

Country Report

Due to the past three decades of war and instability, Afghanistan has and is facing many serious challenges in the progression of all sectors. Human capital is a key for progress in the country. Education, and in particular the literacy rate, is an obvious indication for value of the human capital in society. With one of the lowest literacy rates in the world,¹ Afghanistan is trying to overcome its obstacles towards progress. Three out of four adult Afghans are not able to communicate through written documents and are not able to use written knowledge to improve their lives.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) aims to “provide literacy to male and female aged 15 and above in order to enable them to develop their knowledge and potential and participate fully in their community and wider society” (NESP, 2010).

Currently, it is estimated that there are around 11 million illiterate people in the country. To eradicate illiteracy, there is a need for large-scale efficient literacy programmes.

1. Efficient literacy programmes in Afghanistan:

The literacy programme delivered by CLCs has the potential to be an efficient literacy programme in Afghanistan.

1.1. Basic information of the programme: In 2003, for the first time the concept of CLCs was introduced based on an agreement between the Ministry of Education (MoE), National Federation of UNESCO Association in Japan (NFUAJ) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in Afghanistan. Since the idea of CLCs was a new concept for Afghanistan and the Ministry of Education, a joint-project implementation team was formed between JICA, NFUAJ experts and the Literacy Department of the MoE to ensure successful implementation. The project team was responsible for the implementation of three (3) pilot CLCs in Kabul city. As a first step of the project, the Literacy Department provided land for CLC buildings in districts 5, 8, and 12 of Kabul city without any cost. These CLCs were constructed by JICA’s financial support. Currently, 13 CLCs exist in Afghanistan, eight (8) CLCs are located in Kabul province, three (3) in Parwan province and two (2) in Bamiyan province. The Literacy Department of MoE is responsible for planning, managing and monitoring of the CLCs activities. The main purpose of CLCs in Afghanistan is to combine

¹ . *With current census data available, accurate literacy statistics for Afghanistan are not available.* The National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA 2009) indicated the overall literacy rate at 26.2 % (12.5% female and 39.3% male) based on household sampling. While according to *Afghanistan’s Millennium Development Goals Report (2005)*, the estimated literacy rate of those aged 15 and above was 34% in 2004 (50% for men and 18% for women).

literacy education with vocational training programmes. According to the National Strategic Plan of MoE, 412 CLCs should be established by 2014 (NESP II).

The literacy programme is a nine-month course, which consists of six (6) months basic literacy and three (3) months post-literacy.

CLC achievement in Afghanistan: In the Literacy Department, a general directorate for CLC has been established. Thirteen (13) centers of CLCs have been built. Currently 113 staff are paid by the Literacy Department to work as teachers in CLCs. In each CLC, a management committee has been established. Eighteen (18) different types of supplementary materials as well as eight (8) methodic and learning literacy videos have been developed. Additionally, vocational equipment valuing USD 21000 have been purchased. So far, in total, 89 workshops have been organized for literacy teachers with 11,370 learners (2,842 male and 8,528 female) graduating from CLC classes. Based on demand, NFUAJ provides technical and financial support to all 13 CLCs.

1.2. Innovative point of the programme: In the CLCs, in addition to the literacy courses, learners have the chance to acquire occupational skills such as tailoring, carpet weaving and embroidery.

In the CLCs, currently around four-thousand (4,000) learners are receiving vocational training in 13 various vocations. At the same time, the CLCs are providing a hub in the community for continuing education and the centers are used for multiple activities based on needs of the community. It is a basis for cooperation between the government, people and NGOs.

1.3. Challenge lesson learnt from the programme

Identification of communities: Existing CLCs in Afghanistan are supposed to cultivate a sense of community in various locations; however, creating a sense of community has been a serious challenge given the many different groups that exists including religious and ethnic groups. To avoid the mentioned problem, before establishing any CLC, it is good to identify the communities and CLCs should correspond to existing communities' centers. In Afghanistan, mosques and other religious places, such as Takia Khana, are known as symbols of the community. If there is a link between each CLC with each mosque, it can have better impact on the successful implementation and sustainability of a CLC.

