

## Empowerment through Education in Afghanistan



There are many barriers preventing girls in Afghanistan from getting an education – but CARE’s **Empowerment through Education Project (EEA)**, which has operated from 2011 to 2017, with support from the Australian Government, has helped rural communities in northern and south-eastern Afghanistan to send their children, including girls, to school. This has helped to change attitudes to gender equality.

### **Context**

From 2007-2017, participation in education in Afghanistan has risen sharply. During the internal conflict prior to 2001, only 1 million children were enrolled in school - of which fewer than 50,000 were girls. Since 2001, school attendance has increased to 7 million children, including 2.5 million girls. Despite this achievement, an estimated 4.2 million children are still out of school and 60 per cent are girls.

There are many barriers preventing girls in Afghanistan from getting an education, such as long distances between their homes and schools, safety and security issues, restricted movement, a shortage of female teachers, poor facilities, household responsibilities, early marriage and the lack of value placed on female education. However, CARE’s long history of working in the country, stretching back to 1961, has enabled it to help overcome those

barriers. Since 2005, CARE has been providing sustainable Community-Based Education (CBE) for marginalised children, youth and adults in remote and rural areas with no access to formal schools. CBE involves a localised approach in recruiting local teachers and involving the community in the management and monitoring of classes. CARE's model also empowers women and girls' access to economic and social resources by building their confidence and leadership skills.

### ***What have we achieved?***

**School enrolment:** From 2011-2017, the project helped 24,811 Afghan children (18,112 girls) to attend classes. Under the current phase from 2015 -2017 it has supported 5,389 students (3,934 girls), 246 school teachers (89 female), and 205 classes in 135 rural and remote communities of 12 districts in Parwan, Kapisa, Khost, Paktya and Ghazni Provinces.

**Improving the quality of teaching:** From 2015-17 teachers receiving training from CARE on teaching skills. They are on track to meet the target of 80% of teachers demonstrating improved teaching methods and knowledge in the classroom, such as structuring classes and lessons.

**Community mobilisation:** CARE has supported the creation of 203 Village Education Committees (VECs) since 2015. These involve parents, teachers and community members in the management of the school. Of the 182 committees at the primary grades level, 42% of members are female; at the Lower Secondary level all 21 committees are 100% female. There are 611 committee members across the provinces, with the overall percentage of females at 48%.

**Change in attitude towards educating girls:** The establishment of community-based schools has changed community perceptions and attitudes on girls' education. In focus group discussions and interviews with Education Department officials, village elders and teachers, more than 90% of respondents said that they supported girls' education and acknowledged the harm of underage marriage.

**Built girls' leadership skills and decision-making skills:** 344 peer groups with 2,247 members were established to provide an opportunity for girls to identify and discuss topics of mutual interest, including the importance of education, personal and environmental hygiene, health, personal histories and the benefits of libraries. Recreational activities and meaningful development opportunities were also promoted. In addition, 916 girls joined 812 village committee meetings. They shared their class issues with the village committee members and participated in decision making. This enabled them to develop their leadership skills.

### **Women are acquiring more education and professional experience:**

1916 girls (88%) of girls who completed lower secondary schooling went on to high school.

Out of the 1045 lower secondary students, supported by CARE, who have graduated from high school since 2008, 674 sat for the university entrance exams and 234 passed (34.7%). Of those who passed:

- 53 are undertaking Teacher Training.

- 38 are undergoing two years of vocational training through the Faculty for Women (Science, Physics and Management).
- 23 are studying Education.
- 17 are studying Language & Literature.
- 13 have gone to medical school
- 113 students were supported with CARE Scholarships.

Community-based teachers provided training to all 700 female lower secondary students. This will enable girls to continue their higher education as teachers/administrators in CBE or government schools, or to work as health educators in their communities.

### *How did we achieve this?*

- The project worked with the Ministry of Education (MoE) to train community-based teachers, providing mentorship, guidance, and support. This enabled them to become part of the formal education system.
- There was strong cooperation and partnership between the project, Provincial Education Departments, District Education Departments and the Ministry through monthly coordination meetings. This supported joint planning and monitoring.
- Having known and trusted members of the community monitoring school activities through the Village Education Committees made parents and community leaders feel comfortable with the community-based classes and has influenced even highly conservative, traditional households to allow their daughters to attend. Village Education Committees have also helped parents understand the importance of educating girls and to address barriers towards girls' education. They provided an environment in which women and girls can participate in decision making.
- Student peer groups and Village Education Committees have provided a platform for women and girls to build confidence and leadership skills.
- Students received school supplies. This supported families in the target communities, many of whom were unable to afford school fees and materials.

### *Who is CARE working with?*

- 135 rural and remote communities in Parwan, Kapisa, Ghazni, Paktya and Khost provinces.
- Ministry of Education (MoE).
- Provincial Education Departments, District Education Departments.