IN THE CLASS BUT ON THE MARGINS OF SOCIETY

GIRLS' EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the
Master of Arts Degree in Humanitarian and Development Practice,
Oxford Brookes University
Lucy Strickland
March 2008
IN THE CLASS BUT ON THE MARGINS OF SOCIETY
GIRLS’ EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

LUCY STRICKLAND

MARCH 2008
Girls and boys learning together in the village community school
Grade 4, Atokhon Village, Kapisa Province
ABSTRACT

THIS STUDY, BASED ON PRIMARY AND SECONDARY RESEARCH INTO THE REALM OF GIRLS’ education in Afghanistan, is an exploration into complexity and seeks to understand a complex, dynamic context through an appreciation of the linkages and interconnectedness of the whole. A country afflicted by ongoing insecurity, unrest and weak institutional structures, Afghanistan represents complex place, blurring across all states of emergency, ‘post-conflict’, recovery and development. As such, it presents a challenging context in which to undertake research. In response to the ‘messy’, dynamic nature of the environment, the field research took an inductive, qualitative approach. In reflecting this explorative approach, the study has chosen to follow a less conventional route and takes the shape of a narrative with relevant primary data, personal observation and scholarly literature ‘danced’ throughout.

As a nation emerging from many years of conflict, the challenges facing Afghanistan’s education system are overwhelming. The gendered constraints to education for Afghan girls equally concerning, as girls sit on the margins of a society and culture which inhibit them from full participation in education. This study seeks to uncover some of the complex social and institutional layers that impact girls and their schooling. It then describes the reality of a ‘live’ international education project in Afghanistan working on the girls’ education agenda. Also explored is the unique set of challenges educational practitioners face in their day-to-day work, as they navigate the socio-cultural topography of this landscape. The study concludes by asking what happens at the interface, where the reality inhabited by educationalists meets that of the girls, and seeks to provide insight and understanding into how sensitively attuned these realities are.
Directing Traffic in Kabul
AT THE EDGE OF LEARNING AND GROWTH

The transition from researcher in Afghanistan to writer of it has been a challenging one. It often felt like threading an elephant through the eye of a needle, as I sought how best to consolidate so much into the arms of so little.

Afghanistan was a place that both probed and pushed, yo-yo’ing me from peaks of new learning and insight to depths of sticky self-doubt and isolation. Consequently, having lived, breathed and been affected by this context, it took time to digest the experience before ordinary words could attempt to articulate it.

As I moved tortuously through the process of shaping this dissertation, the following quote was generously shared with me. It eloquently captures the flavour of this time of transition and shift. Growing pains, perhaps, but the true lesson lay in releasing the yoke of perceived expectations and freeing my own voice through the process.

As this journey stretched across a canvas of hairpin turns and delicate crossings, there was one voice consistent throughout, encouraging me to stay with it, breathe through it and allow it to flow.

And it eventually did.

"Each time people move to the edge of their present self concept and take risks with what they are willing to be aware of, they grow. If they are genuinely able to feel their authentic self and let go of their self image (i.e. who they would like to be), they change."

Jennifer Mackewn, 1997
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>ABSTRACT</th>
<th>QUOTE</th>
<th>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS WITH SOURCES</th>
<th>GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS</th>
<th>ABBREVIATIONS</th>
<th>A PERSONAL NOTE</th>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i</td>
<td>iii</td>
<td>vii</td>
<td>ix</td>
<td>xi</td>
<td>xiii</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 1 INTRODUCING THE STUDY

Arriving and Meeting the Context ~ 3  
Exploring Complexity and Introducing the Study ~ 6  
Multiple Realities in Shared Space ~ 7  
Managing the Literature ~ 9  
Aim and Objectives ~ 10  
Organisation of Study ~ 10

## 2 RESEARCH INTO COMPLEXITY: METHODS, APPROACHES AND CONTEXTUAL CONSTRAINTS

Research into Complexity: A Qualitative Approach ~ 15  
Why a Case Study? ~ 16  
The Principle of ‘Returning the Research’: An Ethical Consideration ~ 17  
Affecting a Presence: Subjectivity and Emotions in the Research ~ 18  
Navigating Complexity: Challenges to Research in a ‘Not Neat’ Place ~ 19  
Constraints and Limitations to the Research and Researcher ~ 23  
Treading Lightly: A Consciousness of ‘Do No Harm’ ~ 23  
Ethical Considerations: Representation of Voice ~ 25

## 3 AFGHANISTAN IN CONTEXT

Introducing Afghanistan: A Sense of Place ~ 33  
A Worsening Security Scenario ~ 36  
Situating Afghanistan: Facts and Figures ~ 37  
A Collectivist Culture: Honour, Shame and Saving Face ~ 39  
A Gender Segregated Society: Embedded in Centuries-Old Traditions ~ 40  
Pushing Gender Boundaries for Small Change: Provok, Unsettle, Question ~ 40  
Islam: the Role of Religion ~ 44  
Profiling the Status of Education: Challenges Ahead ~ 45  
Communities taking ownership: Community-Based Education ~ 48  
A Changing Policy Environment for Education ~ 48

