

Afghan Connection Strategy 2018 -22



Afghan Connection's Mission

Afghan Connection's (AC) mission is to bring hope and opportunity to a generation of young people in Afghanistan through education and cricket.

Overview

16 years after the US -led military intervention that ousted the Taliban Government, an estimated two-thirds of Afghan girls do not go to school. It is estimated that in 2001 just a million children were in school and of those, 5000 were girls. From its inauguration in 2001, the new Afghan Government under Hamid Karzai, along with the international community made significant progress with education for girls and boys.

Statistics of all kinds are hard to obtain in Afghanistan and are of questionable accuracy. In 2015, a government report stated that more than 8 million children were in school, 39% of whom were girls. In December 2016, the Ministry of Education announced that the real number was nearer to 6 million but in 2017 they said it was over 9 million. All of these figures are inflated by the government's practice of counting a child as attending school until he or she has not attended for up to 3 years.

Whatever the numbers, the progress which has been made towards getting all girls in to school may now be in decline. Between 2015 and 2017, the number of girls attending school fell in 32 provinces with numbers falling by 206,000 in total. 85% of children who do not attend school are girls. Only 37% of adolescent girls are literate compared to 66% of adolescent boys. The only province outside of Kabul where number are not in decline, is Takhar Province, the focus of AC'S education projects.

What schooling is available in Afghanistan?

- Government schools: free, although parents pay for uniforms and often books and stationery costs. Variable grades 1-12
- Community Based Education, (CBE): a parallel education system largely run by NGOs, often in remote areas, which prioritises girls and serves them well.
- Private schools: of variable standards, largely in cities, where families pay for their children to be educated.
- Madrassas: often the madrassas are funded by hardline international religious groups. They pay a small stipend to students and so are particularly attractive to poverty stricken families. The children are often radicalised and it is said that this can happen within the first 2 months. These schools are increasing in numbers.

What are the threats to education?

The reasons are complex and not just down to security, which is a significant factor. The security situation has grown steadily worse, fighting has escalated and the Taliban now contests or controls 40% of Afghanistan's provinces. Parents want their daughters educated in a secure working environment, by female teachers and all parents want a quality education for their children. The facts below work against this and are all contributing factors causing the decline in enrollment.

- 41% of schools in Afghanistan have no buildings
- 30% have no water
- 60% have no sanitation (particularly hard for post-pubertal girls, causing absence and drop- out rates to increase).
- In 17 provinces less than 20% of teachers are female. (In Paktika less than 1% of teachers are female)
- 1/3 of girls marry before they are 18
- 25% of Afghan children between the ages of 5 and 14 work for a living to support their families and only 50% of these children attend school.
- Corruption is rife in the education sector right from the Ministry of Education to the classroom.

- Quality of education: 90% of teachers in government schools have paid a bribe to secure their position. This can be equivalent of up to 2 years of salary. They may not even be qualified to teach and some are barely literate.

International Donors to Afghanistan

Money is still coming into Afghanistan from its international donors. However, there is a shift on how this is being spent. Embassies are smaller and embassy staff have less access to the country. Donors are now shifting funding, which did go to CBE through large NGOs, to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, ARTF. The Afghan Government distribute these funds and actively discriminate against girls in education, spending much more on schools and education for boys. CBEs are under threat as NGOs receive less direct funding.

Afghan Connection Education Programme

Impact 2002-17

- 46 schools built for 75,000 children (18 in Takhar Province by end 2018)
- 2700 children in CBE in Takhar Province (Worsaj and Rustaq)
- 1000 teachers received training (Worsaj and Rustaq)
- Support for District education department in Worsaj. Capacity building and computerisation.
- 73 schools renovated

It is worth noting that the only province outside of Kabul where the number of girls enrolled in school did not fall is Takhar. Could AC'S Takhar Education Initiative be a significant factor in this? AC is working to ensure that, through its approach to education for boys and particularly girls and its focus on safe, secure buildings, surrounding walls, female teachers, access to water and sanitation, it is much more likely girls can access and stay in school. AC is working to promote all the factors that improve educational opportunities for children.

