



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Ministry of Education

National Report on the Situation of Adult Learning and Education

Afghanistan

April 2008

General Overview:

Afghanistan is one of the poorest and least educated countries in the world. After 23 years of armed conflict in Afghanistan, socio-economic conditions are deteriorated and the basic infrastructure is completely destroyed. Its conflict ridden history, which has global ramifications, makes it a special case in national development. Here human poverty is a multidimensional problem. It includes inequality in access to productive assets and social services, health, education and nutrition status, weak social protection system, vulnerability to macro and micro level risks – natural as well as human triggered, human displacement, gender inequalities and political marginalization. Children, women, disabled persons, Internally Displaced Persons, Kuchis are the primary victims of quarter century conflict. According to the UN, there are 130,000 long-term displaced people in Afghanistan, and recent fighting has displaced up to 80,000; there has also been a substantial influx of refugees and deportees from Pakistan and Iran, respectively.

Afghanistan faces an immense challenge in reconstruction of its national education system, starting from a situation of destruction of infrastructure, loss of human resources due to forced emigration, isolation from the international community during several years and an enormous gap in knowledge and technology. Thousand of communities have no easy access to schools and half of the school-age children are estimated to be out of school. In this post-conflict context, insecurity is still a serious threat to the delivery of education to several regions of Afghanistan. In some parts of the country, general insecurity and attacks targeted directly at schools are a major threat to education and these attacks have been increasing. Although more than 3,500 school buildings have been constructed, only 25% of the schools have usable buildings. In addition, nearly 6% of schools have been burned or closed down due to terrorism in the last two years. However, education is a key enabler of development and human security contributing to improve health, good governance, sustainable livelihoods and economic growth.

With no current census, accurate literacy statistics for Afghanistan are not available. 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). In rural areas where 74 percent of all Afghans live, however, an estimated 90 percent of women and 63 percent of men cannot read, write and do a simple math computation (MRRD 2003). The rates are only somewhat better in urban areas.

The United Nations Population Division estimates that the 2005 population is approximately 29.9 million, and will increase to 35.6 million Afghans by 2010. This includes approximately 16 million Afghans age 15 or older in 2005, increasing to 19.3 million of this age by 2010. Assuming that approximately one-third of the current population aged 15 and above are literate, there are at least 11 million Afghans age 15 and above who are now in need of literacy and numeracy skills development. Unless the formal school system succeeds in improving literacy rates among young Afghans, as many as 1.4 million additional people may require literacy skills development by 2010. In addition, if the population growth rate exceeds the rate of growth of the

formal school system and literacy programs, then the percentage of illiterate people could increase even more.

The Education for All initiative to which Afghanistan has committed explicitly identifies the goal of reducing illiteracy by 50% by 2015. In addition, the I-ANDS (Interim-Afghanistan National Development Strategy) (National Oversight Committee 2005: 51) notes the importance of literacy and non-formal education with regard to the human capital development of the country. “Literacy and non-formal education and apprenticeship programs will enable our adults and youth to work more productively, to gain greater self-confidence, and to become more involved in group decision-making. These programs will also help them to access more credit facilities in order to invest in improving their incomes, and to become more proactive in marketing and selling their products.” In addition, literacy programmes for women are an essential element of decreasing maternal mortality, improving child health and nutrition and building a better understanding of social involvement and community based decision making. Literacy has both a social and economic value in Afghan society.

1. Policy, Legislation and Financing:

1.1. Legislative and policy framework

1.1.1 What is the legislative and policy environment of ALE in your country? Indicate which policies and laws related to ALE have been established since 1997 (CONFINTEA V)

The Ministry of Education has embarked on this process of strategic planning in order to develop one guiding framework for educational activities throughout the country. With technical support of UNESCO’s International Institute of Educational Planning, the Ministry developed a five-year National Education Strategic Plan (NESP-2006/2010) which indicates what the education system of Afghanistan should look like in the future. It was developed through a consultative process that includes representatives from all departments of the Ministry of Education, provincial and district-level representatives, members of civil society and members of the international community (UN and NGO) and donors.

As mentioned in the NESP, the vision of the Ministry of Education is “to facilitate the development of vibrant human capital by providing equal access to quality education for all and enable people to participate and contribute productively to the development, economic growth and stability of the country”. There are eight priority programmes in the NESP, one of which is literacy and non formal education. The NESP outlines the goals and objectives for each of the eight priority programmes.

In case of literacy and NFE there are a number of reforms initiatives underway, largely within NESP guidelines. NESP promotes a new paradigm whereby communities are empowered to take decisions and control.