## 4 AFGHAN GIRLS AND THEIR EDUCATION

Introducing the Chapter: The story so far and what happens next ~ 53  
Afghanistan’s Girls are not alone: a Universal Picture ~ 54  
The price of freedom: girls and their right to education ~ 55  
Conversations in the Field: Introducing a male perspective on a girl’s right to education ~ 56  
Exposure to the field: a unique opportunity ~ 56
Meeting the community: exercising awareness though still affecting presence – 57
Listening to a male perspective: a captured summary of observations and translated responses – 58 Girls and boys have the same right to education: Fathers speak – 60 The Islamic principle of Farz in Education: Obligation and Responsibility – 61 Building on the Conversation with fathers: Expanding upon barriers to girls’ education – 62 Access to a girls’ school within close proximity to the home – 62 Violent attacks targeting girls and girls’ schools – 63 Presence of female teachers integral to girls attending school – 65 Education is free. Schooling is not – 65 A social cost to girls’ education – 65 Religion as a barrier or driver to girls’ education? – 66 Parents and Children – 67 A hard reality, but gains already made – 68

5 PRACTITIONERS IN PARTNERSHIP


6 RELATIONSHIPS AT THE INTERFACE: CONCLUDING REMARKS & AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH


7 APPENDICES

APPENDIX I Terms of Reference for CARE Afghanistan
APPENDIX II A Guiding Framework and Methodology
APPENDIX III Workshop Summaries: Sessions I & II
APPENDIX IV Recording the Research Journey
APPENDIX V List of Research Participants and Organisations

8 REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

REFERENCES
BIBLIOGRAPHY
ILLUSTRATIONS WITH SOURCES

Cover
Waiting for Class to Begin, Chagharan District, Ghor Province
(Oct 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland

Mother with her child, the Panjshir Valley
(Sept 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland

My Morning Path to Work, Ratanakiri Province, North East Cambodia
(June 2006) Photo: Lucy Strickland

Learning Together, Grade 4 Community School, Atokhon Village, Kapisa Province
(June 2007) Photo: Anita Anastacio for CARE International in Afghanistan

Directing Traffic, Share Nau, District, Kabul
(Sept 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland

Part I Introducing the Study
Reading Aloud, Grade 1, Jawqole Payan village’s community school, Ghor Province
(Oct 2007) Photo: Epifania Amado-Adari for CRS Afghanistan

Part II Research into Complexity: Methods, Approaches and Contextual Constraints
The Day I Was Sad (Girl Aged 9) Charbargh Village, Parwan Province
(2003) Save the Children Alliance Study ‘The Children of Kabul: Discussions with Afghan Families’

Street Life from a Distance
(Sept 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland

En route to the village of Atokhon, 120 kilometres west of Kabul
(Sept 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland

Vignette 1 Connecting

Part III Afghanistan in Context
Kabul city stands alone in thin air, ringed by mountains
(Nov 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland

Kabul International Airport
(Sept 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland

Explosion Rocks Kabul
(Sept 2007) Photo: Reuters

Woman Walking Home, Third MacroRayon District, Kabul
(Nov 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland

Minister Atmar
(Oct 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland

Vignette 2 Vulnerability
Part IV. Afghan Girls and their Education

Learning without Walls, Jari-Sorkh Village, Chargaran District, Ghor Province
(Oct 2007) Photo: Wagma Battoor for CRS Afghanistan

Entering Charbagh Village, Hirat Province
(Oct 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland

Members of the SMC, Charbagh Village, Hirat Province
(Oct 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland

Girls in the First Grade, Charbagh Village, Hirat Province
(Oct 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland

Picture Narratives

Walking the Wall, Kabul
(Sept 2007) Photo: Helen Stannard

Zakira and her Husband, Kabul
(Nov 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland

Buzkashi Season, Kapisa Province
(Sept 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland

The Women’s Garden of Kabul
(Nov 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland

The Third Gender, Kabul
(Sept 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland

Women in the Field, Hari River, Hirat Province
(Oct 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland

Part V. Practitioners in Partnership

Workshop with partners from PACE-A programme, PACE-A office, Kabul
(Sept 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland

Vignette 3 Women

Part VI. Relationships at the Interface

Children’s work on display at the Ministry of Education, Kabul, Global Action Week 2007
(June 2007) Photo: Anita Anastacio for CARE International in Afghanistan

Appendices

Tented School closed for Winter, Chargaran District, Ghor Province
(Jan 2008) Photo: Wagma Battoor for CRS Afghanistan