Worsaj

In Worsaj now, 89% of children are accessing school. AC has funded over 800 teacher training sessions and has built 12 schools here. It supports 1500 children in CBE. RS and SF visited this year and it is clear that the project is achieving its aims. However, the work is not complete and it was concluded in the last Trustee meeting that AC should not leave Worsaj yet. We should ensure sustainability for CBE and work to provide all children with access to education. There are still villages requesting CBE support but we are not taking them on until we can guarantee sustainability of the programme. AC also needs to ensure that when community based schools are handed to government, they run them well.

Rustaq

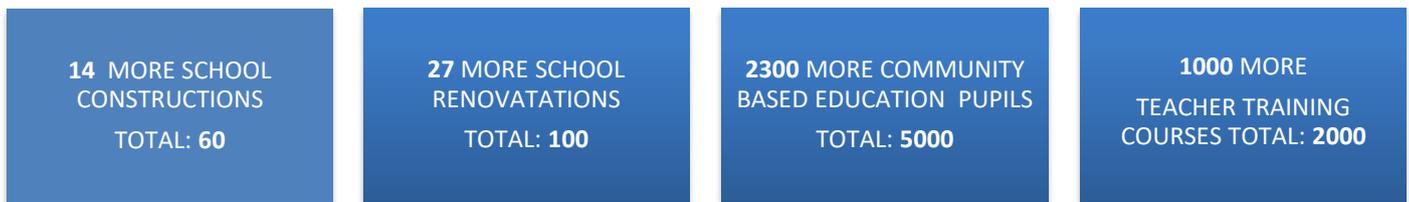
The aim is to replicate the Worsaj Education Programme in Rustaq. This was started in 2015 and already 4 schools have been built, 200 teachers trained and 1168 children have enrolled in community based education. As previously discussed, the challenges are great: large drought-ridden area, difficult to access, ethnic mix Tajik/Uzbek; tensions between different commanders; sheer scale of the need. Realistically, we will not achieve the same success as we have in Worsaj.

To achieve scale, 3-year funding of circa £1m p.a. is needed for this project and AC has approached DFID and National Geographic with very time-consuming applications. The applications have been unsuccessful. However, the needs are great and following SF recent visit, it was recognised that AC, despite its funding challenges, is already bringing hope and transformation to people largely forgotten by their government and the international community.

Education Programme Strategy 2018-22

Our projects have supported over 200,000 children since 2002 (education and sport). Should we have a target number to achieve by 2022? Suggestion: **to support an additional 50,000 children in Afghanistan with education.**

How to hit these numbers:



- **Worsaj:** continue support, aiming to hit 100% access to education (**currently 89%**)
- **Rustaq:** replicate the Worsaj Project and continue to seek 3 year funding to scale up
- **School Construction:** Aim to scale up but **as a minimum**, construction of 2 schools a year (max 5) -these will either be CBE schools, or government schools (see Appendix 1 and 2)
- **CBE:** continue to support current 2700 CBE students in Worsaj and Rustaq **plus natural growth**. AC is working on estimating the numbers of pupils and potential costs over 5 years for current numbers plus natural growth)
 - Only take on new CBE classes if sustainability is guaranteed
 - Work with SCA to ensure quality handover of CBE to Ministry of Education
- **Teacher Training:** continue to support at least 200 teachers a year with training.

In addition:

- **Worsaj survey:** complete the survey evaluating success of the project and lessons learned so that AC can evidence its success and identify what is needed to achieve a quality education for all children in this district. Use the data to demonstrate success to donors.
- **School renovation in provinces outside of Takhar** alongside sports projects. This is important as it avoids criticism from within Afghanistan that AC is focusing on just one province. It also addresses the chronic lack of support for educational infrastructure and many of the reasons girls are not accessing school (latrines/water/secure classrooms/walls around girls' schools)
- **Film:** Make a film demonstrating project success and impact. SF LK to see BBC Director General in January.
- Consider E-learning/Resource centre furnishing / training/disability etc
- Consider synergies with other NGOs

Cricket 2009-17

The MCC has supported AC's cricket projects since 2009 and in 2015-17, AC received grants from the UK Government for cricket and school upgrade projects. With this support, AC has developed grassroots cricket across 22 provinces. The MCC has indicated that it may renew its financial support to AC through the MCC Foundation from 2018. Relationship with the Afghan Cricket Board and the National Team are good and AC has received praise from the Board for its work across the country. AC has had good press coverage for its cricket projects, which in turn, has raised awareness about the education projects.

