

Afghanistan

The Basic Education and Gender Equality Thematic Report (January – December 2015)

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACO	Afghanistan Country Office
AGEI	Afghanistan Girls Education Initiative
ALCs	Accelerated Learning Centers
AWP	Annual Work plan
BEGE	Basic Education and Gender Equality
CAP	Consolidated Appeal Process
CBE	Community Based Education
CBS	Community Based School
CES	Cost Effective School
CFS	Child Friendly School
DED	District Education Department
DOEs	District Education Officer
ECC	Education Coordination Committee
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EIP	Education Interim Plan
EMIS	Education Management Information System
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GoIRA	Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HACT	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer
HDI	Human Development Index
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
INEE	Inter-agency Network on Education in Emergencies
LIFE	Literacy Initiative for Empowerment
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MICS	Multiple indicators cluster survey
MoE	Ministry of Education
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
MTR	Mid-Term review
MTSP	Medium-Term Strategic Plan
NESP	National Education Strategy Plan
PED	Provincial Education Director
RR	Regular Resources
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SMS	School Management Shura
TED	Teacher Education Department
TLM	Teaching Learning Material
ToT	Training of Trainers
TTC	Teacher Training College
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNPD	United Nations Population Division
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

1 Executive Summary

Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world and is ranked as the 19th least developed country/territory on the Human Development Index.¹ According to the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA, 2011-12), 36% of the population live below the poverty line. Thirty years of conflict and bad governance have resulted in the destruction of the country's Education system.

Though the Ministry of Education (MoE), together with UNICEF and relevant Education stakeholders continues to make remarkable progress in increasing primary school enrolment, completion rates as well as improvements in the quality of education, major challenges related to access and quality Education remain. An estimated 3.5 million children of primary school age are out of school, the majority of them are girls (75%). The *Back-to-school* campaign conducted in 2002 registered tremendous increase in school enrolment in Afghanistan. In the primary and secondary sub-sector, enrolment increased from about 900,000 children, almost all boys, in 2001 to over 8.6 million in 2013 of which 39% are girls. The survival rate to grade five for girls has increased significantly from 20% in 2012 to 63% in 2013. Gender equity, though improving, remains a challenge with the Gender Parity Index (GPI) at 0.74 in favour of boys. There has also been success in improving women's literacy. The low proportion of female teachers though slightly increased from 31% in 2011 to 32% in 2012 is still a major hindrance to girls' enrolment and retention.

Key demand and supply-side barriers for girls and boys to attend schools include distance to schools, lack of adequate school facilities and shortage of female teachers; cultural beliefs impact negatively on the schooling of children, particularly for girls. In addition, system-barriers such as a highly centralised governance structure, inadequate technical and financial capacity of the Ministry of Education (MoE), lack of adequate coordination, planning and monitoring systems as well as lack of reliable data and statistics contribute to limited overall efficiency and effectiveness of the overall Education system. The complex emergency situation, including protracted conflict, recurrent natural disasters, chronic poverty and underdevelopment further exacerbate the already weak Education system. In 2015, conflict related violence continued to directly impact on access to education in all regions of the country. The sense of insecurity and danger led many families to withdraw their children from school.

In order to address these challenges, UNICEF in collaboration with key Education partners, continued in 2015 to support the Government of Afghanistan in its effort to reach the second Millennium Development Goal (MDG) and the second Education for All (EFA) target, by 2020.² In line with the post-2015 agenda, UNICEF's Strategic Plan (2014-2017) and within the new 2015-2019 Country Programme (CP) cycle, UNICEF continued to focus on access as well as quality components of Education, including learning achievements of students, both within community-based and regular primary school setting. UNICEF worked with the MoE at policy and strategic levels to increase school enrolment and support the provision of quality educational opportunities for children, particularly for girls and those living in hard to reach communities. Community-Based Education (CBE), the main strategy adopted by the Government of Afghanistan to increase access to quality Education, played hereby a major role. In addition, UNICEF also partnered with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to ensure effective programme delivery and monitoring of interventions. Throughout 2015, UNICEF also continued to support the implementation of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), being the Supervising Entity (SE) in the country.

The goal of the Education component within the CP is '*Education of girls and women increased through more equitable access to quality basic education services.*' The key strategies adopted to achieve this goal include: (1) Capacity development of education officials at sub-national level to plan, coordinate, implement and monitor programme activities, including education in emergencies; improvement of Child-Friendly-Schools (CFS) teaching methodologies and school environment, female literacy and emergency preparedness and response; (2) Service delivery through cash and direct supply assistance to the MoE and implementing partners, such as establishment of CBE classes, distribution of Teaching and Learning Materials (TLM) at a national scale and school construction; (3) Implementation of innovative strategies, in particular for increasing the number of

¹ UNDP, Human Development Index Report, 2014.

² National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) III 2015-2020, Ministry of Education, 2014

female teachers in remote geographical areas; (4) Institutionalisation and systems' building related to measuring and monitoring of learning outcomes; and (5) Advocacy for the reduction of the gender disparities in education. UNICEF is also supporting the implementation of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) being the supervising entity (SE) in the country.

The programmatic and geographic adjustments agreed upon during the mid-term CP review (2011) were to be fully implemented by 2014. During 2015, UNICEF continued to focus on 10 most deprived priority provinces, while keeping interventions such as the distribution of TLM, nationwide. In addition UNICEF supported the Government of Afghanistan in its emergency preparedness response throughout the country, with specific local interventions where needed.

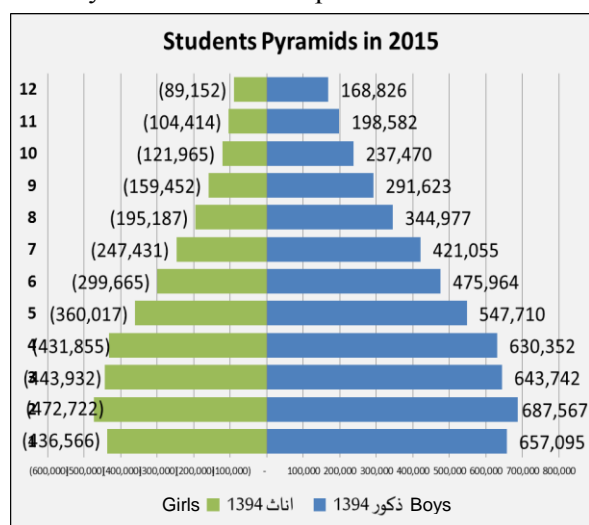
The major achievements of the BEGE (Basic Education and Gender Equality) programme in 2015, through the utilisation of thematic and other contributions include: (1) Increased access to primary education for 45,189 children through implementation of the CBE approach in 29 provinces and the construction of 36 schools; (2) Progressive implementation of the CFS package in 1,500 schools; (3) Improved quality of teaching and learning through increased capacity of provincial and district education officers in 10 provinces, including 991 teachers and members of School Management Shuras (SMS) and learners on CFS methodology and; (4) Inter-departmental coordination strengthened and the GPE Programme extended for an additional 12 months, key programme documents such as programme guideline, M&E plan, and revised operational plan and budget developed.

