



Summary of the Context Analysis; Education for Girls in Samangan Province



Written by: Dr. Mohammad Fareed
Waqfi and Dr. Mohammad Naim Rahimi
Afghan Health & Development Services

12/30/2013

Introduction:

AHDS had recently developed its new 5-year strategic plan. In order to address its Program Development Goal, AHDS is going to expand its service delivery in education sector to an underserved remote area; the Samangan Province. A mission was assigned to look at the general situation of Samangan, perform context analysis for education sector, feasibility study, and community demands and supports.

The mission has focused mainly on two fundamental issues: 1) access of school age children, especially girls, to education, 2) quality of education in the province.

The purpose of this report is to help and inform the project designing team about field realities and stakeholders' demand in realization of education quality and accessibility to school aged children in Samangan.

We would like to thank Haji Abdul Aziz the Provincial Director of Education, Deans of schools, teachers and students in four districts of Samangan for their help and support during our mission.

Objective

To identify the gaps in the realization of quality education for school aged children in Samangan Province, draw a picture of the challenges that ministry of education (MoE), community and development stakeholders are faced in promoting, education system for girls, and find proper solutions in a participatory manner.

Methodology

We have used different methods to ensure a participatory approach as the nature of this mission required including:

1. Stakeholder analysis,
2. Desk review,
3. Interview with individuals and groups,
4. Direct observation and
5. Developing problem - objective tree.

Desk review

A number of relevant documents were reviewed including:

1. Afghanistan National Priority Programs 2012, Ministry of Finance, www.mof.gov.af
2. Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/IMG/pdf/Afghanistan_National_Development_Strategy_eng.pdf
3. National Education Strategic Plan for Afghanistan, http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/News_And_Events/pdf/2010/Afghanistan_NESP.pdf
4. Central Statistics Organization (CSO), Afghanistan, <http://cso.gov.af/en>
5. The Afghanistan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (AMICS) 2010, <http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/AMICS-Jun24-2012-FINAL.pdf>
6. AHDS Five Years Strategic Plan (2014-2018), <http://www.ahds.org/pages.aspx?content=43>
7. [http://medlibrary.org/medwiki/Samangan Province](http://medlibrary.org/medwiki/Samangan_Province)

Stakeholder Analysis

In order to identify the key people and groups who have power and interest and plays a role in this process we did a stakeholder analysis. The following have been ranked as the key stakeholders at the provincial and district level in Samangan:

1. Samangan Provincial Education Director,
2. District Education Directors,
3. Schools Deans, and teacher groups
4. Community Development Committees (CDC), religious elders and parents,
5. District Governors,
6. Student groups; both girls and boys,
7. Swedish Committee for Afghanistan.
8. Private schools in Samangan

We did series of interview with mentioned stakeholders in groups and individuals at the province and districts.

Interviews

Keeping in mind different stakeholders' roles and influence on education in Samangan, sets of questionnaires were developed appropriate to each stakeholder. The team interviewed with authorities, community members, teachers, deans and students in groups and individually. We used structured questionnaire and open discussion about education related issues with them. The questionnaires were focusing on the following points:

1. What is the education profile of the Samangan province?
2. What is the education profile of the district?
3. Who are the most interested and influential stakeholder for this program?
4. Which environmental and social factors prevent girls from going to school?
5. How much is the distance of the nearest, and the most far away village from the school?
6. Why the girls students drop out is much high at the secondary and high school?
7. Is any area or village which does not have access to school at all?
8. In which grades the number of female students are declined? Why is that?
9. What is the proportion of male and female teachers?
10. What do you think, what is the alternative way addressing the lack of female teachers and unqualified teachers?
11. Which subjects are facing with shortage of teachers? What is the reason (s)?
12. What do you think, what are the most important indicators for selecting a local teacher?
13. What do you think, what are the most important indicators for targeting a village to improve its accessibility to quality education?
14. What do you think about strengthening of the classes? For which classes the initiatives should be started?
15. In case the classes are topped up with the distance learning methods, it needs government and community logistical support including space, textbooks, equipment, education system formats, classrooms and its accessories etc. Do the MoE and community provide these supports to the program?
16. Can you do supervision and monitoring of the program?
17. Can community contribute in providing maintenance support to ICT package?
18. Can villagers provide space for community based schools?