SF was introduced to Ajhmal Ghani during her visit to Abu Dhabi. He is cousin to the President and is a successful entrepreneur based in the US. He has been asked by the government to help integrate sport into the national curriculum. He is keen to seek advice and support from AC on introducing cricket to the curriculum.

Project Impact:

- 100 pitches built at schools serving over 100,000 children
- Cricket clothing and kit provided to 100 schools
- 4500 children coached
- 180 school teachers trained in coaching cricket
- 9 regional tournaments held
- ICC Level 1 coaching programme for 44 men and women
- Players coached at our camps have played in the U16 and U19 National sides and in the Afghanistan National Cricket Team

- 2 coaching camps for young men with disabilities
- 1 coaching camp and tournament for children and young people with blindness
- 73 schools serving more than 100,000 children have been renovated alongside cricket pitch construction projects.

Cricket Programme Strategy 2018-22

- Forge closer ties with the Afghan Cricket Board, ACB, and with the Afghan Government to reintegrate sport into the curriculum and bring cricket to students across Afghanistan through:
 - the construction of cricket pitches in schools
 - coaching programmes for students
 - coaching for school teachers to ensure sustainability

Ideas for the future:

- Focus on cricket projects for social change
 - Connect with other charities running cricket projects in conflict zones. Operate under the umbrella consortium of *Cricket for Conflict*, apply for funding together but administer our own in country projects. Use cricket in areas of conflict to promote peace and to bring hope to children and young adults. Work together to identify the best projects/practice. Perhaps link in educational resources/health opportunities.
 - AC impressed by Nangahar Blind Association, NBA who approached AC to support a cricket 4 day tournament and coaching programme for children and young people with blindness. Should definitely consider further support.
 - Continue to support young people with disabilities

Raising Awareness

Aim to keep the spotlight on Afghanistan and to help create a legacy after all the investment from the International Community.

- Focus on schools which have engaged with the project.
- Aim to target new schools each quarter
- Use International Days for campaigns, activities and fundraising.
- CEO to give presentations in schools on a regular basis.
- Better use of Social Media to engage younger audience and spread the message.
- Use of young Ambassadors to encourage young people's interest eg young England cricketers, young artists, journalists etc
- Public speaking, presentations and panels. Lunchtime talks, breakfast meetings. Include corporates.

Fundraising

Fundraising is increasingly challenging.

- **Trusts and Foundations:** Only a small percentage support overseas projects and particularly those outside of Africa. Applications to such Trusts are increasingly demanding as are the reporting requirements. OC and MC are working hard to identify new Trusts and Foundations to apply to and to revisit past donors.
- **Institutional funding** is challenging. Their funding is directed to small charities (annual income less than £250k), to very large NGOs and mainly through the ARTF. Continue to aim for DFID funding despite these challenges. Foreign and Commonwealth Office funding has been significant. The projects have to be implemented and reported on within 6 months or 1 year. This means the funds cannot be used for Takhar education projects but have been excellent for sport and school renovation in other areas of Afghanistan.

- **Individuals** many HNWs have their own causes and few of them target Afghanistan but AC continues to benefit from generous individuals.
- **Corporates:** AC has some success here and aims to increase corporate support and also approach successful Afghan businesses based in Dubai/Afghanistan/UK/US
- **Schools:** funds raised vary from £5-12k p.a. (aim is to consolidate and increase support)
- **Events :** increase annual fundraising from events
- **Visitors to Afghanistan:** Take donors on a *trip of a lifetime* where they pledge to fund a school construction after their trip. Security issues may make this challenging

Summary

AC has developed an excellent modus operandi in an extremely tough environment where it is responding directly to the needs of people in remote communities. Its projects in education and cricket are proving to be building blocks to a more peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan. There is a need to accelerate all we are able to do at this crucial time for Afghanistan, yet funding remains challenging and the spotlight has gone off Afghanistan when it can be argued that the need is greatest. Much depends upon a clear 5 year strategy and the communication of this strategy to donors who are able to support on a scale which will make this higher level of impact possible.