ALL CHILDREN IN SCHOOL AND LEARNING

GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN

AFGHANISTAN COUNTRY STUDY

unicef

SAMUEL HALL.

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Cover photo: A young girl attends a community-based school under a tent in a returnee settlement in Laghman province in eastern Afghanistan, following her family's return from Pakistan. ©UNICEF Afghanistan/2017/Aziz Froutan

Suggested citation: Ministry of Education, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Samuel Hall, *All in School and Learning: Global Initiative on Out-Of-School Children – Afghanistan Country Study,* Ministry of Education, UNICEF, Samuel Hall and USAID, Kabul, 2018.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Afs	afghanis
ALC	accelerated learning centre
ALCS	Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey
AMICS	Afghanistan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
ANAR	adjusted net attendance rate
AOG	armed opposition group
CBE	community-based education
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CSO	Central Statistics Organization
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
ECD	early childhood development
ECE	early childhood education
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EQUIP	Education Quality Improvement Program
GDP	gross domestic product
IDP	internally displaced person
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MoLSAMD	Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled
NESP	National Education Strategic Plan
NGO	non-governmental organization
NRVA	National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
OOSC	out-of-school children
OOSCI	out-of-school children initiative
SDES	Socio-Demographic and Economic Surveys
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
TVET	technical vocational education and training
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO UIS	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNPD	United Nations Population Division

GLOSSARY

At-risk children	Children at-risk of dropping out of school and becoming OOSC.
Attended but dropped out	Out-of-school children recorded as having been in school at some point but no longer.
Closed/non-existent schools	Closed/non-existent schools that receive government/ international funding.
Grade retention	The process of having a student repeat a grade because the student failed the previous year. Students who repeat a grade are referred to as 'repeaters'.
Hidden populations	A research population is 'hidden' when no sampling frame exists and public acknowledgment of membership in the population is potentially threatening.
In-school children	Children reported as currently being in school.
Invisible children	Invisible children are those children included in neither census databases nor the MoE's EMIS system.
Lower secondary school aged children	Children aged 13–15 years registered in population-based databases.
Preschool education	Learning space offering early childhood education to children, prior to the commencement of compulsory education at primary school. School age in Afghanistan starts at 6 years old.
Primary ANAR	Number of children of primary school age (7–12 years) attending primary or secondary education divided by the number of children of primary school age.
Primary school aged children	Children aged 7–12 years (Grade 1–6) and registered in population-based databases.
Will enter school later	Out-of-school children of preschool and primary school age (7–12 years) who will enter school late.
Will never enter school	OOSC with currently no exposure to education at all, and with socio-economic characteristics that lead to very limited exposure to education in the future.


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FOREWORD

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has achieved enormous progress in the education sector since 2001. Educational access in terms of infrastructure and enrolment – in particular that of girls – has improved dramatically. However, this significant report estimates that as many as 3.7 million children in Afghanistan remain out of school, a total of 43.7 per cent of the primary aged population. Girls at all ages are less likely to attend school than boys. In addition, a further 300,000 children who currently access primary school are at risk of dropping out. We cannot achieve our Government's ambitious plan for long-term prosperity in Afghanistan without continuing to prioritize programming that brings out-of school children (OOSC) into the education system.

This report represents a major step forward for stakeholders concerned with education provision in Afghanistan. The report establishes a baseline of the number and profiles of OOSC, outlines factors that contribute to unsatisfactory enrolment rates, and recommends practical policy options for overcoming barriers to education in Afghanistan. By better understanding our OOSC, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and its partners can better plan to achieve universal access to educational opportunities.

In considering the key findings of the report, MoE leadership is prepared to design multifaceted programs to reduce the numbers of OOSC. The researchers found that OOSC rarely face one single identified barrier to schooling: most OOSC face multiple obstacles – economic, cultural, and security-related – that exclude them from education. Focusing on our most vulnerable children, including girls, the MoE will work with development partners, government ministries, and communities to bring OOSC into the education system through cross-sectoral programming. The report highlights that coordination of effort among these stakeholders is paramount to addressing the challenges of OOSC.

Many of the recommendations of this report already appear in the current National Education Strategic Plan (NESP III); the report will serve as an advocacy tool for harnessing the resources necessary for implementing our strategic vision. Ensuring safe learning environments, especially for girl children; recruiting and training female teachers; improving pedagogy; introducing early childhood education; exploring distance learning modules; and – importantly – collecting and sharing better data on OOSC and related statistics—these and other strategies for bringing OOSC into Afghanistan's education system feature in the NESP and require long-term resourcing.

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Ministry of Education are committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 – "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all" – which reaffirms our belief that education is one of the most powerful and proven vehicles for progress. We thank everyone who contributed to this important research, in particular UNICEF and its Out-of-School Children Initiative, Samuel Hall, dedicated MoE staff, and study participants. In preparing this valuable report, we are a step closer to our goals.

Dr. Mohammad Ibrahim Shinwari
Acting Minister of Education


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Children in Afghanistan – and their households – may face war, displacement, migration and natural disasters in trying to access education, in addition to more common difficulties such as poverty and lack of access. This study, part of the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children launched by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics (UNESCO UIS), seeks to identify the barriers preventing children in Afghanistan from attending school, identify gaps in the current approaches to addressing these barriers and provide policy recommendations to move forward effectively. This is in line with the studies conducted elsewhere at the country and regional level for the out-of-school children initiative (OOSCI), based on existing data.

The situation of Afghanistan is particularly unique amongst these other studies, due to the challenges listed and the realities of existing data – or lack thereof – in the country. Strong data are key to the analyses conducted through the studies on out-of-school children (OOSC); yet in Afghanistan, estimates even of the number of children in school in 2015 given by government officials have ranged from 6 million to 11 million. The last full census was carried out in 1979. Official population estimates for 2015 vary from approximately 27 million (Central Statistics Organization, CSO) to nearly 34 million (United Nations Population Division, UNPD). Official education records keep children on the books for three years, minimizing their usability for the OOSC analyses. This study thus relies primarily on three data sources, based on household surveys:[1]

- **National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) (2007–2008, 2011–2012)** and **Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey (ALCS) (2013–2014)**. The ALCS and NRVA were used broadly for economic indicators and measurements concerning nomadic populations. The ALCS also provided the data relating to child labour.

[1] While more recent versions of these are currently underway, their data were not yet available at the time of analysis and writing.

- **Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) (2010, 2015).** The DHS, which is collected by the World Health Organization and Afghanistan Central Statistics Organization, provides provincial-level data and was primarily used for analyses relating to wealth, as it is the only data source providing a wealth index.

- **Afghanistan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (AMICS) (2011–2012).** While not directly used to generate data tables, the AMICS provided a reliable point of comparison to the findings.

The first chapter of this report provides an overview of the country context, the Afghan educational system and its key stakeholders, and the report methodology. The second chapter presents the data sources used as well as the profiles of out-of-school children using the Five Dimensions of Exclusion model. In the third chapter, barriers and bottlenecks to education in Afghanistan are examined in the context of these dimensions of exclusion. The fourth chapter considers existing policies and approaches to addressing these barriers and bottlenecks. Finally, the fifth chapter offers recommendations based on the findings of the study to best support out-of-school children in Afghanistan and strengthen the educational system itself. The annexes include, amongst others, key data tables outlined in the *Global Out-of-School Children Initiative Operational Manual* on which the analysis of this study is based.

The Five Dimensions of Exclusion in Afghanistan

The Five Dimensions of Exclusion model considers two primary 'types' of children: (1) Children of school age not in school (Dimensions 2 and 3), and (2) children in primary or secondary school who are at risk of dropping out (Dimensions 4 and 5). Identifying the profiles of these children in the Afghan context and linking this to the barriers and bottlenecks of exclusion allows for the development of appropriate and targeted recommendations to address this exclusion.

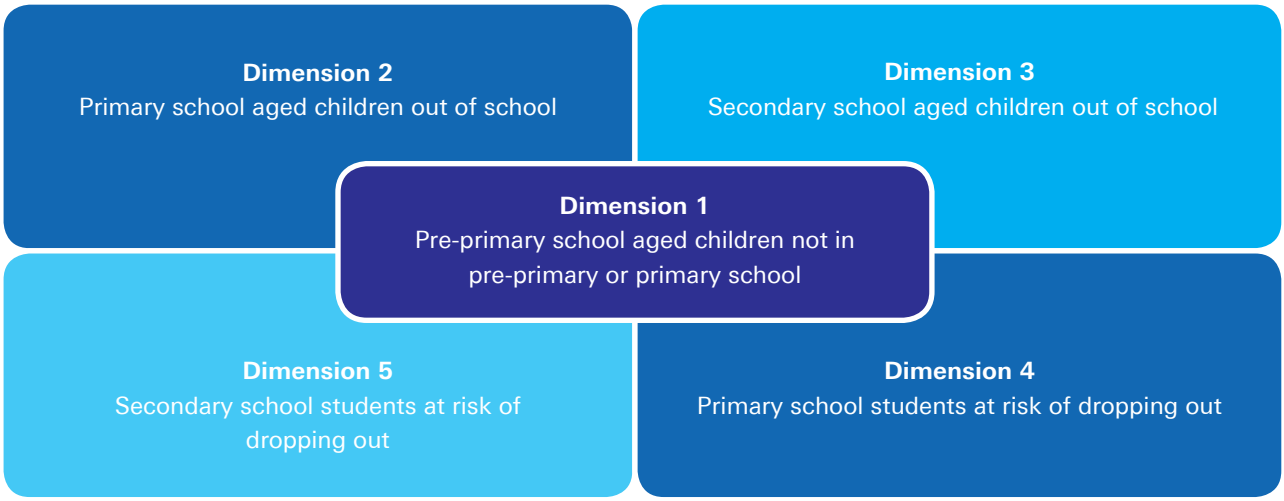
The data limitations touched on here and detailed in Section 1.5 of the report guide what can and cannot be analysed in the Afghan context. Despite these, the research identified clear trends amongst OOSC and children at risk of dropping out, in particular for Dimensions 2 and 3:

Dimension 1 – Children of pre-primary school age who are out of school – no nationwide data exist on pre-primary education at this point in time allowing for clear analyses. However, secondary literature notes this as a key gap in Afghanistan, with estimates that only 1 per cent of children attend early childhood education programmes, which is of particular concern in rural areas.

Dimension 2 – Children of primary school age who are out of school – an estimated 2.3 million (CSO)/2.6 million (UNPD) children are out of school at the primary level. Girls in the country's southern provinces are most likely to be out of school; other children at risk, more broadly, include those living in rural areas, Kuchi (nomadic) children, children whose households are in the lower three wealth quintiles, children whose head of household has no formal education, and children in insecure areas. Working children whose head of household has no education are also less likely to attend school.

Using the ALCS to conduct analyses in conjunction with CSO population estimates, the data show an overall OOSC

Figure ES1 Five Dimensions of Exclusion



rate of 19.7 per cent of urban children at the primary level, while 47.4 per cent of rural children of primary school age are out of school. In terms of concentrations of OOSC, the greatest numbers of out-of-school girls are located in Kabul, Kandahar, Herat and Nangarhar.

Dimension 3 – Children of lower secondary school age who are out of school – an estimated 854,000 (CSO)/984,000 (UNPD) children of lower secondary age are out of school. As with Dimension 2, girls in the southern provinces are most likely to be out of school. Again, other children at risk, more broadly, include those living in rural areas (19.3 per cent of lower secondary aged children in urban areas versus 47.0 per cent of those in rural areas are out of school), Kuchi children, children whose households are in the lower three wealth quintiles, children whose head of household has no formal education, children with no school exposure, and children in insecure areas.

Dimensions 4 and 5 – Children in primary and lower secondary school at risk of dropping out – an estimated 257,000 (CSO)/296,000 (UNPD) current primary school students are expected to drop out before the end of primary school, and approximately 42,000 (CSO)/48,000 (UNPD) current lower secondary school students are expected to drop out before the end of lower secondary school. While for children in primary school, the risk of dropping out is equal for boys and girls, at the lower secondary level, girls are more likely to drop out than boys (8.3 per cent vs. 4.1 per cent). Displaced children are also expected to be more likely to drop out.

Compared to neighbouring countries, Afghanistan actually fares better than some (Pakistan, Nepal) in dropout and survival rates. However, in the case of Afghanistan, it is likely that the dropout rate is also improved by the sheer number of children who never even entered school.

Barriers and bottlenecks to education in Afghanistan and policies to address them

Although the Constitution of Afghanistan calls for the free provision of education until the level of bachelor's degree by the state, significant numbers of children remain out of school and at risk of dropping out despite progress, in particular girls. To better understand this, existing barriers and bottlenecks to access to education were examined alongside three key dimensions, namely:

- **Demand-side barriers:** This includes barriers to education stemming from *insufficient demand* from the population for education for those of school age. These were further disaggregated between socio-cultural demand barriers (social expectations, gender and education; parents' level of education; language/ethnicity-based exclusion; violence/harassment/bullying) and economic demand barriers (general poverty/low household income; lack of guardianship for vulnerable children; opportunity costs and child labour; ancillary costs; lack of employment opportunities following education completion).

- **Supply-side barriers:** This includes challenges to attending school caused by *the lack of educational opportunities offered*. Key supply barriers identified and examined range from lack of provision for nomadic ways of life, lack of effective displacement-related solutions and lack of early childhood education to pedagogy and quality/quantity of teachers, content of learning curriculum, quality/quantity of infrastructure and stigma against overage children.

- **Political, governance, capacity and financial barriers:** The lack of verified data on education and public sector financial constraints and mismanagements were specifically considered, as were challenges related to security and conflict.

These barriers are not separate phenomena, existing in isolation of each other, but rather are often co-dependent and require integrated interventions to overcome them (Dryden-Peterson, 2009):

Demand-side barriers highlighted in particular the contextual challenges to girls' education in Afghanistan, ranging from cultural beliefs to practices that negatively impact girls' demand for and access to education, such as religious beliefs in certain areas that girls should only attend religious institutions – or not attend school at all – and child marriage, which remains the second most reported reason for girls dropping out of school. Insecurity of the trip to school and in schools themselves is real – but gendered perceptions of insecurity, suggested by the significantly different rates between insecurity being given as a reason for non-attendance of school for boys and girls, further limit girls' access to schooling.

More broadly, parental level of education, general poverty and ancillary costs of schooling were highlighted in the secondary literature as key barriers and generally confirmed by the findings of this analysis. While child labour does not preclude attendance at school, children engaging in child labour are more likely to be out of school, and when they do attend school, less prepared to focus and learn.

Supply-side barriers to education were quite closely tied to **political, governance, capacity and financial** barriers and bottlenecks, as the latter limit – although cannot be exclusively blamed for the lack thereof – access to education. Nomadic and displaced populations, for example, may lack the necessary papers to access education. Teachers are, in some cases, insufficiently trained (only 43 per cent of teachers meet minimum qualification requirements, according to the 2015 *Education for All* report), and there is a shortage of teachers in insecure areas, especially of female teachers. Lack of appropriate hard infrastructure, such as lack of boundary walls for schools, further limit the willingness of families to allow children, especially girls, to go to schools.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) is limited in its ability to address these challenges by financial constraints – the budget available for education has not kept pace with the increased demand for it, and the lack of real data around education makes it harder to justify requests for budget increases. Finally, security and conflict limit children at a micro level – individual children can, for example, be injured and become physically disabled due to improvised explosive devices – and at a macro level, as fear for children's safety renders parents less likely to send them to school, and the government itself may not be able to deliver education in some areas.

An examination of existing policies, strategies and interventions to address the barriers and bottlenecks to education in Afghanistan, viewed through the lens of the Five Dimensions of Exclusion, highlights a laudable commitment on the part of the Government of Afghanistan and the Ministry of Education to address these barriers, and the existence of a number of policies touching on some of these barriers. However, many of these are still in the process of finalization, or, while existing, are not implemented nationwide. The new MoE strategy for 2017 plans ambitious reforms and the National Education Strategic Plan 2017–2021 addresses many barriers identified. The question, then, is not just one of policy making, but rather policy and strategy implementation. Awareness of these is limited and donor-driven priorities are often the most visible.

Recommendations and path forward

In line with Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is now time to make OOSC a national cause in Afghanistan, with a specific commitment from the international community, a dedicated budget and doable time-bound programmes. As researchers reviewed the key findings of the quantitative and qualitative information they had collected on the ground or analysing official data, repeated ideas, concepts or elements became apparent, grouped into concepts, and then into categories. Such a grounded approach is quite different from more traditional models of research and allowed the authors to better tailor their recommendations to the specificities of the Afghan context while mitigating the risk of subjectivity and partiality. Figure ES2 synthesizes the five main areas (or 'groups') the following recommendations seek to address in priority.

Specifically, the following recommendations are proposed:

Vision: Making OOSC a multisectoral national cause

- Promoting cross-sectoral efforts to overcome actual barriers to schooling

Coordination: Optimizing cross-sectoral approaches

- Developing a cross-sectoral mindset among all relevant stakeholders (education, health, child protection, welfare, etc.)
- Enhancing and optimizing donor coordination
- Systematizing local-level participatory coordination
- Exploring ways to capitalize on public-private partnerships to expand provision, particularly of lower secondary education for disadvantaged students

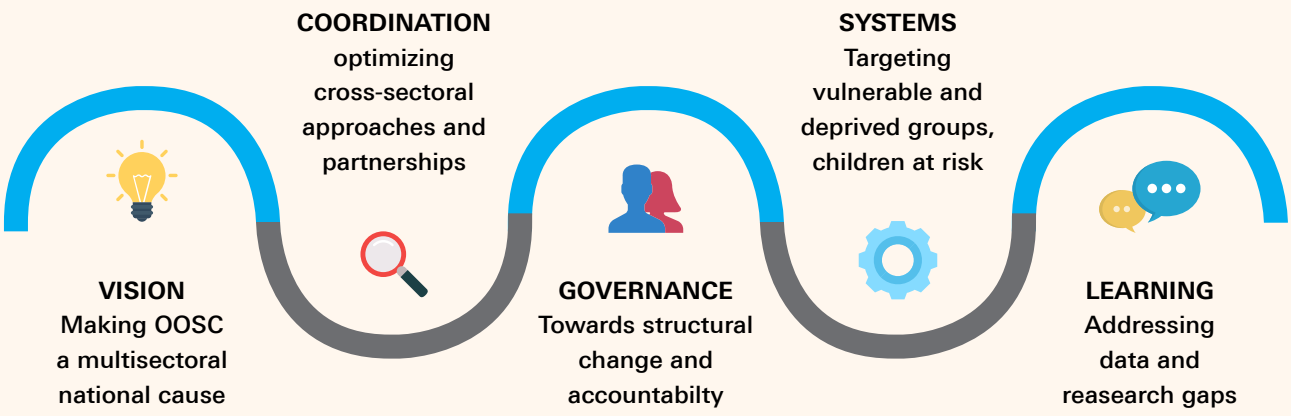
Governance: Towards structural changes

- Clarifying the MoE's role and responsibilities
- Supporting an ambitious strategy, with a clear theory of change and realistic implementation roadmap
- Implementing existing legislation on compulsory nature of school, wherever it is possible
- Increasing public spending on basic education
- Ensuring equitable, responsive and optimal budget allocations

Education systems: Targeting vulnerable groups

- Developing concrete rationale in favour of girls' education
- Supporting the eradication of child marriage
- Targeting provinces with disproportionately high girls' out-of-school rates
- Ensuring girls' learning facilities meet basic security and health standards
- Recruiting and training female teachers
- Improving equitable distribution of resources within the education system by focusing on specific groups of marginalized children
- Expanding public provision of school and preschool infrastructure, targeting the most deprived areas
- Providing schools and areas that perform below

Figure ES2 Overview of recommendations



average in terms of retention and learning achievements with tailored support and resources
- Developing pilot Conditional Cash Transfer programmes
- Offering food in schools
- Designing 'safe walk' systems, with community support
- Scaling up early childhood development programmes and government-led pre-primary education
- Improving pedagogy (teaching and learning)
- Reducing dropout rates in the primary cycle and increasing transition rates between the primary and lower secondary education cycle
- Using technology to facilitate long-distance learning/at home learning for children in rural and insecure areas

Learning: Addressing data and research gaps

- Implementing a rigorous household census, in collaboration with the CSO, UNICEF, UNESCO and other relevant technical actors
- Addressing specific recommendations for the Education Management Information System
- Setting an ambitious and pragmatic research agenda on both short and long term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1

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, approximately 61 million children of primary school age were out of school, as were 62 million of lower secondary school age and an additional 141 million children of upper secondary school age.[2] Children who are out of school are amongst the most vulnerable and hard to reach members of society.[3]

This lack of education can engender further forms of discrimination, trapping them in a cycle on the periphery of their countries' societies and futures. Today, millions of children in Afghanistan face this situation.

1.1 The Out-of-School Children Initiative as a universal development priority

In 2010, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics (UNESCO UIS) launched the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children to "uncover data and details about the children left behind and offer country-specific policy recommendations and interventions". Using statistical methods and policy analysis of barriers to education, the out-of-school children initiative (OOSCI) aims to address this lack of information, and thus "significantly and sustainably reduce the number of children who are out of school around the world". At this point in time, the OOSCI had 87 partner countries, producing reports at the country, regional and global level.[4]

[2] http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/out-school-children-and-youth
[3] http://allinschool.org
[4] http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/out-school-children-and-youth

Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals aims to "Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning".[5] While from 2000 to 2012 the number of out-of-school children (OOSC) and adolescents worldwide slowly decreased, this trend has plateaued in recent years, suggesting that achieving this target by 2030 would be difficult.[6]

Numerous structural inequalities and other forms of disparities, such as poverty, disability, gender discrimination and ethnic/cultural discrimination, can make it difficult for governments to achieve set goals in providing education for all.[7] Countries in situations of conflict, where government control is limited, face additional difficulties.

Key to being able to address these challenges effectively is strong data: accurate understandings of what keeps children from attending school and who is out of school allows for the development of targeted and evidence-based interventions to eliminate identified barriers. These can inform policies focusing on marginalized children in the context of more broadly improving access to education. However, existing official data on the topic in many cases may be limited, governments lacking the will, capacity or ability to both collect and analyse such data.

1.2 Situational analysis

Population data estimates in Afghanistan, from the general to the education related, differ widely. The CSO estimates an overall population of 29,724,323 in Afghanistan in 2017–2018. The United Nations Population Division (UNPD) estimates 33,736,000 in 2015. Similarly, while the Karzai Administration repeatedly gave a figure of 11 million children in school in Afghanistan, the erstwhile Minister of Education, Hanif Balkhi, stated that the Education Management Information System (EMIS) records show 6 million children in school in 2015, and Ministry of Education (MoE) staff have given the figure of 9.1 million students enrolled.[8]

Estimates on the number of OOSC differ as well. The MoE estimates that in 2016, there were over 4.5 million children out of school, of whom about 3.5 million have never attended school (as given in the 2016 Education Sector Analysis).[9] In comparison, the Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey (ALCS) estimates that approximately 2.3 million primary school aged children have never attended school.[10]

Population estimates differ due to a host of reasons, ranging from different census estimates based on 1979 data (the last full census carried out in Afghanistan), successive changes in legislation, regional differences of the compulsory school age, uneven resource allocation of ministerial and international funding to an overall lack of reliable data.

However, both the CSO and UNPD population estimates note a significant portion of the population as being under the age of 15, with 48 per cent of the population under the age of 15 in 2017 according to the CSO. From an education perspective, this means that even in an ideal world, where 100 per cent of Afghan children went to school, the current infrastructure and budget available for education would likely not be sufficient in 5–10 years. In the current state, where numerous children are already out of school, it underlines the need for urgent support to the system to avoid a worsening situation.

Education in Afghanistan has also been frequently interrupted by war, displacement, migration, natural disasters, or otherwise, bringing with it a set of particular challenges. It is not uncommon for classes in primary education to include children of considerable higher ages, and limited access to formal documentation has led to further problems for education governance. It will become apparent that datasets used for this study include significant age heaping. Interpretation of results has therefore been done cautiously.

While making recommendations to improve population statistics goes beyond the scope of this study, improving 'baseline' population statistics is of key importance for measuring progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

The range of population estimates detailed above showcases the current data situation – or rather lack thereof – in Afghanistan today. This is of particular concern given the fact that Afghanistan is host to many

[5] www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education
[6] http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/reducing-global-poverty-through-universal-primary-secondary-education.pdf
[7] https://www.unicef.org/education/files/OOSCI_.pdf
[8] First stated by the incumbent Minister of Education in an interview with Tolo News, 'Minister Sets Record Straight, Only Six Million In School', accessed 6 March 2017. MoE figure comes from EMIS staff as reported to Samuel Hall.
[9] Education Sector Analysis, 2016, p. 69.
[10] Ibid.

of the structural barriers and challenges that have led to OOSC elsewhere:

- Geographically, Afghanistan presents access challenges, with much of its terrain mountainous.[11]
- An ethnically and linguistically diverse nation, Afghanistan counts numerous ethnic groups, including Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara, Turkmen and Baloch amongst others.[12] These may have different cultural traditions and speak different languages.
- Cultural norms have a particularly strong impact on the situation of women; only one out of five women aged 15–24 years was literate in 2012. They also impact children, as worldwide child protection standards are not followed in many cases (previous studies have found numerous children victims of physical punishments, for example).[13]
- The current economic situation is threatened by inflation and violence. The latest World Bank reports note a worsening of the situation with regards to poverty, with 39 per cent of the population currently assessed as poor.[14]
- The existing educational infrastructure is insufficient for the potential number of students in the country, with a significant portion of existing schools without proper buildings.[15]
- Conditions across the country vary significantly, with under 11 per cent of the rural population, for example, having access to grid electric power. [16]
- Forced displacement is a significant issue: since 2002, over 1 million people have been internally displaced and 8.5 million have returned from abroad.[17] Returnees? from Iran and Pakistan have greatly increased since early 2016, with 700,000 returnees, many forced, to Afghanistan. Most returnees settle in either Kabul or Jalalabad, putting additional strain on education service deliverers. In the first half of 2017 alone, 160,000 people had been internally displaced.[18]
- Finally, Afghanistan continues to be in a situation of growing insecurity, with 45 districts at least partially under the control of non-state armed groups and 118 currently being contested – about 40 per cent of the country.[19] The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) predicts a continued growth in insecurity.[20]

1.3 Understanding Afghanistan's education system

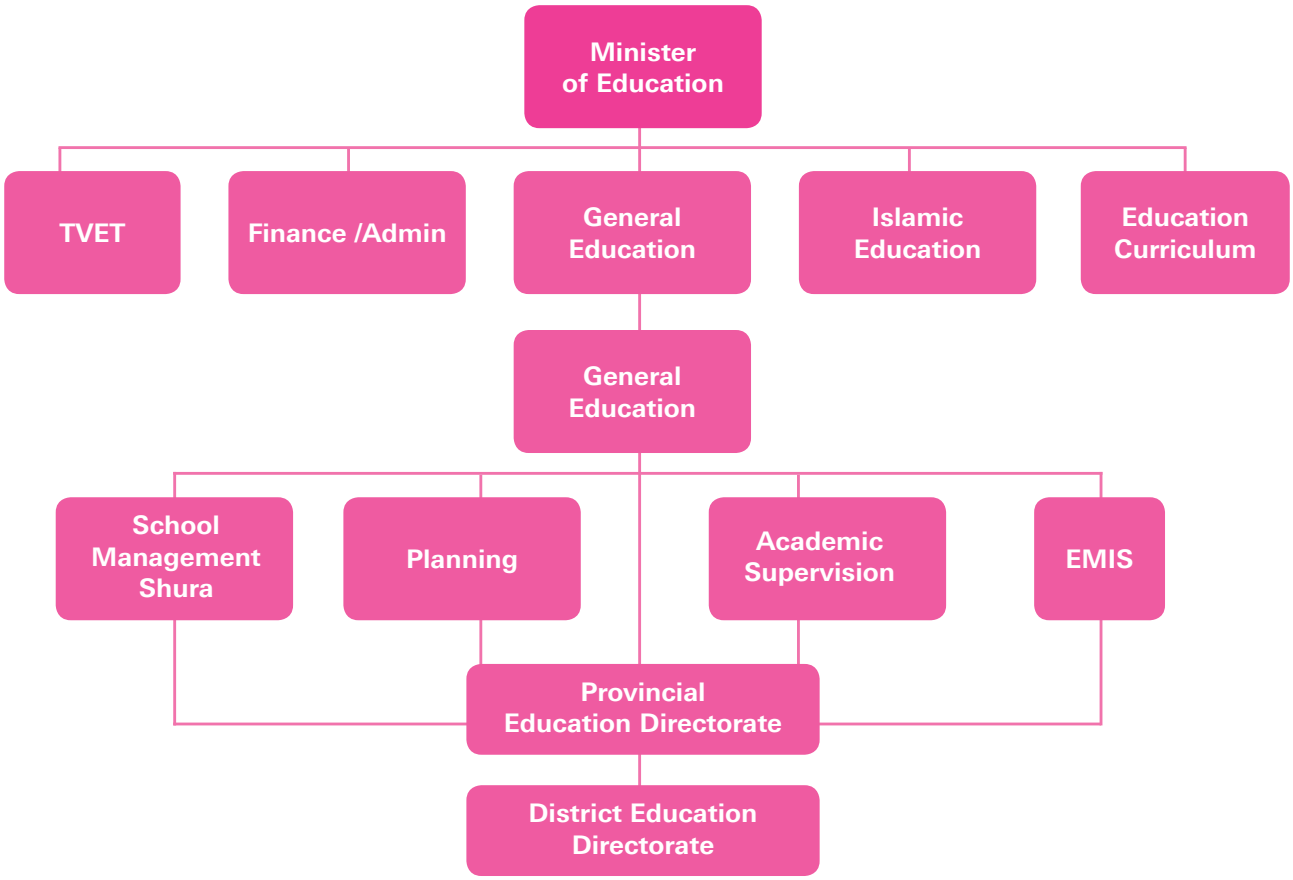
The Constitution of Afghanistan follows international conventions in declaring education as a right for all citizens, and the 2008 Education Law makes primary and lower secondary education mandatory.[21] Education has been a priority of the government and foreign donors and organizations since the fall of the Taliban, resulting in visible increases in school attendance and literacy since 2002 (see Figure 33 for further details on government expenditures on education).[22] That being said, as will be discussed in this report, millions of children remain out of school and significant barriers remain to universal access to education.

Currently, Afghanistan's education system is formally managed by three separate entities, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) and religious institutions. In addition to the formal education sector, various national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have established education systems throughout the country. While these education delivery systems are officially under the authority of the central government, these alternative methods of delivering education to youth in Afghanistan continue to operate independently of the central government and allow for the addressing of some of the gaps in the current system.

Afghanistan's formal education system includes primary schooling (Grade 1–6), lower secondary school *(Maktabeh Motevaseteh)* (Grade 7–9), upper secondary school *(Doreyeh Aali)* (Grade 10–12) and various types of vocational schools (teachers' schools and technical schools) under the leadership of the MoE. Generally, ages of students are 7–12 years for primary, 13–15 years for lower secondary and 16–18 years in upper secondary school.

[11] https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html
[12] Asia Foundation, Survey of the Afghan People, 2012, p. 182.
[13] Central Statistics Organization, AMICS 2011–2012, pp. xxi–xxii.
[14] www.worldbank.org/en/country/afghanistan/publication/afghanistan-poverty-status-update-report-2017
[15] www.worldbank.org/en/country/afghanistan/overview
[16] www.worldbank.org/en/country/afghanistan/overview
[17] Returnee figures from the International Commission on Missing Persons 2016 Afghanistan Country Profile (unpublished as yet) and figures of internally displaced persons from: www.internal-displacement.org/south-and-south-east-asia/afghanistan/figures-analysis.
[18] SIGAR as reported in https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/afg_hrp_2017_mid_year.pdf, pp. 5–6.
[19] SIGAR, 'Quarterly Report to the United States Congress', January 30, 2018, and April 30, 2017.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Article 22 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.
[22] Ministry of Education, Afghanistan Education For All 2015 National Review, p. 10.

Figure 1 Structure of the Ministry of Education, Afghanistan



After graduating secondary school, students have to take an entry exam (the *Konkur*) to enter tertiary education, which is managed by the Ministry of Higher Education. The MoHE oversees the delivery of tertiary education in all universities. Tertiary education includes three levels – bachelor's degree, master's degree and doctorate.

Afghanistan's educational system is highly dependent on the support of other actors for the delivery of education to the broadest number of children. This includes support through MoE infrastructure to existing schools and the creation of/support for systems of education designed to complete the official public school system. It includes elements such as community-based education (CBE), accelerated learning programmes to allow students delayed in their education to join their age group, and early childhood education (ECE) programmes (currently not provided by the government).

Global initiatives including the Global Partnership for Education and Girls' Education Challenge, supported by Afghanistan-specific initiatives such as the Education Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP), have supported the growth of Afghanistan's education system in line with other countries.

1.4 Main educational stakeholders addressing OOSC

The structure of the Ministry of Education – key stakeholder at the levels of education considered in this study – is outlined in Figure 1. The OOSC approach is to involve key stakeholders in the country through a technical and a steering committee. In Afghanistan, these include technical experts from the MoE's planning and EMIS directorates and the Central Statistics Organization, UNICEF and UNESCO UIS staff and key donors (these include, for example, Canada and the United States in the context of education in Afghanistan).

1.5 Research approach and methodology

1.5.1 Standard OOSCI approach and objectives

An OOSCI study first uses population data from various sources to ascertain the number of school-aged children, which it compares with data from the country's Education Management Information

System.[23] Children included in the population database, but excluded from the EMIS system, are considered out of school (OOSCI Manual, 2015). In addition, school-aged children enrolled in either religious education, or included in databases outside census databases but not in the EMIS, or only participating in CBE are considered out of school, even where EMIS may capture them, as per the official OOSCI approach (OOSCI Manual, 2015).[24] Traditionally, other OOSC reports have drawn heavily from national census data.

The objectives of the study are fourfold:

- From a *profiling* perspective, follow the OOSCI conceptual and methodological framework and the Five Dimensions of Exclusion model to identify profiles of out-of-school-children in the Afghan context, including magnitude, inequalities and other dimensions of exclusion.
- From an *analytical* perspective, identify the key barriers and bottlenecks to accessing education and make clear the systemic processes around exclusion in Afghanistan. This will additionally include a mapping of OOSC in Afghanistan.
- From a *theoretical* perspective, evaluate how existing policies and interventions contribute (or not) to the needs of OOSC.
- From a *practical* perspective based on the above, provide actionable recommendations to the MoE and other key stakeholders at the national and sub-national level on how to address the challenges linked to children's schooling in Afghanistan.

1.5.2. Methodology

Several factors determined the approach taken to estimate total numbers of OOSC and other demographics at the province and national level. Although the *Global Out-of-School Children Initiative Operational Manual* encourages the use of official census data compiled at the school level and at the household level, such an approach was deemed unfeasible, or at least impractical in the case of Afghanistan:

- To begin with, the last household census held in Afghanistan occurred in 1979. Since then war and civil upheaval have entirely redistributed the population, without even considering natural growth and demographic drift.
- Secondly, while detailed records of school attendance are kept up-to-date in the EMIS database maintained by the Ministry of Education, it is difficult to assess the accuracy or margins of error due to the fact that students are required to be kept 'on the books' for at least three years after they have ceased to attend school. As budget allocations to schools are currently based on EMIS data, at this point keeping children on the books for three years makes sense as children who are temporarily absent should not lose their funding. However, from a statistical perspective, it means that it is not possible to distinguish students who dropped out after third grade from those who completed primary school.
- Furthermore, while the ministry has records of the number of girls and boys of each age and at every grade level (stocks), it does not provide information on the rates of promotion, retention or attrition (flows), rendering the estimation of a survival rate impossible.

As such, it was determined to use a number of survey sources to estimate the proportions of the various quantities specified in the OOSCI manual, and where necessary projected these proportions onto CSO and interpolated UNPD population figures for 2014, the date of the most recent ALCS. Although we drew on numerous sources to complete the full battery of data tables committed to in the feasibility study, whenever possible, we focused on the ALCS 2013–2014 (1392), the most recent gold standard in representative randomized surveys at the province level in Afghanistan. While the ALCS 2016–2017 survey had been conducted, the dataset was not yet available for analysis at the time of this research.

The ALCS 2013–2014 is the Afghan government's official source of demographic information for policy. The ALCS is the most recent official government survey conducted across all 34 provinces in Afghanistan that contains the vast majority of the information required to estimate the quantities specified in the OOSCI manual, thanks to a dedicated module on school attendance for every household member.

Other surveys consulted and used in the generation of the data tables on which this analysis is based include the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA), 2011–2012 (1391), and the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 2015–2016. These were consulted whenever an indicator (such as the wealth index quintile) was required but not available in the ALCS.

[23] For a comprehensive list of all sources likely to be consulted, please see Section 1.5.2.

[24] In the primary data source used, the 2013–2014 ALCS, Islamic education is considered separately and was thus excluded as per the OOSCI manual. The survey does not otherwise specify students' type of school, only grade level.