19. In average at this village, how many school aged children cannot attend to the school and why?
20. Can the villagers provide the salary of local teachers?

Direct observation

The team visited number of girls and boys schools in four district of Samangan Province; recorded their challenges and recommended solutions.

1. Sayd Jamaluddin; boys
2. Cheldukhtaran; girls
3. Feroz Nakhchir high school; boys
4. Bibi Khadeja Kobra; girls
5. Bibi Ayesha high school; girls
6. Dara-e-Zhwandoon high school; boys

Analyzing the immediate, underlying and root causes

The team analyzed as much as possible the mix of factors that prevent the realization of school aged children access to quality education. It identified the development challenges and their immediate, underlying and structural or root causes that are interconnected and together impact negatively on access to quality education of school aged children. A causality analysis highlighted the inter-related factors affecting the poor access and quality education challenge and helps an understanding of how their interaction affects school aged children and their families in order to identify possible solutions and the most effective interventions. So it helped to develop objective tree relevant to the different levels of causes.

Generally:

1. Immediate causes determine the current status of the problem (high dropout rate of girls from high schools and low entrance of girls to primary schools)
2. Underlying causes are often the consequence of bad or inadequate policies and laws, lack of resources and lack of capacity. They may reveal complex related issues that require interventions in the short-term (e.g. up to five years), as well as those that require more time to obtain results.
3. Root/structural causes reveal conditions (e.g. poverty, persistent patterns of discrimination, corruption, lack of awareness) that require longer-term interventions, particularly in order to change societal attitudes and behavior at different levels, including the family, community and higher decision-making levels.

The following were performed:

1. The education system in Samangan were analysed from education quality and accessibility point of view (capacities, interest, concerns, weakness, expectations, and geographical coverage).
2. Gaps in link to education quality and accessibility were identified.
3. The potential partners and the working mechanism for effective intervention to improve education quality and accessibility were discussed and recommended.
4. Based on our mutual understanding in the field a problem and objective tree considering the key issue in girls education "**Low literacy rate among girls and women**" were developed.
5. Options for developing the education quality and accessibility were suggested.

General information

Samangan Province is located in northern Afghanistan and shares provincial borders with Balkh, Sar-i-Pul, Kunduz, Baghlan and Bamyan. With over 369,000 residents in 11,262 square kilometers area, Samangan like most parts of Afghanistan is ethnically diverse with Uzbeks, Tajiks, Pashtuns, Hazara, Tatars, Turkmen and even a minority population of Arabs living throughout the province.

Economic condition of the people is very hard with nearly 12% households finding it difficult to meet the food requirements to sustain. Most of the population makes their living through agricultural that relies on rainfall, animal husbandry, some small scale mining and small scale business and industries like carpet weaving. Samangan falls under the provincial rehabilitation team (PRT) area of operation led by the Swedish military.

All districts are accessible throughout the year, although the only paved road is the highway of Kabul-Mazar-e-Sharif passing through Aybak, Hazrat-e-Sultan and Feroz Nakhchir districts. Another paved road is connecting Dara-e-Soof to Mazar-e-Sharif.

The security situation in the province is stable, only the road to Dara-i-Suf is sometimes interrupted by insurgents.



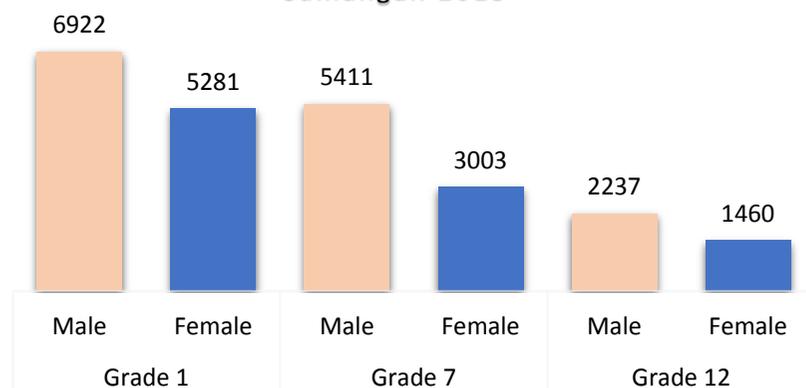
Education profile

The total enrolment is 73,614 students in primary schools, 21,798 in the middle schools and 10,851 in the high schools. It shows very high dropout rates.

