

ARTF AT WORK

RESULTS STORIES SERIES



Improving Higher Education in Afghanistan

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Strengthening Higher Education Program (SHEP) was implemented to progressively restore basic operational performance at a group of core universities in Afghanistan, to provide an institutional base for an agenda focusing on tertiary education development, capacity building and reform.

The program supported the strategic planning and implementation of the development and reform program at twelve key higher education institutions through block grant (investment) and university partnership program (software). The program was the first phase of the long-term support in the development of higher education system in Afghanistan.

Under the SHEP, basic operational performance has been restored in 12 core universities across the country and Core universities in Afghanistan, such as Nangarhar University, are attracting thousands of students as they rebuild infrastructure, increase resources and improve qualifications of teaching staff.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

- 100% of the selected faculties revised and updated their curricula.
- All 12 universities have developed and implemented strategic plans.
- A five-year National Higher Education Strategic Plan was developed.
- Student enrollment increased from 8,000 in 2001 to over 100,000 by 2012 in public universities and institutes of higher education.
- Girls' enrollment has increased from zero in 2001 to some 19,000 in public universities and institutes of higher education by 2012 (19% of the total).
- Female faculty numbers increased from zero in 2001 to 16% of the total faculty number by 2012.

Improving Higher Education in Afghanistan

CHALLENGE

Rebuilding higher education is a pressing and critical need for Afghanistan. With a critical shortage of professionals and leaders – engineers, technicians, administrators, accountants, agriculturist, business leaders – the country found it difficult to meet the needs of reconstruction, growth and poverty reduction. Afghan universities suffered from a large majority of the problems that typically plague public tertiary institutions in many developing countries: low quality, lack of relevance, insufficient funding, lack of appropriate physical facilities, weak links with the economy, and weak governance and management. While these problems have certainly been exacerbated by war and its negative economic consequences, they reflected deep structural dysfunctions that required careful attention. Also, problems of extremely low girls enrollment in the higher education needed to be addressed.

APPROACH

At the core of the Strengthening Higher Education Program was the progressive restoration of basic operational performance of core universities in Afghanistan, which provided an institutional base for an agenda of tertiary education development, capacity building and reform.

The program began in June 2005 and originally supported six universities (Kabul, Balkh, Herat, Kandahar, Nangarhar, and Kabul Polytechnic), mainly in the areas of physical infrastructure and improvement of staff development, curriculum, and equipment. With additional funding in 2010, six more universities (Bamyan, Khost, Takhar, Jawzjan, Al-Beroni and Kabul Education University) received assistance.



The ARTF program facilitated and financed partnership programs between Afghan universities and established foreign universities (especially those within the South Asia region). Financial and technical contributions from various foundations were actively sought in the process. The partnership program provided support for: curricula revision and preparing facility plans; training programs for Afghan faculty at partner institutions; and visiting professorships in Afghanistan for partner institutions. Additionally, block grants were provided to support the installation of basic administrative systems and procedures and to improve academic programs in order to enhance the performance of universities.

The program supported a new governance system in all higher education institutions through: defining the relationship between the Ministry and higher education institutions in order to facilitate/promote the autonomy and accountability of the institutions, identifying the information flow between universities and the MOHE, and reviewing the financing strategies for higher education, including developing funding formulae and mobilizing external resources. The support was provided for a quality assurance system which facilitated the development of an autonomous accreditation and quality assurance system for both public and private universities.