Back Page

Kids at Play, Kariz Chawgan Village, Hirat Province
(Oct 2007) Photo: Lucy Strickland
## Glossary of Arabic Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>ahadith</em> (singular: <em>hadith</em>)</td>
<td>documented traditions of the teaching and actions of the Prophet Mohammed, which were not in the Quran but which were recorded for posterity by his close companions and the members of his family&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>burqa</em> (<em>chadari</em>)</td>
<td>all enveloping garment with gauze patch over eyes, that completely covers the woman’s body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>farz</em></td>
<td>has two closely related meanings: obligation and responsibility. In the context of this study, the principle of <em>farz</em> is closely tied to education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>madrasa</em></td>
<td>Institution where Islamic sciences are taught i.e. religious school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mahr</em></td>
<td>the tradition of a bride price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mahram</em></td>
<td>Permitted category of relatives of opposite sex, i.e. either one’s spouse or close relatives with whom sexual relations are forbidden&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ramadan</em></td>
<td>a Muslim religious observance taking place in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. It is a month of fasting and ends with the holiday Eid ul-Fitr, when feasts are held&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>shalwar kameez</em></td>
<td>traditional dress consisting of <em>shalwar</em>, wide pyjama-like pants and the <em>kameez</em>, a long shirt or tunic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>shura</em></td>
<td>village council (similar, though often not as formal in its constitution, to the <em>jirga</em>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>1</sup> Definition from religious scholar, Karen Armstrong’s *Islam: A Short History* (p.171).  
<sup>2</sup> Definition from World Bank (2005) *The Role of Women in Afghanistan’s Future*.  
<sup>3</sup> Definition from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramadan
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACD</td>
<td>Assistant Country Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AKF</td>
<td>Aga Khan Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARE</td>
<td>Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBE</td>
<td>Community-Based Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>Community-Based Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>Country Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoP</td>
<td>Chief of Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPE</td>
<td>Community Organised Primary Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Country Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRS</td>
<td>Catholic Relief Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DED</td>
<td>District Education Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCoP</td>
<td>Deputy Chief of Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>International Rescue Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I)NGO</td>
<td>(International) Non-Government Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACE-A</td>
<td>Partnership for Advancing Community Education in Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PED</td>
<td>Provincial Education Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMU</td>
<td>Program Management Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFA</td>
<td>Request for Application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMC</td>
<td>School Management Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>Technical Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mother with her child, the Panjshir Valley
A PERSONAL NOTE

IN INTRODUCTION TO THIS STUDY, I’D LIKE TO BRIEFLY FLESH OUT SOME OF THE personality and background of the person behind the pen. I arrived at this postgraduate door of academia in 2006, having completed my first degree in Australia in 1995 in Applied Linguistics. I was passionate about language, the teaching of language and working with people. I then entered the classroom in Australia as a teacher to recently arrived migrants and refugees and learned more than I ever taught. The work was shaped to suit me and it was a tremendous privilege working with people whose life experiences far outweighed mine. It was not unusual to enter the classroom, for example, and find a chemical engineer from Baghdad engaged in conversation with a Kareni woman who’d grown up in the Thai Burma border camps.

In 1999, I carried my profession beyond Australian borders and entered the world of humanitarian development aid by accidental good fortune, winding up in South East Asia on an AusAID-funded teacher training project in the northern highlands of Vietnam. I maintained a healthy attachment to this life in the field, spending the next seven years moving from rural Vietnam to the jam packed yet beautifully elegant streets of its capital Ha Noi, and finally, to a small frontier town bordering a rapidly disappearing jungle in Cambodia’s north eastern corner.

South East Asia spoiled me, when riding my bicycle to local markets to squeeze the fruit and chat up the vendors was an essential and nourishing thread running through the tapestry of the life I spun here. Whereas living in Kabul, life was dramatically different and it hit me early on how strongly I needed a human connection to those I lived and worked with. Due to the security risk and an enclave kind of existence for expatriates, I struggled with this life ‘on mute’ and at distance and sought more contextually and culturally sensitive ways to ‘squeeze
fruit and chat up vendors’. I believe I learned more about myself and ‘my needs’ in Afghanistan, than I had living without electricity or running water in a tiny wooden house in Cambodia.

This piece of work is therefore both an academic and personal journey. It carries a strong sense of where I have come from and hints to where I hope to head. And the same passion for language, the teaching of language and working with people even further reinforced and affirmed through the experience.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The past two years for this Australian in academia have profoundly and positively reshaped the contours of my life, both professionally and personally. Returning to academic study after a long absence sparked a series of shifts from within, some subtle whilst others seriously seismic. The luxury of simply having time and space to think again after years of ‘doing’ was a significant one.

I committed fully to soaking up the rich marinade of intellectual inquiry and investigation. Rusty cogs flared into action again, flinging windows wider open and switching forgotten lights back on. Standing now at the threshold of my return to the field of practice, I am struck by a small but meaningful change. A quiet new confidence that knows this work is not about ‘having the answers’. To continue asking the questions remains most important.

