



INTEGRITY  
WATCH  
AFGHANISTAN



# EDUCATION COMPROMISED?

A Survey of Schools in 10 Provinces of  
Afghanistan



# Education Compromised?

## **A Survey of Schools in 10 Provinces of Afghanistan**

Integrity Watch Afghanistan

2018

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Integrity Watch Afghanistan

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Kolola Poshta, Kabul, Afghanistan

Email: [info@iwaweb.org](mailto:info@iwaweb.org)

Website: [www.iwaweb.org](http://www.iwaweb.org)

## ABOUT INTEGRITY WATCH

Integrity Watch is an Afghan civil society organization committed to increase transparency, accountability, and integrity in Afghanistan. Integrity Watch was created in October 2005 and established itself as an independent civil society organization in 2006. The head office of Integrity Watch is in Kabul with provincial programmatic outreach in Balkh, Bamyan, Herat, Kabul, Kapisa, Kunduz, Nangarhar, Paktia, and Parwan provinces of Afghanistan.

Over the last one decade, Integrity Watch's work has focused on three major components: (1) Community Monitoring, (2) Research, and (3) Advocacy.

Ever since its establishment, Integrity Watch has tried to encourage active citizenship and community mobilization through its programs. Our community monitoring work has included development of community monitoring tools, mobilizing and training communities to monitor infrastructure projects, public services, courts, and extractives industries.

Our research work has focused on policy-oriented research measuring trends, perceptions and experiences of corruption and covering wide range of corruption related issues including security and justice sectors, extractive industries, budget and public finance management, and aid effectiveness. The objective is to develop new, ground-breaking empirical research in order to set the agenda, influence decision-makers, bring to the public attention non-documented and non-explored issues.

The aim of our advocacy work has been to enhance Integrity Watch's pioneering role in advocating for knowledge-based decision-making and informed public debate on corruption and integrity issues. Our advocacy work includes facilitation of policy dialogue on issues related to integrity, transparency, and accountability. We have engaged in policy advocacy for issues that communities experience on day-to-day basis while trying to hold the government and service providers accountable. Such issues has included access to information, budget transparency and accountability, aid transparency and effectiveness, effective public services, and other issues related to anti-corruption.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFN	Afghani
CBM	Community Based Monitoring
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CKT	Conditional Kind Transfer
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CERP	Commanders Emergency Response Program
DoD	Department of Defense
ECW	Education Cannot Wait
EQUIP	Education Quality Improvement Program
FSSP	Female School Stipend Program
GER	Gross Enrollment Rate
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HDI	Human Development Index
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights
IWA	Integrity Watch Afghanistan
MOE	Ministry of Education
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NESP	National Education Strategic Plan
NRVA	National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PED	Provincial Education Department
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
STR	Student Teacher Ratio
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund for Afghanistan

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT INTEGRITY WATCH .....	i
List of Abbreviations .....	ii
Acknowledgment .....	vii
Executive Summary .....	2
I. Context Analysis .....	4
1. Deteriorating security situation .....	4
2. Uneven and unsustainable progress .....	5
3. Migration and population boom .....	5
4. Poverty, slow economic growth, and declining international aid .....	6
5. Socio-cultural factors and role of religious schools .....	6
6. Corruption and centralization of administration .....	7
7. Background and rationale of this report .....	7
8. Provincial profiles .....	10
II. Methodology .....	13
1. Security assessment .....	14
2. Limitations .....	15
III. Key Findings.....	18
1. Functional status .....	18
2. State of physical infrastructure .....	22
3. Gender parity .....	30
4. Qualification of Teachers .....	33
5. Student-teacher ratio .....	36
6. Access to learning material .....	37
7. Analysis of donor intervention .....	42
IV. Lessons Learned .....	52
V. Recommendations .....	54
Bibliography .....	58

## FIGURES

Figure 1: Sectorial break-up of budgetary allocation for the year 2016-2018. Source: Ministry of Finance 2018. ....	9
Figure 2: Schools according to level of education .....	18
Figure 3: Functional Status of schools in 10 provinces surveyed .....	19
Figure 4: Reasons that put schools in danger of close down in Faryab province. ....	20
Figure 5: Perception of beneficiaries by province .....	21
Figure 6: Schools according to their level of maintenance.....	23
Figure 7: Number of schools with structural damages according to province .....	23
Figure 8: Schools with type of structural damages based on province .....	24
Figure 9: Schools with classes outside standard classrooms based on province .....	24
Figure 10: District-wise distribution of schools without adequate classroom infrastructure in Faryab. ....	25
Figure 11: Number of shifts in each province .....	26
Figure 12: Schools according to number of operational shifts in Faryab.....	26
Figure 13: Number of schools operating in double or triple shifts in Kabul based on level of schools. ....	27
Figure 14: Schools with and without boundary walls .....	27
Figure 15: Access to toilets in schools .....	28
Figure 16: Access to drinking water in schools.....	30
Figure 17: School type according to gender and level of education in Faryab .....	31
Figure 18: Total number of male and female students enrolled in 77 schools of Faryab.....	31
Figure 19: Proportion of male and female teachers by province. ....	32
Figure 20: Proportion of male to female teachers in Faryab. ....	33
Figure 21: Number of teachers according to level of educational qualifications in three provinces .....	35
Figure 22: Number of male and female teachers who have received training in Faryab. ....	35
Figure 23: Student-teacher ratio in ten provinces .....	36
Figure 24: Percentage of schools with and without access to adequate teaching equipment .....	37
Figure 25: Number of schools with or without computer labs in eight provinces .....	38
Figure 26: Number of schools with or without libraries.....	38
Figure 27: Schools' access to electricity .....	39
Figure 28: Availability of textbooks in ten provinces. ....	39
Figure 29: Number of school covered in the survey based on donor.....	42
Figure 30: Number of classes conducted outside of adequate classrooms.....	44
Figure 31: Schools with or without boundary walls .....	44
Figure 32: Number of schools with and without access to drinking water based on donors.....	45
Figure 33: Number of schools with and without access to toilets based on donor .....	45
Figure 34: Number of schools with access to electricity based on donor .....	46
Figure 35: Percentage of schools maintenance status based on donors.....	46
Figure 36: Percentage of schools with structural damage based on donor .....	47



Figure 37: Beneficiary perception of schools based on donor .....	47
Figure 38: Number of schools with access to computer lab based on donors .....	48
Figure 39: Number of schools with or without a library based on donor .....	48
Figure 40: Schools have access to adequate textbooks.....	49

## MAPS

Map 1: Map of Afghanistan highlighting provinces where Integrity Watch conducted the survey.....	8
Map 2: Proportion of unqualified teachers by province .....	34

## BOXES

Box 1: Revitalizing School Management Shuras through Community Based Monitoring .....	21
Box 2: Militarization and politicization of schools in Afghanistan .....	22
Box 3: Community monitoring: A model to address O&M issues of schools .....	29
Box 4: Limitations in tracking donor support to schools .....	43

## TABLES

Table 1: List of the Schools inspected in each province.....	13
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite having more than 3.5 million<sup>1</sup> children who remain out of school, Afghanistan has made great strides in the educational sector. The number of students in school increased from around 1 million in 2001 to more than 9 million in 2015 (39% of whom are girls).<sup>2</sup> This is a commendable achievement in a country where delivery of basic public goods and services has been tremendously complicated by over three decades of armed conflict. However, there remains a lot of ground to cover to ensure access to quality education for all in the country. These challenges include security concerns, insufficient and low-quality school buildings, limited access to water and sanitation, the limited availability of qualified teachers (especially female teachers), insufficient learning materials, and corruption and mismanagement of resources.

This report is based on primary data generated through a survey of 276 schools in 10 provinces over a period of three years to assess the operation and physical condition of donor-funded schools in Afghanistan. All the schools surveyed have been constructed within the last 15 years with funding from the donors. Though restricted by the size of the sample and scope of the survey, the study tries to capture the impact of insecurity on the schools status, beneficiary perception on usefulness and quality of schools; and report on the physical status of the infrastructure, gender parity, qualification of teachers, student-teacher ratio, and access to learning materials. The surveys were conducted between October 2015 and April 2018 in 10 provinces including Baghlan, Balkh, Faryab, Herat, Kabul, Kapisa, Khost, Kunar, Kunduz, and Parwan.

The findings of this research reaffirm the fact that despite billions of dollars of investment by donors, the state of physical infrastructure and quality of education remains poor. The United States alone has spent at least \$759.6 million to support primary and secondary education between 2002 and 2014.<sup>3</sup> Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Afghanistan's education sector increased from \$22.75 million in 2002 to \$449.8 million in 2013.<sup>4</sup> Although about 8,000 schools were built during the last decade and a half, almost half of the 16,400 schools in Afghanistan still do not have dedicated school buildings.<sup>5</sup> According to the survey findings, even 3 out of 4 schools that do have dedicated buildings do not have sufficient classrooms, forcing students to study in short shifts or even in tents or the open air. Despite teaching in up to three shifts, 41% of the schools did not have adequate classroom capacity despite donor support to construct buildings for the surveyed schools.

The state of school building maintenance is dismal in most of the provinces, where the majority of the schools (57%) reported leaking roofs and broken doors, furniture, or windows. The survey shows that only 59 out of 276 (21%) schools surveyed in the 10 provinces were recorded as being well maintained; another 18% are being fairly maintained while 18% of the schools were found to be poorly maintained. An alarming 39% of the schools had no maintenance whatsoever.

Lack of clean water and adequate sanitation facilities is likely to increase the propensity of students to fall sick, which in turn leads to higher absenteeism. Access to water and sanitation in the surveyed schools was relatively better than other indicators, with 85% of the schools overall (225 out of 265) equipped with toilets. Nevertheless, there are major disparities among provinces when it comes to access to water and sanitation. In Faryab, for instance, an overwhelming majority of schools (73 schools or 88%) were equipped with toilets. In contrast, access to sanitation was worst in Kunar and Kapisa, with all 12 schools surveyed in Kunar and 8 out of the 9 schools surveyed in Kapisa having no toilet facilities whatsoever. The Ministry of Education (MOE) and international donors through UNICEF had promised to provide drinking water to 100% of the schools in Afghanistan by 2015. While there has been significant progress in providing access to water in schools, the findings of this research show that out of 221 schools, 44 schools (20%) still lack access to drinking water.

Access to learning materials is key to determining quality of education services. Lack of modern teaching equipment, limited access to science and computer labs, and limited access to libraries have been common problems in the schools surveyed. One of the alarming issues highlighted in this report is lack of access to adequate textbooks in schools. Out of 265 schools surveyed, only 79 schools reported having adequate textbooks available. Another 186 schools (70%) did not have access to adequate textbooks, which points to mismanagement and corruption within the education sector. Considering the fact that USAID has recently announced that a total \$75 million has been earmarked for the printing and distribution of textbooks<sup>6</sup>,

1 UNICEF, "Annual Report 2016", UNICEF, 2016: 1.

[https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Afghanistan\\_2016\\_COAR.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Afghanistan_2016_COAR.pdf)

2 Ministry of Education, "NESP III", Ministry of Education, 2017: 2

3 SIGAR, "16-32 Audit Report, 2016: 4, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/SIGAR-16-32-AR.pdf>

4 Strand, Arne, "Financing Education in Afghanistan", 2015: 10, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/FINANCING%20EDUCATION%20IN%20AFGHANISTAN.pdf>.

5 Ministry of Education, "NESP III", MoE, 2017: 21

6 <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/usaid-fund-education-ministry%E2%80%99s-textbook-distribution-project>

this might be an opportunity for stakeholders, especially the MOE, to ensure effective use of resources.

Another component that has a strong bearing on the quality of learning outcomes and remains in inadequate supply is trained and qualified teachers. These would be categorized as those teachers who have successfully completed teacher training courses and possess minimum academic qualifications to teach. Nationally, 43% of teachers employed fulfill the minimum criteria of 14 years of formal education.<sup>7</sup> More recent data that MOE shared with Integrity Watch indicates a big increase in these figures indicating 65% of the teachers have qualification up to grade 14 or above. While this is a huge improvement from 26% of teachers in 2007, significant room for improvement remains. The findings of the survey are in stark contrast with the national data. Out of a total of 2156 teachers employed by schools in Baghlan, Faryab, and Parwan, data on teacher qualifications available for 2132 teachers reveals that a majority, i.e. 59% or 1253 teachers possess a degree from an institution of higher learning. Almost a quarter, i.e. 24% or 510 teachers have university degrees. This difference between national-level data and the data from the survey for this report could be due to the surveyed schools being concentrated in urban areas, where more qualified teachers are available due to better educational opportunities and relatively better security situations.

Security remains a huge concern and challenge for the education sector. Although only 10 schools among the 276 schools surveyed for this report were found to be closed due to security concerns, many more were found to be in danger of closure. 184 schools were dropped from the pre-selected sample for this research due to security issues that made the schools inaccessible to the surveyors. Nationally, based on MOE information, around 1000 schools were either inactive or were completely closed during 2016 and 2017, largely due to security concerns.<sup>8</sup> The relatively better security situations of the surveyed schools could be due to the concentration of these schools in urban areas.

Consequently, due to these issues, Afghanistan did not experience a revolution in education that could result in creation of a critical mass of educated citizens to drive for stability and for skilled labor to become an engine of economic growth in the country. Current efforts by the Afghan government and its international partners do not seem to be ready to overcome these issues any time soon. There is a need to rethink the capacity and approaches of the Afghan government and international donors in attempting to deliver quality education services to the country's approximately 10 million students.

## Recommendations

Based on the key gaps in school education identified in this report the following set of recommendations is put forth for consideration (For more detailed recommendations, please see the last section of the report):

- **Improving physical infrastructure:** The MOE should explore ways of engaging communities in planning, construction, and maintenance of infrastructure by developing an institutional framework for effectively channelizing community involvement. Adequate resources should be allocated for maintenance of schools to ensure their sustainability including establishing a school maintenance fund for each school.
- **Rethinking construction of expensive schools:** Afghanistan will not have the resources to meet the growing demand for school buildings. Therefore, more low cost options should be explored.
- **Exploring public-private partnership for textbook distribution:** A technology-based solution for inventory system would ensure student's access to textbooks. In addition, options like creating public-private partnerships for textbook printing and distribution should be explored.
- **Filling in for unprofessional teachers:** Options such as mobilizing administration and management skills as well as drawing on the teaching abilities of highly qualified civil servants, NGOs and INGOs, and private companies on voluntary basis could be explored.
- **Bolstering female participation:** Ensure that all schools have boundary walls, well-maintained and gender segregated toilets along with access to sources of potable water, and a crèche facility within the school premises could encourage female teachers to work.
- **Thinking beyond service delivery by government:** Options to hand over public schools to public-private partnerships, non-government organizations, or community associations where government could subsidize schools based on their performance should be explored. The MOE should focus more on its regulatory and policy role.

<sup>7</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/FINANCING%20EDUCATION%20IN%20AFGHANISTAN.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> ECW Mission to Afghanistan (Kabul and Jalalabad) 10-19 January 2018: 1

## I. CONTEXT ANALYSIS

The education sector in Afghanistan has seen phenomenal transformation in the past decade and a half. The number of students in schools has increased from around one million in 2001 to more than nine million in 2015 (39% of which are girls)<sup>9</sup>. This is a commendable achievement in a country where delivery of basic public goods and services has been tremendously complicated by over three decades of armed conflict. However, there remains a lot of ground to cover to ensure access to quality education for all students in the country. The 2016 Human Development Index (HDI)<sup>10</sup> report ranks Afghanistan at 169 out of 188 countries, placing it in the low human development category.<sup>11</sup> Education is regarded as one of the key parameters against which HDI score is measured.

Afghanistan's education sector has operated in the midst of both major threats and unprecedented opportunities for the last fifteen years. Several factors and actors have shaped the establishment of institutions to manage the educational sector, to mobilize and use its resources, and to meet the needs of Afghanistan's society and economy. The primary factors that have shaped the education sector are: the deteriorating security situation since 2004; a population boom, the return of millions of refugees from neighboring countries; the voluntary migration and displacement of millions of people from villages into urban centers; the continued high poverty rate coupled with meager economic growth; and the role of international community and non-state actors in supporting the Afghan government. Corruption within the centralized management of the education sector within the Ministry of Education and contests over the leadership of the Ministry of Education under the National Unity Government significantly affected MOE's ability to deliver quality education services. This section further discusses some of these factors.

### 1. Deteriorating security situation

The rising armed opposition since 2004 is perhaps the major factor affecting how Afghanistan's education sector has been reestablished and operated since 2001. After the fall of the Taliban, the armed opposition started to grow from southern villages of the country and became a major threat to the state of Afghanistan by 2009, when the U.S. and its allies increased the level of their forces to more than a hundred thousand troops at one point of time.<sup>12</sup> In spite of the efforts by the Afghan government and international community to either defeat the armed opposition forces militarily or strike a peace deal with them, the fighting has spread to all parts of the country resulting in many rural areas falling under the opposition's control. Even the cities have witnessed increased attacks. The fall of Kunduz to the opposition in 2015 is an indication of the threat the insurgents pose to Afghan government and the services it delivers to the people.<sup>13</sup>

The ongoing war remains a major factor affecting the Afghan education sector both in rural and urban areas. Consider for instance the fact that since 2010 approximately 1,239 attacks have been recorded on school and health facilities, leading to the closure of 500 schools. There are frequent reports of opposition forces setting schools on fire.<sup>14</sup> Both Afghan government forces and armed opposition use schools in insecure and remote areas. In this report, we have documented that out of 276 schools, 4 (1.5%) of schools were used by Afghan government armed forces. An MOE spokesperson recently indicated that 67 schools are used by Afghan government or opposition<sup>15</sup>, forcing students out of their classrooms or posing a great threat to their lives.

Although only 10 schools among the 276 schools surveyed for this report were found to be closed due to security concerns, many more were found to be at the danger of being closed. Nationally, based on MOE information, around 1,000 schools were either inactive or were completely closed during 2016 and 2017 largely due to security issues.<sup>16</sup> The fall of districts and ongoing conflicts especially in rural areas and even some urban centers like Helmand, Farah, and Kunduz have forced millions of Afghans into urban centers. This is one of the major reasons for school overcrowding in urban centers.

9 Ministry of Education, "NESP III", MoE, 2017: 2

10 HDI measure progress in three key areas: "a long and healthy life" which is "measured by life expectancy at birth"; "access to knowledge" that is measured through the "mean years of education received by the adult population"; and "a decent standard of living" which is measured through Gross National Income per capita, UNDP, 2016.

11 Human Development Report 2016, "Human Development for Everyone. Briefing Note for Countries on the 2016 Human Development Report".

12 <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/08/21/asia/afghanistan-war-explainer/index.html>

13 <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/14/world/asia/taliban-afghanistan-kunduz.html>

14 <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/armed-taliban-torch-nangarhar-school>

15 <https://ariananews.af/afghan-forces-insurgents-use-schools-as-strongholds-moe/>

16 ECW Mission to Afghanistan (Kabul and Jalalabad) 10-19 January 2018: 1

## 2. Uneven and unsustainable progress

The most visible impact of increased school enrollment is reflected in a steady growth in youth literacy rates that have surged from 20% to 32% for females and from 40% to 62% for males between 2005 and 2012. However, this growth is characterized by a disparity in male and female literacy rates.<sup>17</sup> Afghanistan's GPI<sup>18</sup> index is a reminder of socio-cultural nuances that have underpinned the education sector's growth trajectory.

The pace of progress is uneven if we take into account regional disparities that, in turn, are informed by factors such as geography, levels of economic development, security concerns, and socio-cultural factors. It is estimated that over 3.5 million children are out of school in Afghanistan largely due to poverty combined with remote areas and mountainous terrain. This number would read much higher if we consider the fact that the MOE follows a practice of retaining "permanent absentees" as enrolled on attendance records for up to three years. These "permanent absentees" account for 15% of those enrolled.<sup>19</sup> Magnifying the challenge at hand is the strain upon existing educational infrastructure:

*The number of schools has grown from 6,039 in 2002 to 15,510 in 2012, but these are still not enough to meet the demand ...Even if 500 new schools are created annually, it will take 13 years to meet the rising demand. Meanwhile, teacher-student ratios are already expected to rise to 1:50 or 1:60, far above the target of 1:35.*

Moreover, the education system struggles to improve its qualitative health, with only 60% of boys and 54% of girls enrolled at the primary level completing grade 6. These figures underpin the assumption that "...if students do not reach the last grade of primary section, they do not learn proper reading, writing and mathematics, and over the years the level of their understanding and literacy decreases."<sup>20</sup>

## 3. Migration and population boom

The seminal significance of building on and entrenching the gains made in education is underscored by the fact that Afghanistan has one of the world's youngest populations, with 67.5% of its population classified as youth i.e. under 25 years of age.<sup>21</sup>

The demand for education boomed in 2001 when millions of children, especially girls who were out of school, started to enroll into the public schools. The pressure on the government to provide education services increased with millions of refugees returning from Iran and Pakistan. The Afghan government and international partners mobilized available resources to provide education to the masses. Tents and open spaces were used to teach students. Primary and secondary school graduates were hired as teachers. People with little or no knowledge of education administration managed schools. While providing minimum services to the masses was remarkable, the quality of the services had to be compromised.

The situation has remarkably improved in the last fifteen years, with the number of schools doubling from 3,400 to around 17,500,<sup>22</sup> with the percentage of professional teachers reaching 43%.<sup>23</sup> More recent data that MOE shared with Integrity Watch indicates a big increase in these figures indicating 65% of the teachers have qualification up to grade 14 or above. However, the capacity of Afghan government to construct more schools and train or hire more professional teachers has been a major problem. More than half of Afghan students have to learn in open spaces and the remaining study in crowded classrooms.

17 Adult literacy rate for children 15 years of age or over is 45 for male and 17 for female. This does not include youth literacy rate age group (15-24) mentioned above. Central Statistics Organization, "National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment report (2011-2012): Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey", Central Statistics Organization.

18 GPI is calculated by "dividing female gross enrollment ratio in primary and secondary education by male gross enrollment ratio in primary and secondary education". A GPI score below 1 is an indicator of girls being more disadvantaged than boys in learning opportunities, while a GPI score greater than 1 suggests the inverse. Elimination of gender disparities in learning is widely regarded as key to improving the status and capabilities of women in society, The World Bank, 2017.

19 The exact number of students out of school is 3.5 million, UNICEF, "Annual Report 2016" UNICEF Afghanistan, 2016, [https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Afghanistan\\_2016\\_COAR.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Afghanistan_2016_COAR.pdf)

20 UNESCO, "Education for All 2015 National Review: Afghanistan", UNESCO, 2015: 26. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002327/232702e.pdf>

21 Central Statistics Organization, Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey 2013-14. National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment. 2016: 13 Kabul, CSO <http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/ALCS/ALCS%20ENGLISH%20REPORT%202014.pdf>

22 The MOE through its EMIS departments provided the figures to Integrity Watch. Comprehensive data on the number of schools and students can be found in the Ministry of Education's "EMIS report 2009-10" ([http://moe.gov.af/Content/files/079\\_1388%20English%20Report.pdf](http://moe.gov.af/Content/files/079_1388%20English%20Report.pdf)). To access more recent data on number of schools and students visit: <http://moe.gov.af/ps/page/1831/3031>.

23 <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/FINANCING%20EDUCATION%20IN%20AFGHANISTAN.pdf>

To meet some of the challenges, Afghanistan's MOE launched the first phase of Education Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP) in 2008.<sup>24</sup> EQUIP was the major program through which many donors channeled their assistance to the MOE.<sup>25</sup> Recognizing the importance of education as a tool to harness this demographic dividend Afghanistan joined the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)<sup>26</sup> in 2011. The GPE aims to help Afghanistan attain its goal of Education for All (EFA). The MOE is trying to convince donors to support a five-year support program with less bureaucracy and managed through national budget structures.<sup>27</sup> A multi-donor program called Education Quality Reform in Afghanistan (EQRA) is expected to replace EQUIP with a total budget of \$298 million and is expected to start in the second half of 2018.