Data from several other surveys were also collected but were excluded from the primary analysis due to either concerns on data reliability or lack of relevance to the research at hand:

- **Socio-demographic and Economic Surveys (SDES)** – only exist for 11 provinces, and can therefore not be used for overall analyses. Additionally, doubts concerning the methodology implemented to generate these data necessitated the elimination of the SDES as a data source. For example, the SDES data include a database with 11 provinces, each of which contains a number of records roughly equal to the entire population of the province, suggesting some sort of census.
- **Afghanistan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (AMICS)** – was used as a point of comparison to the figures generated through the analysis of ALCS and DHS data. It was not incorporated into the numerical analysis as it did not offer further relevant indicators excluded from the other data, and therefore joining it would simply have added potential for error and older data to the analysis.
- **EMIS data** – see above for discussion.

The main disadvantage of using surveys as opposed to census data is that, although the sample sizes are designed to ensure a high level of confidence at the province level, further disaggregation yields ever smaller sample sizes and ever broader error margins. The OOSCI in particular requires a high degree of disaggregation, be it by age group (school aged or not) gender, age, grade level, etc. Thus, the degree of confidence in some provinces, at some levels of disaggregation, cannot always be ensured (see Annex 1.2).

In addition, because different surveys interrogate non-overlapping samples, it is generally not possible to link responses from one survey to another. For example, the DHS computed a wealth index for each respondent household, and the ALCS determined instances of attrition in school attendance from one year to the next, but the two could not be directly correlated because the interrogated samples were distinct.

1.5.3. Selected database validity

The last ALCS survey was conducted as a two-phase cluster sample, with 400–900 households sampled per province with 600 households on average. The sample size balances between proportional and constant representation. In principle, the DHS followed the same sampling strategy, though the authors of this study do not have first-hand knowledge of the details of this sampling exercise. Other data sources, such as AMICS and SDES, were consulted if necessary, though avoided due to a lack of detail on sampling methodologies as noted.

With respect to the ALCS, in addition to the non-proportionality at the province level, the clusters were each drawn from a randomly selected enumeration area, a mutually exclusive, collectively exhaustive topological partition of the population of the country. As enumeration areas have non-uniform numbers of households, each cluster represented a different proportion of the population of Afghanistan.

Enumeration areas were selected randomly using probability proportional to population size of the area. However, these population sizes were calculated from a pre-census household listing dating from 2003–2004. Thus, these proportions will have drifted in the interim, oversampling areas that have experienced a population decline and undersampling those that have undergone in-migration or growth. To account for these variations in enumerator area size, the ALCS provides household and individual weights to each record in the survey (See Annex A1.2).

Based on these data, estimates of proportions of children in and out of school, performing child labour, etc., are computed for 2014, using the ALCS data where available, which corresponds to the CSO 2014 population estimates. In the case of UNPD estimates the proportions obtained from the ALCS data are applied to national UNPD population estimates interpolated to approximate the population in 2014. Wealth quintile information was extracted from the DHS collected in 2015. The proportions from the DHS dataset were projected onto a national population estimate for 2015, which was interpolated from CSO and UNPD data, respectively.

In addition, the estimates were also calculated to correspond to UNPD's fertility-based estimates of the population of Afghanistan. Although UNPD estimates are some 25 per cent higher than CSO estimates, we consider the competing estimates to be of equal validity and invite interested parties to select their preference. Ultimately, however, it is the proportions that have measurable statistical validity and margins of error.

The decision was made to use a steady state transition model for survival rates and dropout rates to account for data gaps (see Annex 1).

1.5.4. Further data limitations

The databases used, while providing useable data for these analyses, are not without their flaws and

challenges. The research highlighted a number of limitations in the datasets themselves and in which of the standard OOSCI analyses were possible. Chief among these are the following:

Population data. The last countrywide population census in Afghanistan was conducted in 1979. The most current population data available are thus projections based on the 1979 census and household-level data. The most widely used of these projections come from the CSO and UNPD. These differ quite significantly as the UNPD's population estimate for 2015 is 33,736,000,[25] while the CSO notes 27,101,365 for the same year.[26] This OOSC study is primarily conducted using CSO data on population statistics because this is in line with that used by humanitarian and development stakeholders and the CSO estimates can more easily be disaggregated by provinces. Furthermore, since our principal data source, the ALCS, was provided by the CSO, it remains the most consistent population estimate. Finally, the CSO provides population estimates at the province level, while UNPD only provides national estimates.

However, the UNPD figures are also provided for key elements as a point of comparison. It is important to note that while UNPD figures are from 2015 (January–December), CSO figures are aligned to the Afghan calendar and thus span the time period from March of a given year through February of the following.

Figure 2 highlights the difference in population estimates based on the UNPD figures and CSO figures for Afghans aged 6–18 years in 2014. It is important to note that the proportions here come from the ALCS breakdown – the key point is in the overall magnitude of the difference, of over 1.5 million individuals between the ages of 6 and 18, which has clear policy and implementation implications, given what this difference can represent in terms of necessary places in schools, teachers, supplies, infrastructure and more.

Age heaping. Figure 2 also shows how the data sources used in this study showed signs of age heaping. This happens when respondents do not give their exact age, but rather are more likely to give an age ending in 0 or 5 or other ages of social significance. This can be observed as the distribution of ages is not smooth, but rather heaps at these ages. These patterns peaked at ages 10, 12, 18 and 20 in both the ALCS and DHS datasets. This can happen when survey respondents are unsure of their own age or that of other respondents.

While methods exist to 'straighten' data subject to age heaping, a conscious decision was made not to use them: they assume that age heaping is symmetrical (i.e., people are as likely to underestimate as to overestimate ages), which may not in fact be the case, and using these methods would thus introduce an unknown error into the analyses.

It is unclear who over- and under-reports their age. One possibility must be noted: that households whose children are out of school may also have heads who are illiterate and may also be more likely to report their children's ages as being at these 'flashpoints' (8, 10, 12 and 18). This would have analytical implications in that it would suggest higher OOSC rates for those ages. As a result, the subsequent analyses tend to consider and draw conclusions from children over a range of ages (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary) to mitigate this potential bias.

Proxied wealth quintiles. The data on wealth quintiles from the DHS are not based on direct indicators of household income. Rather, the wealth quintiles use indicators based on ownership of specific household assets.[27]

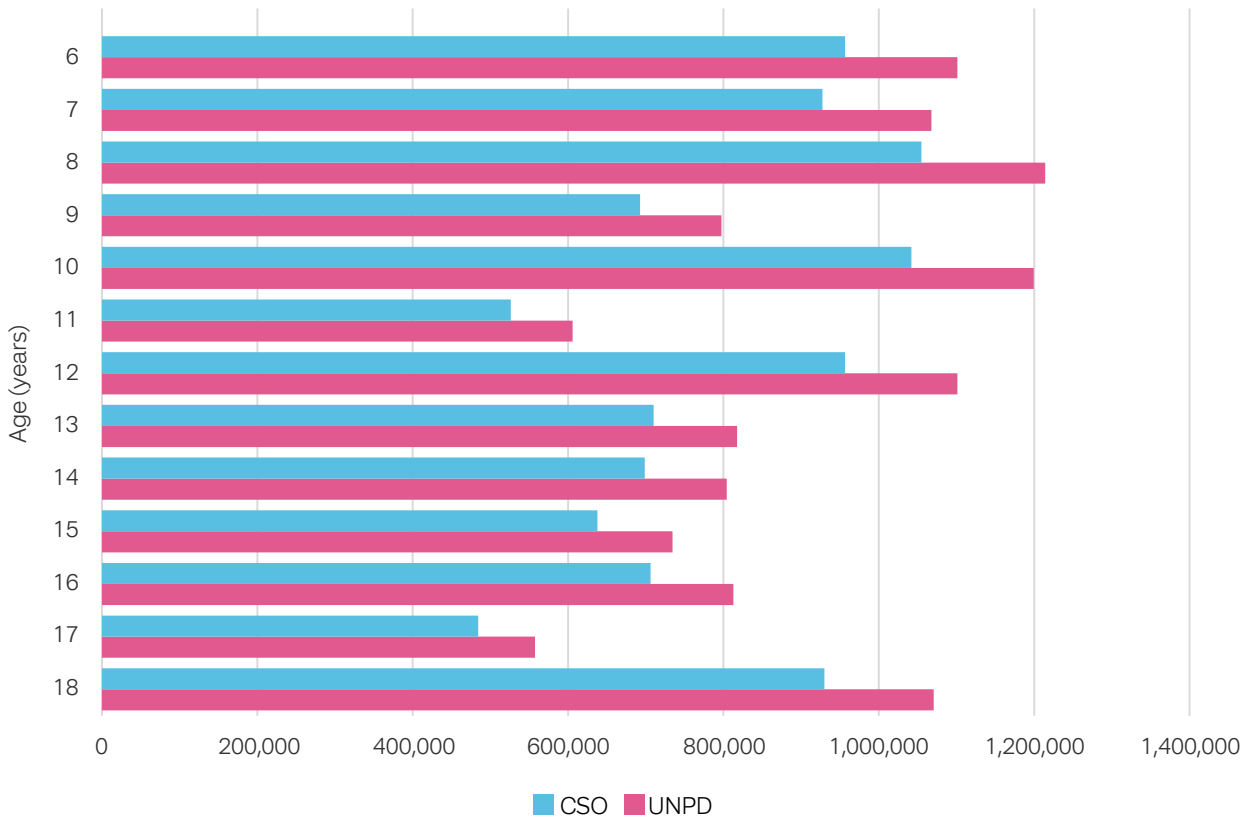
Missing data. Several of the 'standard' OOSC analyses are not feasible in Afghanistan due to missing data; the missing data impacts not just this OOSC study, but more broadly policy making in Afghanistan, and is thus addressed in the recommendations section. Data gaps that should be highlighted in particular include:

- **Data on pre-primary education**: There are not any records of pre-primary education in the key datasets used (ALCS, DHS, EMIS). The only existing data at the nationwide level – from the General Education Department – cannot be disaggregated sufficiently to analyse in conjunction with the key datasets. Thus, none of the pre-primary analyses were feasible.

- **Data on ethnicity, language and religion**: The datasets included in the study do not allow for disaggregation by ethnicity, language or religion,

[25] UNPD figures shared by UNICEF.
[26] Humanitarian Data Exchange, https://data.humdata.org/dataset/estimated-population-of-afghanistan-2015-2016
[27] For additional information on the methodology for assessing income levels using the asset indicators, please visit http://worldbank.org/asset-based-indicators.

Figure 2 Population estimates for 6–18-year-olds based on ALCS data and UNPD and CSO estimates, 2014



making it impossible to scientifically substantiate whether or not these play a role in school attendance. This data gap reflects broader tensions in Afghanistan around ethnicity.[28]

Lack of consistency in data collection approaches and survey designs. The household surveys included in this research have used different research designs (including, but not limited to, differing sampling methods, framing of research questions, enumerator training modules and data gathering at different periods of the year), introducing potential errors in cross-database calculations and comparisons. In some areas, due to questions of security and access, data collected are not representative.

The most persistent problem with drawing random samples in Afghanistan is the lack of a recent sampling frame from which to draw truly random samples. The hybrid methodology used by ALCS combining a partial household listing from 2004 and household listings drawn up on demand by local authorities in selected enumeration areas is the most robust.

Under-reporting of women. The databases used under-reported women, based on sex ratios for specific age brackets. For example, the sex ratio in the ALCS is 117 males per 100 females for children aged 10–15. This is significantly above the world average and cannot be explained due to contextual factors.
As it is unclear who are not being reported, the impact of this under-reporting cannot be gauged. Anecdotal evidence suggests that girls and women may be under-reported for security reasons, which would lead to the hypothesis that the same girls are less likely to attend school – which could lead us to infer that real OOSC numbers are higher for girls than reported in this document. However, another scenario imaginable would be that under-reporting of girls and women is not correlated with their school attendance – which

[28] Recent research by Samuel Hall for the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) highlighted, for example, the tensions around ethnicity in the creation of a national ID cards; these have put a halt to the process.
"The debate primarily concerns the use of nationality: "Afghan" to some correlates with specific ethnicities. This issue has become extremely sensitive and there are fears that using the designation of nationality ("Afghan") could result in de facto identification of ethnicity: If "Afghan" is taken to mean "Pashtun", some have argued that other groups in Afghanistan should not have "Afghan" written on their card, but rather their own ethnicity. This in turn could facilitate discrimination. Donors have been categorically opposed to any reference to ethnicity on cards, in line with most national identity cards across the world." Samuel Hall and NRC, Access to Tazkera and other civil documentation in Afghanistan, 2016, p. 45.

would lead to the conclusion that OOSC figures do not differ significantly from those reported here.

SDES data limitations. One additional source – the Socio-Demographic and Economic Surveys conducted by the Ministry of Education EMIS Department – was originally considered for inclusion as a point of comparison to the ALCS and DHS data on attendance rates and economic activity. However, the decision was taken to exclude these for several reasons, notably the fact that only 11 provinces are included, as well as the fact that the numbers of household interviews included in these datasets are not realistic.[29]

1.5.5. Age segmentation and child labour

Definitions for specific education-related terms can be found in the glossary. This subsection details the approach taken on age segmentation and defining child labour:

Age segmentation by level of school. Throughout this report, primary school aged children can be understood as being of age 7–12, lower secondary as aged 13–15, and upper secondary as aged 16–18. This represents the target ages for these levels of schooling in Afghanistan. While some six-year-olds do attend school, including them would make primary attendance rates appear lower (as a significantly smaller proportion of them attend school) than they actually are (as six-year-olds are not expected to attend school). As such, children under seven years of age are not included in the study, except where specifically stated (for example, see Annex 2 on child labour). Children aged 7–17 are considered out of school when they are not attending school; children overage for their grade are still counted as in school.

Child labour. This report follows UNICEF definitions on child labour. It therefore distinguishes between unemployed children, working children, children engaging in child labour, and children contributing heavily to household chores. See Section 2.4.1 for further description of relevant Afghan laws.

1.6 Report structure

This report analyses the situation of out-of-school children through the following chapters:

1. Introduction and methodology
2. Profiles of excluded children
3. Barriers and bottlenecks to education in Afghanistan
4. Existing policies and strategies to address barriers and bottlenecks to education
5. Conclusions and recommendations

[29] It reports more than 2 million interviews conducted in Kabul alone.

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2

PROFILES OF EXCLUDED CHILDREN

Limited data exist on school-aged populations, socio-economic indicators and education in Afghanistan, especially at a nationwide level. The data that do exist vary greatly in reliability, even within surveys. This lack of data challenges the measurement and analysis possible around out-of-school children. Nonetheless, based on the three key databases used for this study, this analysis is able to highlight and substantiate the trends and differences amongst out-of-school children in Afghanistan.

2.1. Overview and analysis of data sources

Three databases were used as the main sources in the out-of-school children profiling:

National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (2007–2008, 2011–2012) and Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey (2013–2014): These include provincial-level data gathered by the Central Statistics Organization. The ALCS 2013–2014 is the Government of Afghanistan's primary official source for demographic information in determining policies and was the main source for this report.

As detailed further in the methodology section, the ALCS individual and household weighing for each record in the survey was used to compute estimates of proportions of children in and out of school, performing child labour, etc. The proportions computed for this 2014 survey were then applied to both CSO and UNPD population numbers. The ALCS and NRVA were used broadly for economic indicators and measurements concerning nomadic populations. The ALCS also provided the data relating to child labour.

Throughout this chapter, the ALCS 2013–2014 is referred to as 'ALCS'; 'NRVA' can be understood to refer to the 2011–2012 survey unless stated otherwise.

Demographic and Health Survey (2010, 2015): The DHS, collected by the World Health Organization and CSO, provides provincial-level data (except Zabul for both 2010 and 2015, and Kandahar and Helmand in 2010). For the purposes of this analysis, it was primarily used for analyses relating to wealth, as the DHS is the only data source providing a wealth index. The wealth quintiles were constructed using DHS 2015 data, whereas the other data in the data tables come from ALCS 2013–2014. Thus, while total student numbers were similar in both years, underlying differences may persist and wealth index data should be considered cautiously. 'DHS' can be understood as referring to the 2015 data unless stated otherwise.

Afghanistan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2011–2012): The AMICS is representative at the regional level and, while not used directly in the generation of core data tables, provides reliable data as a point of comparison for key findings. 'AMICS' can be understood as referring to the 2011–2012 edition of the survey.

2.2. Participation in pre-primary education

The first dimension of exclusion in the OOSCI approach considers "Children of pre-primary school age who are not in pre-primary or primary school". As noted in the data limitations section, **no useable data at the national level exist on this dimension, which could be tied into the core analysis.**

The AMICS, however, does present older figures on this (data from 2010–2011). Reflecting the fact that, currently, the government only provides early childhood education in 10 governmental schools[30] and existing programmes are thus limited, run by non-governmental organizations or religious entity, the percentage of OOSC for pre-primary school aged children is quite high: only 1 per cent of children between the ages of 36 and 59 months (3 and 5 years) actually *attend* organized early childhood education programmes (AMICS, 2012).

In several other countries (for example, Nepal), the OOSC study has found evidence of pre-primary school aged children attending primary school, likely because it is free. This is unlikely in the Afghan context, given the reported delay in beginning primary school. The ALCS 2013–2014 actually notes, "Given the very low school attendance at age 6, this age is not considered as a realistic indicator of the start of education. Consequently, the analyses in this report use age 7 as the primary school-entry age." (ALCS, 2013–2014, p. 138).

MoE and NGO administrative records identified 40,000 children in non-religious preschool programmes in 2013, confirming these low attendance numbers.[31] While the numbers in mosque-based preschools are reportedly higher at 1.2 million (UNESCO, 2015), this does not constitute pre-primary education to international standards.[32]

The Government of Afghanistan has recognized this problem, as will be addressed in Chapter 4, but progress remains slow. The AMICS does highlight some key differentiators in which children between the ages of 3 and 5 years had access to pre-primary education at the time the survey was conducted (2011–2012):

- **Type of location**. While only 0.5 per cent of children aged 3–5 years in rural locations reportedly attended organized early childhood education programmes, 4 per cent of those in urban areas did.
- **Region**. Children in the Central (3.3 per cent) and Central Highlands (1.8 per cent) were more likely to attend organized early childhood education (pre-primary) programmes.
- **Age**. Attendance rates doubled for four- year-olds to 1.4 per cent versus 0.7 per cent of three-year-olds.
- **Wealth**. Finally, children in the wealthiest quintile were nearly four times as likely as the average 3–4-year-olds in Afghanistan to attend pre-primary (3.9 per cent).[33]

Gender does not appear as a differentiator (1.0 per cent of males aged 3–4 years versus 1.1 per cent of females in the AMICS).

The government's plan to further support ECE/pre-primary education suggests that actively gathering information on these figures in subsequent iterations of national household-level surveys and EMIS is crucial.

[30] According to the MoE.
[31] UNESCO, Education For All Review, 2015, p. 21.
[32] OOSCI Operational Manual, p. 14 notes that these are considered OOSC.
[33] AMICS, 2013, p. 102.

2.3. Participation in primary and lower secondary education

This section considers Dimensions of Exclusion 2 and 3 – namely, children of primary school age who are not in primary or secondary school (Dimension 2), and children of lower secondary school age who are not in primary or secondary school (Dimension 3). Attendance rates here will be analysed based on net adjusted attendance rates (ANAR), which are defined for primary school aged students as the "total number of students of the official primary school age group who attended primary or secondary education at any time during the reference academic year, expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population".[34]

Of the approximately 5.2 million (CSO)/6.0 million (UNPD) primary school aged children, an estimated 2.3 million (CSO)/2.6 million (UNPD) are out of school (43.7 per cent). Out of the 2.0 million (CSO)/2.4 million (UNPD) lower secondary school aged children between the ages of 13 and 15, an estimated 854,000 (CSO)/984,000 (UNPD) are out of school (41.7 per cent).[35]

2.3.1. School participation by age and level of school

As illustrated in Figure 3, school attendance rates peak at age 11 overall, with 67.1 per cent of 11-year-olds enrolled in school (55.0 per cent of girls and 75.8 per cent of boys). As noted earlier, six-year-olds have been excluded from the analysis as few attend school (11.2 per cent overall; the expected rate would be 50 per cent, if all who are eligible to were attending school, as half of them reach the age of 6 after the start of the school year and so cannot attend).

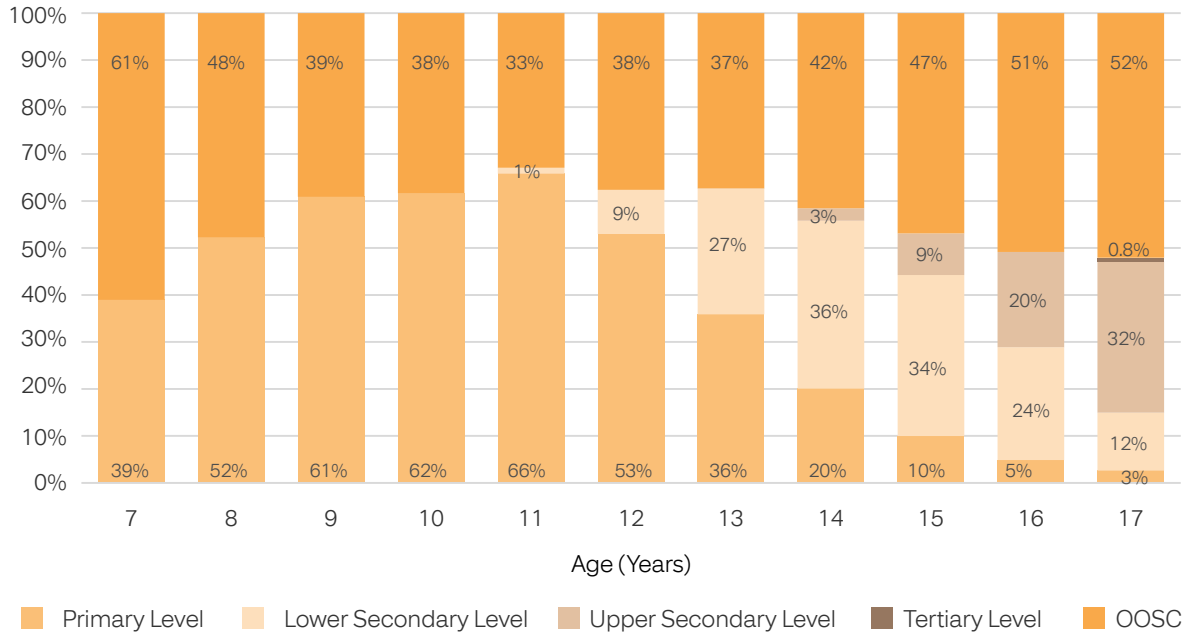
Figure 3 also highlights age discrepancies in school attendance, as a portion of students are attending primary school through to age 17, and similarly students stay in lower secondary school longer than might be expected. While age heaping may account for some of the discrepancies, as students' ages may not be accurately reflected given that the age heaping is focused at ages 10, 12 and 18, it does not explain the number of children aged 15 and 16, for example, attending primary school.

The decrease in OOSC between ages 7 (61.0 per cent) and 9 (39.1 per cent) further supports the hypothesis that late entrance to primary school is a significant issue in Afghanistan.

2.3.2. The impact of gender

Figure 4 shows the clear impact which gender has on school attendance. According to ALCS data, girls at all ages are less likely to be attending school. The difference between the percentage of girls who are out of school and boys who are out of school (represented in the grey series in Figure 4) increases steadily from

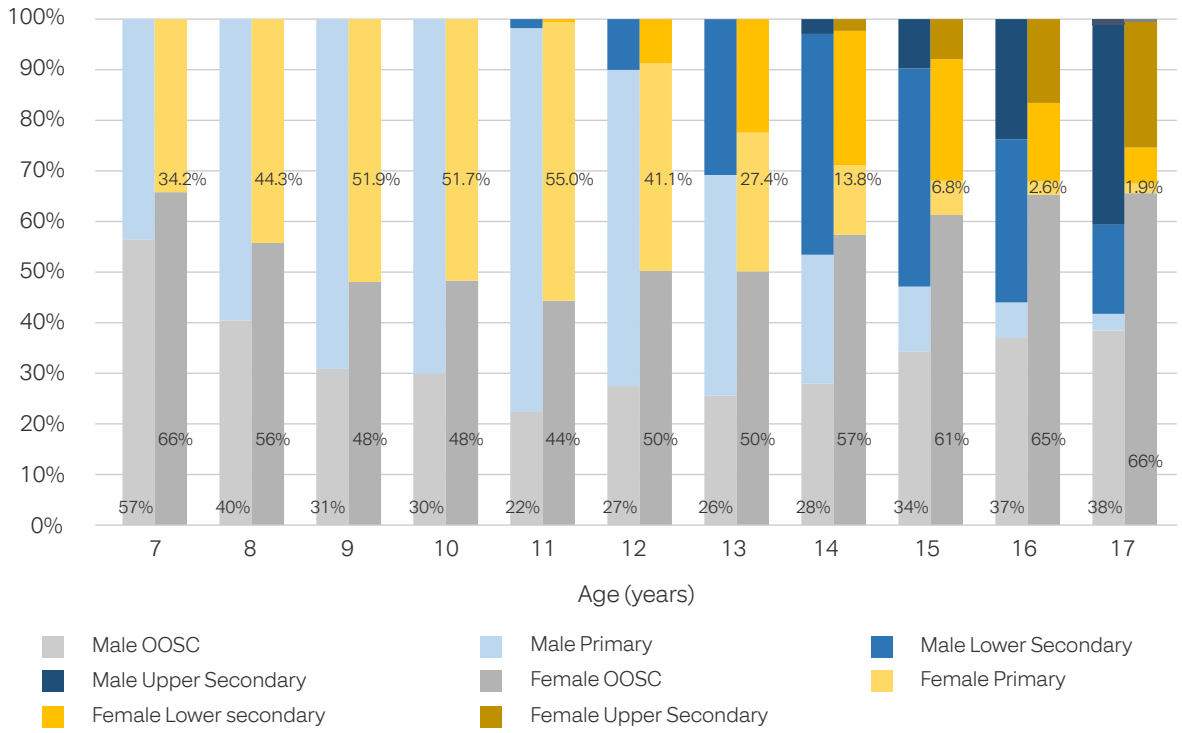
Figure 3 Age-specific attendance rates by level of education



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

[34] http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/adjusted-net-attendance-rate
[35] See Table A1.4.1 in Annex 1 for a better understanding of how many children may be over/under age for their grade level.

Figure 4 Attendance rates by age, gender and level of education



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

age 7 to age 14, at which point it plateaus, suggesting that girls and boys who continue to be in school at that age are equally likely to stay in school.

Figure 4 also highlights the fact that girls, generally, are less likely to attend all levels of school than boys; the differential that begins in primary school continues throughout.

2.3.3 The rural-urban divide

The population of Afghanistan remains largely rural, with 6.7 million urban residents and 19.8 million rural residents at the time the ALCS was conducted (7.8 million, CSO/22.8 million, UNPD). The rural-urban divide in Afghanistan is one of the strongest predictors of school attendance at both the primary and lower secondary school ages (see Figure 5), with children in rural locations more than twice as likely to be out of school. In absolute numbers, this represents nearly 1.8 million OOSC of primary school age in rural areas using CSO figures (2.0 million, UNPD) and about 230,500 in urban areas using CSO numbers (265,400, UNPD).

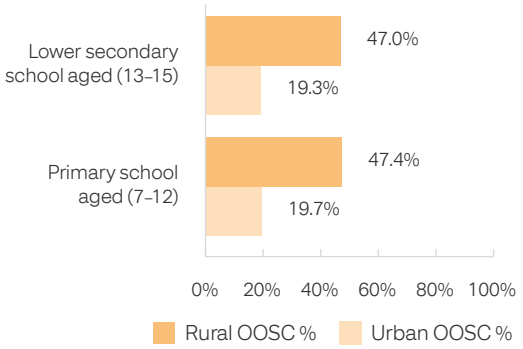
The impact of the rural-urban divide is more visible for girls than for boys at the primary school age level, with the percentage of rural girls out of school 2.5 times greater than that of urban girls at the primary school age (versus a 2.3 multiplier for boys), as can be seen in Figure 7. However, this changes at the lower secondary school age level, with the percentage of rural boys out of school three times greater than the percentage of urban boys out of school (versus a 2.2 multiplier for girls). In absolute terms, however, again, rural girls remain the worst off, with 64.2 per cent of them out of school at the lower secondary school age level.

This difference in attendance rates can likely be partially explained by a question of access to education, with schools, especially of lower secondary and higher levels, more likely to be further from home (when they exist) in rural areas than in urban. The fact that the percentages of out-of-school children stay fairly consistent between primary and secondary school aged children suggest that the challenge is one not just of retention but of attendance in the first place.

From a policy perspective, it is important to note that in absolute numbers, rural girls form the greatest number of OOSC, with approximately 1,450,000 at the primary and lower secondary levels (CSO; 1,676,000, UNPD).

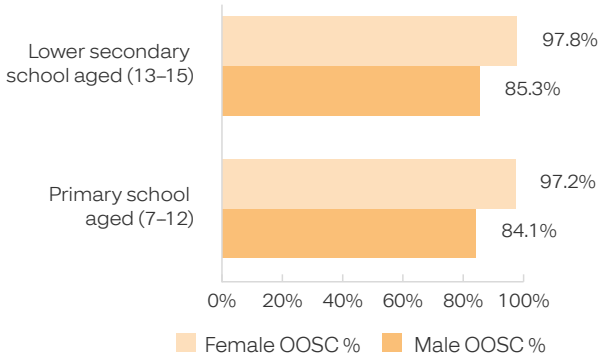
A third category of children is considered in these analyses based on the ALCS data: children who belong to the Kuchi (nomadic group). These children are significantly more likely to be out of school at both primary school and lower secondary school age. The difference between girls and boys out of school is lower here than overall – but only because the rates of out-of-school Kuchi children are so high (see Figure 6).

Figure 5 Percentage of OOSC by age and location



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Figure 6 Percentage of Kuchi OOSC by gender and education level



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

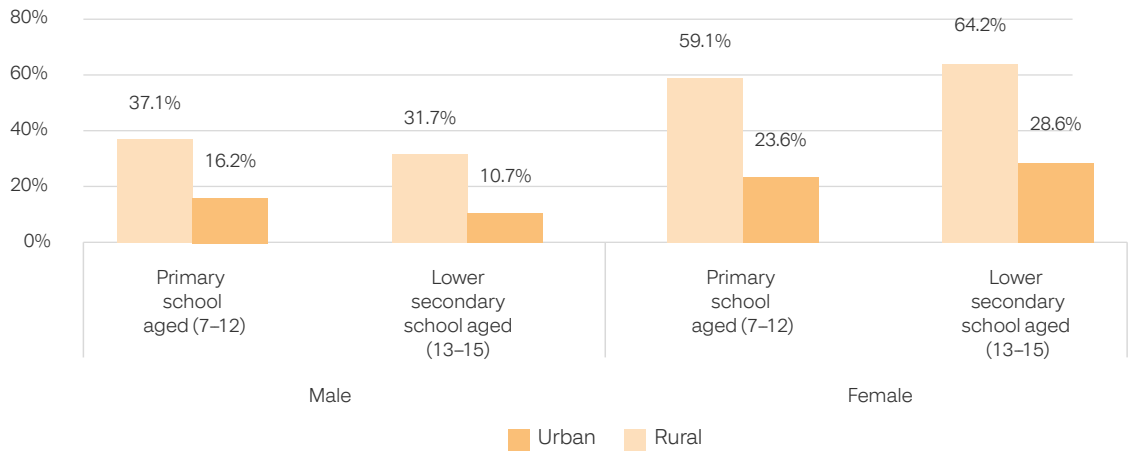
2.3.4. Understanding the impact of wealth on school attendance rates

Children in the two wealthiest quintiles are less likely to be out of school than those in the poorer three. However, within these three poorer categories, the trend is less pronounced, and even in some cases reversed (see Figure 8), rather than a straight poorest-to-richest trend as might be expected and is common elsewhere. Several explanatory factors are proposed for this:

- The wealth quintiles come from DHS data, in which the merging of two datasets for this analysis, with different data collection and sampling approaches, may have introduced additional errors into the analysis.
- Wealth is also linked to other variables such as rural/urban and location within the country. The DHS 2015 survey highlights significant variance on the wealth index by both of these. For example, in Bamyan, 69 per cent of households were in the poorest quintile; however, as, will be discussed in the provincial analysis, the province has higher-than-average rates of school attendance. In Nangarhar, where only 1 per cent of households were in the poorest quintile, overall attendance rates were more in line with the national average. Unfortunately, sample sizes, by quintile and by province, in some cases become too low to be statistically significant.

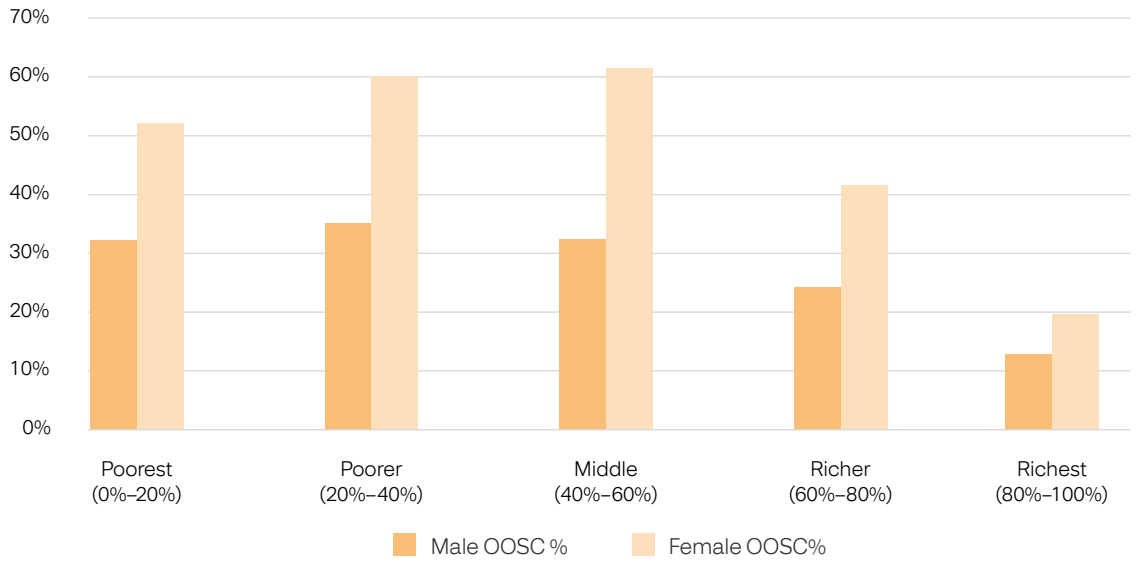
Thus, while wealth does play a role in facilitating access to schools (as will be discussed in Chapter 3), it is not sufficient to fully explain household decisions to send children to school – or not to.

Figure 7 Percentage of OOSC by age, location and gender



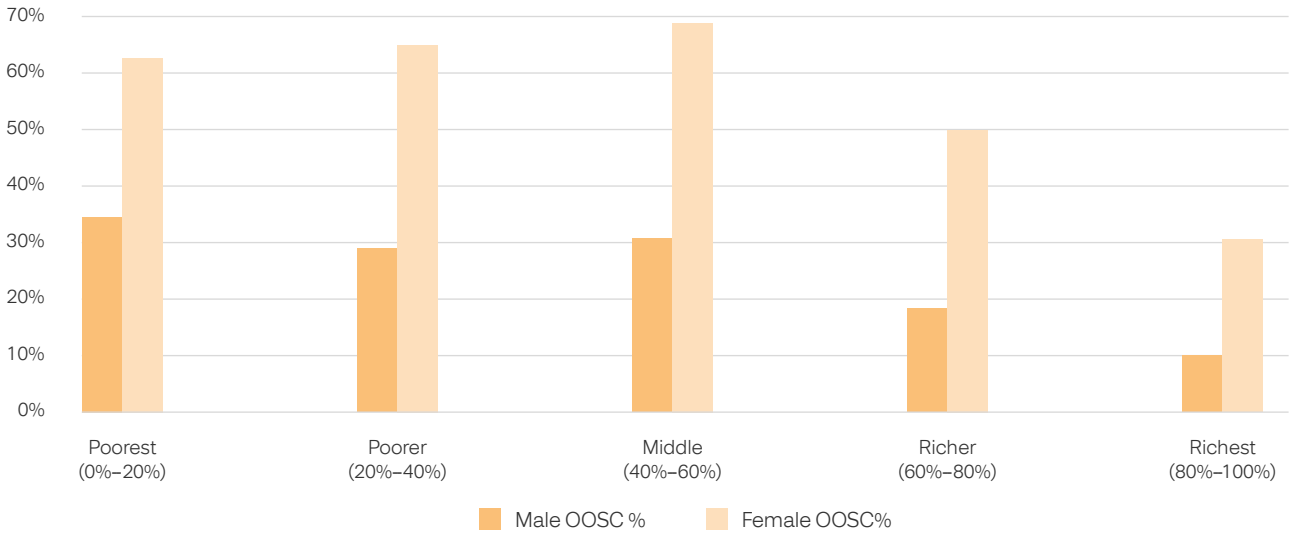
Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Figure 8 Percentage of OOSC of primary school age by gender and wealth quintile



Source: DHS, 2015; ALCS, 2013–2014

Figure 9 Percentage of OOSC of lower secondary school age by gender and wealth quintile



Source: DHS, 2015; ALCS, 2013–2014

2.3.5. Head of household education

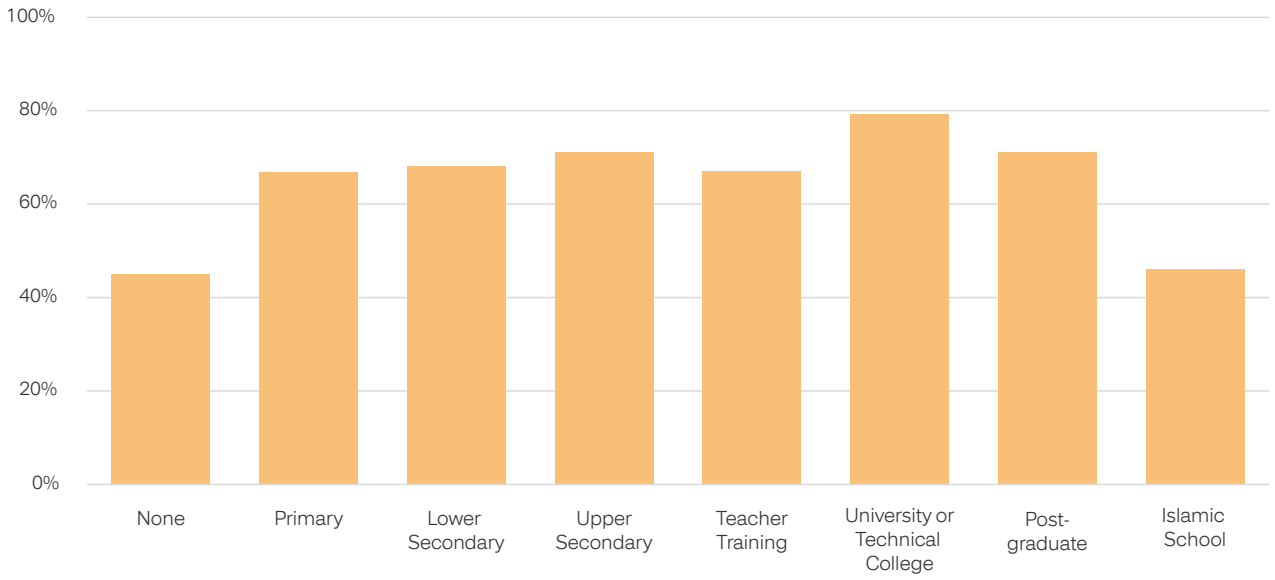
Examining the education level of head of household shows its importance in predicting school attendance. Children aged 6–14 years whose head of household has at least some level of governmental education are more likely to be attending school than children whose head of household has only been to Islamic school and children whose head of household has no education.

