

Afghanistan

Regional Conference on Community Learning Centres (CLCs): National Qualifications Frameworks for Lifelong Learning and Skills Development 19-21 June 2013, Bangkok, Thailand **Country report**

Section 1: Updated Information on Community Learning Centres

Background

Due to the past three decades of war and instability, Afghanistan has and is facing many serious challenges in the progression of all its 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.

Community Learning Centres in Afghanistan

In 2003, for the first time the concept of community learning centres (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 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. These CLCs were constructed by JICA's financial support. Currently, 14 CLCs exist in Afghanistan with CLC classes (including skill development classes) numbering 870, with 6,673 learners. Female account for 4,508 learners and male learners are 2,165. Thus far, 4,142 graduates have graduated from these classes, of which 2,797 are female graduate learners and 1,345 are male—based on the latest statistics from the Literacy Department. The main purpose of CLCs in Afghanistan is to combine literacy education with vocational training programmes. According to the National Strategic Plan of MoE, 412 CLCs should be established by 2014 (NESP II).

In the Literacy Department, a general directorate for CLCs has been established. Currently, 113 staff are paid by the Literacy Department including 71 male and female teachers. Eighteen (18) different types of supplementary materials have been developed as well as eight (8) methodic and learning literacy videos have been developed within the Community Learning Centres (CLCs). Currently, around four-thousand (4,000) learners are receiving vocational training in 14 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 the needs of the community. It is a basis for cooperation between the government, people and NGOs.

The updated version of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESPIII) (2004-2020) mentioned the following regarding CLCs:

Establishing Community Learning Centers (CLCs): The deputy ministry of literacy will establish eight regional literacy centers at the centers of each geographical zone and will construct their buildings. These centers will be used for designing and implementing capacity development programmes for literacy teachers and supervisors. In the next phases, the deputy ministry will establish literacy centers at the centers of provinces and then will establish community learning centers at the centers of districts. The community will run these centers and appropriate strategies will be taken for the sustainability and financial independence of these centers.

Project main Objectives of CLCs in Afghanistan are:

- Improving the quality people’s life through education and life skill trainings
- Awareness raising for basic education, especially for adult males and females
- Peace building, women empowerment, social, cultural and entertainment
- Promote and create the atmosphere / concept of the people, by the people / for the people
- Provide and promote lifelong education
- Promote learning by doing
- Provide vocational and educational advice to the public
- Develop a network for the community to discuss educational/community objectives
- Every individual regardless of age, gender, nationality and religion has the right to use the centre

Number of CLCs in Afghanistan

CLC		Other Learning or non-formal education centers (with multiple learning programmes)		Adult literacy Centers (only focusing on Literacy)	
Government	NGOs/Others	Government	NGOs/Others	Government	NGOs/Others
	National Federation of Associations of UNESCO in Japan (NFUAJ)	Literacy classes	Literacy Classes	Literacy classes	Literacy Classes
0	14	In development	In development	In development	In development

A total of 14 CLCs have been established by National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan under the supervision of the Literacy Department.

Section 2 and 3: National Qualification Frameworks (NQF)

A NQF is at the beginning phases of development in Afghanistan. The Afghan National Qualification Authority (ANQA) is conceptualized as the responsible body for the governance and management of the ANQF, but it has yet to be established. It will be an independent authority that is accountable to the government. The main objectives of ANQA will be to:

- Establish and maintain ANQF for the development, recognition and award of qualifications, based on knowledge, skills and competence acquired by learners

- Establish and promote the maintenance and improvement of the standards of further education and training awards in Higher education, TVET, general education, Islamic education, literacy and Basic education
- Promote and facilitate access, transfer and progression within the national education system.

There will be six boards under the ANQA: one board each for TVET, literacy, higher education, basic education, general education, and Islamic education. The Committee on Education and Skills Development (CESP), under the Office of the Vice President, has led the development of the legal and regulatory framework for the ANQA, as part of a World Bank-funded project called the Afghanistan Skills Development Project (ASDP). CESP contracted a Dutch company, CINOP, to support the development of the legal and regulatory frameworks. It was decided that the first board to be established under the ANQA would be the TVET board. By the end of 2011, the structure and operational procedures of the TVET board that monitors the part of the NQF dedicated to TVET was completed. Establishment of the board is still pending.

- Afghanistan National Qualifications Framework (ANQF) is an important policy instrument for coordination and development of the education and training sector. ANQA is a mechanism for classification of qualifications according to specific levels of learning outcomes and on the basis of the decision of Government of Afghanistan Committee on Education and Skills Policy chaired by the first vice president for the reform of the entire education system.