2 Strategic context

2.1 The country situation

In 2015, protracted conflict, recurrent natural disasters, chronic poverty and underdevelopment continued to undermine the survival, livelihood and dignity of Afghan children and women. Conflict related violence directly impacted on the access to education in all regions of the country and according to the MoE, over 650 schools remained inactive in 2015. The sense of insecurity and danger lead many families to withdraw their children from schools.

The status of boys and girls in education continues to be compromised in terms of access, quality and gender equality. Only 50 per cent of eligible children are enrolled in schools while approximately 3.5 million of children, especially girls and children in remote, mountainous and insecure areas remain out of school. This is exacerbated also by the estimated 1.2 million³ students who remain on-the-books for up to 3 years, but are actually out of school as “permanent absentees”.

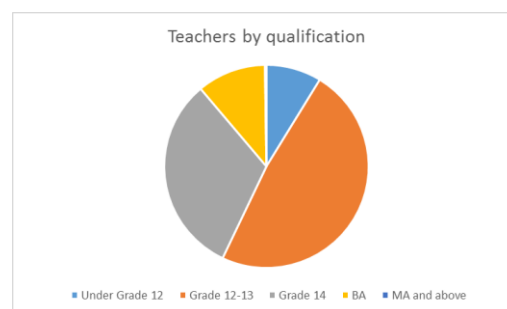


Education in Afghanistan suffers from disparities across gender, geographical location and household income, with higher enrolments amongst boys, in urban provinces and amongst the richest wealth quintile. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) stands currently at 0.7. The girls' participation in education gets lower as one goes through the education ladder due to high drop-out rates amongst girls. The enrolment pyramid (see “Student Pyramid in 2015”) indicates the decreasing numbers in enrolment as one moves up the school grades. It is estimated that of the ten children who enrol in grade one, only 2 reach grade 12. The gender disparity in access to education is also a function of geographical location with the rural girls being the most disadvantaged. Rural children rank seriously behind their urban counterparts in available teachers, school materials

and, not surprisingly, in access.

³ Education For All Report, 2015, MoE

The shortage of female teachers, especially in rural areas is one of the major causes for low enrolment and retention amongst girls. Out of the 193,000 teachers, only 33% are female and only very few of these are teaching in rural schools. In addition, only 43% of the teachers meet the minimum required qualifications (grade 14). The situation is worse in rural provinces. The shortage of female teachers in rural schools is mainly due to a growing proportion of trained teachers avoiding insecure areas by concentrating in the cities. Educated girls/women from the cities are not ready to serve as a teacher in rural schools because the current salary level is not attractive and not enough to meet the living expenses in a new location. Due to strong cultural beliefs in Afghanistan, parents do not allow their daughters to be taught by male teachers and lack of female teachers in schools becomes a major barrier to girls' enrolment.



Poor access and retention of boys and girls in school can be attributed to supply-, demand- and system-wide barriers. General insecurity in many parts of the country and socio-cultural practices and beliefs that undermine girls' education, explaining the fragility of school demand. The limited supply: inadequate number of schools, especially for girls (only 16% of schools are girls' schools), shortage of qualified teachers especially female teachers, and inadequate facilities in schools such as toilets, drinking water, boundary walls and learners desks negatively affect access and retention. About half (47%) of schools do not have usable buildings; 70% of school buildings lack boundary walls; 30% of schools lack safe drinking water and 60% of the schools lack sanitation facilities; about 31% of schools are running on multi-shift and consequently with reduced teaching hours. Shortage of schools result in long walking distance to schools.

2.2 Main objectives and results from the country programme

Through its 2015-2019 CP, UNICEF is committed to support the Government of Afghanistan in its effort to realise the rights of children to survival, development, protection and participation, in line with the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the National Education Strategic Plan, thus contributing to the consolidation of the overall peace and the reconstruction process.

UNICEF through its BEGE Programme contributed towards achieving the EFA and MDG 2020 goals as well as the overall national targets and objectives set out in the MoE's National Education Strategic Plan (NESP II and draft NESP, 2016-2021, currently under development). UNICEF's new CP cycle, 2015-2019 continues to build upon the programme interventions from the previous programme cycle. During the year 2015, the Afghanistan BEGE programme continued to support the MoE at all levels in order to ensure increased access to education, particularly for girls and the most marginalised children. The overall goal and objectives of the 2015 Rolling Workplan specifically contributed to the following outcome and outputs:

Outcome 5: Girls and boys of school age, especially vulnerable children in deprived provinces and areas, access primary education that is progressively child-friendly and demonstrates improved learning outcomes.

- **Output 5.1:** Access to primary education for girls and boys in deprived provinces and other focus areas scaled up to meet the minimum defined standards for Afghanistan;
- **Output 5.2:** National and subnational education authorities (MoE) have management and financial capacity to progressively manage CBE and ensure higher transition rate from grade 3 to grade 4 for girls and boys, including in emergencies;
- **Output 5.3:** GPE in Afghanistan leveraged for resources and results to meet national education objectives;
- **Output 5.4:** Strengthened national and subnational capacity to implement CFS, especially in targeted schools in deprived provinces and other areas;
- **Output 5.5:** National capacity strengthened to develop and operationalise a system for monitoring of learning achievements and setting of national standards in core subjects for primary grades;

- **Output 5.6:** Girls' education and community-based Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) developed and demonstrated in selected communities in deprived provinces and other focus areas.

UNICEF works with the MoE at national and decentralised levels in a transparent manner to ensure ownership and accountability by the Government of Afghanistan and its communities. UNICEF's work, in 2015, was centred on capacity development at national, provincial, district and school levels. Particular emphasis was given to the strengthening of the capacity of Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) and District Education Offices (DEOs) in terms of education planning, monitoring and measuring of results to ensure sustainability of the interventions. UNICEF provided direct technical assistance through its own staff, national or international consultants and technical assistance embedded within the MoE at central level and PEDs.

At national level, UNICEF continued to be an active member of various donor and education partner forums such as the Local Education Group (LEG). Furthermore, in 2015, UNICEF co-chaired the technical working groups on CBE, Pre-School Education, Girls' Education and Education in Emergencies (EiE). UNICEF also continued to play the role of convenor to ensure participation of cross-sectoral government actors and NGOs in relevant decision-making fora.

At provincial levels, UNICEF played a key role in supporting the MoE with: (1) equity-based education planning; (2) sector coordination through active contribution in existing coordination fora; (3) generation, analysis and use of evidence-based data.

