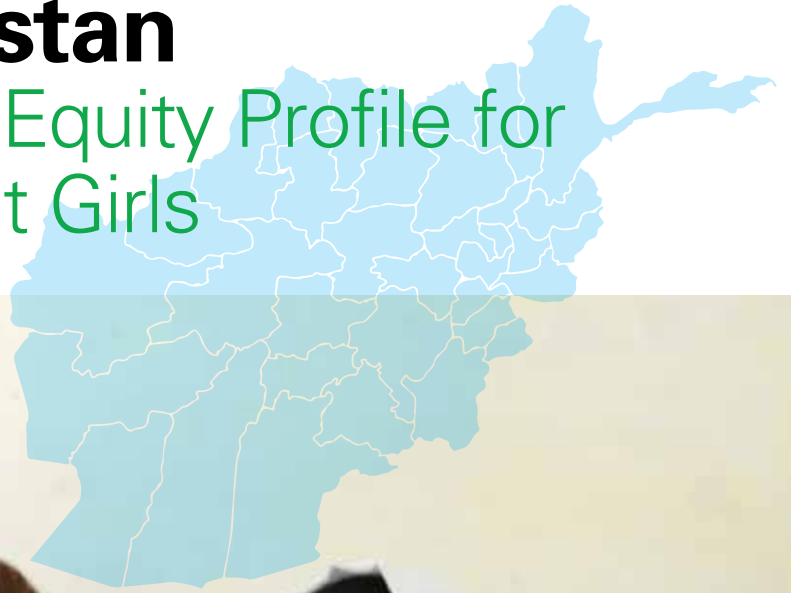




Afghanistan

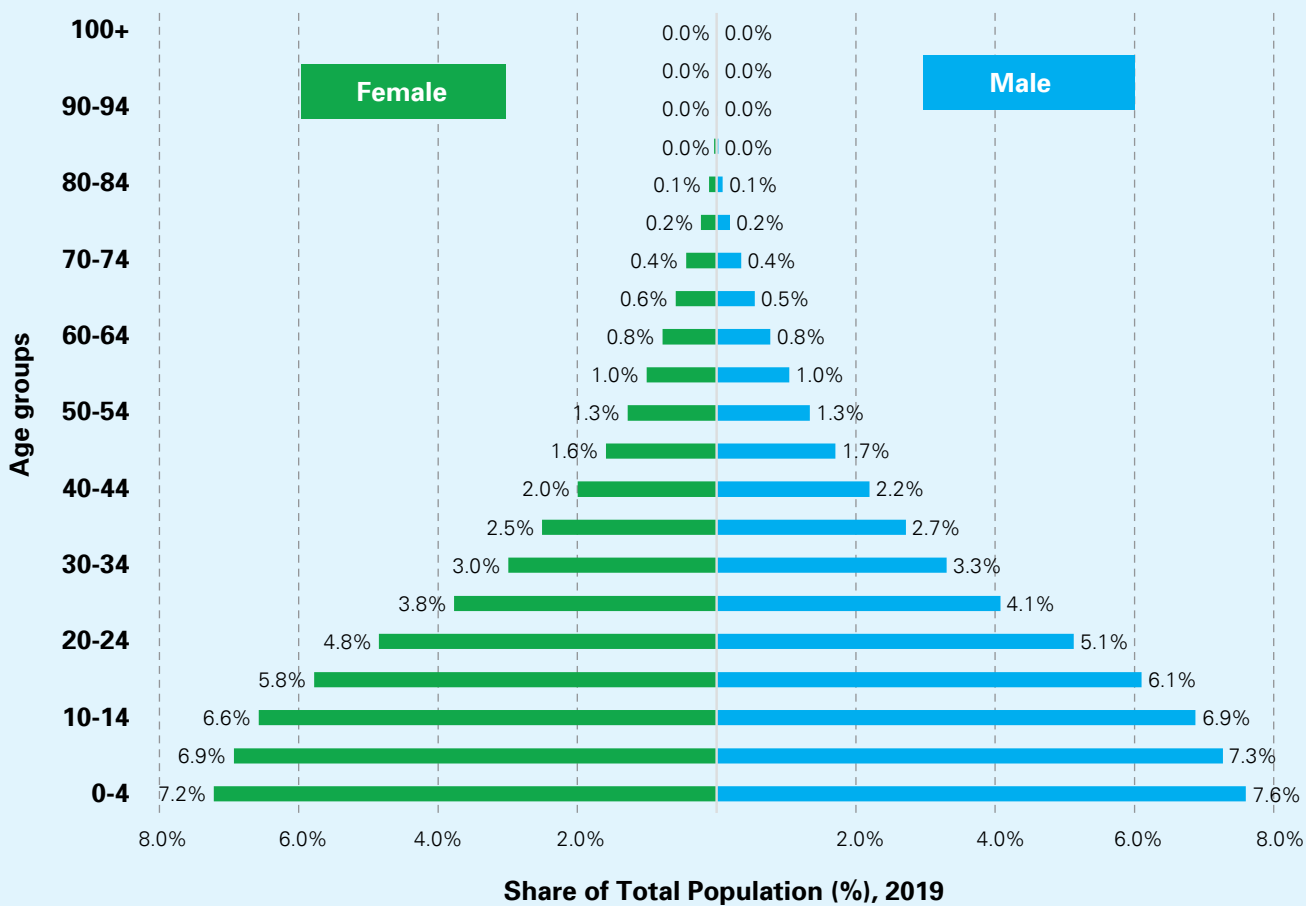
Education Equity Profile for Adolescent Girls





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▶ DEMOGRAPHICS



Current demographic trends place Afghanistan in the 'pre-dividend' category (the only such country in South Asia), characterized by a high fertility rate (over 4 births per woman), rapid population growth, many children, few elderly, and a high dependency ratio.¹ This situation is set to change and from about 2021, Afghanistan will enter the early-dividend stage of the demographic transition. This phase begins when there is a steady reduction in birth rates while the working age population increases, leading to an economic window of opportunity. In order to reap the dividends of this rare demographic opportunity, it is crucial that Afghanistan makes the necessary investments to anticipate the 'adolescent bulge' entering the labor market in the coming years. Investing in adolescents is therefore key to unlocking this extra-growth potential for the country. Currently, a quarter of the population (26 per cent) are adolescents age 10 to 19, of which 49 per cent are female and 41 per cent male.² The number of adolescents is expected to increase from an estimated 9.5 million in 2019 to 11 million by 2045. Three-quarters of the population live in rural areas, but face rapid urbanization, providing both opportunities and challenges to the provision of education and to economic development.



