



The capacity to learn is at the heart of human development. It is the foundation for enlightened existence and the sustenance of all livelihoods.

[Education for All: 2000]

A New Vision for Education

After more than two decades of war and conflict, the Government of Afghanistan is gradually moving out of crisis management mode and adopting a longer-term approach to reconstruction and development. Education is one of the core components of the economic and social redevelopment of Afghanistan and its progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and nation building. The demand for education, for girls and boys alike, cannot be underestimated. Since 2001, Afghanistan has witnessed a large jump in student enrollment, reaching by far the highest level in the history of the nation. This expansion has placed unexpected stress on the education system at all levels as it tries to rebuild schools, develop curriculum and improve teacher competency simultaneously.

Effective planning and implementation of an education system is critical in Afghanistan's state building efforts as the structure, content and accessibility of education help to determine if it serves to unify or to divide citizens. During the past four years the Ministry has been working towards a more coordinated and systemized education response building on principals of quality, inclusion and tolerance. Rebuilding the education system in Afghanistan will ensure stability and security across the country. Investing in education is investing in Afghanistan's and therefore the region's future.

The Ministry of Education is committed to developing plans that are national in scope and that ensure equal access to a quality education system for all children of Afghanistan. With new leadership for the Ministry and a new sense of vision, these plans will become a reality.

A five year plan

The Ministry of Education is developing a comprehensive five year strategic plan which will be national in scope and will work towards building a knowledge-based society. Within this plan eight national programmes will be prioritised.

◆ **General Education**

The Ministry is committed to ensuring equal access to education for all students throughout the country, regardless of gender and geographic, socio-economic, religious or ethnic affiliation. There are almost 6 million students, 138,000 teachers and 8,400 formal education schools throughout Afghanistan. In line with Afghanistan's Millennium Development Goals, net enrolment in primary school for girls and boys will be at least 60% and 75% respectively by 2010. Access to education will be combined with improving quality. In line with the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), the Ministry expects to develop a system for assessing learning achievement through a national testing system for students by 2010.

The Ministry's objectives for the coming five years will be to develop and implement a national strategy for education. The provision of well trained teachers and quality learning materials will be a priority. Special attention will be given to girls, nomadic populations, returning refugee children and minority groups. A national communication strategy for girls' education will be developed and implemented to enhance girls' enrollment and retention. By establishing smaller sized schools the Ministry intends to bring the school closer to the children. Accelerated learning classes will be organized for over-age children to catch up on primary grades and integrate them into the formal system. School buildings will be reconstructed, using local, low cost standards. Community participation will be promoted, as a key factor in enhancing enrollment, the quality of education and school protection, through strengthening Parent Teacher Associations and school student committees. Access to education will become a national concern, not just a concern of the Ministry of Education.

◆ **Religious Education**

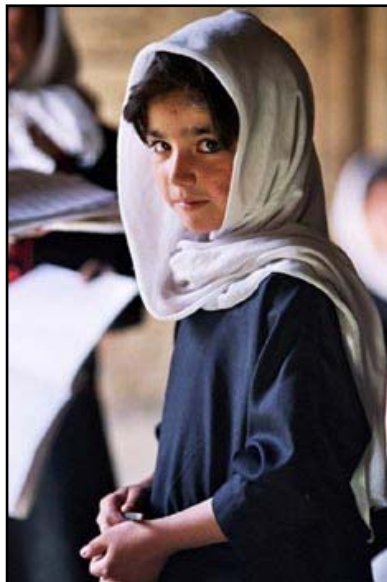
A major priority and commitment of the Ministry of Education is to reconstruct, develop and regulate religious education throughout Afghanistan in an effort to build a nation state grounded in modern and tolerant Islamic principles. Currently there are 59,000 students, 2,079 teachers and 275 Islamic schools throughout Afghanistan. The new programme will draw upon the expertise of Islamic scholars within Afghanistan and the region to promulgate true Islamic teaching and ensure that Islamic and general education will be integrated so all children of Afghanistan will receive an education that is able to fully prepare them for their economic futures. Developing a broad based religious education system encompassing the true teachings of the great religion that is Islam will become the cornerstone for peace and security in Afghanistan.

◆ **Curriculum Development**

The Ministry of Education is deeply committed to improving the quality of educational opportunities for all students in the country. Curriculum is emphasised as an important leverage of overall educational reform efforts for it constitutes the heart of any education system - it encompasses the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that a nation wants their children to embrace. The Ministry plans to establish a National Curriculum Development Centre to strengthen the Ministry's capacity to continuously develop and evaluate the national curriculum. This will be supported

by the establishment of the National Standards Board which will be responsible for the development of a national system of student assessment and evaluation.

