several challenges met when implementing the project. For example, it found that education officials at the district level are hesitant to fund and support local community groups because as these groups become more empowered, districts are demanded to be more accountable. Furthermore, communities need more support to understand and execute their roles in supporting education, which is particularly important for community-owned schools. For some schools, travel distance between home and school remained a large barrier to attendance; this was especially true in the winter months when roads may be closed. Finally, the evaluation noted that teachers were far less focused than expected on project participation (MIED, 2010).

An important take-away from the evaluation is that all stakeholders of schools and education (parents, teachers, students, community, and government officials) need to participate as well as understand and exercise their ownership. The evaluation also addressed an important development of the project mid-way through implementation; part of the focus of the project shifted to establishing Student Representative Councils alongside PTCs to encourage a larger role for teachers and students, enhance student participation, and develop leadership skills among students (MIED, 2010). It would be useful to have a more detailed and rigorous evaluation done by CARE themselves or by an outside party not involved in implementation or funding. While the available evaluation helpfully identifies strengths and weaknesses of the project, a more detailed report of monitoring and evaluation is needed to inform future projects.

3. SAVE THE CHILDREN PAKISTAN

In Pakistan, child labor is one of the greatest barriers to education. In order to address this, Save the Children Pakistan launched the Children’s Action Against Oppression and Neglect (CHAON) project from 2009-2014. CHAON is funded by the IKEA Foundation and reaches more than 199,000 children (Save the Children, Cotton growing, 2015). The project targeted Muzaffargarh and Sanghar districts because they are traditional cotton-growing areas where child labor is high. Children, especially girls, often work long days during harvesting season thus missing out on an education while also being exposed to pesticides causing health problems. The project focused on strengthening child protection systems, strengthening the education
system, improving health education for in school in addition to financially supporting families whose children regularly engage in child labor. Successes were made in creating councils and child protection units (CPU) at local, district and national levels through the CHAON project. In addition, a Child Rights Advocacy Network (CRAN) was established in 2011 that campaigns and advocates on behalf of children’s legal rights. One of CRAN’s focuses is to eliminate fees and barriers to birth registration, thus allowing more children to be provided with a birth certificate easing their enrollment in school. CPUs were also established at the national level in coordination with CHAON in order to address child rights violations including early marriage, vaccination and health issues and out-of-school children. The CPUs are regarded as highly successful because of the large number of cases they have addressed (Save the Children, CHAON, n.d.). The approach to directly involve children in education initiatives is quite unique.

In order to increase children’s right to education, CHAON "focused on building capacity of teachers on child friendly teaching methodologies, strengthening schools management committees, designing and implementing school improvement plans through inclusion of children, up-grading primary schools into middle schools for girls and accelerating learning programs for working and out-of-school children" (Save the Children, CHAON, n.d., p.14). An Accelerated Learning program for out-of-school children was also established, targeting mainly girls. The success of this program is evident by the fact that more than 2,000 out-of-school children have been rehabilitated into regular schools through this program. In addition, "In 2013, 15 Students including 10 girls appeared in Punjab Examination Commission fifth grade papers. The overall passing percentage was 54.06 in the province while CHAON intervention schools achieved 100 per cent results where majority of the students secured above 65 per cent marks" (Save the Children, CHAON, n.d., p.14).

One of CHAON’s biggest focuses was on training teachers on child-friendly teaching methods that focus on child participation and equal opportunities for all children. CHAON transformed 291 "Government schools" into "Child-Friendly schools" that enroll more than 44,000 children.