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▶ EDUCATION SYSTEM

Afghanistan's formal education system runs from grade 1 to 12 and includes various types of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes. It is highly dependent on the support of other actors for the delivery of education. A wide range of national and international NGOs provide Community-Based Education (CBE) in various hard-to-reach areas. The formal education system is also complemented by accelerated learning programmes to allow students who were out of school due to conflict or other reasons to catch up on lost education. Of government spending on education (2015-2016), 95 per cent goes to general education, 4 per cent to Islamic education, and the remainder on technical and vocational education and teacher training. A national TVET strategy was launched in 2013, supported by UNESCO. In recent years,

| Education level | Official entrance age (years) | Duration (years) |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Primary | 7 | 6 |
| Lower Secondary | 13 | 3 |
| Upper Secondary | 16 | 3 |

TVET provision has grown significantly among the development aid community and private institutions as a promising way to efficiently provide unqualified workers with adapted skills to enter the labor market. A major gap in the education system is the absence of organized pre-primary, which impacts all future education outcomes. Only about 1 per cent of age appropriate children participate in pre-school, which is privately run and mostly in the cities.

¹ Dependency ratio is the age-population ratio of those not in the labor force to those in the labor force. See also: *Global Monitoring Report 2015/2016: Development Goals in an Era of Demographic Change*; age pyramid from <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Graphs/DemographicProfiles>.

² United Nations Population Division (UNDP), *World Population Prospects 2019*, 2019.

▶ PROFILES OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL ADOLESCENT GIRLS

School attendance rates by age indicate that girls are significantly less likely to attend school across all ages. As shown in Figure 1, the gender gap in school attendance rates widens from age 10 and peaks at age 14, reflecting increased barriers to education when girls reach adolescence. Percentage-wise the gap reduces at later ages, reflecting higher dropout rates for boys at upper secondary level. However, girls are more likely than boys to drop out at the primary education level.

The ratio of girls to boys in school does continue to widen as the numbers for both groups shrink from age 10 to 23. Three times as many boys as girls attend tertiary education at age 19+.

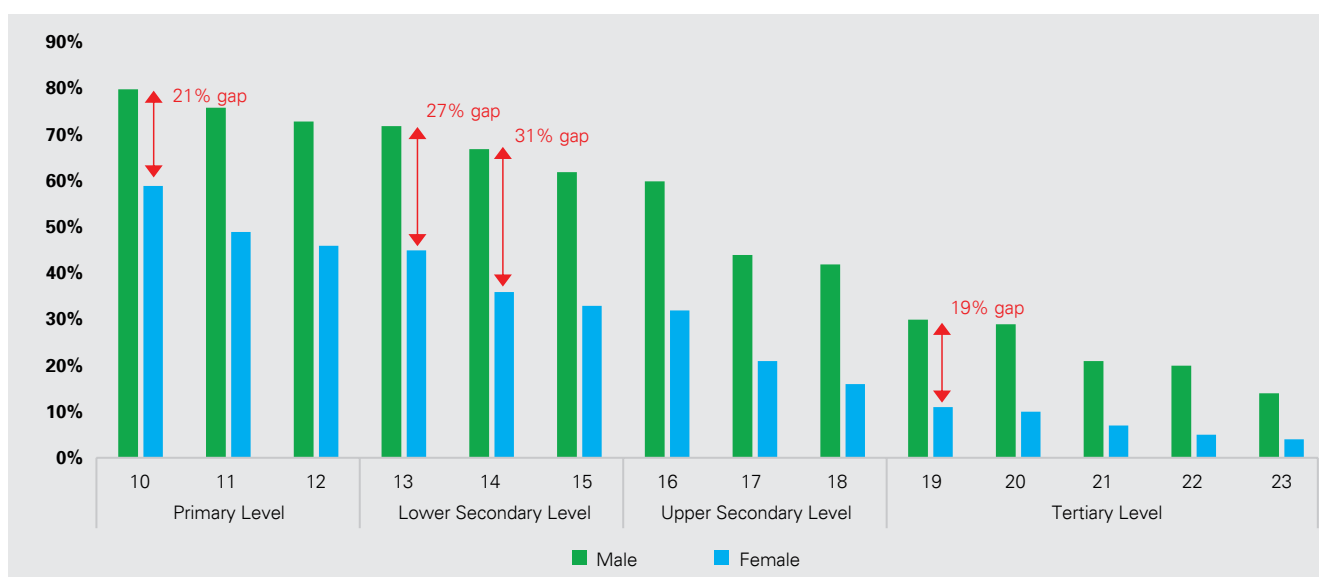


1. Gender differences by location

National figures mask much greater gender gaps in out of school numbers by location and province. The majority of people in Afghanistan – around 71 per cent – live in rural areas, with 24 per cent living in urban areas, and 5 per cent are nomadic Kuchis.⁴ Nevertheless, the number of rural and Kuchi out-of-school children is disproportionately large, especially for girls. For lower-secondary aged girls (13 to 15 years), 1.1 million were rural and Kuchi out-of-school children compared to only 0.21 million urban in 2016-17. At the primary level (7 to 12 years), 1.1 million out-of-school girls were rural and Kuchi compared to 0.12 million urban.

There are also considerable differences in attendance rates between provinces. Figure 3 illustrates the differences in secondary net attendance rates for girls by province, which ranges from just 2 per cent in Paktika in the southeast part of Afghanistan, to 51 per cent in Panjshir in the northeast. In general, provinces in the south and east of the country have much lower school attendance rates for girls than for boys. Many of these are provinces where significant parts are controlled by non-state actors.