In the next two years special emphasis will be placed on completing a new curriculum and text books for secondary students. This is will be important as a quality secondary education curriculum that is of an international standard and relevant to the reconstruction efforts of the country will help Afghanistan effectively build its human capital and economic opportunities both within the region and globally.





Teacher Training

A well trained cadre of teachers will become the foundation upon which the Ministry's education system will be built. There are currently 138,000 teachers and 19 teacher training colleges across the country. The Ministry is presently undertaking a census and registration of all existing teachers as a baseline for planning and skills improvement. In addition, programmes will be developed to ensure that a sufficient number of new teachers will be recruited to respond to the educational needs of the children of Afghanistan.

The teacher training initiative will develop a comprehensive pre-service teacher training curriculum, meeting specific teacher requirements that especially suit the priorities and needs of teachers in Afghanistan. Teacher training colleges will be rehabilitated or constructed in every province of the country. They will be equipped with internet, video and other modern training facilities. An outreach system will be established to ensure that a flexible in-service teacher training programme, based on the competencies of the pre-service curriculum, will be supported for both fully qualified and under-qualified teachers. A teacher training team of more than 3,000 staff is currently being trained at the central, provincial, district and sub-district level. Radio programmes provide another avenue of teacher training in hard-to-reach areas. The Ministry of Education has committed that 70 percent of all teachers will have a basic set of teaching competencies by 2010.

Technical Education and Training

The development of technical education is an essential cornerstone for the recovery process in Afghanistan. Building technical skills that are economically valued in the reconstruction efforts will contribute to both the stability and recovery of our country. The Ministry is working together with the National Skills Development Commission to conduct a national skills assessment study. This will provide further information on the types of technical skills that need to be developed. Further to this, two areas that are a priority for the Ministry of Education are building the country's skills in financial and organizational management. The Ministry plans to partner with a number of international institutes to provide technical assistance for the development of this effort. This will ensure that the qualifications received at the technical colleges are of an internationally recognized standard. Technical education is a multi-faceted initiative and depends on the provision of financial and technical resources which have not presently been committed.



Literacy

The Ministry of Education will be prioritizing literacy and non-formal educational initiatives. Afghanistan's high rate of non-literate men and women is a key driving force for this need. With over 90% of rural women and 63% of rural men still non-literate, making this a literate nation in the next 20 years will require a massive, coordinated, low-cost, demand-driven and community-supported literacy strategy that can be taken to scale across the country, led by the Ministry of Education.

The Ministry has recently launched a collaborative, coordinated effort between the Afghan Ministries and all donors to develop, fund and implement a Plan for National Literacy which will enable Afghanistan to achieve its committed targets for the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All and its social and economic development objectives. Through this programme 10 million Afghan's will have access to a literacy programme. The Ministry of Education is elevating national literacy to be one of its top priorities.

Planning and Policy Development

The Ministry is currently undergoing a major planning exercise that will set objectives and measurable outcomes for its achievements over the next five years. The national strategy and associated policy papers will be translated into provincial and district based plans to provide the necessary direction and programme accountability of Ministry activities.

To support this exercise a fully-fledged education management information system (EMIS) is being established. A national education census is currently underway and the results for this will be made available by the end of 2006. The EMIS will allow for better monitoring of the Ministry's programmes and will enable the Government of Afghanistan to more effectively plan its budgeting and education finance investments. The Ministry is also one of three Ministries working with the Ministry of Finance to introduce basic program budget techniques as part of its commitment to improved performance evaluation and reporting.

Organisational Reform, People Development and Management

A major effort is underway to reform the Ministry's organizational structure so that it can implement its programmes more effectively. In addition a more open, accountable and effective financial and administrative system is being built together with the central Ministry of Finance in accordance with international standards of budgeting and financial management using a Medium Term Expenditure Framework. The Ministry of Education employs more than 60 percent of the Afghanistan Civil Service and efforts are currently underway to register each Ministry staff person throughout the country through biometric recognition software.

The Ministry of Education is partnering with a team of national and international specialists to implement the Public Service Administrative Reform initiative at the central, provincial, district and school level. Recruitment processes in the Ministry of Education will be performance based, open and transparent. In addition a suitable revised salary scale for teachers will be developed. These key reforms are expected to take place and be implemented over the following two years.

Through an improved organisational system and the development of its people the Ministry will be able to launch an accelerated development effort that will upgrade the national education system to internationally competitive levels.