According to ratified Constitution (January 04, 2004) education is right of every citizen. The constitution also provides for equal right and full participation of women by stating that any type of discrimination and privilege between citizens of Afghanistan is prohibited. It also states that state should device and implement effective programmes for balancing and promoting education for women, improving of education of the Nomads and elimination of illiteracy in the country (Article 44).

The Constitution also stipulates that the state is required to provide opportunity to teach native languages in the areas where they are spoken.

To enact these articles of constitution, policies and legislations are required. Government will take immediate action to adapt policies and legislations to enact the constitutional privileges, develop legal and regulatory framework for efficient enforcement of these Articles. There exists a national literacy policy. But the current policy and approaches to literacy and NFE need to be revised as mentioned in the NESP to make the learning process more relevant to the need of adult learners. Following issues need to be dealt with:

- Policy and strategy for improved participation of women and girls in literacy and education. Poverty and deprivation, insecurity, socio-cultural aspects keep girls and women out of literacy class. Strategic planning is required to bring them to the literacy centres.
- Coherent legislation and rules based framework for delivery of quality education.
- Formation of education policy for teaching native languages.
- Policy for early childhood care as establishment of early childhood care centre is very important for participation of women and girls in education.
- Policy for education of various levels of disabled people.
- Integration of religious and faith based education into over all system as NESP states the use of these institutions for literacy promotion.
- Linkages between literacy and micro-credit schemes.
- Linkages between various partner Ministries.
- Implementation of literacy programme according to literacy rate, geographical areas and situation of the areas. There is a need to develop more focused strategy on reaching the un-reached through innovative and alternative literacy programmes as there are variations in different provinces and districts concerning access to education and literacy. Decentralized province/district wise planning is required.
- Formulation of effective strategy to involve people at grassroots level in literacy programme, especially involvement of mullah and religious leaders for promotion of female literacy.
- Contingency plans for the areas prone to natural disaster.

1.1.2 *What are the priorities goals for ALE in your country?*

The overall goal of NESP is to develop a long term literacy programme to empower communities and individuals to build a productive, secure and literate nation. The principle objectives are to:

- Improve literacy rates of all Afghans in line with the Education for All goal of increasing literacy by 50%.
- Ensure that at least 60% of learners are female, and that minority groups, Kuchi and people with disabilities are specifically targeted.
- Enable more than 1.8 million Afghans to attain demonstrated literacy by 2010.
- Provide non-literate youth and adults across all 34 provinces with access to basic-literacy and post-literacy enhancing opportunities through mass media.
- Utilise the education management information system to measure and monitor achievements in literacy.
- Establish a partnership with mullah-Imams to provide community support for literacy courses and train them to become literacy facilitators in their communities.

To address these objectives, the literacy and non formal education programme will consist of the following different components and targets:

- Development of a National Literacy Strategy
 1. Establish a High Commission for National Literacy Strategy;
 2. Establish National Literacy Centre;
 3. Develop a national implementation/operational plan for literacy;
- Development of teaching and learning materials
 1. Print and distribute 1,800,000 literacy textbooks, 37,000 teachers guidebooks and 1,800,000 post-literacy textbooks during the plan period;
 2. Translate, print and distribute materials into local languages identified in the Constitution;
 3. Prepare and distribute 72,000 learning kits;
 4. Develop special materials for Kuchi learners, for learners with special needs and for distance education and Mosque-based literacy.
- Training and capacity development
 1. Train 68 provincial and 816 district master trainers during the plan period;
 2. Train special needs literacy teachers;
 3. Train trainers for the private sector and NGOs;
 4. Build awareness among other ministries and civil society;
 5. Upgrade professional skills of central level officers;
- Delivery of the national Literacy Programme
 1. Conduct surveys to determine levels and patterns of illiteracy in local communities to identify specific needs;
 2. Recruit 17,000 literacy teachers;
 3. Provide 1,800,000 learners with basic supplies for literacy classes;
 4. Establish 364 CLCs throughout the country;
 5. Put in place a programme for Mosque-based literacy courses;
 6. Prepare and run a programme for literacy through distance learning;

- Monitoring and evaluation
 1. Ensure proper monitoring of the different literacy programmes through regular field visits;
 2. Carry-out an annual province-based evaluation;
 3. Set up an efficient, decentralized information system;
- Programme management
 1. Ensure proper staffing of the offices in charge of literacy at central, provincial and district levels;
 2. Provide the different offices with proper equipment and means of transportation and a budget for operation and maintenance;

1.1.3 How is ALE organized within the Government? What ministry/s are In-charge or involved? Is ALE centralized/decentralized? How?

Afghanistan faces a daunting task in reducing illiteracy rates in the country with an estimated 11 million currently illiterate Afghans aged 15 and above. Improving literacy rates is requiring the combined efforts of the Ministry of Education and other partners within the Government of Afghanistan as well as communities, the private sector and other non-government actors.