Figure 1 – Difference in school attendance rates by gender and age³

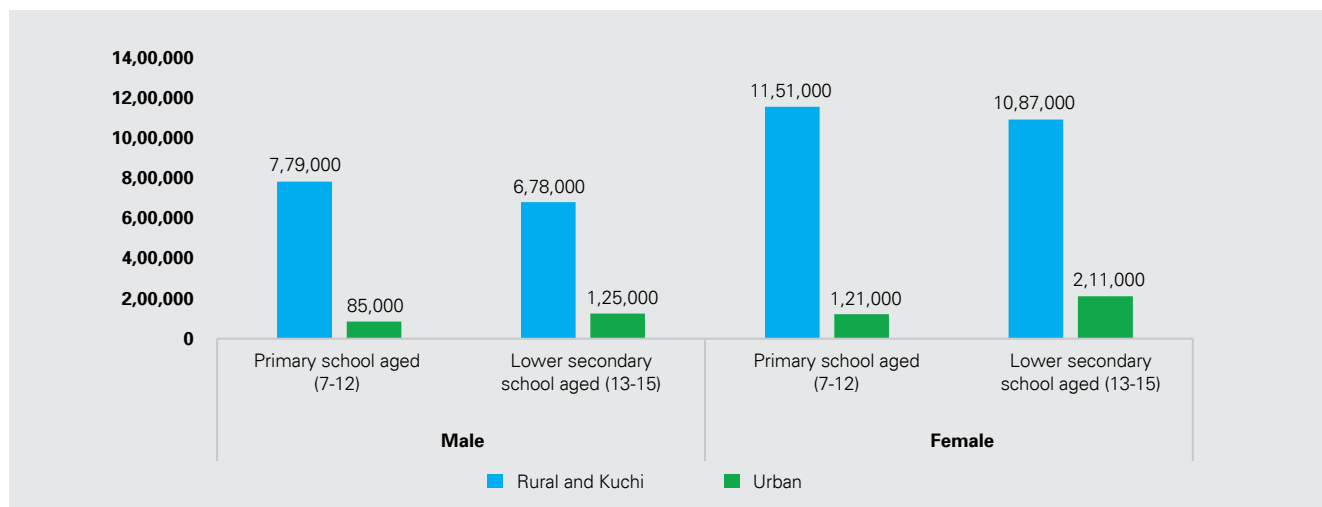


Source: ALCS 2016-17

³ Central Statistics Organization (2018), *Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey (ALCS) 2016-17*. Kabul, CSO.

⁴ *Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey (ALCS) 2016/17*, p.164.

Figure 2 – Difference in out of school rates by gender and age



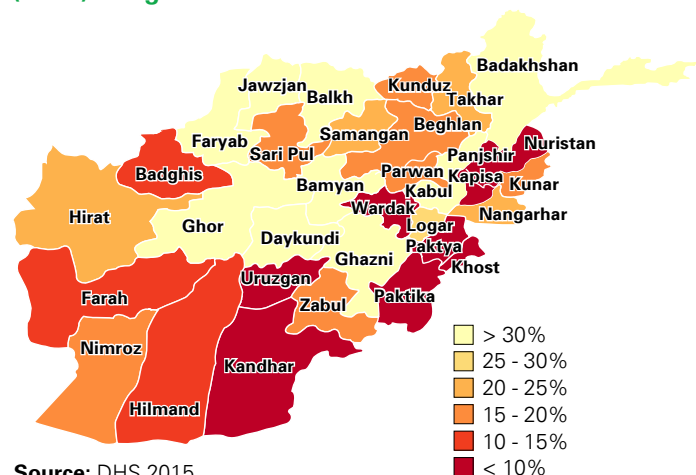
Source: ALCS 2016-17

2. Gender differences by household wealth

Provinces in the south and east of Afghanistan have the lowest proportion of children in the lowest wealth quintile, as illustrated in Figure 4. Comparing to the map in Figure 3, it becomes apparent that some of the provinces with the *highest* secondary net attendance rates for girls are also amongst those with the *highest* poverty rates, contrary to expectations. And vice versa, some provinces with the *lowest* secondary net attendance rates for girls are amongst those with the *lowest* poverty rates. This means that factors *other than poverty* play an important role in determining whether adolescent girls are attending school.

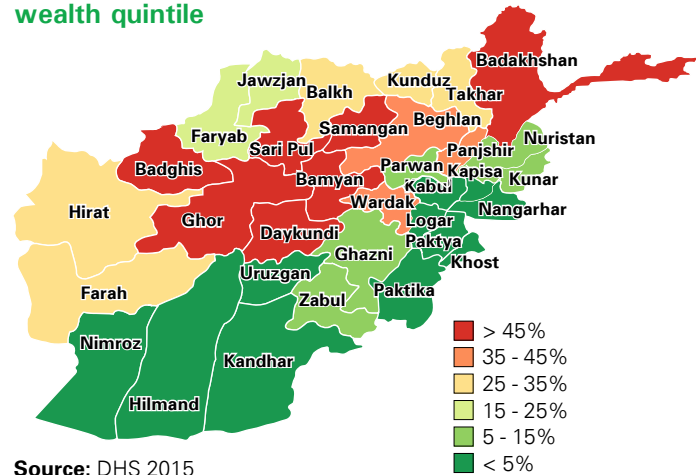
Nevertheless, on average (nationally), girls in poor households are much less likely to attend school than girls in wealthier households. Figure 5 illustrates the difference between adolescent girls and boys from the poorest quintile by education status. Girls are more than twice as likely to have never attended school. However, the dropout rates at primary, lower secondary and upper secondary are similar for girls and boys from the poorest quintile.