The fact that there is a fairly constant rate in school attendance for children whose head of household has primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education suggests that it is the head of household having any schooling – rather than a specific level – that fuels the demand for children's education. From a supply-side perspective, children in more rural parts of the country – where there are fewer schools – are less likely both to have parents/heads of household who attended school and to attend themselves due to lack of accessible options.

2.3.6. Decreasing rates of OOSC over time

The available data for comparison of OOSC over time

Figure 10 Percentage of school attendance of children aged 6–14 by education level of head of household



Source: ACLS, 2013–2014

are limited. However, between the 2011–2012 school year and the 2015–2016 school year, a clear, if slight, decrease in OOSC rates can be observed, along with a decrease in the absolute number of out-of-school children of primary and lower secondary school age, from 3 million to 2.85 million. This decrease in absolute number is important as it means that the decrease in rates cannot simply be attributed to the number of OOSC remaining constant while the absolute numbers of children of primary and lower secondary school age increased.

It should be noted here that data were used from two sources (NRVA, 2011–2012/ALCS, 2013–2014; DHS, 2015–2016); different data collection methods could have impacted this decrease in rates.[36]

A distinction must be made between the evolution of OOSC rates at the primary and lower secondary level. While at the lower secondary level, they have been steadily decreasing since 2011–2012, at the primary level they actually increased in 2013–2014 – in both rates (from 42.1 per cent to 43.7 per cent) and absolute numbers (by 144,000 according to CSO figures) – before decreasing again (see Figure 11).

The increase in OOSC numbers in 2013–2014 was spread fairly evenly amongst girls and boys (an additional 69,000 boys and 74,000 girls of primary school age when compared to 2011–2012; CSO). The fact that both the absolute numbers and the rate of OOSC increased means that the increase cannot simply be attributed to demographics. However, as noted above, different data collection methods between the datasets used for analysis could have contributed to this apparent trend.

At the lower secondary school age level, the trend is even clearer: the data show a relatively steady decrease in OOSC rates at lower secondary school age from 2011 to 2016 (see Figure 12). As, at the same time, the total population of children aged 13–15 years grew by 15 per cent, absolute numbers must also be considered. However, these also decreased, from approximately 865,000 OOSC in the 2011–2012 school year to approximately 851,000 OOSC in the 2015–2016 school year.

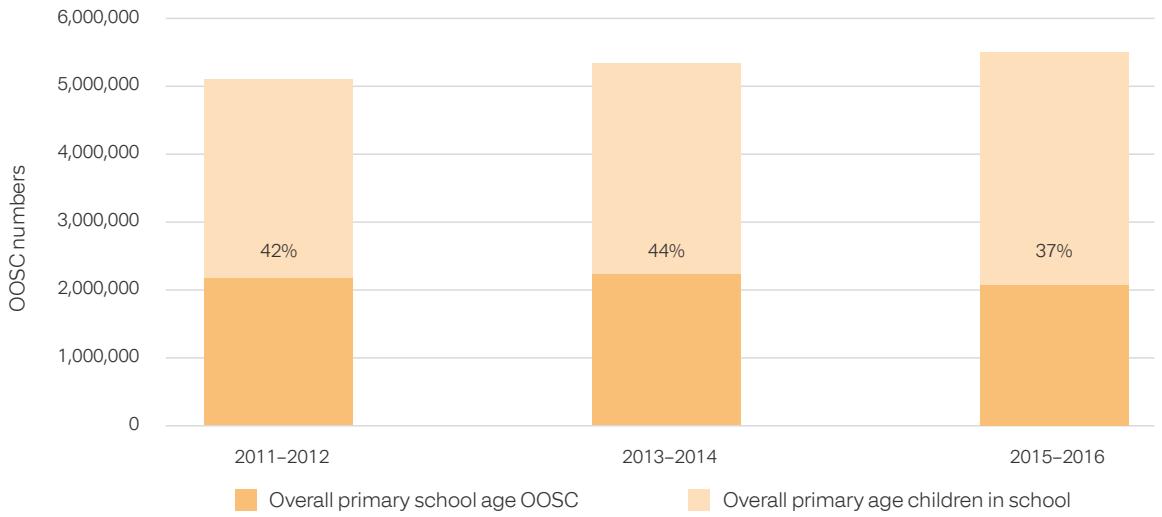
The trend holds true for both girls and boys, with the percentage of out-of-school girls decreasing from 60.0 per cent to 55.1 per cent over this time period and for boys from 32.3 per cent to 24.9 per cent.

2.3.7. Exposure to school of OOSC children

The question of school exposure helps to better understand the past and future of children who are out of school. Out-of-school children can be divided into three mutually exclusive groups relative to school

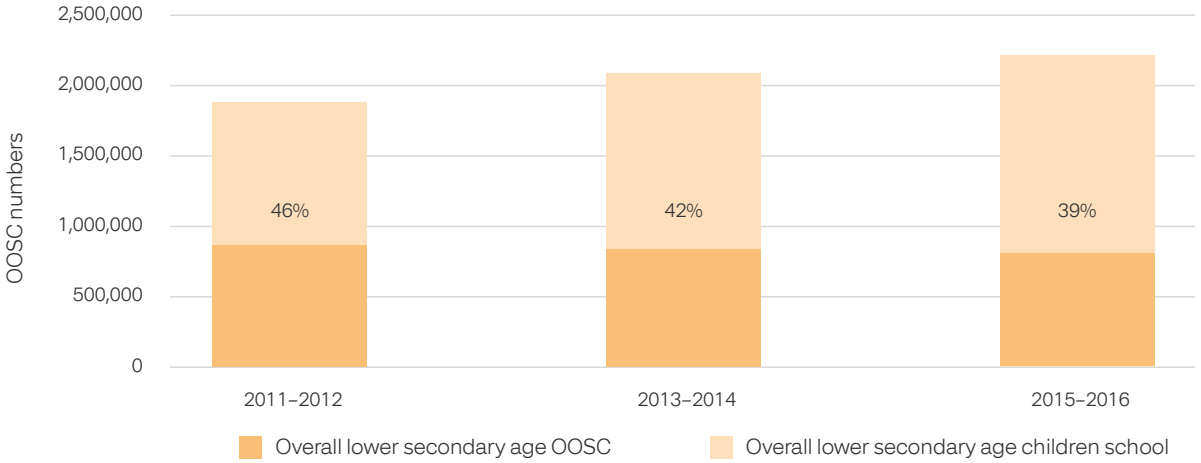
[36] The data comparison between different sources has been presented here as no alternative data sources with similar information over time exist. The potential for this to impact analysis results must thus be kept in mind here.

Figure 11 Percentage and number of OOSC of primary age



Source: NRVA, 2011–2012/ALCS, 2013–2014; DHS, 2015

Figure 12 Percentage and number of OOSC of lower secondary school age



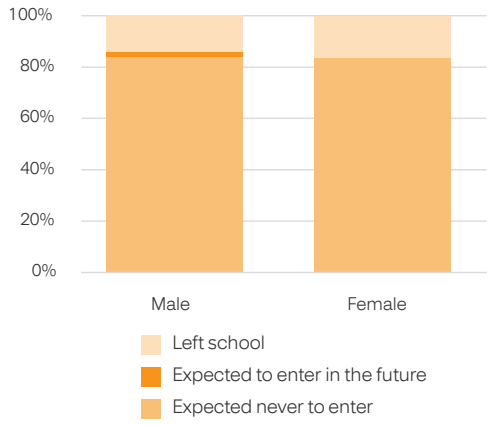
Source: NRVA, 2011–2012/ALCS, 2013–2014; DHS, 2015

exposure: those who have entered, but dropped out; those who will enter school late; and those who will never enter school. The relative weights of these groups within a country's out-of-school children population have clear policy implications: a 15-year-old, for example, who attended school from age 7 to 12, versus a 15-year-old who has never attended school and never will, and one who is seeking basic education at the age of 15 will have differing educational and professional needs and potential for their future.

Figure 13 and Figure 14 make very clear that at both primary and lower secondary school age, the vast majority of out-of-school children are never expected to enter school. Overall, 83.7 per cent of OOSC of primary school age and 83.9 per cent of lower secondary school age are expected never to enter school.

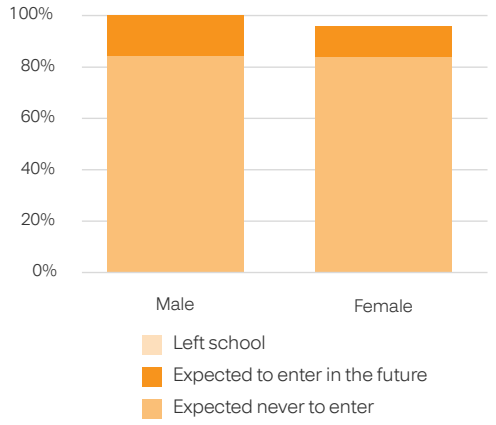
The drop between primary school aged OOSC and lower secondary school aged OOSC in those expected to enter school in the future (12.6 per cent of primary school age; 0.7 per cent of lower secondary school age) underlines that children who have reached lower secondary school age are highly unlikely to ever enter the school system, especially girls. This means that there are approximately 717,000 (CSO) lower secondary school aged children in Afghanistan who will never enter school in the future – and have never been (approximately 825,000, UNPD). This has clear programmatic impacts not just from an educational perspective, but also from an employment perspective, as the opportunities of these youth will be severely limited.

Figure 13 School exposure of OOSC of primary school age by gender



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Figure 14 School exposure of OOSC of lower secondary school age by gender



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

While accelerated learning centers (ALCs) could provide alternative pathways for education, it is difficult at this moment to assess the costs involved in scaling these up due to a lack of standard setting and coordination. ALCs will be covered by the revised CBE policy, which is being finalized by the MoE.

Key recommendations on this front would be to include harmonized costing for ALCs, similar to proposals for CBEs, and reform the EMIS to include data on ALC and CBE students. Through this revised structure, policy makers at the MoE would be able to track education numbers and propose to donors and other policy makers the potential for ALC programmes to provide education for those entering late or having their education disrupted.

Of primary school aged children, more than twice as many boys as girls are expected to attend school at some point in the future. This gender differential suggests that boys are more likely to be late entrants to school, as compared to out-of-school girls who are more likely to come from households that will not ever send them to school. This gender differential will be further discussed in Chapter 3, which considers gender-based barriers to school attendance.

2.3.8. Trends in upper secondary school age attendance

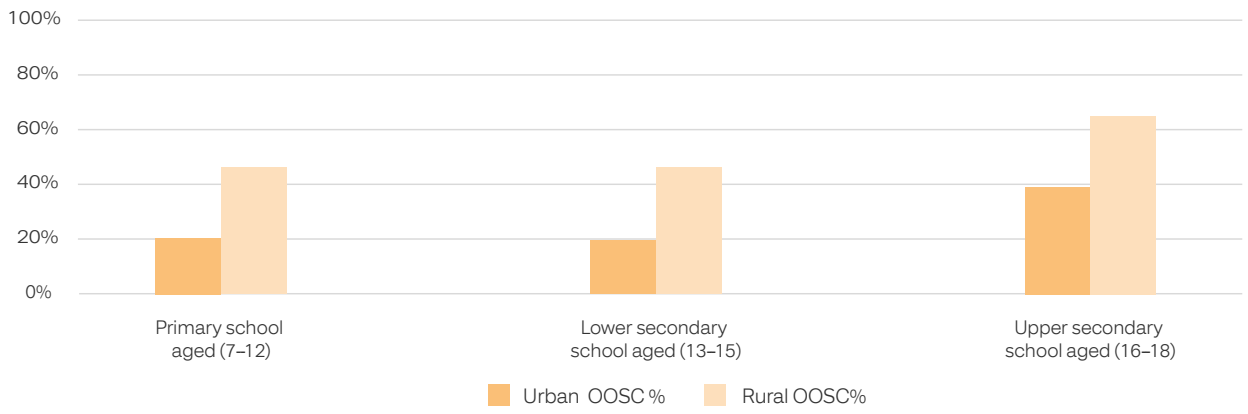
Examining attendance of upper secondary school aged youth confirms trends noted above:

- Girls are less likely to be attending school, generally, and are more likely to be neither in school nor working (56.8 per cent of girls aged 16–18).
- The spread of school levels attended confirms late entry as being of concern, although more strongly for boys. Only about a quarter of upper secondary school aged children are attending upper secondary school; however, while for girls this is primarily due to the fact that approximately 70 per cent of girls of that age are out of school, for boys it can be observed that at age 16 they are more likely to be attending lower secondary school – and only at age 17 do they become more likely to attend upper secondary school than lower secondary school (39.6 per cent vs. 17.6 per cent).
- Age heaping in data is a real phenomenon: based on CSO figures, 44 per cent of all upper secondary school aged children are aged 18 versus 23 per cent of those aged 17 years and 33 per cent aged 16 years.
- Finally, as is detailed for younger ages in Section 2.4.3, employment status is a stronger predictor of attendance for males than for females: whereas 70 per cent of employed males aged 16–18 are out of school, only 24.8 per cent of those who are not employed are out of school. For females aged 16–18, these figures go up to 86.3 per cent and 67.2 per cent, respectively.

On two key points, however, 16–18-year-olds must be differentiated from younger children:

- **Household wealth**. While at lower ages, the children from the poorest quintile are not all least likely to attend school, at upper secondary school age they are (67.9 per cent out of school in the poorest quintile vs. 40.3 per cent in the richest).
- **Location**. The percentage gap between urban and rural OOSC is higher for this age group than younger ages (see Figure 15). This likely reflects the fact that most upper secondary schools are in more urban areas and, potentially, a decreased demand for education at that level in more rural areas.

Figure 15 Percentage of OOSC by age and type of location



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

2.4. Understanding the impact of child labour on school attendance rates

2.4.1 Legality of child labour in Afghanistan

Past OOSC studies have highlighted links between child labour and lack of attendance.[37] Examining the prevalence of child labour in Afghanistan and its links to school attendance (or lack thereof), thus, forms an important part of this research.

Both international and national law in Afghanistan ban child labour, with the Afghan labour law only allowing children from the age of 14 to serve as trainees or apprentices, and children from 15 to 17 years to conduct light work so long as they do not work in hazardous conditions (Afghan Labour Law, Article 13). Afghanistan ratified International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 138, which sets the following guidelines around permissible types of work for children under the age of 18, in 2010:

- *Light work* is permissible between the ages of 13 and 15, but cannot "hinder their education or vocational orientation or training" (Art. 7). For those countries who have noted that "their economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed", this can be placed at ages 12 to 14 (Art. 7, Clause 4).
- The *minimum* age for work should not be before the end of compulsory education (Art. 2).
- No *hazardous* work is permissible for children under the age of 18.

Yet, the AMICS 2010–2011 found that 28.4 per cent of boys and 23.8 per cent of girls between the ages of 5 and 14 were involved in at least one hour of economic activity per week.[38] Previous research has found that, while work and education are not necessarily mutually exclusive, the correlation between work and negative impacts on educational attainment is clear.[39]

Measuring child labour is further complicated by the variety of forms it can take, especially in Afghanistan. The AMICS, for example, specifically notes:[40]

- Paid and unpaid work outside the household
- Working for family business
- Economic activity for at least one hour
- Household chores less than 28 hours
- Household chores for 28 hours or more
- Child labour

Within these, further subcategories, such as bonded labour and hazardous labour, are recognized in the laws and conventions governing child labour. Measuring child labour – and breaking this down by type – is furthermore complicated by the fact that these are not necessarily mutually exclusive categories and may be hidden from view (household chores could, in certain circumstances, be hazardous; child labour

[37] The OOSC Pakistan report notes, for example, "In fact, child labour, which is strongly linked to the socioeconomic background of households, may be one of the primary reasons that keeps children out of school or causes them to drop out." (p. 19), www.unicef.org/pakistan/OSC_UNICEF_Annual_Report.pdf

[38] AMICS, 2010–2011, p. 124.

[39] 2014 research by Samuel Hall on child labour in carpet weaving for GoodWeave found that weaving children "have less time to do homework and report higher rates of absenteeism. Older weaving girls are also less likely to attend school." (GoodWeave, Cutting the Threads, p. 26)

[40] AMICS, 2010–2011, p. 124.

Table 1 Children aged 6–14 engaged in child labour in Afghanistan

	Children aged 6–11 in economic activity for 1h+ (%)	Children aged 12–14 in economic activity for 1h+ (%)	Children aged 12–14 in economic activity for 14h+ (%)	Children aged 6–14 in household chores for 28h+ (%)	Children aged 6–14 in child labour (%)
Gender					
Male	27.1	52.2	22.3	1.1	32.7
Female	19.2	32.8	11.1	3.7	23.4
Residence					
Urban	7.8	19.0	8.5	2.4	11.5
Rural	26.4	50.2	18.0	2.4	32.1
Kuchi	40.7	73.9	15.3	0.8	48.5

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

in carpet weaving, for example, could be considered in some cases a household chore rather than economic activity, where carpet weaving is a cultural tradition).

2.4.2. Children engaging in child labour

Based on CSO figures, approximately 2.1 million Afghan children aged 6–14 are engaged in child labour (based on UNICEF definitions). UNPD population estimates take this figure up to 2.5 million for children in the same age group.

Table 1 highlights the clear gender and residential differentials in child labour, in line with UNICEF definitions of child labour, which classify a child as involved in child labour if they fulfil any of the following criteria:

"(a) children 5 to 11 years of age that during the week preceding the survey did at least one hour of economic activity or at least 28 hours of domestic work, and

(b) children 12 to 14 years of age that during the week preceding the survey did at least 14 hours of economic activity or at least 42 hours of economic activity and domestic work combined."[41] In line with Article 7 of ILO convention 138, point (b) allows for the possibility of a group of 12–14-year-olds to engage in work but not in child labour, and 12–14-year-olds working more than 14 hours per week (child labourers) are thus considered separately in this analysis from those working less than that (working children).

Boys aged 6–11 are more likely than girls to be engaging in one hour+ of economic activity (27.1 per cent vs. 19.2 per cent). Broadening this out, boys aged 6–14 are also more likely to be engaged in some form of child labour overall than girls. The only type of labour where this trend is reversed is with household chores, where 3.7 per cent of girls aged 6–14 report engaging in 28+ hours of household chores per week versus 1.1 per cent of boys – unsurprising given broader social norms around engaging with household chores.

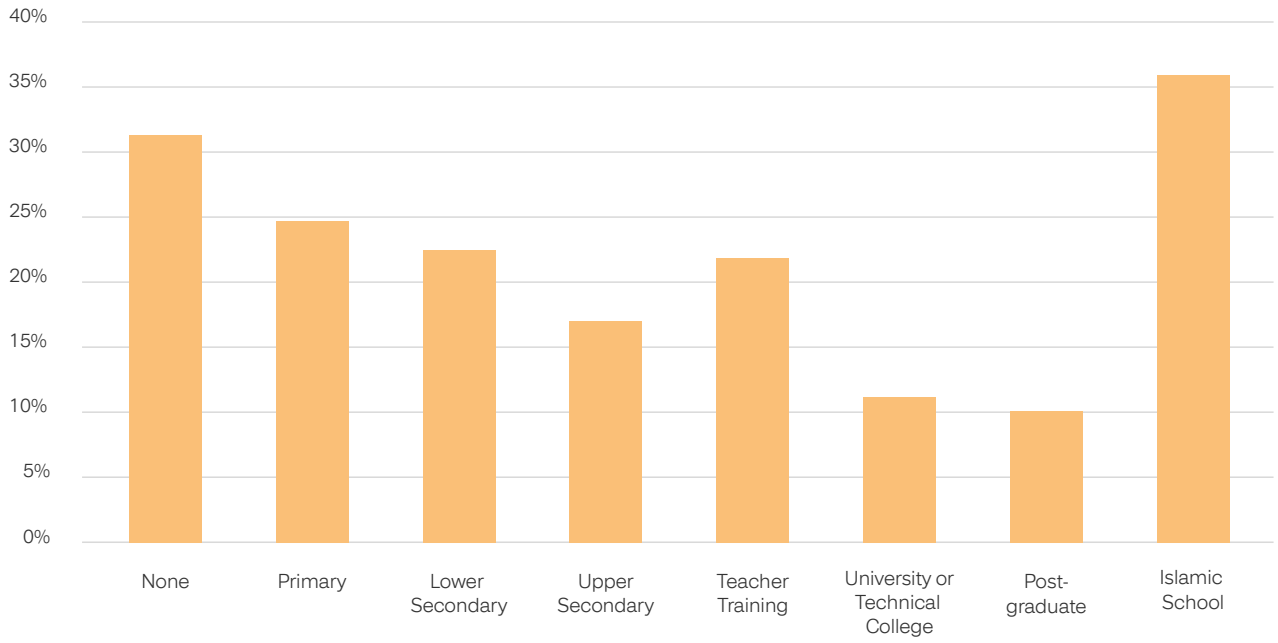
Children in rural areas are more than twice likely to be engaging in some form of work than children in urban areas, and Kuchi children are most likely of all to be engaging in some form of work. While only 7.8 per cent of children aged 6–11 engage in economic activities for one hour+ per week in urban areas, 26.4 per cent of children in rural areas do. This is likely due to the prevalence of agriculture in more rural areas of the country.

While wealth quintiles could not be calculated for this indicator, the level of education of the head of household acts as a good indicator of the likelihood that children will be engaged in child labour, with a few outliers as can be seen in Figure 16.

A clear trend can be observed: as formal education levels of the head of household increase, the likelihood of the household's children being involved in child labour decreases, with one exception, where heads of household with teacher training (where 22.2 per cent of children are engaged in child labour). This may be at least partially explained by the fact that teacher training in Afghanistan has varied significantly in quality and

[41] The OOSC Pakistan report notes, for example, "In fact, child labour, which is strongly linked to the socioeconomic background of house holds, may be one of the primary reasons that keeps children out of school or causes them to drop out." (p. 19), www.unicef.org/pakistan/OSC_UNICEF_Annual_Report.pdf

Figure 16 Children aged 6–14 in child labour (%) by education level of head of household



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

scope in the past. The *Education for All* (2015) report notes that "more than half of teachers do not have required qualifications", suggesting that teacher training does not necessarily fall in the sequence between upper secondary and university and technical education.[42]

This trend can most likely be explained by two factors:

- Generally, increased education has been found to facilitate increased wealth.[43] This could decrease the perceived economic need to have children work.
- Parents who have had the benefits of education may be more likely to see the need for education and not wish to compromise its quality by sending children to work.

2.4.3. Children aged 6–14 in child labour and school attendance

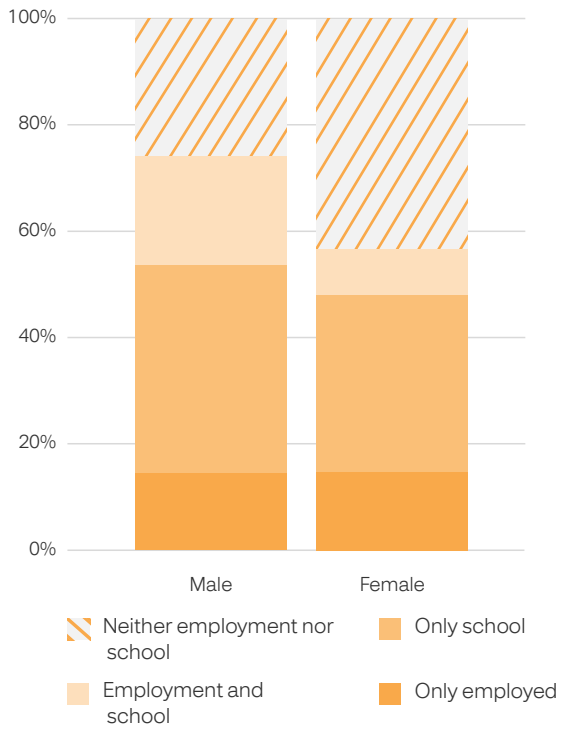
The findings of this research confirm that for children aged 6–14 child labour and school are not mutually exclusive: 57.1 per cent of boys in child labour are not out of school and 36.0 per cent of girls who are in child labour are not out of school. Figure 17 details the breakdown for employment and attendance rates by gender and highlights in particular the proportion of girls neither in school nor working compared to boys – while boys are much more likely to both work and go to school.

While girls who are in child labour are more likely to be out of school than boys, child labour is actually a greater predictor of being out of school for boys than for girls (the difference being explained by the greater numbers of girls working): 34.8 per cent of out-of-school boys are involved in child labour, compared to only 25.9 of girls. Girls, more often than boys, may be in the situation of neither going to school nor working. Overall, however, working children aged 6–14 are only slightly less likely to attend school than non-working children of the same age (see Figure 18).

This combination of work and school is more frequently found in urban areas than in rural areas – with only 27.7 per cent of urban children in child labour who are out of school, versus 49.3 per cent of rural children in child labour who are out of school (figures for Kuchi are significantly higher at 87.5 per cent, in line with higher OOSC rates generally). The fact that many OOSC are not involved in child labour underlines the fact that economic drivers are not the sole factor behind out-of-school children. This suggests that either other access drivers are at play or, potentially, a more generalized lack of demand for education.

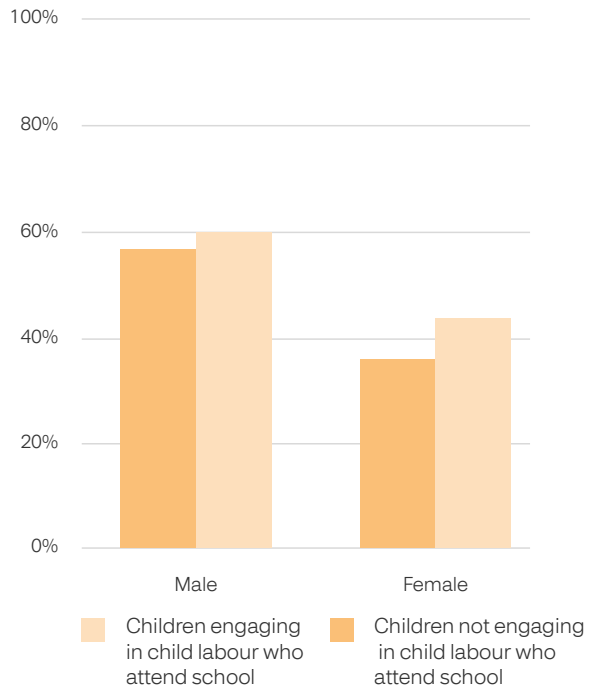
[42] UNESCO, Education For All Review, 2015, p. 29.
[43] World Bank notes (2013) "Investment in human capital has a positive and increasing impact on economic welfare, at all levels of education from primary schooling upwards through higher education, for both urban and rural populations in Afghanistan." http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/307221468180889060/pdf/809150WP0Afgha0Box0379822B00PUBLIC0.pdf, p.3.

Figure 17 Employment and school attendance rates of children aged 6–14 by gender



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Figure 18 School attendance of children aged 6–14 by gender and child labour status



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Households whose head is well educated are less likely to have working children, generally (31.2 per cent of children in households whose head has no education engage in child labour vs. 22.7 per cent of those in households where the head has a lower secondary education and 11.1 per cent of those where the head has a university or technical education, for example), and, of those whose children are working, are less likely to have them also be out of school. In well-educated households, being out of school is also less likely to correlate with child labour (see Figure 19).

Indeed, when the percentage of children in child labour who are OOSC and those not in child labour who are OOSC are considered by the head of household's education level, these numbers are nearly the same (note that the sample size for university/technical college level education is very low).

This thus nuances the conclusions at the end of Section 2.4.2; if the presumed economic ties to the head of household's educational level were sole drivers of the higher OOSC percentages for children whose head of household has no education, one might expect a difference between the likelihood of working and non-working children in these households' school attendance rates.

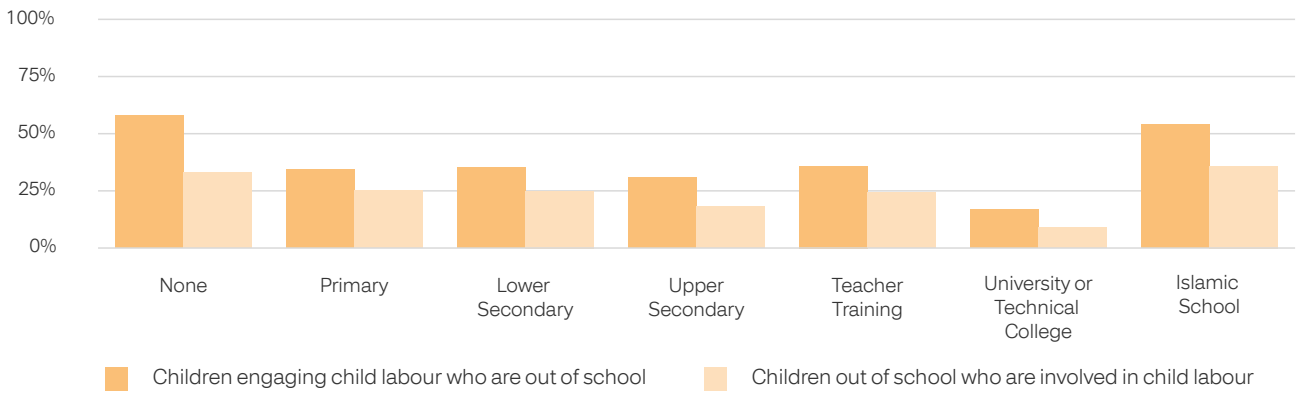
2.4.4 Employment and school attendance for youth of upper secondary school age

Employment and education do not coexist as easily for youth aged 16–18: only 29.9 per cent of males and 13.7 per cent of females in this age group who work also attend school. Girls are more likely to do neither, with 56.9 per cent in this age group neither working nor attending school.

2.5. Children at risk of dropping out of primary or lower secondary school

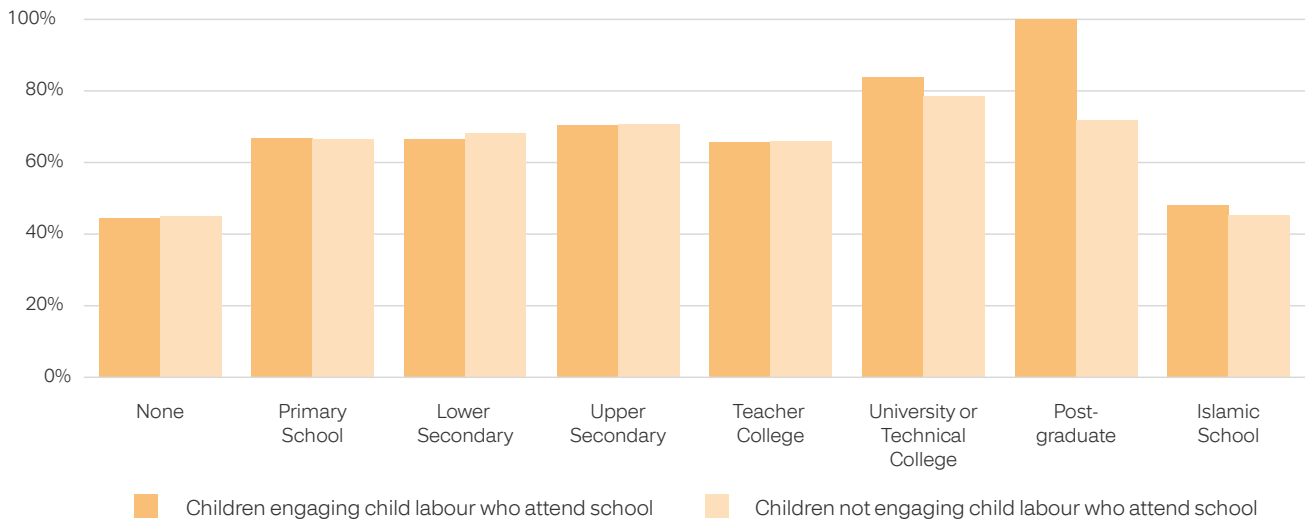
Dimensions 4 and 5 of the Five Dimensions of Exclusion cover, respectively, children who are in primary school but at risk of dropping out, and children who are in lower secondary school but at risk of dropping out. As noted in Section 2.3, dropout rates are not the greatest risk in Afghanistan, overall; survival rates are high and most students who have started school are likely to stay in it. Unfortunately, the data available do not permit time-series analyses to understand how this rate is evolving. Having this data – and disaggregation at the yearly level – is necessary to working out the time and cost of graduating students, which has clear planning implications. This section also

Figure 19 Head of household education level relative to children's likelihood of engaging in child labour and being out of school, and of OOSC engaging in child labour



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Figure 20 Relationship of participation in child labour to likelihood of attending school of children aged 6–14 by education level of head of household



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

considers gender and geography as factors placing children at risk of dropping out.

A steady state transition model was used to calculate the dropout rates discussed in this section (see Annex 1.1). These assumed a repetition rate of zero (no reliable data was available from data sources used on repetition rates). Tables with promotion and dropout rates per grade by gender are available in Annex 1.1. Overall, the proportion of primary school aged children with school exposure (57.9 per cent) is only slightly higher than the overall school attendance rate for children of that age – meaning that primary schools have high survival rates and not many students drop out at primary school age. All in all, 3 million (CSO; 3.5 million, UNPD) children of primary school age have been exposed to school; 2.9 million (CSO; 3.4 million, UNPD) attend school. Indeed, the survival rate to the last grade of primary education is 84.9 per cent overall – higher than some neighbouring countries, which rank better on other metrics (see Figure 21).[44]

[44] All figures cited in Figure 21 come from the UIS online statistics, available at http://data.uis.unesco.org. Note that they are not a perfect point of comparison as the grades for primary school may differ from one country to another

Table 2 Dropout and survival rates by level of school and gender

		Survival rate to last grade (%)	Dropout rate to last grade (%)
Primary school (age 7–12)	Male	84.9	8.9
	Female	84.9	9.1
Lower secondary school (age 13–15)	Male	94.3	4.1
	Female	90.0	8.3

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

This trend holds true at the lower secondary school level as well, where the survival rate is even higher at 92.8 per cent to the last grade of lower secondary education for those who have entered it. This remains relatively in line with other countries in the region (as a point of comparison, based on 2014 UIS data, the survival rate for lower secondary school is 64.1 per cent in Pakistan; 70.1 per cent in Nepal; 98.3 per cent in Uzbekistan; 97.5 per cent in Iran; 98.6 per cent in Tajikistan).

2.5.1. Gender and Dimensions 4 and 5

Survival rates[45] are slightly higher for boys than for girls overall. The survival rate to the last grade of primary education is the same for both girls and boys at 84.9 per cent; that until the last grade of lower secondary education (for students who have entered lower secondary education) is 94.3 per cent for boys and 90.0 per cent for girls.

Correspondingly, dropout rates are slightly higher for girls, especially at the lower secondary level (see Figure 22); survival rates for girls at the lower secondary level are higher than for girls at the primary level despite similar dropout rates because of the longer time (and thus opportunities to drop out) at the primary level.