#### 4. Poverty, slow economic growth, and declining international aid

Empirical evidence lucidly establishes linkages between levels of education and poverty in Afghanistan:

*"Poverty rates for individuals living in households with an illiterate head are 14 percentage points higher than those of individuals living in households with a literate head (41.6 and 27.6% respectively)."*<sup>28</sup>

In turn, high poverty and unemployment rates affect enrollment and retention of students in schools in rural and urban centers. Families choose to make ends meet by taking their kids to the agricultural fields or to hit the streets in the urban centers. The quality of education and the small chance to get admitted to public universities that would provide better employment opportunities may be other reasons why many people either do not enroll their kids or choose not to continue their education at later stages. Socio-cultural factors affect girls' education in particular (more on this in the next section). Permanent absentees, which make up 22% of students in Afghan schools,<sup>29</sup> and primary enrollment in rural areas, as well as refugees and Internally Displaced People (IDPs) kids could be better understood in the light of the economic condition of the country and of individual households.

Only the United States has spent at least \$759.6 million to support primary and secondary education between 2002 and 2014.<sup>30</sup> ODA to Afghanistan's educational sector increased from \$22.75 million in 2002 to \$449.8 million in 2013.<sup>31</sup> The Afghan educational sector should be looked at from a diminishing aid angle, for there is little or no hope that Afghan domestic revenues could go beyond financing the existing expenditures of the education sector.

#### 5. Socio-cultural factors and role of religious schools

There are deep-rooted social norms that keep girls out of school or propagate the belief that girls should be only educated up to the primary or secondary school level, before they reach the age of puberty. These cultural beliefs are further cemented by low-quality services in schools including lack of separate and tidy toilets, a low number of female teachers, and the huge distances between schools and communities coupled with security concerns. Education Sector Analysis indicates that "for every mile a child has to travel to go to school, attendance rates dropped by 16 percent."<sup>32</sup>

However, Afghanistan has come a long way toward ensure girls' education. The demand for educating girls beyond primary and secondary level has increased due to improved accessibility and increased awareness, at least in urban areas. For instance, the number of female graduates in the capital of Kabul has been higher than that of male graduates in recent years.<sup>33</sup>

The impact of socio-cultural norms has also affected boys' enrollment in public schools. Families in rural areas prefer to

24 The EQUIP program was launched in 2008 by MOE in collaboration with The World Bank with the objective "to increase equitable access to quality basic education especially for girls through school grants, teacher training and strengthened institutional capacity." The second phase of the project was launched in 2012 and concluded in December 2016. A grant of US \$408 million was administered through the Afghan Reconstruction and Trust Fund (The World Bank 2012) (ARTF 2016).

25 <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/FINANCING%20EDUCATION%20IN%20AFGHANISTAN.pdf>

26 The GPE was launched in 2002 focusing on the education sector in developing countries, with an aim to provide "inclusive, equitable quality education for all by 2030" (Global Partnership for Education 2017).

27 <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/FINANCING%20EDUCATION%20IN%20AFGHANISTAN.pdf>

28 Central Statistics Organization, "National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment," Central Statistics Organization, 2014: 55.

29 Statistics from "NESP III" and the "UNICEF Education Fact Sheet," 2017.

30 SIGAR, "16-32 Audit Report," 2016: 4, (<https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/SIGAR-16-32-AR.pdf>)

31 Strand, Arne, "Financing Education in Afghanistan," 2015: 10. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/FINANCING%20EDUCATION%20IN%20AFGHANISTAN.pdf>

32 ESA, "Education Sector Analysis," ESA, 2016.

33 <https://da.azadiradio.com/a/28504640.html>



send their kids to religious madrasas rather than to public schools. In recent years, there has been a slight increase in the interest to join both informal and formal madrasas. There are several reasons why people choose to not send their kids to public schools or formal religious schools. In Kabul, the number of girls joining religious schools increased from 40,000 to 49,000 between 2015 and 2016.<sup>34</sup> One reason may be that the Afghan government has not been able to institute teaching some basic religious subjects in its schools. There is a need to conduct more thorough studies, but a correlation can be seen between provinces such as Kunduz where there are a lot of informal religious schools and high levels of instability. The efforts by the Afghan government to encourage religious schools to join the MOE seem to have been more successful immediately after 2001 and then diminished in later years.<sup>35</sup>

## 6. Corruption and centralization of administration

Lack of competence coupled with weak integrity resulted in millions of wasted aid dollars in the education sector. The scandals over ghost schools and teachers started as early as 2008, but there has not been much progress in terms of prosecuting the culprits or at least providing accurate data on schools. The perceived legitimacy of the MOE and the government at large is very low among the more than 200,000 teachers who are affected by corruption within the ministry.<sup>36</sup> The failure of the MOE is further exacerbated by the overall failure of the state institutions. Intra-governmental agencies mandated to provide oversight to the expenditures of the MOE such as the Supreme Audit Office and the Ministry of Finance have failed so far. The Attorney General's Office has also failed to investigate allegations of corruption in the education sector.

The Afghan parliament and the majority of its members have been also a contributing factor to pervasive corruption within the MOE. The MPs visited the MOE 800 times in one year mostly to discuss teacher and administrator appointments.<sup>37</sup> This also shows how the educational administrative functions are centralized. The provincial directorates of the MOE, which manage hundreds of thousands of students, have little or no role in planning and budgeting.<sup>38</sup> During the National Unity Government, the contest over the position of the minister of education and a subsequent problematic collaboration with other state agencies belonging to a different political camp also had an adverse impact on the MOE.<sup>39</sup>

## 7. Background and rationale of this report

It is against this backdrop that this report critically assesses the sustainability of schools established by Norway in Faryab province, as well as those established by the Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) of the Department of Defense (DoD) in the provinces of Kabul, Kapisa and Kunar. The DoD and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) are the two principal U.S. agencies that have made large-scale interventions in the education sector. The former spent an estimated U.S. \$141 million on primary and secondary education between 2002-2014 while USAID spent U.S. \$613 million.

Findings in relation to the ten provinces (refer to Map 1 below) have been used to highlight achievements as well as challenges faced by the education sector in Afghanistan. Regional variations notwithstanding, the education sector in Afghanistan is confronted with a broadly similar set of challenges.

34 <https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2016/02/24/49000-girl-students-enrolled-kabul-based-religious-schools>

35 Ibid.

36 <https://8am.af/x8am/1394/03/17/teachers-on-strike-ministry-of-education-address-the-demands-of-the-outside/>

37 <http://ettelaat.af/web/en/node/233>

38 <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/FINANCING%20EDUCATION%20IN%20AFGHANISTAN.pdf>

39 <https://8am.af/x8am/1393/07/02/election-afghanistan-government-unity-national/> and <https://bit.ly/2HB2enu>

Map 1: Map of Afghanistan highlighting provinces where Integrity Watch conducted the survey



Interventions designed to mitigate or eliminate some of the challenges faced in the education sector have to grapple with the changed political and economic context. Departure of a majority of NATO troops in 2014 has led to a deterioration of security and economic outlook. The year 2016 witnessed a 3% increase in total civilian casualties from 2015.<sup>40</sup> Specifically in relation to the education sector, a total of 94 incidents targeting educational facilities and personnel were recorded, which resulted in 91 civilian casualties in 2016.<sup>41</sup> In addition, insecurity has spread to many districts that used to be very secure. For instance, Faryab has transformed from being a relatively stable province to one that is increasingly regarded as “one of the most contested provinces in the north-west. Currently, six districts are fiercely fought over: Almar, Kohistan, Khwaja Sabzposh, Shirin Tagab, Dawlatabad and Ghormach.”<sup>42</sup>

Intensifying conflict has dictated budgetary allocation (see figure 1 below). The size of the budget in the year 2017 was AFN 429.4 billion, of which 34% was allocated to the security sector, a decline of 6% from the previous financial year. The 2018 National Budget is AFN 357 billion of which 13% goes to the education sector. An absolute majority of the education budget goes toward operation costs; 93% of the budget is dedicated to operations, with only 7% percent going to development.<sup>43</sup> Resource constraints have begun to take their toll on the national budget, which shrunk in 2018 by 17% to 357 billion AFN,

40 UNAMA, “Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts”, UNAMA, 2017: 3.

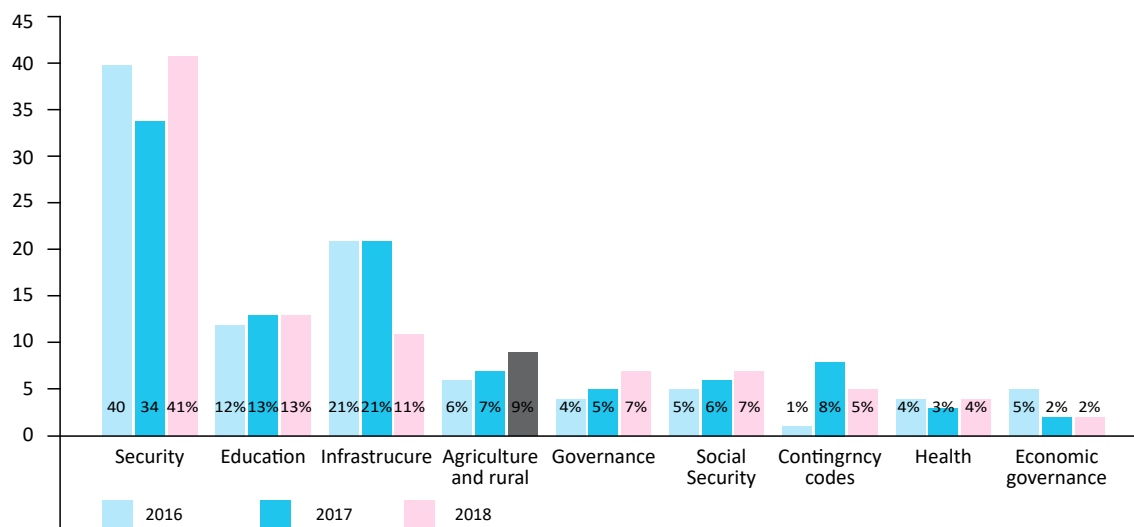
41 UNAMA, “Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts”, UNAMA, 2017: 22.

42 Obaid Ali, “Non-Pashtun Taliban of the North (2): Case studies of Uzbek Taliban in Faryab and Sar-e Pul”, Afghanistan Analysts Network, 2017: (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/non-pashtun-taleban-of-the-north-2-case-studies-of-uzbek-taleban-in-faryab-and-sar-e-pul/>).

43 Ministry of Finance, “National Budget 1397 (2018),” Ministry of Finance.

with about 166 billion or 47% of the budget being financed by domestic revenues.<sup>44</sup> The country has already seen ODA dip from a high of U.S. \$6.86 billion to U.S. \$4.23 billion. However, the share of the security sector in the budget for 2018 has ballooned to 41%.<sup>45</sup> Yet it underscores that conflict has compelled a diversion of a disproportionately large proportion of limited resources to the security sector in a country characterized by a very low HDI.

Figure 1: Sectorial break-up of budgetary allocation for the year 2016-2018. Source: Ministry of Finance 2018.



The tenuous security situation has complicated efforts towards enhancing service delivery in sectors such as education, particularly so outside district and provincial centers. In light of these developments this report seeks to offer a critical appraisal of the quality and sustainability of service delivery in the education sector in the ten provinces surveyed for this report.

Key findings presented here have been arrived at on the basis of primary data generated through field surveys. The report will contextualize these findings against the provincial and national contexts and address some of its potential policy implications. Based on the nature of its key findings the report will conclude by putting forth a set of policy recommendations.

<sup>44</sup> Afzali & Timory, Integrity Watch Afghanistan, "The Game of Numbers : An Analysis of 2018 National Budget," Integrity Watch Afghanistan, 2017: 1.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

## 8. Provincial profiles

This section provides a brief overview of the ten provinces where educational interventions at the school level have been carried out.

### Baghlan

Once known as an industrial province, Baghlan is located in the northeast of the country. Two main highways connecting the north of Afghanistan to the south and east pass through Baghlan. Amongst the few natural resources that have been extracted in Afghanistan, Karkar coal mining is the most famous. In recent years, the security situation in the province has gone from bad to worse. Armed opposition forces have made inroads in a number of strategic districts that now pose a greater threat to the country's ring road that passes through Baghlan.<sup>46</sup> Baghlan is used by insurgents as a corridor to reach further northern provinces including Kunduz, Takhar, and Badakhshan. The province has less than a million people according to a 2013 survey estimate.<sup>47</sup> There are about 500<sup>48</sup> schools in the province providing education to as many as 320,000 students, 37% of them girls.<sup>49</sup> One-third of boys and one-fifth of girls attend school. This number is lower amongst the province's Kuchi population, with one in four boys and one in eight girls attending school.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, more than five thousand students have been enrolled in private schools.<sup>51</sup>

### Balkh

Located in the north of Afghanistan with its capital Mazar-i-Sharif, Balkh covers a land area of 16,186 square kilometers. Sharing a border with Uzbekistan over the Amu River, Balkh's Hairtan port city connects the country to the Central Asian states. It is organized into 15 districts and is home to an estimated 4.9% of Afghanistan's population.<sup>52</sup> The region is socially heterogeneous, being home to people from Pushtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Arab, and Turkmen ethnicities. Unlike the general security situation of the country, the province enjoyed a relatively peaceful period during the last decade and a half. However, insurgents have a presence in districts such as Chimtala and Balkh. The province has 686 or 3.9% of Afghanistan's 17,859 schools.<sup>53</sup> The province has the third highest proportion of qualified female teachers in Afghanistan at just over 50%.<sup>54</sup>

### Faryab

Faryab shares an international border with Turkmenistan. It abuts Ghor in the south, Badghis to the west and north, and Sar-e-Pul to its east and southeast. It's a socio-culturally heterogeneous province, with its population comprised of Tajiks, Pashtuns, Hazaras, Arabs, and Uzbeks. Its provincial capital is Maimana and it is organized into 13 districts. 63% of the province is classified as having mountainous or semi-mountainous terrain; the remainder is flat and semi-flat land.<sup>55</sup> The Taliban's effort to localize their fight against the government by recruiting the local population into the group's rank has had good results in Faryab province. Recently, Faryab is generally considered the most contested province in the northwest region. Six districts including Kohistan came close to falling to opposition forces in the summer of 2016.<sup>56</sup> More than 300,000 students, amongst which four out of ten are girls, study in 548 schools operating in the province.<sup>57</sup>

46 The main highway connecting the northern provinces of Balkh, Samangan, Faryab and Kunduz, Takhar Badakhshan to Kabul pass through Baghlan's Pul-e-Khumri city. See Obaid Ali, Afghanistan " Taleban in the North: Gaining ground along the Ring Road in Baghlan." Afghanistan Analysts Network, 2016, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/taleban-in-the-north-gaining-ground-along-the-ring-road-in-baghlan/> (accessed on 20 April 2018).

47 CSO/UNFPA "Socio Economic and Demographic Profile", CSO/UNFPA.

48 Ministry of Education provided the number of school as 530.

49 Pajhwok Afghan News, <http://elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-baghlan> (accessed on 20 April 2018).

50 UNAMA

51 Majority of the students in private schools in Baghlan are boys with 1167 girls making twenty percent of the total number. Data provided by Ministry of Education.

52 There is no agreement on population of Afghanistan among different sources. CIA Factbook estimates total population of the country a little more than 34 million while the World Bank estimated the population 34.6 million in 2016. The Afghan government's only statistics bureau projects the population of the country for the year 2017-18 as 28224323 male and female. Accordingly, Balkh has 1382155 population. Central Statistics Organization (<http://cso.gov.af/en/page/demography-and-socile-statistics/demograph-statistics/3897111>).

53 Data provided by MoF

54 UNESCO, "Education for All 2015 National Review: Afghanistan", UNESCO, 2015.

http://

[unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002327/232702e.pdf](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002327/232702e.pdf)

55 Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development 2013: 1.

56 Obaid Ali, Afghanistan Analysts Network, "Non-Pashtun Taleban of the North (2): Case studies of Uzbek Taleban in Faryab and Sar-e Pul." Afghanistan Analysts Network, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/non-pashtun-taleban-of-the-north-2-case-studies-of-uzbek-taleban-in-faryab-and-sar-e-pul/> (accessed on 20 April 2018).

57 Data received from the Ministry of Education is not confirmed by any third party. Recently, reports have emerged citing existence of ghost students, ghost teachers, and ghost schools (students, teachers, and schools that existed on paper but not in reality).

## Herat

The city of Herat serves as the provincial capital of this western province, which is divided into 16 administrative districts. Tajiks, Pashtuns, Hazaras, Aimaq, Uzbeks, and Turkmen are the principal groups inhabiting the province. It is also home to 4.1% of the kuchi or nomadic population. 39% of the province has mountainous or semi-mountainous terrain, while more than half of the area is made up of flat land. The literacy rate for the province is 36% but it is characterized by a considerable gender disparity, with 43% of men being literate as opposed to a mere 28% of the women.<sup>58</sup> Herat also scores low on the percentage of qualified female teachers, being under 30%.<sup>59</sup>

## Kabul

More than half of this province has mountainous or semi-mountainous terrain while approximately 37.7% is made up of flat land. The city of Kabul has a troubled political history featuring the infighting of several factions after the withdrawal of Soviet forces from the country. In recent years, Kabul has witnessed a wave of suicide attacks, car bombs, and targeted attacks. Due to the insecurity and economic pressure in the country that forced rural population to the center, the population of Kabul has increased from 1.5 million in 2001 to 4.6 million in 2018.<sup>60</sup> What was once a ruined ghost city during civil war of 1990s rule is now one of the fastest-growing cities in the world.<sup>61</sup> The province has 939 villages and 14 districts. The city of Kabul acts as both the provincial and national capital.<sup>62</sup> The city alone is home to 991 or 5.6% of the country's schools, with an additional 521 schools located in other districts in the province.<sup>63</sup>

## Kapisa

Located in the northeast of Afghanistan, 54% of this province is mountainous or semi-mountainous, while more than 43% is flat. It is organized into five districts with Mahud-i-Raqi as the provincial capital. Pushtun, Tajik, and Pashai are the principal groups inhabiting the province. Due to its proximity to Kabul, it is used as a weekend resort for citizens of the capital. According to the MOE there are 275 school operating in the province, of which 88 are female only. Also, there are 14 co-educational schools.<sup>64</sup> Just under 50% of the qualified teachers in the province are female.<sup>65</sup>

## Khost

Located in the southeast of Afghanistan, with a population of 1.5 million people. Khost was a former district of Paktia province before it was promoted to province status. The province has twelve districts governed by three administrative units. A 2016 report by NATO includes Khost alongside Nuristan, Paktia, Paktika and Kunar among the provinces that Al-Qaeda was trying to reinforce their presence.<sup>66</sup> The Haqqani Network has been active largely in this province. More than 200,000 enrolled students are studying in 291<sup>67</sup> schools in Khost, of which 35% are girls.<sup>68</sup> In addition, the Pedagogy department in Khost has 1,060 students with females comprising only 20%. In addition to the government-run educational institutions, there are a number of private and religious seminaries. Khost has 14 private schools that provide an education to more than 26000 boys and girls.<sup>69</sup>

58 UNAMA, "UNDSS Provincial Assessment" UNAMA.

59 UNESCO, "Education for All 2015 National Review: Afghanistan", UNESCO, 2015: 47.

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002327/232702e.pdf>

60 Central Statistics Organization "2017-18 population projection" CSO, 2017.

61 The Guardian, "Kabul – the fifth fastest growing city in the world – is bursting at the seams." The Guardian, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/dec/11/kabul-afghanistan-fifth-fastest-growing-city-world-rapid-urbanisation> (accessed on 20 April 2018).

62 Kabul Governor Office website: <http://kabul.gov.af/en>.

63 Ministry of Education, "EMIS," MOE, 2015.

64 Data obtained from Ministry of Education

65 UNESCO, "Education for All 2015 National Review: Afghanistan", UNESCO, 2015: 47.

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002327/232702e.pdf>

66 Nabil Bhatia, "Afghanistan: Security Analysis of a Failed State", 2017, <http://natoassociation.ca/afghanistan-security-analysis-of-a-failed-state/> (accessed on 20 April 2018).

67 As per information received from Ministry of Education, there are 486 schools operating in the province.

68 Pajhwok Afghan News, "Background Profile of Khost", Pajhwok, <http://elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-khost-0> (accessed on 20 April 2018).

69 Ministry of Education, "EMIS," MoE, 2015.

## Kunar

Located in the east of the country, Kunar is a largely mountainous province organized into 15 administrative districts including its provincial capital Asadabad. Allama Sayed Jamaluddin Afghan, the famous reformer, was born in Kunar province. The province is famous for its beautiful landscapes. Its mountainous terrain makes it difficult for the government forces to reach to all of the province's landmass. Recently, reports surfaced claiming that groups associating themselves with ISIS are building a nest in the province.<sup>70</sup> There are more than five hundred schools operational in Kunar province, in which 159,707 students are getting education, among whom less than half are girls.<sup>71</sup> It has an extremely low number of qualified female teachers at barely 23%.<sup>72</sup>

## Kunduz

The historic province of Kunduz was once a military base for Alexander the Great in 330 BC. The province has one million inhabitants and shares an international border with Tajikistan connected through Shir Khan Bander through the Amu River. The province has seven districts including the provincial capital, also named Kunduz. The city of Kunduz fell into the hands of the opposition in 2015 for the first time after Taliban government was ousted in 2001. The capture of the city by the Taliban was not an overnight incident. The group had already made inroads in surrounding districts for quite some time.<sup>73</sup> This restive province remains a confrontation ground between insurgents and government forces. According to the most recent data obtained from the MOE, there are 338,790 students enrolled of whom 127,957 are females.<sup>74</sup>

## Parwan

Parwan province is located in the north of Kabul, connecting the capital with northern Afghanistan and the central Bamyan province. The province has mountainous terrain with some plains. The strategic Salang pass connects nine northern provinces with the south of the country, and Bagram Airfield is also located in this province. The province is culturally heterogeneous with a population of more than half a million people. During the weekends and holidays, the province is frequented by a huge number of visitors, mostly from Kabul. Government forces have launched a number of unsuccessful operations to clear out the Taliban in districts such as Siagerd-e-Ghourband.<sup>75</sup> Public schools in these areas are run by the Taliban. According to the MOE there are 217,374 students enrolled in more than 500 public schools. About 4 in 10 of these students are girls. The number of students studying in private school reaches 20,000.<sup>76</sup>

70 In 2015, film makers Najibullah Quraishi and Jamie Doran documented the activities of the group showing, training young children in the group's run schools. The documentary also pictured the group fighting Taliban for supremacy. Aljazeera English, "ISIL and the Taliban", Aljazeera, 2015, <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/specialseries/2015/11/islamic-state-isil-taliban-afghanistan-151101074041755.html> (accessed on 20 April 2018).

71 Ministry of Education, "EMIS", MoE, 2915.

72 UNESCO, "Education for All 2015 National Review: Afghanistan", UNESCO, 2015: 47. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002327/232702e.pdf>

73 Obaid Ali, Retrieved from Afghanistan Analysts Network, "The 2015 Insurgency in the North (3): The fall and recapture of Kunduz", 2015, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-2015-insurgency-in-the-north-3-the-fall-and-recapture-of-kunduz/> (accessed on 20 April 2018).