Figure 3 – Secondary net attendance rate (NAR) for girls⁵



Source: DHS 2015

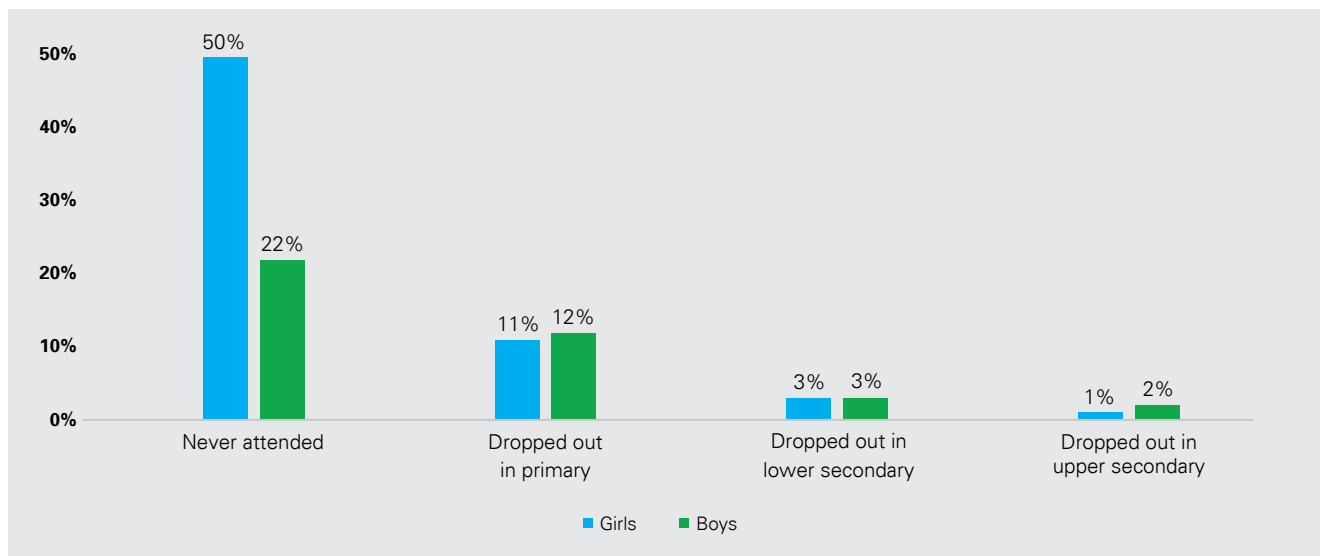
Figure 4 – Proportion of children in the lowest wealth quintile



Source: DHS 2015

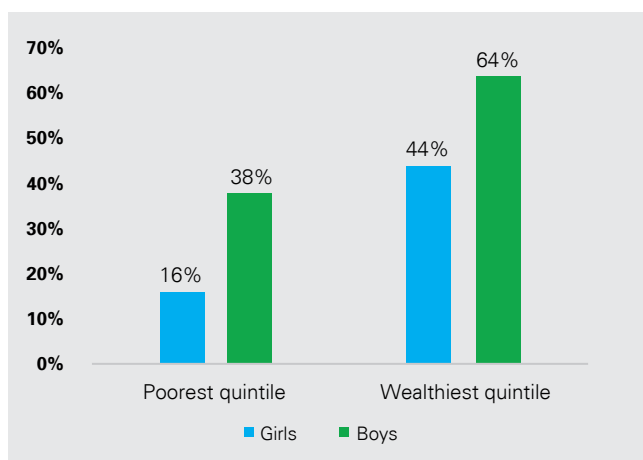
⁵ Central Statistics Organization (CSO), Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), and ICF. 2017. *Afghanistan Demographic and Health Survey 2015*. Kabul, Afghanistan: Central Statistics Organization.

Figure 5 – Distribution of adolescents age 10-19 in the poorest quintile by education status in 2015



Source: DHS 2015

Figure 6 – Secondary school net attendance ratio for adolescents age 13-18 by wealth quintile



Source: DHS 2015

Figure 6 compares the secondary school net attendance ratios for adolescents age 13-18 for the wealthiest and poorest wealth quintiles. Adolescent girls from *wealthier* households are much more likely to be in school, but the attendance rates are low *regardless of wealth quintile*. Even for the wealthiest quintile, the attendance rate is only 44 per cent, just slightly

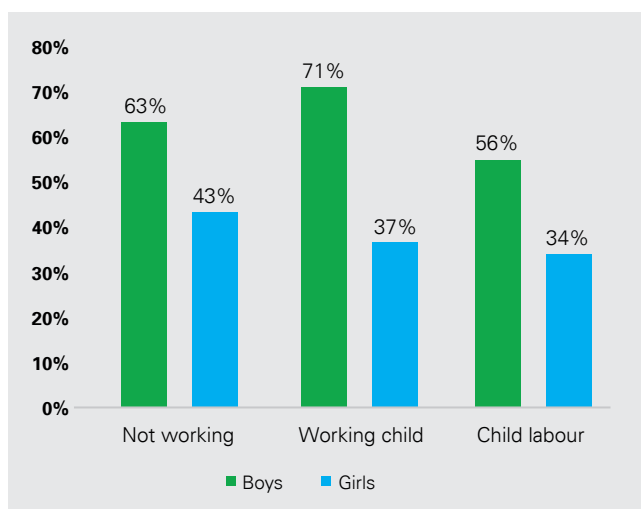
higher than the attendance rate for the poorest boys. This reinforces the message that factors other than wealth play an important role in determining whether adolescent girls go to school.

3. Gender differences by engagement in child labour

Boys are more likely than girls to be engaged in child labour⁶ or working⁷ according to ACLS 2013-14 data. About 2.7 million (or 27 per cent) of children aged 5-17 years are engaged in child labour in Afghanistan. Although boys in this age group are more likely to be involved in child labour (33 per cent of boys and 20 per cent of girls), girls are especially vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. In addition, girls are much more likely to avoid school due to their involvement in child labour. As shown in Figure 7, among girls engaged in child labour, only 34 per cent are attending school while more than half of boys engaged in child labour are still going to school. In addition, 37 per cent of working girls are going to school compared to 71 per cent of working boys. Girls are more likely to be involved in unpaid house work due to biased

⁶ Work that is (i) mentally, physically, socially and/or morally dangerous and harmful to children, and (ii) hazardous work which by its nature or the circumstances under which it is performed, jeopardizes the health, safety and morals of a child. The UNICEF definition used for ACLS is: (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 household 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 household work combined.
⁷ Children aged 12-17 years engaged in non-hazardous economic activities for less than 14 hours are not considered as engaged in child labour but called working children.

Figure 7 – Share of 6-17-year-old children attending school by economic activity status⁸



gendered norms that expect women to be involved in cooking, cleaning, caring for children/siblings and caring for old or sick people.

4. Kuchi nomadic communities

Education-wise, the most disadvantaged group are Kuchi, a generic term for a multitude of nomadic communities – estimated to number around 1.5 million – who do not share a single ethnicity, language or religion. Kuchis are amongst the most disadvantaged sections of Afghanistan society when it comes to access to education, especially for girls. Many are internally displaced as a result of the conflict. According to ALCS 2016-17, only 1.9 per cent of Kuchi youth age 15 to 24 participated in formal or non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, compared to 24.6 per cent of rural and 42.2 per cent of urban youth. The gender parity index (ratio of girls to boys) was incredibly low at 0.07, compared to 0.66 and 0.30 for urban and rural youth, respectively.