![Save the Children Pakistan](image)

**Project:** CHAON, targeting child labor, one of the main barriers to accessing education in Pakistan and Afghanistan

**Funded by:** the IKEA Foundation

**Targeted** child labor by providing "Child-Friendly schools" and local skills development training to parents of families who relied on child labor
Specific attention was paid to constructing boundary walls and ensuring water and sanitation was up to standards to encourage girls to enroll in the converted schools. In schools, health education initiatives were stepped-up to teach children about pesticide effects on their health as well as sanitation and health concerns. Thanks to these programs, school absenteeism due to illness dropped remarkably, cases on intestinal worms dropped from 19 per cent to 9 per cent and an increase in the percentage of students treated for intestinal worms went from 14 per cent to 62 per cent resulting in healthier children who are more prepared to learn (Save the Children, CHAON, n.d.).

In order to financially assist the families who relied on child labor, trainings were provided to parents on topics such as local skills development, business and marketing skills to more than 3,000 parents, especially women, in the villages. Following these programs, the average income in Sanghar province raised from 6,000 rupees to 9,000 rupees and an increase from 6,000 rupees to 8,000 rupees in Muzaffargarh province. Accompanying this, the two provinces saw a decrease in child labor rates of 54 per cent and 64 per cent in families who benefitted from these programs (Save the Children, CHAON, n.d.) and a 17 per cent and 31 per cent increase in spending on education in the two provinces (Save the Children, Cotton growing, 2015).

The success of this project can be attributed to the contextualization. Before launching the project, a study was undertaken to assess the situation in the target regions of Pakistan: "The objectives of the study are to capture the socio-economic profile of the target districts; examine the probable factors responsible for issues related to the realization on child rights in the target areas; explore ways and means to improve the strategic planning of Save the Children and other stakeholders in the prevalent context; and provide a base for evaluation at midterm and end of the project" (Save the Children, Baseline Survey, 2010, para 1). This practice uncovered barriers that were then directly addressed by Save the Children.

4. TAALEEM FOUNDATION

The Taaleem Foundation, a Pakistani NGO started by Dr. Zafar Qadir, has been working in the Western province of Balochistan since 1989 (Taaleem Foundation, About Taaleem, 2014). When Taaleem began operating, this region of Pakistan has little access to health facilities,
education, or electricity (Taaleem Foundation, *Our Achievements*, 2014). Since 1989, the Taaleem Foundation has established eight schools in rural areas: Kohlu, Loralai, Killa Saifullah, Muslim Bagh, Zhob, Pishin, Mastung and Sui (Dera Bugti). The schools are funded through student tuition payments and donors and receive very little support from the government. The NGO focuses on initiating social change by offering quality schooling with a modern curriculum, promoting girls' involvement, and utilizing an all-female staff. Taaleem Foundation focuses on mainstreaming education in society through their Grammar School System (primary school) that "mobilized the concerned communities for collective thinking, with a view to achieve a self-supportive, self-contained and self-reliant growth model for integrated community development. The model has stood the test of time in the communities served by the Taaleem Foundation" (Taaleem Foundation, *About Taaleem*, 2014, para 4). Students graduating from a Taaleem sponsored school are more likely to pursue higher education through available scholarships. The organization’s success is attributed to their private-public partnership between the community and the local administration (Taaleem Foundation, *About Taaleem*, 2014).

An independent evaluation is not available, but the Taaleem Foundation monitors progress. A 2014 results sheet showed that the average grade for students completing the year-end examination was 85 per cent for all eight schools (Taaleem Foundation, *Annual Board*, n.d.). Graduates are now working in several sectors including business and administration, medicine, agriculture, civil services and the armed forces (Taaleem Foundation, *Our Achievements*, 2014). Other marked differences within the communities include enhanced health and hygiene conditions as well as increased female involvement in education. While girls' literacy is very low, Taaleem Foundation is initiating change by encouraging girls' enrollment, which stands at 35 per cent in their project schools (Taaleem Foundation, *Social Impact*, 2014). Thanks to Taaleem's schools, there has been an increase in quality workforce in the region as graduate start businesses and participate in the labor market. The success of Taaleem was noted by the U.S. based think tank "PUSH Institute" who named the Taaleem Foundation as the Social Entrepreneurship Project of the year in 2005 (Taaleem Foundation, *Economic Impact*, 2014).