74 Ministry of Education, "EMIS", MoE, 2015.

75 See Tolonews report here: <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/heavy-clashes-ongoing-parwan-s-seyagerd-district> and <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/ongoing-clashes-displace-dozens-families-parwan>

76 Ministry of Education, "EMIS", MoE, 2015.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This research is based on primary data generated through field surveys and limited inspections of 276 schools in 10 provinces over a period of three years to assess the operation and physical condition of schools in Afghanistan.

The objectives of the research were to assess the physical condition of school buildings and the ability of the facility to delivery education services. More specifically, operational status of schools, quality of school infrastructure, functionality of school support mechanism, access to sanitation facilities, availability of trained teachers, gendered information on student enrollment, quality and quantity of learning materials, and student-teacher ratio were assessed.

The schools in the sample were built by specific donors in each sampled province and pre-selected for limited inspections. The sample was given to Integrity Watch by the donors to conduct its survey in accordance to the objectives set out prior to the design of the research.

The final sample used in the report included only those schools that are in the most accessible and secure areas of the provinces, making site visits possible for the surveyors. The sample selection criteria were 1) accessibility of the location and 2) the security situation of the surrounding area of the school.

Generalizations made by drawing inferences from this sample survey can be applied to secure and accessible areas in other provinces of Afghanistan. The problems highlighted in this survey may be even worse in more remote and less secure locations.

For the survey in Faryab, a standardized questionnaire, developed jointly by IWA and the Norwegian Commission, was employed for all of the schools. In the case of the CERP and USAID-surveyed schools, a questionnaire developed by IWA and SIGAR was used, with some revisions made during different periods of the survey in order to include more variables and information. Different versions of the tools used during the survey limit comparative analysis of the data, but the statistical analysis used only data that was consistent among all of the surveys conducted in different provinces. All findings have been substantiated by photographically documenting school sites visited to allow verification of data by third parties. Table 1 below shows the details of schools surveyed by province, donor, and timeline of the survey in the ten provinces.

*Table 1: List of the Schools inspected in each province*

Province	Donors	Total Number of schools	Date of inspection
Balkh	USAID	26	October-November 2015
Herat	USAID	25	October-November 2015
Faryab	NCA USAID	94	First batch: March-April 2016 Second batch: May-June 2017
Kabul	CERP USAID	51	First batch: August-October 2016 Second batch: April-June 2017
Kapisa	CERP	9	March-April 2016
Kunar	CERP	12	March-April 2016
Khost	USAID	23	March-May 2017
Kunduz	USAID	7	September 2017
Baghlan	USAID	16	April 2018
Parwan	USAID	13	April 2018

A total of 389,587 students were taught by 10,245 teachers in the ten provinces surveyed in this study. Within the central zone, a sample of schools in Kabul, Parwan, and Kapisa were surveyed. In the northern region, Kunduz, Balkh, and Faryab schools were inspected. Three dozen schools were surveyed in Herat in the western zone. Khost and Kunar represent the southern and eastern regions. In addition, Kabul and Faryab schools were inspected in two separate batches at different time spans.

In Herat and Balkh the survey was conducted between October and November 2015. This was followed by surveys in Faryab, Kunar, and Kapisa between March and April 2016. Between August and October of 2016, schools were surveyed in Kabul. Between March and June 2017, additional schools were surveyed in Kabul, Khost, and Faryab and in September of the same year, Kunduz schools were surveyed. In April 2018, schools were surveyed in Baghlan and Parwan.

All the schools surveyed were built with donor support. Faryab schools surveyed were built by the Norwegian Commission for Afghanistan as well as USAID. Schools surveyed in Kabul were built with support from USAID and the CERP. In other provinces, the schools surveyed were built by only one donor as shown in Table 1.

Prior to embarking on the on-site inspection visits, an Integrity Watch inspection coordinator trained the surveyors in order to enhance the efficiency and accuracy of data collected. The surveyors received an orientation training on how to locate and access a school, perform internal and external observations, fill out questionnaires properly, and take GPS-embedded and date/time stamped photographs. The inspectors entered data generated from completed questionnaires into an Excel spreadsheet, where information about each school could be easily tracked.

Data generated through field surveys was coded and with the aid of statistical software, primarily SPSS, and graphs and charts have been generated accordingly. The data generated has been analyzed at length in this report in light of the larger national and provincial context. To further strengthen claims put forth in this report, claims put forth by other sources have been triangulated with the survey data for corroboration as well.

The principal research methodology employed to answer questions pertaining to sustainability of the schools is of a quantitative nature, but qualitative comments from on-site staff members of the school and community representatives and observational information from the inspection specialists were written recorded as well. Qualitative data generated through interviews with on-site staff and community members was then quantified and used in the quantitative analysis of the report and was then confirmed and triangulated back with data collected and received from the MOE.

Relevant stakeholders such as schoolteachers, school shuras, and members of the local committees and provincial education departments were identified for participation in the survey. The surveyors gathered further complementary information through interviews and participant observation in the field. In addition, the surveyors made thorough observations of the school buildings and took photographs to document the condition of the buildings in this report. Data on attendance and absence rates of students and teachers in the schools has been collected through classroom observations.

## 1. Security assessment

Prior to embarking on the field survey, a thorough security assessment of the districts in which schools located were to be surveyed was taken. This was done in consultation with the security department and the field team of Integrity Watch research department. Accessibility to each school facility was prepared based on a four-tiered, color-coded security ranking system: Green, Amber, Red, and Black. Schools surveyed were located in security zones classified as “Green” and “Amber.” In “Red” districts only schools located in the center of these districts were accessible, whereas in the case of districts identified as “Black” no schools were covered by field visits. Therefore, those schools were dropped from the survey. This includes 40 schools in Faryab funded by the NCA, 23 schools funded by CERP, and 121 schools funded by USAID in various provinces. Out of the schools selected, there were 10 schools in total that were not surveyed due to the security assessment by Integrity Watch. The 184 schools dropped from the sample and the 10 schools not surveyed after selection help gauge the impact security dynamics at the local level have in impeding progress in education.

Integrity Watch conducted a thorough security assessment prior to commencing inspections for CERP-funded schools in the provinces of Kabul, Balkh, Kapisa, Kunar, and Herat. The first step in developing a security appraisal was the organization of consultation meetings between the project manager, engineering specialists, and field inspectors with relevant security officers of IWA for each of the five provinces. The coordination meetings helped the team to jointly determine that the project sites proposed for inspection for this report were not located in overtly dangerous areas.



The panel concluded that if the security situation on the ground altered during the course of the survey, the proposed inspection site would be dropped from the inspection list and due record of the same would be made. Thus, field inspectors were given independence in determining the sites to be inspected. A finalized list of inspections was drawn up and submitted to the IWA office, which decided that the best practices for ensuring safety included utilizing travel wherever possible. In limited instances travel by road was undertaken to the inspection site; in such cases the inspector was allowed to not proceed with the visit should he not feel assured of his safety. Moreover, inspectors were permitted to stop site inspections and inform the IWA office should they judge the security situation to be uncertain at any point during the site visit.

## 2. Limitations

Notwithstanding the best efforts of the research team, some limitations remain. The findings in this survey are based on pre-selected schools in 10 provinces chosen to represent the whole country, which include 42 CERP-funded schools in five provinces, 77 Norwegian-funded schools in Faryab, and 157 USAID-funded schools in eight provinces. In Faryab, while the field survey covered a large sample, it could not cover areas with a fragile security situation. Hence, primary data for these districts remains limited. The research team sought to mitigate this limitation by gathering information for those regions through the provincial education directorate as well as from members of local communities from the surrounding areas.

While the questionnaire was designed to encapsulate a range of key issues on which sustainability of schools is to be gauged, it does not provide us with specific information such as building standards followed or per-unit cost of construction. The survey team took great care to ensure accuracy in collecting data on school enrollment by age and gender. However, given the absence of documents such as birth certificates and attendance of girls in schools designated on paper for boys and vice versa owing to non-availability of any other schools nearby, figures represented here are to be read as proxy indicators. To the extent possible, this limitation was sought to be overcome by triangulating data generated.



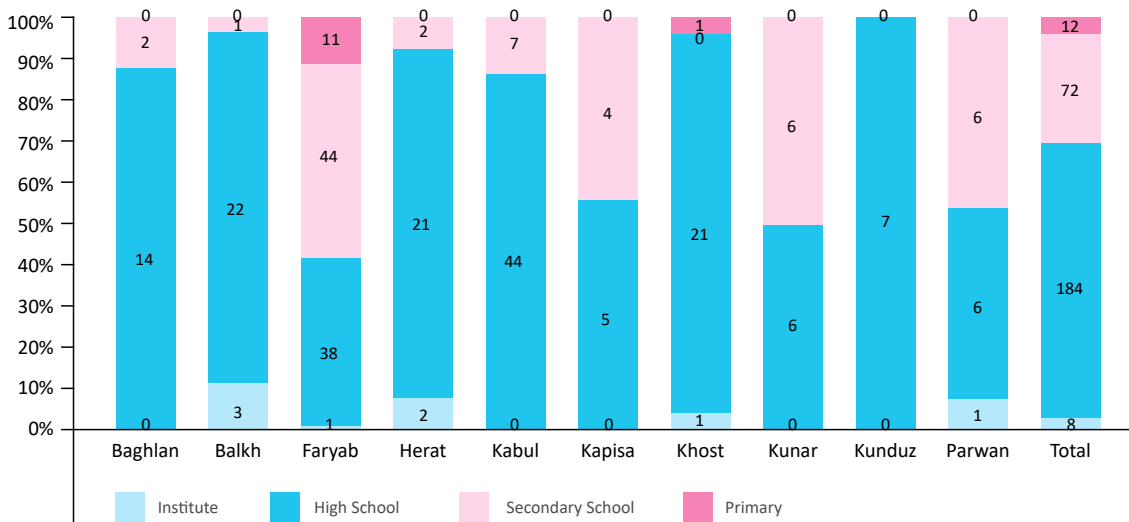


### III. KEY FINDINGS

The key elements inspected are those identified by the surveyors, school staff, and community members who are most familiar with the strengths, weaknesses, and needs of the education facilities among target communities. Hence, these findings may not reflect complete alignment with MOE guidelines on service delivery in the education sector. Findings here would provide useful input for restructuring policy guidelines and enhancing service delivery in the education sector.

Integrity Watch assigned inspectors who collected data for this report across 10 provinces including Baghlan, Balkh, Faryab, Herat, Kabul, Kapisa, Khost, Kunar, Kunduz, and Parwan. In total, 276 schools were surveyed across four different levels of education: The largest concentration of schools is at the high school level (184), followed by the secondary level (72), the primary (12), and the institute level (8).

Figure 2: Schools according to level of education

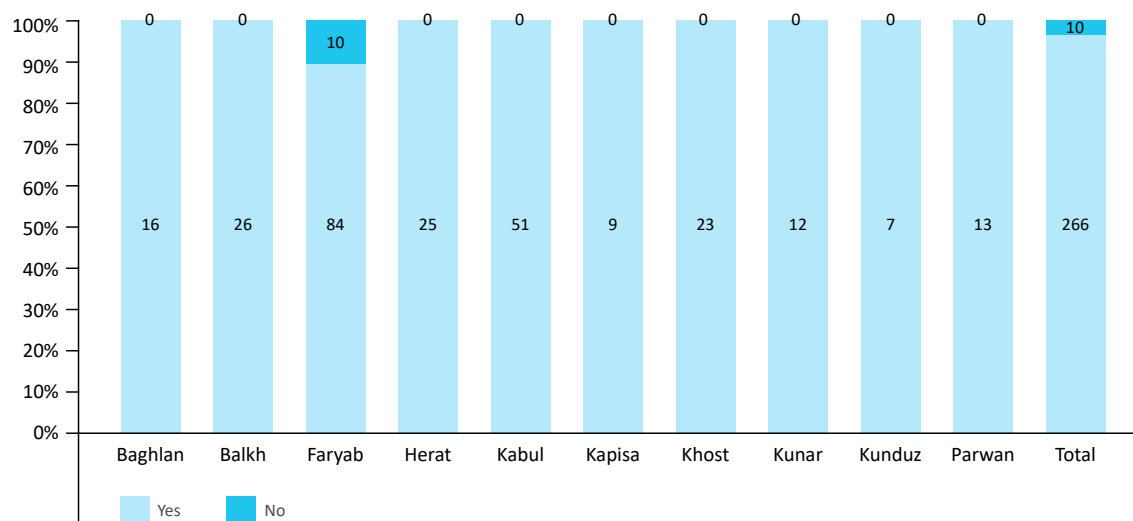


The following sections analyze six main indicators based on which data was collected in the mentioned provinces. The six indicators include: (1) functional status including impact of insecurity and beneficiary perception; (2) state of physical infrastructure including maintenance, availability of standard classrooms, existence of boundary walls, and access to sanitation and water; (3) gender parity; (4) qualification of teachers; (5) student-teacher ratio; and (6) access to learning material.

#### 1. Functional status

One of the first steps towards determining the impact and sustainability of the schools surveyed was to determine the functional status of schools. Figure 3 below illustrates the functional status of schools across 10 provinces surveyed. Of the 276 schools surveyed over three years, 266 schools (96%) were found to be open and in use while 10 schools (4%) were reported to be closed, all of which were in Faryab province. It is worth mentioning that 184 schools were dropped from the preselected sample due to insecurity in the areas where the schools were located. There is a high likelihood of more schools being closed in insecure areas compared to secure areas. Therefore, the number of closed schools would have been much higher if the schools in insecure areas had been included.

Figure 3: Functional Status of schools in 10 provinces surveyed



All schools in Baghlan province were reported to be open despite the challenging security situation. In Balkh province, all of the 26 schools surveyed were found to be functional, the highest concentration of these being in the provincial capital, Mazar-i-Sharif. Herat province too replicates a similar pattern, with all 25 schools surveyed reported as being open and in use. All 51 schools surveyed in Kabul were functional and in use by the intended beneficiaries. In Kapisa, all 9 schools surveyed were found to be functional, the majority of them being outside the provincial capital Mahmud-e-Raqi. All 23 schools surveyed in Khost were reported to be open, the majority of which were located outside the provincial center of Khost. In Kunar, all 12 schools surveyed were found to be functional of which 50% were located in the provincial capital of Asadabad. Although the sample of schools in Kunduz was very small, all seven schools surveyed were reported to be open. In addition, the schools in Kunduz province were all located in the city of Kunduz. A larger sample, including schools from various districts of Kunduz where insecurity prevails, might present a different picture. All schools surveyed in Parwan were reported to be open, most of which were located in various districts of the province with some in provincial capital of Charikar.

The functional status in the mentioned nine provinces contrasts with those in Faryab province. Although 17 schools surveyed in 2017 were found to be all open, 10 out of the 77 schools surveyed in 13 districts in the year 2016 were found to be closed due to insecurity. This contrast might also be due to the large sample size of schools surveyed in Faryab province. The detailed findings from Faryab provides a more complete picture of how insecurity has affected school operations in rural areas where government control is weak or nonexistent.

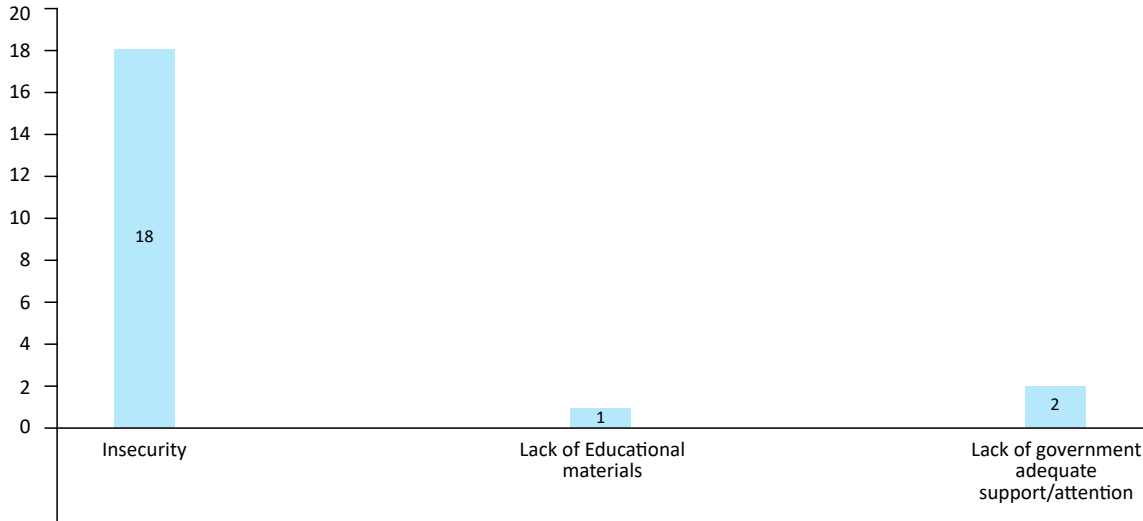
Out of the 77 schools surveyed in Faryab, 15 of them were in the provincial capital Maimana, all of which were open. A similar trend is replicated in Almar, Andkhoy, Dawlatabad, and Qaram Qol districts. These figures indicate a relatively stable security environment in these districts, rendering them more conducive for functioning of schools. The only exception to the above districts is Dawlatabad, where all schools surveyed were open, yet as indicated in preceding sections three schools in this district could not be surveyed owing to poor security. This seems to indicate that in contested districts, schools in district centers that are controlled by the government are less vulnerable to insecurity than those located in remote areas.

In Gurziwan district, of the six schools surveyed, five were open and one was found to be in need of repairs. In the districts of Qaysar and Khwaja Sabz Posh, a higher number of schools were open than those that were closed or in disrepair, while in the district of Shirin Taghab, of the six schools surveyed, two were reported open, two were in a state of disrepair,<sup>77</sup> and another two were closed. In Belcheragh district the proportion of schools closed and in disrepair outnumber schools open. In Ghormach the picture was more dismal, with many schools either closed or in a state of disrepair. These are districts where insecurity has increased recently. Interestingly, Pashtoon Kowt district has the highest number of schools open after Maimana, but it also has the highest number of schools reported closed and the highest number of schools that could not be surveyed owing to security concerns.

<sup>77</sup>School facilities classified as being in a "State of Disrepair" in this report, are nonetheless functional, even if not at an optimal level.

Thus, across these districts one factor that determines the functional status of schools is security. Figure 4 below underscores the fragility of operations of the surveyed schools in Faryab. Of the 77 schools surveyed 21 or 27% of schools were reported to be in danger of seeing their operations cease. Insecurity is cited as a factor in 18 out of the 21 schools in question. Intensifying armed conflict has the potential to reverse some of the hard-won gains in education. Therefore, the NRVA survey notes, “Insecurity is primarily a rural obstacle for participation in education”.

Figure 4: Reasons that put schools in danger of close down in Faryab province.



The contrast in operational status of schools in Faryab compared to other nine provinces surveyed is striking as many schools in Baghlan, Balkh, Herat, Kabul, Kapisa, Khost, Kunduz, Kunar, and Parwan identified USAID or DoD as a donor, and insecurity has not affected their operations. Even within Faryab province, a large number of schools in insecure districts such as Pashtoon Kowt were reported to be open. Although there is need for a more in-depth study to identify factors that contribute to a large number of schools being open despite insecurity, factors such as the role of insurgency and the role of local communities cannot be ignored. Insurgents tend to prove themselves useful to the population under their control and as an alternative to the government by filling in the gap of governance<sup>78</sup>.

The findings from Faryab in 2016 underscore a need to continue to strengthen local ownership in educational interventions to mitigate the impact of conflict on school operations. One important institutional interface for strengthening local ownership are School Management Shuras (Box 1) and Parent–Teacher Association’s (PTAs). For instance, in Faryab, 65% of schools have PTAs that assist schools on a range of issues from maintenance and management to security. 50 of the 77 schools or 65% reported holding regular meetings on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. The current scenario makes it imperative to strengthen existing mechanisms for community engagement, which are key to creating a sense of local ownership and minimizing the risk to continuance of school operations in an increasingly fragile security scenario.

<sup>78</sup><https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/04/05/when-terrorists-and-criminals-govern-better-than-governments/>

### Box 1: Revitalizing School Management Shuras through Community Based Monitoring

The Community Based Monitoring of Schools (CBM-S) is an initiative by Integrity Watch that engages people from local communities. Local communities are mobilized, trained, and facilitated to provide oversight to the education facilities in their area. The program aims to enhance coordination between communities and government departments, increase transparency and accountability, enhance quality of education services through community monitoring, collaborative information-sharing, and problem solving. The program has made officials more responsive and has encouraged communities to support education sector since 2015.

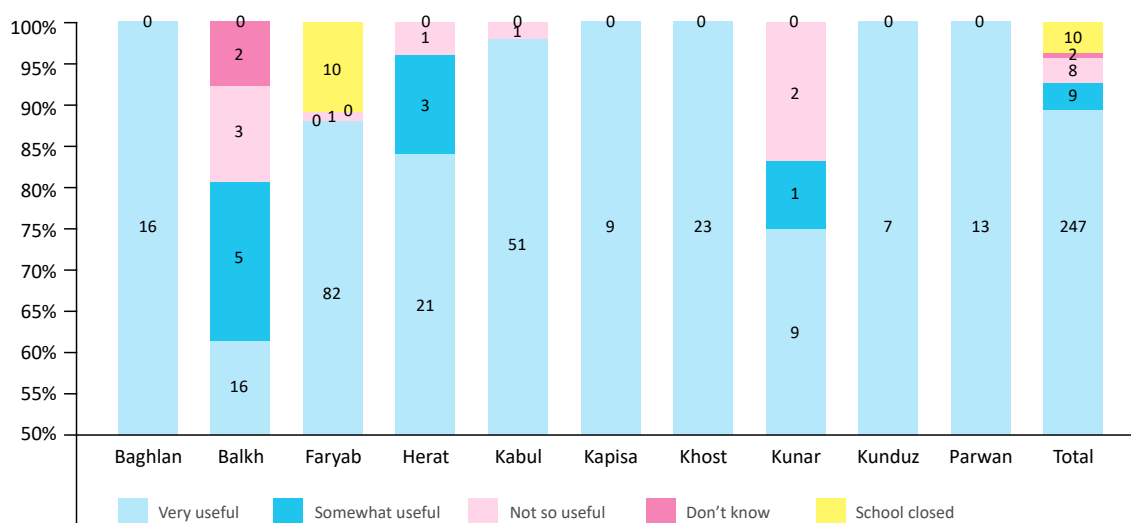
The CBM-S approach mobilizes a number of key stakeholders in different roles and capacities to identify and fix school problems. The process begins by presenting the program to the local elders followed by the election of volunteer citizens who receive short-term training on communication skills, monitoring of schools based on indicators, and advocacy to solve problems through engagement of communities and education administrators including school management. The volunteers use a checklist to check on teachers and students' attendance, hygiene and toilets, portable water, existence and use of laboratories, teaching plans, books and stationary, and to ensure School Management Shura (SMS) is held on monthly basis to discuss and possibly address the problems identified during monitoring.

The problems identified are shared with the school management as well as with community elders on a monthly basis. Some of the problems like attendance, hygiene, and teaching plans are addressed at the school level. Other issues like lack of teachers, books, or drinking water are discussed in quarterly stakeholders meetings that include the provincial directorate of education, school management, community elders, and volunteers. In 2015, 824 problems were identified out of which 233 problems were addressed in three provinces of Herat, Kapisa, and Parwan. In 2016, the program also covered Kunduz and was able to identify 1016 problems and solve 343 through communities and SMSs. In 2017, the program expanded to four new provinces of Bamyan, Nangarhar, Kabul and Balkh and addressed 1357 out of 1837 problems.

Through this program, local communities contributed to solving many school problems by mobilizing local resources that included donations by community members, local businessmen, and political figures.