As this dissertation marks the final chapter toward completion of my Masters degree, I wish to acknowledge those who elevated and inspired me through the process. Their views, experiences, insights and wisdom collectively form the spine of this work. Provocative, intimate encounters of varying shades and complexions have injected a skip and life into the folds of this scholarly endeavour, enabling me to keep the spirit of Afghanistan alive long after I had left.

I wish to acknowledge the person who accompanied me on this research journey, Dr Mohamed Hamza. He redefined and punched out the boundaries of what conventional supervision is all about, willing me be brave, ambitious, experimental and ultimately ‘myself’ through the long process of research and writing. Having also experienced Afghanistan for himself, I was working with someone who instinctively knew the bumpiness of re-entry and recovery, and respected the time it takes to gain a sense of equilibrium again.
From the moment I determined this piece of work would focus on Afghanistan, I knew it could not be done from a desk over distance. My parents, knowing me, instinctively knew this too. Although preferring Casablanca to Kabul, they supported my desire to go and trusted, in the words of my mother, ‘I would be sensible’. I am reminded how fortifying it is to be part of a family who celebrate, rather than squash, such experience and opportunity.

I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to my hosts in Afghanistan. They enthusiastically participated in and supported the field research from the outset, also providing security, resourceful drivers and a home for the duration of my stay. Whilst there, Kabul was a sizzling hotbed of ongoing unrest, wracked by a surge in suicide bombings and roadside explosions. Although you learn to uneasily shoulder the reality this kind of operating context presents, the interdependency on others to merely exist was reinforced every day.

Finally, my greatest debt is to Afghanistan, for taking me to the smouldering edge of chaos and certain unpredictability. Under these conditions, personal freedoms significantly shrink and constrict. Yet, unexpectedly, I tasted a different freedom, one of entitlement. As a Western woman, I was welcomed into two worlds; that of the Afghan women and of the men. From this privileged perspective, I was reminded of the obvious; that realities are never black and white, and to assume knowledge of places unknown and people unmet is a dangerous thing. To those who invited me into their lives, thank you for giving Afghanistan a human face and sense of humour I could connect to.


The failures of understanding, the omissions and the mistakes are, of course, entirely mine.
PART I

INTRODUCING THE STUDY

Reading Aloud, Grade 1 in Jawqole Payan village’s community school,
Ghor Province
1. INTRODUCING THE STUDY

1.1 ARRIVING AND MEETING THE CONTEXT

I ARRIVED IN AFGHANISTAN IN SEPTEMBER 2007 AND LEFT LATE NOVEMBER, AS Winter was on the wind and the ritual of thawing out the gas bottles and lighting fires already underway. The electricity supply in Kabul was sporadic and nights revealed who had the power and who didn’t. The randomness of it seemed inexplicable and I became accustomed to working to the rhythm of the jack-hammer generator or under the flicker of candlelight.

Early on into my arrival, I curiously enquired of an Afghan colleague her thoughts on Afghan identity. She replied, ‘Honesty, honour, pride. The importance of family. Traditions, like taking tea.... We still have our traditions. We do not forget them’. As she spoke, her teenage children were in the background flicking through the TV channels. Julia Roberts in knee-high boots and acres of exposed thigh crept across the screen in a dubbed *Pretty Woman*. The irony did not escape my colleague, and I visibly blanched. This is a country where men and women cover their bodies and live their lives according to fixed codes. Where the ubiquitous blue burqa is still inconveniently visible. How do Afghans negotiate images such as Julia’s thigh either on the television, or on the streets where the international presence is strong and sometimes disturbingly indiscreet?

Although Julia’s thigh pressed up against this backdrop of deep-rooted, centuries-old tradition is not, in essence, the central interest of this study, it is a critical dimension. The research from the outset recognised in a place as ‘messy’, complex and dynamic as I believe Afghanistan to be, nothing can be understood in isolation of the other. There are linkages and connections to
other dimensions which I felt compelled to absorb and try to understand. Although the research sits for the most part in the realm of girls’ education in Afghanistan, it needed to open its eyes much wider and deeper than this in order to see beyond the surface story and reach into the nuance of the sub-text.

Research has illustrated, according to Buckle (2005), that at the heart of many disasters there are seldom single causes. Instead, many interacting and interdependent dimensions and factors. In Buckle’s argument, he refers specifically to famine, something which can be caused by drought, a rise in the price of grain, a drop in the price of livestock, inadequate road infrastructure, a lack of food aid, or by all these factors simultaneously (p.43). These dimensions relate and interact in a dynamic fashion and as my exposure to the context deepened, I consciously sought not to fall into the seduction trap of making hurried assumptions based on consideration of factors in isolation. In a context that threw up a unique set of challenges and constraints to both the research and the researcher, of which the following chapter will refer to, Buckle’s words were tucked up my sleeve in reminder to continue probing beyond the surface and to never stop asking of myself, or of the context, ‘Why?’.

