

# Afghanistan National Education Coalition (ANEC)

## CSO Spotlight Key Messages on SDG 4



### AFGHANISTAN

<b>Population:</b>	38.9 million (Worldometers, 2020)
<b>2021 Global Index Score:</b>	53.9/100 (SDR 2021)
<b>2021 Global Index Rank:</b>	137/165 (SDR 2021)
<b>SDG 4 Dashboard:</b>	● Major challenges remain (SDR 2021)
<b>SDG 4 Trend:</b>	↗ Moderately improving (SDR 2021)
<b>2019 HDI Value/Rank:</b>	0.511, 169 out of 189 (HDRO, 2020)
<b>GNI per capita (PPP\$):</b>	2,229 (HDRO, 2020)
<b>Income Group:</b>	Low-Income Status (WB, 2020)
<b>Secondary Net Enrolment:</b>	Total: 50.4% Female: 36.8% Male: 63.3% (UNESCO, 2018)
<b>Literacy Rate (15 years &amp; older):</b>	Total: 43% Female: 29.8% Male: 55.5% (UNESCO, 2018)
<b>Out of School:</b>	Total (ages 7 to 17 years): 3.7 million Girls: 2.22 million Boys: 1.48 million (UNICEF, 2018)

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**Context:** The education system in Afghanistan remains fragile due to more than three decades of war and conflict. Completing primary education is difficult for many children in the country, especially for girls. In 2018, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) estimated Afghanistan's illiterate population (age 15+) at 12 million (7.2m female, 4.8m male) from a total of 36 million. The literacy rate is 43.02 per cent, in which female literacy is only 29.81 per cent compared to males at 55.48 per cent. This substantial gender gap in education has a major impact on the social, economic, and political situation of the country.

While there has been a considerable increase in enrolment, persisting challenges of insufficient teachers, especially female teachers, deliberate attacks on schools, poor infrastructure, traditional socio-cultural norms, protracted conflicts and environmental crises continue to devastate the education of the country. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed severe threats to the already fragile education system of Afghanistan. The sudden school closures due to the pandemic and economic difficulties at the family level have increased dropout rates. The Ministry of Education adopted few approaches to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on education, such as Distance Learning through the Internet, television, and radio, and learning at schools in smaller groups following the health guidelines by the Ministry of Public Health.

The Ministry of Education considers Literacy Education as a foundation for lifelong learning and continuing education. This new vision underlying Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) enables upward socio-economic mobility and is key to overcoming poverty. Through the efforts of the Ministry, there has been an increase in the literacy rates of young people. However massive challenges remain and a great number of people lack literacy skills and opportunities for continuing education in the country.

The peace talks that started in 2020 is an encouraging initiative for a future free of violence for the citizens of Afghanistan. At the same time, equitable and inclusive access to education for all is a strategic approach towards building sustainable peace in the country.

#### Recommendations:

1. Integrate the education agenda into the priority programmes of the government and ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong education for all learners, especially girls and women.
2. Provide literacy programmes and vocational training with more financial and technical support; paying more attention to the needs of persons with disabilities.
3. Protect girls' and women's education as one of the fundamental and non-negotiable rights during the peace talks and the political structure. In the composition of the negotiation team, one representative must have an active and significant presence on behalf of the CSOs of the education sector.
4. Allocate sufficient and well-targeted financial and technical support to the education of all learners, especially the most marginalised groups, including women and girls, and increase support for female teachers.
5. Protect schools and educational centres and take steps to ensure that these serve as safe spaces and conducive learning environments. The Government of Afghanistan and political groups must commit themselves not to use schools for military or political purposes. Increase government support for the implementation of support programmes for schools and students, such as the National School Safety Programme.
6. A holistic standard curriculum is one of the most fundamental components of quality education. The Ministry of Education must prepare the curriculum in accordance with regional and international standards and make it available to students nationwide. In the last two decades, more work has been done on the structure of education in terms of quantity and less attention has been paid to quality. Therefore, it is necessary to facilitate the standardisation of the curriculum so that at least 12th-grade graduates can find jobs in the labour market and empower learners to think critically and respond to life's challenges.
7. The government should ensure that education is accessible, inclusive and of good quality for all. Infrastructures, equipment, laboratories of learning, and education technology that are adaptive to local contexts and responsive to the needs of learners should be provided and financed.
8. Address the shortage of professional teachers and create new positions. Special efforts should be taken for recruitment, training and retention of female teachers.
9. The government, especially the Ministry of Education, should pay serious attention to literacy and adult education and allocate more financial and technical resources.
10. Improve the provision of and access to technical and vocational education by establishing vocational training centres according to the demands of the ever-evolving labour market and based on a national certification system that adheres to international standards.
11. Specialised support for people with specific needs and people with disabilities must be provided, including access to devices and trained and qualified teachers. Recruitment and job creation for them should also be included in the priority programmes of the Afghan government.
12. The country's education system is facing a serious challenge in delivering distance and online education, which was further exposed by the pandemic. The Ministry of Education and the country's development partners need to put serious attention to online and digital education and provide urgent financing support.
13. While the Afghan Government allocation was on an average of 15 per cent of the national budget till 2020,<sup>1</sup> it has reduced drastically in 2021 to 8.6 per cent. Education is in constant attack in the country. A robust budget allocation and increase in aid up to 20 per cent is critical to saving the public education system. •

<sup>1</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GB.ZS>

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