Strengthening mechanisms to ensure community participation and ownership of schools not only assists schools in finding solutions to their problems locally, it can positively influence people's perception about schools. Figure 5, below, underscores beneficiaries' perception of schools established. An overwhelming majority (89%) view schools as being very useful; 3% perceive schools as being somewhat useful, and a small minority of 3% see the schools as not being so useful, 4% of schools were reported as closed.

Figure 5: Perception of beneficiaries by province



*Box 2: Militarization and politicization of schools in Afghanistan*

Civilian casualties have always been an issue of concern in Afghanistan. Yet, its educational impact has been overlooked. In the first three months of 2018 more than 2500 civilians were killed and injured; a similar number of casualties was reported last year. Use of school facilities as military outposts by the armed opposition and government forces alike endangers the lives of children and affects their education. Schools buildings are the only concrete reinforcement in some villages that are at risk of being used by the military forces, especially in relatively insecure provinces. As the armed opposition and the Afghan government forces contest over territory across the country, the military use of school buildings by either side increases the risk to the lives of the children near the front lines.

A Human Rights Watch report in 2016 documented the use of a dozen schools by both the government and armed opposition in the restive northeastern Baghlan province. Integrity Watch's inspection of schools in Baghlan province found the same results. Chashma Shir High School, located in the outskirts of Pul-e-Khumri city, and Gul Miran No.2 High School are two cases we have come across. The latter is housing a regiment of ANA along with students in the school. Shikh Amir High School in Gurbuz district of Khost province is another example of how schools are put at risk by the military. A heavy military post used by soldiers is located deep within the school. If fighting erupts between government and the opposition forces, the base within the school would become a prime target. There is a high risk of students getting caught in the middle.

Schools that are located in insecure areas are more likely to be used as military bases either by soldiers or the armed opposition. This is concerning, particularly as the battlefield constantly shifts back and forth between the government and the armed opposition. Therefore, both government and opposition forces must avoid engaging in an armed conflict using schools and other educational facilities that would put children and civilians' lives at risk.

The militarizing of schools could delay studies for an indefinite period of time as attacks continue, depriving children of their right to education. Even after the schools are evacuated by armed forces, they might still remain far from being reopened. The repair and sometimes reconstruction of school buildings that have been subjected to heavy shelling and mortar rounds costs money and consumes time.

In addition to civilian casualties and schools being closed, the militarizing of schools also encourages local authorities to misuse school facilities and students for their political ends. For instance, in September 2017 in Kunduz province, students of Malawi Saraj-u-ddin High School for Boys were called to attend a political gathering, resulting in the school closing for the day. In Faryab's Pashtun Kot district, not very far from the provincial capital, a local warlord agreed to allow the construction of Sar-e-Hawz School only to turn it into his personnel guesthouse after it was built.

## 2. State of physical infrastructure

The quality and quantity of school infrastructure has a significant bearing on determining student enrollment, particularly for girls beyond the primary level. Lack of standard classrooms and maintenance directly affects quality of education. Absence of boundary walls and separate toilets for boys and girls are the two most significant factors affecting girls' enrollment and retention in schools. It also has a bearing on quality of learning outcomes. In this section, the report critically evaluates the state of school infrastructure and draws attention to existing gaps which, if addressed, could potentially result in drastic gains in education.

### Maintenance

As regards to the upkeep of existing infrastructure of schools surveyed, figure 6 below shows that only 59 out of 276 (21%) schools surveyed in the 10 provinces were recorded as being well-maintained<sup>79</sup>, whereas another 18% percent are being fairly maintained<sup>80</sup> while 18% were found to be poorly maintained<sup>81</sup>. An alarming 39% of the schools had no maintenance. Thus, a majority of the schools surveyed appear to have no operation and maintenance plan in place, thereby reducing the sustainability of school operations.

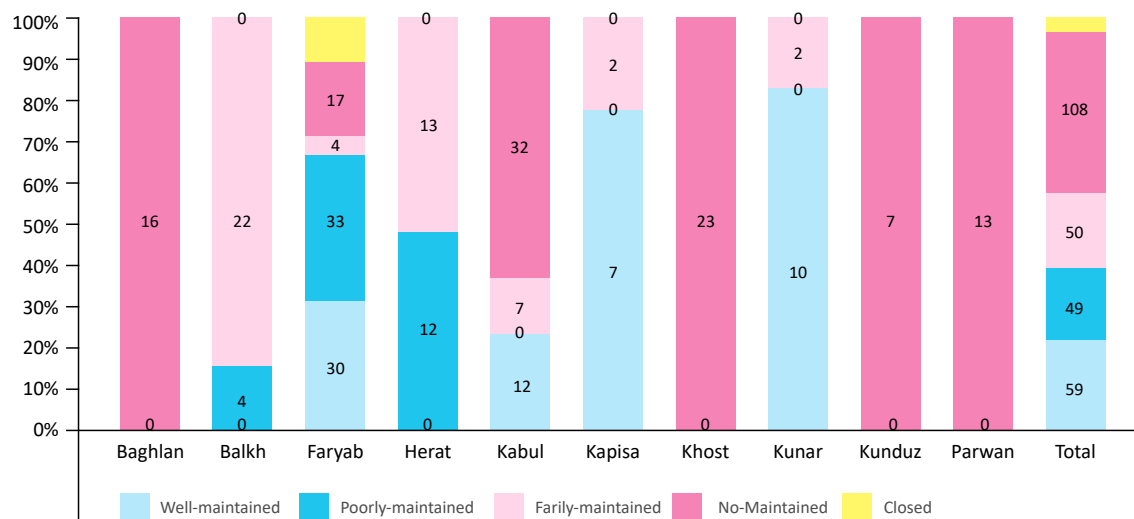
<sup>79</sup> A school is classified as being well maintained if there is evidence of renovation; rectification; and it has operational doors; windows; and water and electrical systems.

<sup>80</sup> A school is classified as being fairly maintained, if there is some evidence of renovation; rectification; operational doors; windows; and water; and electrical systems.

<sup>81</sup> A school is classified as being poorly maintained, if there is no evidence of renovation; rectification; and/or operational doors; windows; and water and electrical systems.



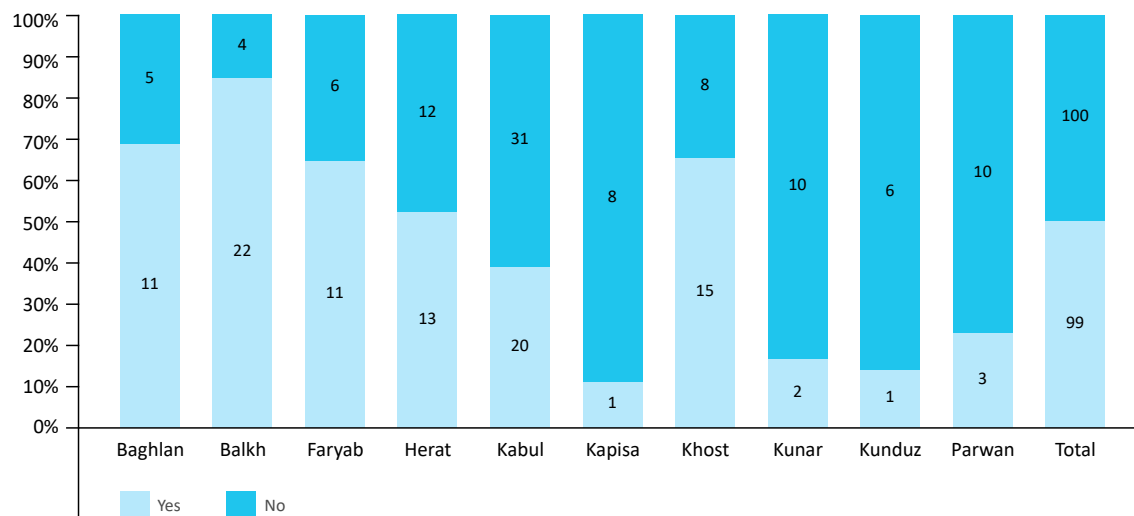
Figure 6: Schools according to their level of maintenance.



The state of maintenance is dismal in most of the provinces, where majority of the schools (57%) reported leaking of roofs and broken doors, furniture, or windows. Of these, schools in Baghlan, Khost, Kunduz, and Parwan were reported to have zero maintenance. In addition, 76% (or three out of four) schools in Kabul were reported to have either poor or no maintenance. This indicates the lack of maintenance and operation plans, which in turn undermines the learning environment and puts under strain the sustainability of school operations in the long term.

In addition, data was collated on the structural condition of schools surveyed. As Figure 7 below shows, there are considerable variations in the state of school infrastructure. The state of schools surveyed in Balkh is abysmal, with 23 (or 85%) of schools showing structural damage.<sup>82</sup> Faryab, Khost, Baghlan, and Herat come next with 65%, 65%, 63%, and 52% of schools showing damage respectively. In contrast, only one school each in Kapisa, Kunduz, Kunar, Parwan, and Kabul reported structural damage. Overall, almost half of the schools reported structural damage<sup>83</sup>.

Figure 7: Number of schools with structural damages according to province

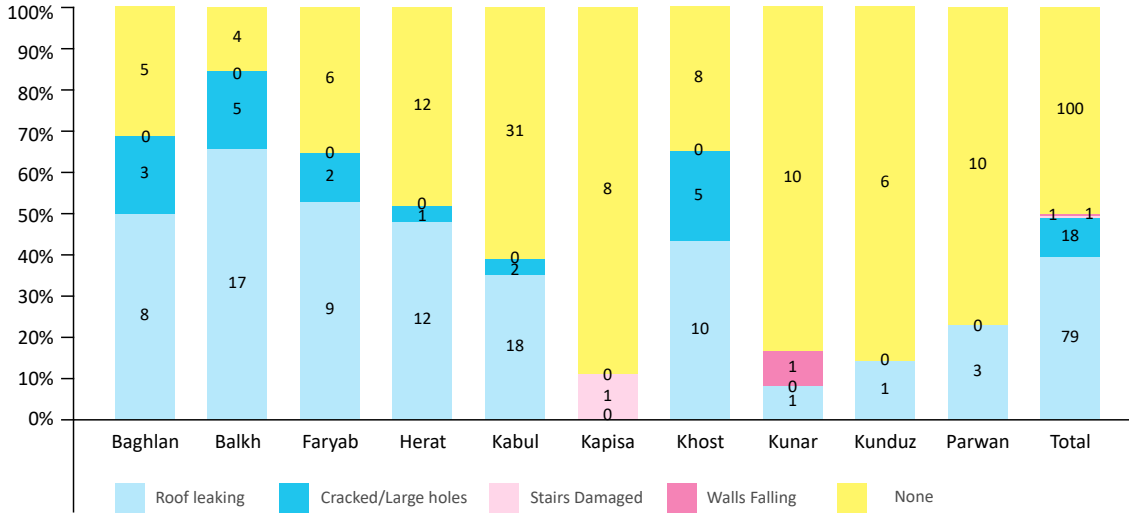


<sup>82</sup> Structural damages for the purpose of this report includes leaking and/or cracked roofs; broken staircase(s), etc.

<sup>83</sup> No data was available for 77 schools of Faryab that were surveyed in 2016.

Schools surveyed in the 10 provinces faced various structural problem. As Figure 8 below shows, 40% or 79 of the 199 schools surveyed had roof leakage while another 20 schools (10%) reported cracks or large holes, damaged stairs, or walls falling.

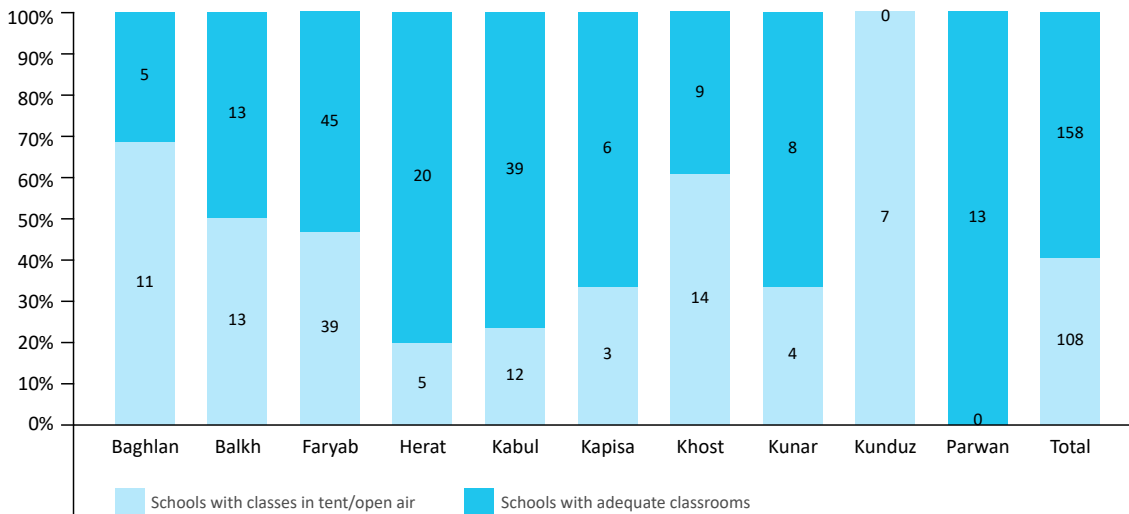
Figure 8: Schools with type of structural damages based on province



### Availability of Standard Classrooms

The availability of standard classrooms is another factor that influences learning outcomes. At the national level, out of 14,600 schools, almost half did not have standard classrooms at all. Data from 10 provinces surveyed indicate a dismal picture, with 41% of the schools not having adequate classrooms despite donor support to construct buildings for the schools covered in the survey.

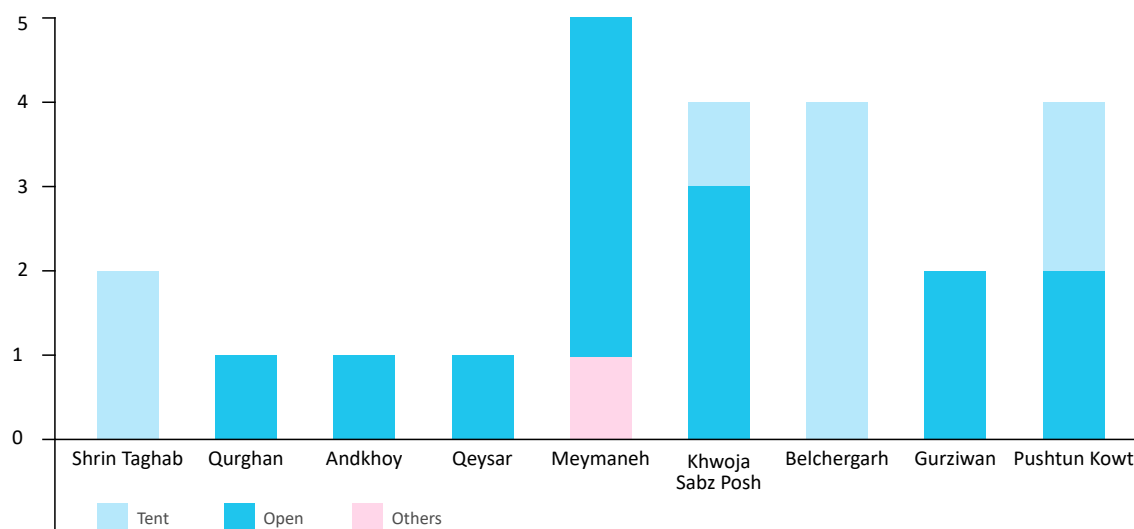
Figure 9: Schools with classes outside standard classrooms based on province



In Kunduz, no surveyed schools had adequate buildings. In Baghlan (69%), Khost (61%), Balkh (50%), Faryab (46%), Kapisa and Kunar (30% each), Kabul (24%), and Herat (20%), many of the schools were without adequate classrooms. Only in Parwan did no schools surveyed have to hold any classes in tents or open air. This indicates that donors have invested in school buildings without considering basic indicators or projecting future demand for additional classrooms.

A random sampling of 77 schools in Faryab surveyed in 2016 (see Figure 10 below) reveals that in 24 schools (31%) concentrated in nine districts, a lack of classrooms forces classes to be either held in tents or in the open. In one instance, in Maimana, they were held instead in a nearby local Masjed. The highest proportion of such schools were located in the provincial capital of Maimana, followed closely by Khowaja Sabz Posh, Belchergarh, and Pushtun Kowt districts. The larger number of non-standard classrooms in Maimana owes to a relatively large sample of schools (15) from the provincial capital. This points to the relative ease with which interventions can be directed at schools in the provincial capital, which has better security environment compared to rural districts.

Figure 10: District-wise distribution of schools without adequate classroom infrastructure in Faryab.

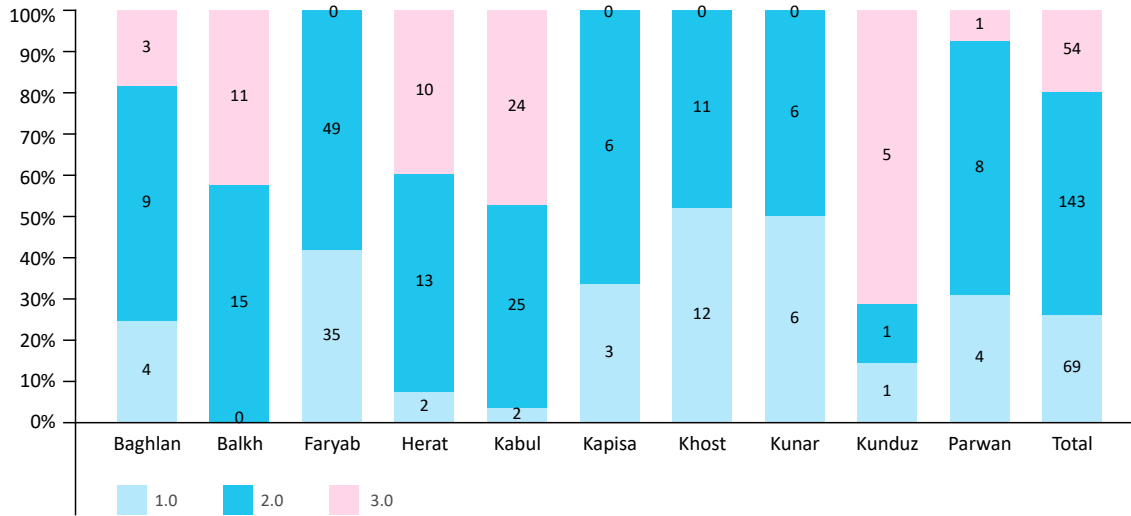


The strain on school infrastructure often compromises learning outcomes by cutting short learning hours. Schools often operate two or more shifts to accommodate student numbers. Typically, one shift lasts up to four hours, implying children are spending less time in classroom learning. Consider the fact that 36% of schools operate more than one shift, while 346 schools operate three shifts or more<sup>84</sup>.

In contrast to national-level data, the data from schools surveyed in 10 provinces for this report draw a gloomier picture. Figure 11 indicates that 54 out of 266 (or 20%) of the schools that were open during the survey were found to have three shifts per day while another 143 schools (or 54%) operated in two shifts. Only 69 schools (or 26%) were found to operate in a single shift. Schools surveyed in Kunduz demonstrated the worst situation in terms of shifts per day with 71% (5 out of 7 schools) operating in three shifts. This is followed by Kabul (47%), Balkh (42%), and Herat (40%). Overall, three out of four (74%) of the schools operate in two or three shifts. The situation in urban centers (Kabul, Balkh, and Herat) is particularly alarming: 96% of the schools here operate either in two or three shifts.

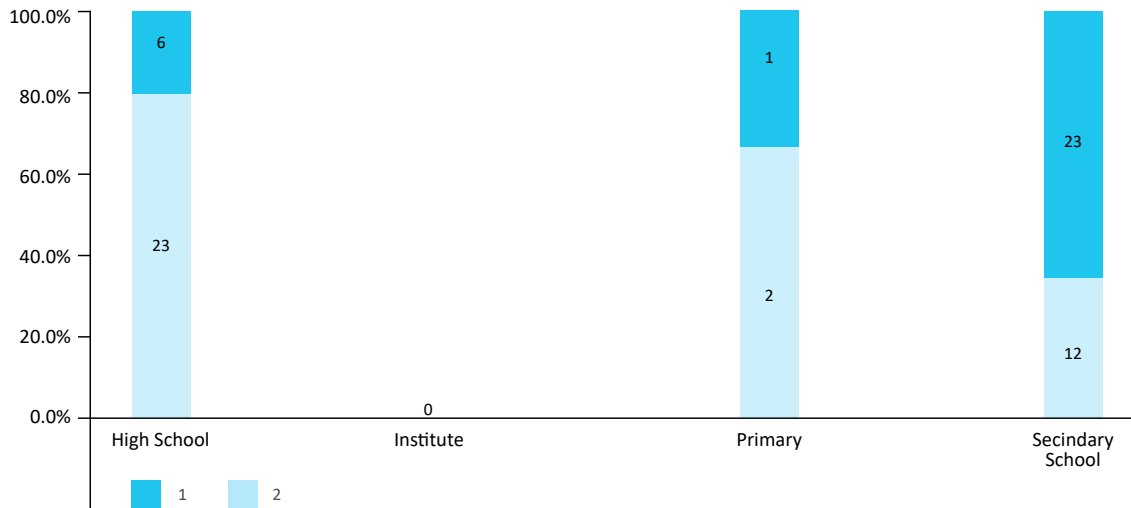
<sup>84</sup> UNESCO, "Education for All 2015 National Review: Afghanistan", UNESCO, 2015: 52. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002327/232702e.pdf>

Figure 11: Number of shifts in each province



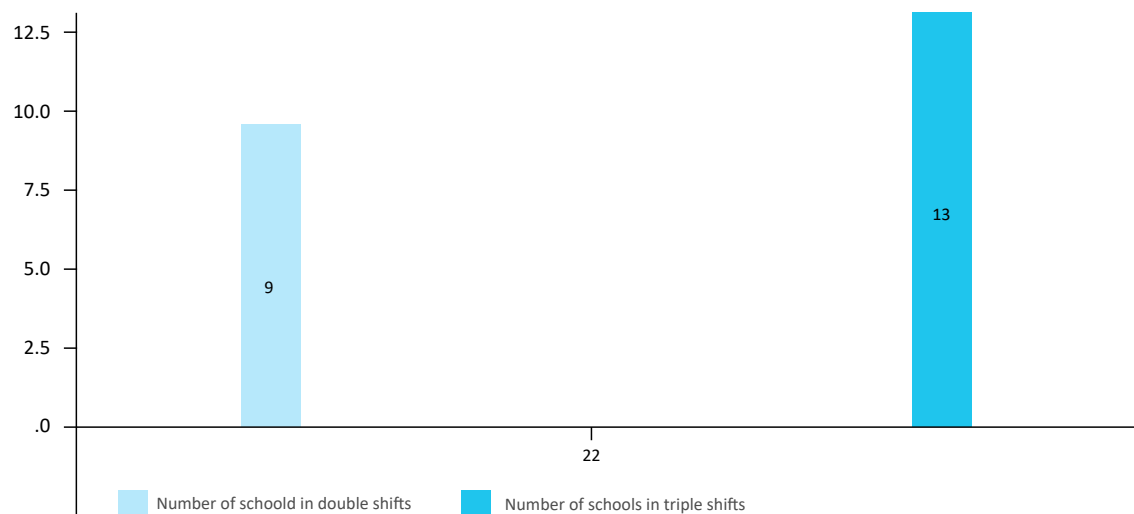
Faryab, as Figure 12 below shows, is most severely affected at the high school level, where 23 of the 28 high schools operate in two shifts. At the primary level the situation is slightly better, with 5 of the 8 primary schools surveyed operating in single shifts. The exception to the trend is at the secondary level, with 22 schools operating in single shifts as opposed to 12 schools operating in double shifts. These figures are indicative of potentially better infrastructure for schools at the secondary level and the need to bolster efforts to this end at the primary and high school levels, which are seminal to registering qualitative and quantitative improvements in education.