UNICEF also extended its partnerships for delivery of services in remote hard-to-reach geographical locations with NGOs. This included partnership agreements with SHAO to implement CBE activities in the South of the country, with CSFO to support the capacity development of teachers related to learner-centred methodologies and School Improvement Plans (SIPs) in the province of Paktika, and with Aid Afghanistan for Education (AAE) to provide education for girls who have been denied access to formal schools due to their age and/or early/forced marriage.

In terms of sustainability, UNICEF in 2015, supported community-based interventions through implementation of the CBE approach (establishment of Community-Based Schools (CBSs) and Accelerated Learning Centers (ALCs)). Efforts also continued to strengthen the active role of communities through their full participation in planning of the activities, including budgeting and use of Communications for Development (C4D) approaches.

3 Results assessment and challenges by key result area

Despite the challenging programming environment, significant improvements were made in access to basic quality Education in partnership with the MoE and relevant education sector stakeholders. Overall and in the absence of more recent validated statistics, the annual Education Management Information System (EMIS) data shows remarkable progress with an increase of enrolment in general Education (primary and secondary schools) from 6,504,715 students (4,081,447 boys and 2,423,268 girls, 37%) in 2009/2010 to 8,203,724 students (4,978,145 boys and 3,225,579 girls, 39% girls) in 2013/2014. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for primary level increased from 75% (86% Boys; 63% Girls) in 2012 to 79% (90.7% Boys, 66.9% Girls) in 2013/14 against the Government's set target of 85% for boys and 74% for girls for 2013. By 2020, the Government's target is to increase GER rate to 110% in primary Education. The survival rate to grade 5 has also improved significantly from 34% for girls in 2007 to 64% (66% boys and 44% girls) in 2013/14 (EMIS data). However, gender equity remains a challenge with a GPI of 0.74 in favour of boys. The low proportion of female teachers, which has slightly increased from 31% in 2012 to 33% in 2014, remains a major hindrance to girls' enrolment and retention.

Gains in enrolment and retention can be attributed to the use of various intervention strategies, such as increased availability of CBSs and ALCs as well as more child-friendly learning environments. In 2015, UNICEF contributed to the enrolment of more than 560,000 Out-of-School Children (OOSC), out of which 39% were girls, through the provision of close to 1,000 additional CBS and ALC classes as well as the construction of 36

new schools. Furthermore, UNICEF played a key role in enhancing teacher capacity in the use of learner-centred methodologies through pre-service and in-service trainings.

The table below describes the results attained in 2015, constraints and challenges faced, and remedial actions taken under each planned result. It also summarises UNICEF's work using thematic and other funds that were available in 2015. UNICEF, the MoE and other partners reviewed the progress of implementation of the planned results, during the Annual Review held in November 2015, and concluded that progress on three out of six results are on track (against the 2015-2016 Rolling Workplan) while three were constrained as summarised below.

Output Statement	Progress
Output 1.1 Access to primary education for girls and boys in deprived provinces and other focus areas scaled up to meet the minimum defined standards for Afghanistan.	On track
Output 1.2 National and sub-national education authorities (MoE) have management and financial capacity to progressively manage CBE and ensure higher transition rate from grade 3 to grade 4 for girls and boys, including EiE.	Constrained
Output 1.3: GPE in Afghanistan leveraged for resources and results to meet national education objectives	On track
Output 1.4 Strengthened national and sub-national capacity to implement CFS, especially in targeted schools in deprived provinces and other areas	Constrained
Output 1.5 National capacity strengthened to develop and operationalise a system for monitoring of learning achievements and setting of national standards in core subjects for primary grades.	On track
Output 1.6: Girls education and community-based Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) developed and demonstrated in selected communities in deprived provinces and other focus areas.	Constrained

3.1 Enhanced support to communities with disadvantaged and excluded children to start schooling at the right age and attend regularly

3.1.1 Access and retention

UNICEF as an active member of the Local Education Group (LEG) and member or co-lead of various technical working groups (such as CBE, Girls' Education, ECD and CFS), played a crucial role in contributing to major achievements such as making OOSC and Girls' Education a priority of the NESP III. CBE being the main strategy used by MoE to provide education and learning opportunities for OOSC, especially girls, UNICEF's contribution alongside with other partners resulted in CFS quality standards being integrated into the existing CBE policy (a policy that has been in place for 5 years). UNICEF also supported the expansion of improved learning environments through school construction, establishment of CBSs and ALCs, provision of TLM and involvement of community members in a variety of CFS and CBE related trainings (see below for more details).

a) Improved access and learning environment, particularly for girls

In its effort to achieve the EFA and MDG goals by 2020, the Government of Afghanistan has adopted CBE as its main strategy. CBE includes (a) the provision of education for 7-9 year old children living in areas where no formal schools exist within a radius of 3km (grades 1-3), and (b) the establishment of CBSs (grades 1-6) and ALCs (10-15 year old) for children who missed entering into the education system at the right age. Students in ALCs are foreseen to transition into formal schools after completion of grade 6.

- **CBE:** In 2015, UNICEF was able to support the MoE at national and decentralised levels (PEDs) to reach 48,497 OOSC in 17 provinces (24,496 girls, around 50%) by establishing a total of 1,768 new CBE Centers (against a planned target of 40,000 children). CBS and ALC centers were opened, TLM distributed and teachers underwent training on child-centered pedagogy. Both CBSs and ALCs used the same curriculum and textbooks as the formal schools. Currently 110,055 children (45,379 girls) are being reached through CBE.

Within the CBE approach, UNICEF continued to work closely with community members, who participated in identifying OOSC. Men and women among the local community were trained as teachers for the CBSs, and learning spaces were identified and provided by the community. Where learning spaces were not available, UNICEF provided tents to serve as classrooms.

Through supporting the establishment of schools at the community level, UNICEF contributed to reducing travel time and personal security risks for children on their way to and from schools. Furthermore, UNICEF continued to use the CBE approach to strengthen the involvement of local community members in school management.

- **School Construction:** Construction of new schools was used as another strategy to expand access to education. In 2015, UNICEF continued to support the MoE in the construction of 70 schools in three provinces in the Central Highlands region (Ghor, Bamyan and Daikundi).