Throughout the three months, a steady stream of questions, most that were never answered, continued to surface as time in the field passed. Answering them became less the point as the value lay in building a relationship between myself and the context, and to continue to ask questions of it without expectation of a neat response or watertight conclusions. I was conscious of the inherent dangers in simplifying complex for the sake of convenience, as
doing so would not have remained true to the subject, stripping it of the layers and texture that essentially characterise and animate it.

“Afghanistan is Islam. Everything is Islam” – An Interconnectedness of the Whole

Arriving in Afghanistan almost as the Holy Month of Ramadan was about to begin, I am struck by the way in which Islam seems to thread itself through daily life, forming the rhythms of life rather than interrupting them. Having little knowledge of the practices of this religion, I observe prayer mats being rolled out in the workplace towards Mecca. On field trips, the driver seems to carefully pick his spot to stop for prayer, often somewhere picturesque or near water. Encountering a ‘living’ Islam through these experiences, religion seems to me somehow integral to everything. Embedded in every sphere of life - socially, culturally, economically, educationally. It cannot be separated from the research.

(Observations adapted from researcher’s reflective journal, mid-Sept 2007)
1.2 Exploring Complexity and Introducing the Study

‘... the word “complexity” comes from the Latin complexus, meaning braided or entwined together’ (Gell-Mann, 1996).

‘... complexity is built on ... interconnections between the simple parts that make up a complex system’ (Gribbin, 2004).

Complexity is an interesting place to visit and an important lens through which to see a country as bewildering as Afghanistan. As this research appreciates, the world is not a predictable place, or linear or orderly. Looking through a lens of complexity enables you to understand the way things relate as unpredictable and non-linear processes, rather than predictable loops (Gell-Mann, 1996). When dealing with complex systems, Gell-Mann suggests linear cause-and-effect thinking may in fact be useless (p.12). More may be learned, instead, by trying to understand the important patterns of interaction and association among different elements and dimensions (Haynes, 2003). Pidd (1996) agrees and accentuates the importance of seeing the dimensions of what he refers to as ‘a mess in its entirety’ (p.74). By carving off a part and dealing with it in isolation, he cautions, you run the risk of ignoring the linkages and connections to other dimensions of this ‘mess’ (p.76).

Complexity, as I understood it through my own Western-tinted lens, presented itself in many guises and forms that ‘day of Julia’ in my colleague’s living room. And upon meeting both the daughters, an interesting entry point into my research was made.
In a country where over half its girl child population is out of school\(^4\), these girls occupy an alarming minority of those able to attend. They are made more rarefied still, with parents who elected to (and could afford to) send them to Kabul’s elite co-educational International School\(^5\). Here, the girls intermingle with a diverse blend of nationalities, sixty percent of the student body of Afghan origin and the remainder, children of expatriates working in the country. The girls speak excellent English with a soft Texan drawl, expertly imitating the long vowel sounds of their teacher who hails from Kansas. Their friends are of mixed nationality and gender, and Fatima, the younger daughter, has established a close friendship with an American boy called JJ. As I left their home, she handed me her mobile number in case I wanted to ‘catch up and hang out’.

1.3 **MULTIPLE REALITIES IN SHARED SPACE**

Although having barely arrived in the country, I had enough background knowledge to appreciate neither the education nor life experience of these two girls were remotely representative of the whole, with a number of realities presenting themselves in a country defying neatly packaged labels or definitions. Blurring across all states of emergency, post-conflict, recovery and development, Afghanistan is, quite simply, complex and the situation concerning girls’ education accordingly so. Although city children fare best, a

\(^{4}\) The Ministry of Education statistics note that for the 5.4 million children enrolled in schools as of 2007, 1.7 million were girls. There is an estimated 7 million out of school with significant gender and provincial disparities. See the National Education Strategic Plan for Afghanistan 1385-1389 www.adf.gov.af/src/strategy_papers/NESP%20Final%20light.pdf.

\(^{5}\) The International School of Kabul opened in September 2005 and is directly funded by the United States government. In the 2006-07 school year, of the 250 students enrolled, 60% are Afghan children of families repatriated to the country. Annual tuition is US$5000 and there are scholarships available to Afghan children with ‘strong existing English skills’. See: Gall, C. 31 March 2005. *The New York Times* http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/31/international/asia.
few kilometres out of Kabul enrolments drop, especially of girls, reflecting the depths of tradition and cultural divisions, among a comingling of other factors that collectively play a role in determining who goes to school and who doesn’t. Across much of the literature, a dire shortage of schools, few female teachers and geographical remoteness are cited as key barriers to girls’ participation in education in Afghanistan. My time in the field, although limited, exposed me to other more nuanced, culturally embedded concerns and perspectives which work both for and against girls in their own way.