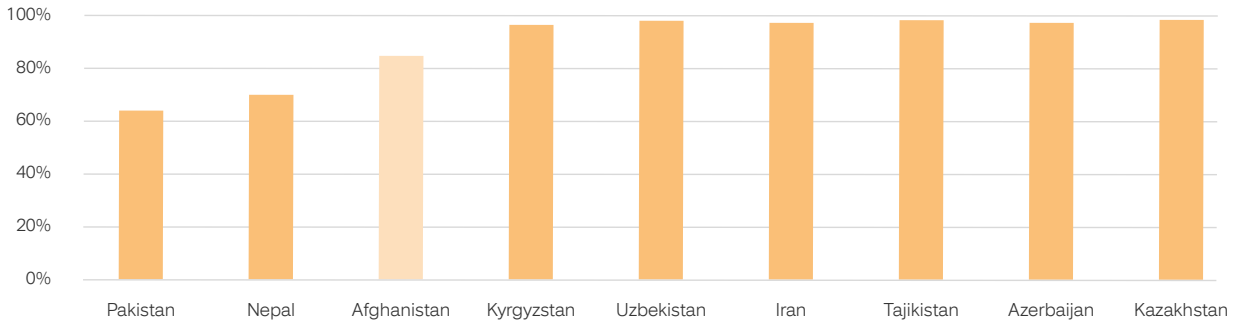
At lower secondary level, girls are more than twice as likely (8.3 per cent vs. 4.1 per cent) to drop out than boys. Nonetheless, in absolute terms, dropouts remain a significantly smaller problem than OOSC generally: while about 21,000 (CSO; 24,000, UNPD) girls are expected to drop out while in lower secondary education, over half a million are already out of school.

One additional factor to consider when looking at dropout rates and gender is the lower enrolment of girls in the past. Significant efforts have been made to increase girls' enrolment; this could lead to a higher perceived dropout rate when looking at upper grade levels due to lower enrolment rates at those upper grade levels. However, the lower enrolment rates in this case would be due at least in part not to higher dropouts, but simply greater rates of out-of-school girls in the past. Additional analysis for this would require the projecting of data from one study onto another and analysis of disparities; this is recommended for future research.

2.5.2. Geography and dropouts

Section 2.6 will further examine geographical and regional differences in school attendance. In terms of dropout rates, it should be noted that the overall

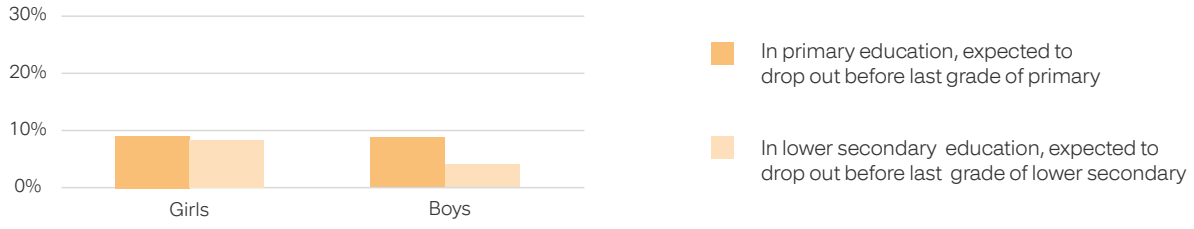
Figure 21 Survival rates to the last grade of primary education for countries in the region, 2014



Source:UNESCO UIS; Afghanistan – ALCS, 2013–2014

[45] For primary, the proportion of those starting primary education who finish; for secondary, the proportion of those starting secondary who finish secondary education.

Figure 22 Dropout rates by gender and level of education



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

expected dropout rates of children in primary education across the country are driven by substantially higher dropout rates in nine provinces.

Farah and Kandahar in particular report substantially higher dropout rates than any other province. This phenomenon requires further research to fully understand and address; data limitations due to propagation of errors may be partially responsible. The figures noted in Figure 23 are higher than those visible in the primary school age OOSC type breakdown as the methodology used to calculate these figures is a Markov model, which includes the dropout rates for older children (who have a higher chance of dropping out). See Annex 1.1 for a full explanation of the steady state transition model and why provincial-level data on this is generally of limited reliability.

While the rural/urban divide is strong in school attendance rates, it has limited impact once children are in school. The total dropout rate for children aged 7–17 is 10.8 per cent in urban areas and 8.1 per cent in rural areas. Kuchi children have the lowest dropout rates – 5.0 per cent – suggesting that while far fewer of them attend school, those who do are likely to stick with it.

2.5.3. Other factors

While no data exist on dropout rates for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returning refugees specifically, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, the barriers to education which they face would suggest that they are at higher risk of dropping out. Children in internally displaced families who were enrolled in school prior to displacement may not be able to enrol in school in their new location due to lack of documentation; migration also correlates with economic difficulties, which could limit enrolment; finally, there may not be schools in the areas where displaced families have settled.

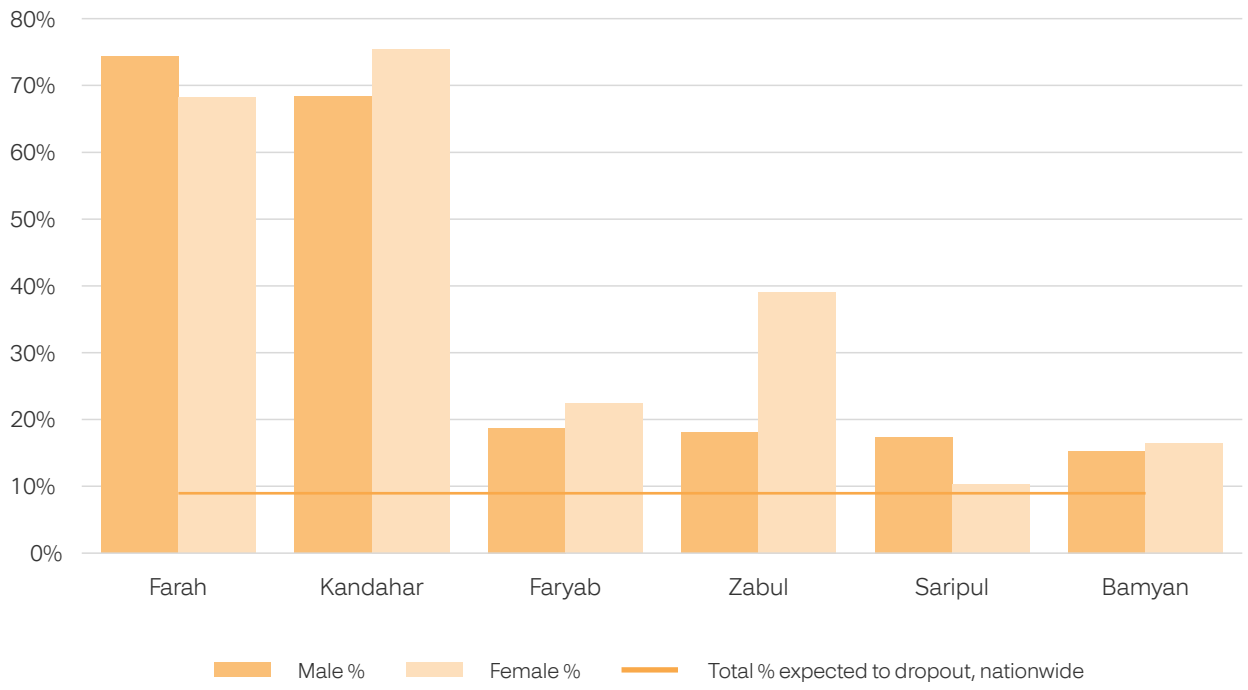
2.6. Provincial profiles of excluded children

The degree of analysis possible at the provincial level is limited by small sample sizes in certain provinces when attempting very granular estimates (e.g., girls in Daikundi and Farah provinces whose head of household has teacher training or university degrees).[46] Nonetheless, certain key trends to consider do emerge, in particular to gender and security:

- Clear trends in OOSC rates by gender can be observed across regions, with provinces such as Helmand, Wardak, Khost and Paktika showing much higher OOSC rates for girls than boys. The provinces with significantly higher OOSC rates for girls than boys align relatively well with provinces at least partially under Taliban control.
- Many of the more insecure provinces show higher rates of OOSC, presumably attributable to challenges in both supply (lack of schools due to limited government access or destroyed facilities; lack of secure routes to school) and demand (other perceived priorities by households; potential for internal displacement).
- Delayed school starts (evidenced by comparing OOSC rates for children aged 7 to those aged 7– 17) are significantly more visible in several provinces, notably Jawzjan and Daikundi.
- Head of household education may not be a panacea to solving the question of promoting girls' education. In several provinces (Nuristan, Ghor, Paktia, Takhar, and Uruzgan, for example), girls were less likely to be out of school if their head of household did not have an education than if they just had a primary level of education.
- Over the past five years, the trends in OOSC rates have been similar for girls and boys in most

[46] As a point of comparison, in Paktika province, only 262 school-aged respondents in the sample had attended primary school the previous year.

Figure 23 Primary education students expected to drop out before last grade by gender and top drop-out provinces



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

provinces. Two outliers stand out: Khost, where female OOSC rates have increased as male OOSC rates have decreased, and Herat a similar, but less marked, trend has occurred.

- Four provinces around Kabul where boys are more likely to be out of school in urban rather than rural areas, bucking national trends; for girls this is only the case in Uruzgan, but the numbers are so close and high as to suggest the difference is minimal.
- It is important to distinguish between OOSC rates and OOSC locations. Due to the distribution of population within the country (see Table 3), the greatest numbers of out-of-school girls are in Kabul province and the greatest number of out-of-school boys in Herat province, despite the fact that these provinces have comparably lower OOSC rates than others.

2.6.1. Gender and security at the provincial level

Regions in the south of the country show significantly higher OOSC rates for girls than for boys (see Figure 24 and Figure 25). Paktika, Wardak, Khost, Kunar, Logar, Parwan, Paktia and Helmand provinces in particular show the greatest differences between female and male OOSC rates (more than 35 per cent) with Nangarhar and Laghman not far behind.

There is some overlap between these provinces and those in which the Taliban either controls significant districts or has concentrated efforts during 2017 (see provinces in red in Table 4). The July 2017 Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) report notes Kunduz, Uruzgan, Helmand, Kandahar and Zabul as those with the most districts controlled by the Taliban, and Badakhshan, Baghlan, Farah, Faryab, Helmand, Kunar, Kunduz, Laghman, Sar-e-pul, Zabul and Uruzgan as those where the Taliban have concentrated their efforts in 2017.[47] The provinces with the lowest rates of school attendance for girls – more than 85 per cent OOSC – are Helmand, Wardak, Kandahar, Paktika, Zabul and Uruzgan. Zabul and Uruzgan are of particular concern as their male OOSC rates are quite high as well.

2.6.2. Late entrants

Comparing the OOSC rate of seven-year-olds to the overall rate of those aged 7–17 shows the greatest differentials in Daikundi (difference of 42 percentage points between OOSC aged 7, 71 per cent, and OOSC overall, 29 per cent) and Jawzjan (difference of 41 percentage points between OOSC aged 7, 69 per cent, and OOSC overall, 27 per cent).

[47] https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2017-07-30qr.pdf, pp. 84–89

Table 3 Distribution of OOSC within the country by gender and province

Province	OOSC Boys	OOSC Girls
Badakhshan	2.46%	2.13%
Badghis	2.47%	1.62%
Baghlan	2.80%	3.66%
Balkh	3.61%	3.78%
Bamyan	1.08%	1.14%
Daikundi	1.37%	1.13%
Farah	2.84%	2.30%
Faryab	3.65%	3.64%
Ghazni	1.80%	3.04%
Ghor	3.30%	2.83%
Helmand	5.33%	4.70%
Herat	9.41%	7.19%
Jawzjan	1.60%	1.48%
Kabul	7.34%	9.30%
Kandahar	7.76%	7.24%
Kapisa	0.61%	1.17%
Khost	1.99%	2.85%
Kunar	1.09%	2.20%
Kunduz	4.40%	4.17%
Laghman	1.75%	2.30%
Logar	1.29%	1.73%
Nangarhar	7.69%	7.23%
Nimroz	0.93%	0.56%
Nuristan	1.08%	0.59%
Paktika	0.80%	1.38%
Paktia	2.68%	2.70%
Panjshir	0.17%	0.41%
Parwan	1.47%	2.41%
Samangan	1.87%	1.40%
Sar-e-Pul	3.59%	2.55%
Takhar	3.36%	2.99%
Uruzgan	2.89%	2.64%
Wardak	2.60%	3.76%
Zabul	2.92%	1.77%

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

2.6.3. Head of household education

While, overall, as Section 2.3.5 showed, OOSC rates are much higher for children whose head of household has not had a formal education, than for those who have had even just primary level of education, there are some exceptions to the rule, especially with regard to girls' education.

In several provinces (Nuristan, Ghor, Paktia, Takhar, Uruzgan for example), girls were actually slightly less likely to be out of school if their head of household did not have an education than if they just had a primary level of education (with differences ranging from 3 per cent to 22 per cent).[48]

[48] While this difference is most striking in Nuristan, where 78 per cent of girls whose head of household has no education were out of school and 100 per cent of those whose head of household has primary education were out of school, it is likely that this is due to low sample size.

2.6.4. Evolutions in OOSC over time

As with the data overall, in terms of ability to look at specific differences in trends at the provincial level over time, the analysis is limited by the low number of years available for comparison as well as different data collection methods in each of the datasets. Considering small differences in trends between provinces is thus of limited value. One interesting comparison can however be drawn: looking at trends around girls' and boys' OOSC rates within each province. Differing trends between them, when they occur, are worth commenting on because in theory these numbers should be drawn from the same households surveyed in each province.

Comparing the evolutions in OOSC over time in each province reveals different trends (some with increasing rates, others with decreasing rates). However, only in two provinces are the trends different for girls and boys (see Figure 26). These could be further investigated to understand the increasing trend in girls' OOSC rates, although it must be noted that time evolutions suffer from potential errors due to the use of different surveys with different sampling methodologies; while similar questions were considered, there is always some difference due to sampling, the length of the survey, the order and wording of questions, and the competence of enumerators.

2.6.5. A slightly gendered rural-urban provincial divide

In each province but one (Uruzgan) where there are both rural and urban data, girls are less likely to be out of school if they live in an urban area (in Uruzgan, 100 per cent of urban girls and 98 per cent of rural girls are out of school).

There are four provinces where rural boys are less likely to be out of school: Badghis (47 per cent vs. 55 per cent); Ghazni (7 per cent vs. 16 per cent); Kunar (20 per cent vs. 22 per cent); Laghman (27 per cent vs. 50 per cent); and Parwan (15 per cent vs. 17 per cent).

2.7. Analytical summary

This chapter considers the Five Dimensions of Exclusion model to profile the children in Afghanistan and to facilitate the design of more effective solutions to existing barriers to education.

Since the fall of the Taliban in 2002, the Government of Afghanistan, donors, international organizations and local NGOs have recognized education as a priority area of action. These efforts have had a significant impact on Afghanistan's education system; nonetheless, much progress remains to be made. Currently, about 3.7 million (CSO) children aged 7–17 are out of school in Afghanistan, of whom 2.2 million (CSO) are girls. Others yet are at risk of dropping out.

While the full degree of OOSCI analyses possible in other countries, with stronger and more regular data collection on the topic of education, analysis based on the ALCS 2013–2014 data, in conjunction with the DHS 2015 data and the AMICS 2011–2012 report, only allows for the identification of key trends amongst these five dimensions of exclusion.

There is not enough data on pre-primary school aged children to conduct analyses on this facet of exclusion. Nonetheless, the picture in Afghanistan is very clear: nearly no children of appropriate age go to pre-primary education. Those who do, attend preschools run by NGOs and religious institutions.

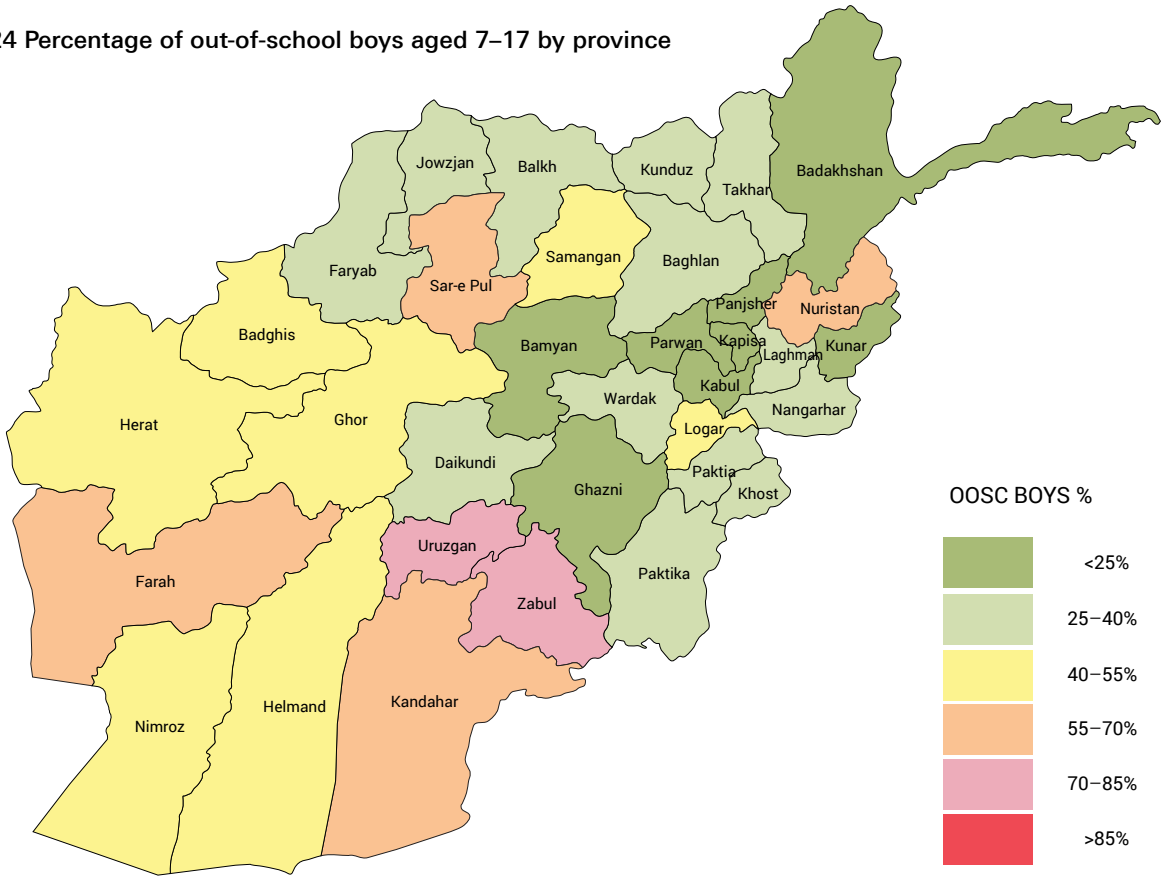
Examining Dimensions 2 and 3 of exclusion – primary and secondary school aged children who are out of

Table 4 Rates of OOSC aged 7–17 and provinces with the highest differential between genders

Province	Male OOSC %	Female OOSC %	Difference
Paktika	26.9%	93.7%	66.8%
Wardak	40.2%	88.8%	48.7%
Khost	29.2%	76.2%	47.0%
Kunar	20.8%	65.0%	44.1%
Logar	40.9%	84.8%	43.8%
Helmand	48.2%	86.5%	38.3%
Parwan	20.7%	57.6%	36.9%
Paktia	40.3%	76.9%	36.7%
Laghman	34.6%	68.5%	33.9%
Nangarhar	34.3%	65.8%	31.5%

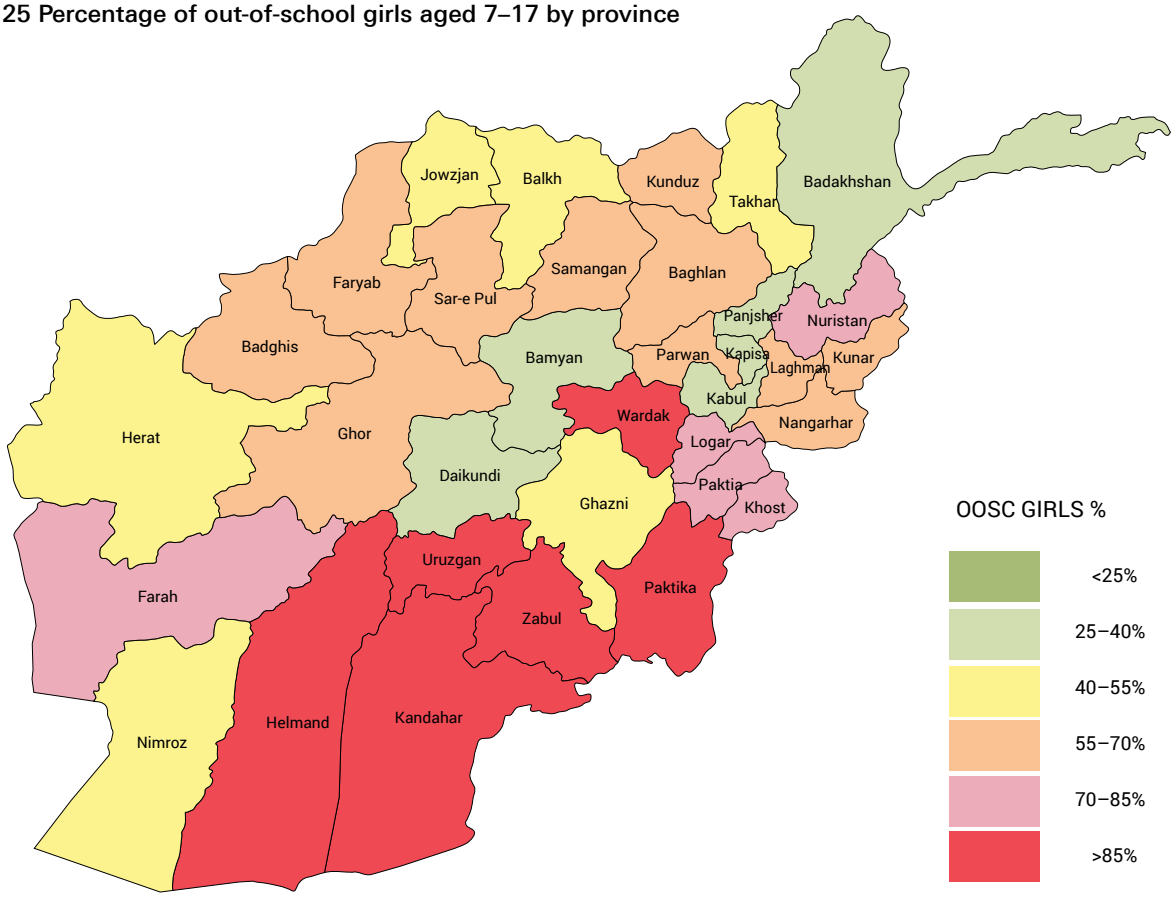
Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Figure 24 Percentage of out-of-school boys aged 7–17 by province



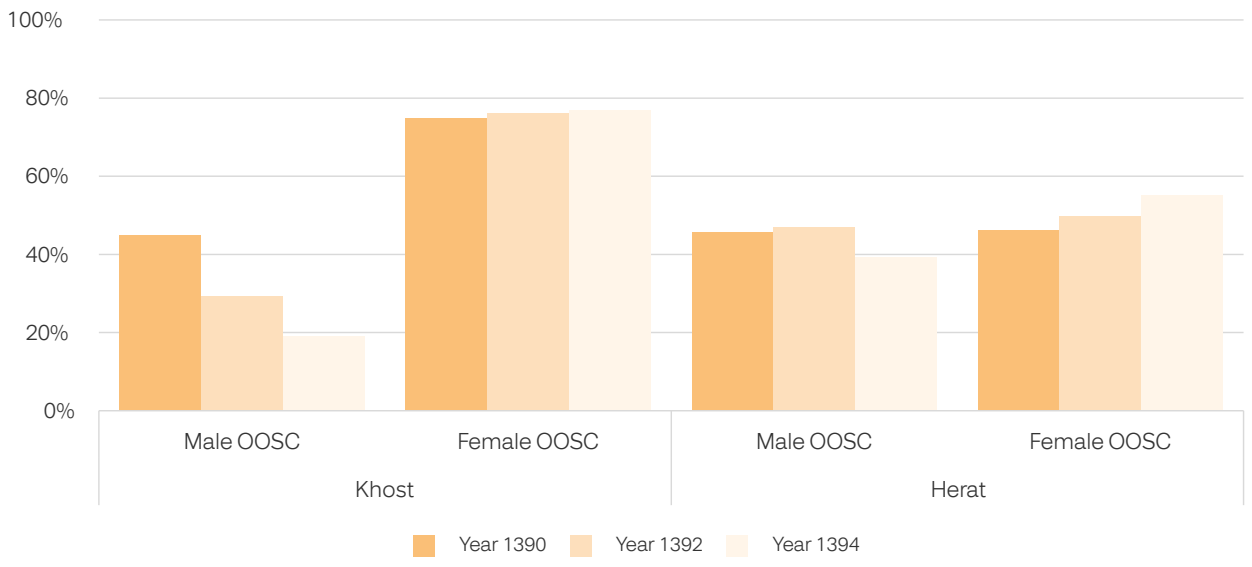
Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Figure 25 Percentage of out-of-school girls aged 7–17 by province



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Figure 26 Rates of out-of-school children aged 7–17 over time by gender, Khost and Herat provinces



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

school – underlines the magnitude of this problem in Afghanistan, especially for rural children and girls. Using the ALCS to conduct analyses in conjunction with CSO population estimates, the data show OOSC rates of urban children, overall, in primary and lower secondary levels of 19.7 per cent and 19.3 per cent, respectively, and 36.7 per cent at the upper secondary level.

Among rural children, 47.4 per cent of primary school age are out of school, as are 47.0 per cent of lower secondary school age and 63.2 per cent of those of upper secondary school age. Kuchi children, girls, and children in the poorer three wealth quintiles are all more likely to be out of school than others.

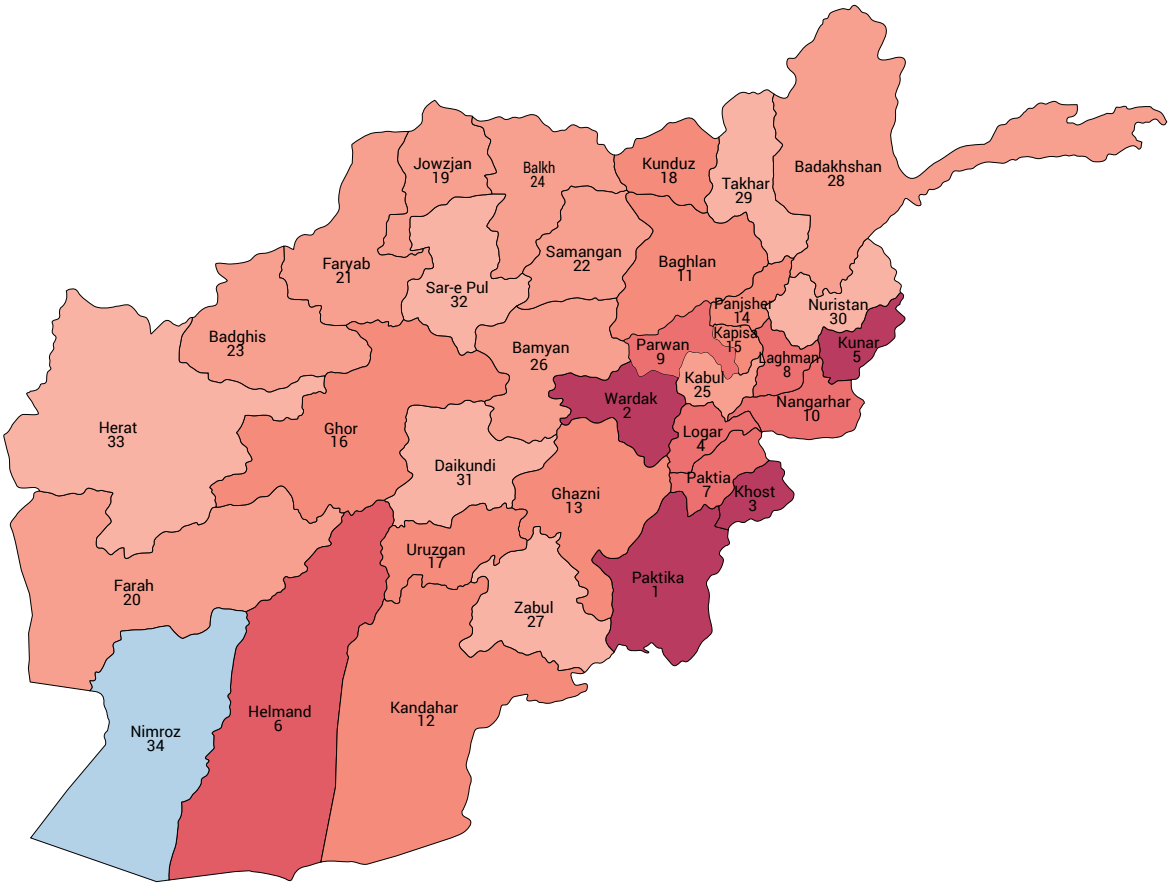
The head of household's education level also correlates with likelihood of school attendance, as those children whose head of household with no formal education or only Islamic education are more likely to be out of school than others.

In terms of concentrations of OOSC, as noted in Table 3, the greatest numbers of out-of-school girls are located in Kabul, Kandahar, Herat and Nangarhar (respectively home to 9.30 per cent, 7.24 per cent, 7.19 per cent and 7.23 per cent of out-of-school girls), and the greatest numbers of out-of-school boys are located in the same provinces (respectively, 7.34 per cent, 7.76 per cent, 9.41 per cent and 7.69 per cent of out-of-school boys). The potential impact of migration on these figures will be discussed in the next chapter. This underlines that solutions to support OOSC should focus not just on locations with high rates of OOSC, but also on those where the greater concentration of population, generally, means that there are greater concentrations of OOSC, even if at lower rates than elsewhere.

ALCS-based analyses of Dimensions 4 and 5 of exclusion are slightly more positive. Compared to neighbouring countries, Afghanistan actually fares better than some (Pakistan, Nepal) in dropout and survival rates. However, in the case of Afghanistan, it is likely that the dropout rate is also improved by the sheer number of children who never even enter school. At the primary level, gender does not play a role in dropout rates; however, at the lower secondary level ALCS data show that girls, although less likely to drop out than in some neighbouring countries, are twice as likely to drop out as boys (8.3 per cent vs. 4.1 per cent). Factors ranging from security to culture likely contribute to this. The rural/urban divide does not seem to impact dropout rates; however, forcibly displaced children are likely to be at increased risks of dropping out.

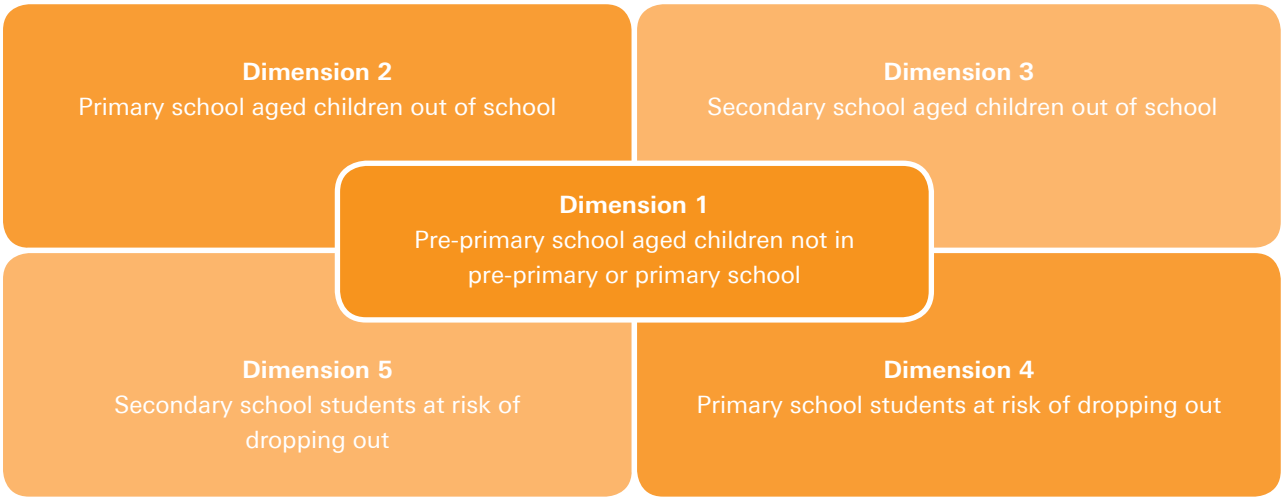
Analyses at the provincial level reveal strong regional differences in percentages of out-of-school children, especially regarding girls' access to school. Further differences by gender underline that geography is not the sole driver of these differences; comparing attendance rates to provinces currently undergoing more conflict, as well as provinces where certain languages dominate, suggests other drivers also result in limited access to girls' education. For instance, Helmand, Kandahar, Paktika, Uruzgan, Wardak and Zabul have out-of-school rates for girls aged 7–17 of over 85 per cent. These are areas that share ethno-linguistic characteristics but also are amongst the least secure provinces in Afghanistan.

Figure 27 Difference in attendance rates of girls and boys, ranked (1= greatest difference)



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Figure 28 Five Dimensions of Exclusion



Summary of profiles of excluded children.

Dimension 1 Pre-school aged children out of school	**Magnitude** No data allowing for clear calculations; previous estimates note approximately 1% attendance of ECE programmes **Characteristics** Countrywide; rural areas in particular
Dimension 2 Primary school aged children out of school	**Magnitude** 2.3 million (CSO)/2.6 million (UNPD) OOSC at the primary level. Girls in the Southern provinces are most likely to be out of school **Characteristics** Six-year-olds (suggesting generalized late entry); female children; rural children, in particular rural girls; Kuchi children; children in the lower three wealth quintiles; children whose head of household has no formal education; working children whose head of household has no education; children with no school exposure at all; girls in Taliban-held areas; children in insecure areas
Dimension 3 Lower secondary school aged children out of school	**Magnitude** About 854,000 (CSO)/984,000 (UNPD) at the lower secondary level. Girls in the Southern provinces are most likely to be out of school **Characteristics** Female children; rural children, in particular rural girls; Kuchi children; children in the lowest three wealth quintiles; children whose head of household has no formal education; children with no school exposure; girls in Taliban-held areas; children in insecure areas
Dimensions 4 and 5 Children in primary and lower secondary school at risk of dropping out	**Magnitude** About 257,000 (CSO)/296,000 (UNPD) current primary students expected to drop out before the end of primary school; about 42,000 (CSO)/48,000 (UNPD) current lower secondary level students expected to drop out before the end of lower secondary school **Characteristics** At primary level, female and male children equally likely; at lower secondary level, female children twice as likely; displaced children (expected)

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3

BARRIERS AND BOTTLENECKS TO EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan states in Article 22 that **"Education is the right of all citizens of Afghanistan, which shall be offered up to the B.A. level in the state educational institutes free of charge."** Yet, as the previous chapter makes clear, despite progress in the past 20 years, significant numbers of children in Afghanistan remain out of school, and even more do not complete education through to the upper secondary level. Girls in particular remain excluded at higher rates, especially in certain parts of the country. This chapter therefore examines the existing barriers and bottlenecks to education in Afghanistan from supply, demand and governance sides, linking them back to the analysis of the Five Dimensions of Exclusion.

- **Demand barriers** include those barriers to education stemming from *insufficient demand* from the population for education for those of school age. Demand barriers can be further disaggregated between:
  - Socio-cultural demand barriers
  - Economic demand barriers
- **Supply barriers** are the challenges to attending school caused by the lack of educational opportunities offered.
- **Political, governance, capacity and financial** barriers consider the enabling environment challenges from the government specifically

It is important to note that these barriers are not separate phenomena, existing in isolation of each other. Rather, they are often co-dependent and require integrated interventions to overcome them (Dryden-Peterson, 2009). Solutions therefore must consider the interdependence of supply and demand barriers, for instance on insecurity and distance to schools in areas under the control of armed opposition groups (AOGs) (Dryden-Peterson, 2009).

Additionally, while all of these barriers and bottlenecks impact education, they cannot all be attributed to – and addressed by – the education sector. Education-specific interventions will not result in all school-aged Afghan children attending school. Chapter 4 will thus consider existing policies and strategies to address these barriers and bottlenecks within the MoE and within other ministries as appropriate, and their relevance and success in addressing the challenges.

Table 5 Overview of key barriers to education identified in Afghanistan

Type	Identified barriers
Demand-side, socio-cultural	Social expectations, gender and education
	Parents' level of education
	Language/ethnicity-based exclusion
	Violence/harassment/bullying
Demand-side, economic	General poverty/low household income
	Lack of guardianship for vulnerable children
	Opportunity costs and child labour
	Ancillary costs
	Lack of employment opportunities following education completion
Supply-side	Lack of provision for nomadic ways of life
	Lack of effective displacement-related solutions
	Lack of early childhood education
	Pedagogy and quality/quantity of teachers
	Content of learning curriculum
	Quality/quantity of infrastructure
	Stigma against overage children
	Additional access constraints for disabled children
Political, governance, capacity and financial barriers	**MoE related**
	Lack of verified data on education
	Public sector financial constraints/mismanagements
	Broader issues
	Security and conflict related

3.1. Demand-side socio-cultural barriers and bottlenecks

Key demand-related socio-cultural barriers to education
Social expectations, gender and education
Parents' level of education
Language/ethnicity based exclusion
Violence/harassment/bullying

Demand-side socio-cultural barriers include barriers that negatively affect demand for education, especially for disadvantaged groups, like girls, stemming from cultural beliefs and practices. In the context of Afghanistan, this study has identified a range of cultural beliefs and practices that impact negatively on girls' education, such as child marriage, violence/harassment and bullying.