The schools provide environments that are child-friendly and conducive for learning. It is expected that they will have a positive impact on enrolment and retention amongst boys and girls. By the end of 2015, 36 schools out of the 70 planned were completed and handed over to the Government. Typically, the schools have 8 or 16 classrooms in the building (depending on the identified needs through PEDs), eco-san latrine blocks, safe water points, boundary walls and a playground area. The project was initiated in 2013 with financial support from the Government of Japan and by the end of 2016 will benefit over 34,925 children (out of which around 40% are expected to be girls).

b) Enabling Environment through provisioning of Teaching and Learning Material (TLM)

In Afghanistan, education is provided free for all children from grades 1-9, however the Government is facing constraints in providing sufficient free teaching and learning materials (TLMs). In addition, the majority of Afghan parents have insufficient income to buy learning materials for their children, which in itself becomes a barrier for children to attend school. Over the years, UNICEF has been providing TLMs to children in primary schools and CBE classes. In 2015, UNICEF procured TLM for nearly 3 million children in both formal schools and CBSs for the school year 2016. At the same time, strong advocacy by UNICEF has led to the MoE agreeing to provide textbooks for all CBE Centres.

c) Strengthening Monitoring

A key focus in 2015 was put on strengthening monitoring mechanisms for the CBE centers, especially in remote and insecure areas. Third Party Monitoring (TPM) mechanisms were developed to support existing approaches and applied in initial two provinces in the Central Region. In addition, the PEDs monitoring capacity was strengthened by augmenting human resources in the form of one Provincial Coordinators and two Field monitors in each of the ten priority provinces.

d) Advocacy for Girls' Education

In 2015, UNICEF supported the establishment of a technical working group for Girls' Education chaired by MoE and co-led by UNICEF. The working group includes members from different international organisations, including the NGOs (Save the Children, Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), International Rescue Committee (IRC), World Vision), bi- and multi-lateral partners (UNICEF, BRAC, GIZ, USAID). The Working group members organised three coordination meetings in 2015 and discussed issues on girls' education, working towards a comprehensive Girls' Education policy to be fully developed in 2016.

e) Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

In 2015, UNICEF in collaboration with AKF was successful in establishing a technical working group on Pre-School Education. This resulted in the approval of the Pre-School Education Policy guidelines, which were in draft stage for more than two years. The working group has also initiated the harmonisation of the pre-school education curriculum and will soon be initiating work on early learning standards. A cost-effectiveness study has been planned for 2016.

f) Implementation constraints and challenges

In 2015, school construction continued to be a challenge due to lengthy Government procurement procedures, low capacity of contractors, inadequate capacity of the MoE to effectively manage the construction projects,

insecurity and rugged terrain. In particular, the Central Highlands Schools Construction project has experienced delays in implementation of phases II and III.

In remote areas, communities have appreciated the importance of CBE as a sustainable and safer way of providing education to their children. CBE allows children, especially girls and the younger children to be closer to where they live hence they do not have to walk long distances. However, challenges were linked to the transitioning of children to higher grades and formal schools (from grade 3 to grade 4) – this mainly due to long distances of formal schools. To address this challenge, communities were supported with the establishment of additional grade 4 classes in the same CBS, prioritising respective locations for cost-effective school construction projects.

The problem of not finding adequate number of educated females to become CBS/ALC teachers remained a major challenge. Given the fact that CBSs/ALCs are located in remote areas, where girls usually do not have the opportunity to receive basic education, concerted efforts over time are needed to find good solutions. The Government and partners have been trying to address the lack of female teachers in various ways, including reinforcing the GPE programme component three (increasing the number of female teachers in the 13 GPE targeted provinces, aimed at retention of girls in school). UNICEF continued to support the MoE and Teacher Education Directorate (TED) in the implementation of the “Girls Access through Female Teacher Education” (GATE) project. This included the provision of scholarships for females from rural areas to enroll in Teacher Training Programmes. Support mechanisms have been put in place for female candidates who are not meeting the criteria to upgrade their qualifications.

While strong advocacy has resulted in the MoE taking over the supply of textbooks for CBE classes and facilitating increased monitoring through their academic supervisors, other CBE related operational costs such as the provision of TLMs and the payment of incentives to the teachers remained a major challenge. UNICEF hence continued to support the MoE in the provision of TLM and teacher incentives throughout 2015.

3.2 Increased national capacity to provide access to early learning opportunities and quality primary and secondary education

3.2.1 Quality Education

In the present context of Afghanistan where basic school infrastructure and qualification of teachers are far from adequate, this programme component focused on advocacy to create a child-friendly foundation for schools through the introduction and development of a minimum CFS package, including the following components: (1) Inclusiveness, (2) Effective teaching and learning, (3) Safe and healthy schools, (4) Gender-responsive learning environments and (5) Community participation.

In 2015, a total of 1,500 formal schools in 82 districts (10 priority provinces targeted within the new CP, 2015-2019) developed School Improvement Plans (SIPs) to support the CFS principles. This was aimed at providing secure and safe environment for children, especially girls, their teachers and principals through school grants to make their schools meet CFS standards. The expected result is improved access, retention and learning achievement for the children. A total of 53 schools were supported to meet CFS standards and 32,918 students including 20,825 boys and 11,963 girls benefitted from these interventions. In addition, 32 schools in 4 non-focus provinces were supported to develop SIPs to improve their learning environment. As part of service delivery, UNICEF supported printing and distribution of 4,500 sets of teacher guidebooks (grades 1-3, 40 titles) both in Dari and Pushto to the same 1,500 schools.

a) Advocacy for adoption of CFS principles by MoE

A significant achievement in 2015 was the MoE’s adoption of CFS principles and their inclusion into the draft NESP III (currently under development) as a strategy to improve quality education. A new Department (“Inclusive and CFS Education”) was established and a working group put in place to coordinate all CFS related initiatives. Furthermore, a policy on inclusive and CFS was developed and implementation guidelines are currently being drafted. UNICEF supported the MoE in the development of harmonised guidelines for school improvement (School Improvement Plans – SIPs) in collaboration with the CFS working group. At local levels,

these SIP guidelines will be used by all stakeholders and School Community Shuras (SMS). The SIP guidelines include the following components: (1) Teacher training on child-centred and gender-sensitive teaching methods; (2) establishment of safe, inclusive and protective learning environments including classrooms with water and sanitation facilities; (3) child health and nutrition activities; (4) strengthening of school-community partnerships; and (5) application of gender-sensitive curricula.

b) Capacity building

UNICEF supported the following activities in 2015:

- **CFS Training:** A total of 142 academic supervisors (including 72 provincial academic supervisors from 8 focus provinces) and 384 teachers/headmasters, SMS members and students from the provinces Jawzjan and Saripul benefitted from a comprehensive CFS training package. The training package aimed at encouraging communities to take part in the education of their children and to reinforce school-community linkages and partnerships. The training package also supported the participants to play a role in school decisions that affect their lives.
- **Development of CFS module:** UNICEF provided technical and financial support to the MoE (Teacher Education Department and Directorate for Academic Affairs) in the development of a CFS module (translated into two local languages, Dari and Pushto). The module will be integrated into the curriculum of Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) and is expected to enhance the knowledge and skills of the lecturers in using iterative, active learning and learner-centred methods linked to classroom discipline, lesson planning and student assignments. In addition, it is expected that TTC students will be able to apply CFS principles in their daily teaching practice.
- **Child-Centred Methodology Training:** A child-centred methodology training was rolled out by provincial trainers, benefitting 2,376 teachers. The model used in the training provided teachers with hands-on examples of activities, which they can use in their classrooms to make the learning environment more stimulating and lessons more interactive.
- **Gender Responsive Pedagogy:** A training manual on gender-responsive pedagogy was developed in consultation and support of the MoE. A total of 60 lectures and MoE staff (including 7 females) benefitted from this training.
- **WASH package:** 195 schools benefitted from a full WASH package, including training of 720 teachers from 285 schools on Hygiene Education, Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM). A total of 216 teachers (81 female) in the provinces Jawzjan and Balkh also benefitted from a similar training.
- **Revision of Teachers' guides (grades 4-6):** UNICEF supported the revision of textbooks and teacher guides (grades 4-6), including field-testing, ensuring the integration of child-friendly schools components. Revised instructional materials have been made gender-sensitive in content, reader-friendly by enlarging the letters and simpler to follow by the teachers. Finalisation of the revision process and printing of the final product is foreseen to be completed in 2016. All these efforts are expected to contribute to the improvement of the quality of education being offered.