Summary of Samangan public schools data in 2013:

Civil Division	Population	High schools			Middle schools			Primary school			Students		Teachers	
		Boy	Girl	Mix	Boy	Girl	Mix	Boy	Girl	Mix	Boys	Girls	Male	Female
Aybak (Center)	100,500	15	11	3	6	4	5	5	2	13	21,016	15,950		
Hazrat -e-Sultan	40,200	5	4	0	3	3	4	3	0	7	5,003	3,649		
Khuram Wa Sarbagh	38,800	4	3	4	0	1	7	0	0	7	4,801	4,344		
Feroz Nakhchir	12,700	2	1	0	1	1	1	2	1	2	2,352	1,964		
Rui- Do- Ab	44,300	4	1	3	2	6	8	1	1	13	7,130	4,592		
Dara -e-soof-i-Payin	69,400	6	1	2	14	0	6	21	1	3	11,112	1,828		
Dara -e-soof-e- Bala	62,900	5	7	10	2	2	14	0	0	5	12,095	9,717		
Total	368,800	41	28	22	28	17	45	32	5	50	63,509	42,044	1,698	688

Students Drop out & Gender Parity in Samangan 2013



Owing to its relative isolation, Samangan province is underdeveloped with no energy infrastructure and has a high rate of illiteracy, although some students have access to education in neighboring Mazari Sharif. Educational facilities in the province is at a low level with literacy rate recorded at only 19% for the province as a whole, with 28% literacy rate among men and a low of 10% among women.

Samangan has one Teacher Training Institute and 5 support centres for teachers. The graduates are not satisfied with quality of training. In addition to the general schools listed in the table, 9 religious schools (Madrasa), 2 nomad (Kochi) schools and 5 technical schools for business administration and agriculture (1 for girl and 4 for boys) are functional.

Analysis:

Access, Equity, and Quality

This section is guided by article 1 of education law “Providing equal, education for citizens of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan through balanced and fair growth and development of the public education system”.

The analysis focuses on stakeholders especially students, parents, community, teachers demand and field realities. The overall indicators of education and literacy reflect an education system that has performed very poorly. In addition, they invariably show very large gender gaps. In addition to the shortage of girls’ schools, shortage of female teachers, shortage of local transportation, conservative traditions and discrimination against girls are the obstacles to girls’ enrolment. Most of the teachers (male and female) cannot teach the new syllabuses developed by ministry of education (MoE).

To improve access to education, implying greater equity, and to improve the quality of education, it is needed to develop alternative approaches to meet security constraints and modern, traditional, and conservative interests.

Shortage of Human Resources

Almost all interviewees have been complaining of shortage of female teachers. Despite number of female teachers are available in Aybak (Capital of Samangan Province) but as there is no public transportation, it is difficult for them to travel to the nearby districts’ schools on daily basis to address lack of female teachers in the districts. Shifting the female teachers to far away districts without a reasonable incentive would be almost impossible option. In one case the people have provided transportation means for female teachers to transport them from Aybak Town to the school in the neighbourhood district.

Although the high girls’ dropout from secondary and high schools is the main factor for lacking of female teachers in the rural areas, but socioeconomic factors are other important potential factors that push further this problem e.g. girls early marriage for any reason financial or traditional, conservative community because of local customs or feeling un safe for teenage girls security, difficult access to teacher training institutes (geographical distance, no public transportation, or poverty).

It is generally believed that the quality of teacher training institutes in the province is very low. The graduated teachers do not have the ability to teach school textbooks, especially the science subjects; however they have studied in that fields. On the top of this problem the MoE new designed curriculums also have both technical and linguistic mistakes e.g. a science teacher noticed 35 scientific mistakes in grade 7 chemistry subject.

Community, Provincial Education Department and Private Sector Contribution:

MoE is the only big education service provider in the province. Other stakeholders e.g. Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, Agha Khan Foundation, UNICEF and one private school are supporters of the education in Samangan. However, according to the provincial education department their contribution is not significant.