More general, demographic factors that limit demand for education include parents' level of education and populations of different ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

3.1.1. Social norms, gender and education

Several factors contribute to girls having a more limited access to education in Afghanistan. These include tradition, religion and social norms, regional and linguistic differences, generalized lower demand for upper level girls' education and security (see Figure 29). Overall, 2.2 million (CSO; 2.5 million, UNPD) girls aged 7–17 are out of school versus 'just' 1.5 million (CSO; 1.8 million, UNPD) boys in the same age group. Figure 24 and Figure 25, which show provincial differences in OOSC rates by gender, illustrate the points detailed here.

Tradition and religion

Traditional and religious beliefs generate additional barriers to education in Afghanistan, especially for girls. Especially in south Central Afghanistan, girls are either not allowed to attend school or, in certain areas, attendance is permitted only at religious institutions. Some girls are "only allowed to go to traditional Madaris, where they learn exclusively about religious subjects" (AIHRC, 2009). Access to secular education is viewed as forbidden by specific interpretations of tradition and religion (Liuhto, 2016). While traditional and religious beliefs also influence attendance rates of boys, their impact is disproportionately felt in girls' access to education (Dryden-Peterson, 2009).

Child marriage

Although the rate of child marriage has experienced a decline according to the DHS (2015), it still remains the second most reported reason for girls dropping out of school (19 per cent) for girls aged 5–24, while only 3 per cent of boys discontinued their education because of marriage.[49]

The clear influence of child marriage on school attendance and dropout rates, especially for girls, has been confirmed by several studies, although estimates vary between reports and locations (AIHRC, 2009; Oxfam, 2011), due in part to phrasing of questions. AIHRC (2009) found that 11 per cent of parents "referred to marriage as the reason why their girls do not go to school".[50] Oxfam (2011) notes that 34.9 per cent of respondents gave early or forced marriage as "a major obstacle to girls' education" in a survey conducted in 17 provinces.

While boys' education can suffer from child marriage as well, girls are expected to perform household chores and are likely to become pregnant after marrying – resulting in additional barriers for continuing education (AIHRC, 2009).

Regional and linguistic differences

The highest prevalence of out-of-school girls are found in the south central provinces, most notably Uruzgan (98 per cent of school-aged girls are out of school), Zabul (95 per cent), Paktika (94 per cent) and Kandahar (90 per cent). This is in comparison to Bamyan (34 per cent), Panjshir (38 per cent) and Daikundi (35 per cent). It has been noted that these differences persist across linguistic divides. Pashto speakers have lower enrolment numbers in general, but also lower enrolment numbers of girls in particular (Giumbert, Miwa & Nguyen, 2008).

Whether these differences in girls' attendance rates stem from socio-cultural demand-related barriers or other barriers, possibly economic or supply-related, cannot definitively be concluded from existing literature. However, existing research points towards cultural barriers to limited attendance rates for girls in said regions (Dryden-Peterson, 2009). This study cannot draw conclusions from the data as linguistic or ethnic indicators are excluded in the preceding chapters on profiles of OOSC, as these are excluded from nationally representative surveys.[51]

Decreased demand for upper levels of education for girls

Data from the 2014 ALCS and 2015 DHS show that girls' enrolment figures, in comparison to those of boys, are much lower and the difference in school enrolment between both genders becomes larger as children become older (see Figure 29).

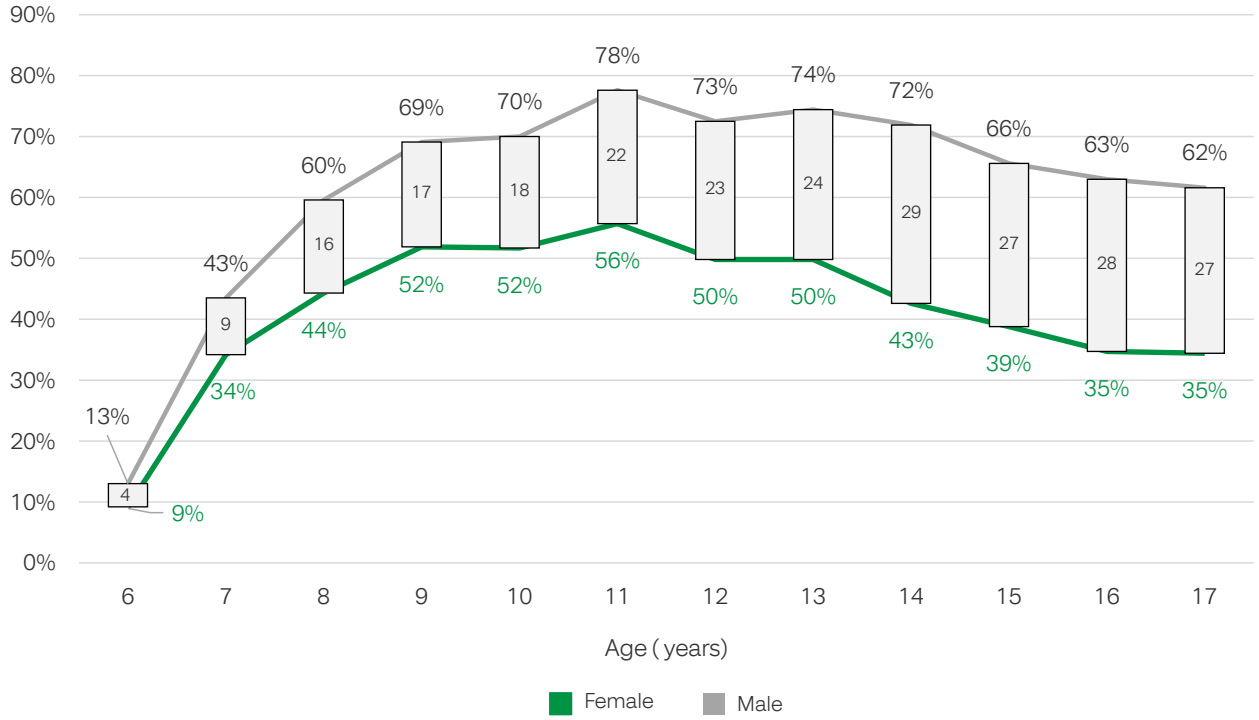
There is a lower demand for higher education for girls due to perceptions that their higher education is unnecessary. In some regions, education beyond basic literacy and numeracy is not considered to be required for girls, exacerbated by child marriage as girls transition into lower secondary education around the age of 12 (UNESCO, 2015). This is evidenced by a widened difference in attendance rates between girls and boys as students transition from primary education to lower secondary (although not the only factor contributing; supply-side drivers also play a role).

Gendered perceptions of insecurity of the trip to school

Insecurity on the way to school is another key factor leading to children being out of school, and girls in particular as parents prefer to keep them safe at home (Asia Foundation, 2016; Samuel Hall, 2013).

[49] The most frequently given reason for girls dropping out was "because their parents did not send them to school" at 30 per cent. DHS, 2015, p. 13.
[50] This survey does not give an exact list of provinces included although it notes the exclusion of Nimroz and Helmand from this analysis.
[51] This is due to exclusion of ethno-linguistic indicators from nationally representative surveys, such as the AMICS, DHS and NRVA/ALCS.

Figure 29 Difference in school attendance rates by gender and age, 2014



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

A distinction, however, must be drawn between the wide range of reasons that may be reported as insecurity, and keep both girls and boys from attending school, and which require different solutions. Insecurity in the Afghan context can range from potential AOG attacks (see Section 3.4 on insecurity) to 'harassment' (Asia Foundation, 2016). Girls in particular are targeted by the latter – a 2014 Human Rights Watch report highlights that President Ghani recognized sexual harassment in schools as common enough to order the MoE to track such incidents, as well as to have other relevant ministries create approaches to counter such harassment.[52] Such harassment also occurs on the way to schools.

The gendered basis of 'insecurity' in Afghanistan is evidenced by the significantly different rates between insecurity being given as a reason for non-attendance of school for boys and girls. According to the ALCS 2013–2014 report, this was the given reason for 8 per cent of out-of-school boys at the primary level and 22 per cent of girls. At the secondary level, again there is significant difference, as this reason was given for non-attendance for 2 per cent of out-of-school boys and 10 per cent of out-of-school girls.

It is worse questioning the degree to which this insecurity is real (whether of AOG or harassment) versus feared, and the degree to which different types of insecurity are a real threat, as past research has suggested that in some, but not all, cases this insecurity may be more perceived than real, and thus based on a subjective decision (Samuel Hall, 2013; Asia Foundation, 2016).

In sum, real and perceived insecurity, worsened by longer distances to school in some cases, is a barrier not only due to limited supply of schools (leading to longer journeys to school), but also a subjective evaluation (often gendered) by decision-makers of the situation.

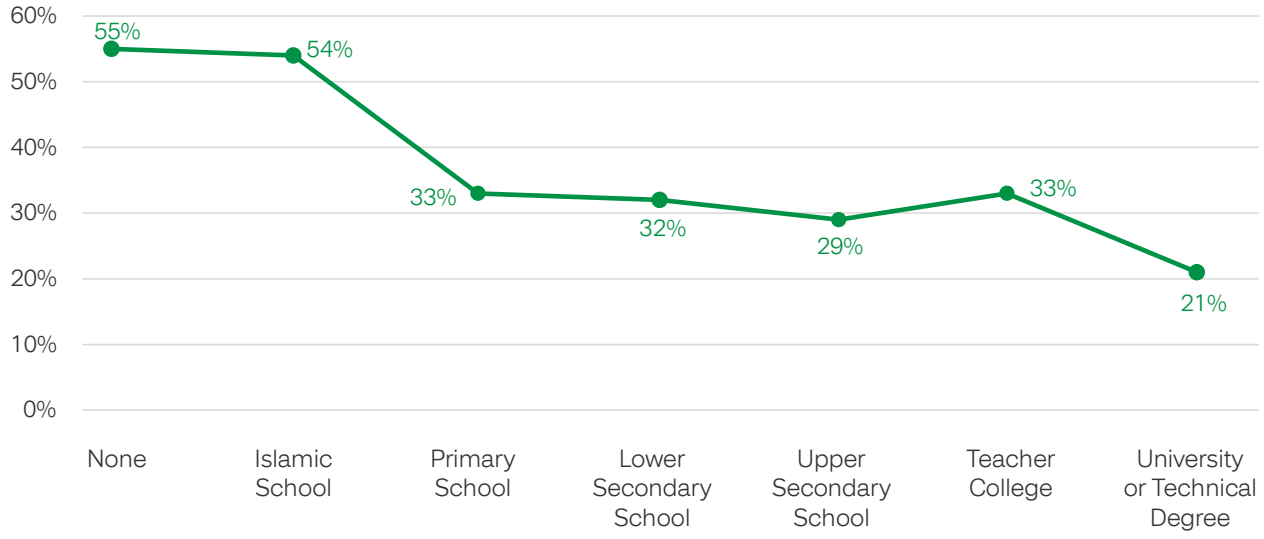
3.1.2. Parents' level of education

Substantial research has concluded that the level of education of the head of household is a strong predictive indicator for demand of education for their children (Kodde & Ritzen, 1988; Glewwe & Jacoby, 2000; Nerman & Owens, 2006). According to the AMICS (2013), "only 29% of children aged 13 years whose mother has no education had completed primary education, in comparison with 57% of those children whose mother has secondary education or higher." When Afghan parents, in particular mothers, have experienced education and gained literacy, they tend to be more proactive in the support of their children's education (UNICEF, 2014).

The ALCS data analysed here confirm this (see Figure 30), the key factor being the head of household having

[52] https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/10/14/afghanistan-fight-rampant-sexual-harassment

Figure 30 Percentage of OOSC aged 6–14 by education level of head of household



Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

some form of formal education, rather than having attended Islamic school or not having any level of education whatsoever. In absolute terms, the latter is a bigger challenge as it represents 3.1 million OOSC aged 6–14 (CSO; 3.5 million, UNPD), whereas the former only represents 16,000 OOSC (CSO; 19,000, UNPD).[53] This should be nuanced by the fact that this does not necessarily mean that heads of household without an education placed less value on it; families who have stayed in the same area with limited access to a school, for example, may, from one generation to the next, simply not have access to education. From a policy perspective, the question then becomes how to break this cycle.

3.1.3. Language/ethnicity based exclusion

The ethnicity, language and lifestyle of communities and families can clash with officially designated curricula (Dryden-Peterson, 2009). In response, families and communities often preserve their cultures by not sending children to schools adhering to the official curricula. For example, in Afghanistan, the right to further education in one of the many state languages is enshrined in the Constitution. Article 16 of Chapter 1 of the Constitution on the state notes:

> "The state shall design and apply effective programs to foster and develop all languages of Afghanistan. Usage of all current languages in the country shall be free in press publications and mass media. Academic and national administrative terminology and usage in the country shall be preserved."

However, classes are only provided in local languages to a limited extent, mostly due to limited funding, teacher capacities and uniformity of the curriculum (Dryden-Peterson, 2009). Although ethnicity or language is rarely reported directly as a defining reason for children being out of school, several reports indicate students are marginalized at schools because of their ethnicity and/or language spoken within their household (Hunte, 2005; Miwa, 2005; Dryden-Peterson, 2009). For instance, Dryden-Peterson (2009) notes that between Uzbeks and Dari speakers in Balkh province and between Kuchi and Pashto speakers in Nangarhar province, local grievances spill over into schools, resulting in some ethno-linguistic groups being favoured over others locally.

At the national level, Pashto speakers have significantly less access to formal education than Dari speakers, and are "10 percent less likely to be enrolled than other language groups" (Giumbert, Miwa & Nguyen, 2008). This is due not just to language but also to the perceived politicization of the official school curriculum in Afghanistan, which some have viewed as attempting to push 'values', for instance by providing education to girls beyond primary education (Glad, 2009). This once again shows the inter-relatedness of the multitude of demand-related barriers to education. The data do not allow for language-based analyses.

3.1.4. Violence/(sexual) harassment/ bullying at school and on the way to school

Bullying and violence and harassment in schools and on the way to school constitute a demand-related

[53] These figures refer to children aged 6–14 as they stem from the analysis on child labour, which uses that age bracket in line with UNICEF definitions.

barrier to school, as the potential threat is seen as too big a risk due to community-based repercussions around the idea of family honour (Dryden-Peterson, 2009). Dryden-Peterson (2009) notes that families prefer to not send their children to school rather than risk family honour. This is particularly the case for girls, who embody this honour. This falls further under the question of both perceived insecurity and real insecurity (discussed in Section 3.4).

3.2. Demand-side economic barriers and bottlenecks

Demand-related economic barriers to education
General poverty/low household income Lack of guardianship for vulnerable children Opportunity costs and child labour Ancillary costs Lack of employment opportunities following education completion

Demand-side economic barriers include barriers that have a negative impact on the demand for education, resulting from poverty, opportunity costs, child labour and other factors lowering demand for education. Households are frequently not able to afford sending (all) children to school. In the context of Afghanistan, this study has identified economic barriers that particularly affect access to education, namely poverty and low household income, opportunity costs and child labour, ancillary costs for education and lack of employment following education completion.

3.2.1. General poverty/low income families

Afghanistan has been in almost continuous war since 1978, when the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan took power following a military coup. Decades of war have left the country underdeveloped, with its education system having to be almost completely rebuilt after 2001. Since 2012, the Afghan economy has been in a 'slowdown' period, a term often coined as Afghanistan's "transition period" (Wieser, Rahimi & Redaelli, 2017).

Poverty is usually cited as the biggest barriers to education (Miwa, 2005; Dryden-Peterson, 2009) and indeed this is the case in Afghanistan. Poverty has a multitude of effects on access to education, from influencing decisions on child marriage to opportunity costs for education. Extreme poverty is usually more common in rural areas than in urban Afghanistan, but almost all families and communities in Afghanistan face some degree of economic hardship (World Bank, 2017).

Economic disadvantages are often identified as primary reasons for dropping out of school, and indeed, children in the two wealthiest quintiles are less likely to be out of school (see Figure 8), based on ALCS and DHS data. This is not a direct wealth–attendance correlation; the wealth quintiles in DHS data are calculated based on assets, and the lowest three wealth quintiles do not follow the expected pattern, suggesting that other factors play into this.

At the provincial level, looking at the attendance rates confirms this lack of wealth–attendance correlation, as provinces like Kandahar, Khost and Paktika, which have lower percentages of the population in the lowest wealth quintiles, have higher out-of-school rates for girls than provinces like Bamyan and Badakhshan, which have higher rates of the population in the poorest quintile (DHS, 2015).

Further factors must thus play a role; Section 3.4.3 discusses the impact of insecurity, but the differentials in female and male attendance rates in some provinces (see the provincial analysis in Chapter 2) suggest cultural factors may also play a role, although this cannot be confirmed by the data, which does not allow for disaggregation by ethnicity.

3.2.2. Lack of guardianship for vulnerable children

Without the care of guardians, children are more likely to discontinue education. Lack of parental protection increases a child's necessity to become economically active, as children must provide for themselves and other family members, such as siblings. This is in particular the case for boys, but also girls are affected. Thus, a lack of a (male) guardian has immediate negative effects on school attendance and continuation (AIHRC, 2009). Ongoing conflicts and displacement deprive many children of parental care, and orphans and other children without parental care are one of the most vulnerable groups to drop out of the education system (Dryden-Peterson, 2009).

3.2.3. Opportunity costs and child labour

Many authors have given the opportunity cost of school (as families forego income from child labour) as the most important barrier to accessing primary school (Dryden-Peterson, 2009; Fredriksen, 2009; Hunte, 2005). This is particularly true for boys (ALCS, 2014). Studies on Afghan children, including children living and working on the streets, agree that their contributions to household income is necessary often in the form of begging, street vending, agricultural activities and/or manufacturing (Dryden-Peterson, 2009; Samuel Hall, 2017). However, the data show that in actuality, OOSC rates cannot be attributed solely to the opportunity costs of keeping children in school.

Firstly, child labour does not necessarily preclude children from going to school or directly dropping out: "Parents, unless they are educated themselves, do not see why there would be a contradiction between work and school. Children can beg for 10 hours and go to school for five" (Engel Rasmussen, 2017).

As noted in Table 6, more than half of boys who are in child labour are **not** out of school. That being said, the double burden of education and work for Afghan children from poor families has proven to be a major contributor to decreased regular attendance and worsened school performances – both hard barriers to a continued and successful education (Samuel Hall (a), 2016). Numerous studies, including those on children living and working on the street (Samuel Hall (a), 2017) and child labour in carpet weaving (Samuel Hall, 2016), have shown that children engaged in labour see their school performance drop considerably.

Secondly, the fact that only 34.8 per cent of out-of-school boys aged 6–14 and 25.9 per cent of out-of-school girls aged 6–14 are in child labour confirms that OOSC cannot be attributed solely to financial needs in the household and the opportunity cost of sending a child to school, although it may be a factor for some families (see Table 6).

That being said**,** as highlighted in Table 7, work – both child labour and working children (depending on whether they work more or less than 14 hours per week) – is not incompatible with school. This work may allow families to have the funds to afford ancillary education costs.

3.2.4. Ancillary costs

Although school is free in Afghanistan, families still face financial barriers in the form of ancillary costs to education. For many poor families in Afghanistan it is not the direct costs of education, but rather indirect costs, such as the costs of school supplies, clothes (uniforms), transport and food that render education unaffordable. Multiple qualitative studies have shown how indirect costs can be insurmountable for poor households, especially those depending on highly seasonal income (Fredriksen, 2009; King & van de Walle, 2007; Lewis & Lockheed, 2006).

Such financial pressures, in combination with potential opportunity costs, have put some families in the position of having to decide which of their children will attend school, as their financial and economic status may not provide chances for everyone. This affects girls' education in particular (AIHRC, 2009).

If families are not able to fully cover the ancillary costs for their children who are in school, further socio-cultural barriers might arise, because "the embarrassment of not having school supplies or uniforms [is] so great that, especially combined with punishments from teachers for not coming to school prepared, it keeps [children] from going to school" (Dryden-Peterson, 2009). Indeed, as noted in Figure 8, children in the poorest three wealth quintiles are more likely to be out of school (DHS; ALCS).

3.2.5. Lack of employment opportunities following education completion

Data on employment in formal sectors of the economy are scarce, and no comprehensive database was

Table 6 Relationship between child labour and OOSC (%) by gender

	Children 6–14 in child labour who are OOSC	OOSC 6–14 who are in child labour
Males	42.9%	34.8%
Females	64%	25.9%

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Table 7 Rate of OOSC of lower secondary school age by employment status

	Not working OOSC	Working children (<14 hrs per week, light work) OOSC	Children engaging in child labour (>14 hrs per week) OOSC
Males aged 13–15	16.6%	27.4%	41.5%
Females aged 13–15	49.7%	60.7%	67.8%

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

identified that could provide national statistics on labour.[54] Given the lack of labour data, the impact that schooling has on finding gainful employment is difficult to ascertain. However, the perception that education does not necessarily increase employment opportunities has been put forth by authors as having a negative effect on demand for education, and therefore on school attendance rates (Nadery & Harpviken, 2014).

Certainly, significant numbers of youth aged 16–18 are neither employed nor in school: over half a million girls (577,000, CSO) and 154,000 boys (CSO). Additional research, using market data on employment, is required to further analyse chances on employment following graduation. Unemployment, together with insecurity, consistently score highest as concerns, especially for Afghan youth (Asia Foundation, 2016).

3.3. Supply-side barriers and bottlenecks

Supply-related barriers to education
Lack of provision for nomadic ways of life
Lack of effective displacement-related solutions
Lack of early childhood education
Pedagogy and quality/quantity of teachers
Content of learning curriculum
Quality/quantity of infrastructure
Stigma against overage children
Additional access constraints for disabled children

Supply-related barriers limit school attendance due to the lack of educational opportunities offered. Political, governance, capacity and financial barriers and bottlenecks discussed in Section 3.4 are tied, for clear reasons, to a number of these, but lack of finances and capacity cannot be held solely responsible for these difficulties. This section will review specifically education-related barriers for nomads and displaced persons, early childhood education (ISCED 0),[55] supply of quantity and quality of teachers, relevance of the curriculum, infrastructure, stigma towards overaged children enrolling in the school system, and lack of guardianship for vulnerable children.

3.3.1. Lack of education solutions geared towards nomadic/migratory ways of life

'Kuchi' is a common generic term used for a multitude of nomadic communities in Afghanistan. Kuchi populations do not necessarily share a single ethnicity, language or religion (Tapper, 2008). Additional research is therefore required to further explore the various nomadic populations often referred to, especially given livelihood strategies of many Kuchis are changing and they are becoming increasingly sedentary (Dyer, 2014).

Kuchi populations have far lower attendance ratios compared to more sedentary populations, with virtually no Kuchi girls attending primary (97 per cent OOSC) or lower secondary education (98 per cent OOSC) (ALCS, 2014). In absolute terms, 125,000 primary school aged girls and 151,000 primary school aged boys (CSO; 144,000/173,000, UNPD, respectively) are out of school. At the lower secondary level, about 41,000 girls and 51,000 boys (CSO; 47,000/59,000, UNPD, respectively) are out of school (ALCS).

Both demand-side and supply-side arguments have been put forward by researchers and practitioners. However, demand-side arguments for low levels of school attendance have decreased in salience and increasingly governments, international organizations and (I)NGOs have focused on alternative delivery mechanisms for providing targeted supply of education (Dyer, 2015). Potential alternative delivery mechanisms include distance learning, mobile schools and specialized delivery models of CBE, but many initiatives are still in their infancy (Dyer, 2015).

Research (Samuel Hall, 2011; 2016 (b)) points towards other barriers to education that are specific for (formerly) nomadic populations:

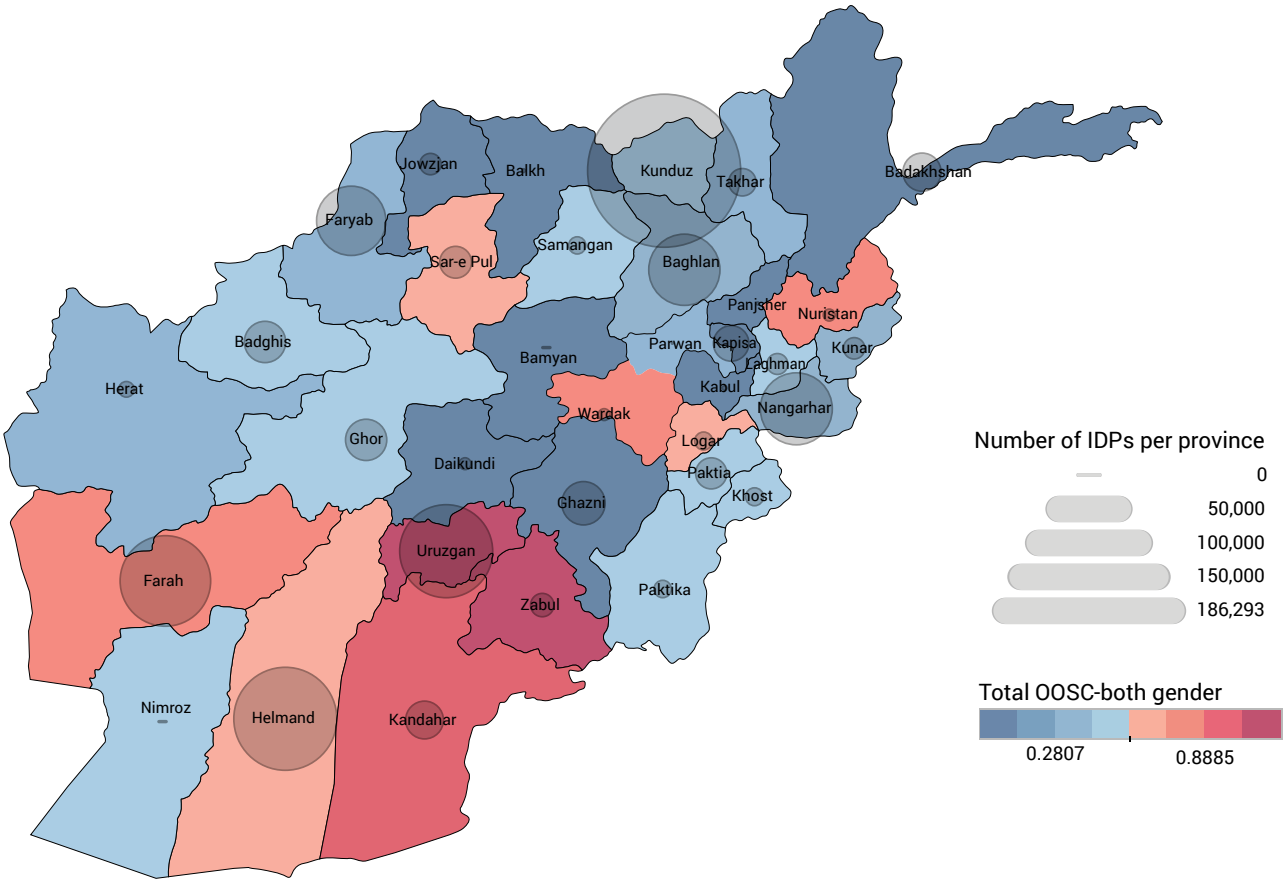
- Comparatively high levels of household poverty hinder access to education, especially for girls, as children often must contribute to household income.
- Lack of required documentation (*tazkeras*) is a significant obstacle for children of migratory populations impeding access to education. Not being able to obtain land deeds forces migratory families to remain mobile, impacting their children's' access to education. This is worsened by the registration process for schools being highly centralized, forcing families to re-register their children at the MoE in either provincial capitals or in Kabul after migrating.

3.3.2. Lack of effective displacement-related solutions

The link between migration and barriers to education in Afghanistan has been made clear in numerous reports, as Afghanistan's complex migration and displacement

[54] These figures refer to children aged 6–14 as they stem from the analysis on child labour, which uses that age bracket in line with UNICEF definitions.
[55] These figures refer to children aged 6–14 as they stem from the analysis on child labour, which uses that age bracket in line with UNICEF definitions.

Figure 31 OOSC rates (ALCS 2013–2014) and number of IDPs (OCHA, 2016) by province



landscape poses both supply- and demand- side limitations to education. For both internally displaced persons and undocumented refugee returnees, access to education is limited. Past research (Samuel Hall, 2011; 2016 (b)) has noted that:

- Displaced children may lack the necessary papers to enrol in school, as procedures to obtain documents, such as *tazkera*, have traditionally required travel to one's province of origin – difficult for those who have fled for security concerns. (Samuel Hall (b), 2016).
- Displaced households are often worse off and so economic reasons limit access to education.
- Cross-border recognition of education certificates is key for returnees, which currently impacts their access to formal education (UNHCR, 2009).[56]
- Many Afghan children living in Pakistan are out of school (80 per cent), making reintegration in the Afghan school system more difficult.[57]
- Locations with high numbers of returnees often lack schools and children discontinue their education because of migration. Children and families note that they often receive better quality education abroad, being frustrated upon return by the lack of educational opportunities (Dryden-Peterson, 2009).
- Areas where internally displaced persons settle may lack necessary facilities for education. More than one third of IDPs interviewed in a 2012 research study reported that their children could not attend school as there were not any schools in their communities (2012 Samuel Hall Challenges of IDP protection survey). Even where facilities existed, schools could not always accommodate the growing number of students.

The overview of Afghanistan's population earlier in the report highlighted the potential for the growing number of children and young people to further strain the country's educational system. Internally displaced persons and returnees are likely to do the same.

Figure 31 compares numbers of IDPs (current location) to OOSC rates, which are comparatively high in Farah, Uruzgan and Helmand. Over half a million

[56] While the MoE recognizes this issue and has been working to address it, recent research confirms that it continues to be a challenge (see for example Samuel Hall (a), 2016, p. 37).
[57] UNHCR and NRC, Breaking the cycle, 2015, p. 15.

people (84,257 families) were displaced internally by the end of 2016, according to the UNOCHA, of whom 56 per cent were children.[58] Forced displacement occurred in 31 provinces and displaced persons were scattered throughout all of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. Additionally, 2016 was one of the heaviest years for returnees in the past decade. According to the Afghan government, there were more than 1 million returnees from Pakistan and Iran.[59]

Trends on displacement were also not positive in 2017. By the end of August 2017, UNOCHA noted 212,000 internally displaced persons,[60] and the International Organization for Migration reported 83,337 returnees from Pakistan since the start of the year and 230,508 from Iran. These returnees will continue to place stress on an already overburdened educational system, which lacks the means to accurately predict their numbers.

This is of particular concern in Nangarhar, which is by far the most common destination for undocumented returnees from Pakistan.[61] The provinces that show the next greatest numbers of returnees from Pakistan between January 2016 and September 2017 report 37,991 undocumented returnees in Kabul, 18,086 in Kandahar and 16,949 in Kunar, and 1,228, 435, and 1,222 deportees from Pakistan, respectively.

These flows do not in all cases correspond to the province of origin of these returnees and deportees, as the International Organization for Migration notes that, for example, only about a third of those ending up in Kabul between January and September of 2017 were from there originally, while only about a third of returnees and deportees originally from Kunar went back.[62] Recent research revealed that the primary obstacles for returnees from Pakistan in attending school are not so much the legal aspects but the need for enrolment support, adapting teachers' mindsets to support children who have experienced displacement, the need for a community-based approach to displacement and highlighting the possibilities of integration of displaced persons through schooling.[63]

3.3.3. Lack of early childhood education

In Afghanistan, attention to early childhood education or early childhood care and education has, so far, been negligible. Only 1 per cent of children aged 36–59 months are attending preschool in Afghanistan. Urban-rural and regional variances are significant. The attendance figure is eight times higher in urban areas as compared to rural areas. Among children aged 36–59 months, preschool attendance is more prevalent in the Central region (3 per cent), and lowest in the South East region (almost 0 per cent).

No gender differential exists, but differentials by socio-economic status are significant. Almost 4 per cent of children living in the wealthiest households attend preschool, while the figure drops to 0.2 per cent in the poorest households. The most significant background characteristic determining differences in children accessing ECE is found in the mother's education level. For instance, preschool attendance is 9 per cent among the children of mothers with secondary education or higher, compared with less than 1 per cent for the children of mothers without an education.

Systematic preschool programmes have been shown to improve learning. An evaluation of a preschool programme for children aged 5–7 years showed significant results in improving school readiness skills of children prior to Grade 1 (31 percentage points in mean scores of preschool children relative to control group) and in superior learning achievement of first grade children in comparison to children who had not attended preschool (16 percentage points higher mean scores).

Analysis on ECE has not been included in this study since comprehensive data is non-existent in Afghanistan. Institutions providing preschool are scarce, with at most 3 per cent of children classified as ISCED 0 obtaining ECE in the Central region (AMICS, 2014). Major differences have not been noted between boys' and girls' attendance rates (AMICS, 2014), signalling that demand for girls' education is relatively unaffected at younger ages. This could provide an opening for demand-creation for girls' education in the longer term if ECE is provided for girls in areas where they hardly attend primary and lower secondary education.

3.3.4. Pedagogy and quality/quantity of teachers

The quality of education provided in Afghanistan is highly dependent on teachers. Despite major efforts to recruit and further train teachers, only 43 per cent of all teachers meet minimal requirements – that they themselves have completed Grade 14 (MoE (b), 2015). While this cannot be directly tied to the quantitative

[58] http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/over-half-a-million-afghans-flee-conflict-in-2016-a-look-at-the-idp-statistics.pdf
[59] https://www.voanews.com/a/over-one-million-afghan-refugees-returned-home-in-2016/3641761.html
[60] www.unocha.org/afghanistan
[61] Nangarhar was reported as the final destination for 168,053 undocumented returnees from Pakistan and 7,970 deportees from Pakistan between January 2016 and September 2017.
[62] https://afghanistan.iom.int/sites/default/files/Reports/iom_return_of_undocumented_afghans_weekly_situation_report_sep_10_-16.pdf
[63] Samuel Hall, The Road to Early Recovery, 2017.

findings, it is important as the quality of education can impact the decision to send children to school and the decision to keep them there, amongst other issues.

This research notes four key teacher-linked barriers to education:

- Teacher absenteeism due to salaries not being paid on time;
- Lack of skilled teachers;
- Lack of trained teachers, especially in insecure areas; and
- Lack of female teachers.

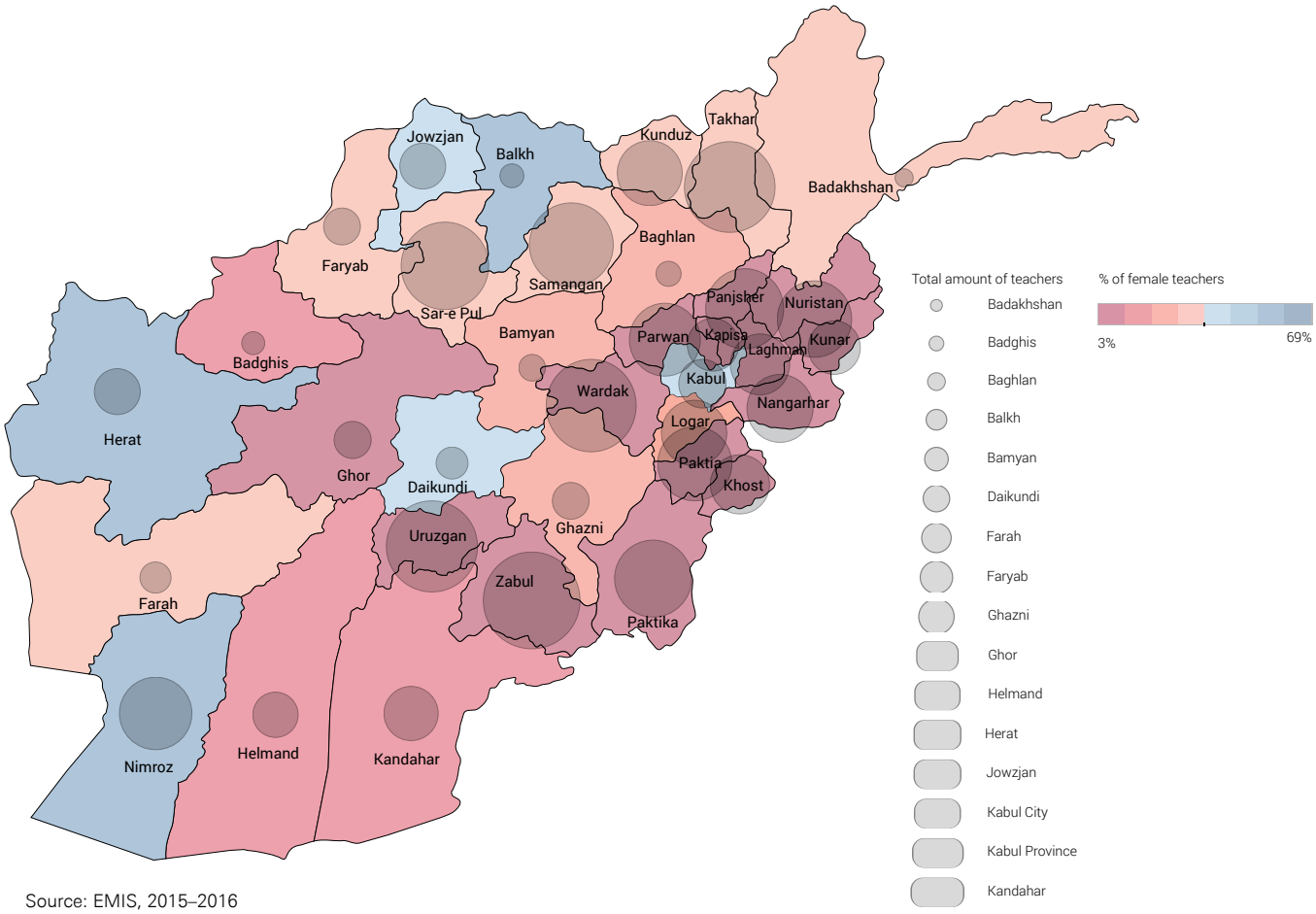
Teacher absenteeism due to salaries not being paid on time

Teacher absence is directly related to compensation (Dryden-Peterson, 2009). Low compensation, or a failure to pay teachers their salaries on time, results in "lowered morale, absenteeism, and lack of interest in the profession" (Dryden-Peterson, 2009). While the ALCS (2014) report notes that teacher reimbursement is competitive, several sources note that teachers are not always being paid on time and in full (Roehrs & Qayoom, 2015). The Financial Management Information System currently being implemented across the MoE should result in improved timeliness of payment for teachers.