As stated in the NESP, to reduce costs and increase impact, the objective of the Ministry of Education is to build upon existing programmes and ensure that district level facilities are available through the establishment of community learning centres and the direct participation of specially trained mullahs.

The overall literacy strategy conducted through the Ministry of Education will be coordinated through a National Literacy Centre. It will encourage the use of multiple approaches and materials in order to make the learning process more relevant to the needs of adult learners. The Ministry intends also to encourage improved literacy among its own workforce through in-house programmes or incentives to participate in external programmes.

The programme aims to improve management and administration capacities to sustain literacy programmes at all levels (central, provincial and district). Offices will be better staffed and better equipped, while the technical skills of the staff will be upgraded. These efforts will be even more important because the programme focus will shift from urban to rural areas and since active community participation is envisaged under the new programme. To train its staff in community development and participation, the Literacy Department of the Ministry of Education will conduct its capacity building activities in close cooperation with the Education Administration Reform and Development Programme.

- 1.1.4 How are the policy and implementation strategies aligned, for example with:*
- *Policies in other sectors (health, economy, labour, rural development, etc.)*
 - *Other goals, such as gender equality, social cohesion, active citizenship, cultural and linguistic diversity;*

- *The creation of knowledge economies and/or the building of learning societies;*
- *National development plans and strategies; or in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers;*

As stated in the NESP, the Ministry of Education will review the current policy and approaches to literacy and non formal education including the development of multiple approaches and materials in order to make the learning process more relevant to the needs of adult learners. This could include directly implementing literacy programmes or setting standards for and certification of facilitators; setting and monitoring standards of student assessment; training and supporting trainers and facilitators down to the village level; encouraging and supporting best practices, materials and curriculum that are appropriate to the life of each learner; collecting, analysing and disseminating data; and coordinating donors and facilitating partners (NGOs and other organizations) to ensure national coverage.

To reduce costs and duplication and increase impact, the Ministry of Education will coordinate with existing development programmes such as the National Skills Development Programme and the Vocational Training Centres of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to maximise learning opportunities for people outside the main population centres through the use of innovation and mass media programmes.

The Ministry of Education will review the mechanisms for effective coordination between its Literacy Department, the private sector, non-governmental partners, donors and other ministries to assess the potential for a National Literacy Centre (NLC). The NLC will be responsible for mapping existing literacy programmes and conducting an assessment of best practices and lessons learned nationwide.

Based on the national strategy, a literacy implementation plan will be developed in close collaboration with other related ministries and partners. This National Literacy Action Plan (LIFE-Literacy Initiative for Empowerment- Action Plan) will be developed based on the LIFE Needs Assessment and in the framework of the LIFE Coordination Working Group. The Ministry will make special efforts to reach isolated and minority linguistic groups and, where possible, to provide materials in their first languages as well as in the two official languages of Afghanistan.

1.1.5. What are the main challenges in your country? How are the ALE goals defined in relation to these challenges?

Access to literacy programs

Most of the existing literacy programs operate in the cities of the country. In the rural areas, where there are high rates of illiteracy and poverty, people have less access to literacy programs and are less likely to participate if they do not see the relevance of the planned activities to their daily lives. Insecurity in some areas of the country is also an obstacle to people's participation in literacy initiatives, especially for women.

Learning spaces

After the collapse of the Taliban, reconstruction of supplementary schools began and 78 supplementary schools re-started their activities with the cooperation of national associations, UNESCO and Japan. In addition, six Community Learning Centers have been established and started their activities in Parwan and Kabul provinces. These centers are open to all people between the ages of 9 and 45. Participants study basic literacy and can also take part in skills training programs. While some literacy and skills training activities take place in these formal learning spaces, most literacy classes are held in people's homes. This can sometimes result in disruptions to the program when people are not able to offer their home on a particular day or when they withdraw from the program but, in general, this is an effective way of conducting large scale literacy education. As part of the Ministry's vision for expanding literacy in the country, the Ministry will encourage communities to offer learning spaces in mosques as well as in people's homes.

Curriculum

The literacy curriculum was out-dated and did not meet the requirements of students. The new curriculum has just been developed with technical and financial assistance of UNESCO. In addition, there is no existing curriculum for the skills training offered in the supplementary schools and local educational centers. The use of multiple local languages throughout Afghanistan is another obstacle to literacy training and requires the use of local facilitators who read and write the local language.

The Department has written a new textbook as part of the LAND Afghan project with funding from the government of Japan. There is some question as to whether a formal literacy textbook is the most effective way of teaching literacy and whether it is economically viable to base the literacy strategy on an approach that requires the use of a textbook. A more flexible approach requires that teachers are able to develop and produce low-cost teaching materials that are relevant to the lives of participants but this requires a more concerted training effort for the literacy teachers.