It’s important to point out that although this study is predominantly interested in the current status of education for girls for reasons better explained in the fourth chapter, boys cannot be left out of the story. I was reminded of this by one stalwart expatriate who had seen Afghanistan through much of the Taliban era to the present. She said, in reference to the logic of current educational policies directed at girls, ‘Remember, don’t deprive boys of education in retribution for the Taliban denying this to girls. How will a generation of uneducated Afghan men help in promoting women’s rights?’

This study has been greatly enriched by a three-month internship in Afghanistan on a ‘live’ international education project working as a consortium for girls’ education. From this privileged ‘insider-outsider’ perspective, I was exposed to the reality inhabited by practitioners engaged in this challenging work. I also had access, although limited due to security and cultural constraints, to the field and visited communities with whom the project is working. Through a ‘lived’ experience of the context, this study attempts to describe the challenges and constraints that inhibit and stymie practitioners in their work. It also seeks to understand the barriers keeping girls outside the
education system, as well as innovative approaches designed to bring them in and keep them there. What happens at the interface, where the intervention meets the girls, is also an area this study will delve into as it is here we can explore how sensitively attuned these realities are to each other.

1.4 MANAGING THE LITERATURE

A great deal of background reading was also done before, during and after Afghanistan. As this dissertation is first and foremost an exercise of academic enquiry and critical analysis, the study draws on a number of primary and secondary information sources. It listens to and incorporates voices from both the worlds of research and practice; those of the practitioners themselves who participated in the research, voices indigenous to those communities affected by the research, my own voice as an actively passive observer and participant in the process and finally, the tremendous body of scholarly work written across key themes relevant to the study: the relationship between education and conflict in general, gender and education in Afghanistan, as well as literature documenting the emerging link being made to partnership approaches to programming and the agenda of girls’ education. Finally, whilst in Afghanistan, I consumed a number of works of fiction shaped around the country and its people, seen through the eyes of both Afghan writers and international authors. These narratives resonated more deeply, I found, once immersed in the context in which they were set.

To reflect the explorative approach taken throughout the research process, the dissertation will not follow the conventional, linear path traditionally adhered to. Instead, it will take the shape of a narrative that aspires to tell a personal
story of an already well-documented place, ‘dancing’ the relevant literature throughout rather than dedicating any single section to a consolidated review. The choice to write in the first person has been a decisive one.

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim
To provide a more refined understanding of the complexity and intricacy of post-conflict education programmes, the researcher will have a special focus on Afghanistan as it sits on the grey area between conflict and ‘post-conflict’.

Objectives
1) Identify aspects that may influence girls’ participation in education.
2) Identify challenges and constraints faced by practitioners, working in the area of girls’ education.
3) Identify methods and approaches taken to work with these constraints.
4) Identify how these approaches are working to address the educational needs of girls.

1.6 ORGANISATION OF STUDY

Part One is introduced by way of a story, and then establishes the study’s relationship to theoretical concepts of complexity and reality in the context of Afghanistan. On account of these contextual complexities, the Reader learns of the less conventional approach taken to the study’s structure and style. Following this, the aim, objectives and organisation of the study are set out and briefly explained.
**Part Two** is dedicated to describing the methods and approaches taken by the researcher in response to the nature of the research terrain. It explains and justifies the inductive approach taken, as well as introducing the international education project in Afghanistan hosting the research. This section also makes explicit the position of emotions and subjectivity in the research and how they were managed. Finally, challenges and constraints to the research are detailed, raising some of the ethical considerations taken into account by the researcher.

**Part Three** presents a broadly brushstroked backdrop to Afghanistan, against which the following chapters are set. It looks at the socio-political and cultural context, making mention of issues concerning gender, the role of Islam and the current status of education and educational policy. A brief recent historical reflection on the country’s educational past to present is also made, paving the way for the Reader to move more easily into the following chapters.

**Part Four** introduces Afghan girls’ education as central to this study’s investigation. It explains why the lens is focussed on girls in particular, rather than both girls and boys. A discussion follows around barriers girls face going to school. Issues pertinent to culture and tradition, a growing insecurity and geographical remoteness, to name some of the constraints, are raised. Where possible, this chapter also incorporates perspectives and views on the education of girls from a small sample within one Afghan community visited by the researcher.
Part Five case study’s an international education project working as a consortium for girls’ education. This chapter is informed by the researcher’s own experience of the project and its participants. It examines challenges and constraints practitioners face within both the life of the partnership and the external context of the country. It describes various innovative methods and approaches adopted by the partnership to work with the constraints this reality presents, keeping in mind its overarching goal to increase girls’ access and opportunity to education.