Taaleem's schools cater to 500-600 students each, with class sizes of 20-30 students and are equipped with a library, science lab, auditorium, playground, and staff quarters. All courses are taught in English and the curriculum is compatible with other institutions in Pakistan. Fees are adjusted for girl students in order to encourage their enrollment. The number of teachers in each
school varies from 22-43. Students in grades five through eight are given yearly examinations to assess progress, although detailed information is not available. Communication with parents is seen as key, and a "Home School Partnership" is promoted to encourage dialogue and any issues that may arise (Taaleem Foundation, *Annual Report*, n.d.). Taaleem’s defining characteristics are their effort at creating partnerships with private organizations, and their focus on technology in education, in order to increase the quality of their programs.

Taaleem Foundation’s plans for the near future include providing e-Learning, e-Schooling, and e-Skills services in rural areas. Their goals include: "...to set up a pool of technology driven and technology-supported outlets that help educate and engineer social change. Our priority at the moment is to setup a chain of e-schools and v-schools in collaboration with renowned international brands, with a university at the apex" (Taaleem Foundation, *Futuristic Vision*, 2014, para 2). Their partners include Intel, Japan International Cooperation Agency, NIMSS (affiliated with the Cambridge University UK and Harvard Medicine School), EE-learn private limited (connected to Open University UK) and Pi Teach among others that are helping Taaleem Foundation realize its goals (Taaleem Foundation, *Futuristic Vision*, 2014). These partnerships provide resources and knowledge which increases the capacity of Taaleem’s projects.

5. KEF

Another NGO working in Pakistan is Kashmir Education Foundation (KEF). KEF is a non-political, non-governmental and non-profit organization established as a charitable education trust in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir in 1994 with its headquarters located in Rawalpindi, Pakistan (Kashmir Education Foundation, n.d.). The total amount of funds and liabilities held by the organization for the fiscal year 2014 was 328,127,218 rupees (approximately USD 3,111,685.42)\(^5\). The organization’s income, including fees, donations and contributions, dividend income, gain on sale of investments, amount received from partners, gains from sale of fixed assets and other income, for the same year was 73,006,998 (approximately USD 692,337.60)

\(^5\) Equivalency in USD given according to exchange rate on 11/22/2015 on xe.com.

The organization’s aim is to “make the highest quality education accessible to talented boys and girls from underprivileged and hitherto marginalized sections of society, with special emphasis on female education” (Kashmir Education Foundation, n.d., para 1). Another objective added since 2000 is to “set up a culture specific Institute of Teacher Education (ITE) for female graduates from rural areas." (Kashmir Education Foundation, n.d. para 2) KEF has built and runs three model English medium schools in the rural areas of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir as well as a College of Teacher Education (CTE). Admissions to the schools are made at the elementary school level through a competition led by a team of expert psychologists. Thirty students are chosen for each class and receive financial support for attending the schools.

The first school – a pilot project - was established in 1996 in Rawalakot, Azad Kashmir. There are now three schools: The Pearl Valley Public School (PVPS) and Banjosa Valley Public School (BVPS) both in Azad Kashmir, and Soan Valley Public School (SVPS) in the Rawalpindi district. It is important to note that the Kashmir region has been the subject of conflict between India and Pakistan, but has a literacy rate of about 64 per cent, at a level significantly higher than the average in Pakistan and an elementary school enrollment rate of 95 per cent for boys and 88 per cent for girls (Azad Government of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, n.d.). The schools established by KEF provide teaching up to the last year of high school and have modern facilities including libraries, science, computer and audio-visual labs, gymnasiums and playgrounds. Girls’ enrollment in these three schools are between 41 and 51 per cent (Kashmir Education Foundation, n.d.).