Community participation

There is a need to increase the involvement of communities in literacy efforts. When adults do not see the relevance of planned programs, they do not participate. This is a challenge in some parts of the country. Therefore, the vision for the Community Learning Centers includes a prominent role for local people with regard to the design and implementation of programs in the centers.

Sustainable literacy

Completion of a literacy program does not guarantee that students will be able to read, write and do numeracy long-term. Many programs globally have failed because they do not consider the learners' needs after the course has ended. Literacy is sustained when skills are continually used and materials are available that are understandable by those with very basic skills. What we call 'post-literacy' can be supported by ministries and agencies that, for instance, provide literature on health and agriculture that is written for people with basic literacy skills. Radio and TV programs are already a major contributor to children's learning as well as youth and adult literacy in Afghanistan, and can be built upon. Such efforts need to be an explicit part of any comprehensive national strategy.

Essential coordination and collaboration

Literacy efforts thus far in Afghanistan have been fragmented, with disparate efforts by various ministries, aid agencies, civil society organizations and individuals. Yet the government cannot take on the task alone. Collaboration and coordination is absolutely essential if national coverage is to be achieved, and if Afghanistan is to become a literate nation in the foreseeable future. A well-designed program and clear policies can allow for the flexibility and innovation required to address the range of needs and learners. In this effort the Ministry of Education must take the lead while bringing all other stakeholders into partnership.

A coordinated strategy requires sensitivity on all sides as to the historic role of the ministry, as well as the important role that civil society has played in literacy. Achieving a fine balance and sense of true partnership, with respect for one another, is fundamental to making literacy a reality.

Building government capacity

For the Ministry of Education to take the lead on a comprehensive national literacy program, the capacities of the ministry to do so must be a high priority.

1.1.6. Are there other policies in place to have an impact on ALE?

N/A

1.2. Financing of ALE

1.2.1. Public investment in ALE:

- a) Share of the budget allocated to adult education in the education sector (indicate measures, activities, responsible bodies);

Since 2001, the literacy program of the Ministry has had no development budget from the Government of Afghanistan. The government has only covered the ordinary budget of the literacy program which mainly covered the salaries of teachers and some operation costs of the literacy department. The literacy activities have mainly been implemented by external funding i.e. UNESCO, USAID, UNICEF, JICA and others.

Following the development of five-year National Education Strategic Plan of the Ministry, two main programs of about US\$ 60 million have been designed and the agreements for implementation have been signed.

As for the benchmarks, the five-year strategic plan stipulates clear targets on yearly basis with cost estimations. During the life of the Strategic Plan, 1.8 million persons would be provided literacy courses throughout the country.

The total amount of funding allocated to the education sector in 2007 was USD 389.31 million, out of which USD 4,6 was allocated for the operational cost of the literacy programme.

- b) Share of the budget allocated to adult education from other sectors, made either directly or indirectly within their policies (indicate responsible ministries, describe activities);

There are three main ministries providing literacy courses to their employees including the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Women Affairs. The cost of these courses is covered by the ministries' budget.

- c) ALE in decentralized/local budgets (local governments and authorities, municipalities, communities);

N/A

- d) Other investment, e.g. from regional funds, trans-national organizations, etc.

N/A

1.2.2. Foreign bilateral/ multilateral donor investment in ALE:

- List annual amounts and key areas/activities
- USAID: Learning for Community Empowerment Programme (LCEP II); USD 8 million (implemented by UN-Habitat).
- Government of Japan: Programme for Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan (ELA); USD 5.2 million (implemented by UNESCO).
- UNICEF: Women Literacy Programme; USD 1.4 million.

1.2.3. Support to ALE from private/corporate sector:

N/A

1.2.4. Civil society support to ALE (e.g. religious institutions, unions, NGOs)

There are small NGOs who provide literacy classes to a small number of learners in the country. These NGOs implement literacy courses following signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Literacy Department of the Ministry of Education and mainly using the government curriculum for literacy.

The main NGOs providing literacy in Afghanistan are part of the LIFE Coordination Working Group.

1.2.5. Learners/individuals contributions to ALE

Since most of the learners are very poor in Afghanistan, there is no contribution by learners/individuals. However, in some cases the communities provide learning spaces and volunteer teachers for literacy courses.

1.2.6. Are there specific direct or indirect financial incentives in support of ALE e.g. learning vouchers, scholarships, paid educational leave, special funds and funding schemes etc? Are these specific to some programmes or general schemes? Please elaborate.

N/A

1.2.7. Are benchmarks (targets in relation to financing of ALE in place? In your context, what would be realistic benchmarks related to financing of ALE?