Part Six concludes the study by examining the relationship at the interface, where the education project described in Part Five, meets the described reality of girls’ education in Part Four. This final chapter reflects on ways in which the agenda of girls’ education is being addressed through approaches such as the partnership model of programme delivery. It suggests avenues for further research into girls’ education, to promote an enhanced understanding of ‘girlhood’ in the context of Afghanistan.
PART II

RESEARCH INTO COMPLEXITY
METHODS, APPROACHES & CONTEXTUAL CONSTRAINTS

"The day I was very sad was when my mother gave birth to another daughter in spite of already having four daughters. I mean we became five girls. On that day my father, my mother and us, we all got sad." Girl, age 9, Charbigh Village 150 kilometres from Kabul
2. RESEARCH INTO COMPLEXITY: METHODS, APPROACHES & CONTEXTUAL CONSTRAINTS

2.1 RESEARCH INTO COMPLEXITY: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Taking a wholly inductive approach to the research from the outset made sense and was deliberate, although at times I craved a more fixed structure to lean against. As I was working in an environment that was dynamic, in flux, insecure and unknown by the researcher, the most pragmatic research response was to adopt a flexible, qualitative approach to accommodate these characteristics. I wasn’t interested in testing hypotheses or theories determined in advance, but rather sought to understand a piece of social reality through personal interaction with the context and those within it.

Through the course of the research, I encountered recurring ethical dilemmas and challenges in how to most faithfully interpret and represent the voices I sought to capture. I was also overwhelmed by a relatively compressed time in the field, racing with myself to ‘come to grips’ with a challenging context, as well as catch up on and internalise ‘enough’ of the history of the case study project and its protagonists. These challenges are expanded upon later.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I was afforded a privileged window open into the world of an international education project promoting the girls’ educational agenda. As a case study, this project was ideal as it was engaged in educational programming across the country, with a particular focus on girls. The project also had a diverse organisational membership, working as a consortium of four international NGOs (INGOs). And finally, and most
importantly, these organisations appeared open to engaging in a participatory research process involving active workshopping, focus group discussions, interviews and the daily interaction I had with the project.

Without the willingness of all organisations to host and participate in the research, I can’t conceive how this study would have taken flight. Through the three months shadowing this partnership, I was able to generate a picture of the ‘lived reality’ of those practitioners who work so interdependently of each other within a challenging and insecure environment. Although only a snapshot of people in a place at a particular time, a great deal was learned through the process and gave me privileged access to a diverse group of stakeholders; local communities, field practitioners, donor agency representatives, as well as officials from the Ministry of Education at provincial and national level.

2.1.1. Why a Case Study?

Although intensifying the research experience through such close collaboration with the project participants, it certainly gave me what is described by Guba and Lincoln (1981) as, ‘a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study’ (p.46). Critiqued by some that findings may be biased by the ‘intense exposure’ to the research topic (Kvale, 1996), case study research is intrinsically interesting and the ways in which I managed bias and emotional subjectivity in the research will be mentioned later in the chapter. This study is also one that deals with complex societal issues and I believe that the case study emerges as one of the most suitable techniques to explore these phenomena, which are best
understood in the context of the organisational and institutional environments in which they are experienced.

2.2. THE PRINCIPLE OF ‘RETURNING THE RESEARCH’: AN ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

In her writing about the feasibility of carrying out ethical research in developing country contexts, Patai (1991) suggests that Western researchers may commit to ‘return the research’ to those organisations and communities who made it possible in the first place, as a way to deal with the inequality of the typical exchange between researcher and researched. She challenges researchers to ask themselves how their research and findings will be returned, to whom and in what form? (p.66).

I was committed to following Patai’s suggestion from the outset, as it was ethically irreconcilable to treat the host project as a research site purely for my own academic gain. My commitment was driven largely by having been on the ‘receiving end’ before whilst working in North East Cambodia. A surprising number of doctoral students found their way to this remote north-eastern corner of the country, requesting information as well as access to communities with whom we worked. It was tremendous so much interest in the programme was taken, however rarely was data collected or findings reached ever ‘returned’ to those who shared it. Sharing takes time, a precious resource of the pushed field practitioner, and in the context of Afghanistan where practitioners are pushed by more than time, putting the principle of ‘giving back’ into practice was a must.
In the spirit of ensuring the research in Afghanistan gave back to the life of the project hosting it, a set of research parameters, separate to those I devised for the dissertation itself, was designed in collaboration with my hosts. Negotiating these parameters took time as multiple stakeholders were involved in shaping research that they determined was of value and relevance to the project itself and its future. The Terms of Reference (ToR) detailing the main objectives, methodological approach and expected outcomes are included in the Appendices section toward the end of the study. Inevitable tensions in negotiating additional research demands and expectations, as well as balancing multiple roles and responsibilities, quickly surfaced and it took time to iron out a ‘best’ approach to manage them.