Teachers lack the training in necessary technical and pedagogical skills to provide education most effectively

Research has shown that the lack of skilled teachers has been one of the major barriers to education in Afghanistan (Miwa, 2005; Hunte, 2005; Dryden-Peterson, 2009). Building the capacity of current teachers has been a priority for the MoE since the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) II (GPE, 2011). In-service training programmes, INSET-I, II and III, have built teachers' capacity, focusing on pedagogical skills, knowledge of content and administrative skills required (World Bank, 2012). The INSET teacher training programmes have been implemented as part of the EQUIP programmes, World Bank–funded projects that seek to "build a national cadre of qualified teachers who will be knowledgeable in content and in pedagogy" (World Bank, 2012).

Figure 32 Absolute number of teachers and percentage of female teachers by province



Source: EMIS, 2015–2016

Teacher training colleges have also been established across Afghanistan, with an increasing number of 'rural satellite colleges' established in rural areas. Teachers interviewed as part of a review of the education sector in Afghanistan noted that teachers "had experienced resistance from provincial school administrators to adapt new teaching methodologies" (Strand, 2015). This highlights the need for training on the part of administrators with new education methodologies (Strand, 2015).

Shortage of teachers, especially in insecure areas

The overall norm within the MoE is a pupil/teacher ratio of 40:1 (ESA, 2016; MoE (b), 2015). The MoE estimated the ratio to be around 45:1 in 2015 (MoE (b), 2015). Shortages are especially acute in rural areas and in specific fields, such as mathematics and science. It is particularly difficult to hire trained teachers in insecure areas of the country (Giumbert, Miwa & Nguyen, 2008)

Lack of female teachers

Further compounding the lack of teachers is the shortage of female teachers (UNHCR & NRC, 2015). Shortage of female teachers is a particular problem at higher grade levels as, in conservative areas, girls are often not allowed to be taught by male teachers (UNHCR & NRC, 2015; MoE (b), 2015). Figure 32 underlines the differences in percentages of female teachers by province.

Statistics show that only 32 per cent of teachers and 17 per cent of primary school teachers are women (Strand, 2015). Four provinces have less than 5 per cent female teachers and 22 per cent of all districts have no female teachers at all (Strand, 2015).

EMIS records show that there were approximately 218,000 teachers in 2015–2016, of whom 34 per cent were women, including teachers in private schools (203,535 government school teachers).[64] Figure 32 shows how these are primarily in areas with overall higher numbers of teachers, in particular, Kabul, Balkh, Jawzjan, Herat and, to a lesser extent, Nimroz. Areas with both very low absolute numbers also have low numbers of female teachers – Uruzgan, Zabul and Nuristan.

3.3.5. Content of learning curriculum

The curriculum being imparted at various school levels is often not relevant to the daily life of children (Strand, 2015). The content of the learning curriculum is often outdated, lacks standardization and is being provided through pedagogical teaching methods that require restructuring (MoE (b), 2015).

Curriculum reform is one of the major pillar of the reforms proposed by the NESP III, and there is already major investment in developing new curricula, ranging from teacher training materials to materials designed for pre-education levels (Strand, 2015). These policies will be discussed in Chapter 4. Most new textbooks and teacher guides are developed using international and/or regional expertise (Strand, 2015). Children participating in a study stated that the quality of the curriculum matter greatly whether to "enrol and persist in school" (Dryden-Peterson, 2009).

It is crucial to 'depoliticize' the curriculum, which creates space for teachers to provide education in insecure areas. These areas currently have higher OOSC rates (see Figure 24 and Figure 25).

3.3.6. Quality/quantity of infrastructure

This study distinguishes three issues around the quality and quantity of education infrastructure:

- Lack of soft infrastructure;
- Lack of hard infrastructure/distance of households to school facilities; and
- Multiple deprivations in areas that lack infrastructure.

Investment in education infrastructure in Afghanistan has been intense since 2002, with the World Bank EQUIP projects investing $443 million (World Bank, 2012; 2017) since 2008. EQUIP II, however, has seen the project completion being delayed from 2012 until 2017, due to unfinished construction of schools, latrines, drinking water facilities and provision of textbooks (World Bank, 2017). Until December 2017, under the EQUIP I and II programmes, 1,144 schools had been fully completed and built, 90,000 teachers trained and an undisclosed number of textbooks provided. Nonetheless, lack of appropriate infrastructure continues to hamper education in Afghanistan (Strand, 2015).

The EMIS system includes indicators that monitor hard infrastructure. However, these currently range from highly relevant ones, such as the existence of surrounding walls, to the number of non-operational printers and the presence of scanners. It is recommended to streamline existing indicators to ensure a more limited number of questions is asked, but with added relevance.

[64] According to the MoE.

Lack of soft infrastructure

Lack of infrastructure includes the lack of appropriate (sanitation) facilities, boundary walls for girls' schools, desks, chairs, books and other physical requirements for appropriate infrastructure. This especially hampers girls' education, as they require the boundary walls for safety and privacy reasons (Strand, 2015; Samuel Hall, 2014; 2013 (b)).

In conjunction with the cultural barriers outlined earlier, these create additional barriers to education in conservative areas in south and south-eastern Afghanistan. Investment in infrastructure, specifically buildings, desks, chairs and books were also found to be of high importance by children themselves, describing them as prerequisites for a learning environment (Dryden-Peterson, 2009).

Lack of hard infrastructure/distance of households to school facilities

Distance to schools, especially in remote, rural areas, is a significant barrier to accessing education (Dryden-Peterson, 2009). For every mile, a child has to travel to go to school, attendance rates dropped by 16 per cent (ESA, 2015). This aspect is particularly strong for girls, whose attendance rate drop by 19 per cent of every one-mile increase in distance to school (ESA, 2015).

According to a study, 31.6 per cent of children described distance to school being a barrier to accessing education (Dryden-Peterson, 2009). In many cases, teachers are forced to teach children in open air. Lack of and late arrival of textbooks and revised curricula months after the opening of the academic year are also problematic (Dryden-Peterson, 2009). EQUIP II also responded to the distance of the average school for families by constructing additional schools in remote areas (World Bank, 2017). In total, the EQUIP II programme seeks to construct 1,820 school buildings.

Official MoE policy states that primary schools can be established at a distance of 3 km from the village/home of the children, and lower and upper secondary will be established within an 8-km distance (MoE (b), 2015).

Multiple deprivations in areas that lack school infrastructure

It is often in these remote areas that children suffer from multiple deprivations, their households are poorer, distance to school is greater and teachers are more often absent. A vital interaction exists between distance to school and insecurity in a certain area, for instance, "children in Kandahar, particularly girls and younger children, were "afraid of the long way" and concluded that "people will send their children to school if there is a school in the village" (Dryden-Peterson, 2009). Problems are further compounded by often inaccessible terrain and harsh climatic conditions (Dryden-Peterson, 2009).

Higher OOSC numbers in rural areas can most likely be at least partially attributed to the greater distances to school; at the primary school age, 1.7 million OOSC vs. 223,000 in urban areas (CSO; 2.1 million vs. 278,000, UNPD).

3.3.7. Stigma against overage children

There are no official school-level restrictions on access to education and most children enrol in school late (see Table 1). However, even without official restrictions, overage children in Afghanistan "face barriers of social stigma as well as greater opportunity costs of their labour" (Dryden-Peterson, 2009). Thirteen-year-olds, for example, may find it difficult to attend classes with seven-year-olds just beginning school.

Literacy classes and accelerated learning programmes have been effective at increasing access for overage children, but additional scaling up of such programmes are required to provide education for all Afghans (Dryden-Peterson, 2009). In addition, families and communities need to be convinced of the need for basic numeracy and literacy skills – a clear demand-related need.

3.3.8. Additional access constraints for children with disabilities

Chapter 2 did not analyse the impact of disability on school attendance. While there is generally a lack of appropriate data on the topic, a report has stated that children with physically disabilities are 14 per cent less likely to attend school and children with mentally disabilities even more (20 per cent) (Giumbert, Miwa & Nguyen, 2008). The MoE even estimates that three quarters of school-aged children with disabilities have never accessed school, and of those who do enter the schooling system, approximately 75 per cent drop out before completing sixth grade (MoE, 2007, p. 30; Handicap International, 2006).

Another report estimates that 200,000 children with disabilities do not go to school (Sida, 2014). Children of poor families often become disabled as they search for scrap metal that can be sold and risk becoming physically disabled due to unexploded ordinance or minefields. Even though families may be aware of the risks posed by the collection of scrap metal, they still send their children to work due to poverty (UNAMA, 2017). As violence is increasing each year, more

explosive remnants of war remain behind on battlefields, resulting in more children becoming physically, and some mentally, disabled (UNAMA, 2016).

3.4. Political, governance, capacity and financial barriers and bottlenecks

Governance-related barriers to education
MoE specific
Lack of verified data on education
Public sector financial constraints/ mismanagements
Broader constraints
Security and conflict-related

This section discusses barriers to education related to governance of the education sector in Afghanistan, focusing specifically on the role of the MoE. It has been developed in broad consultation and is based on interviews with key education stakeholders in Afghanistan. Barriers identified for this study can be divided into the following topics:

- Lack of capacity related to education statistics;
- Public sector financial constraints; and
- Allegations of financial mismanagement.

3.4.1. Lack of verified data on education

Out of the total reported students receiving formal education as part of the MoE, 95 per cent are currently managed by the General Education Department (EMIS, 2015). Furthermore, the administrative responsibilities in measuring the enrolment of children, especially those at pre-education level, rests with multiple departments.

The recent decision to place the EMIS Department under the General Education Department will likely decrease the distance between Provincial Education Councils, District Education Councils, School Management Shuras (councils) and Academic Supervision, but might overburden a department that manages many of the ministries' key activities.

Lack of verifiable data remains a major challenge for the MoE to initiate planning, measuring and reporting on education outcomes (Strand, 2015). The current EMIS needs an upgrade, with a clear training need for administrators at various departments and levels (Strand, 2015). Reporting and monitoring structures require a major overhaul and alternative school systems, such as ALCs, madrassas and various technical vocational education and training initiatives, have further complicated Afghanistan's education landscape and monitoring.

The analysis of the different data sources available and selected for this study underlines some of the key problems with existing data sources.

3.4.2. Public sector financial constraints and mismanagement

The provision of education in Afghanistan is limited by domestic revenue constraints, and the MoE is highly reliant on external donor aid to fund both the development of education programmes and part of its operating budget (ESA, 2016). Total MoE expenditures are estimated to be at least 43 per cent funded by international donors. However, donors also significantly fund off-budget interventions such as CBE, with approximately 75 per cent of total international expenditure on provision of education spent off-budget (ESA, 2016). Government expenditure on education has ranged between 2.7 per cent and 3.8 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) between FY2011 and FY2014 (ESA, 2016) (see Figure 33).[65]

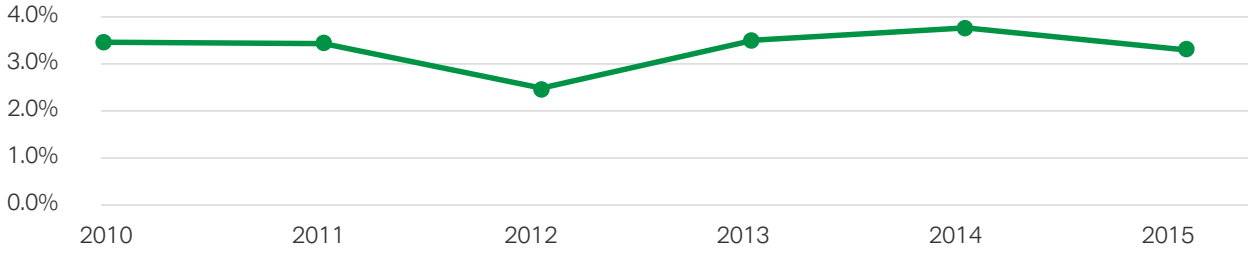
Though education expenditure at 14.1 per cent of total government expenditure appears relatively low compared to similar developing countries and its relatively large school-age population, the budget allocation for education is affected by the high levels of government security expenditure (ESA, 2016). Of this government spending on education, based on EMIS 2015–2016 data, 95 per cent goes to general education, 1 per cent to technical and vocational, 4 per cent to Islamic education and 1 per cent to teacher training.

While recurrent education expenditure as portion of total GDP has increased, expenditure has not kept pace with increasing demand for education, owing to Afghanistan's very young population (ESA, 2016).

The education sector in Afghanistan also faces allegations of corruption and nepotism, a challenge cited by civil society organizations and academic sources (Strand, 2015). Anti-corruption measures are highly prioritized by the new president, Ashraf Ghani, but likely remain a challenge for the foreseeable future and impact further investments in the education sector by international donors (Strand, 2015; Dryden-Peterson, 2009). Introduction of the Financial Management Information System will likely enhance the financial management capacity of the ministry.

[65] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS?locations=AF

Figure 33 Government expenditure on education as percentage of GDP



Source: World Bank; UNESCO

Another issue remains the level of underspending of the development budget of the MoE (ESA, 2016). The low expenditure rate of the development budget reflects overly optimistic programming of resources, contracting and implementation constraints (ESA, 2016). In addition, overspending in previous years has been carried over to subsequent years, increasing the development budget for succeeding years.

It must be noted that implementation constraints are universal for actors in Afghanistan working on education, for instance the World Bank–managed EQUIP II programme has encountered significant difficulty with finalizing several school building projects, delaying project completion by several years (World Bank, 2017).

3.4.3 Security and conflict

Decades of violence and war have resulted in a complete reboot of the education system since 2001, but violence continues to remain prevalent and is even on the rise (UNAMA, 2017). Violence and insecurity result in a particular set of problems for governance in Afghanistan's education sector, with government-funded schools operating outside of government control, an inability to monitor results, expenditure and relevant education statistics and a ministry that is dependent on international funding for its core budget.

One key characteristic of the current conflict is the increase in volatility and fragmentation of front lines and the creation of new AOGs in areas that were controlled by the government. This, of course, has a significant impact on the organization and capabilities of the MoE to sustainably provide quality education all over the territory and of education in general. As reported by the 2016 MoE Education Sector Analysis Report, the proximity of front lines has a strong impact on school closure as well as school attendance and enrolment, especially for girls. It is difficult to hire qualified staff in war-torn areas and in AOG-controlled areas, education curricula both for girls and boys vary widely depending on the political colour of local commanders and rarely meet the standard MoE requirements.

Overall security situation and its effects on children

Conflict-related violence continues to exact a heavy toll, with the 2016 human rights report by OHCHR and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA, 2017) noting the highest civilian casualty figures since 2009. There are frequent attacks on mosques, district centres, bazaars and schools. In 2016 alone, UNAMA counted 11,418 casualties (3,498 deaths and 7,920 injured). Children are particularly affected by explosive remnants of war and landmines, with 2016 seeing the highest number of children becoming physically disabled since 2009.

Macro-level – Fear for safety, migration and complications for governance

At the macro-level, a report notes there is on average 9 per cent less enrolment in education in areas that had a "security incident" the previous year (Giumbert, Miwa & Nguyen, 2008). Constant fear for safety results in families not allowing girls to walk to school and migrating to urban areas or abroad (World Bank & UNHCR, 2016). The lack of provision of quality education has also been noted as a factor for migration.

All these factors negatively affect school attendance, but also complicate the measuring of in-school children through EMIS. This also requires the creation of alternative forms of delivery of education (for instance accelerated learning classes for overage populations) and the need for cross-border recognition of diplomas (World Bank & UNHCR, 2016).

Community-level – Children associated with armed forces or groups, securitization of schools, trust between communities

At the community-level, government schools can become targets as they are affiliated with the central government or heavily guarded (Samuel Hall (b), 2013;

Rubin, 2016). Education has also become a weapon for mobilization in war, a tool for recruitment of children by armed forces or groups (UNAMA, 2016). While the MoE has found ways to continue to operate schools in areas of AOG control, OOSC are often found in areas affected by insecurity and violence (MoE (b), 2015). Schools also require increased physical protection, increasing the chances that they become targets, leading to a drop in school attendance (Samuel Hall (b), 2013; Rubin, 2016).

Individual-level – Interpersonal relations

At the individual level, violence impairs interpersonal relations within communities, which can exacerbate violence, fuelling inter-communal tensions and "promoting children to stay at home and out of harm's way" (Dryden-Peterson, 2009).

Delivery of education services in Taliban-held areas

The position of AOGs regarding education has markedly changed since the initial years after the fall of the Taliban in 2001 (Rubin, 2016). Current attacks against education institutes do not necessarily reflect opposition to education itself, but frequently are tactics to control funding or over the curriculum of schools (Rubin, 2016). According to Rubin (2016), "the struggle in insecure areas over control of education revolves around three issues: funding, curriculum and access to education by girls."

- On funding, AOGs demand payment, including authority over hiring decisions, in areas where the Afghan National Police or the Afghan National Security Forces cannot operate, functioning as security guarantors (Rubin, 2016);
- AOGs often demand increased attention to religious education, but not the elimination of secular education (Barnett et al., 2016);
- Local AOGs sometimes restrict or deny girls' access to education.

The underlying reasoning for AOGs to allow government schools to operate is because of the demands for education of the local populace. Engendering enough local demand, also for girls' education, will result in populations pressuring AOG factions into allowing schools to operate. This creates a new venue for control and monitoring, using electronic data-gathering methods that will be further detailed in Chapter 5.

3.5. Analytical summary

This literature review outlines the main barriers to education in Afghanistan, drawing on the analysis detailed in Chapter 2 and nuancing it through a review of existing literature. The key take away issue is the interlinked nature of many of these barriers, meaning that 'solutions' cannot be generated at the individual barrier level and be expected to solve the problem of out-of-school children in Afghanistan. For example, girls' access to education may be limited by cultural expectations (demand-side); these are, however, in many cases tied to perceptions and reality around security and the appropriateness of the school (supply-side) to local cultural norms.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4

EXISTING POLICIES AND STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

This chapter on policies, strategies and interventions creates a link between the profiles of OOSC in Afghanistan and the bottlenecks and barriers to education, which have been identified. Its objective is to analyse the various responses to Afghanistan's educational and social protection needs by the Afghan government in terms of policies and strategies, allowing for the identification of remaining gaps in addressing these barriers to education.

The Government of Afghanistan is committed to creating the ideal conditions for a well-educated nation, and since 2002 Afghanistan has seen increased government investments into the education sector and witnessed progress towards the ultimate goals of educating all children, reducing illiteracy and creating a skilled labour force (ANDS 2008:14). Both the Constitution of Afghanistan and the International Convention of the Rights of the Child (ratified by Afghanistan in 1994) protect the right to life and development for children. The Constitution proclaims that "education is the right of all citizens of Afghanistan." It thus also echoes and is a signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which declared education as a human right.

4.1. Introduction

The Constitution, together with the Education Law of 2008, establishes the legal framework for the Ministry of Education. The Afghan Constitution has set out an ambitious goal by declaring free education until the bachelor's level as a right of all citizens of Afghanistan.

The Department of General Education within the Ministry of Education is responsible for the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels under consideration in this OOSC study. In addition to the formal education programmes being implemented by the MoE, a wide range of national and international non-governmental organizations provide community-based education in various hard-to-reach areas, and/or areas under AOG control.

In 2005, Afghanistan signed the Education For All agreement, which includes six goals: (1) expand early childhood care and education; (2) provide free and compulsory primary education for all; (3) promote learning and life skills for young people and adults; (4) increase adult literacy; (5) achieve gender parity and gender equality; and (6) improve the quality of education.

The current guiding national policy document is the National Education Strategic Plan 2017–2021, for which the Educational Sector Analysis – carried out in 2015 and early 2016 – brought evidence. The NESP III elaborates on strategies to achieve the 2012 CBE policy and the MoE Situational Analysis and Strategic Plan 2015–2020, amongst others, and is centred upon three core components: (1) quality and relevance; (2) equitable access; and (3) efficient and transparent management. The three main components and the proposed strategies under each, coherently and logically address most major barriers to achieving educational targets in Afghanistan, although these strategies lack many explicit policies and guidelines to implement them.

As of mid-2017, 25 new policies were in development at the MoE.[66] As part of these, the Policy Guidelines for Outreach Education and Accelerated Learning, and the Social Mobilization Strategy were being finalized (as of late 2017). A non-exhaustive list of the key existing policies (implemented and draft) reviewed in this section can be found in Annex A1.3.

As with the discussion of the barriers and bottlenecks in Chapter 3, policies and strategies are discussed in relation to each barrier/bottleneck. These should not, however, be considered to be mutually exclusive as many address several barriers, and the barriers themselves are interlinked.

4.2. Demand-side socio-cultural policies and strategies

4.2.1. Social expectations, gender and education

From a broad perspective, gender equality is a key component in a number of international documents to which Afghanistan is signatory, the Constitution itself and strategic plans:

- The Declaration of the Essential Rights of Afghan Women signed by President Karzai in 2002 declares that there should be equal protection and representation of both men and women under the law, in educational institutions and with reference to freedoms of movement, speech and political participation.
- Articles 22, 44 and 43 of the Constitution formally outlaw discrimination against women, recognizing their equal status, rights and duties. They guarantee the State's commitment to devise and carry out effective programmes to address the gender imbalances in formal education, promoting the education of women as well as institutionalizing the importance of female education being supported by families and all sectors of Afghan society.
- Adopted at the 2004 Berlin Conference, 'The Way Ahead: Work plan of the Afghan Government' was intended to reinforce the Millennium Development Goal of education and the need for the Afghan government to ensure that "all girls and boys complete compulsory education and have opportunities to continue at higher levels". It pays particular attention to the inclusion of girls formerly prevented from accessing education and calls for the mainstreaming of gender in all government sectors, policies and programmes.
- Afghanistan is also signatory to the Bonn Agreement, which recognizes the participation of women – their status and rights – as a necessary prerequisite for establishing peace and reconstruction of the nation.
- The Government of Afghanistan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2003, making it central to the country's legal and policy documents.
- The National Action Plan for Women's benchmarks and timelines declare that it will be fully implemented and in line with the Millennium Development Goals.

[66] Samuel Hall, interviews with high-level civil servants at the MoE, 20–22 August 2017.

From an education-specific perspective, key informant interviews with the MoE[67] confirmed that an explicit policy for girls' education is being formulated and is currently in the process of finalization. Its key provisions include: (1) the support of a political dialogue among government bodies; (2) building capacities of school shuras to change communities' norms towards girls' education; (3) increasing girls' enrolment as part of the MoE effort to reach out to the community through CBE and ALCs; (4) reducing child marriage through inter-sectoral collaboration; (5) implementing the Girls Access to Education programme (dedicated to the training of female teachers); and (6) increasing efforts to implement water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure in schools (Draft Girls' Education Policy, 2017).

This agenda is in line with the barriers identified in this report. These provisions are drawn from the Girls' Education zero draft policy and could be significantly overhauled depending on current consultations and actual implementation capacities of the ministry (potential lack of resource rank high in the risks matrix of the policy draft). A Female Teachers' Relocation Policy is currently under development.

At the time of this assessment, addressing the issue of low female enrolment appears to be a priority for the MoE. The NESP III, the 2012 CBE Policy and the MoE 2017 'Conditions of Girls' Education in Afghanistan Report' contain provisions on socio-cultural factors that could positively impact the demand for increased access for girls' education. MoE officials recently reported that the ministry is undergoing a significant effort to train more female teachers, and to recruit around 30,000 among communities over the next five years.[68]

The Community-Based Education Policy and its associated initiatives at the community level presents concerted efforts to address the question of girls' education. The policy particularly focuses on girls in rural areas – identified in our analysis as a clear group of concern – as it gives flexibility to communities in remote areas to organize safe and quality access to education for girls and boys alike outside of MoE-run public schools.

It also contains provisions to address the attitudes of community leaders and community opinion makers, that they may better understand the importance of these skills for Afghan youth and, in turn, actively promote and support education initiatives. Several international NGOs and UN agencies (including CARE, the Agha Khan Foundation, the Womanity Foundation and UNICEF) have committed to promote CBE as a vector to overcome barriers to girls' access to education and have been successful in it (Acks, Baughman & Diabo, 2015).

The NESP III's Equitable Access policy to "Ensure the school environment is inclusive, safe and conducive to learning and positive social relations" clearly notes initiatives aimed at gender disparity as a priority and highlights the need to include strategies that improve the access to learning and retention of girls in schools and other learning programmes. These include plans for:

- Pilot schemes for the "deployment of female teachers to rural areas".
- Pilot schemes for the "establishment of training and dormitory facilities to allow girls and female teachers to continue their education".

The 2012 National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan noted that increasing the number of female teachers in rural areas could positively affect female enrolment and attendance by addressing the fact that many female students cannot attend school with male teachers. To support this the NESP III will pilot the use of incentives (such as housing, salary supplements, inclusion of family members, special security provisions) to encourage qualified female teachers from urban areas to relocate to underserved areas (NESP III, 2017).

Child marriage is targeted by several international human rights documents, including the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and the International Convention of Civil and Political Rights, which have been incorporated into domestic law. Afghanistan is also a member of the South Asian Initiative to End Violence Against Children, which adopted a regional action plan to end child marriage. The regional action plan covers 2015–2018.

At the regional level, representatives of the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation, including Afghanistan, asserted the Kathmandu Call to Action to End Child Marriage in Asia in 2014. As part of its commitment, Afghanistan will ensure access to legal remedies for child brides and establish a uniform minimum legal age of marriage of 18.

[67] Samuel Hall, interviews with high-level civil servants at the MoE, 20–22 August 2017.
[68] Samuel Hall, interview with MoE high-level civil servants, 20–22 August 2017.

The 2009 Elimination of Violence Against Women criminalizes *baad* (marrying a woman to someone as blood money or for the purpose of bringing peace and reconciliation among families), child and forced marriage (legal age in Afghanistan is 16 for girls and 18 for boys), and 19 other acts of violence against women. The law is the cornerstone of the Afghan initiative to eradicate all forms of abuse, aggression and violence against girls and women. However, it has suffered from delays and challenges in implementation, with Parliament still not conforming to the law.

The Afghan Civil Code officially condemns child marriage, but the systematic enforcement of the law on this matter, *baad*, and *baadal* is variable depending on the geographic areas where the court rules. Especially in rural areas, the Afghan law is sometimes in competition with other socio-economic orders that bear more legitimacy.

On 19 April 2017, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Information and Culture launched a National Action Plan to Eliminate Early and Child Marriage. The action plan was developed in partnership with United Nations Population Fund Afghanistan and after several consultations with the public and private sectors and representatives of the international community.

Recent research conducted by Samuel Hall (2018) for the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD), in conjunction with UNICEF, suggests that to date, these policies and legislation have yet to have a strong impact, with child marriage persistent in many parts of the country and causing difficulties in accessing education. This is in line with findings from the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (Smith, 2009) and statistics from the AMICS 2012.

4.2.2. Parents' involvement in education

The Afghan government recognizes the role of parents as a vector of promotion of education in the NESP III. Under the NESP III, the MoE plans to transfer more responsibilities in education management to parents and communities, as a way to build ownership, to advocate for education, and as part of its effort to promote a more transparent and inclusive management of education. The Social Mobilization Strategy, which is to be finalized by the MoE will provide more guidelines and actionable recommendations on the way to reach out and involve parents and communities in education within their community.

4.2.3. Language/ethnicity based exclusion

In principle, the Afghan Constitution guarantees the "development" of all languages.[69] In line with this, the 2008 Education Law states that "Language of teaching shall be selected from one of the two state official languages, based on the current language spoken by the majority of the population residing in the area, in accordance with its related rule. In the areas where spoken language of the majority of the people is the third official language in the country (Uzbeki, Turkmen, Pashai, Nooristani, Balochi, Pamiry, and other languages), opportunities for teaching of the third language as a teaching subject shall be prepared."

Children from ethnic, language, social and religious minorities are also taken into consideration in the 2014 Inclusive and Child Friendly Education Policy from the MoE, which promotes language as an important part of an individual's identity, which should be respected through the education system. The fact that this is still noted as a significant barrier suggests that while frameworks exist, they are not being translated into action.

The NESP III reminds readers about this general principle, but provides little guidance on an implementation strategy, or the means needed to improve the offer of education in multilinguistic environments.

The selection of languages for education, especially in ethnically mixed areas, is politically sensitive and sometime used by political entrepreneurs to fuel local feuds (ESA, 2016). The politicization of the debate over which language should be used in schools, as well as clear statistical discrepancies in school enrolment depending on language use (as developed in Chapter 3) should be the ground for a critical assessment of the achievements of the government on this front, and for more innovative approaches to offer a more language-inclusive environment for education.

4.2.4. Violence/harassment/bullying

The MoE guidelines, 'Establishment and promotion of education schools in Afghanistan', note that primary, secondary and tertiary schools should either be located in a district centre or that the distance to students' homes should not exceed a certain limit. In some remote parts of the country, this policy is particularly difficult to implement and CBE represents a major alternative to provide nearby basic education within communities. The issue, however, becomes more acute for higher

[69] Samuel Hall, interviews with high-level civil servants at the MoE, 20–22 August 2017.

grades as the MoE acknowledges the widespread difficulty to recruit trained teachers for Grades 4–9. At same time, while CBE providers are required to offer opportunities for Grades 1–3, the provision for higher grades is planned to be addressed on a case-by-case basis, in coordination with the MoE and its partners (MoE Policy Guidelines for CBE, 2012, p. 10).

The Policy Guidelines for Outreach Education and Accelerated Learning (2017) should provide updates to the way the MoE implements CBE, which could have positive impacts on violence on the way to school in remote areas. In relation to family honour, the quality of infrastructure is of critical importance to offer girls an environment considered safe by their community and foster attendance, and this barrier is strongly linked to the infrastructure quality and quantity barrier.

4.3.Demand-side economic policies

4.3.1. General poverty/low household income

Historically, Afghanistan has a tradition of providing free education, regardless of the level of income and the ethnical or social origin of individuals. Article 43 of the Afghan Constitution states that the State is responsible for providing free education to all up to the level of bachelor's degree. This crucial point is also acknowledged in the 2008 National Education Law, as well as the National IDP Strategy from 2013. Although the financial constraints on the education sector is high, this principle is implemented all over the country without exception and represents one of the major achievements of the Afghan state in effectively promoting equal access to education.

With the support of international donors, the Afghan government has implemented several social protection plans, such as the Social Protection Sector Strategy from 2008 (part of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy), aiming to reduce extreme poverty, hunger and malnutrition and improve assistance and integration of the most vulnerable categories of society. The Social Safety Net Programme is the World Bank flagship project in Afghanistan and intends to support the government in improving the economic resilience of the most vulnerable population.

Although progress has been made on the implementation of a social security system in the country, the economic reality remains extremely stark as almost 40 per cent of the Afghan population remained below the poverty line in 2015 (ALCS), the economic growth remains slow (2 per cent in 2016) and the rural market is isolated from economic centres.

4.3.2. Opportunity costs and child labour

Child labour stands as a policy challenge for Afghanistan and ranks high among the priorities of the current government: the fight against child labour was presented as a priority by the Afghan government during the 2016 Brussels conference on Afghanistan.

At the international level, the country was involved in the recent South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children regional action plan to address child labour in carpet weaving for the period 2016–2021. Afghanistan ratified the ILO Convention 182 in 2010, prohibiting entry into the "worst forms of child labour" before 18. The country also ratified the ILO Convention 138 establishing the minimum age for regular work at 14. Overall, Afghan law complies with international standards about the regulation of child labour.

At the national level, the 2004 Constitution and National Labour Policy commit the government to the elimination of child labour and the corresponding Afghan law, Article 13 of the Labour Code, sets the minimum age of regular work at 15 years. The government has also developed several strategies and action plans to address child labour in its diversity, including a National Strategy for Children at Risk, a National Action Plan for Street Working Children and a National Strategy for Street and Working Children.

Additionally, UNICEF and ILO are leading efforts to combat and eradicate child labour across all industries where children are found to be working in hazardous conditions through technical assistance to the government and efforts to coordinate the actions of the humanitarian community.

However, in reality, child labour continues to be prominent in Afghanistan and laws are limited in their effects. The extremely diverse reality of child labour in the country (in terms of forms, reasons and incurred risks), as well as the lack of resources to deploy appropriate law enforcement mechanisms over the national territory minimizes the impact of legal restrictions.

Despite several limitations in the initiatives to fight child labour, the government has consistently had a pragmatic approach to the labour–education nexus for children, acknowledging the absolute need for some families to have children contribute to the household income with income-generating activities, as well as providing sensitive and adapted school curricula to meet this need and limit the opportunity costs of education.

4.3.3. Ancillary costs

There is limited data (both qualitative and quantitative) on the costs of education at the individual level, which represents a significant information gap on an important barrier to education, as 39 per cent of the population live under the poverty line (ALCS 2013–2014). Given the lack of information about this barrier, it is not surprising to note the existence of only a few policies and regulations.

The 2013 National IDP Policy states that "no IDP student will be denied access to the school because they cannot pay for a school uniform, school books, supplies or other similar expenses" (National IDP Policy, p. 45), but does not provide the tools to implement this rule or information on the consequences of denying students access to school.

More information on this question should be collected through the EMIS and be subject to a specific nationwide study to identify the scope and the impact of this barrier, as well as the most promising areas of intervention for policymaking.

4.3.4. Lack of employment opportunities following completion of education

The NESP III acknowledges the need to develop market-conscious strategy for education planning and plans for dedicated nationwide surveys of job providers/employers, a mean of assessment of the integration of graduates on the labour market. However, data on the labour market in Afghanistan are too scarce to provide reliable guidance on the market needs. The government lacks adequate tools to assess the sectoral needs of the labour market, as well as the adequacy of the education offer to the dynamics of the labour market demand in Afghanistan.

In this regard, regular collection of sector-oriented data is needed to inform the long-term strategies of the MoE and MoHE. In the last years, vocational training activities have significantly grown among the development aid community and private institutions as a promising way to efficiently provide unqualified workers with adapted skills to enter the labour market.

To coordinate these activities and provide for a consistent strategy, official curricula have been developed and enforced by the government (National TVET Strategy for Afghanistan 2013–2018). However, poor information on market needs have sometimes led to poor results, where local markets are flooded with individuals bearing the same skills (Samuel Hall, 2012).

4.4. Supply-side policies and strategies

4.4.1. Lack of early childhood education

As noted in the previous section, the 2008 Education Law makes the MoE and MoLSAMD responsible for providing preschool education to children (MoE (b), 2015). Currently, neither governmental preschool education nor a system for systematic data collection, monitoring and analysis of ECE exists within the MoE or MoLSAMD.

The MoE has taken the lead in harmonizing the ECE curriculum through a consultative process with humanitarian and civil society stakeholders in 2007 under the umbrella of a preschool working group. This concerted effort resulted in the publication of a draft Pre-School Education Policy, which has yet to be implemented.

Additionally, CBE providers, such as the Aga Khan Foundation, provide ECE in rural areas, and private institutions provide limited ECE services in major cities. Mosques are also known to provide ECE services in many areas in Afghanistan (MoE (b), 2015).

Nonetheless, the NESP III states that the MoE in coordination with MoLSAMD is to develop Afghanistan's early childhood education policy, and the MoE encourages development partners and private sector to participate in the development and implementation of the policy (MoE (b), 2015).

4.4.2. Lack of education solutions geared towards migratory ways of life

Through Article 44 of the Constitution, the State committed to "devise and implement effective programs for balancing and promoting education for women, improving of education of nomads, and elimination of illiteracy in the country". In the NESP III, Kuchis are considered among the "disadvantaged section of the society" when it comes to access to education and commits to implementing equitable solutions to foster their integration in the national system.