5. Children and adolescents with disabilities

Although no recent data is available, disability rates for children and adolescents in Afghanistan are likely to be considerably higher than in other countries in the region and globally. Armed conflict often leads to injuries and trauma that result



in disabilities, which is exacerbated by the lack of emergency health care and rehabilitation. In addition, many children and adolescents of poor families have become physically disabled as a result of hazardous work searching for scrap metal, due to unexploded ordinance (UXOs) or minefields. The Accessibility Organizations for Afghan Disabled (AAOD) estimates that 95 per cent of children with disabilities do not attend school – at least 760,000 children – due to various barriers including a lack of trained staff and facilities to cater to their needs.⁹ Unfortunately, data on children or adolescents with disabilities in or out-of-school is not routinely collected, and no disaggregated data is available. However, it is clear that regardless of gender, children and adolescents with disabilities are amongst the most disadvantaged groups in Afghanistan and – along with Kuchi – the least likely to attend school.

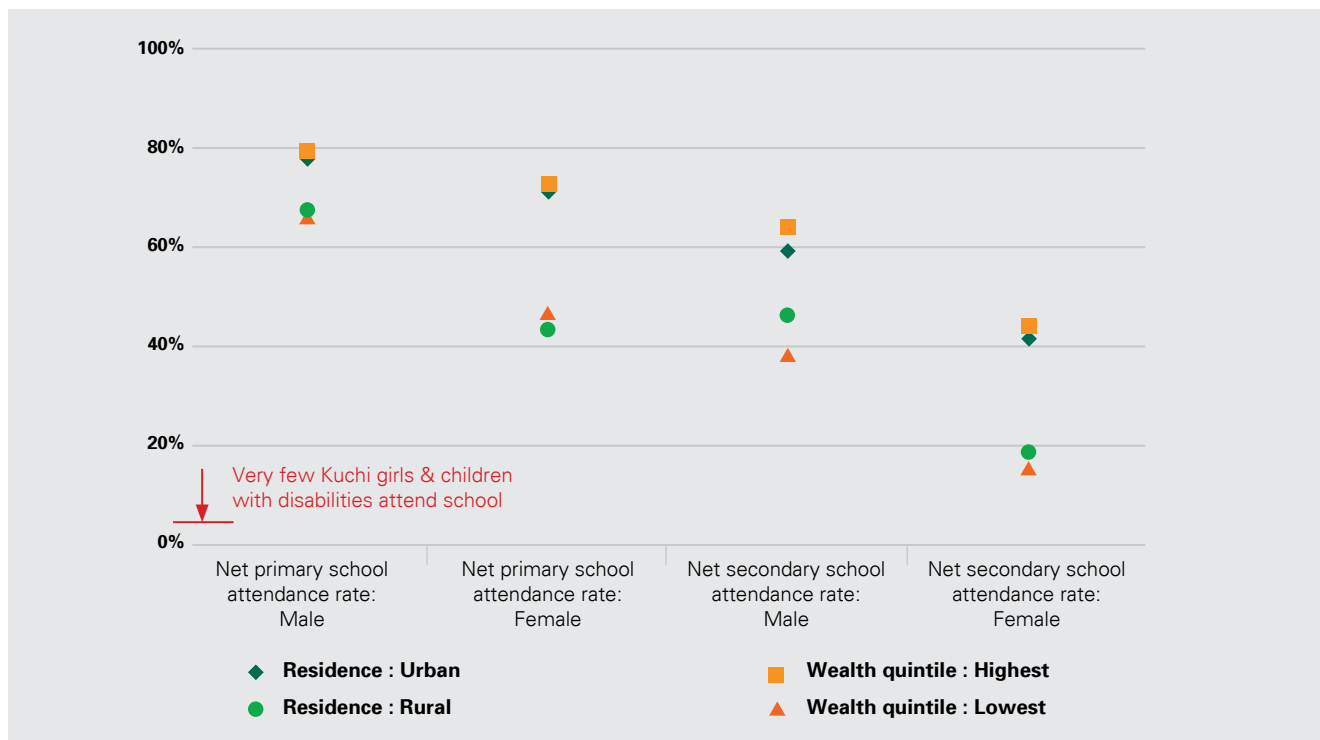
6. Summary overview

Figure 8 shows a summary overview of school attendance rates by gender, wealth quintile and location. Secondary school age adolescent girls living in rural areas and in the poorest quintile are the least like to attend school. However, even more disadvantaged are Kuchi girls and children with disabilities in terms of educational opportunities. The chart also shows the considerable drop in attendance for girls from primary to secondary level. It is important to note

⁸ Central Statistics Organization, *Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey (ALCS) 2013-14. National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment*. Kabul, CSO, 2016.

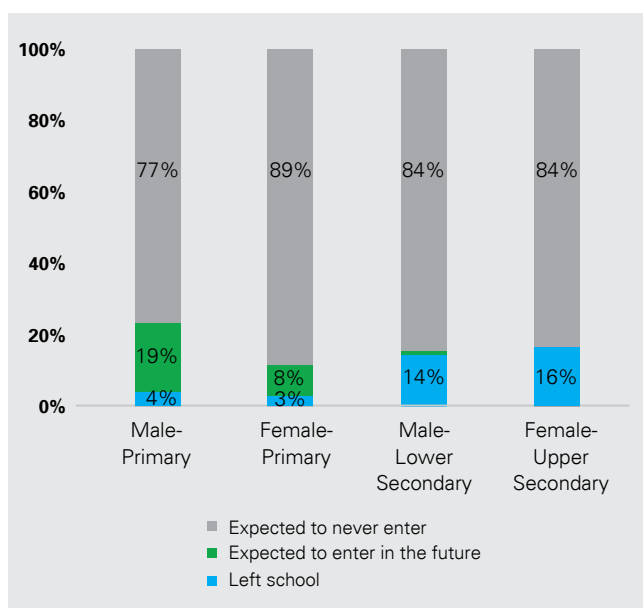
⁹ National Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021.

Figure 8 – Summary overview of school attendance



Source: DHS 2015

Figure 9 – Lower-secondary age out-of-school children by school exposure (ALCS 2013-14)



that this drop in attendance is quite consistent across wealth quintiles and location. This indicates that while wealth and rural/urban location strongly impact whether girls enter school, it is mainly other factors which cause adolescent girls to drop out before completing secondary school. These factors are discussed under barriers to education for adolescent girls.