The estimated financial requirements for literacy and non formal education programme are:

- Operating budget (1386/2007): USD 4.2 million; Total 1385/2006-1389/2010: USD 22.26 million.
- Development budget (1386/2007): USD 6.51 million; Total 1385/2006-1389/2010: USD 47.16 million.

2. Quality of Adult Learning and Education: Provision, Participation and Achievement

2.1. Provision of ALE and institutional frameworks

2.1.1. Which institutions are responsible for managing and co-ordinating ALE at national level?

The Literacy Department of the Ministry of Education, headed by a Deputy Minister, is responsible for developing National Literacy Programme, monitoring, evaluation as well as coordination of literacy activities in the country.

Realizing the importance of LIFE in achieving the goals and objectives set in the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP), in June 2007 the Afghan Ministry of Education requested Director General of UNESCO to include Afghanistan in the second phase of LIFE implementation from 2008 and to provide technical and financial support for its preparation in 2007.

LIFE was officially adopted in Afghanistan as a national literacy framework which offers a platform for all the literacy stakeholders to plan and implement their respective activities in a harmonized manner and collectively achieve the literacy goals set in the National Education Strategic Plan.

LIFE will contribute to the achievement of the EFA Goals, in particular Goal 4 (a 50% improvement in adult literacy rates), Goal 3 (meeting the learning needs of all

young people and adults) and Goal 5 (achieving gender equality in education). It will also support the achievement of the Afghanistan Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on poverty reduction, women's empowerment, HIV/AIDS and education for sustainable development.

The overall goal of LIFE in Afghanistan is to contribute to the attainment of literacy goals set in the National Education Strategic Plan through the empowerment of illiterate population, especially women and out-of-school girls and their families in underserved rural areas.

LIFE will be country led and its actions will be planned, implemented and monitored by the MoE in close collaboration with the partners like NGOs, UN organizations, donors, communities etc. based on the country's needs and requirements to achieve the literacy goals set in the National Education Strategic Plan.

LIFE will link with other development programmes such as life skills, income generation, livelihood, HIV & AIDS and sustainable development. It will draw on existing national, regional, and international expertise relevant to the locally identified needs. LIFE fits perfectly with the overall framework of National Education Strategic Plan to achieve the National Literacy Goals through;

- Advocacy to create national and international momentum;
- Enhancing partnership among all the literacy stakeholders;
- Reinforcing national capacity in literacy policy, strategy and programme development;
- Enhancing delivery in literacy learning;
- Facilitating the consultation and sharing of information to improve policies and practice.

A LIFE Coordination Working Group has been set up in October 2007 with the participation of a wide range of literacy stakeholders (UN agencies, donors, NGOs) and to date monthly meeting has been organized with the co-chairpersonship of the Senior Adviser to the Minister of Education and Director of UNESCO Kabul.

The key partners providing technical and financial support to the literacy program of Ministry of Education include UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, JICA and others. There are a number of NGOs also providing literacy courses in different parts of the country. As already mentioned, the government ministries who provide considerable number of literacy classes to their employees include the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defence, and Ministry of Women Affairs.

A National High Commission for Literacy has been planned under NESP, which will be responsible to ensure policy implementation by all Ministries and stakeholders. The establishment of High Commission for Literacy is highly recommended to give high profile support to the national literacy programme. Its role will be as follows:

- Confirmation of political will.
- Advocacy and communication at national and international level.
- Raising awareness at national level.
- Coordination of literacy programmes.
- Monitoring and evaluation.

- Approval of national strategy for literacy
- To encourage and ensure policy implementation by all related ministries and other stakeholders at all levels.

2.1.2. Please use Table 1 below to list and describe briefly the ALE programmes in your country, including the following items:

Table 1

Programme (name and brief description)	a) Provider (please choose the appropriate one from below)			b) Area of learning (please choose the appropriate one/s from below)			c) Target groups	d) Programme cost (1 year)	e) Funding source
	Public /State	CSO/NGO	Private	General competencies	Technical skills	Knowledge generation, innovation			
Women Literacy		UNICEF		Reading, writing and numeracy			Women	USD1.4 million	Various
LEAF		JICA		Reading, writing and numeracy			Male and female in 3 provinces	USD 1.5 million	Government of Japan
LCEP I		UN-Habitat		Reading, writing and numeracy	Skill development		Male and female		USAID
LCEP II		UN-Habitat		Reading, writing and numeracy	Skill development		Male and female in 18 provinces		USAID
Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan (ELA)		UNESCO		Reading, writing and numeracy	Skill development		Male and female in 18 provinces	USD 5.2 million	Government of Japan

2.1.3. *What linkages exist between formal and non-formal approaches? Please describe.*

Graduates of literacy programmes who successfully complete the 9 months course can continue their formal education starting from grade 4 of the formal system.