More specifically, the 2013 IDP Policy notes that the acquisition of a *tazkera* ranks high among the issues nomadic population face to enrol in the education system. The MoE 2013 Literacy Strategy also plans coordination meetings with Kuchi representatives to plan for the development of culture-sensitive material and appropriate forms of schooling.

Seasonal schools and mobile schools are being considered by the MoE as part of the innovative tools to promote education for nomadic population (NESP III, p. 47), and the Policy Guidelines for Outreach Education and Accelerated Learning (currently under revision) will soon provide MoE staff more technical and concrete actions to take to foster adapted CBE and distant learning solutions. Overall, these solutions remain new and more experience needs to be gathered on their effectiveness.

However, to date there is limited data on any current successes in promoting adapted education to nomadic population, and the analysis in this report shows extremely high OOSC rates amongst many of these populations.

4.4.3. Lack of effective displacement-related solutions

The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation implemented a National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons in November 2013. It outlines a comprehensive framework to fulfil the rights of IDPs, address their emergency needs, support the achievement of durable solutions and assign clear roles and responsibilities on actors involved in achieving these goals.

Regarding education, the policy acknowledges the specific needs of IDP children and highlights the need for the Afghan government to provide access to quality education at every level and eliminate gender disparities in education, in compliance with the Afghan constitution and the Education For All Policy.

The NESP III also commits to provide education "in Emergencies, for Returnees and Displaced Persons", planning to address the specific challenges of education among IDPs (including lack of adapted infrastructure, prevalence of child labour as an opportunity cost, diversity of background of students).

There is generally weak knowledge among government staff, NGOs, civil society actors and IDPs themselves about IDP rights and the implementation of the National IDP Policy. The IDP landscape has evolved since the policy was designed. The restructuring of the humanitarian response to IDPs in Afghanistan since 2013 has further complicated the implementation of this policy, as at the international level, the lead role on IDPs has switched from UNHCR to UNOCHA and at the national level the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development has emerged as a central forum for information-sharing among NGOs involved on IDPs.

Almost four years after its announcement, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation has released an updated Policy Framework for Returnees and IDPs, which updates several strategies from the National IDP Policy, based on the evolution of the situation. Several measures to promote education (including acceptance of alternate identification documents, waiver for certification fees, recognition of foreign teacher credentials) are mentioned, however the policy implementation is low.[70]

4.4.4. Pedagogy, quality and quantity of teachers

Although the number of teachers in the general education system has risen, the shortage remains acute, especially in rural areas (ESA, 2016), where the proximity with front lines and lack of education facilities make it even more difficult to hire qualified teachers, especially female. As of 2014, only a third of teachers were women, mostly in urban centres.

One of the strategies used by the Provincial Education Departments to remedy this shortage is to hire teachers on contract to meet the schools' demand, and who are entitled to lower salaries. CBE, involving community members for teaching, allows for more flexible recruitment and teaching, although it meets the same limitation: lack of qualified staff, especially for higher grades.

The NESP III developed a plan to "Ensure teachers and educators are better qualified, certified, and employed according to national standards and regulations". It included a reform to improve and unify teacher education curricula, guidebooks and support material, the implementation of a teacher credentials system, partnership with other ministries (such as MoHE) or the private sector to increase efficiency in the training of teachers in general education and technical vocational education and training (TVET), and a competency based teacher recruitment mechanism implemented at the provincial level. It is too early to draw any conclusion on the effect of this strategy, which has not yet been translated into action.

Under the umbrella of the NESP III, which has committed to support a more gender-sensitive environment, the MoE should pay particular attention to the development of innovative solutions to increase recruitment of qualified female teachers, as it stands as a major barrier to girls' education in rural areas.

[70] https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/05/afghanistan-internally-displaced

4.4.5. Contents of learning curriculum

The last major overhaul of the national education curriculum was conducted in 2011, organizing education around four stages:

1. Primary education (Grade 1–6)
2. Intermediate education (Grade 7–9)
3. Upper secondary education (Grade 10–12)
4. Post-secondary education (Grade 13–14)

The conditions of design of this curriculum were suboptimal as doubts were cast on the qualification of the staff among the MoE Curriculum Department, and the concertation work was reportedly disrupted by significant external involvements (including religious groups, environmental groups, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Humanitarian Rights Commission) (ESA, 2016). This curriculum has the merit of existing though and has led to improvements (development of a comprehensive TVET curriculum, enforcement of minimum quality standards) but faces significant limitations:

- Teachers have persistently complained about the fact that children have too many subjects to study in regard to the time dedicated to education, particularly for children who also have to contribute to the household income (ESA, 2016).
- The lack of qualified teachers rendered the implementation of the curriculum difficult, especially in mathematics and science (ESA, 2016).

The new MoE strategy, which was implemented in early 2017, plans an ambitious reform of the learning curriculum. The forthcoming reform intends to (1) create a National Curriculum Centre and strengthen its team's capacities, including the training to master's level of a core of national curriculum development specialists; (2) improve consultation with stakeholders external to the MoE (such as children and youth, parents, private sectors, universities, Ministry of Public Health, MoHE); (3) create standards for curriculum development for better streamlining of its evolution; (4) increase the gender-sensitivity of the curriculum; and (5) adapt the curriculum to the labour market's needs in a pragmatic effort to provide students with a better adequacy of the skills and knowledge learnt with their life's needs.

Part of this planned reform includes an update of the general education curriculum, an overhaul of the TVET catalogue of skills offered, as well as strengthen literacy classes and better teacher education. Although the NESP III has been appraised as both an ambitious and realistic strategy (NESP III Appraisal Report 2016), one major uncertainty remains, as the MoE has regularly been unable to spend its entire development budget due to structural constraints (in 2016, it spent only half of its development budget) (Gacougnolle & Kelly, 2016).

The curriculum reform plan developed in the NESP III is promising and represents a lucid analysis of the current situation. In line with the MoE's strong wish to operate in a more transparent environment, the new National Curriculum Centre should pay attention to remaining independent and free from any politicization, sensitive to the cultural, ethnical, linguistic and religious diversity of the country, and adopting a pragmatic approach to the needs of the Afghan population for a smooth transition to the labour market.

4.4.6. Quality and quantity of infrastructure

The MoE commitment to "Ensure the school environment is inclusive, safe and conducive to learning and positive social relations" (NESP III, p. 40) sets minimum standards for school infrastructures and furniture, including surrounding walls, drinkable water and sanitation with lockable doors.

The 2012 CBE Policy Guidelines also put access to drinkable water, closed toilets, walls and easy access both for girls and boys as a condition for CBE learning spaces.

Previous initiatives by the government in collaboration with the private sector and NGOs were successful. One example is the school-in-a-box programme implemented by several NGOs, which were successful in providing schools with minimum safety, sanitation facilities and qualified staff to increase girls' attendance (Samuel Hall (b), 2015).

In terms of quantity, the MoE has set clear guidelines for maximum numbers of students per class in primary, secondary and tertiary education. However, the reality in the field can vary widely, depending on government ability to reach areas and population displacement.

Although the NESP III and the National IDP Policy state the obligation of the state to offer IDPs access to education according to the national standards, few indications are given on the way the government plans to deliver these standards in emergency settings, and education in IDP-concentrated areas are heavily reliant on humanitarian aid.

The development of CBE gives more ownership to communities in organizing basic and intermediate education. It alleviates the state's burden in building schools in remote areas, as community buildings can be used as schools, as long as these buildings meet the MoE standards set in the 2012 MoE Policy Guidelines for

CBE. The need for additional schools in rural areas cannot be overstated (approximately half of MoE schools have usable buildings according to the ESA 2016).

4.4.7. Stigma against overage children

The MoE commits to offering fair access to education to everyone in Afghanistan, regardless of their age, as stated in the objectives on quality and relevance, and equitable access of the NESP III. Among the innovative tools proposed by the NESP III, evening or seasonal classes stand as promising alternative ways of providing adapted education to overage students.

Although the Inclusive and Child Friendly Education Policy, Article 3 of the 2008 Education Law and the Quality and Relevance objective of the NESP III acknowledge the importance of schools to be stigma-free and inclusive spaces, there are no specific guidelines for MoE staff on how to tackle discrimination issues of overage students within schools and communities.

In the recent past, CBE and ALPs have offered flexible systems to ensure access to education to overage children or adults, as well as mechanisms for some children to catch up with the normal pace of their studies.

UNICEF's literacy classes for girls and women in rural Afghanistan, which ended in 2014, proved to be an effective example of how to provide basic literacy skills to a particularly vulnerable population, with positive appreciation among local communities.[71] Similar programmes, designed by the MoE in coordination with international partners could provide stigma-free learning spaces for overage children and adults, offering adapted skills to catch up with the education system (for overage children) and professional skills (through TVET curricula) and literacy for adults.

4.4.8. Additional access constraints for children with disabilities

The Afghan Constitution states that "The state shall guarantee the rights of retirees, and shall render necessary aid to the elderly, women without caretaker, disabled and handicapped as well as poor orphans, in accordance with provisions of the law".

Practically, persons with disabilities fall under the remit of the MoLSAMD. Nonetheless, MoE education strategies (for example the 2008 Education Law, the Child Friendly Education Policy and the NESP III) take on board the question of access of children with disabilities to schools. This corpus of documents sets intentions for the future, as well as budget dedicated to the development of adapted facilities, such as dedicated competence and resource centres. However, the implementation of most of these measures is still pending and 95 per cent of children with disabilities do not access education (ESA, 2016).

Access to education is not only a physical challenge, but also a social one, when social stigmas of disabilities are reproduced into schools. Although the government is committed to creating an inclusive environment, there are no guidelines for MoE staff at the local level on special needs related to disabilities in schools.

4.4.9. Lack of guardianship for vulnerable children

In 1994, Afghanistan ratified the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child and in 2006, the MoLSAMD adopted the National Strategy for Children at Risk. Both texts serve as the legal base for child protection in Afghanistan.

There is currently no specific mechanism to provide the necessary protection to children lacking guardianship. Over the last four years, the Child Protection Action Network has helped 3,000 children per year, on average, but its structures at the district level have a wide mandate and do not have the capacities to systematically identify children lacking guardianship and provide adequate support to ensure equal access to the education system.[72]

4.5. Political, governance, capacity and financial barriers

4.5.1. Lack of verified data on education

The EMIS represents the main and central source of data on education in Afghanistan. Although the EMIS stands as a critical tool for monitoring the strategy and achievements of the MoE over the years, the NESP III lacks a dedicated section assessing the successes and shortcomings of the statistics gathering and analysis mechanism as of 2017. The only available comprehensive document on the EMIS is the Information Systems Development Policy, released in 2014.

Other documents produced by the MoE (like the ESA 2016) touch upon the EMIS and the NESP III mentions the greater role the EMIS will have in the management decentralization process (NESP III, p. 23), in making data collection and supervision more transparent

[71] UNICEF, Afghanistan: In-depth Evaluation of Female Literacy Program, 2014, https://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_81366.html
[72] https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/afghanistan0716_brochure_lowres.pdf

(NESP III, p. 24), and improvements of its monitoring capacities (NESP III, p. 24).

However, the NESP III lacks a more thorough evaluation of EMIS capacities and shortcomings, particularly in capacities for data verification and analysis given the extensive role the EMIS plays in monitoring the achievements of the new strategy[73] and the ambitious goals it is assigned. It is unclear how the EMIS will support the NESP III, as it lacks the necessary means to achieve what is promised.

4.5.2. Public sector financial constraints/ mismanagement

Expenses in the education sector have risen from 32.8 billion Afs to 44.4 billion Afs over the last five years, amounting to 14.1 per cent of total government expenditures in 2015 (NESP III, 2017), and investments in educations are planned to increase in 2017 (ESA, 2016). But as expenditures linked to enrolment rates (primary, secondary, tertiary and TVET) and the growing demography of the country continues to rise, the need for funding remains important, if only to be able to maintain current standards of quality.

This has been a structural challenge for the country as the expansion of school enrolment since the turn of the millennium has constantly pressured education investments. (ESA, 2016). Although the World Bank noted significant progress on finance planning and management compared to the situation considered under the Afghanistan Public Finance Review 2005, particularly in management decentralization, better donor coordination with the MoE and efforts to improve the quality of secondary education remain vital (World Bank, 2010), with room for improvement.

The NESP III commits to better efficiency in budget spending: although operations budgets have regularly been completely spent, only a fraction of the development budget was spent in 2016, mainly due to optimistic forecasts and "implementation constraints". Commitments from the government to stick to the financial plan developed in the NESP III will be of paramount importance to assess the abilities of the MoE to efficiently plan and execute its strategy.

As part of the structural vulnerabilities of education funding in Afghanistan, the role of international aid is central. The education sector heavily relies on this aid to bridge the gap between increasing needs and the available budget of the government (the international aid intervenes mostly for the development budget, parts of the operations budget and off-budget interventions) (ESA, 2016). That said, there is still room for improvement in coordination and cooperation between international actors and the MoE in efforts to improve the reach and quality of education across the country. The structural reliance of the education sector on this aid poses a risk as it depends on the commitment and agendas of these donors (ESA, 2016).

Allegations of financial mismanagement

Corruption is a persistent problem in Afghanistan. It is seen by the population as the second most important problem facing the country (ESA, 2016) and the country ranks 169 out of 176 on the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index. The education sector is no exception; the lack of trust between local leaders (elders and mullahs) and MoE representatives has been pinpointed as a major challenge for the implementation of CBE (Rubin, 2016).

The National Unity Government has made clear its commitment to eradicate corruption at every level and announcements by President Ashraf Ghani account for the political will to effectively comply to this agenda. While a nationwide coordination policy is planned, it has not been written yet and the fight against corruption relies on a variety of disparate and complementary governmental bodies, national laws and donors' commitments:

- The Afghan government has committed to the UN Convention against Corruption.
- Transparency International identified 10 anti-corruption agencies and supporting agencies, some of them coming as replacement of dysfunctional organization (Transparency International, 2017), in addition to the 2008 Law on Overseeing the Implementation of the Anti-Administrative Corruption Strategy.

More specifically, the MoE has set the fight against corruption as an objective in its 100 Days Plan through better regulation and monitoring of recruitment, complaint management and banning of dubious contractors (ESA, 2016). The NESP III also calls for an MoE strategy to (1) provide transparent reporting to the public and donors; (2) implement regulatory frameworks for performance assessments of all MoE operations; (3) strengthen monitoring system of staff attendance;

[73] The EMIS is cited as a source for indicators for the policy objectives and outcomes, and amounts to the majority of the "means of verification" in the Sector Monitoring Matrix.

(4) develop a budget execution tracking database at the provincial level; and, (5) increase accountability by publishing policies, standards, plans, budgets, results and reports; this does not yet exist.

Despite these gaps, significant progress has been made in the fight against corruption, as well as in improving control on public expenses (Transparency International, 2017). As reported by UNAMA, "The Government has made notable progress through: high-level leadership signalling a shift away from the culture of corruption; development of ministry-level anti-corruption plans and initiation of a national plan; efforts to professionalise the civil service through merit-based recruitment and collection of asset declarations from senior officials; transparent and effective public financial management, including in procurement and budgeting; efforts to streamline the delivery of public services and safeguard vital public resources; and legislative reform and establishment of a dedicated court to ensure increased accountability in major corruption cases." (UNAMA, 2017).

4.5.3. Barriers to education related to security and conflict

The security environment across Afghanistan remains extremely volatile; diverse AOGs, mostly affiliated with the Taliban, challenge the government's order and grip over the national territory, and threaten the stability of the administration in contested areas.

In the past, strategies of negotiation and accommodation between AOG commanders and local entrepreneurs (community elders, mullah, humanitarian actors) have reportedly been successful in a pragmatic effort to keep schools open and education running for girls and boys.

However, as impressive as they are at the local level, these initiatives are contingent to the will of local AOG leadership and do not reflect the reality of the country. MoE representatives at every level represent a political target for AOGs but examples of sectoral discussion between the MoE and Taliban leadership brings hope for constructive dialogues (Rubin, 2016).

The CBE approach, as promoted by the 2012 policy, has proven to be more resilient to conflicts than classic state-run schools (Burde, Middleton & Samii, 2016). Less centralized and visible, more flexible and run by members of the community, CBE structures are less likely to be perceived by AOGs as symbols of the Afghan government. As such, AOGs have reportedly been much less defiant to MoE-supported CBE than to MoE-run schools (Rubin, 2016).

Although CBE accounts for a potentially powerful resilience mechanism in the specific context of war, its implementation needs to respect the conditions, quality standards and curriculum set up by the CBE Policy Guidelines (2012) to provide sustainable education.

Besides, the MoE has developed action plans to foster the recognition of learning centres as 'Peace Zones' and the inclusion of school shuras and the Child Protection Action Network in discussions with relevant conflict stakeholders to foster negotiations and prevent school destruction and closure as much as possible.

As part of a new and innovative mechanism to deliver education in conflict areas, the MoE plans to leverage technologies to equitable access to education, especially to girls (NESP III, 2017). The Social Mobilization Strategy (currently under revision) participates in this effort in allocating more autonomy to school shuras in school managements and local promotion.

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5

RECOMMENDATIONS AND POLICY INTERVENTIONS

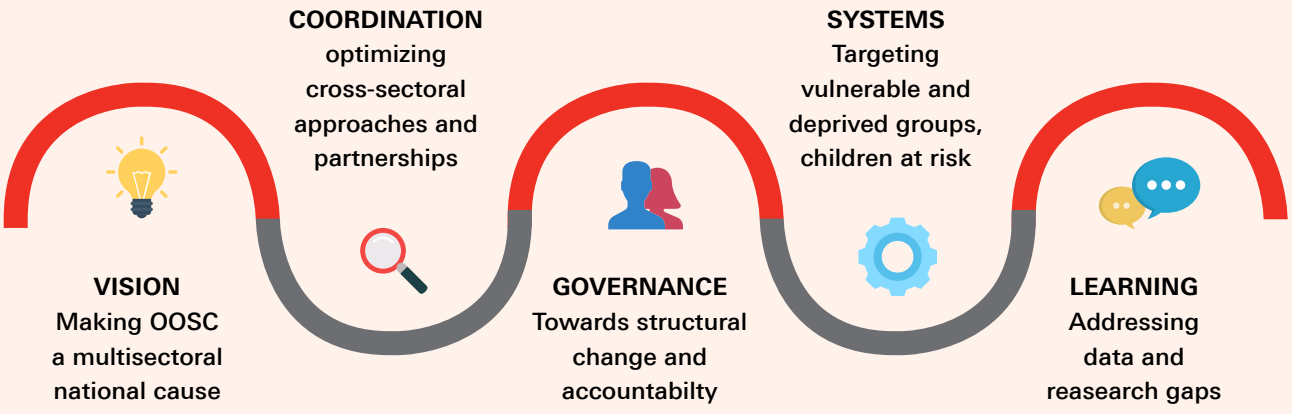
In line with Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is now time to make the situation of OOSC a national cause in Afghanistan, with a specific commitment from both national and international communities, a dedicated budget and doable time-bound programmes. The recommendations in this chapter are based on a grounded approach using the quantitative analysis of existing official data, key informant interviews, workshops with stakeholders, as well as the desk literature review.

It is clear that there are some noticeable gaps in improving existing policies, strategies and programmes as highlighted in the previous chapters, taking stock of the profiles of excluded children in Afghanistan, understanding patterns of exclusion and assessing the existing range of interventions to address the barriers to school participation. A number of these barriers are addressed at a high level in policies and strategies related to general education and children. Some more specific policies are in the process of drafting and finalization.

However, very few policies are being actively and successfully implemented. The challenges for Afghanistan are twofold: (1) to design policies that are adapted to the local context, realistic and implementable, and (2) to then ensure follow through by appropriate actors at all levels, from the ministerial down to the village level.

As researchers reviewed the key findings of the quantitative and qualitative information they had collected on the ground or analysing official data, repeated ideas became apparent, grouped into concepts and then into categories. Such a grounded approach is quite different from more traditional models of research and allowed the authors to better tailor their recommendations to the specificities of the Afghan context while mitigating the risk of subjectivity and partiality. Figure 34 synthesizes the five main areas (or 'groups') the following recommendations seek to address in priority.

Figure 34 Overview of recommendations



5.1. VISION: Making OOSC a multisectoral national cause

Promoting cross-sectoral efforts to overcome actual barriers to schooling. Out-of-school children rarely face one single identified barrier to schooling (e.g., economic *or* cultural *or* security-related), but face multiple obstacles that end up excluding them from education. For example, the high priority to tackle economic barriers in the past decade seems appropriate in view of the strong negative association between school participation and household wealth; yet, almost all the other barriers disproportionately affect poor children too.

This study has shown that excluded children from minority groups who are poor and come from rural areas often face multiple deprivations due to systemic bottlenecks, opportunity costs and socio-cultural expectations. Barriers preventing some children going to school cannot be dealt with by the education sector alone. Overcoming these barriers in Afghanistan will thus require public policy actions as well as significant investments on several fronts, beyond the formal education sector (MoE and its allocated budget).

The MoE and its partners (UNICEF and UNESCO) will need to fully take into account health, child protection and welfare in their thinking while developing strong operational partnerships with other relevant ministries (MoLSAMD, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Finance, etc.), civil society organizations, NGOs and, potentially, private sector actors. Such a cross-sectoral effort will require the political and economic backing from the highest political level; in parallel, it will also be driven in a participatory manner from the local level (communities).

5.2. COORDINATION: Optimizing cross-sectoral approaches

Developing a cross-sectoral mindset among all relevant stakeholders (education, health, child protection, welfare, etc.). This study shows that most stakeholders still do not consider adequately the complexity of OOSC, as they either work in silos, regardless of other possible initiatives, or misunderstand the multifactorial nature of the problem (beyond education and dropout rates). The involvement of central ministries (e.g., Planning, Finance, Prime Minister's office), which set country-level performance frameworks including targets on education participation, is critical in ensuring appropriate cross-sectoral incentives; likewise, other actors (donors, INGOs, NNGOs, private sector, and other civil society organizations) should rethink their analytical lens and develop a cross-sectoral and coordinated approach.

Enhancing and optimizing donor coordination. While numerous coordination mechanisms are already in place and are successfully used, pressure for specific policy priorities are often tied to donors' individual interests, running the risk of being counterproductive. This study would therefore recommend the following actions, low-hanging fruits that can have a significant impact on OOSC rates:

- **Portfolio**: Under the MoE's coordination and building on existing coordination mechanisms, a comprehensive portfolio of all existing donor-funded initiatives should be put in place, with a

broad understanding of how OOSC can be directly and indirectly impacted by initiatives on education, health and gender and in other related areas. With its international partners, the MoE would then be in a position to better optimize existing initiatives by identifying possible synergies.

- **Multiplier effect**: Beyond specific political priorities, which are understandable, there is an urgency to further coordinate donors' funding, strategy and interventions, so that a tangible multiplier effect is progressively generated from their actions. Likewise, common and standardized approaches, using UNICEF and UNESCO standards are recommended.

Systematizing local-level participatory coordination. Local leaders, such as mullahs and wakils, play a leading role in creating additional demand for education and ensuring community buy-in. Past research has highlighted the strength of a community-led approach in creating demand for education by:

- including the community in decision-making organisms for schools (such as school shuras) to increase involvement and thus demand.[74] The implementation of the MoE Social Mobilization Strategy should be a priority for long-term awareness-raising and strengthening ownership of education by local communities; and
- giving higher priority to interventions mitigating socio-cultural barriers to schooling since there are relatively few effective programmes in place. Some of the key barriers are child marriage (and early childbearing) for girls, restricted physical and social mobility for older girls, discriminatory employment practices affecting minority communities, lack of information on the likely returns to education, social norms related to schooling and child labour, and social neglect and abuse of particular groups of marginalized children (e.g., children with disabilities).

Exploring ways to capitalize on public–private partnerships to expand provision, particularly of lower secondary education for disadvantaged students. If public provision for secondary schooling does not match the demand, alternative (temporary) scenarios need to be explored taking into account that the government has primary responsibility to ensure the right to education. For example, providing incentives to private schools that receive public subsidies to expand enrolment and to serve disadvantage students. This can be done by (1) developing a pilot project in a reduced number of districts; (2) collecting feedback from the pilot experience; and (3) scaling the initiative up, with a transparent, competitive and open bidding process, and clear contracts detailing outputs and responsibilities for both parties.

5.3. GOVERNANCE: Towards structural changes

Clarifying MoE's role and responsibilities. While conducting this study, researchers were regularly given conflicting information during key informant interviews about which education-related policies and their implementation status. This highlights the need for:

- Centralizing existing strategy and policy in the form of a revised education law clearly identifying and detailing education delivery mechanisms and the policies developed to support them. EMIS reporting requirements that will feed into evaluations of this law's implementation should also clarified.
- Making policies related to education publicly available on the MoE website. Each must include a clear plan of action for implementation – and monitoring and evaluating procedures for it – to avoid the existence of multiple, competing and unimplemented policies.
- Restoring trust in the MoE's wish to be inclusive and politically neutral. The MoE should pay particular attention to ensuring that the bodies in charge of designing the curriculum remain above any suspicion of political, ethnic, linguistic or religious partiality. In this regard, the MoE should grant the new National Curriculum Centre with enough legal capacities and skilled staff to remain independent from any lobby.
- Declaring all schools as Zones of Peace to ensure that schools remain safe from violence and politicization. In particular, with the proximity of national elections, it is important to reaffirm that schools should not be used as polling stations.[75]

Supporting an ambitious strategy, with a clear theory of change and realistic implementation roadmap. As reported by a MoE civil servant, more than 25 documents of policy and strategy are currently being designed, in line with the NESP III and the new strategical vision for the ministry. This strategy is both

[74] Samuel Hall, 2014.
[75] See in particular the 2013 Save the Children report on pilot projects implemented in Faryab and Nangarhar, at www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/schools_as_zones_of_peace.pdf.

In Yemen, UNICEF and NGOs have advocated for legal reform and brought religious, political and educational leaders together to discuss child marriage. In addition, judges have been given courses on the dangers of child marriage for girls and 1,600 female teachers have been trained to serve in rural areas. (OOSCI – Yemen)

ambitious and relevant to address the barriers and issues identified, as highlighted in this report. However, attention needs to be paid to its implementation. As every administration, the MoE faces its own structural and operational constraints and change should be implemented within these internal boundaries. The MoE critically needs to develop a theory of change plan that matches its current organization and the ambitious objectives it has set for education.

Implementing existing legislation on compulsory nature of school, wherever it is possible. Education at the primary level is compulsory in Afghanistan according to the 2008 Education Law (Article 4); however, this law is not enforced. Beyond awareness-raising, understanding that it is a legal obligation – and putting in place consequences for those who do not follow this law – could help mitigate the impact of cultural traditions, allowing families to send girls to school because they 'have' to. It could also lead to a slow normalization of children attending school in places where that is not the case, especially for girls, and where other external factors (e.g., security, criminality) do not constitute an obstacle.

Increasing public spending on basic education. Given the enormous challenge of mitigating the barriers keeping millions of children out of school in Afghanistan, it is clear that additional public financing along with more efficient allocation of resources is critical. Funding constraints exist pertaining to the willingness of international donors to fund programmes, but the national macro-economic environment will also not allow for a drastic increase of the MoE's budget. This is happening as Afghanistan's demographic structure is leading to an ever-greater number of children coming of primary school age, with demand for education increasing further.

The governance environment thus requires reform. These parameters will result in difficult choices for the MoE, as it simultaneously tries to expand the sector's capacity, increase quality and improve its governance of the education system. To overcome this crucial obstacle, it is recommended to make OOSC a national cause and organize a *donor conference* specifically on this crucial issue for the long-term peace, security and socio-economic development of the country, with the objective of identifying priorities and agreeing on additional funding for OOSC – and correlated issues – in Afghanistan.

Ensuring equitable, responsive and optimal budget allocations, by tracking expenditures and assessing planned versus utilized budget across urban-rural disaggregation, level of schooling, and geographic location. This approach would help the MoE and its partners:

- Identify bottlenecks that hinder implementation and limit absorption capacity.
- Address these bottlenecks starting with those that affect mostly marginalized groups and areas.

5.4. EDUCATION SYSTEMS: Targeting vulnerable groups

5.4.1. Focus on girls' education and gendered approaches

Developing concrete rationale in favour of girls' education. Arguments to address the socio-cultural traditions limiting girls' education often take a socio-cultural approach; yet, previous studies have highlighted that this often cannot be separated from socio-economic calculations within the household.[76] Showing communities how girls' education can have a positive financial impact – if only through strengthening their family's future ability to handle finances – can help justify the investment of sending girls to school.

Supporting the eradication of child marriage. The practice of child marriage is deeply rooted in social norms and traditions and requires high-level political commitment and community mobilization to promote change. Financial incentives for poor rural girls should

[76] Samuel Hall, 2014.

also be provided to help delay marriage. Expanding school infrastructure would reduce the distance to school, particularly for girls of lower secondary school age living in rural areas. More female teachers in rural areas are needed as they are important role models for girls.

Targeting provinces with disproportionately high out-of-school rates for girls. The analysis highlighted several provinces – including Kandahar, Helmand, Wardak, Paktika, Zabul and Uruzgan – suffering from disproportionately high out-of-school rates for girls. Additionally, portions of these provinces are under the control of AOGs. This calls for innovative approaches to supporting girls' literacy and education, working with religious leaders and AOG leaders, as possible, to develop curricula approved for that context as an interim solution to the problem.

Ensuring girls' learning facilities meet basic security and health standards. Schools should have walls, closed toilets, handwashing stations and provide access to a nearby source of drinkable water. This simple recommendation – walls can be built by communities – actually addresses an issue that has been in the past highlighted as preventing girls' attendance.

Recruiting and training female teachers. Girls are less likely to transition to lower secondary education and specific measures to improve their completion of the basic education cycle is crucial. One particular concern in the Afghan context remains the relatively low percentage of female teachers. Recruiting and training female teachers for both primary and secondary levels would strongly contribute to improving the perception of schools among communities and households, as they are significant role models for girls to take control over their own destiny.

5.4.2. Focus on vulnerable children and children at risk

Improving equitable distribution of resources within the education system by focusing on specific groups of marginalized children

disproportionately excluded and deprived from access to school. Such groups include children with disabilities, including psychosocial issues; children from ethnic minorities and different linguistic background; children from religious minorities; children living in urban slums, and on the street; children from families who migrate seasonally for work; and refugee and internally displaced children.

The expansion of alternative pathways to education is crucial to reach children who *cannot* access the traditional schooling system; it can be done through a long-term investment in tailored alternative programmes, including increasing the amount invested per pupil and ensuring equivalency, so marginalized children are equipped with basic literacy, numeracy and relevant life skills.

- **Children living in rural areas or urban slums**. Geographic disparities, in terms of coverage and quality improvement, are a key concern to the integration and inclusion of children in the education system. The rational distribution of trained teachers to address existing gaps and ensure that disparities do not worsen are of course essential – so is the level of investment in new infrastructure for both primary and secondary levels.
- **Displaced and returnee children**. The key barriers to displaced children's enrolment are not political or legal (although access to documentation is an issue), but rather financial and the lack of appropriate teaching/schooling. There is need for supporting households in enrolling their children in school once they have been displaced (i.e., walking them through procedures) and sensitization of teachers to the profiles of migrant households and their past experiences through trainings.
- **Child survivors of child trafficking (child labour and child marriage)**. Barriers such as child labour and child marriage cannot be simply resolved through the MoE. These require targeted solutions of which education interventions can only be a part. Amongst others, key recommendations on this subject would be:
  - Ensuring implementation of existing plans/strategies to combat child marriage and child labour, both of which are issues prioritized by the current government.
  - Developing programming to address security concerns, which can lead to both child marriage and the exclusion of girls from education.
  - Identifying and promoting programmes that successfully build alternatives to child labour and child marriage.
- **Children with disabilities.** To date, children with disabilities that may impede their educational performance are not catered to in the Afghan educational system. Guidelines for teachers and training to understand how to integrate them into classes, when possible, are needed.

  In particular, it is recommended that pilot projects be implemented in a few selected school to promote social action units (e.g., composed of a trained social worker or nurse, a psychologist, a doctor and the school director). In the context of

Tunisia launched a national strategy for the progressive integration of children with disabilities in ordinary schools in 2003, 'La Stratégie d'Intégration Scolaire des Enfants Handicapés'. Several measures have been taken to facilitate this process, including reduced class sizes for classes with children with disabilities, additional resources and attempts to better gather the different partners around each child's individual needs. A recent assessment of the implementation of the national strategy brought forward several areas in need of further enhancement. Three major areas for improvement include the still too limited coordination between partners, lack of trained education staff and insufficient resources for monitoring. (OOSCI – MENA – Tunisia)

Afghanistan, such pilot projects may not be scaled up on the short to medium term, however, they may strongly contribute to changing mentalities and the way communities perceive and include children with disabilities.

- **Children affected by conflict**. Children and adolescents who have missed out on education due to conflict are a group of special concern, requiring tailored accelerated learning programmes.

5.4.3. Focus on tailored infrastructures and service provision

Expanding public provision of school and preschool infrastructure targeting the most deprived areas. To match rapidly increasing preschool enrolment of children from urban and middle-income families, the government has to prioritize pre-primary provision in marginalized rural areas in order to provide equitable opportunities. There is a need to continue to expand the provision of school infrastructure to reduce the distance to school, in particular for girls of lower secondary school age living in rural areas.

Providing schools and areas that perform *below* average in retention and learning achievements with tailored support and resources (security permitting) in a needs-based manner, so that they receive stronger personalized guidance, capacity building and on-location support from educational authorities, relevant stakeholders and civil society organizations.

Developing pilot Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programmes to address vulnerable households for whom economics and ancillary costs are the primary drivers of OOSC. Using CCTs, school grants need to be predictable, timely, transparent, flexible and of appropriate value, as often highlighted in several studies on cash transfer in Afghanistan (Samuel Hall (a), 2015). Starting with pilot projects, the targeting of large-scale CCT schemes could be improved considerably using profile analysis and variables, such as age, gender, poverty, geographic location, opportunity costs, direct schooling costs and vulnerability to child labour.

Offering food in schools. Providing lunch meals has been successfully used in other countries to drive demand for school, while ensuring basic nutrition standards. This can also be used to promote community welfare if funds are used to source food locally.

Designing 'safe walk' systems, with community support. To address bullying/insecurity on the way to schools, work through communities to create a safe walk system where designated adult volunteers, in pairs, can accompany children to school to minimize potential harassment.

5.4.4. Focus on ECE/ECD

Scaling up early childhood development (ECD) programmes and government-led pre-primary education. While pre-primary education is legally called for, to date only 10 governmental schools nationwide implement it. Given challenges in providing primary and secondary education evidenced by this report, creating and supporting a full pre-primary system may seem quite ambitious and unfeasible. However, lessons learned from existing approaches to ECE in Afghanistan, for example programming led by the Aga Khan Foundation, points to the potential for self-sustaining pre-primary programmes.

By making pre-primary education a part of the basic education cycle, children more likely to enrol in Grade 1 at the appropriate age and are more 'school-ready' at the correct age. ECD not only improves school performance, but also plays an inclusive role for a lot of children who might be tempted to drop out of school. As part of wider poverty-reduction efforts, appropriate measures should be taken to expand the provision of ECD and pre-primary education:

- At both national and local level, a stronger understanding of the benefits of ECE is needed to address this disparity.
- At the household level, sensitization campaigns should explain the potential benefits of this type of investment.
- More generally, it is recommended that pre-primary education be *systematically* negotiated within the existing education resource envelopes (at the government level and with donors).

5.4.5.Focus on teaching and learning

Improving pedagogy (teaching and learning). Several successful models of child-centred pedagogy should be taken as examples for achieving impactful change at scale. In the Afghan context, this may be done by adapting curricula and learning materials to specific vulnerable populations, by improving teacher education and management (e.g., absenteeism), and promoting a culture of formative assessments.

Reducing dropout rates in the primary cycle and increasing transition rates between the primary and lower secondary education cycle. A rapid benchmark with Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries, Pakistan, and Bangladesh suggests that reducing the risk of dropout can be achieved:

- **In the primary cycle**: Through a focus on grade repetition (using continuous assessment); remedial teaching (additional in and out of class support); multilingual education in the early grades of primary education (recruitment of teachers from ethno-linguistic minorities); age-appropriate enrolment; strict control over teacher absenteeism; and stronger dialogues between teachers and parents.
- **Between the primary and lower secondary cycles**: On the supply-side, by increasing the number of schools where lower secondary education is delivered on the same site as primary schools; on the demand side, by better controlling rising costs for schooling (with the increase in the education level).

Using technology to facilitate long-distance learning/at home learning for children in rural and insecure areas. In admittedly very different contexts, radio technology and the internet have been successfully used to facilitate learning for children in remote areas without schools. Radio technology in particular – cheap and functional in much of Afghanistan – offers the potential for an interim solution for education for children located in areas not in the control of the government and in communities where it is difficult for girls to leave their homes. The MoE should refer to the vibrant international research and literature on the development of e-learning for migrants, refugees and IDPs or provide girls with an access to education in insecure areas, or places where there are few appropriate facilities.

To reduce the unequal access to social services, the government of Morocco has instituted a cash transfer programme conditional on school attendance, and a programme to create special units in more than 1,000 schools to identify and support children at risk of dropping out. The programme, called Taysir, began in 2009 with a pilot phase involving the most vulnerable households, especially in rural areas and schools with high dropout rates. This first step involved some 88,000 primary school aged children in more than 47,000 households. Extended in 2010, the programme allowed more than 300,000 students from 160,000 households to benefit from cash transfer (almost 10 per cent of the primary school age population). (OOSCI – MENA – Morocco)

5.5. LEARNING: Addressing data and research gaps

Implementing a rigorous household census, in collaboration with the CSO, UNICEF, UNESCO and other relevant technical actors. Much of the uncertainty around the magnitude of OOSC as a phenomenon in Afghanistan comes from the fact that the last full household census was conducted in 1979, and all estimates since then have been based on population growth projections.