Figure 9 shows school exposure by gender and level of education. In Afghanistan, within the out-of-school group – the proportion who never have and never will enter school is extremely high. At primary school age, only 8 per cent of out-of-school girls are expected to enter in the future compared to 19 per cent of out-of-school boys. At lower secondary school age, hardly any adolescent out-of-school children are expected to start or return to school. Around 8 per cent of lower-secondary age girls in lower secondary education are expected to drop out before the last grade, which is twice the rate of boys.¹⁰

¹⁰ Based on ALCS 2013/2014 data.



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► BARRIERS TO EDUCATION FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS

In most countries, it is often a combination of factors which leads to exclusion from education. While this is also true in Afghanistan, it is particularly one single factor – being female – which presents a formidable barrier. Girls from poor households, in rural areas, and in parts of the country controlled by non-state actors are especially likely to be out-of-school. What is particular to Afghanistan is that there are also a high proportion of girls from wealthier households, in urban areas, and throughout all provinces who are out of school.

1. Socio-cultural barriers

Social norms, tradition and religious beliefs forbid access to secular education for many girls. Child marriage, although in decline, also remains a major obstacle to education. According to the Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey 2016-17, family disapproval is one of the three main reasons why girls and boys aged 6-24 years discontinue schooling, and this problem is more common among girls than boys (31 per cent of girls versus only 1.5 per cent of boys).¹¹ Furthermore, familial disapproval against

ever entering school is also more so a problem for girls than boys (40 per cent compared to 3 per cent, respectively). Insecurity (real or perceived), including potential attacks from Armed Opposition Groups and harassment, are another important barrier which affects girls much more than boys.

Educating adolescent girls carries multiple perceived risks (safety, psychological, health, and social repercussions, public perceptions of purity, marriage opportunities and no or reduced dowry), which often outweigh the perceived benefits from the parents' perspective. During the Taliban's rule in the 1990s, girls and women were banned from going to school, often under ideologies that endorsed preserving women's purity. Although the Taliban's rule ended in 2001 and girls were subsequently allowed to go to school, many families still carry fear.¹² The threat of sexual harassment, abuse, rape, and out-of-wedlock pregnancies are especially significant factors that deter parents from sending their daughters to school. Religious beliefs that assume girls are only meant to be protected inside the

¹¹ ALCS 2016/17, p.156

¹² Human Rights Watch, "'I won't be a doctor, and one day you'll be sick': Girls Access to Education in Afghanistan', October 17, 2017,

< <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/10/17/i-wont-be-doctor-and-one-day-youll-be-sick/girls-access-education-afghanistan>>, accessed November 26, 2019.

house also discourage some families from sending their daughters to school.¹³ Furthermore, a girl's (perceived) purity also impacts marriage opportunities and dowry, and thus families may perceive a direct economic disincentive to allow girls to be educated, especially at adolescence. Keeping adolescent girls at home protects them and ensures their purity. This economic disincentive is not compensated by a higher likelihood of employment, since women seldom participate in the labor market. There is a widespread perception that women should become housewives, and there are very few job opportunities for educated women. In addition, cultural norms dictate that after marriage women live with their husband and in-laws, and any income potentially earned by women benefits her husband's family.

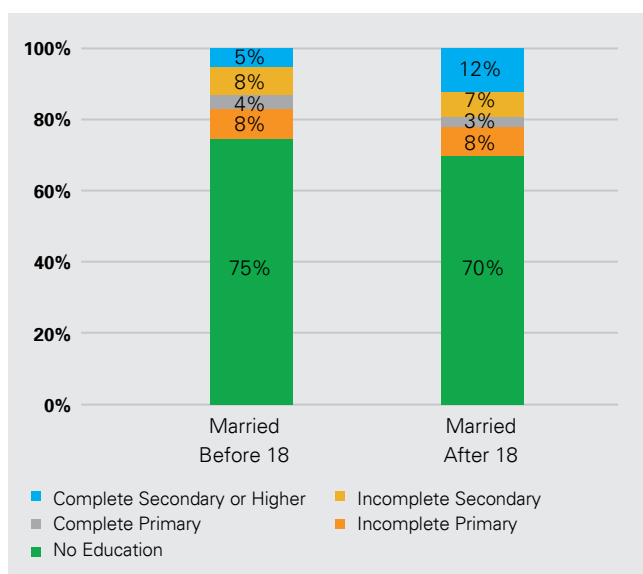
Girls also face many restrictions due to cultural norms and taboos around menstruation. For instance, a study found that around 80 per cent of girls in Afghanistan were not allowed to attend cultural events like weddings and funerals on their period.¹⁴ Girls are also often misinformed about

menstruation. The same study found that only 50 per cent of girls are aware of menstruation before their first period. Lack of knowledge around menstruation and myths and taboos associated with menstruation not only makes it harder for girls to manage menstrual hygiene but perpetuates misunderstandings among people who continue to exclude and isolate girls for experiencing menstruation. This also affects school attendance, as further described below.

Child Marriage

Child marriage is on the decline in Afghanistan, but still prevalent: 9 per cent of women aged 20-24 reported being married before the age of 15, and 35 per cent by the age of 18. Figure 10 shows education attainment by child marriage status.¹⁶ Surprisingly, the association between child marriage and education attainment is quite weak in Afghanistan. Girls marrying before age 18 are more likely to drop out, with only 5 per cent completing secondary or higher, compared to 12 per cent for those marrying after the age of 18. But overall, there is not a big difference in girls' education attainment between those who were married before the age of 18 and those who were married after the age of 18. The majority had never attended school in the first place.

Figure 10 – Education attainment for women aged 20-24 by child marriage status, Afghanistan (2015)¹⁵



2. Poverty and financial barriers

Poverty tends to impact all other factors leading to exclusion from education, and almost all families and communities in Afghanistan face some degree of economic hardship. It influences decisions and opportunities relating to child labour, child marriage and children with disabilities, amongst others. The Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey indicates that almost 54.5 per cent of the Afghan population (15.9 million) are below the poverty line.¹⁷ As noted in the discussion of gender differences by household wealth, girls have a high likelihood of being out-of-school across all wealth quintiles, whereas boys' education opportunities appear to be particularly impacted by poverty. This could be linked to the higher rates of engagement in

¹³ Shayan, Zafar, 'Gender Inequality in Education in Afghanistan: Access and Barriers', 2015, *Open Journal of Philosophy*, 5, 277-284.