Figure 12: Schools according to number of operational shifts in Faryab.



in contrast to Faryab, all schools in Kabul (shown in Figure 13 below) operate either in two or more shifts. Of the 22 schools surveyed in the capital, 9 (41%) operate in double shifts, while an even higher number of 13 schools (59%) operate in triple shifts. Thus, a growing demand for education, particularly in urban centers, is exerting a strain on existing infrastructure and in turn undermining learning outcomes. The data from urban centers also indicates that the government has failed to prioritize improving education in areas where it has more control.

Figure 13: Number of schools operating in double or triple shifts in Kabul based on level of schools.

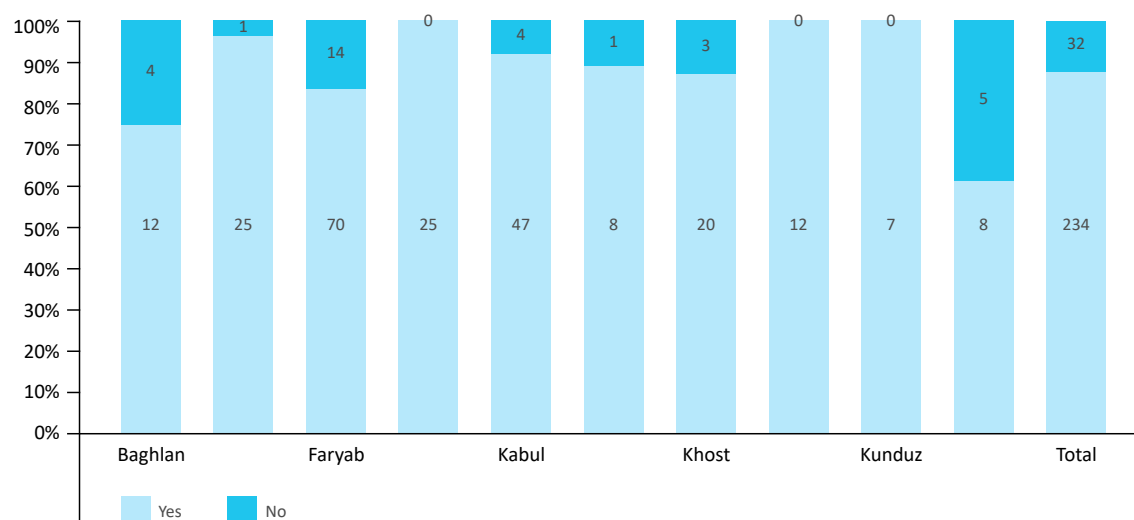


### Boundary walls

Another significant factor that contributes to both a high rate of girls' enrollment and a high proportion of female teachers in the schools surveyed is the presence of boundary walls. Schools with boundary walls tend to make both female pupils and female teachers feel more safe and secure.

As Figure 14 below shows, a total of 234 of the 266 schools (88%) that were open and surveyed in the 10 provinces have boundary walls, while only 12% or 32 schools lack boundary walls. This figure is in stark contrast with the national level where only 37% of schools have boundary walls.<sup>85</sup> This could be because all the schools surveyed received donor intervention that was more in-line with local needs.

Figure 14: Schools with and without boundary walls



The schools surveyed in provinces of Kunduz, Kunar, Kapisa, Herat, Balkh, Kabul, and Khost are much better placed than their counterparts in Parwan, Baghlan, and Faryab. The proportion of schools having boundary walls in each of the seven

<sup>85</sup> Ministry of Education, "EMIS-Infrastructure 1395", MoE, 2015.

provinces surveyed places them far above the provincial and national average. Only one school each lacked a boundary wall in Balkh and Kapisa provinces. Only four out of 51 schools in Kabul lacked a boundary wall. In Kunduz, Kunar, and Herat, 100% of the schools had boundary walls. This is an important factor for enrollment of female students, especially those past puberty, and also in the recruitment of qualified female teachers.

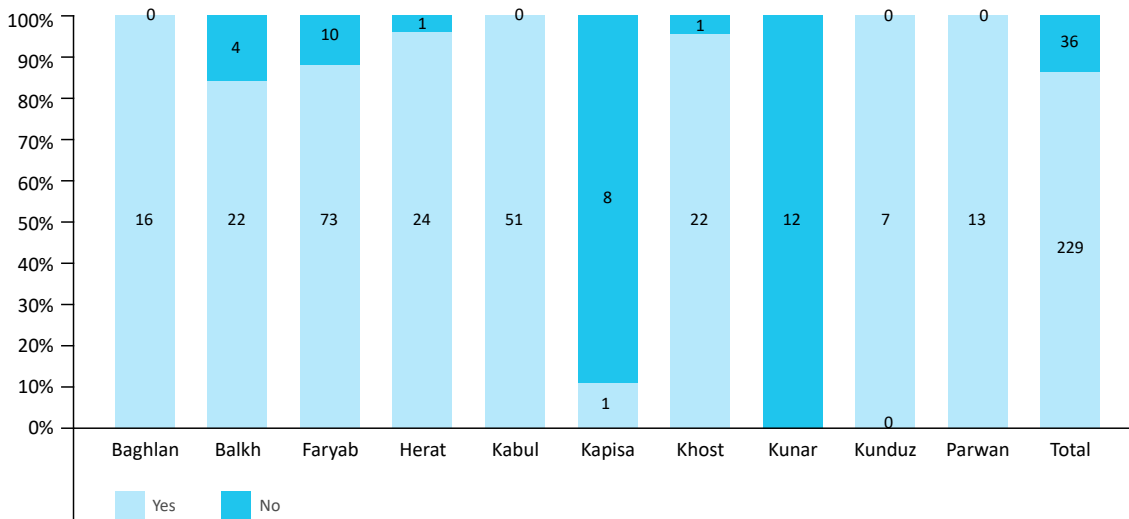
However, as MOE data shows, schools surveyed in these provinces are an exception to the norm with regard to the provision of boundary walls in schools. In Kabul province for instance, only 51% (264 out of 521) of schools have boundary walls; schools in Kabul city are better provided, with 91% percent or 909 out of 991 schools having boundary walls. In Kapisa 40% (109 out of 274), in Balkh 56% (371 out of 686), in Herat 51% (581 out of 1139), and in Kunduz 37% (185 out of 503) of schools have boundary walls.<sup>86</sup>

Access to sanitation

Access to sanitation and potable drinking water has a seminal impact on student enrollment and retention as well as on children’s health. As Figure 15 below demonstrates, access to sanitation varies across provinces. In Faryab, an overwhelming majority of schools (73 schools or 88%) are equipped with toilets, out of which nine schools have poorly maintained toilets. The remaining 10 schools do not have toilet facilities and 10 schools were reported to be closed and therefore were not included in the analysis. Although the data does not throw light on segregation of toilets by gender, the high rate of girls’ enrollment in the schools surveyed is indicative of access to sanitation facilities being a critical factor.

Data on sanitation for schools surveyed in Baghlan, Balkh, Herat, Kabul, Khost, and Kunduz shows that these provinces are at or above par with their counterparts in Faryab province, with 95% of schools overall having toilets. However, access to sanitation is worst in Kunar and Kapisa, with all 12 schools surveyed in Kunar and 8 out of 9 schools surveyed in Kapisa lacking toilet facilities.

Figure 15: Access to toilets in schools



Overall, 86% of the schools (229 out of 265) were equipped with toilets. Thus, only 14% of the schools did not have any toilet facilities. This is in contrast with national level data that shows only 40% of schools have toilet facilities. This is in contrast with national level data that shows only 40% of schools have toilet facilities.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>87</sup> UNESCO, "Education for All 2015 National Review: Afghanistan." 2015: 25  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002327/232702e.pdf>

### *Box 3: Community monitoring: A model to address O&M issues of schools*

#### **Case Study of Parwan Province**

Integrity Watch facilitated the monitoring of schools in Parwan province through community members in 22 schools in 2015, 44 in 2016 and 49 in 2017. The program was focused on a dozen indicators to improve the quality of education in schools that included sanitation, drinking water, and the availability of clean toilets as well as the presence of teachers and students and teaching plans and materials.

The top three most frequent problems at schools were operational and maintenance issues, with lack of drinking water occurring 169 time in three years, with 81 counts of lack of laboratories and 60 counts of untidy toilets as well. Staff absenteeism was more of a serious problem than student absenteeism. During the three years of monitoring, there were 51 counts of staff absence and 25 counts of lack of enough students at schools.

Local volunteers highlighted the aforementioned issues through monitoring of the schools using checklists and visiting the schools twice a week. Through School Management Shura (SMS) the volunteers engaged community elders and school management to discuss and explore ways of addressing the problems. During 2015, 25% of the drinking water issues were resolved. This increased to 47% in 2016 but dropped to 26% in 2017. Similarly, SMSs were able to address the two lavatory issues highlighted in 2015 and solve 40% and 33% of the issues in 2016 and 2017 respectively. Untidy toilets are as recurrent as the two earlier problems at schools and SMSs were able to address 44%, 17%, and 49% of these issues in 2015, 2016, and 2017 respectively. In total, community monitoring was able to address 199 problems out of 465 in schools in the Parwan province.

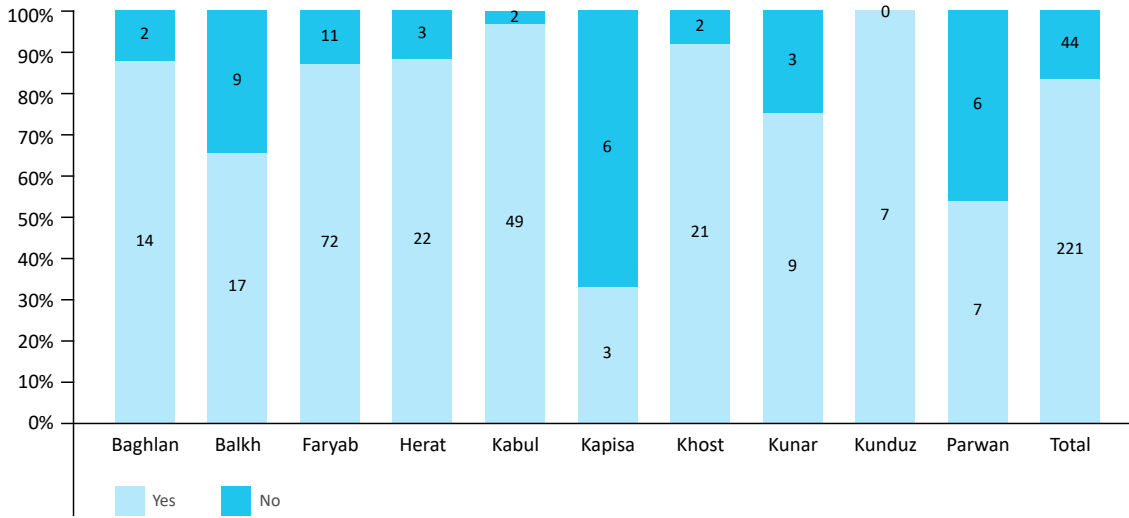
Community engagement has been proven to have the ability to identify and address a range of operational and maintenance issues such as untidy schools and toilets and lack of drinking water. This area could be explored as a solution to operational and maintenance problems at schools, with additional O&M budgets provided to schools and supervised by communities. On an exceptional basis, community monitoring was able to raise awareness and mobilize financial resources to build boundary walls, dig new boreholes, construct additional classrooms, and even build new schools in some of the provinces that the program has covered. When communities are engaged, there is the possibility to use existing facilities more efficiently and mobilize local resources that the government or international community are not able to provide.

#### **Access to water**

Access to clean water not only reduces water-borne diseases but also promotes hygiene as it encourages students to wash their hands after they use the toilets. Figure 16 below shows that 67% percent of schools in Kapisa do not have access to any source of water; this figure stands at 45% in Parwan, 35% in Balkh, 25% in Kunar, 13% in Baghlan and Faryab, 12% in Herat, 9% percent in Khost, and 4% in Kabul province. In contrast, in Kunduz 100% of schools surveyed had access to water. Thus, apart from Baghlan and Khost, schools in other provinces are at a distinct disadvantage compared to their urban counterparts in Kabul and Herat. These findings reinforce the national trend of rural areas lagging behind urban counterparts. Nationally, around 30% of the schools lack access to safe drinking water.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Ibid

Figure 16: Access to drinking water in schools



A lack of clean water and adequate sanitation facilities is likely to increase the propensity of students to fall sick, in turn leading to higher absenteeism. In contrast, access to water and good sanitation facilities contributes to creating a healthy learning environment, inculcates a civic sense amongst the young citizenry, and contributes to improved health indicators. In addition, studies show that “hygiene education represents an effective health intervention that reduces the mortality caused by diarrhoeal disease by an average of 65%, and the related morbidity by 26%”.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, interventions targeting improved access to water and sanitation facilities, coupled with increasing hygiene awareness, would likely improve learning and health outcomes. Such interventions, in addition to other measures including adequate classrooms and boundary walls, would particularly increase girls’ enrollment in schools and their continued education.

Girls’ education has long-term reverberations for a holistic development of the human resource base. The positive correlation between women’s education level and multiple indicators such as health, nutrition of children, water, sanitation, and child protection is empirically attested to by findings of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) of 2010-11, which notes:

*“Consistently, the education level of women emerges as a reliable predictor of almost all indicators for women and children. This finding is compelling evidence that investments in the status and well-being of women are investments in children, and in communities at large.”*<sup>90</sup>

Targeted interventions to improve specific infrastructural components can go a long way in enhancing learning outcomes and boosting girls’ enrollment. Addressing gaps in physical infrastructure must be complemented by systematic targeting of other factors holding back enrollment of girls, such as preventing the practice of early marriages among girls.

### 3. Gender parity

Gauging gender parity is an important benchmark for determining equitability of access to education. Women’s education in turn is significant, for not only does it equip women with basic life skills but is widely held to be an important complementary component towards supporting improved maternal and child health and improving learning outcomes of children enrolled in schools. A low GPI score is indicative of the need to target the male populace and sensitizing them to the need to educate girls.

As Figure 17 below demonstrates, schools established in Faryab are providing equitable education opportunities, with schools for females outpacing those for males significantly at the higher and secondary levels and being almost equal at the primary level. The province also has a healthy proportion of co-education schools,<sup>91</sup> indicating that school spaces are accessible to both genders.

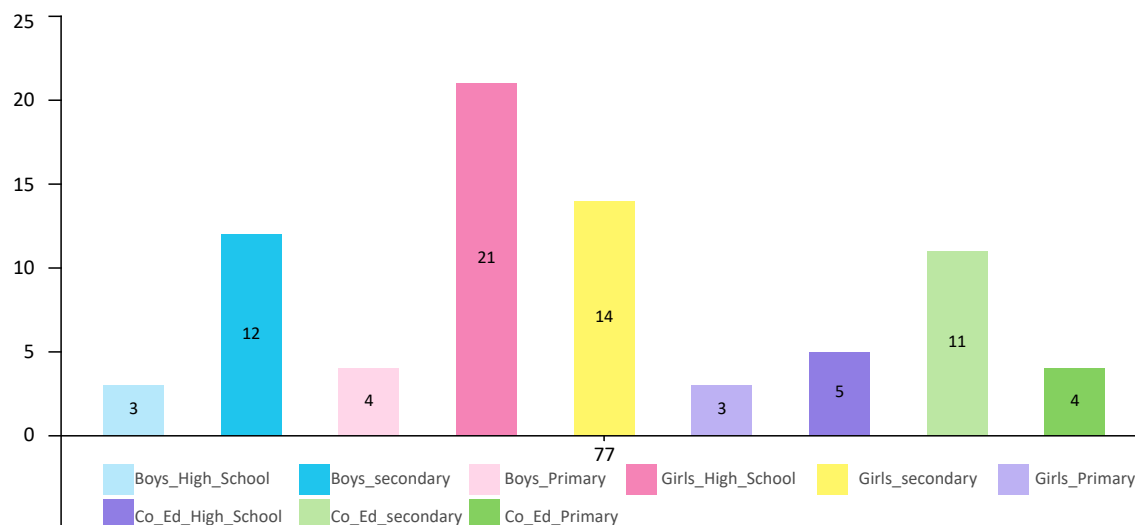
<sup>89</sup> Central Statistics Organization, “NRVA 98,” 2012.

<sup>90</sup> Central Statistics Organization and UNICEF 2013, xviii

<sup>91</sup> Co-education schools in this context usually refer either to schools where girls and boys study together up to primary level, or more commonly, to schools where two separate shifts are operated for girls and boys from the same premises.

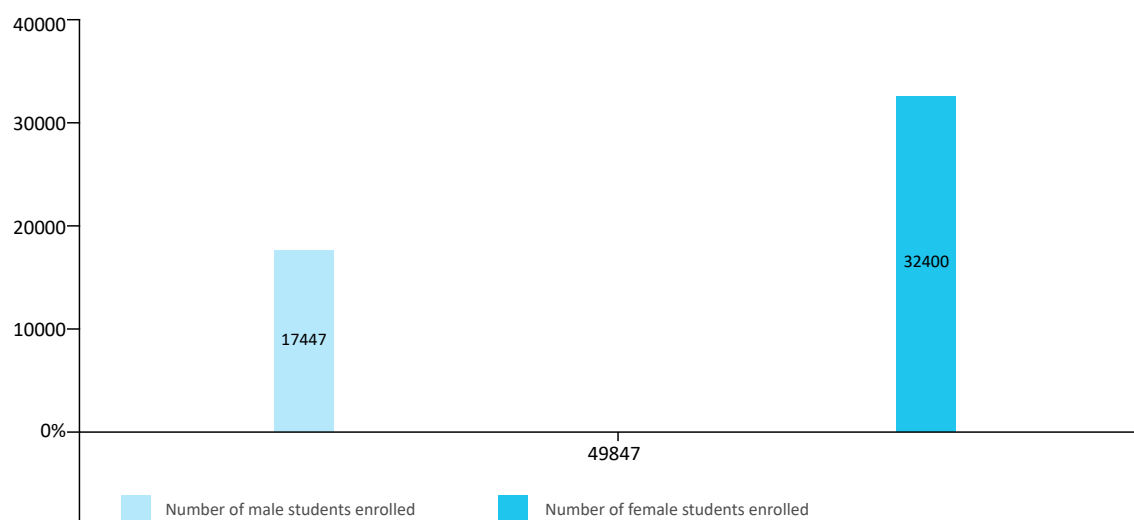


Figure 17: School type according to gender and level of education in Faryab



The high number of schools catering to girls is further attested to by enrollment figures, which reveal a high disparity between enrollment for boys and girls as shown in figure 18 below. A total of 49,847 students are enrolled in the 77 schools surveyed in Faryab in 2017, of which only 17,447 are boys and 32,400 are girls. Thus, 65% of students enrolled in the schools surveyed are girls. One of the factors explaining the high rate of girls' enrollment in this case is the fact that a large number of the schools surveyed are mainly girls' schools, and more likely there are other public schools in the same area where boys from the same villages are enrolled.

Figure 18: Total number of male and female students enrolled in 77 schools of Faryab.



These findings are significant on a number of counts. First, it establishes the fact that schools surveyed have a favorable GPI score, with girls' enrollment outpacing that of boys at all levels of education.

Second, these figures are at variance with GPI trends at the national as well as provincial level. Consider, for instance, that girls' enrollment falls from an average of 41% in lower grades to 28% in the higher grades.<sup>92</sup> One of the main causes of this

<sup>92</sup> UNICEF report 2014: 57.

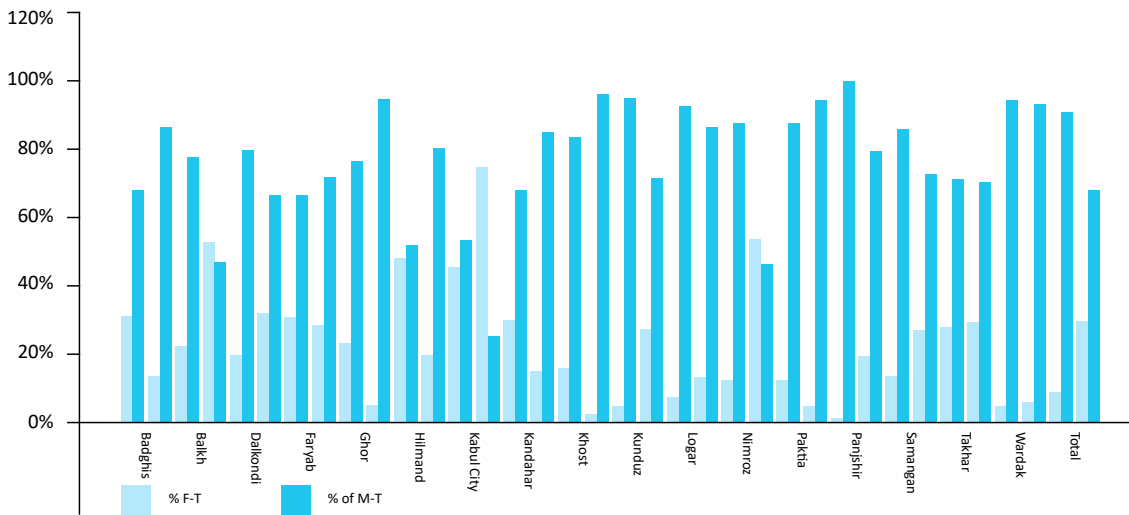
drop is early marriage. The United Nations Population Fund for Afghanistan (UNFPA) estimates that 46% of Afghan girls are married by 18 years of age while another 15% are married off before attaining 15 years of age.<sup>93</sup> Figures from the surveyed schools indicate that educational interventions, many of which are targeted at girls, enjoy support and goodwill of local communities. Hence, the schools surveyed could offer a useful model for retaining girls in higher grades, worth studying carefully.

Third, as seen in the Afghan socio-cultural milieu, the seminal role that young girls eventually come to play in the family set-up lays the groundwork for a better-educated future generation.

Field data indicates girls’ enrollment is underpinned by three factors: First, access to sanitation; second, the presence of boundary walls in schools; and third, the ratio of male to female teachers. As access to sanitation and presence of boundary walls have already been addressed above, only the ratio of male to female teachers is addressed below.

Female teachers play an extremely significant role in the retention of girls, especially those who attain puberty. This is particularly the case at secondary and higher education levels. The national average proportion of female teachers, grades 1-12, is 33%. As Figure 19 below shows, the proportion of qualified female teachers is higher than the national average for Faryab, Kabul and Balkh provinces. Kabul is best-placed in terms of access to qualified female teachers, while Faryab has the fifth highest percentage of qualified female teachers at just a little under 50%, while Balkh has a little over 40%.<sup>94</sup> The figure below also reveals glaring regional disparities, with provinces such as Ghor, Helmand, Kandahar, Khost, Paktia, Wardak, Badghis, and Panjsher being distinctly disadvantaged in having access to qualified female teachers.

Figure 19: Proportion of male and female teachers by province.