Updating this information is thus a must; however, the current security situation in Afghanistan makes it difficult. As a first step, a household survey could be conducted in those districts and provinces where the government has access. Comparing this partial household census to the 1979 results would allow for the partial validation of existing population projections and thus be useful not just in education-related planning but for all governmental departments.

Addressing EMIS-specific recommendations. This report highlights the need for better data on education in Afghanistan. The EMIS Department is best placed to be both collecting and analysing this, but requires improvements to its current approach and structure:

- **Ensuring EMIS data credibility and depoliticization**. A clear policy detailing criteria to be monitored, how they will be monitored and setting in place data verification procedures will add to the usefulness and credibility of EMIS data. The potential for EMIS data to be politicized is high as pressure to show positive results in order to continue receiving donor funding has in the past led to the inclusion of non-existing or inactive schools in the records.
- Data included in EMIS need to become open-source at the district level and easily accessed by the ministry, donors and other major stakeholders, thus going beyond the existing online reporting system (which forms a strong first step). This will allow all major stakeholders to perform on-the-ground verification, something which the office of SIGAR has been especially successful. There must also be further bottoms-up processes for data verification within EMIS. The EduTrac system can assist in verification of existence of schools
- **Improving current EMIS approaches**. The Ministry of Education should abandon the policy – followed by EMIS – of keeping students 'on the books' for more than three years. This makes the monitoring of dropout much more difficult for EMIS, resulting in likely considerable overestimation of education enrolment as students who have not set foot in school for two years and have no intention of doing so may be considered enrolled.

  Additionally, the efficiency of the EMIS system can be improved by reducing the number of indicators in coordination with UNICEF and UNESCO to identify a coherent, relevant set. This should include, for example, attendance (EMIS currently only reports enrolment), and rates of promotion, retention or attrition (flows) to make possible the accurate estimation of survival rates through EMIS data.

  Finally, additional resources must be given to the EMIS Department for effective data analysis, both for data validation and for drawing conclusions from the data to ensure it is being used in a timely fashion. The EMIS Department reports that they have recently developed data verification procedures. These will require testing and validation.
- **Including pre-primary data**. The EMIS data collection needs to create a clear plan for collection of useable pre-primary related information, including reporting of ECE targets through mosque-based education given the prevalence of this at the pre-primary level.

Setting an ambitious and pragmatic research agenda in both short and long term. While improving the data collection and analysis on education and OOSC in Afghanistan, it is also recommended to set a five-year research agenda to better understand the issues highlighted in the present report and further assess the impact of the solutions and measures taken by the MoE and its partners. Suggested research studies and assessments include:

- Taxonomic identifications of factors causing dropout, leading to possible policy and programme interventions;
- Noteworthy practices on (1) alternative pathways to basic education for primary and lower secondary school aged OOSC; (2) learning needs of children with disabilities, including on scaling up or expansion; (3) socio-economic profile and needs assessment of seasonal migrant, and IDP and returnee children; and (4) multilingual education in primary and secondary education;[77]

[77] The politicization of language in teaching and the current impact of this must be explored through targeted research to allow for a more granular understanding of the scope of the phenomenon.

- Social and economic assessment of the complex correlation between child labour and education in Afghanistan. The extent to which child labour in all its different forms impacts education is unclear, making it difficult to identify appropriate solutions; and
- Social and economic research on the impact (1) of quality improvements in schooling on enrolment, retention, learning achievements and community perception; and (2) more specifically, of ECD/pre-primary education exposure of children on their retention and performance in primary education.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1 Methodology, key sources and data tables

A1.1. Steady state transition model

The decision was made to use a steady state transition model because unlike in other countries where the OOSCI has been performed, schools do not report dropout rates explicitly.

$$\varepsilon(t_1 \times t_2 \times t_3 \ldots) > \sqrt{\varepsilon(t_1)^2 + \varepsilon(t_2)^2 + \varepsilon(t_3)^2 \ldots} > max(\varepsilon(t_1), \varepsilon(t_2), \varepsilon(t_3) \ldots)$$

The steady state transition model allows for the computation of dropout rates and survival rates through the use of a transition matrix based on reports of previous and present school attendance in the ALCS. Since the transition rate from one grade a to grade a+1 is estimated from the number of respondents who were previously in grade a in a particular province, provinces with fewer observations will exhibit wild fluctuations because the numbers are so small.

For example, Paktika province had only 262 school-aged respondents who had been in primary school the previous year. When disaggregated by school year and gender, some of the grade/sex combinations had only a few observations, if any. Thus, the standard errors of a particular transition rate far exceed the level of confidence we require. In computing survival and dropout rates, we must compute the product of the transition rates between every pair of sequential grades at the school level in question.
Indeterminate error for a product propagates at least as the square root of the sum of the squares of the error, which is always larger than the largest error of any estimate in the product. Thus, the province-level standard error in the dropout and survival rates exceeds the largest of any of the errors in the transition rates. In particular, any province/grade/gender combination that has no respondents who were in school the previous year will result in an infinite standard error for the entire province/gender combination. For Paktika province primary schools, therefore, the survival rates for boys are barely significant and completely inconclusive for girls.

Understanding dropout, promotion and retention rates at the yearly level is necessary to be able to create cohort analyses, which allow for the measurement of the time and cost of graduating students in each cycle, enabling an improved understanding of challenges and more efficient processes, and thus should be included in monitoring systems.

Tables A1.1.2 and A1.1.3 note the yearly promotion rates used to calculate the overall survival and dropout rates. As the retention rates were assumed to be zero, due to lack of reliable data, dropout rates can be assumed at 1 - promotion rate.

Table A1.1.1 Sample provincial error rates, Paktika province

Sample sizes and errors in transition rates and survival rates for Paktika province				
Previous Grade	Male	Female	Standard error male	Standard error female
1	49	1	7%	50%
2	56	5	7%	22%
3	33	4	9%	25%
4	36	2	8%	35%
5	29	3	9%	29%
6	23	1	10%	50%
Primary school survival/attrition rate			21%	91%

Table A1.1.2 Primary school promotion rates by gender and overall

	Male promotion rate	Female promotion rate	Total promotion rate
From Grade 1 to Grade 2	96.7%	96.8%	96.7%
From Grade 2 to Grade 3	96.8%	96.4%	96.8%
From Grade 3 to Grade 4	97.0%	97.2%	97.0%
From Grade 4 to Grade 5	96.6%	96.0%	96.6%
From Grade 5 to Grade 6	96.9%	97.5%	96.9%

Table A1.1.3 Lower secondary school promotion rates by gender and overall

	Male promotion rate	Female promotion rate	Total promotion rate
From Grade 7 to Grade 8	96.6%	96.1%	96.6%
From Grade 8 to Grade 9	97.6%	93.7%	97.6%

A1.2. ALCS 2013–2014 margins of error by province

Table A1.2.1 provides the sample count and margins of error at 95 per cent, 97.5 per cent and 99 per cent confidence levels at the provincial level, underscoring why detailed granularity is more difficult in certain provinces than others.

Table A1.2.1 Sample count and margin of error by province

Province	Sample count	Weighted standard error	Margin at 95% confidence level	Margin at 97.5% confidence level	Margin at 99% confidence level
National	**157262**	**0.0014**	**0.28%**	**0.32%**	**0.37%**
Badakhshan	4383	0.0076	1.50%	1.71%	1.97%
Badghis	3062	0.0095	1.86%	2.13%	2.45%
Baghlan	4118	0.0078	1.53%	1.75%	2.01%
Balkh	4617	0.0074	1.45%	1.66%	1.91%
Bamyan	3921	0.0087	1.71%	1.95%	2.24%
Daikundi	3321	0.0090	1.76%	2.01%	2.31%
Farah	4077	0.0081	1.59%	1.81%	2.08%
Faryab	4623	0.0074	1.45%	1.66%	1.91%
Ghazni	4493	0.0080	1.57%	1.80%	2.07%
Ghor	3289	0.0090	1.76%	2.01%	2.31%
Helmand	5833	0.0068	1.32%	1.51%	1.74%
Herat	5801	0.0066	1.30%	1.49%	1.71%
Jowzjan	3649	0.0083	1.63%	1.86%	2.14%
Kabul	12132	0.0046	0.89%	1.02%	1.17%
Kandahar	6679	0.0062	1.22%	1.39%	1.60%
Kapisa	3836	0.0084	1.65%	1.88%	2.16%
Khost	5537	0.0071	1.39%	1.59%	1.83%
Kunar	5763	0.0070	1.37%	1.56%	1.80%
Kunduz	4784	0.0073	1.43%	1.63%	1.88%
Laghman	4274	0.0080	1.56%	1.79%	2.05%
Logar	3804	0.0087	1.70%	1.94%	2.23%
Nangarhar	6573	0.0062	1.22%	1.39%	1.60%
Nimroz	3481	0.0087	1.71%	1.95%	2.24%
Nuristan	4341	0.0078	1.52%	1.74%	2.00%
Paktika	4300	0.0078	1.53%	1.75%	2.01%
Paktia	4378	0.0082	1.61%	1.84%	2.11%
Panjshir	3721	0.0084	1.65%	1.89%	2.17%
Parwan	3656	0.0086	1.69%	1.93%	2.22%
Samangan	3622	0.0084	1.64%	1.87%	2.15%
Sar-e-Pul	3616	0.0086	1.68%	1.92%	2.20%
Takhar	4395	0.0076	1.48%	1.69%	1.94%
Uruzgan	4851	0.0072	1.41%	1.61%	1.85%
Wardak	3668	0.0087	1.70%	1.95%	2.24%
Zabul	4664	0.0090	1.77%	2.02%	2.32%

A1.3. Primary existing government documents, strategies, policies and laws around education

Table A1.3.1 provides a non-exhaustive list of key documents, such as laws, policy, strategies, evaluations, which have been used to assess the actions taken by national and international stakeholders to address the barriers to education highlighted in this study. Open source research and key informant interviews with MoE staff and UNICEF staff stand as the three main sources of this list.

Table A1.3.1 Key documents used in the study

Type	Government body	Name	Status
Law	GoIA	Afghanistan Constitution	Implemented
Law	MoE	Afghanistan's Education Law – 2008	Implemented
Law	MoE	Draft Pre-School Education Bill	Draft
Policy	MoE	Community-Based Education (CBE) Policy – 2012	Implemented
Policy	MoE	Information System Development Policy – 2014	Implemented
Policy	MoE	National Education Strategic Plan III – 2017–2021	Implemented
Policy	MoE	Inclusive and Child-Friendly Policy – 2014	Finalized
Policy	MoE	Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Policy	Finalized
Policy	MoRR	National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons – 2013	Finalized
Policy	MoRR	Policy Framework for Returnees – 2016	Finalized
Policy	MoE	Policy Guidelines for Outreach Education and Accelerated Training – 2017	Finalized
Policy	MoE	National Technical Assistance Remuneration Policy – 2013	Finalized
Policy	MoE	Pre-school Education Draft Policy – 2012	Draft
Policy	MoE	Zero Draft Afghanistan Girls' Education Policy and Strategy	Draft
Strategy	MoE	Education For All	Implemented
Strategy	MoE	Situation Analysis and Strategic Plan for the Teacher Education General Directorate 2015–2020	Finalized
Strategy	MoE	Draft Social Mobilisation Strategy – 2017	Draft
Evaluation	MoE	Education Sector Analysis (ESA) – 2016	Finalized
Evaluation	MoE	Afghanistan National Strategic Plan 2017–2021 (NESP III) Appraisal Report – 2016	Finalized
Evaluation	MoE	Annual Education Joint Sector Review Girls Education Findings – 2015	Finalized
Guideline	MoE	National Technical Assistance Salary Scale and Implementation Guideline	Finalized
Study	MoE	Enhancing Access to Education Challenges and Opportunities in Afghanistan – Center on International Cooperation – 2016	Finalized
Study	MoE	Conditions of Girls' Education in Afghanistan Process Analysis of Years 1382–1395 – Progress, Challenges, Recommendations – 2017	Finalized
Technical document	MoE	Terms of Reference General and Islamic Education Working Group – Community-based Education Subworking Group	Implemented
Technical document	MoE	Pre-school Curriculum – 2016	Finalized
Technical document	MoE	Terms of Reference Early Childhood Development/Preschool Working Group	Finalized
Technical document	MoE	Curriculum for OOSC	Finalized

A1.4. Data tables

Unless noted otherwise, all tables refer to children aged 7–17.

Table A1.4.1 Age-specific attendance rates by level of education and gender

Proportion Male					
Age (years)	Primary (%)	Lower secondary (%)	Upper secondary (%)	Tertiary (%)	Total (%)
7	43.5	0	0	0	43.5
8	59.6	0	0	0	59.6
9	69.1	0	0	0	69.1
10	70.0	0	0	0	70.0
11	75.8	1.8	0	0	77.6
12	62.5	10.0	0	0	72.5
13	43.6	30.8	0	0	74.4
14	25.4	43.6	2.9	0	72.0
15	12.8	43.1	9.7	0	65.67
16	7.0	32.2	23.8	0	63.0
17	3.3	17.6	39.6	1.1	61.6
Proportion Female					
Age (years)	Primary (%)	Lower secondary (%)	Upper secondary (%)	Tertiary (%)	Total (%)
7	34.2	0	0	0	34.2
8	44.3	0	0	0	44.3
9	51.9	0	0	0	52.0
10	51.7	0	0	0	51.7
11	55.0	0.7	0	0	55.6
12	41.1	8.7	0	0	49.8
13	27.4	22.4	0	0	49.9
14	13.8	26.5	2.3	0	42.7
15	6.8	24.1	7.9	0	38.7
16	2.6	15.5	16.6	0	34.7
17	1.9	7.1	24.8	0.6	34.4
Proportion Total					
Age (years)	Primary (%)	Lower secondary (%)	Upper secondary (%)	Tertiary (%)	Total (%)
7	39.0	0	0	0	39.0
8	52.3	0	0	0	52.3
9	60.9	0	0	0	60.9
10	61.7	0	0	0	61.7
11	65.8	1.3	0	0	67.1
12	53.0	9.4	0	0	62.4
13	35.9	26.8	0	0	62.7
14	20.1	35.7	2.7	0	58.5
15	10.0	34.3	8.9	0	53.1
16	4.9	24.0	20.2	0	49.1
17	2.6	12.3	32.2	0.8	48.0

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Table A1.4.2 Percentage of out-of-school children of primary school age by age, gender and other characteristics

Age (years)	Male OOSC (%)	Female OOSC (%)	Total OOSC (%)
7	56.50	65.80	61.00
8	40.40	55.70	47.70
9	30.90	48.10	39.10
10	30.00	48.30	38.30
11	22.40	44.40	32.90
12	27.50	50.30	37.60
All ages (7–12)	35.52	52.97	43.69
Residence	**Male OOSC (%)**	**Female OOSC (%)**	**Total OOSC (%)**
Urban	16.20	23.60	19.70
Rural	37.10	59.10	47.40
Kuchi	84.10	97.20	89.60
Child labour (UNICEF definition)	**Male OOSC (%)**	**Female OOSC (%)**	**Total OOSC (%)**
Child labourer	42.2	61.2	49.5
Not child labourer	32.5	50.4	41.5
Working child	23.3	51.8	35.9
Wealth quintiles (DHS)	**Male OOSC (%)**	**Female OOSC (%)**	**Total OOSC (%)**
Poorest (0%–20%)	32.2	41.8	41.8
Poorer (20%–40%)	35.2	47.1	47.1
Middle (40%–60%)	32.4	45.7	45.7
Richer (60%–80%)	24.3	32.4	32.4
Richest (80%–100%)	12.9	16.3	16.3

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014; DHS, 2015

Table A1.4.3 Percentage of out-of-school children of primary school age by available years

Available years	Male OOSC (%)	Female OOSC (%)	Total OOSC (%)
2011–2012 (1390) NRVA 2011–2012	34.2	50.9	42.1
2013–2014 (1392) ALCS 2013–2014	35.5	53.0	43.7
2015–2016 (1394) DHS 2015	27.9	47.3	37.1

Source: NRVA, 2011–2012; ALCS, 2013–2014; DHS, 2015

Table A1.4.4 School exposure of out-of-school children of primary school age by gender

Type of school exposure	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
School exposure	65.8	48.9	57.9
Left school	3.8	3.5	3.6
Expected to enter in the future	19.2	8.0	12.6
Expected to never enter	76.9	88.5	83.7

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Table A1.4.5 Percentage of out-of-school children of lower secondary school age by gender and other characteristics

Age (years)	Male OOSC (%)	Female OOSC (%)	Total OOSC (%)
13	25.60	50.20	37.30
14	28.00	57.30	41.60
15	34.30	61.30	46.90
All ages (13–15)	29.17	56.03	41.74
Residence	**Male OOSC (%)**	**Female OOSC (%)**	**Total OOSC (%)**
Urban	10.70	28.60	19.30
Rural	31.70	64.20	47.00
Kuchi	85.30	97.80	90.40
Child labour (UNICEF definition)	**Male OOSC (%)**	**Female OOSC (%)**	**Total OOSC (%)**
Child labourer	41.5	67.8	51.0
Not child labourer	16.6	49.7	34.8
Working child	27.4	60.7	42.6
Wealth quintiles (DHS)	**Male OOSC (%)**	**Female OOSC (%)**	**Total OOSC (%)**
Poorest (0%–20%)	35.2	62.0	47.7
Poorer (20%–40%)	29.2	65.7	46.4
Middle (40%–60%)	31.1	67.6	48.5
Richer (60%–80%)	18.1	49.9	32.3
Richest (90%–100%)	10.5	31.4	20.8

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014; DHS, 2015

Table A1.4.6 Percentage of out-of-school children of lower secondary school age by available years

Available years	Male OOSC (%)	Female OOSC (%)	Total OOSC (%)
2011–2012 (1390) NRVA 2011–2012	32.3	60.0	45.6
2013–2014 (1392) ALCS 2013-2014	29.2	56.0	41.7
2015–2016 (1394) DHS 2015	24.9	55.1	39.0

Source: NRVA, 2011–2012; ALCS, 2013–2014; DHS, 2015

Table A1.4.7 School exposure of out-of-school children of lower secondary school age by gender

Type of school exposure	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
School exposure	75.0	53.0	64.7
Left school	14.1	16.2	15.4
Expected to enter in the future	1.6	0.1	0.7
Expected to never enter	84.3	83.7	83.9

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Table A1.4.8 Percentage of children in primary education expected to drop out before the last grade of primary education by gender

Available years[78]	Male % expected to drop out	Female % expected to drop out	Total % expected to drop out
2013–2014 (1392)	8.9%	9.1%	8.96%

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Table A1.4.9 Percentage of children in lower secondary education expected to drop out before the last grade of lower secondary education by gender

Available years[79]	Male % expected to drop out	Female % expected to drop out	Total % expected to drop out
2013–2014 (1392)	4.1%	8.3%	5.6%

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Optional Tables

Table A1.4.10 Survival rate to the last grade of primary education by gender (%)

	Male	Female	Total	Gender parity index (ratio male/female)
Survival rate to the last grade of primary education	84.9%	84.9%	84.9%	99.69%

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Table A1.4.11 Survival rate to the last grade of lower secondary education by gender (%)

	Male	Female	Total	Gender parity index
Survival rate to the last grade of lower secondary education	94.3%	90.0%	92.7%	95.4%

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

[78] OOSC data for other years could not be extracted from the NRVA/ALCS and DHS databases.
[79] OOSC data for other years could not be extracted from the NRVA/ALCS and DHS databases.

Table A1.4.12 School attendance of youth of upper secondary school age (16–18 years) by level of education, gender and other characteristics

MALE								
Age (years)	Not attending school (%)	Islamic education (no ISCED Score) (%)	Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)	Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)	Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)	Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)	Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)	Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)
16	36.8	0.2	7.0	32.2	23.8	0	0	0
17	37.6	0.6	3.3	17.6	39.6	0.3	1.1	0
18	51.7	0.3	1.6	11.0	31.2	0.9	3.2	0
Residence	Not attending school (%)	Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)	Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)	Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)	Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)	Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)	Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)	Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)
Urban	26.8	0.1	1.8	22.0	44.6	0.7	4.1	0
Rural	47.7	0.4	4.6	19.6	26.6	0.4	0.8	0
Kuchi	82.3	1.0	4.0	6.6	6.1	0	0	0
Wealth quintile	Not attending school (%)	Islamic education (no ISCED score)[80]	Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)	Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)	Attending upper secondary education and higher (ISCED 3+) (%)	Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4)[81]	Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5)[82]	Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6)[83]
Poorest (0%–20%)	55.3	No data available	5.3	38.2	1.2	No data available	No data available	No data available
Poorer (20%–40%)	44.4	No data available	5.2	49.0	1.4	No data available	No data available	No data available
Middle (40%–60%)	46.5	No data available	4.8	47.0	1.7	No data available	No data available	No data available
Richer (60%–80%)	38.7	No data available	3.4	54.8	3.2	No data available	No data available	No data available
Richest (80%–100%)	27.2	No data available	2.0	65.6	5.2	No data available	No data available	No data available

[80] Data not available as DHS (2015) data were used to calculate wealth quintiles.
[81] Idem.
[82] Idem.
[83] Idem.

Employment status	Not attending school (%)	Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)	Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)	Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)	Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)	Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)	Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)	Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)
In employment	70.0	0.1	3.0	11.4	14.8	0.2	0.6	0
Not in employment	24.8	0.5	4.4	25.4	41.8	0.7	2.4	0

FEMALE								
Age (years)	Not attending school (%)	Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)	Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)	Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)	Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)	Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)	Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)	Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)
16	65.1	0.1	2.6	15.5	16.6	0	0	0
17	65.2	0	1.9	7.1	24.8	0.4	0.6	0
18	76.5	0	1.2	3.7	15.2	1.5	1.9	0
Residence	Not attending school (%)	Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)	Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)	Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)	Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)	Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)	Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)	Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)
Urban	46.0	0	1.6	14.9	33.4	1.6	2.5	0
Rural	79.4	0.1	2.0	5.9	11.9	0.5	0.3	0
Kuchi	99.3	0	0.7	0	0	0	0	0

Wealth quintiles	Not attending school (%)	Islamic education (no ISCED score)[84]	Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)	Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)	Attending upper secondary education and higher (ISCED 3+) (%)	Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4)[85]	Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5)[86]	Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6)[87]
Poorest (0%–20%)	81.0	No data available	3.0	14.8	0.7	No data available	No data available	No data available
Poorer (20%–40%)	80.7	No data available	1.6	16.9	0.7	No data available	No data available	No data available
Middle (40%–60%)	79.8	No data available	5.1	14.8	0.3	No data available	No data available	No data available
Richer (60%–80%)	69.0	No data available	2.8	26.7	1.5	No data available	No data available	No data available
Richest (80%–100%)	53.4	No data available	1.7	39.3	5.6	No data available	No data available	No data available
Employment status	**Not attending school (%)**	**Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)**	**Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)**	**Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)**	**Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)**	**Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)**	**Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)**	**Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)**
In employment	86.3	0	1.2	2.9	8.8	0.6	0.3	0
Not in employment	67.2	0.1	2.0	9.4	19.5	0.8	1.1	0
TOTAL								
Age (years)	**Not attending school (%)**	**Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)**	**Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)**	**Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)**	**Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)**	**Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)**	**Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)**	**Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)**
16	50.7	0.1	4.9	24.0	20.2	0	0	0
17	51.4	0.3	2.6	12.3	32.2	0.4	0.8	0
18	64.0	0.2	1.4	7.4	23.3	1.2	2.5	0

[84] Data not available as DHS (2015) data were used to calculate wealth quintiles.
[85] Idem.
[86] Idem.
[87] Idem.

Residence	Not attending school (%)	Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)	Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)	Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)	Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)	Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)	Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)	Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)
Urban	36.7	0.1	1.7	18.3	38.8	1.1	3.3	0
Rural	63.2	0.2	3.3	12.9	19.4	0.4	0.5	0
Kuchi	89.4	0.6	2.6	3.8	3.5	0	0	0
Wealth quintiles	**Not attending school (%)**	**Islamic education (no ISCED score)[88]**	**Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)**	**Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)**	**Attending upper secondary education and higher (ISCED 3+) (%)**	**Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4)[89]**	**Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5)[90]**	**Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6)[91]**
Poorest (0%–20%)	67.9	No data available	4.2	26.9	0.9	No data available	No data available	No data available
Poorer (20%–40%)	62.6	No data available	3.4	32.9	1.1	No data available	No data available	No data available
Middle (40%–60%)	62.5	No data available	5.0	31.5	1.0	No data available	No data available	No data available
Richer (60%–80%)	53.6	No data available	3.1	40.9	2.3	No data available	No data available	No data available
Richest (80%–100%)	40.3	No data available	1.9	52.4	5.4	No data available	No data available	No data available
Employment status	**Not attending school (%)**	**Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)**	**Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)**	**Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)**	**Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)**	**Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)**	**Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)**	**Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)**
In employment	74.3	0.1	2.5	9.1	13.2	0.3	0.5	0
Not in employment	49.6	0.2	3.0	16.0	28.7	0.7	1.6	0

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014; DHS, 2015

[88] Data not available as DHS (2015) data were used to calculate wealth quintiles.
[89] Idem.
[90] Idem.
[91] Idem.

Table A1.4.13 Educational attainment of out-of-school youth of upper secondary school age (16–18 years) by level of education, gender and other characteristics

Male OOSC									
Age (years)	Not attending school (%)	Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)	Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)	Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)	Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)	Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)	Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)	Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)	Not attending school (%)
16	73.7	8.9	6.3	5.9	4.6	0	0	0	0
17	67.7	10.4	3.2	7.2	4.3	5.8	0	0	0
18	63.2	8.3	5.1	8.8	4.9	8.5	0.1	0.3	0
Residence	Not attending school (%)	Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)	Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)	Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)	Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)	Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)	Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)	Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)	Not attending school (%)
Urban	40.6	14.1	7.7	17.4	8.3	10.9	0.2	0.4	0
Rural	70.5	8.4	5.1	6.0	4.3	4.8	0	0.1	0
Kuchi	88.2	3.3	0	3.3	1.7	1.7	0	0	0
Employment status	Not attending school (%)	Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)	Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)	Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)	Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)	Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)	Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)	Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)	Not attending school (%)
In employment	68.9	8.9	4.9	7.0	5.1	4.8	0	0.2	0
Not in employment	63.5	8.9	5.5	9.1	3.9	6.9	0.1	0.2	0

Wealth quintile	Not attending school (%)	Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)	Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)	Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)	Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)	Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)	Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)	Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)	Not attending school (%)
Poorest (0%–20%)	52.1	2.3	4.7	5.6	6.8	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available
Poorer (20%–40%)	54.1	2.8	4.6	3.3	5.9	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available
Middle (40%–60%)	55.8	2.2	3.4	5.0	6.6	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available
Richer (60%–80%)	46.7	2.4	4.6	4.1	3.6	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available
Richest (80%–100%)	28.9	1.2	2.8	5.2	7.0	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available
Female OOSC									
Age (years)	Not attending school (%)	Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)	Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)	Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)	Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)	Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)	Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)	Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)	Not attending school (%)
16	78.6	8.9	4.6	5.0	2.7	0	0	0	0
17	76.5	8.1	4.3	4.9	4.0	2.1	0.1	0	0
18	77.5	6.6	3.1	4.9	2.9	4.2	0.4	0.3	0
Residence	Not attending school (%)	Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)	Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)	Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)	Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)	Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)	Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)	Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)	Not attending school (%)
Urban	55.6	12.4	6.0	10.8	6.7	7.1	0.7	0.5	0
Rural	82.1	6.7	3.5	3.7	2.3	1.4	0.1	0	0
Kuchi	97.1	2.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Employment status	Not attending school (%)	Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)	Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)	Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)	Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)	Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)	Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)	Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)	Not attending school (%)
In employment	78.5	8.7	4.3	5.0	2.0	1.0	0.2	0.4	0
Not in employment	77.4	7.4	3.7	4.9	3.3	2.8	0.2	0.1	0
Wealth quintiles	**Not attending school (%)**	**Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)**	**Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)**	**Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)**	**Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)**	**Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)**	**Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)**	**Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)**	**Not attending school (%)**
Poorest (0%–20%)	70.5	1.2	3.3	5.9	3.2	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available
Poorer (20%–40%)	76.1	2.9	5.1	3.0	2.3	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available
Middle (40%–60%)	79.6	1.5	2.2	3.3	3.1	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available
Richer (60%–80%)	69.4	1.9	2.2	4.5	2.5	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available
Richest (80%–100%)	48.9	3.1	4.4	4.8	4.8	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available
Total OOSC									
Age (years)	**Not attending school (%)**	**Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)**	**Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)**	**Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)**	**Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)**	**Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)**	**Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)**	**Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)**	**Not attending school (%)**
16	76.8	8.9	5.2	5.4	5.4	0	0	0	0
17	73.3	8.9	3.9	5.8	5.8	3.5	0.1	0	0
18	71.6	7.3	4.0	6.5	6.5	5.9	0.3	0.3	0

Residence	Not attending school (%)	Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)	Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)	Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)	Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)	Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)	Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)	Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)	Not attending school (%)
Urban	50.3	13.0	6.6	13.2	7.2	8.5	0.5	0.5	0
Rural	77.7	7.3	4.1	4.6	3.1	2.7	0.1	0.1	0
Kuchi	92.3	3.1	0	1.8	0.9	0.9	0	0	0
Employment status	**Not attending school (%)**	**Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)**	**Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)**	**Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)**	**Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)**	**Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)**	**Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)**	**Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)**	**Not attending school (%)**
In employment	71.9	8.9	4.7	6.4	4.1	3.6	0	0.2	0
Not in employment	74.5	7.7	4.1	5.8	3.4	3.7	0.2	0.1	0
Wealth quintile	**Not attending school (%)**	**Islamic education (no ISCED score) (%)**	**Attending primary school (ISCED 1) (%)**	**Attending lower secondary (ISCED 2) (%)**	**Attending upper secondary (ISCED 3) (%)**	**Attending post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) (%)**	**Attending BA-level university (ISCED 5) (%)**	**Attending MA-level university / postgraduate (ISCED 6) (%)**	**Not attending school (%)**
Poorest (0%–20%)	62.8	1.6	3.9	5.8	4.7	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available
Poorer (20%–40%)	68.3	2.8	4.9	3.1	3.6	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available
Middle (40%–60%)	70.4	1.8	2.7	4.0	4.5	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available
Richer (60%–80%)	61.1	2.1	3.1	4.4	2.9	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available
Richest (80%–100%)	42.2	2.4	3.9	4.9	5.6	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014; DHS, 2015

Table A1.4.14 Percentage of youth of upper secondary school age (16–18 years) by education, employment and gender

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
In education only	43.7	27.7	35.8
In employment only	29.0	13.3	21.3
In education and employment	12.4	2.1	7.3
Not in education or employment	14.8	56.9	35.6

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Annex 2 Child labour

Child labour is closely related to out-of-school children. The majority of children not in school are engaged in some form of work activity, and, for children in school, involvement in work makes them more susceptible to premature dropout. Households are often dependent on income provided by school-aged children, requiring awareness-raising on the benefits of education for families and other demand-side policies and interventions. Understanding the interplay between child labour and out-of-school children is therefore critical to achieving Education For All and child labour elimination goals.

Table A2.1 Children aged 6–14 engaged in economic activity, household chores or labour by gender, residence and education level of head of household

Gender	Children aged 6–11 in economic activity for 1h+ (%)	Children aged 6–14 in economic activity for 1h+ (%)	Children aged 12–14 in economic activity for 14h+ (%)	Children aged 6–14 in household chores for 28h+ (%)	Children aged 6–14 in child labour (%)
Male	27.1	35.1	22.3	1.1	32.7
Female	19.2	23.3	11.1	3.7	23.4
Residence	**Children aged 6–11 in economic activity for 1h+ (%)**	**Children aged 6–14 in economic activity for 1h+ (%)**	**Children aged 12–14 in economic activity for 14h+ (%)**	**Children aged 6–14 in household chores for 28h+ (%)**	**Children aged 6–14 in child labour (%)**
Urban	7.8	11.8	8.5	2.4	11.5
Rural	26.4	33.7	18.0	2.4	32.1
Kuchi	40.7	49.3	51.3	0.8	48.5
Education of household head	**Children aged 6–11 in economic activity for 1h+ (%)**	**Children aged 6–14 in economic activity for 1h+ (%)**	**Children aged 12–14 in economic activity for 14h+ (%)**	**Children aged 6–14 in household chores for 28h+ (%)**	**Children aged 6–14 in child labour (%)**
None	25.5	32.3	19.6	2.4	31.2
Islamic school	29.2	35.5	18.9	0.8	35.8
Primary	20.2	25.7	14.1	2.1	24.3
Lower secondary	18.4	23.3	11.0	2.4	22.7
Upper secondary	13.7	18.5	9.0	2.2	16.8
Teacher training	19.1	25.1	11.9	3.0	22.2
University or technical college	11.0	13.0	4.2	1.5	11.1
Postgraduate	0	10.2	0	5.1	10.2

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Table A2.2 Child activity status, age group 6–14 years, by gender and residence, (%)

Background characteristics	Mutually exclusive activity categories				(a) & (c) Total in employment (%)	(b) & (c) Total in school (%)	(a) & (d) Total out of school (%)
	(a) Only employment (%)	(b) Only schooling (%)	(c) Employment and schooling (%)	(d) Neither activity (%)			
Gender							
Male	14.6	39.2	20.5	25.7	35.1	59.7	40.3
Female	14.7	33.4	8.7	43.2	23.3	42.1	57.9
Residence							
Urban	3.0	65.4	8.7	22.9	11.8	74.1	25.9
Rural	16.1	29.9	17.6	36.4	33.7	47.5	52.5
Kuchi	43.2	3.4	6.1	47.4	49.3	9.5	90.5
Total							
Total	**14.7**	**36.5**	**14.9**	**33.9**	**29.6**	**51.4**	**48.6**

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Table A2.3 Children out of school and children engaged in labour aged 6–14 by gender, residence and education level of head of household

Gender	Children out of school (%)	Children in child labour (%)	Children in child labour who are out of school (%)	OOSC who are involved in child labour (%)
Male	40.3	32.7	42.9	34.8
Female	57.9	23.4	64.0	25.9
Residence	**Children out of school (%)**	**Children in child labour (%)**	**Children in child labour who are out of school (%)**	**OOSC who are involved in child labour (%)**
Urban	25.9	11.5	27.7	12.2
Rural	52.5	32.1	49.3	30.2
Kuchi	90.5	48.5	87.5	46.9
Education of head household	**Children out of school (%)**	**Children in child labour (%)**	**Children in child labour who are out of school (%)**	**OOSC who are involved in child labour (%)**
None	54.9	31.2	55.5	31.5
Islamic school	53.9	35.8	51.8	34.4
Primary	33.1	24.3	33.1	24.3
Lower secondary	31.9	22.7	33.6	23.9
Upper secondary	28.9	16.8	29.6	17.2
Teacher training	32.9	22.2	34.4	23.2
University or technical college	20.7	11.1	16.1	8.7
Postgraduate	28.9	10.2	0	0

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Table A2.4 Children aged 6–14 engaged in labour and school attendance by gender, residence and education level of head of household

Gender	Children attending school (%)	Children in child labour who are attending school (%)	Children not in child labour who are attending school (%)
Male	59.6	57.1	60.3
Female	42.1	36.0	43.9
Residence	**Children attending school (%)**	**Children in child labour who are attending school (%)**	**Children not in child labour who are attending school (%)**
Urban	74.1	72.3	74.2
Rural	47.5	50.7	45.5
Kuchi	9.5	12.5	6.7
Education of household head	**Children attending school (%)**	**Children in child labour who are attending school (%)**	**Children not in child labour who are attending school (%)**
None	45.1	44.5	45.0
Islamic School	46.1	48.2	45.2
Primary school	66.9	66.9	66.5
Lower secondary	68.1	66.4	68.2
Upper secondary	71.1	70.4	70.8
Teacher college	67.1	65.6	66.1
University or technical college	79.3	83.9	78.5
Postgraduate	71.1	100	71.0

Source: ALCS, 2013–2014

Annex 3 Captions

Page V11
A young boy smiles at the photographer in his classroom in Mazar, Afghanistan.

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Page X
Children in a tent that serves as a community-based school in emergencies in Afghanistan - eager to get the answer to their teacher's question right.

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Page 6
Children who were enrolled in schools in Pakistan and have now returned to Afghanistan's Nangarhar province, attending a formal school. UNICEF works with the Ministry of Education to explore options to help such children to deal with documentation, grade equivalence and other issues, to allow them continuing their education.

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Page 16
A young girl stands in front of her community-based school in the Gamberi settlement for returnees in Laghman province, Afghanistan.

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Page 40
Zainab, 10, is keen to continue her education. She receives support from her family and community. Education is “everything” for her in this settlement with limited access to water, sanitation and health services. She attends a community-based school in the Gamberi settlement for returnees in eastern Laghman province, Afghanistan.

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Page 58
Water is a daily chore. Over 13 million people in Afghanistan spend over 30 minutes per round trip to collect water.

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Page 70
Young girls in a classroom in a school in Afghanistan.

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Page 84
Saima, 12, plays with other girls her age at a child-friendly space in Nangarhar province, eastern Afghanistan. Her family has been internally displaced by conflict in a neighbouring province.

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April 2018