2.1.4. *Does ALE lead to certification and national awards? If yes, provide examples.*

Successful completion of the 9 month literacy course results in getting grade 3 graduate certificates.

2.2 Participation in ALE

2.2.1. *Statistical data on participation:*

- a) Provide an overall participation rate (% of population participating in an adult education activity) and difference compared to previous survey(s). Please disaggregate according to gender, education background and age;

The Literacy and Non-formal Education Department currently supports a general literacy program, which is a nine-month program for those between the ages of 15-45 who did not previously have access to education and who are not literate. The tables below present the number of enrolled students (male and female) and the number of graduates (male and female), from 2002 to 2007.

The table below provides information on the participation of Afghans in ALE:

Enrolled male and Female Students

Year	Male	Female	Total
1381/2002	180,723	161,361	342,083
1382/2003	199,447	157,891	357,338
1383/2004	271,938	174,959	446,897
1384/2005	190,728	195,713	386,441
1385/2006	108,174	187,641	295,815
1386/2007	96,825	207,693	304,518

Graduated male and Female Students

Year	Male	Female	Total
1381/2002	92,389	86,713	179,102
1382/2003	115,824	91,888	207,712
1383/2004	111,036	821,84	193,220
1384/2005	52,937	67,168	120,105
1385/2006	40,647	63,214	89,348
1386/2007	20,274	25,942	46,216

Participants take part in an initial six months of literacy training that uses a formal curriculum and textbook. Following this initial period, participants may take part in an additional three months of supplementary training. Participants can choose from two options for the supplementary training component:

- *Literacy supplementary schools:* These schools cover the materials presented in Grades 4-9 of the formal system. The focus of these courses is 40% vocational subjects and 60% literacy subjects.
- *Labor supplementary schools:* These schools are designed for graduates of the literacy program who are employed by the private sector or in governmental offices. Participants in these schools can earn up to a ninth grade equivalency and are able to attend night schools to earn up to a Grade 12 certificate.

The Literacy Department also supports vocational supplementary schools that are designed for graduates of the accelerated learning program. The focus of study in these schools is 60% vocational subjects and 40% literacy subjects. Students can study the equivalent of Grades 5-9 in this program.

The programs supported by the Literacy Department to date have focused on grade equivalency, but the Ministry's emphasis during the course of this Strategic Plan will shift to a focus on functional literacy and skills based learning that is relevant to the lives of adult learners. This will be an essential change in direction if the Government is to achieve the goal of halving illiteracy by 2015 and will require the combined efforts of the Department and international and national organizations that are supporting literacy initiatives throughout the country.

- b) Show Participation, in specific programmes (possible examples for programmes: literacy/numeracy programmes; health (including HIV prevention) programmes; income generating skills training' programmes addressing special learning needs (e.g. prisoners, migrants, disabled); technical skill training (including ICTs). Please provide information, if available, on total numbers of participants, disaggregated according to age and gender.

N/A

2.2.2. What existing surveys/ studies have been undertaken on non-participation and groups that are difficult to reach?

No specific survey has been undertaken.

2.2.3. What existing surveys/ studies have been undertaken on learner motivation?

No specific survey has been undertaken.

2.2.4. Which measures have been undertaken to mobilize learners and to increase participation?

The Ministry of Education is taking different measures to encourage participation, including Community Development Councils (CDCs), community elders, traditional Shuras, religious leaders, radio and television.

2.2.5. Are specific groups targeted by ALE provision? Which ones?

The Ministry of Education is planning to target Kuchis, people with special needs and minorities by designing specific literacy programmes, which can meet the specific needs of these groups.

2.2.6. Are there benchmarks in relation to participation in place? If yes, which ones? If not, what would be realistic benchmarks for participation in your context?

The National Education Strategic Plan targets 1.8 million (40% male and 60% female) by 2010.

2.3. Monitoring & evaluating programmes and assessing learning outcomes

2.3.1. Do you assess the learning outcomes of ALE Programmes (national, regional and local community perspective/programme perspective)? If so, what methods do you use?

N/A

2.3.2. What tools and mechanisms are used to monitor and evaluate programmes to ensure good quality?

The monitoring unit of the Literacy Department is regularly visiting the literacy courses. An external evaluation of programme is envisaged under the strategic plan.

2.3.3. To what extent are the results used for a) legislation, b) policy formation, and c) programme development?

N/A

2.3.4. Are benchmarks in relation to outcomes of ALE in place? In your context, what would be realistic benchmarks related to outcomes?

N/A

2.4. Adult educators/ facilitators' status and training

2.4.1. What educational qualifications/ training are required for adult educators/ facilitators? What continuing/in-service training measures are in place?