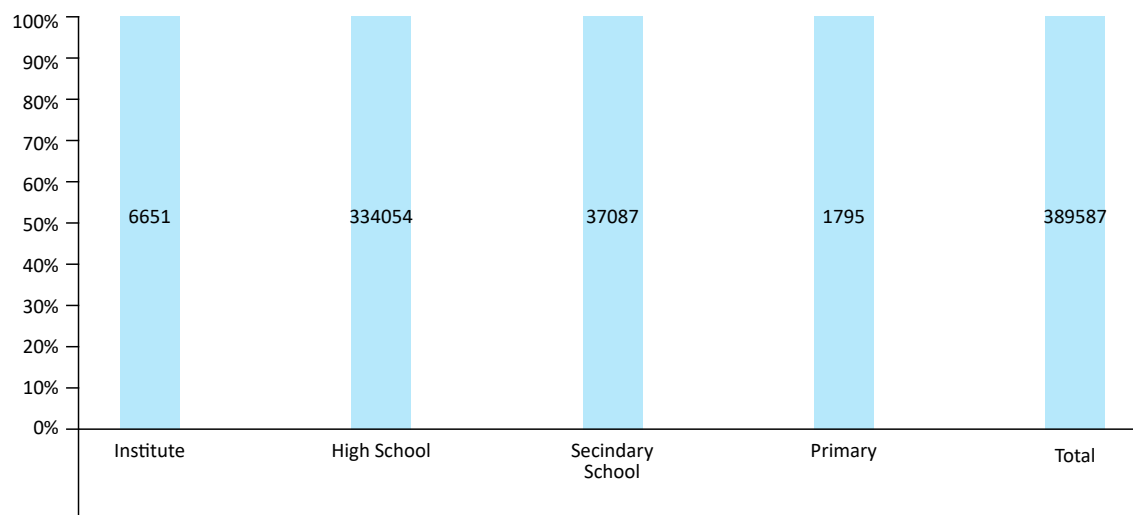


In contrast to the national and provincial average highlighted above, the schools surveyed in Faryab have a far higher proportion of female teachers. As Figure 20 below shows, of the 1,338 teachers employed in 77 schools, 59% are female whereas 41% are male. The high proportion of female teachers can, in large measure, be attributed to the fact that a large number of schools surveyed were girls’ schools. This seems to suggest targeted interventions for girls are likely to attract a higher proportion of female teachers, which in turn can undoubtedly be attributed as a major contributing factor to the high rate of girls’ enrollment and retention in schools in Faryab.

93 Mabruk Kabir “Strong teachers are stepping up to educate girls in Afghanistan,” <http://blogs.worldbank.org/education/strong-teachers-are-stepping-educate-girls-afghanistan>, accessed on May 20, 2017.

94 UNESCO, “Education for All 2015 National Review: Afghanistan”, UNESCO, 2015: 41-42. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002327/232702e.pdf>

Figure 20: Proportion of male to female teachers in Faryab.



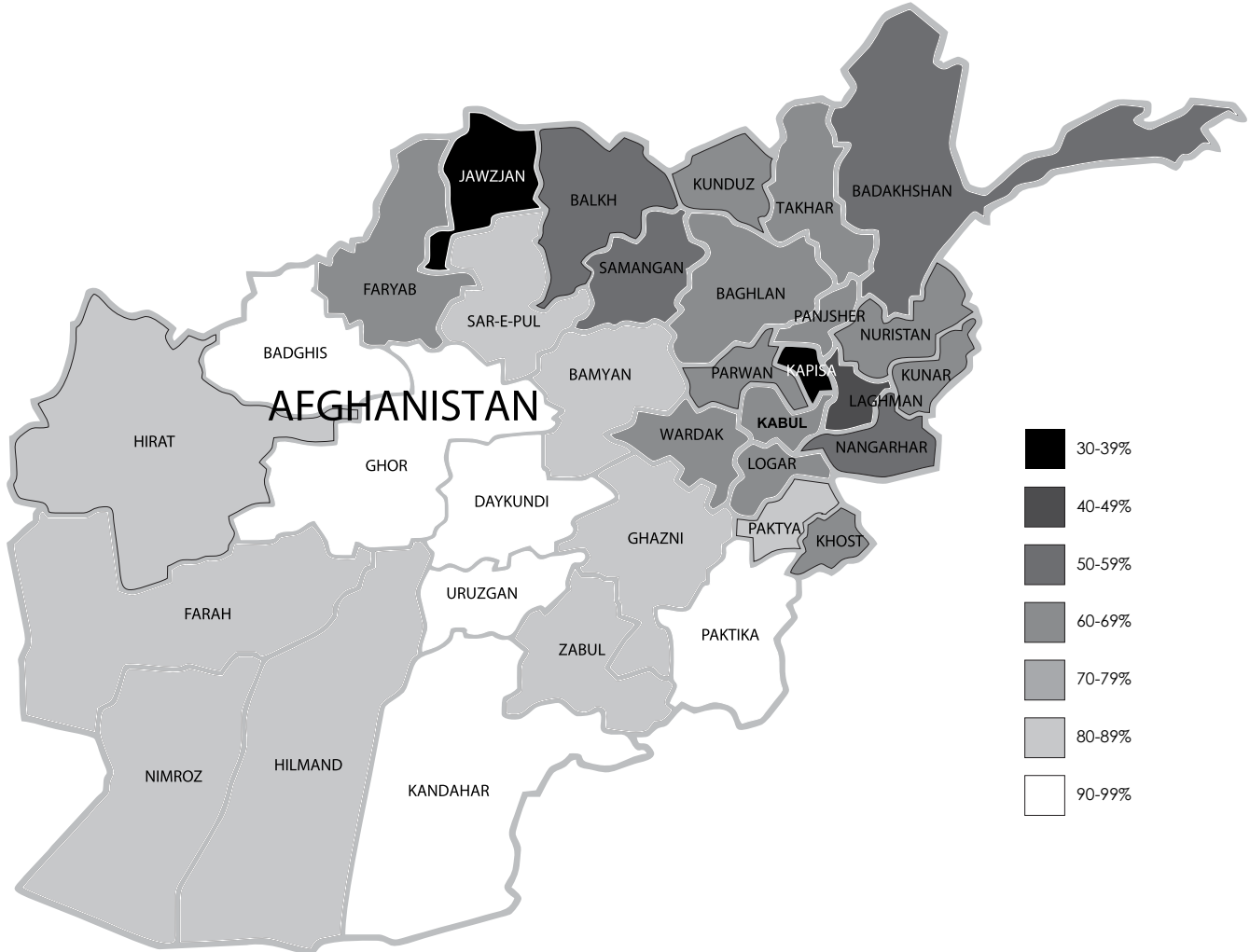
#### 4. Qualification of Teachers

Another component that has a bearing on the quality of learning outcomes, and remains in inadequate supply, is trained and qualified teachers. This would be categorized as those teachers who have successfully completed teacher training courses and possess minimum academic qualifications to teach. This is particularly true in rural areas.

Afghanistan's education system sets graduation from grade 14 (two years of education after high school or Teacher Training Colleges) as the minimum qualification criteria for professional teachers. Reports indicate that 43% of teachers employed fulfill the minimum criteria. More recent data that MOE shared with Integrity Watch indicates a big increase in these figures indicating 65% of the teachers have qualification up to grade 14 or above. While this is a huge improvement from 26% in 2007, significant challenges remain. It implies that the remaining 57% of the teachers do not meet the minimum standards but were recruited owing to the paucity of teachers, particularly in remote, rural areas as map 2 illustrates.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>95</sup> UNESCO, "Education for All 2015 National Review: Afghanistan", UNESCO, 2015: 46.  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002327/232702e.pdf>

Map 2: Proportion of unqualified teachers by province



Source: Education for All 2015, 47.

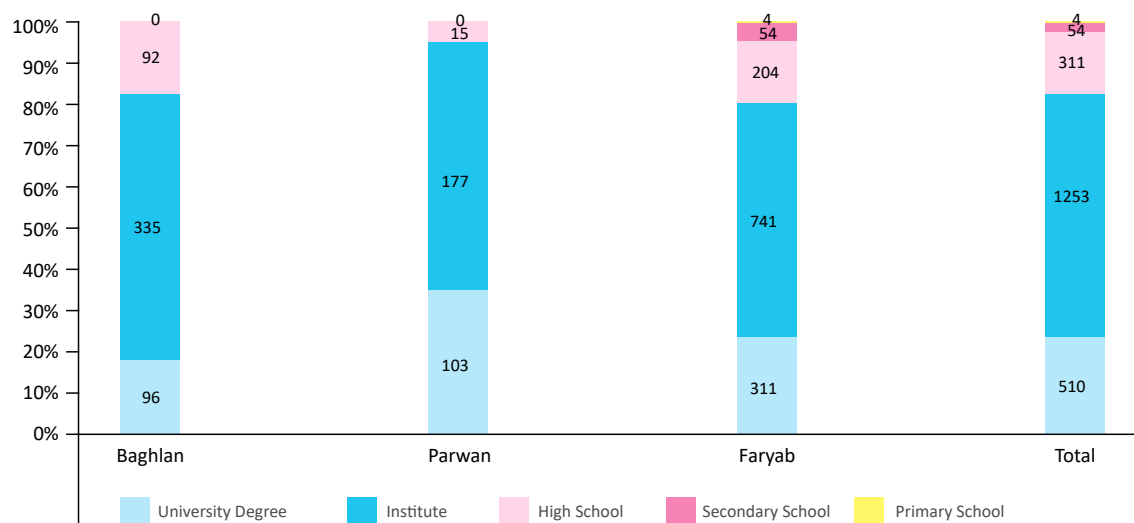
Understandably this adversely affects the quality of learning for students, as underqualified teachers are unable to deliver adequate school-level instruction. Additionally, regional disparities are pronounced, with provinces in the center, south, and west of the country being much worse off in terms of access to qualified teachers compared to the north and east. Part of the constraint to this end is budgetary; with a little over 90% of the education budget going to pay salaries, less than 10% remains for providing for improved infrastructure, access to improved learning materials, and teacher training.<sup>96</sup>

As is demonstrated in Figure 21 below, of the 2,156 teachers employed by schools in Baghlan, Faryab, and Parwan, data on teacher qualifications available for 2,132 teachers reveals the following: four teachers are merely primary school graduates; 54 teachers (3%) completed secondary school; and a total of 311 teachers (15%) completed high school. In other words, teachers in all three categories did not complete the minimum level of schooling required as per MOE guidelines. A majority, i.e. 59% or 1,253 teachers, possess a degree from an institute of higher learning.<sup>97</sup> Almost a quarter, i.e. 24% or 510 teachers, have university degrees. Thus, in schools in three provinces covered in this survey, an overwhelming majority (83%) of teachers possess the minimum qualifications and above as required to deliver quality classroom instruction in schools. This is almost twice as high as the national average. This significant difference might be due to a large sample from urban areas where teacher qualification is comparatively much higher.

<sup>96</sup> MOE, “NESP III.” 2016: 81 <http://anfae.af/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/National-Education-Strategic-Plan-NESP-III.pdf>

<sup>97</sup> Typically, institutes of higher learning are classified as those that offer a two-year certificate level program to those who have successfully graduated from high school. They are one level below university.

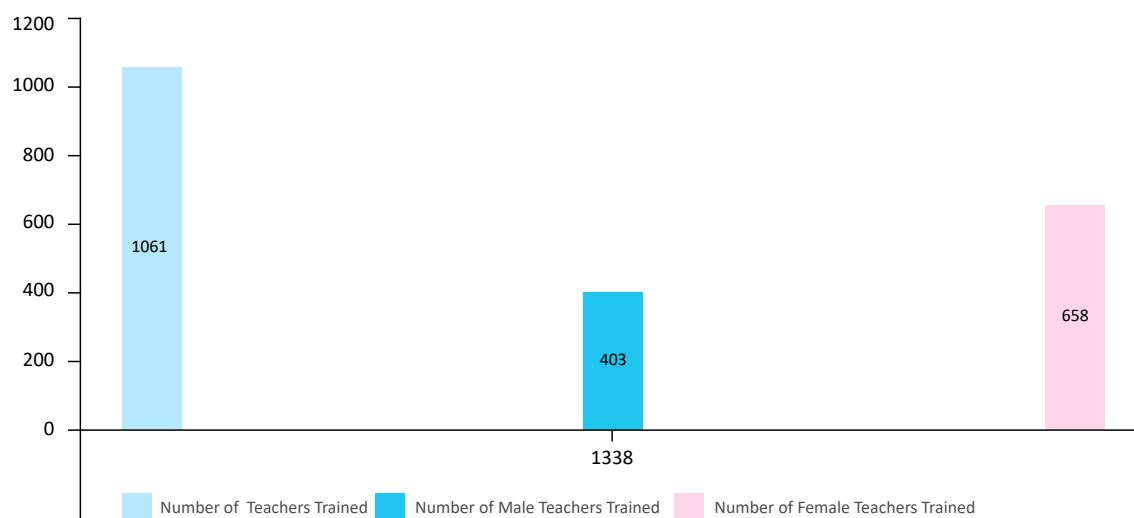
Figure 21: Number of teachers according to level of educational qualifications in three provinces



The four teachers with only a primary education level are found in girls' schools, which may be indicative of the flexibility of recruitment policies of the MOE that favor the employment of female teachers. Most teachers with formal education at less than a grade 12 level are contracted teachers and, according to the national rules, are contracted on a yearly basis and only where there is a particular shortage of teachers.

In order to mitigate the challenges posed by the employment of under-qualified teachers and, in many instances, teachers with little or no pedagogical training, the MOE has provided in-service training to a number of teachers. As Figure 22 below, shows, 79% of the 1,338 teachers employed by the 77 schools in Faryab have received teacher trainings. Of these trained teachers, 62% are female and 38% are male.

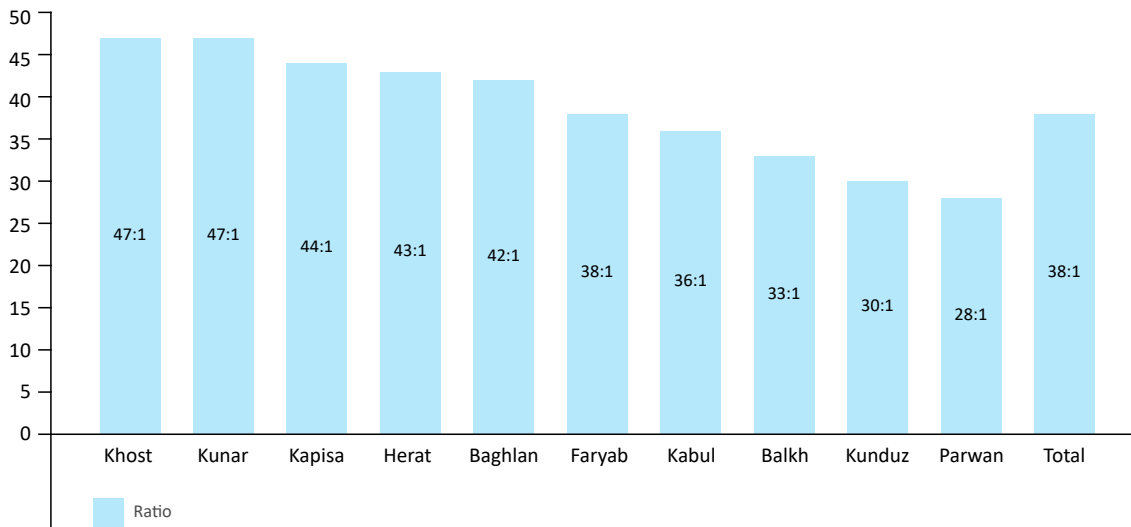
Figure 22: Number of male and female teachers who have received training in Faryab.



## 5. Student-teacher ratio

As Figure 23 below shows, only three provinces, i.e. Parwan, Kunduz, and Balkh, meet the national STR<sup>98</sup> target of 35:1. Schools surveyed in the three provinces are doing better than the remaining provinces, maintaining a STR of 28:1, 30:1, and 33:1 respectively, which are above the set national target. In contrast to the schools in the previous three provinces, Khost, Kunar, and Kapisa provinces maintain a much higher STR, i.e. 47:1, 47:1, and 44:1 respectively. STR in Khost is below the provincial average while in Kunar and Kapisa the STR is within the provincial average yet well below the set national target. These STR values place all three provinces at the lower end of the spectrum even among their provincial counterparts. The overall STR value of all the ten provinces surveyed is 38:1, slightly above the national target but well below the actual national STR.

Figure 23: Student-teacher ratio in ten provinces



Primary data shows that STR in the 84 schools surveyed in Faryab is 38:1. This is marginally above the national target of 35:1 (which only five provinces meet) and below the provincial average of 41:1. Schools surveyed in Kabul almost meet the set national target of maintaining a STR of 1:36. This can be attributed to relative ease of being able to recruit and retain qualified teachers in a pre-dominantly urban setting with relatively fewer challenges, especially in the realm of security. What is also noteworthy are the high number of female teachers (1,619) that schools employ in Kabul, which points to gender as being less of a factor constraining employability. These survey findings are consistent with national survey findings that show Kabul as one of the better-performing provinces in regards to women's literacy, with over 40% of women being literate.<sup>99</sup> It also has the highest proportion of qualified teachers at 70%, indicating fewer physical and cultural barriers for women to access education and also the relative ease of recruiting and retaining qualified female teachers in urban centers,<sup>100</sup> which has significant effects on girls' enrollment.

Thus, primary data reveals that, with the exception of Parwan, Kunduz, and Balkh, the STR in all other provinces is below the national target. This implies that learning outcomes in schools with favorable STR are qualitatively better, as students get more time and attention from their teachers in class. The findings also underscore the challenges schools are faced with in recruiting and retaining teachers in relatively more rural, underdeveloped, and insecure provinces.

<sup>98</sup> The student-teacher ratio is calculated by dividing the number of students enrolled by the total number of teachers, UNESCO, "Glossary: Pupil-Teacher Ratio PTR", 2018. <http://uis.unesco.org/node/334770>

<sup>99</sup> UNESCO, "Education for All 2015 National Review: Afghanistan", UNESCO, 2015: 39.

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002327/232702e.pdf>

<sup>100</sup> Ibid 42.

## 6. Access to learning material

The availability of and access to quality learning resources can dramatically alter learning outcomes. The adverse impact of the inability to access these learning resources is borne out by recent findings on learning outcomes for Class Six level students in Afghanistan. The findings, based on a random sampling of 110 schools representing 361,172 students from 13 provinces, concluded that:

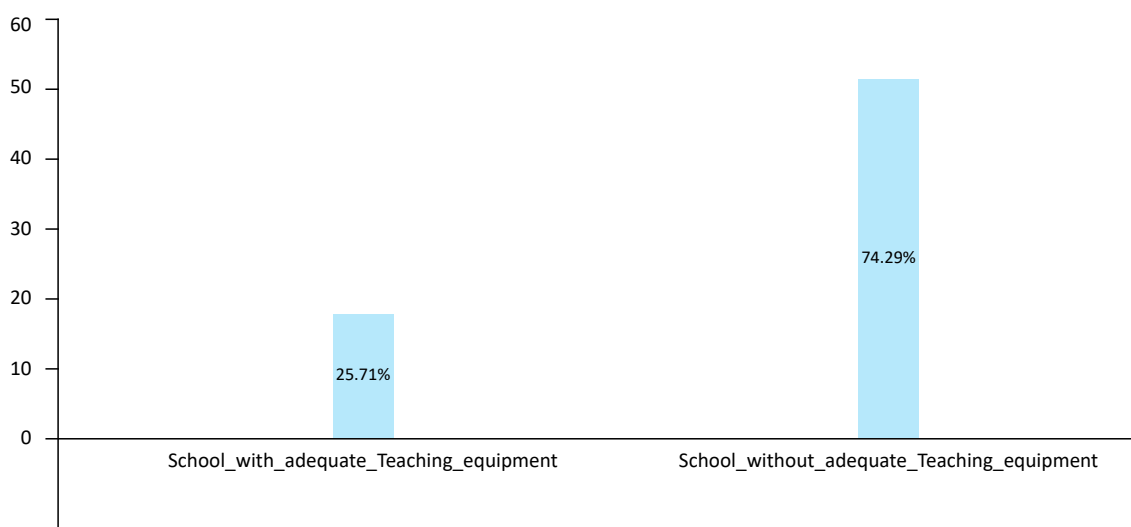
*“While there are small numbers of Class Six students operating at the higher levels of proficiency in each of the domains of reading, writing, and mathematical literacy, there are substantial proportions of the population who are not able to perform simple reading, writing, and mathematical tasks.”<sup>101</sup>*

When these findings are read in comparison to the performance of Class Four students in Iran, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan, “it would appear that Class 4 students in those countries are performing at a similar or higher level compared to Class 6 students in Afghanistan”.<sup>102</sup> Contextualizing quality of learning outcomes at the global level, UNESCO notes that an astounding 10% “of global spending on primary education is being lost on poor-quality education that is failing to ensure that children learn. This situation leaves one in four young people in poor countries unable to read a single sentence, affecting one-third of young women in South and West Asia”.<sup>103</sup>

A key component contributing to the soundness of learning outcomes for students is the quality of learning material at their disposal, which has been assessed on the following parameters: qualifications of teachers, availability of teaching aids, and access to school textbooks. As we have already discussed the qualifications of teachers, in this section we will focus on remaining two parameters.

A large number of schools lack the basic books required for course instruction as well as blackboards, tables and chairs, and computer laboratories that are increasingly regarded as seminal to creating a skilled and competent human resource base for the country. For instance, many of the schools in Faryab do not have adequate access to teaching equipment. As Figure 24 below shows, only 26% of the schools have adequate teaching equipment, leaving an overwhelming majority (74%) under-equipped.

Figure 24: Percentage of schools with and without access to adequate teaching equipment



101 Lumley, T., Mendelovits, J. e., Stanyon, R., & Turner, R. &, “Class 6 proficiency in Afghanistan 2013: Outcomes of a learning assessment of mathematical, reading and writing literacy,” Australian Council for Educational Research, <https://research.acer.edu.au/mteg/1/>, February 28, 2018.

102 Ibid.

103 UNESCO, “UN Report Urges Afghanistan to Recruit Female Teachers Locally to Boost Girls’ Education,” UNAMA, <https://unama.unmissions.org/un-report-urges-afghanistan-recruit-female-teachers-locally-boost-girls-education>, May 18, 2017.

The challenge at hand is forcefully driven home by the state of computer labs and libraries in the surveyed schools: 142 out of 187 (76%) of the schools surveyed lacked computer labs (Figure 25). In addition, 37 out of 70 (53%) of the schools surveyed did not have a library facility (Figure 26). Even in the capital, Kabul, 43% of the schools did not have libraries, while another 71% did not have computer labs.