The MoE is willing to provide any feasible support to the programs that alternatively address the access to education and improve the quality of education. They can provide school textbooks, formats, M&E of the program, teachers' salary, school building maintenance and some other running costs. Despite of these, poor supervision and M&E capacity of provincial education department is raised by the education staff in the districts.

The people are very interested in education of their children. They are willingly eager to provide space for community based schools, and maintain the ICT package (if introduced) and take care of them. They are also supportive of the idea for advocating for their children education rights and dealing with education department to attract their support for Community Based Schools and helping the Distance Learning technologies. The challenges they are facing are: less number of high schools nearby, long distances that are not safe for teenage girls to walk, shortage of female teachers and shortage of qualified teacher of both sexes. Therefore, the people are concerned more about the quality of education, and are in somehow satisfied by access to primary schools.

In the places where, people do not live on the paths to school, parents are afraid to send their teenage girls. This is the main cause gender disparity in secondary schools. Some people do not believe that higher education is necessary for girls.

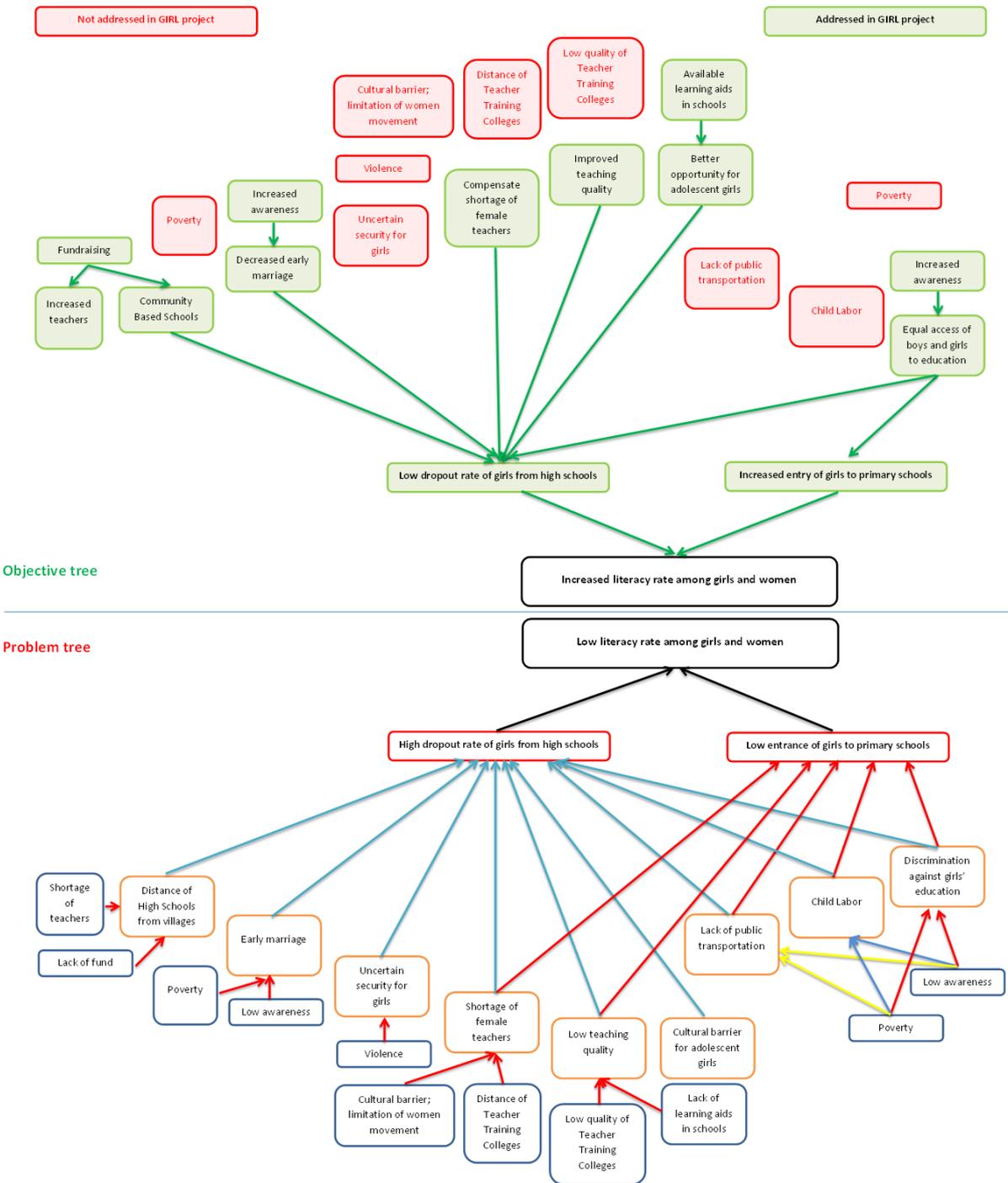
Although public opinion in Afghanistan is that people are poor and cannot contribute financially but this study showed that people are willing to share in the cost of education for their children.