Low Community Participation: In Afghanistan, as CLC is a new idea and has recently been established, the community participation is very low. The below reasons could partly explain the low participation of the community in CLCs:

- **Lack of public awareness.** Most of people are not aware of what CLCs are and its benefits.
- **CLCs are known as government identities.** For example, in each CLC there is a signboard introducing a CLC as a governmental building. In the CLC of district 5 of Kabul city, there are two logos one government logo and one MoE logo; between these logos is written “Ministry of Education, Literacy Department, and Directorate of CLC in District 5)”. Considering the negative perception of the government in Afghanistan, community people cannot trust and think a CLC as a place where they can accumulate their efforts to address their common needs.
- **CLC location:** some CLCs are not located in suitable places. For instance, the CLC of district 5 of Kabul is located in an area surrounded by very wealthy people that do not have a need for vocational training. While in contrast, there are a lot of poor communities that need these kinds of training and most, of which are likely to be illiterate.

2. New trends and Innovations to reduce poverty in Afghanistan

The National Development Strategy (ANDS) reflects the commitment of the government to poverty reduction and private sector growth for a prosperous and stable Afghanistan. Based on the ANDS, several sector strategies were established. They include concrete efforts and national Priority programmes to reduce poverty from a national perspective.

2.1. Any innovative and remarkable projects/cases to reduce poverty (any sector)

Here some remarkable sector programmes:

The development of the transportation network enables reliable movement of people and goods. Villagers can sell their products outside their locations. This stimulates farming. **The road construction** also provides employment opportunities. Communities support the construction and maintain the rural roads. 10,000 km of roads, over the past years has led to higher income and better living conditions.

Information and Communication Technologies – supported by the ANDS and the sector strategy increased the access to communication to nearly 80 % of the country. These achievements, mobile phone availabilities in almost all places **and now also increased**

internet connection provide better opportunities to employment, easy and low-cost connection among people for selling of product or other small businesses.

The road and communication network is bridging the region and promotes economic cooperation.

Education sector development

Literacy and educational attainment are key factors in reducing poverty and therefore should be incorporated in poverty reduction strategies. The ability to read and write and knowledge learned in the education system are strong facilitators for adequate performance in the labour market and in social life. Households of illiterate heads are 31 percent more likely to be poor than those of literate heads, and the household poverty rate decreases steadily with higher levels of education: the likelihood of being poor for households with uneducated heads is 1.5 to 5 times higher than those with heads that have any educational attainment above middle school. (NRVA 2009:60).

During the last decade, Afghanistan has witnessed an impressive development of the education sector. In 2001, enrolment was less than one million students, mainly boys, but now stands at more than 8 million students, of whom more than 3 million are girls. Higher education has grown from 7,900 students in 2001 to more than 77,000 in 2011 (Education Joint Sector Review 2011).

2.2. Innovation and new approaches through CLC to reduce poverty

In Afghanistan, the main focus of CLC is to reduce poverty through vocational training. The graduates of these vocational trainings have the chance to establish a small business and generate income. By having skills like tailoring, they will be able make cloths for themselves and their families and save the money they use to pay tailors for such products. At the same time, CLCs enhance productive skills among people that will have a positive impact on poverty reduction in the country.

3. New contents of life Skills/ Skill Development in your country

Current contents of life Skills/ Skill Development in your country under formal education and non-formal education

In Afghanistan, after the fall of Taliban with, support of international community has tried to provide opportunities for learners to develop their required life skills. However, to better build sustainable approaches, Afghanistan needs qualified Afghan experts in such fields as curriculum, teacher training and even teachers to take initiatives in creating new contents for life skills/skill development in the country. Currently, for the field of literacy via non-formal education in particular, the Ministry of Education is currently reviewing its current curriculum to incorporate a more lifelong learner approach in its practice with the help of

development partners. Discussion is on-going, but it is hoped that this lifelong learning approach is adopted soon.

3.2 New contents of life Skills /Skill Development required for future in your country

In the future, Afghanistan needs to realize that all Afghans, regardless of gender, ethnic group, religion, etc., need to acquire life skills, so they are able to fully participate in the community and the world. Indeed, more emphasis will be on the real needs of learners. People who live in rural areas of Afghanistan may not need the same skills as those that live in urban areas. Therefore, a more diverse content of life skills is needed for the future of Afghanistan.