Figure 25: Number of schools with or without computer labs in eight provinces

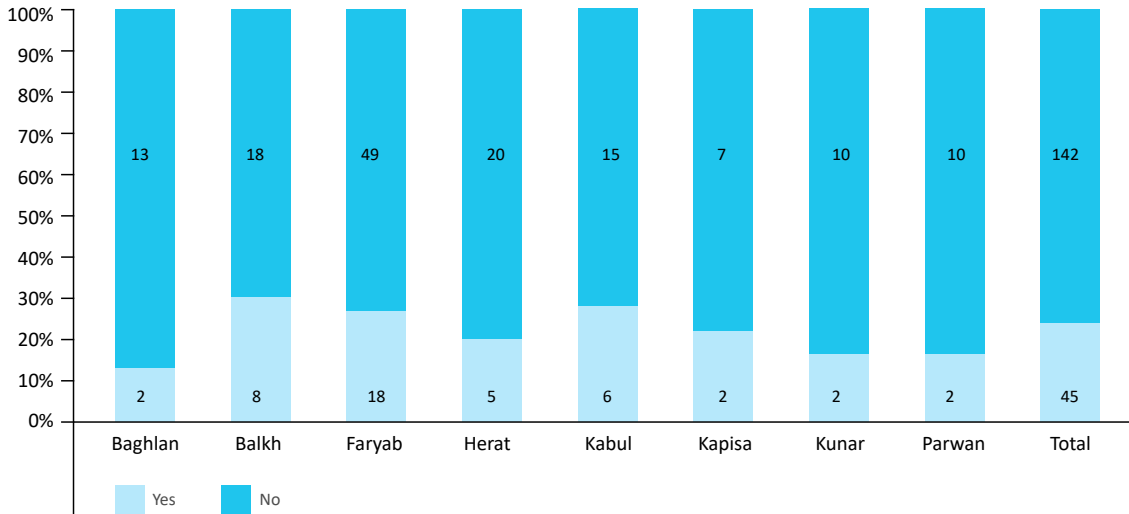
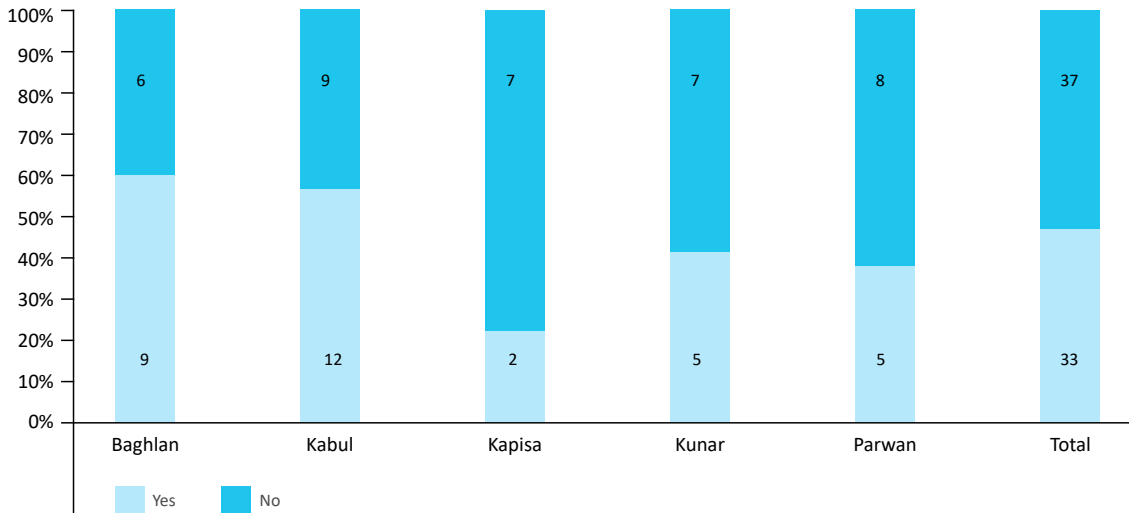


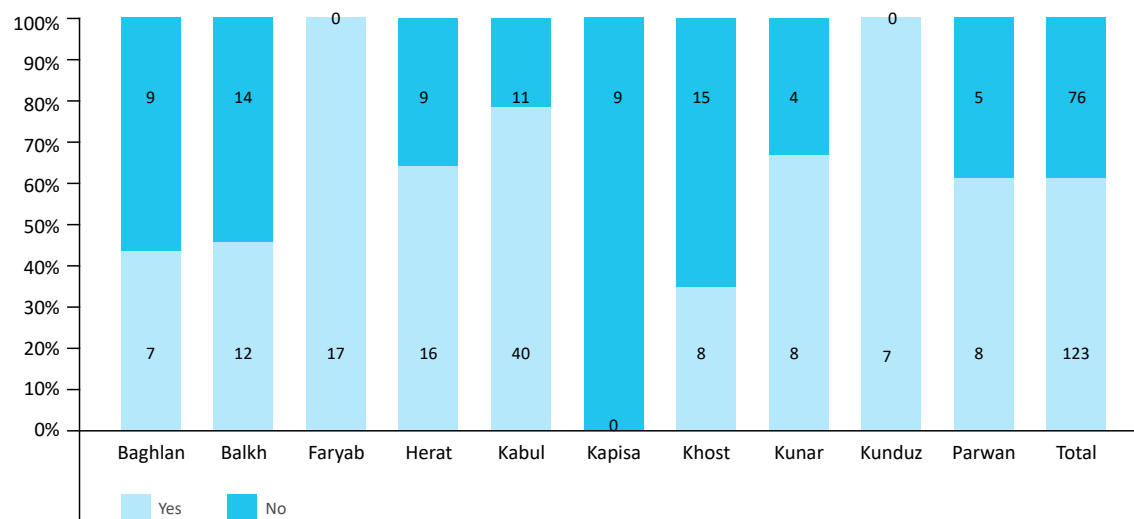
Figure 26: Number of schools with or without libraries



The ability of Afghanistan’s school education system to enhance the learning environment in the classroom through making available computer labs and the interactive audio-visual learning aids that are seminal to modern pedagogy is constrained by the lack of access to reliable source(s) of power. Figure 27 below puts into perspective the scale of the challenge at hand: All 9 out of 9 (100%) of the schools surveyed in Kapisa do not have access to electricity. The figure stood at 15 out of 23 schools (65%) for Khost and 14 out of 26 schools (54%) for Balkh. Overall, 123 out of 199 (62%) schools that data was gathered from reported having access to electricity, displaying a much better overall picture. Nevertheless, the remaining 38% of schools need urgent attention.



Figure 27: Schools' access to electricity

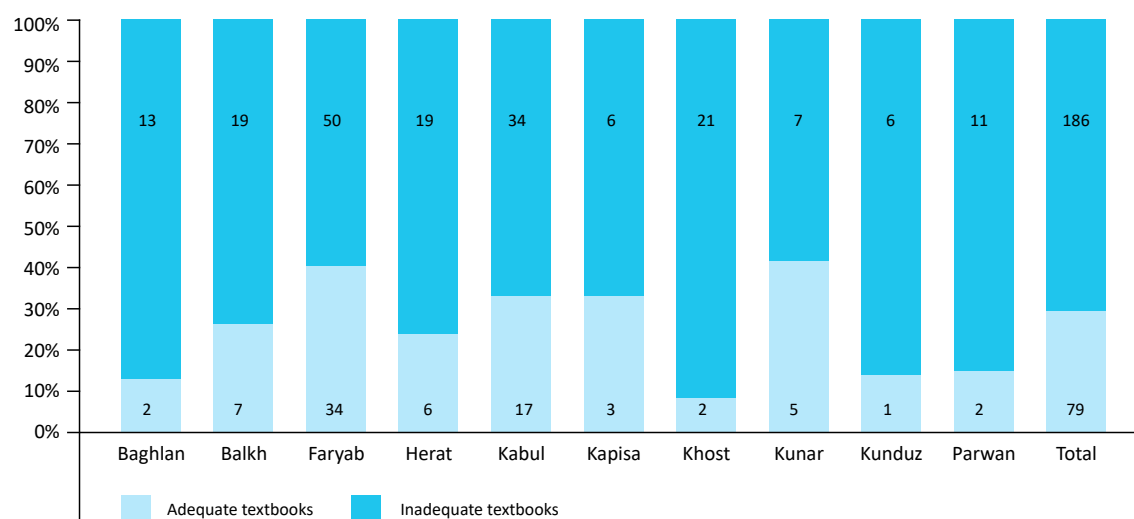


Members of school management teams across all the provinces made requests for access to reliable sources of power during school hours. Access to electricity would improve learning outcomes by improving the overall classroom-learning environment, allowing better temperature control inside the classroom through cooling/heating and lighting as well as offering the ability to offer audio-visual aids to students.

Some of the beneficiaries requested renewable electricity sources such as solar power. Arguably, while the initial investment costs for solar power would be high, the everyday running costs would be minimal compared to conventional sources such as installing a power grid or generators. However, to make any renewable initiative sustainable in the long term, local technicians must be trained for maintenance and upkeep of power equipment, in this case solar panels.

The grossly under-equipped state of schools in regard to teaching and learning equipment is further reiterated by Figure 28 below, which shows the proportion of school textbooks available in the 10 provinces surveyed. Khost, Baghlan, Kunduz, and Parwan face an alarming situation where close to 90% of the schools reported not having adequate textbooks available for students' use. Overall, 186 out of 265 (70%) schools reported inadequate textbooks.

Figure 28: Availability of textbooks in ten provinces.







What these figures underscore is the fact that despite Afghanistan having invested in developing new curricula and textbooks, supplying these learning materials to schools remains a serious problem. The MOE in its third National Education Strategic Plan (NESP)<sup>104</sup> acknowledges that the “distribution of textbooks proved to be very challenging” and that “many textbooks are stocked in district education offices and are not distributed among schools due to a lack of budget.”

The MOE goes further in stating that while for the first time textbooks have been prepared “in third official languages (Uzbeki, Nuristani, Pashai, Baluchi, Turkmeni, Sheghnani, Gojari, and Wakhani) for children of linguistic minorities in grades 1-6,” which has relevance for socially heterogeneous provinces like Faryab, yet there remain several pressing challenges with respect to the new textbooks. There are problems with content, typological errors and not enough teachers have been adequately trained to teach the new curriculum.<sup>105</sup>

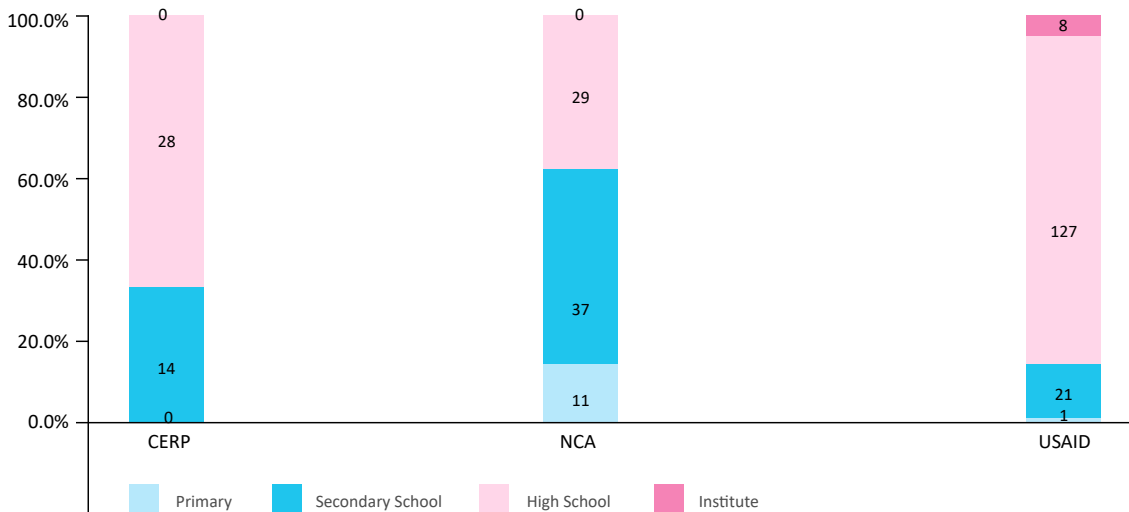
Thus, the Directorates of Education in the provinces, who are entrusted with the responsibility to supply school textbooks, need to ensure timely distribution of textbooks to students to remedy the supply-side problem. In addition, there is a need for a tracking system and the proper management of textbook inventory. Technology-based solutions could be an alternative to the existing manual system and would prevent or at least reduce waste, misuse, and fraud in the distribution of textbooks.

### 7. Analysis of donor intervention

One of the key achievements of international intervention in Afghanistan after 2001 is in the education sector. The number of schools built or rehabilitated and the number of students enrolled has been transformational. However, the quality of the schools built and their ongoing maintenance remain challenging. Only after a few years of construction, many of the school buildings look aged, with roofs crumbling and walls cracking. Lack of access to standard sanitation and clean drinking water plus overcrowded classrooms are still common in the majority of the schools despite donor support to the schools. This seriously undermines the effectiveness of the hundreds of millions of dollars spent by donors in the education sector.

As indicated above, this survey covered 275 schools funded by three donors including NCA, CERP (DOD), and USAID. Figure 29 indicates that a total of 157 USAID-funded schools (including one school that could not be tracked and therefore was dropped from the survey), 77 NCA-funded schools, and 42 CERP-funded schools were covered in this survey.

Figure 29: Number of school covered in the survey based on donor



However, as Box 4 indicates, it was not possible to track donor support to many of the schools that were surveyed. Of the all 77 schools built or reconstructed by NCA, 10 schools were reported closed or abandoned. There could be more of such

104 The third NESP covers the period 2015-2020.

105 Ibid.

schools, especially in areas that are not under government control. In one case in Faryab we found a school funded by NCA is now occupied by a local warlord (see Box 2 on the militarizing and politicizing of schools).

*Box 4: Limitations in tracking donor support to schools*

The issue of ghost schools, ghost teachers, and ghost students has been ringing bells for the last few years in Afghanistan. One of the fundamental reasons for a large number of schools existing on paper only is the lack of reliable data based on a proper inventory and tracking system of donor support to schools. USAID has been a key donor to the education sector and has spent hundreds of millions of dollars since 2002. Integrity Watch assessed 157 USAID-funded schools in eight provinces. All schools constructed through USAID funding are supposed to have the USAID emblem on the building. However, surveyors for this report were not able to locate the emblem anywhere in at least 63 schools in Herat, Balkh, Khost, Parwan, Baghlan, Faryab, and Kunduz.

Out of those 63 schools, 29 did not have any donor emblem and the remaining 34 had a sponsorship sign from another donor. Out of 10 schools without a USAID sign in Parwan, JIKA, South Korea, and BRAC constructed one each, and South Korea also provided stationary and furniture to two schools. The remaining schools had no sign of any donor. Out of six schools in Baghlan, Agha Khan Foundation and GPI had constructed one school each and the remaining four did not have sign of any donor. Out of thirteen schools in Balkh, seven schools were constructed by IRC, Samaritan's Purse, Hungary, UNDP, the Afghan government, and UN Habitat/Japan. In Kunduz, there were only two schools that did not have any donor sign. Out of eight schools in Herat, six were built by Italian Cooperation and one by Japan. Out of eight schools in Faryab, two schools were constructed by Save the Children and two by the Norwegian Commission for Afghanistan. The majority of the schools were in Khost where out of 16 schools, six were built by DACAR, one by UNICEF, one by Canada, and one by UNHCR. The remaining seven did not have any donor sign within its premises.

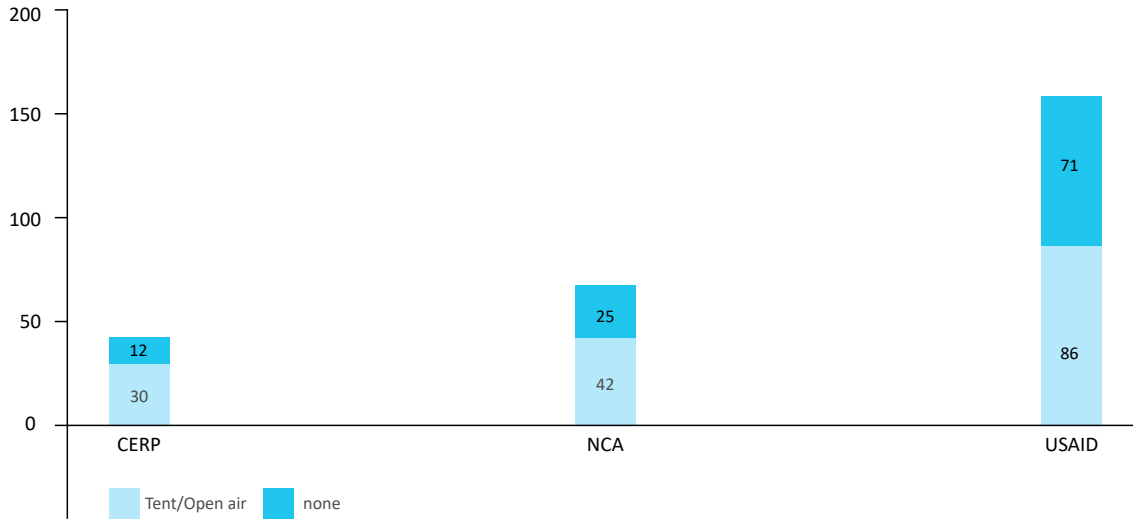
There could be many reasons why USAID has claimed to have funded these projects. One reason could be that the schools were not constructed through USAID funding but only received support such as stationary or furniture. In another instance, a school principal told the surveyors that USAID donated two dozen used computers to his school, following which the USAID emblem was placed over a wall in the school. The other possibility is that the emblem might have been removed either by local people or due to wear. However, the USAID emblem was found on the buildings of many other schools built as far back as 2003 and there was no report of people removing them. It is also possible that due to lack of monitoring by donors and lack of coordination between donors, the Afghan government officials might have reallocated the funds to some other schools, or the construction company might have received funds for buildings that already existed and they never bothered to construct a new building.

In addition, there were a number of schools that existed only on paper with no building, students or teachers present. One such school is Hazrat Ali High School for Girls in Siagird-Ghourband of Parwan province. The school was reported to have received funding from USAID but it was impossible to find the school in the area. However, a boys' school with the same name was found in the area. Another missing school we have documented is Huda Primary School in Kunduz province. There is a high possibility that a large number of such ghost schools exist especially in rural areas where access by independent verifiers is not always possible.

Whatever the reason for such unreliable information might be, the negative impact on the effectiveness of aid is enormous. Lack of reliable information paves the way for corruption and misuse that diverts much-needed funds from sector.

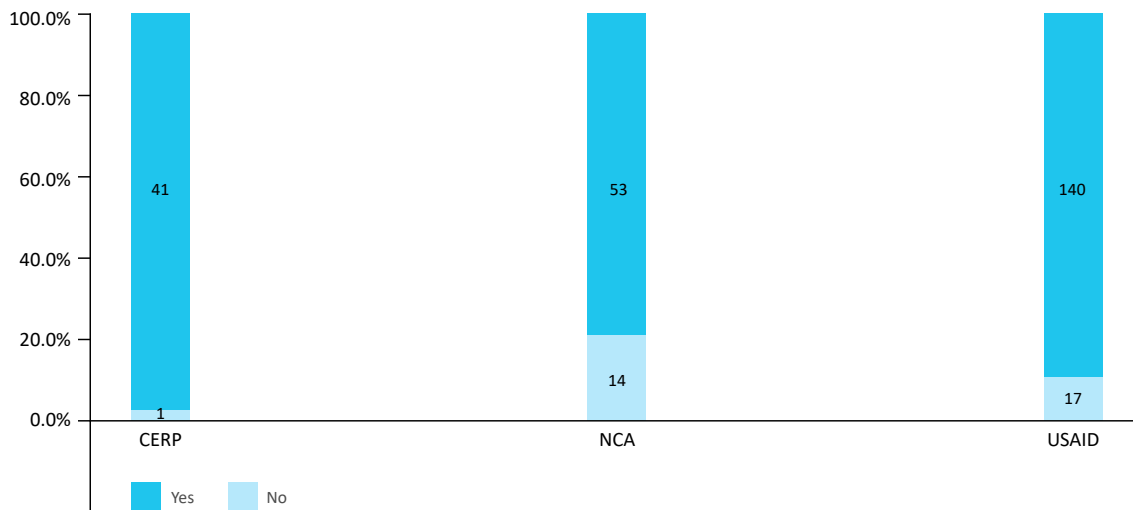
In order for school infrastructure to be adequate, school construction should include sufficient classrooms, boundary walls, toilets, and a source of clean drinking water. Figure 30 indicates almost half, i.e 71 out of 157 (45%) of the schools funded by USAID still had to hold classes outside standard classrooms. Data for other two donors indicate a similar picture, although CERP-funded schools show a relatively better picture. This is a clear indication of an inadequate number of standard classrooms despite donor support. It also indicates that the donors did not take into consideration schools' basic needs or did not adequately project the demand for education in the areas of intervention.

Figure 30: Number of classess conducted outside of adquate classrooms



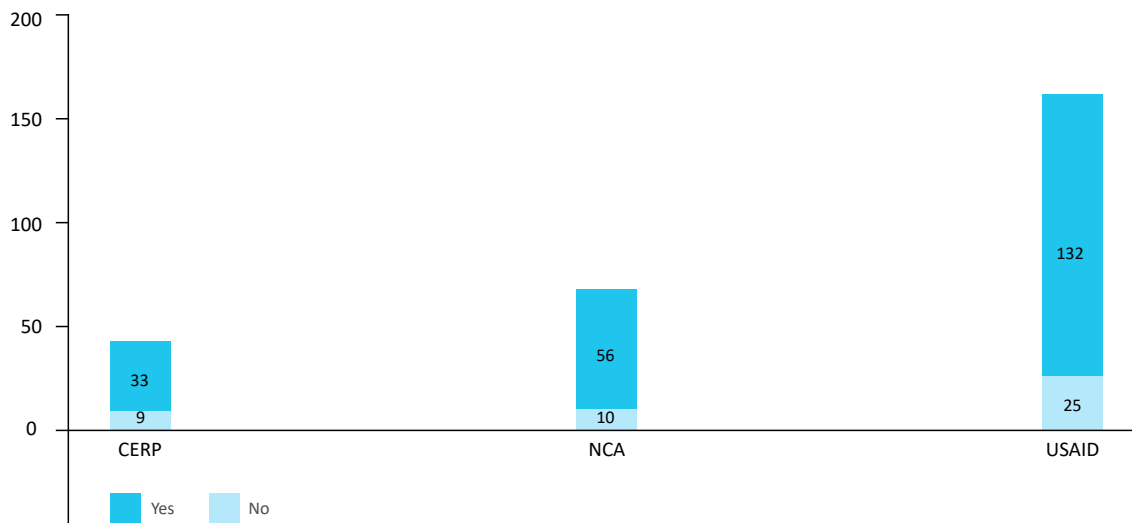
A total of 32 schools were found without a boundary wall of which 17 were funded by USAID, followed by 14 funded by NCA, and 1 by CERP (Figure 31).

Figure 31: Schools with or without boundry walls



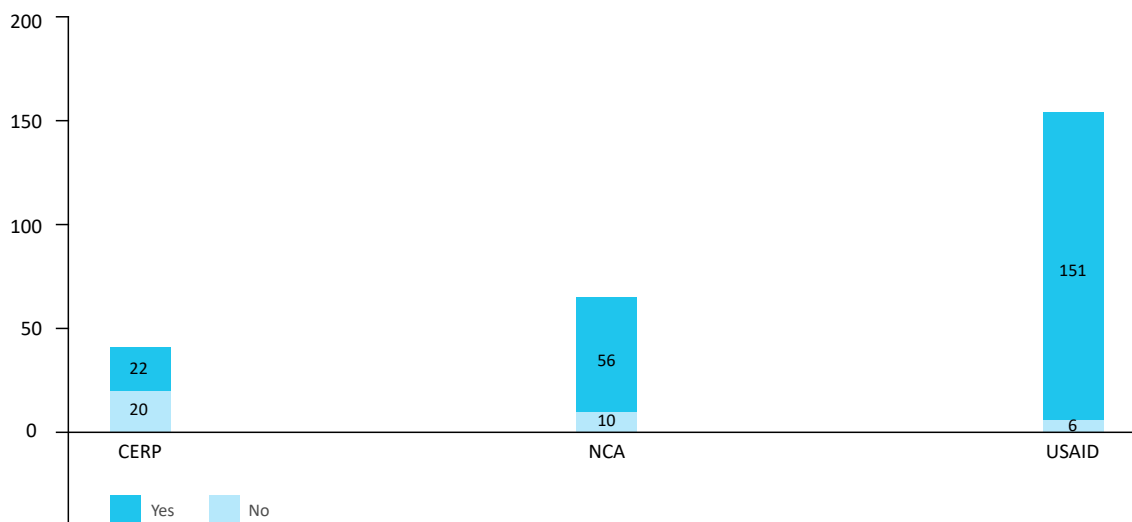
In addition, access to basic services such as electricity, drinking water, and sanitation are issues that have been overlooked in many of the schools that received donor support. However, access to clean drinking water seems to be much better compared to other indicators. In 25 schools funded by USAID, students did not have access to clean drinking water, followed by 10 schools funded by NCA, and nine schools funded by CERP (Figure 32).