In addition to extensive work related to CFS, collaboration was strengthened with the Ministry of Education to establish a National Assessment Framework for Afghanistan. A Request for Proposal for institutional consultancy was published, however difficulties were experienced in attracting suitable expertise to work in Afghanistan. In addition, UNICEF played a key role in supporting the MoE in the establishment of a Working Group for Learning Assessment, which is planned to be formalised in 2016 (led by MoE and co-chaired by UNICEF). A consultancy for Formative Learning Assessment has been established with the consultant joining UNICEF end of December 2015.

c) Implementation Constraints and challenges

In 2015, challenges of improving quality education continued to be persistent due to inadequate qualified teachers, in particular female teachers, in rural areas. Furthermore, poor learning environments due to inadequate school infrastructure (buildings, water and sanitation facilities) had a continued negative impact on the education of children, leading to drop-outs, especially among girls. Lack of systematic monitoring of

learning continued to be a major challenge. Insecurity situation continued to undermine the provision of quality education.

3.3 Strengthened political commitment, accountability and national capacity to legislate, plan and budget for scaling-up quality and inclusive education.

3.3.1 Progress on Output 5.3: UNICEF as Supervising Entity for GPE

UNICEF being the Supervising Entity (SE) for the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Programme in Afghanistan, an “on budget” programme of MoE (2012-2016) with a total funding of US\$ 55.7 million to assist MoE to achieve its *Education for All* goal. The four priorities of GPE Programme are: (i) strengthening community and social mobilization and governance systems at the local level, (ii) expanding and reinforcing multiple pathways to education, (iii) increasing the number of qualified female teachers in areas with high gender disparities, and (iv) stream-lining policy and administrative systems in the MoE. In 2015, UNICEF as SE, has provided continued support to the MoE and the GPE Programme Coordination Unit (GPEPCU) on programmatic and fiduciary components of the Programme.

a) Programme component

Programme component activities supported by UNICEF include: a) provide technical and advisory support to the MoE/GPEPCU, developing and ensuring oversight to strengthen planning, reporting and monitoring mechanisms at district, provincial and national levels; b) provide technical support to MoE/GPEPCU in reviewing and finalising the operational rolling work plan and monitoring framework (2013-2016) for the GPE Programme.

In 2015, UNICEF, as SE for the GPE programme, provided continued support to MoE/GPEPCU for an effective and accelerated programme implementation. Through its Zone Offices (in Central, Eastern, Western and Southern regions of the country), UNICEF provided required assistance to MoE’s Provincial Education Departments (PEDs), the District Education Offices (DEOs), GPE Provincial Coordinators (GPEPCs) and Social Mobilisers (GPESMs) at the sub-national level.

Some of the major technical support and oversight provided to MoE/GPEPCU included (1) facilitating and assisting the MoE with the preparation, revision, and submission of its 2nd no-cost extension to the Country Grant and Performance Committee (CGPC), (2) providing no-objection to assess, and support MoE’s request to CGPC and GPE Secretariat, which led to the approval of the 2nd no-cost extension; (3) facilitating the MoE’s and GPEPCU’s communication with the GPE Secretariat, donor community, and other Development Partners; (4) assisting the GPE next phase by assisting the MoE with improving its National Education Strategic Plan (NESP III); (5) strengthening inter-departmental coordination within the MoE by initiating High-Level Coordination meeting among MoE’s respective departments; (6) providing substantial technical support to the MoE through developing key programme documents such as, GPE Programme Guideline, M&E Framework, and Revised Operational Plan and Budget; (7) financing GPE workshops at zonal level; and (8) developing a GPE Lessons Learnt Documentation.

b) Fiduciary Component

During 2015 UNICEF provided technical and advisory inputs and assistance to the MoE and GPEPCU on the overall financial planning, reporting, and management from national to sub-national levels. Some of the major fiduciary technical support provided to MoE and GPEPCU (through the Fiduciary Advisor KPMG) hereby included : (1) conducting field monitoring of the fiduciary and programmatic aspects of the GPE Programme implementation and fund utilisation in the GPE targeted provinces and districts; (2) producing field monitoring, quarterly, and semi-annual, and annual progress reports of and sharing them with MoE and GPEPCU for their consideration and actions; (3) providing substantial support to GPEPCU in revising the Programme’s operational plan and budget; and (4) providing technical assistance on overall financial planning and reporting to MoE’s Finance and Accounting Department and GPEPCU.

c) Implementation constraints and challenges

In spite of the aforementioned progress and UNICEF’s constant support and assistance to the MoE and GPEPCU, there have been some ongoing challenges and bottlenecks that resulted in relatively low

implementation of the GPE Programme at national and sub-national levels. Some of the main constraints and challenges are: (1) perpetual security concerns in the GPE targeted districts, (2) delay in the transfer of funds from centre to provinces, mainly due to the lengthy internal administrative process in MoE, (3) insufficient inter-departmental communication and coordination at MoE, (4) weak monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanism at the MoE, mainly at the provincial and district levels, and (5) significant delay in the recruitment of qualified female teachers, who can play significant role in the enhancement of girls' enrolment in Afghanistan, and (6) significant delay in the development of key programme strategies and policies.

3.4 Increased country capacity and delivery of services to ensure that girls and boys have access to safe and secure forms of education and critical information for their own well-being in humanitarian situations

a) Education in Emergencies

Throughout 2015, UNICEF worked closely together with the MoE to prepare and respond to emergencies. The Education Cluster was discontinued in 2013, and the MoE leads the coordination of the Education in Emergencies (EiE) working group with UNICEF as the co-chair. UNICEF supported capacity building efforts of the MoE in strengthening the EiE Working Group.