Under the framework of the ANQF, eight (8) qualification levels based on learning outcomes have been developed:

- Level 1: Basic level
- Level 2: Literacy and Basic Vocational Training Certificate
- Level 3: Intermediate Education certificate/ Grade 9
- Level 4: Advanced Certificate, High School/Grade 12
- Level 5: Tertiary Education Grade 14 Diploma
- Level 6: Higher Education Bachelor Degree
- Level 7: Higher Education Master Degree
- Level 8: Higher Education Ph.D. Degree

Recognition of learning under CLC/NFE centers:

National literacy courses offered by the Literacy Department bring learners up to a grade three reading level. The NESP III of Afghanistan stated that the graduates of literacy courses who are still in school age will be encouraged to enroll in the fourth grade of general education schools. The deputy ministry of literacy will also provide opportunities for the older graduates of literacy courses to continue their education in adult schools. The literacy programme, in coordination with the general education programme, will develop a special curriculum for these schools and will implement the general education competency tests for assessing their learning achievements. The deputy ministry will consider the possibility of adopting open and distance education strategies in adult schools.

Section 4. Skills Development in Afghanistan

4.1: Current policies concerning skills development under formal and non-formal education.

There are several policies/programmes guiding Afghanistan in skills development within the country, including the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and the National Skills Development Programme (NSDP).

Within and under the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP), overall goal for skills development is to provide relevant and quality technical and vocational educational opportunities for male and female Afghans in order to equip them with marketable skills that meet the needs of the labor market in Afghanistan and other countries. The TVET programme will contribute to this obtainment.

The Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) states Afghan will “develop an effective skills development system that is responsive to the labor market needs.” The Ministry of Education and other line ministries such as the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs must combine efforts in order to meet the target of training “150,000 men and women in marketable skills through public and private means” by Afghan calendar year 1399 (2011/2012). The Ministry of Education has traditionally concentrated on longer courses (formal TVET), with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs delivering short-term courses (non-formal TVET). However, the demand for short-term courses is significant, and the Ministry of Education will start to implement these courses as well. This will increase the importance of ensuring that a qualifications framework is in place, so that learners can access flexible pathways between formal and non-formal TVET. The Ministry of Education will continue to also focus on higher skill training and aims/aimed to rebuild its capacity and reach into higher complexity trades and sub-professional areas. This will be achieved over the duration of the present Strategic Plan through the expansion of the existing formal TVET system, a closer partnership with the private sector and the provision of short-term training courses in various technical and vocational fields that will be targeted at unemployed young people—both male and female. Technical education will touch upon public administration, construction, information and communication technologies (ICTs), agriculture and industry. Non-formal and informal vocational training will be more skills based and will be offered in both urban and rural areas. These training programmes will not necessarily be offered through an official school-based system but rather will be targeted towards on-the-job training.

The National Skills Development Programme (NSDP), which falls under the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, aims to establish a modern and well-structured vocational education and training (VET) system having all the best features referred to above, and of those drawn from best practice around the world. However, the intention is to ensure that it is demand driven, inclusive, cost effective and competitive, and that credit for learning is awarded at all levels and is standardized within a flexible qualifications framework – and delivered by an interconnected network of accredited, public and private training providers. It will be essential to address the issue of access and reduce entry barriers to the minimum possible and ensure that additional underpinning courses are available so as to allow those who require extra learning experiences to obtain them and so gain access. The NSDP has developed over 100 National Occupational Skills Standards (NOSS), which are being shared with the Ministry of Education, as a step towards establishing a coherent system of competency-based learning standards for TVET in Afghanistan.

Regarding the future direction for skills development in the country, there is discussion on establishing a demand-driven system that will ensure courses of study are of high quality, relevant to the current market needs and that any training provided is likely to lead to worthwhile waged and self-employment. In addition, inclusiveness is crucial and the emerging NSDP will seek to ensure that all women and men who wish to engage in vocational training can do so, and that they will be assisted in obtaining employment in fields which suit their aptitude and level of achievement. Through a system of credit recognition, training paths and bridges will be established such that those who seek to continue their technical and vocational studies may do so - provided the entry-level standard of achievement to embark on the next level has been met. This will mean that courses must be devised which can cater for the needs of all groups and all levels, regardless of prior learning, and that initial entry level courses must cater for those having very limited prior educational experiences. It is expected that those having special needs, such as the disabled, will also be accommodated. Nonetheless, it is evident that the quality of skills and TVET provision is poor and there is a great need for the quality assurance mechanism in this sector.

4.2 Recent initiatives of the Government to address skills development for unemployed youth

Besides what has been noted in this report, no additional initiatives are underway.

4.3 Innovative point of the programme:

CLCs/skill development programmes in Afghanistan offer courses in tailoring, carpet weaving and embroidery, bee keeping, etc. There are courses at CLCs on topics such as peace as well. Participation of the learners in social, economic and cultural activities in community is encouraged (i.e., creation of tournaments among youths, planting, health and agriculture programmes).



Female Learners in CLC Peace Programme



CLC volleyball tournament



Pictures of Advocacy Campaign of CLCs