Figure 32: Number of schools with and without access to drinking water based on donors



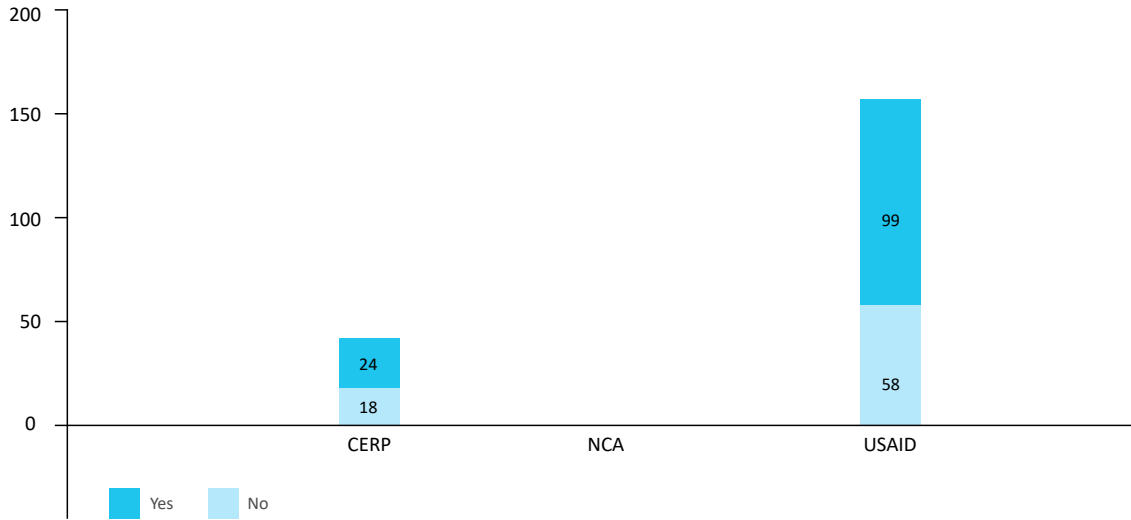
Access to sanitation is limited in many of the schools surveyed. The CERP-funded schools were worst off, with 20 out of 42 schools not having access to toilets. NCA-funded schools come next with 10 out of 66 schools not having access to toilets. The situation of USAID-funded schools was much better, with only six out of 157 schools not having access to toilets (Figure 33).

Figure 33: Number of schools with and without access to toilets based on donor



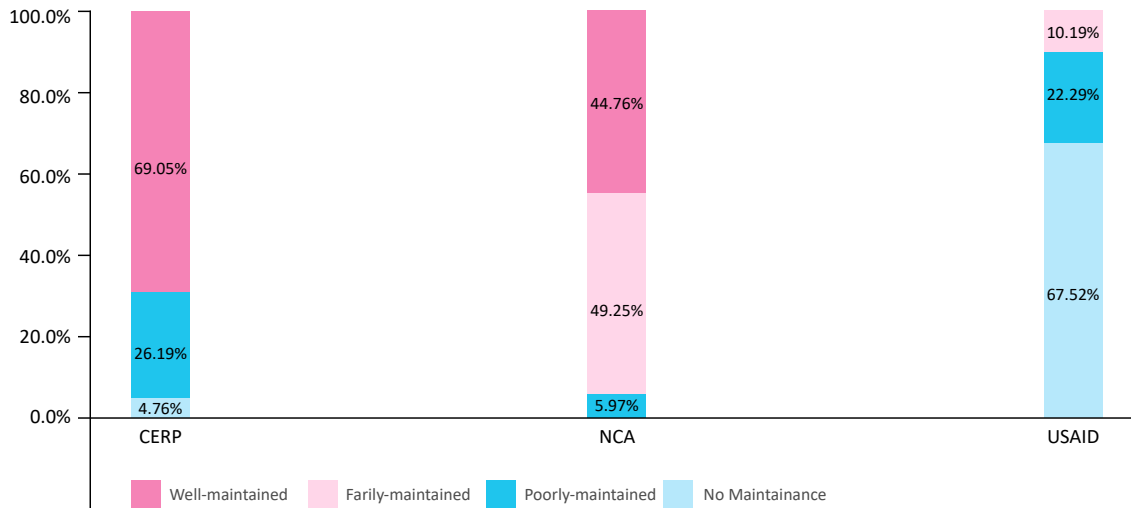
76 schools funded by USAID and DoD have no access to electricity (Figure 34). Data was not collected for NCA-funded schools based on this indicator. In some schools, despite being connected to a source of electricity, due to protruding electrical wires students and teachers have no true access to electricity.

Figure 34: Number of schools with access to electricity based on donor



Simply building school facilities is not enough. Maintaining and keeping the school buildings functional is just as important. Figure 35 below shows the state of maintenance of the schools built by the donors varies. USAID-funded schools were found to be the worst among all with 141 (more than 80%) of the schools either poorly maintained or without any maintenance at all. In contrast, 95% of NCA funded-schools were fairly or well maintained, followed by 69% of the CERP-funded schools.

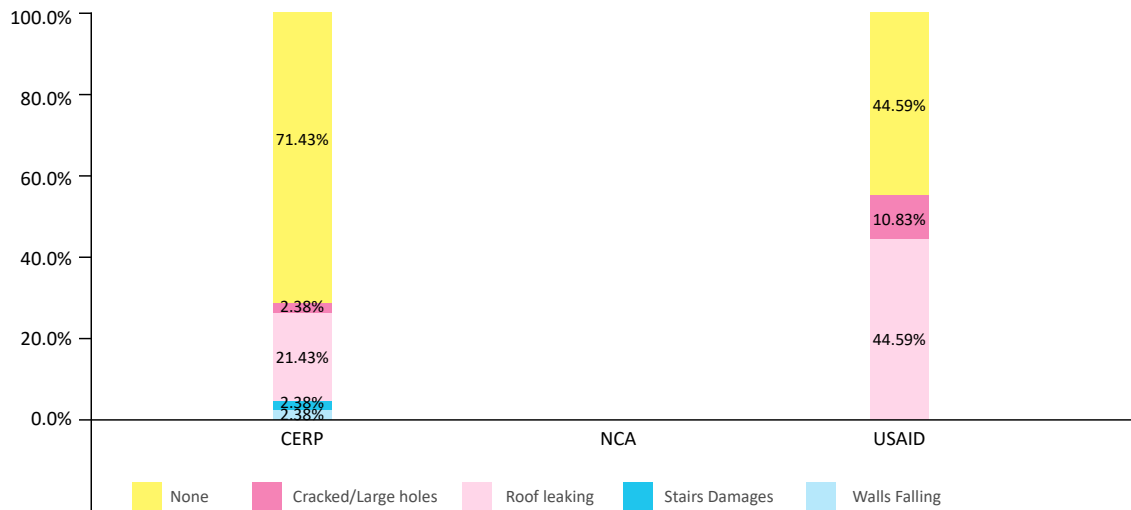
Figure 35: Percentage of schools maintenance status based on donors



In addition to their state of maintenance, many of the schools surveyed had structural damage that could not be fixed by the schools. For instance, 70 out of 157 (around 45%) of the USAID-funded schools had leaking roof while another 17 schools had cracks or large holes in the buildings. In contrast, CERP-funded schools were in much better condition with only nine out of 42 (21%) with leaking roofs (Figure 36).

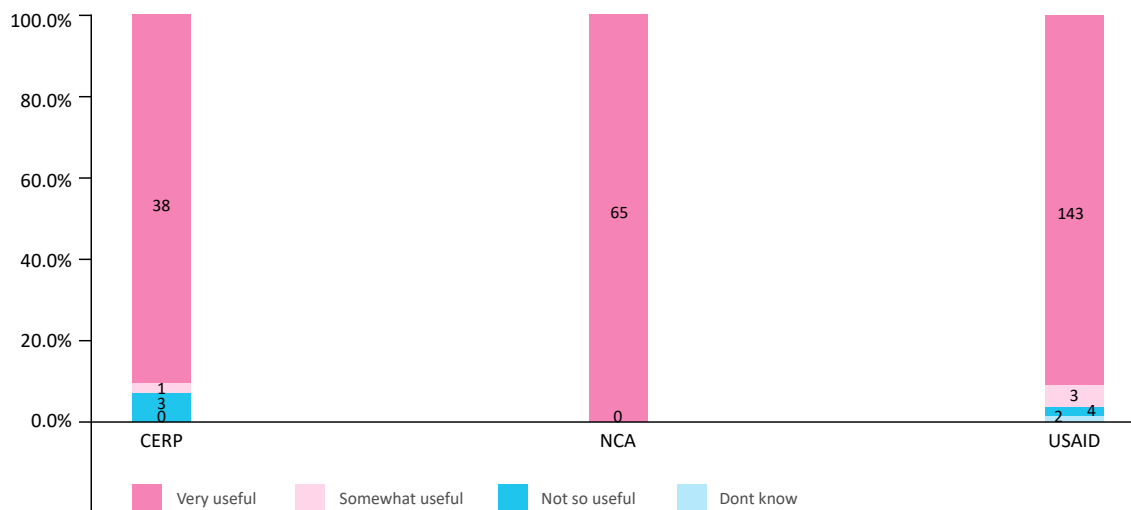


Figure 36: Percentage of schools with structural damage based on donor



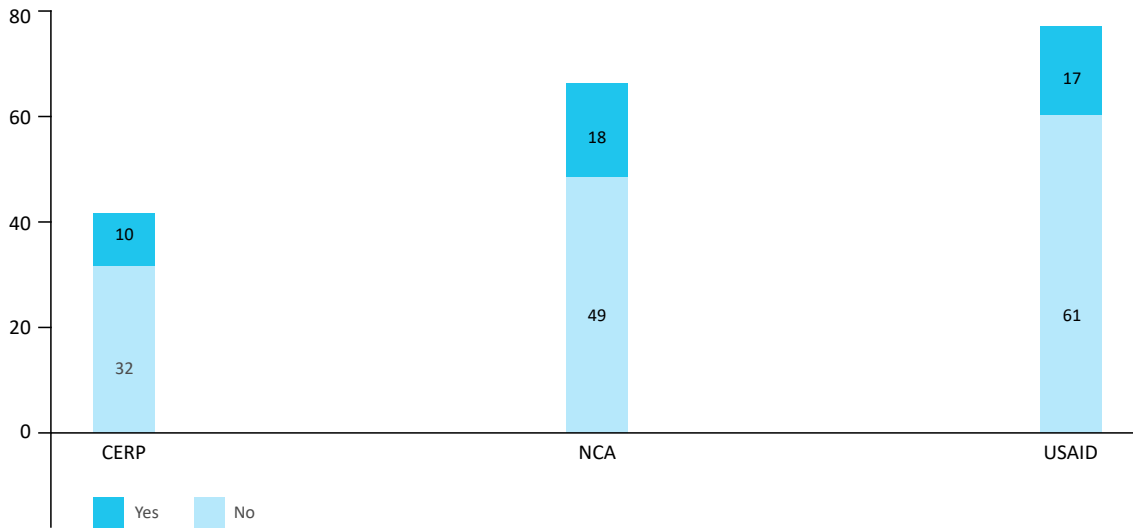
One-time intervention without any follow-up and maintenance runs the risk of subverting beneficiary perception about schools funded by donors. This has been the case with some USAID and DoD-funded schools: Beneficiaries of seven USAID-funded schools thought the schools were not useful at all. This indicates a need to revise agencies' notion of aid effectiveness. On the same note, 14 schools out of 276 funded by USAID, DoD and NCA surveyed (see Figure 37) in Balkh, Faryab, and Herat found buildings that were unusable and not suitable for education. This includes 11 schools funded by USAID alone.

Figure 37: Beneficiary perception of schools based on donor



In addition to school infrastructure, it is important to ensure that the schools are equipped and have access to quality teaching materials. Access to teaching equipment and learning materials has been a major problem in most of the schools. For instance, only 45 out of 187 schools had access to a computer lab (Figure 38).

Figure 38: Number of schools with access to computer lab based on donors



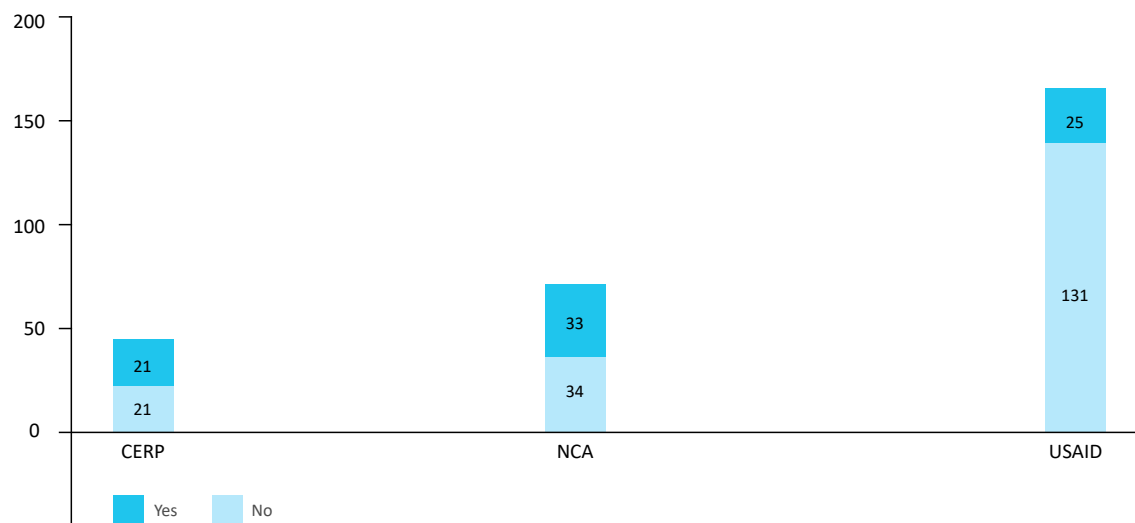
In addition, more than half of the schools funded by USAID and CERP did not have access to a library.

Figure 39: Number of schools with or without a library based on donor



Last but not least, access to textbooks is a basic need for any school. Figure 40 indicates that a clear majority of the schools surveyed did not have access to adequate textbooks. For instance, 84% of the USAID-funded schools did not have access to adequate textbooks, followed by CERP and NCA with just more than 50% of schools without adequate access to textbooks.

Figure 40: Schools have access to adequate textbooks



Analysis of the data indicates that the donors handed over the schools to the MOE without any follow-up plan. Nevertheless, the fact that NCA carried out a survey of the schools it funded in Faryab to find out their status is a good sign that at least some donors are interested in knowing, after several years, about the effectiveness of the money they spent. While there is no sign of follow-up by DOD or USAID, SIGAR's role in inspecting the schools several years after their construction has been commendable. Such surveys need to be carried out on a regular basis and findings should be used for future interventions, such as allocating additional funds to schools to address gaps identified through the surveys. Such targeted interventions would avoid further waste and would add to the sustainability of the projects. In addition, spending a little now on maintenance can prevent bigger expenditures later.





## IV. LESSONS LEARNED

Afghanistan has made rapid quantitative and qualitative strides in the education sector since 2001. While there are regional variations in the degree of progress made and the nature of challenges faced, based on the data generated through field surveys this report puts forth a set of common challenges faced and lessons learned from it. This section summarizes key lessons learned from interventions undertaken in the education sector across provinces.

**Ensuring local ownership:** Local ownership and involvement is seminal to mitigating the impact of armed conflict on educational interventions. This gives local communities a direct stake in educational interventions perceived to be beneficial to the community at large.

Active School Management Shuras (SMS) that include representatives of the community can provide an important interface for institutionalizing involvement of local community members. SMSs can serve as an effective and coherent platform for engaging school management on school needs such as the provision of portable drinking water, sanitation, and electricity, and effective ways to help meet same. A good example is seen in CERP-funded schools established in Balkh, Herat, Kabul, Kunar, and Kapisa, where an overwhelming majority of the schools established have boundary walls. This indicates attention has been given to local contexts, as boundary walls are important for providing a sense of safety and privacy for female students and teachers. In addition, ongoing engagement of the community through monitoring and meeting with school management helps in solving problems identified in schools such as providing drinking water or building boundary walls or solving other problems through community contributions.

**Expanding and maintaining school infrastructure:** The conducting of double and triple shifts in schools is testimony to the inadequacy of existing school facilities to cater to the growth in the number of students enrolled. In addition, it has a negative impact on qualitative learning outcomes. Rapid expansion of physical infrastructure is essential to ensure that quality of learning outcomes is not compromised as the number of students in schools increases. A majority of school facilities lack a standardized operation and maintenance plan, which is essential to ensure that physical infrastructure is maintained. Putting in place a maintenance and operation plan can help in the better maintenance of existing infrastructure and minimize adverse impact on learning outcomes.

**Following up after interventions by donors:** The donors should have ensured a proper maintenance plan, at least on a periodic basis, for each of the projects before handing them over. Nevertheless, the fact that NCA carried out a survey of the schools it funded in Faryab to find out their status is a good sign that at least some donors are interested in knowing, after several years, about the effectiveness of the money they spent. Such surveys need to be carried out by all donors on a regular basis and findings should be used for future interventions such as allocating additional funds to the schools to address the gaps identified through the surveys. Such targeted interventions would avoid further waste of the investments that have already been made and would add to the sustainability of the projects. In addition, spending a little now on maintenance can prevent bigger expenditures later.

**Creating a balance between infrastructure and qualitative indicators:** Rapid expansion of school infrastructure should not be seen as a remedy to all the problems that schools are faced with. An equal emphasis on qualitative indicators is needed. Apart from physical infrastructure, the quality of learning outcomes in school is contingent upon the availability of adequate, trained, and qualified teachers; access to adequate teaching materials and equipment including modern audio-visual aids and computers; and distribution of a sufficient number of textbooks. The availability of trained and qualified teachers outside the major urban centers such as Kabul is an acute problem. Most provinces were found to be lacking on all of the above stated parameters.

**Addressing the gender gap:** Gender parity in education is contingent not only on the ability of interveners to sensitize the male members of communities that are the intended beneficiaries of the benefits of female education, but also on a number of other variables, namely presence of boundary walls in schools, availability of female teachers, and access to sanitation facilities.

Finding available and qualified female teachers is relatively easier in urban centers such as Kabul as compared to the countryside. This puts girls' enrollment and retention outside major urban centers at a disadvantage. As the data from Faryab demonstrates, one potential solution to bolstering female teachers in schools would be to consider developing educational interventions specifically designed for females.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Key findings of this report in relation to rates of enrollment, retention, and learning outcomes in schools have reverberations for the school education sector across the country given the broadly similar nature of socio-cultural, economic, political and security challenges faced. Based on the key gaps in school education identified in this report the following set of recommendations is put forth for consideration:

**Improving physical infrastructure:** The MOE should explore ways of engaging communities in planning, construction, and maintenance of infrastructure by developing an institutional framework for effectively channelizing community involvement. Adequate resources should be allocated for maintenance of schools to ensure their sustainability. The community-based monitoring of schools is a model that could be adopted for this and other purposes to improve quality of education. Avenues for providing schools access to sources of (renewable) power should be explored in collaboration with local and/ or regional NGOs. In addition, establishment of a school maintenance fund for each school should be explored. This should include incentivized contribution from MOE but should also attract local resources such as community contributions. Such funds should be spent in a transparent manner including communities in decision-making and keeping the funds in a dedicated bank account.

**Developing standards and guidelines for school infrastructure:** The MOE, in consultation with Provincial Educational Directorates (PEDs) as well as civil society actors active in delivering educational services should come up with standardized construction, maintenance, and operation guidelines for schools that should among other things ensure access to sanitation, portable water, electricity, and boundary walls. The implementation of this could be overseen by a CBM structure with a line of reportage to the PEDs so as to ensure compliance with guidelines.

**Rethinking construction of expensive schools:** Out of 17500 schools that Afghanistan has, only half of them have buildings while over 8000 of the buildings were built in the last fifteen years. Despite double and triple-shift schools as well as overcrowded classrooms and the increasing demand for more schools, Afghanistan does not have the resources to construct tens of thousands of new schools. This is not possible for either the Afghan government or its international partners. Therefore, more low cost options should be explored. Besides bringing down constructions costs of concrete-made schools through improved construction and cost standards, improved procurement and better monitoring; options of constructing prefabricated and mud-constructed schools and where possible using mosques as school could be some alternatives.

**Exploring public-private partnership for textbook distribution:** The printing and distribution of school textbooks, the most basic of education materials, is in disarray because of the lack of a modern inventory system. A technology-based solution to inventory system could ensure students' access to textbooks and reduce misuse by education administrators. In addition, options like creating public-private partnerships for textbook printing and distribution and even making cash payments to students instead of direct distribution of textbooks to schools could be explored, taking into consideration the risks of poverty and the possibility of parents using the money to meet more immediate needs.

**Filling in for unprofessional teachers:** Efforts to build the capacity of existing teachers may happen very gradually, and past experience shows that it has not taken education quality to the next level. Options like mobilizing administration and management skills as well as drawing on the teaching abilities of highly qualified civil servants, NGOs and INGOs, and private companies on voluntary basis could be explored. Community school service on a volunteer basis could also be explored.

**Bolstering female participation:** Given the difficulties faced by schools in Afghanistan in recruiting female teachers, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas, measures like ensuring that all schools have boundary walls well-maintained and gender segregated toilets along with access to sources of potable water, and a crèche facility within the school premises could encourage female teachers to work.

**Enhancing recruitment and retention of qualified teachers in rural areas:** Recruitment and retention of qualified teachers in rural areas is a daunting challenge. This is magnified by fragile security in rural areas. Strategies that could improve recruitment and retention include providing financial incentives over and above the regular salary for teaching in rural schools that face a paucity of qualified teachers, providing housing subsidies, providing a travel allowance for teachers and their families, providing relocation assistance, and, finally, weighing the number of years of experience teaching in challenging rural environments when considering promotions for teachers.



**Providing underperforming schools with greater support:** Schools that have poor physical infrastructure and a lack of materials are likely to face problems in attracting and retaining teachers, maintaining healthy student enrollment, attendance, and retention figures, and an ability to demonstrate benefits to the communities they intend to serve. The MOE must identify and seek to accelerate addressing key gaps in underperforming schools.

**Improving management and transparency of data:** Lack of reliable data has always been a problem for the education sector. Data provided by MOE is not reliable, as several agencies including SIGAR have indicated concerns over the quality and reliability of the data. The MOE should prioritize data management by improving data gathering through independent sources. A detailed survey of all schools is needed to draw a true picture of the education sector, including all assets and their current condition. The MOE should make continuous efforts to publish data in an easily accessible format for CSOs and communities. Initiatives such as information walls at schools that include key data such as number of teachers could improve transparency and prevent misuse of funds by school administrators.

**Thinking beyond service delivery by government:** The Afghan government should rethink its capacity constraints to delivering educational services to its 10 million students. The experience of the last fifteen years has shown that the Afghan government is not able to deliver quality education that meets the needs of Afghan economy or contributes to security and stability. Options to hand over public schools to public-private partnerships, non-government organizations, or community associations where government could subsidize schools based on their performance should be explored. The MOE should focus more on its regulatory and policy role.



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INTEGRITY  
WATCH  
AFGHANISTAN

Kolola Poshta,  
Kabul, Afghanistan

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 +93 (0) 780 942 942


 info@iwaweb.org


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