¹⁴ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Afghanistan, 'Launch of first ever Girls' Hygiene Guidelines in Afghanistan', October 30, 2018, <<https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/press-releases/launch-first-ever-girls-hygiene-guidelines-afghanistan>>, accessed November 25, 2019.

¹⁵ DHS: *Demographic and Health Survey*, 2015.

¹⁶ Bajracharya, A., S. R. Psaki and M. Sadiq, *Child marriage, adolescent pregnancy and school dropout in South Asia*, report by the Population Council for the United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu, Nepal, 2019.

¹⁷ ALCS 2016/17, p.330



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(non-household) economic activities for boys. At the same time, in many households, financial pressures lead to girls rather than boys being excluded. Although school is free, there remain many indirect costs such as school supplies, clothes and transportation. If a family cannot afford the indirect costs of education for all children in the household, it is more likely that girls are excluded.

Besides tradition and religious beliefs, the lack of future employment opportunities for girls also influence such decisions. The labour market is, in effect, closed to women in many provinces. This not only affects the well-being of women, but also that of men and children. Effects of the gender gap in employment include reduced bargaining power of women at home and lower investments in children's education and health, lower economic growth, as well as underrepresentation of women in the teacher workforce with implications that are discussed below.

Poverty is also associated with malnutrition and anemia which affects a large proportion of children and adolescents in Afghanistan. In 2013, the Ministry of Public Health reported that around 31

per cent of adolescent girls and 40 per cent of women of reproductive age suffer from anemia.¹⁸ Poor health prevents girls from going to school and performing well in school and increases child and mother mortality in the future.

3. School-level barriers

There are multiple school factors which also lead to greater exclusion of adolescent girls. Female teachers increase the likelihood that girls, especially adolescent girls, will be allowed to go to school and continue their schooling. In Afghanistan, only 34 per cent of teachers are female, according to 2015-16 data, and the proportion of female teachers in rural areas is even lower.

Another school-level barrier is inadequate WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) facilities and Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) facilities in schools. They are critical for a safe, protective and healthy learning environment, and inadequate WASH and MHM facilities particularly affect adolescent girls. A questionnaire-based survey in 2010 of 7,769 schools in 24 provinces found

¹⁸ Ministry of Public Health, *National Nutrition Survey Afghanistan 2013: Survey Report*, Government of Afghanistan, Ministry of Public Health.

that only 37 per cent of all surveyed schools had safe drinking water, only 7.5 per cent had soap, and only around half of co-education schools had separate toilets for girls and boys; moreover, other studies found that an estimated 30 per cent of girls stay home during menstruation due to lack of MHM facilities.¹⁹

Adolescent girls often have to travel long distances due to the lack of schools. According to the 2016 Education Sector Analysis, 40 per cent of children require more than half an hour to get to school. This puts them at risk of sexual harassment, and there is a particularly strong correlation between distance to school and lower enrolment for girls.

4. Insecurity and conflict

Violence and insecurity continue to remain prevalent and are even on the rise. This poses a particular set of problems for governance in Afghanistan's education sector. Schools are a frequent target of attacks. The ongoing conflict has a strong impact on school closures, and disproportionately affects girls' attendance. For instance, in 2018, armed conflicts caused school closures throughout villages in the Farah province and left 3,500 girls out of school.²⁰ Even after schools re-opened, girls were reluctant and afraid to return. In addition, it poses problems in recruiting and keeping qualified teachers, especially female teachers which subsequently impacts girls' enrolment. Non-state control of parts of the country has also influenced education curricula, which rarely meet the standards of the Ministry of Education. The lack of security has also led to difficulties obtaining reliable data from schools including on girls' participation. This has implications for the accuracy and breadth of data collected for monitoring and evidence-based decision making.

5. Barriers to education for ethnic minorities and disadvantaged populations

Kuchi face a particular set of barriers to education. In addition to socio-cultural barriers, many Kuchi face the barrier of mobility and

thus requires alternative mechanisms for the delivery of education (though Kuchi are becoming increasingly sedentary). A challenge for Kuchi as well as returnees and IDPs (Internally Displaced People) – noting that many Kuchi are IDPs – is that they often lack the necessary papers to enrol in school. Language of instruction is also a barrier, and there is currently no consensus within the Ministry of Education on the provision of mother-tongue education in the case of small ethnic minorities.

Children with disabilities face barriers both in terms of discrimination and social stigma, and the complete lack of services to support them. Schools lack accessible infrastructure, learning materials and staff with specialized training to support the needs of children with disabilities.

6. Lack of government expenditure on education and reliance on external funding

Government expenditure on education is similar to other countries in South Asia (both as a percentage of GDP and percentage of total government expenditure). However, it is affected by the high levels of government security expenditure and has not kept pace with increasing demand for education, owing to Afghanistan's very young population.

Inadequate controls leading to corruption, nepotism and misappropriation of resources are also a significant threat. Afghanistan ranks 177 out of 180 on the 2017 Transparency International *Corruption Perceptions Index*, based on perceived levels of public sector corruption.²¹ This potentially impact further investments by international donors, and currently Afghanistan is highly reliant on external sources of education funding, with 36 per cent of education costs covered by Official Development Assistance (ODA). Corruption will continue to be a challenge for the foreseeable future, although President Ashraf Ghani has prioritized anti-corruption measures. It disproportionately impacts the poorest households, with financial pressures more likely to lead to exclusion of girls than boys.

¹⁹ United Nations Children's Fund, *Assessment of Existing School Sanitation Facilities in Afghanistan, Final report*, UNICEF, December 2010.

²⁰ Amnesty International, 'Afghanistan 2017/2018', <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/afghanistan/report-afghanistan/>>, accessed November 25, 2019.

²¹ Transparency International, 'Corruption Perceptions Index', <https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017>, accessed 8 November 2019.