The CTE provides a year of modern teaching training to women teachers from rural areas. Upon successfully completing the program, the students are awarded a B.Ed. degree of Bahria University, to which CTE is affiliated. In addition to facilities including a library, and science, language and computer labs, CTE also offers a hostel for about 46 trainees. This hostel is “enclosed by a high wall and has excellent security” (Kashmir Education Foundation, p.6). It also has a female warden living in the building as well as access to medical services, including an on-site ambulance (Kashmir Education Foundation, n.d.).
Success stories for the PVPS and CTE only are offered by the organization online. They show that all but six of the 98 graduates of PVPS are currently studying or have graduated from some of the top schools in the country. Furthermore, a former student won the distinguished Sword of Honor at PAF Academy, and another placed second in an all Pakistan competition in 2014 (Kashmir Education Foundation, n.d.). CTE boast 257 alumni who have passed as qualified teachers so far, of which 28 received the B. Ed degree from Bahria University (Kashmir Education Foundation, n.d.).

KEF publications show a careful monitoring of students achievements during and after their time at the different schools and training center. They track student grades during their studies as well as the number of alumni in top Pakistani schools and universities, sorting data by gender. The data shows that since 2008 PVPS has consistently placed in the 10 of 830 schools in Pakistan ranked by average grades. For trainees, KEF tracks which schools employ its alumni. KEFs future plans include building additional schools, and establishing a new section of CTE dedicated to training teacher or secondary and higher secondary education (Kashmir Education Foundation, n.d.).

6. BEST PRACTICES AMONG NGOS IN PAKISTAN

Many different approaches are highlighted in this section showing the versatility of strategies used to tackle the challenge of providing education in Pakistan. Major themes among these NGOs include using a multi-pronged approach to address education, acknowledging indirect channels through which education can be improved as well as the importance of partnerships between the NGOs and the government and/or other private organizations. Again, these practices in Pakistan are meant to be understood in their context; they cannot, and should not be, understood as directly applicable in Afghanistan.

As stated, one best practice among the NGOs mentioned in Pakistan is using a multi-pronged strategy to providing education. For these NGOs, that means addressing barriers to education and indirect links to education rather than simply providing more schools, textbooks, etc. For
Save the Children’s CHAON project, this multi-pronged theme was manifested in identifying how child labor acts as a large barrier to education which holds true also for Afghanistan. For this project, financial assistance was provided to families who relied on child labor in the form of training on topics such as local skills and business and marketing skills. These trainings took the burden of income generation off of the children, allowing them to more freely attend schools (Save the Children, *CHAON*, n.d.). The APWA similarly addresses issues related to education simultaneously with their school-building projects. For example, APWA has a wide range of projects besides schools, such as maternal and child health care centers and maternity homes (APWA, *A Short History*, n.d.). Finally, CARE addresses conflict resolution and disaster risk reduction alongside its projects which plays a particularly important role in Pakistan as well as Afghanistan, as both are countries with recent histories of conflict (CARE, *Programming Principles*, 2013).

Another important best practice among NGOs in Pakistan, which mirrors those of NGOs in Afghanistan, is the use of partnerships. APWA and CARE in particular work in public-private partnership with the Pakistani government, allowing them to better coordinate their projects as well as capacity-build for the MoE and government in general (APWA, *A Short History*, n.d.; CARE, *Programming Principles*, 2013). Another noteworthy partnership is that between the Taaleem Foundation and Intel to increase the Taaleem Foundation’s capacity, professionalism, and competency in areas of education related to technology (Taaleem, Foundation, *Project Portfolio*, 2014).

Finally, an emphasis on drawing from the existing body of knowledge is also central to the success of some NGOs in Pakistan. For instance, the Kashmir Education Foundation’s strategy aims at having focused interventions which requires vast knowledge of local settings and culture (Kashmir Education Foundation, n.d.). CARE further makes use of local knowledge to promote communal ownership of schools by facilitating a better understanding of individuals’ stake-holding in the school as a community member, parent, student, or teacher (MIED, 2010). Together, these best practices provide a variety of initiatives and projects that are comparable, to a certain extent, to the context in Afghanistan.
CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WOMANITY FOUNDATION

Based on our review of the multilateral and bilateral donors in Afghanistan, as well as NGOs in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the following recommendations are made to the Womanity Foundation. The recommendations are all evidence-based and drawn from the success of other projects.