The skills required for literacy facilities are quite different from those of formal education teachers. For this reason, although training of literacy facilitators was previously the responsibility of the Teacher Education Department, it is now the responsibility of the Literacy Department. Although the Literacy and Non-formal Education Department has conducted some ad hoc seminars and workshops in order to improve the academic knowledge and pedagogical skills of literacy staff, their

capacity is limited and efforts to date have not been well-coordinated and have resulted in limited impact.

Most of the existing facilitators do not have experience in adult education and lack adequate training with regard to facilitating literacy activities. In addition, there is a shortage of female literacy facilitators which makes it difficult to enroll women in the literacy programs, especially in the rural areas. Among existing facilitators, 27% have not completed Grade 12, 70% are Grade 12 graduates, 1.6% are Grade 14 graduates, 1.3% have a bachelor's degree and 0.09% have a master's degree. The Ministry is currently reviewing its accreditation standards for literacy facilitators.

2.4.2. Is adult education considered as specific profession and are there higher education institutions providing such qualifications?

N/A

2.4.3. Please indicate the proportion of adult educators/facilitators in relation to the overall number of teaching personnel in your country.

The total number of teachers in the Ministry of Education is some 160,000, while the number of literacy teachers reaches 4392.

2.4.4. What are the terms of employment and remuneration in ALE?

There are two types of literacy facilitators – permanent and contracted. They both get USD 60 per month.

3. Research, Innovation and Good Practice

3.1. Research studies in the field of adult learning

3.1.1. Which key studies in adult education have been undertaken in your country recently (within last five years)?

In the framework of LIFE, a Need Assessment process was started in July 2007 with support of UNESCO. The Needs Assessment will be finalized in May 2008.

3.1.2. What were the major questions addressed and promoted by these studies?

The Needs Assessment reviewed and analyzed the literacy situation in Afghanistan to identify the gaps to be tackled in the priority areas. It analyzed the data to identify problems, issues and constraints and the challenges to tackle illiteracy reduction. Based on this assessment the National Literacy Action Plan (LIFE Action Plan) will put forward a common response to a selected number of challenges. The NA and NLAP are intended to provide a framework to strengthen the National Education

Strategic Plan for Afghanistan and Afghanistan National Development Strategy towards achieving the Dakar Goals and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and build and improve the capacity of Afghanistan's women, men and children and empower them.

The purpose of the NA was to determine the contents of the National Literacy Action Plan in Afghanistan and the type of support inputs that need to be mobilised. Keeping this in view, with respect to literacy programmes the NA exercise also identified the type of external support required in terms of both financial as well as capacity building needs.

To identify areas requiring priority attention, following most crucial dimensions for analysis have been identified;

- Policy design and planning;
- Programme design support;
- Programme implementation support;
- Monitoring and evaluation.

The situation analysis yield mapping of targets, comprehensive picture of policy and programmes, base-line statistical data and leads to the identification of priority areas and challenges for the gap analysis.

3.1.3. What are the key findings?

The key findings include the current literacy situation, who is doing what and the gaps.

3.1.4. To what extent did these findings inform policies and practice? How did they influence practice? Please, give examples.

The need assessment report would be finalized in May 2008. Once finalized, the next step would be the finalization of the National Literacy Action Plan in close consultation with the stakeholders in the framework of the LIFE Coordination Working Group.

3.2. Innovation and examples of good practice

In June 2006, His Excellency Haneef Atmar, Minister of Education, requested formation of a Technical Working Group (TWG) of stakeholders, chaired by the Minister's advisor for literacy, to design a five-year comprehensive National Literacy Program. The Program would aim to create equity through national coverage and reach into every household; would ensure collaboration and cooperation of all stakeholders in facilitating literacy development in the country; and would give credit to the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) for literacy in every community. TWG members were representatives of the MoE Literacy Department, UN agencies, NGOs and donors involved in literacy. This draft document presented for Ministerial review provides the recommendations reached through discussion and subsequent consensus or majority agreement of the TWG.

The Technical Working Group (TWG) of stakeholders presented a National Literacy Program (NLP) that was aimed to achieve national coverage; reach into every household; ensure collaboration and cooperation of all stakeholders in literacy; give credit to the Government of Afghanistan for literacy in every community, and ensure equity for women and men. The NLP supports the Millennium Development Goals and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, and promotes the concept of unifying Afghan education. Like schools, NLP classes and activities will facilitate quality, relevant learning; protect students; demonstrate government support; report information; and empower communities.

While the initial design will be for five years, the vision of the programme is a long-term literacy campaign to empower literate, healthy, and productive individuals and communities – the foundation of a literate nation.

The Technical Working Group recommended the followings:

Literacy as a National Priority: To ensure the political will, coordinate, guide and support the NLP across ministries, a High Commission for National Literacy will be established, chaired by a Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, with concerned ministers and the Chair of Parliament's Education Committee as members. Religious leaders and executives from the Afghan business community and voluntary organizations will also participate in the High Commission.