The private courses for mathematics, sciences and Concur preparation that are common in urban areas of Afghanistan are not present in Samangan. Some students have access to home based tuition teachers. There is only one private school in Aybak center of Samangan Province.

The financially well-off boys go to Mazar-e-Sharif for their last year of schooling and taking Concur preparation courses; obviously it is not possible for girls to do so. It costs USD 1,000 – 1,500 for each student. Traditionally, the parents do not feel safe to allow their daughters live in hostels in Mazar-e-Sharif for a year.

Problem – Objective Tree

Looking to the complexity of the socioeconomic context and feasibility study, an education program cannot deal with the socioeconomic issues which have deep roots in community culture and believes, but it can do intervention related to technical issues of the education system. It can improve the knowledge and skills of teachers and providing teaching aid materials. As a result the education system will be expanded to villages that indirectly address the security issues and lack of female and professional teachers. The following problem tree and objective that have been developed in a participatory manner with stakeholders in the field further explains the issues and challenges, their interlink relations. The objective tree is developed based on the problem tree.



Challenges:

1. Shortage of female teachers is a fundamental problem in Samangan Province.
2. Lack of girls graduates from high school in the districts on the one hand and the socioeconomic obstacles are the most important factors that prevent them to travel and attend the teacher training programs.
3. It is also difficult to expect from the Ministry of Education to solve the lack of female teachers in the near future considering these challenges.
4. The quality of teacher training is low, majority of graduates are not capable to teach especially science and mathematics. Majority of the teachers who were interviewed raised this as a major problem.
5. There are lack of both English and Pashto languages teachers.
6. Almost all girls who wish to take Concur preparation courses miss this opportunity because of not availability in Samangan Province.
7. The parents cannot take the risk to send daughters to neighbouring Mazar-Sharif for better education.
8. The financial restrictions and the cultural barriers are other important factors that limit the opportunities for girls.
9. There is no public transportation, so the children living in far villages cannot afford long distance walking to reach secondary and high schools which located mainly at the capital of districts.
10. Early marriage of girls which have deep roots in community poverty status and tradition is another factor that negatively affects some girls to continue their education.

Recommendation

1. If the Afghans wait to gain access to enough qualified female teachers or good transportation passing hard geographic routes or good security to increase access of girls to school, they may have to wait years. Therefore these would not be appropriate options for the time being.
2. Considering the Distance Learning Technology and internet connection improvement, it can be considered as an alternative; however it will definitely need strong technical and administrative investment. Good quality of prerecorded DVD similar to education curricula and Skype conferences not only improve the professional skill of existing teachers but also it can compensate lack of professional teachers especially females in rural areas. Of course it need to be developed carefully, considering the distance learning principles. Lack of power in Samangan can be another challenge that can be solved with the alternative cost effective source; solar power.
3. According to interviews conducted with various partners in the field, they have a passion for educating children and are willing to take an active part in the design and implementation of the project. Therefore it is strongly recommended to involve the community and MoE to contribute in designing and cost sharing of the project. This approach not only guarantee the project sustainability but also is crucial for successful implementation of the project.
4. Considering low professional capacity of teachers in Samangan, it is a need to design the project in such a way that the education staff capacity also to be build.

5. Community mobilization is important for attracting community contribution in the process of the project cycle management. Our study showed that people are willing to take part in the project spiritually and financially, if they ensured that the project is having a positive impact on the education of their children.
6. Coordination the project with MoE and other expert stakeholder from the designing stage is very important. This ensures the MoE future contribution in the project, both at policy level and field supporting the project logistically and administratively.