1. Collaborate with other actors

Given the volume of interventions regarding education in Afghanistan, it is tempting to conclude that all major concerns are being adequately addressed. This is untrue, as barriers to education are still apparent and major challenges exist, as shown throughout this report. In order to address these shortcomings, there is a dire need for more coordination among international organizations, NGOs, and the government of Afghanistan to ensure that projects are well-aligned with national priorities, implementation is efficient, and tracking is precise. Information, including successful and unsuccessful projects, should be shared among organizations in order to learn from other initiatives and maximize positive results. There is an enormous amount of resources being directed into the education sector, and increased coordination would make all efforts more efficient.

The Womanity Foundation should therefore first seek to increase communication and coordination with the Minister of Education (MoE), both at the national and local levels, in order to define a clear integration strategy for working within Afghanistan. The multilateral donors, ARTF and UNICEF, both provide successful examples of partnerships with the Afghan government. This is also crucial for capacity-building of the Afghan government, which is vital in effecting long-term change and results in the country. In addition, building on existing partnerships, the Womanity Foundation should seek further partnerships with other NGOs and private organizations specializing in education-related endeavors, such as technology companies. Partnerships of this nature have proven successful in several other cases, specifically among CARE International, International Rescue Committee, AKF and the Taaleem Foundation in Pakistan. Increased coordination would make efficient use of other organizations' technical know-how and experience, thereby increasing the Womanity Foundation’s impact.
2. Listen to girls and women, work with the community

It is recommended that the Womanity Foundation promote communal ownership in schools when appropriate, helping everyone understand their different roles as stakeholders. This should make continued use of tools such as parent-teacher associations and student representative councils - which the Womanity Foundation already makes use of - helping everyone within the community understand their unique roles as parents, teachers, students, or community members. Past projects have also targeted women and girls’ increased agency with positive results, using the community perspective as a tool. The LCEP-II program implemented by USAID is a prime example of this. The apprenticeship portion of the project involved mentors from the local community teaching learners, specifically women, practical skills that were linked to local market demands. The fact that these skills were demand-driven means that these women were learning marketable, useful skills that will continue to have returns throughout their lives. These types of projects show that in advancing the education of women and girls, women and girls themselves are the most valuable resource and should be directly consulted and involved in all projects.

3. Research, understand, contextualize

An important missing component from the Womanity Foundation’s "School-in-a-box" approach is the lack of attention given to increasing the body of knowledge around girls’ education in Afghanistan and understanding what really works in which setting and why. Therefore, an emphasis on research examining this would help design and implement more effective projects in the future and build on local knowledge.

In addition, while the general barriers to girls’ education are well documented, there are other indirect factors that may be affecting enrollment rates in specific regions. Therefore, it is recommended that the Womanity Foundation completes thorough "needs assessment" surveys before enlarging, or undertaking a new project. These surveys must be carried out in the exact area where the project is to be enlarged or implemented and be thorough - target a variety of local actors and institutions, utilize qualitative methods and observation - in order to uncover the specific needs of the community. For example, an audit of the PACE-A project uncovered that a main barrier to education for girls and boys in the area was the long distance to the school. This
is not a barrier in many other areas, however, the success of future projects there depends on taking this into account. Another example was from Save the Children Pakistan where needs assessment surveys uncovered that child labor is a huge barrier to education in certain provinces. The organization then addressed this by providing trainings to parents to increase their incomes which subsequently lessened their dependence on their children as laborers. Finally, needs assessment surveys would also allow for setting clear standards, guidelines and definitions of actions, which would promote more appropriate education provision in Womanity supported projects.