Role of Concerned Ministries: The Ministry of Education will create an enabling environment and lead the movement to national literacy, in partnership with other concerned ministries such as the Ministry of Higher Education, The Ministry of Women's Affairs, The Ministry of Hajj and Islamic Affairs, the Ministry of Health, and others.

The Ministry of Education will serve a coordinating role, working with other ministries to: develop, implement and monitor policy and national standards of teacher training and student assessment; ensure coordination amongst stakeholders; support and approve appropriate curriculum and supplementary materials; develop and manage a teacher training and support system at the national, provincial and district levels; collect and disseminate data; and monitor and evaluate achievements and issues nationally. While the Ministry of Education and other ministries may continue some direct implementation of literacy courses, their role will generally be to provide the system of support for implementation, rather than direct provision.

Partnership of Government, Business and Communities: A partnership of government, business and communities is at the heart of the NLP. While government will play the central role as noted above, literacy programmes will be implemented through both workplaces and communities. NGOs and UN agencies will provide the technical assistance as the interim measure to build capacities of both government and communities. Thus the NLP will build upon the comparative advantage of each stakeholder to implement a fast roll-out, low-cost, effective and sustainable national programme.

Development of a Low-Cost, Scale-up Model: Given the high illiteracy rate and geographical constraints of Afghanistan, the cost of national literacy will be in the

hundreds of millions of dollars if done as a traditional top-down delivery effort. With the demands on funds for education at every other level, government and donor funds will always be limited. In rural areas, NLP will build upon the substantial investment of the government in the National Solidarity Programme in rural areas, to support rapid scale-up, low-cost and sustainability of literacy programmes.

Rural and urban communities will contribute learning spaces, youth volunteer facilitators, and support to a flexible, stepped teacher development and compensation process. In support of unifying Afghan education, all schools will be encouraged to support literacy, either within the school itself or in the community.

A National Literacy Trust Fund (NLTF) will serve as an independent fiduciary mechanism to fund the NLP and coordinate and centralize support from those donors that cannot fund the ministry directly. The NLTF will support the Ministry of Education in dispersing and monitoring block grants to community based organizations to establish and implement literacy. Supported by the Contracts Management Unit of the MoE, the NLTF can also be a mechanism through which the Ministry of Education can coordinate stakeholders.

Technical Support Unit for Literacy: Capacities of the Government (including multiple ministries) at the central, provincial and district levels will be developed with support of a Technical Support Unit for Literacy (TSUL) comprised of experts in literacy and lifelong learning, community development, education planning and management, and policy. Support to the communities and some technical assistance at the provincial and district level will be provided by Facilitating Partners, similar to the process within NSP.

Innovative, low-cost Curriculum and Materials: The NLP will support and improve the current Literacy Department curriculum, promoting a flexible, learner-centered, and low-cost pedagogical approach utilizing a ‘learning kit’ of materials. Content will be related to participants’ lives and productive skills.

Proposed for cross-ministry discussion—National Literacy & Lifelong Learning: It is proposed for further discussion across technical working groups, to establish a goal of unifying Afghan education, with literacy being the foundational step, but only the first among various learning options sponsored by the Ministry of Education. Otherwise the huge investment in literacy will be lost as people have limited use of their new skills—as experienced by other countries whose major successes turned to failure.

4. Adult literacy

4.1. How is literacy defined in your country? Have there been any changes since 1997 (CONFINTEA V)? Please explain

Traditionally literacy has been defined simply as knowing how to read, write and use numbers (numeracy). Over time the understanding of literacy has broadened beyond mechanical skills to include the ability to think critically and understand better the context of one’s life—to use words, numbers, technology, and new knowledge and attitudes to make informed decisions about productive and financial matters, family

and community health, to resolve conflicts and, in Muslim cultures, to better understand the teachings of the Holy Qu'ran. The National Literacy Program must be relevant to Afghans' lives, thus based on this broader definition and the ultimate objective of enabling individuals and communities to be more effective actors on behalf of their own development.

4.2. Which new policies have been adopted and implemented?

A National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) has been developed with the support of UNESCO's IIEP with a priority programme on literacy and non formal education (please see question 1).

Following the finalization of the LIFE Needs Assessment, a National Literacy Action Plan will be developed in 2008 in response to the goals and targets set in the NESP.

4.3. Please give us examples of effective practice and innovative literacy programmes

N/A

4.4. Please illustrate how policies and programmes focus on gender. Describe the importance given to women and other target groups.

Since the number of illiterate women is much higher than men in Afghanistan, the ministry policy is to cover 60% of women in its literacy programme.