In 2015, UNICEF provided support to the MoE's education emergency response following natural disasters (flood, landslides, avalanches and earthquakes in the North of the country) as well as to conflict-affected areas in the East and the North. Continued access to education and learning opportunities was provided to over 20,000 children, out of which 30% are girls. This included the provisioning of TLM as well as supporting the establishment of CBSs. In addition, a damage assessment of schools in Kunduz (Northern Region) was completed – 14 of these schools will be rehabilitated in 2016.

b) Implementation constraints and challenges

Capacity to prepare and respond to emergencies continued to be a challenge throughout 2015; in addition the absence of reliable data was major constraint to plan and prepare for an effective and efficient education emergency responses.

3.5 Integration of gender dimensions into the programme

The BEGE programme interventions are designed to contribute to MDGs 2 and 3 with a main focus on increased access to basic education especially for girls, women literacy, and improving the quality of education to attract more children to enroll and stay in school. Gender disparities in access to education remain a huge challenge in the country, particularly in the southern provinces. Another gender-related factor is the shortage of female teachers in rural schools. One of the priorities for the BEGE programme in the 2015-2019 programme cycle is to implement innovative teacher training programme for the rural provinces through incentives and using technologies for teacher trainings to increase the number of qualified female teachers.

In 2015, UNICEF was successful in advocating and reviving the functioning of the Afghanistan Girls' Education Initiative's (AGEI) which had been dysfunctional for two years. A technical working group for Girls' Education was established under the leadership of the MoE with UNICEF as the co-chair. Furthermore, an agreement was reached that a comprehensive Girls' Education Policy and strategy would be developed in 2016. In addition, a training manual on gender-sensitive pedagogy was developed and is planned to be rolled-out in 2016.

Gender related issues have been constantly mainstreamed in all projects, including construction of safe and gender disaggregated sanitation facilities and MHM training. Work was initiated in 2015 related to adolescent girls programming and prevention of early and forced marriages. These programmes focus on supporting girls with cash transfers to complete secondary schooling, vocational and life skills for adolescent girls and knowledge and empowerment as the main strategies.

3.6 Monitoring and evaluation arrangement

To facilitate monitoring of the planned programme, results and activities, the CP monitoring framework has been developed. The BEGE programme has indicators for each result and activity which helps to monitor

planned interventions versus progress. UNICEF zonal office staff monitors progress of implementation of activities conducted at provincial, district and community levels, in close collaboration with respective MoE counterparts. Quarterly and annual reviews are conducted at both zone office and country office levels. Each zone office has a monitoring and evaluation officer to provide technical support to the organisation.

Third party monitoring mechanism were used to strengthen the mechanism for identifying the implementation gaps and corrective action in a timely manner. This form of monitoring provided independent information which guided the programme implementation to achieve results. In 2015, the country office also initiated the implementation of a comprehensive set of assurance activities for monitoring use of UNICEF resources (HACT). This included a combination of Programme monitoring along with spot checks and audits where necessary.

3.7 Advocacy and capacity development for achieving results

The advocacy efforts by UNICEF over the years has, to some extent, contributed to highlighting key education policy issues related to the strategy for providing education to the out-of-school children and youth, particularly the hard to reach children and girls in the remote and insecure areas. It also facilitated in raising awareness among key government education officials, community leaders and parents on the value of education, building a sense of accountability as a duty bearer and ownership and that they can contribute to providing education to most vulnerable and marginalised groups of children.

In 2015, advocacy mainly focused on the large number of out-of-school children to become the main consideration for the development of the next NESP. The other area of advocacy was the need for development of a comprehensive Girls' Education Policy and strategy. At the sub-national level, focus was given to capacity development of education personnel and SMSs to ensure that they give importance to Education, support schools and enroll children into school.

Key messages on the importance of Girl's education, their enrolment and retention besides quality of education have been repeatedly broadcast on UNICEF social media sites likes Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. These pages have generated a lot of interest and sparked lively discussions. Facebook posts can be found from the links below: <http://on.fb.me/1mZhEOR>, <http://on.fb.me/1itoQ7q>, <http://on.fb.me/1fjN78f>.

Capacity development for achieving results is one of the main strategy of the BEGE programme. During the reporting period, a series of hands-on training, coaching, mentoring were provided at MoE central, provincial and school levels. With UNICEF support, at the central level, 18 National Education Technical Assistance (NTA) staff were recruited and deployed to the MoE to assist its technical departments to plan and implement the BEGE Programme component. At the provincial level, UNICEF continued to provide technical support to PEDs and DEDs to plan, implement and monitor the education programme in collaboration with UNICEF zonal offices and outposts. In Bamyan, Daikundi and Ghor, UNICEF provided engineers to support the implementation of the Central Highlands School Construction Project. Similarly, provincial coordinators were recruited to support PEDs in its monitoring efforts of the education programme along with two field monitors. In Kandahar, where UNICEF staff are not able to physically monitor UNICEF supported projects due to limited access and security constraints, an NTA was recruited to support programme implementation and monitoring. At school level, through NGOs and the Teacher Education Department (TED), school teachers in 10 provinces were trained in child-friendly methodologies.

3.8 Key strategic partnerships developed

In 2015, UNICEF continued to play a major role in building partnerships to contribute to the Education sector by actively engaging in the Human Resource Development Board (HRDB), a policy forum which allows relevant government ministries (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Labour Social Martyrs and Disabled, Ministry of Women's Affairs and Ministry of Finance) and the development partners to jointly discuss priority education issues on a monthly basis. The forum comprises around 25 Development Partners. During these forums UNICEF continued to raise issues related to equity and equality, advocating for better access to quality education.

Another partnership that UNICEF continued to support is the implementation of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). UNICEF's role as a Supervising Entity for GPE has provided the opportunity to monitor the GPE on-budget Programme and build key strategic partnership with partners and key donors that are a party to the GPE Programme.

3.9 Leveraging of resources

The BEGE programme is mostly implemented by funds from UNICEF and bilateral donors. UNICEF Afghanistan continued to work with various donor countries such as the Governments of USA, Japan, Sweden, Iceland, Italy, Korea, UK and Canada and private donors who are supporting education through the German Committee for UNICEF for the generous additional funding support to implementation of the BEGE programme in 2015.

4 Resources

The budget for the Basic Education and Gender Equality Programme in 2015 was US\$45,392,980 of which US\$ 59,097,522 (fully funded). This included planned RR amount of US\$3,045,368 (of which US\$!The Formula Not In Table funded), and planned ORR of US\$42,347,612 (of which US\$!The Formula Not In Table funded). The table 1 below shows planned and funded budget for 2015.