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► POLICIES AND STRATEGIES ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO EDUCATION FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS²²

1. Addressing socio-cultural barriers

There are a number of important and recent initiatives to address socio-cultural barriers to education for adolescent girls. This includes the training of influential community elders (Maliks) to advocate for prevention of harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and support education for adolescent girls and boys; community dialogues at village and district levels to change perceptions on child marriage and develop action plans around ending child marriage; and establishment of the Afghan Women's Leadership Initiative (AWLI) to reduce child marriage and mitigate its consequences.

The 2009 Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) criminalizes *baad* (marrying a woman to bring peace and reconciliation among families), child and forced marriage, and 19 other acts of violence against women. It is the cornerstone of the Afghan initiative to eradicate all forms of abuse, aggression and violence against girls and

women, but has suffered from delays, challenges in implementation, and opposition from some members of parliament.

Child marriage is targeted by several international human right 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. The Afghan Civil Code officially condemns child marriage, but the systematic enforcement of the law is variable and depends 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 UNFPA Afghanistan and after several consultations with the public and private sectors, and representatives of the international community.

²² The main source of the policy analysis is the UNICEF & Samuel Hall Report on Out-of-School Children in Afghanistan (2017).



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2. Addressing poverty and financial barriers

With the support of international donors, the Afghan government has implemented several social protection plans such as the Social Protection Sector Strategy aiming to reduce extreme poverty, hunger, malnutrition and improve assistance and integration of the most vulnerable categories of the society. The Social Safety Net (SSN) 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.

In terms of improving the education participation, a recommendation is that Conditional Cash Transfers or CCTs are considered which have been successful in other parts of the world. CCTs for education make cash transfers conditional on school attendance. They can be used to reduce the gender gap by having CCTs specifically for girls, or higher CCTs for girls compared to boys.

The large proportion of adolescent girls suffering from anemia is being addressed by UNICEF in

coordination with the Ministries of Health and Education, through providing weekly iron and folic acid supplementation (WIFS) as well as through awareness raising around this issue.

3. Addressing school-level barriers

School construction and improvement of school infrastructure and facilities is a top priority for the government.²³ The Ministry of Education has standards in place for infrastructure and facilities, but these are often not adhered to. For adolescent girls, it is especially important to address the absence of adequate WASH facilities and MHM facilities. There are efforts to specifically improve the implementation of WASH infrastructure in schools, such as in the Draft Girls' Education Policy for 2017.

To address the shortage of female teachers in schools especially in rural areas, the Ministry of Education is undergoing a significant effort to train more female teachers.²⁴ The Ministry is planning to recruit around 30,000 female teachers among communities over the next five years. The National Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 will pilot the use of incentives (such as housing, salary supplements, inclusion of family members, special security provisions, etc.) to encourage qualified female teachers from urban areas to relocate to under-served areas.

4. Addressing insecurity and conflict through Community Based Education

CBE (Community Based Education) has proven to be more resilient to the conflict than state-run schools, because they are less centralized and visible, more flexible, run by members of the community, and less likely to be perceived as symbols of the Afghan government. In 2015, such CBE programmes hired over 11,000 teachers and enrolled more than 300,000 students among which 65 per cent were female.²⁵ The Ministry of Education developed a CBE Policy in a concerted effort to improve girls' education participation, focusing especially on girls in rural areas. The policy gives flexibility to

²³ National Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021.

²⁴ UNICEF – Samuel Hall Out-of-School Children Initiative Report – Afghanistan, 2017.

²⁵ World Bank, *Afghanistan: Promoting Education During Times of Increased Fragility*, 2018, World Bank, Washington, DC, p.24.

communities in remote areas to organize safe and quality access to education for girls and boys alike outside of state-run public schools, with the active support and participation of the community and community leaders. It calls for the establishment of school *shuras*, which are school management councils, with the aim of increasing community involvement and addressing barriers to girls' education (especially adolescent girls) through this community structure. In Afghanistan, community mobilization is key due to the importance of local-level and informal authorities in community-level decision making and guaranteeing the sustainability of outcomes.²⁶ CBE is also promoted by UNICEF and several international NGOs, amongst others, as a way of overcoming barriers to education for girls. CBE Policy Guidelines have been developed setting minimum conditions and quality standards as well as a curriculum. The Ministry of Education has also developed action plans to foster the recognition of learning centres as 'Peace Zones', and to include school shuras and the Child Protection Action Network (CPAN)²⁷ in discussions with relevant stakeholders to prevent school destruction and closures. However, CBE schools are at the time of writing not included in the Education Management Information System; this would be an important development required to better monitor education participation especially for girls.

5. Addressing barriers to education for disadvantaged groups

The National Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 commits to developing strategies and implementing equitable solutions to the integration of disadvantaged groups in the national system, such as through mobile schools for Kuchis, and acquisition of documentation (*tazkeras*) required for enrolment. The Ministry of Education 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, evening classes, and self-instruction using technology are also being

considered as alternative learning pathways for out-of-school and disadvantaged populations.

With respect to children with disabilities, although the government is committed to producing an inclusive school environment, there are no guidelines for Ministry of Education staff at the local levels on inclusive education and special education needs. The 2008 Education Law, the Child Friendly Education Policy and the National Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 take on board the question of access to schools for children with disabilities. This corpus of documents set intentions for the future, such as development of adapted facilities, but most of these measures remain to be implemented.

6. Addressing lack of employment opportunities for women

In 2015, 87 per cent of Afghan women said that they were housewives, while only 5.5 per cent said they are working.²⁸ Moreover, from 2014 to 2015, there was a decrease in the percentage of women saying they were without work and seeking it, dropping from 11 per cent in 2014 to 3 per cent in 2015. This may be linked to rising concerns over security.

In recent years, vocational training activities (TVET) 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 labor market. But there remain significant problems, including the fragmentation of the management of TVET, poor quality of TVET, and skills mismatch between TVET supply and labor market demands. Even if these are resolved, however, the socio-cultural barriers to women's workforce participation remain a barrier.

Initiatives to improve the number of women in the teaching workforce (as discussed above) are especially important, both to increase girls' education participation, and to provide future employment opportunities for educated girls and incentives to continue their education.

²⁶ Samuel Hall, *School Management Shuras: A bridge between girls' education and the communities? – Case Study on Community Mobilization for the promotion of girls' education*, 2014.

²⁷ A network of governmental and non-governmental organizations with a mandate for field interventions in the area of child protection.

²⁸ The Asia Foundation, *Survey of the Afghan People: Afghanistan 2015*.

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December 2019

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