RESULTS

- 100% of the selected faculties revised and updated their curricula
- All twelve project universities:
 - Constructed or renovated at least one new building for teaching and learning;
 - Established a functional student service center and started offering a new student orientation;
 - Developed and implemented strategic plans;
 - Conducted self evaluations.
- 49% of faculty at the twelve project universities achieved at least a Master's degree;
- 50% of administrative staff at MoHE and the project universities received management training; Computer, science labs and libraries made operational in selected faculties of all 12 universities (12 project universities have a total of 84 science labs, 50 computer labs, and 37 libraries which are fully operational);
- A National Quality Assurance Commission was established and national standards for QA has been introduced to all twelve project universities;
- A Higher Education Information Management System (HEMIS) was developed and introduced to 9 project universities
- A five-year National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP 2010–2014) was developed;
- The Gender Strategy (2012–2014) was launched
- The National Entrance Examination (Kankor) was reformed
- More than 65 private institutes of higher education were established, with nearly 50,000 students enrolled, licensed under the Ministry of Higher Education by 2012.
- Student enrollment increased from 8,000 in 2001 to over 100,000 by 2012 in public universities and institutes of higher education
- Girls' enrollment has increased from zero in 2001 to some 19,000 in public universities and institutes of higher education by 2012 (comprising 19% of the total)
- Female faculty numbers stood at zero in 2001 and increased to 16% of the total faculty number (3,230) by 2012

STORY FROM THE FIELD: Offering higher education opportunities for all

JALALABAD, Nanghar Province – Towards the end of June thousands of students are already clamoring to find a space at Nangarhar University. However, space and budget limitations will allow only 2,000 to be accepted, says Professor Arifullah Mandozai, dean of the engineering faculty.

Now at Nangarhar University, 13 faculties in such diverse subjects as economics, medicine, political science, law and Sharia, and literature, offer classes to about 10,000 students, notes Dr. Mohammad Saber, the university Chancellor.



SHEP provided funds to construct the bright new two-story engineering building, which opened three years ago, with 11 classrooms, a large conference room, computer lab and the dean's office. In addition, repairs were done to old wings, and all the university's IT equipment was purchased through SHEP. *"Students are now connected with the whole world to do research, or connect with other professional people to help solve their problems. This is a great gift."* Saber says.

Both, men and women are welcome to study at Nangarhar University. However, pursuing higher education is a challenge for women in Afghanistan. Rozina, 23, a third-year student of literature, says she only wishes more women attended the university. *"Islam says both men and women should study and be educated. After all, it is mothers who must also give good training and information to their children,"* says Rozina. *"This is very important. But right now it is very difficult for us."*

Chancellor Saber says the young women who attend his university are *"very strong and brave."* *"We also want to support women to study here. It is important that we all try to move ahead while respecting traditions. We don't want to make any provocations. The main thing is for women to get higher education."*

BANK GROUP AND ARTF CONTRIBUTION

The Strengthening Higher Education Program (SHEP) is financed by the World Bank and the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). The program began in June 2005 with a grant of \$40 million and in 2009, it was granted an additional \$4.1 million.

PARTNERS

Partners in the program included the World Bank, the Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan and the universities of Kabul, Balkh, Herat, Kandahar, Nangarhar, Bamyan, Khost, Takhar, Jawzjan, Al-Beronim, the Kabul Education University, and the Kabul Polytechnic.

MOVING FORWARD

The World Bank team is working closely with the Ministry of Higher Education and the universities on preparing the next phase of support for higher education. A preparation grant of \$4.9 million was approved by the ARTF Management Committee in June 2013. The preparation grant provides support for the preparation of the Higher Education System Improvement Project. HESIP is developed based on the findings in the Higher Education Sector Report prepared by the World Bank and the implementation experience of the Strengthening Higher Education project (SHEP). This project, when fully designed and ready for implementation, aims to support the updated higher education strategic plan and the development program for 2015-2019 that the Ministry of Higher Education is updating. Key elements of this updated program include increasing the participation of female students in higher education, expanding the stock of well-qualified academic staff in universities, developing systems for greater autonomy and accountability of universities, and improving the labor market orientation of degree programs.

About this series:

ARTF at Work highlights development results and achievements emerging from the ARTF Program, as well as their impact on people's life. The series is produced by the ARTF administrator.

Contact info:

World Bank Kabul Office
Street 15, House 19
Wazir Akbar Khan
Kabul, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Telephone: 0700-27-60-02

Ditte Fallesen
ARTF Coordinator
dfallesen@worldbank.org