Table 1: Basic Education and Gender Equality: Planned Budget and Funded for 2015 (in US Dollar)

Output	Planned Budget			Funded Amount		
	ORR	RR	Total	ORR	RR	Total
Output 1.1: Access to primary education for girls and boys in deprived provinces and other focus areas scaled up to meet the minimum defined standards for Afghanistan.	11,800,000	4,040,000	15,840,000	14,622,372	1,717,290	16,339,662
Output 1.2: National and subnational education authorities (MoE) have management and financial capacity to progressively manage Community Based Education and ensure higher transition rate from grade 3 to grade 4 for girls and boys (including EiE).	720,000	80,000	800,000	217,119	194,006	411,125
Output 1.3: GPE in Afghanistan leveraged for resources and results to meet national education objectives.	1,215,000	135,000	1,350,000	424,673	0	424,673
Output 1.4: Strengthened national and subnational capacity to implement Child Friendly Schools (CFS) especially in targeted schools in deprived provinces and other areas	5,412,000	1,338,000	6,750,000	1,924,259	401,480	2,325,739
Output 1.5: National capacity strengthened to develop and operationalize a system for monitoring of learning achievements and setting of national standards in core subjects for primary grades.	460,000	255,000	715,000	82,441	17,290	99,731
Output 1.6: Girls' education and Community Based Early Childhood Care and Education developed and demonstrated in selected communities in deprived provinces and other focus areas.	300,000	152,000	452,000	74,395	145,765	220,160

Grand Total	19,907,000	6,000,000	60,000,025,907,000	17,345,259	2,475,831	19,821,090
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¹ RR: Regular Resources, ORR: Other Resources - Regular

In 2015, Afghanistan did not receive country-level thematic funding.

4.1 Financial implementation

Table 2: Expenditures by Key Result Areas, 2015 (in USD)

Programme Area	ORE	ORR	RR	TOTAL
05-01 Early learning	70	97,573	252,989	350,633
05-02 Equity # focus on girls# and inclusive education	467,804	18,253,622	2,927,539	21,648,965
05-03 Learning and child-friendly schools	560,852	5,480,920	839,336	6,881,109
05-04 Education in emergencies	46,237	2,711		48,948
05-05 Education # General	8,123	7,726,073	5,700,269	13,434,465
Grand Total	1,083,087	31,560,900	9,720,133	42,364,120

* Expenditure figures provided do not include recovery cost, and are indicative figures obtained from UNICEF Performance Management System.

Table 3: Thematic Expenses by Programme Area, 2015 (in US Dollars)

Programme Area	Expense
05-02 Equity # focus on girls# and inclusive education	361,078
05-03 Learning and child-friendly schools	1,209,173
05-05 Education # General	3,881,133
Grand Total	5,451,384

Table 4: Expenses by Specific Intervention Codes (in US Dollars)

Specific intervention code	ORE	ORR	RR	Total
05-01-01 National policies on early learning and school readiness	0	0	4,952	4,952
05-01-04 Community-based child development and early learning	0	76,741	140,768	217,508
05-02-01 Out of School Children Initiative (OOSCI)	462,380	824,946	140,051	1,427,377
05-02-03 Girls# primary and pre-primary education (excluding UNGEI)	0	14,168,506	1,546,187	15,714,693
05-03-02 Child Friendly Schools # Education	244,938	3,123,776	465,459	3,834,173
05-03-04 Learning assessment systems	0	7,455	228	7,683
05-03-05 Curriculum reform or development	0	1,070,582	0	1,070,582
05-04-05 Education # Emergency preparedness	9,844	0	0	9,844
05-04-06 Education - Emergency response	20,774	0	0	20,774
05-05-08 Education -technical assistance to regional and country offices	0	7,434	0	7,434
05-05-09 Education -support to achieving global and regional goals	0	411,041	0	411,041
08-01-07 Humanitarian Planning (CAP/SRP, HAC) and review related activities	78	0	11,267	11,345
08-02-01 Situation Analysis or Update on women and children	0	82,261	476,878	559,140

Specific intervention code	ORE	ORR	RR	Total
08-02-02 Situation Analysis or Update focused on adolescents	0	0	427	427
08-02-08 Monitoring # General	0	27,834	6,119	33,953
08-02-09 Emergency rapid assessments	393	0	12,670	13,064
08-02-10 Humanitarian performance monitoring	0	0	4,861	4,861
08-03-01 Cross-sectoral Communication for Development	0	33,752	108,184	141,936
08-05-01 Supply # General	0	410,499	144,284	554,783
08-06-01 Building evaluation capacity in UNICEF and the UN system	0	0	217,209	217,209
08-08-01 Gender programming not classifiable by sector	0	0	50,008	50,008
08-09-06 Other # non-classifiable cross-sectoral activities	12,481	2,584,970	408,129	3,005,579
08-09-11 Emergency preparedness and response (General)	10,858	168,748	1,587,482	1,767,088
1903 Support to C4D interventions for multiple OTs within FA1	0	0	1,574	1,574
2031 Support to School fee abolition initiative	0	13,671	17,763	31,434
2062 Teacher training and support for basic education	5,184	5,582,159	3,283,242	8,870,586
5011 Situation Assessment and Analysis (SITAN) and MDG monitoring	0	0	22,623	22,623
5021 Support to MICS, DHS and other data collection systems and their analyses	0	0	12,152	12,152
5032 Knowledge management networks and systems in support of children and women including partners	0	0	376	376
5033 Knowledge systems in humanitarian action including emergency preparedness plans, rapid assessments etc.	290,034	0	824,779	1,114,813
6901 Staff costs (includes specialists, managers, TAs and consultancies) for multiple Focus Areas	0	0	13,839	5,817
7911 Representative and governance	0	0	22,974	22,974
7921 Operations # financial and administration	25,885	2,974,547	271,981	3,272,413
Grand Total	1,082,849	31,568,922	9,796,466	42,440,216

Table 5: Basic Education and Gender Equality: Planned Budget and Funded for 2016 (in US Dollars)

Output	Planned Budget			Funded Amount		
	ORR	RR	Total	ORR	RR	Total
Output 1.1: Access to primary education for girls and boys in deprived provinces and other focus areas scaled up to meet the minimum defined standards for Afghanistan.	11,800,000	4,040,000	15,840,000	11,800,000	4,040,000	15,840,000
Output 1.2: National and subnational education authorities (MoE) have management and financial capacity to progressively manage Community Based Education and ensure higher transition rate from grade 3 to grade 4 for girls and boys (including EiE).	720,000	80,000	800,000	720,000	80,000	800,000
Output 1.3: GPE in Afghanistan leveraged for resources and results to meet national education objectives.	1,215,000	135,000	1,350,000	891,106	81,000	972,106
Output 1.4: Strengthened national and subnational capacity to implement Child Friendly Schools (CFS) especially in	5,412,000	133,800	5,545,800	3,765,469	133,800	3,899,269

Output	Planned Budget			Funded Amount		
	ORR	RR	Total	ORR	RR	Total
targeted schools in deprived provinces and other areas						
Output 1.5: National capacity strengthened to develop and operationalize a system for monitoring of learning achievements and setting of national standards in core subjects for primary grades.	460,000	255,000	715,000	460,000	255,000	715,000
Output 1.6: Girls' education and Community Based Early Childhood Care and Education developed and demonstrated in selected communities in deprived provinces and other focus areas.	350,000	152,000	502,000	350,000	152,000	502,000
Grand Total	19,957,000	4,795,800	24,752,800	17,986,575	4,741,800	22,728,375

¹ RR: Regular Resources, ORR: Other Resources - Regular

5 Future work plan

In 2015, UNICEF began the implementation of the new Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP 2015-2019). The education programme is guided by the National Education Strategic Plan 2015-2020 (NESP III, currently under development) and will contribute to the operationalisation of the same plan.