4. Implement boldly

Using the needs assessment results effectively will necessitate boldness in project design. Thus, it is recommended that the Womanity Foundation implements a multi-pronged approach that explicitly addresses direct and indirect links to educational attainment, such as maternal and child health, child labor, distance, and/or disaster risks that are context-specific.

Furthermore, since using a multi-pronged approach in project implementation means addressing the fragile or conflict context of Afghanistan alongside education, successful initiatives should be narrow in scope. Projects, such as "School-in-a-Box", with a broad focus both thematically and geographically and a short lifetime have limited success since they are difficult to implement on one hand, and face challenges in monitoring and evaluation on the other. In contrast, many of the successful initiatives presented in this report have been specific in focus, implemented over a long period of time with impact that is consistently monitored and assessed. Since goals for these projects are clear, this type of project design enables projects to be more flexible, allowing them to be modified along the way to ensure that the most effective strategies are being used, which will be discussed in more detail below. One challenge with this approach would be designing clean exit strategies, which may be difficult considering the approach requires continuous resources. One way that some projects in this report have attempted to deal with this issue has been trying to integrate project schools into the formal education system provided by the Afghan government. This both fosters a capacity-building environment for the Afghan Ministry of Education as the state transitions into becoming a primary provider of educational services and allows continual monitoring of project outcomes.
5. Measure

Educational assessments aim to measure how well, and what specifically, students are learning. The results provide valuable information to the students themselves, teachers, schools, communities, and the Afghan government. They should therefore be important components of any educational endeavors. One way to assess educational outcomes is through measuring the learning achievement of students. Although no nation-wide standardized learning assessment yet exists in Afghanistan, this report has discussed some of the ways some NGOs as well as the government of Afghanistan assess learning achievements for elementary school students. The Womanity Foundation currently lacks any way to track achievements of the students in their sponsored schools. As tracking such data is paramount to making substantial claims regarding the impact of the "School-in-a-Box" project on the educational achievement of students in schools supported by the Womanity Foundation, the recommendation is to introduce a learning assessment into the monitoring of its education projects in Afghanistan. Such an assessment could either build upon the methods used by other organizations, or rely on the MTEG which was developed for the MoE.

However, as important as learning achievement tests may be in measuring students’ educational levels, it must also be acknowledged that skills in math and reading, which are what is typically measured in existing learning assessments, are only a part of what quality education should offer. Effective assessments should therefore consider tracking other indicators that are more challenging to measure with quantitative indicators, but are just as important components of a quality education, such as problem-solving or analytical skills, leadership skills and creativity. This is an area where the Womanity Foundation can innovate from other organizations active in Afghanistan.

6. Monitor and follow-up efficiently

Effective monitoring and evaluation of projects is only valuable if projects can be adapted to reflect lessons learned at different stages of project implementation. It is therefore key to be flexible in program implementation and to be willing to change, adapt, and delete components of a project in order to incorporate knowledge coming from monitoring and evaluation results. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that monitoring should not only be confined to
current recipients of support from the Womanity Foundation. One of the NGOs surveyed from Pakistan, the Kashmir Education Foundation, has such an approach. They track each student who goes through their school long after they have left them in order to measure the long lasting impact of their education provision. It also allows them to make convincing statements about the impact of the Foundation, which is reassuring to donors.

Efficient monitoring of girls who have benefited from the program long after they have left schools supported by the Womanity Foundation can better assure that the impact in their life is long lasting and sustainable. Things to be monitored include how girls in schools supported by the Womanity Foundation rank with regard to others regionally or nationally, whether girls continued their studies after leaving Womanity supported projects, and/or what types of jobs they pursued with the education provided to them. Tracking these indicators would provide a more in-depth understanding of the ability of Womanity Foundation supported projects to generate long-term change in the lives of Afghan girls.
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