The programme contributes to improving learning outcomes, especially for girls, through increased access to and utilisation of quality education. This will be achieved through scaled-up access to primary education for girls and boys in deprived areas and improved capacity of the MoE to manage community-based education, ensuring higher transition rates to grade 4 for girls and boys. Strengthened pre-service and in-service teacher training will increase the number of female teachers. Access to safe water, separate toilets and hygiene facilities for boys and girls in target schools will be strengthened by increasing the capacity of the MoE at national/provincial level to promote WASH and menstrual hygiene management.

National capacity will be increased to develop a child-friendly school policy and implementation guidelines. The MoE's capacity to develop and operationalise a national assessment system to monitor learning achievements and set national standards in primary school core subjects will be strengthened and community-based early childhood care and education will be piloted in select communities.

5.1 Increased access and retention to primary education in 10 priority provinces

In 2016 and within the new country programme, UNICEF will continue to support the MoE to increase access as per the norms. Further, advocacy will be done to develop minimum quality standards for the community-based education centers to operate. These standards will be based on the child-friendly school principles. UNICEF will support the operationalisation of the community-based education centres mainly in the ten focus provinces. Focus will be on accelerating construction and completion of the remaining 34 schools. This will be done by augmenting the human resources at the MoE and increase the monitoring visits to ensure timeliness and quality.

5.2 CFS package implemented in 10 provinces

In line with the 2016-2017 Rolling Workplan, UNICEF will continue to work in close collaboration with the MoE in order to finalise, print and distribute the School Improvement Plan (SIP) training manual, provide further capacity building to teachers in CFS in target provinces, work on the revision of curriculum materials integrating CFS concept and increase access of female to pre-service Teacher Training Colleagues (TTC) through scholarship. A national system of learning assessment is also proposed to be developed.

5.3 Girls Education and Early Childhood Care and Education

In 2016, UNICEF will continue its endeavors to reduce gender disparities and promote girls education. Efforts will be made to develop strategies to address the barriers to girls' education. Advocacy will continue to ensure a functioning Girls Education working group and coordination among the partners for girls' education. It is also planned to support MoE for piloting Early Childhood Care and Education which are specific to the country context.

5.4 GPE implementation take place as per the Revised Operational Plan

UNICEF will continue to provide technical support to MoE and GPEPCU to assure that programme implementation and expenditure rate are back on track. This will be done by timely identification of bottlenecks and accelerate programme implementation. UNICEF, in its role as SE, will provide continued support to MoE and GPEPCU to assist them with (1) accelerating the recruitment of female teachers; (2) institutionalising the inter-departmental coordination mechanism within MoE, (3) developing and implementing programme guideline and monitoring plan, (4) continuing oversight and monitoring of programmatic and fiduciary aspects of the programme at nation and sub-national levels, (5) conducting quarterly meetings on finance and procurement among UNICEF, MoE, and Financial Advisor to address the recommendations made and agree with MoE on taking proper measures and actions accordingly, (6) carrying on external audit of the GPE programme, (7) financing GPE zone-level workshops on programme progress, (8) undertaking annual fiduciary risk assessment on the utilization of GPE funds, (9) continuing programmatic and fiduciary monitoring of the programme by Financial Advisor in the GPE targeted provinces and districts, and (x) processing with the preparation of the application for next phase (GPE II).

5.5 Timely emergency preparedness and response

In 2016, UNICEF will continue its technical and financial support to MoE in terms of system strengthening and effective EiE service delivery for affected children. Education officials at the national, provincial, district and school level will be trained to collect data, analyse situation, develop programme strategies, coordinate and monitor EiE services according to the minimum standards. They will also be trained to develop emergency preparedness plan which can be implemented at all levels. As first phase, the system strengthening and emergency preparedness will be piloted at selected province, district and schools. Lessons that are learnt from pilot activities will be incorporated into next phases.

5.6 HACT assurance activities

In 2016, UNICEF will focus on rolling out the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer (HACT). This will entail capacity building of implementing partners and adopting a strengthened systematic approach to financial monitoring through spot checks and audits. Programme monitoring will be done through a combination of using existing government systems, third party monitoring and also try out innovative technology based solutions for remote and insecure areas.

6 Expression of thanks

UNICEF Afghanistan deeply appreciates and thanks each donor for the generous contributions in support of education in Afghanistan. The funding enabled many children gain access to basic education which is one of their basic rights. UNICEF also thank colleagues from all the line ministries and departments for their cooperation and support at the central, provincial, districts and community levels. We equally value and appreciate the local community contribution in programme implementation and ensuring quality of output. Finally, UNICEF treasures the collaboration and partnerships with all development partners, local and international NGOs working in different sectors that ensured attainment of the results for the people of Afghanistan.

A human interest story: Shaima – A role model for girls in a remote village in Badakhshan

In Ersu village of Yawan District, a mountainous district in central Badakhshan, Shaima (not her real name), at 20 years of age teaches around 20 girls in a grade 1 class at a UNICEF-supported community based school. Shaima is the only educated girl in her village, having completed Grade 12 at a formal school in the district. Shaima teaches children aged 7 to 9 years in two shifts – one in the morning and another in the afternoon.

Intent on continuing her studies to become a teacher at a Ministry of Education formal school later in life, Shaima also attends Teacher Training centre located in the district headquarters. “Most of the girls in my village are not educated” said Shaima. “I completed my education up to grade 12 with many difficulties and problems but with the support of my father and my mother, I was able to travel to and from my village to the district centre by donkey. Now that I have graduated from grade 12 and am studying at the Teacher Training Centre, other small girls in my village are motivated and their parents are now more willing to educate their children, especially their daughters. I want to be an example for other girls and parents to see and send their children, especially girls to school to receive an education”.

Although Badakhshan Province is among the poorest provinces in Afghanistan, there is a strong commitment to education, including for girls. There are over one million people in Badakhshan and some 70 percent of girls in the province are now enrolled in primary school. However, this still leaves some 30 percent of young children without access to primary schooling, mostly girls. These children are living in the more remote and difficult to access villages out of the reach of the education system. In those villages, the last generation of children, now young adults, missed out on an education, depriving them of their right to grow and develop to their full potential. The present generation of young children will miss out on education unless the education system can be expanded to be closer to their villages. That expansion has started through the UNICEF-supported community-based education.