2.3 AFFECTING A PRESENCE: SUBJECTIVITY AND EMOTIONS IN RESEARCH

I made a deliberate choice to saturate myself completely in the context, as much as the context would allow, understanding from the outset you cannot be impartial to or separate from this kind of experience. But you do need to be aware of it. When you’re standing literally on the edge of a kind of chaos, and subsequently affected, this degree of subjectivity needs to be incorporated into, rather than left out of, the research process.

---

6 The education consortium were interested in learning how those involved perceived the partnership approach as ‘adding value’ to the organisations and individuals involved, as well as contributing on a broader scale to moving the girls’ education agenda forward. A formal presentation of findings, a written report and two self-led workshops took place as part of the package of ‘deliverables’ outlined in the Terms of Reference.

7 Appendices include a copy of the final ToR for CARE International in Afghanistan, workshop agendas and accompanying notes, interview questions and list of the 37 research participants involved in semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.
To balance the inevitable emotional sway and to ensure a robustness and rigour to the research, I facilitated a daily practice of keeping a self-reflexive journal. According to Olesen (1998, in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), if the researcher is reflexive about her work then she will be able to use her strategies of self-reflection to collect data and understand her own interpretations in a valid, reliable manner. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) describe this qualitative stance of reflexivity as ‘in-dwelling’ – a process which requires the researcher to simultaneously ‘feel into’, as well as ‘stand back from’, what is being studied. In-dwelling involves more than understanding another person’s point of view from an empathetic position; it also requires a reflexive stance. That is, the researcher must be able to remove herself from the situation in order to make meaning of the experience. The journaling helped me to do this. It became, by the end of the field trip, a significant data source and also served as a critical tool for charting my reactions and responses to the daily experience. I have peppered various reflections from the journal throughout this piece of work where deemed appropriate.

2.4 Navigating Complexity: Challenges to Research in a ‘Not-Neat’ Place

Afghanistan is anything but a ‘neat’ place to conduct field research in. There is a surface chaos which needs to be navigated before you can begin to grasp its contours and attempt to make sense of them. As someone entering this environment for the first time, I felt at times acutely vulnerable and at no point detached from the research experience.
Through the course of the research experience, a colourful array of challenges and constraints reared their head. Some were anticipated, for example issues concerning security, the research timeframe, navigating the social and cultural context and limited access to areas beyond the national capital. Others were unanticipated and much more personally confronting.

Home Life The least expected and seemingly most insignificant, became the most affecting. It occurred at home in Kabul. Due to the security regulations I was under with CARE Afghanistan, my living conditions were tightly restrictive and following incidences of violence and unrest through the city, we were often placed under a condition known as 'lock down'. I lived at very close quarters with two other international women closely affiliated with my case study project.

How to manage living with two of the most vocal members of the partnership under the same roof? These are strong, articulate women with big voices and now something seems to have happened to sour their relationship. It is very difficult to remove myself from this pressure cooker, yet I can’t afford to get involved. This is getting messy.

Journal Extract, 7 Oct 2007

---

8 Lock Down occurred following periods of violence or unrest in and around the city, or in anticipation of violence and unrest. It came as a request from the expatriate’s host organisation to stay indoors, usually over a 24 hour period, until the threat had passed. Through my three months in Kabul, I experienced a Lock Down almost once a week. September and October 2007 were particularly intense as the Holy Month of Ramadan was approaching, a time notorious for its surge in violence. Winter was also approaching, and historically, a few months before the snows fall and the cold sets in, insurgent activity spikes. One week prior to my arrival a German international aid worker had been kidnapped and subsequently released from a well known restaurant in Kabul in broad daylight and the month prior to my arrival, 23 South Korean missionaries had been kidnapped while travelling on the road from Kandahar in the South to Kabul.

See http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/F78D1DF3-047F-4EA4-9EBE-4EB33F403869.htm
For reasons unknown, perhaps stress accumulated over time or even the presence of an additional third in small space, my colleagues’ personal relationship with one other deteriorated and the underbelly of silent discord made home life increasingly uncomfortable. At this point, I became acutely aware of the value I place on the sanctuary of home, even more so when the world outside the walls was so beyond my control. Leaving and going to a hotel, for example, was not a viable option as CARE’s security regulations would not have tolerated this. I was also conscious of not creating unnecessary waves in an already choppy sea.

The Time Factor Three months in the field seems extensive, yet for me it was a pressing factor from beginning to end. It took time to establish trust and build a rapport with those I worked with. It took time to establish any meaningful sense of the three interlocking layers which influenced and impacted the education project - Afghanistan and its historical, socio-political and cultural environment, the internal context of the project itself and finally, the invidiuals working within it. The ideal response to such layers of complexity was to have had the confidence and wisdom to simply absorb them and allow understanding to come later. Instead the ‘time factor’ lit a fire under me and I felt compelled to push harder for clarity and ‘answers’. As a result, the research process was potentially more difficult than it was ever intended to be.

The research time seems too short! I need an excellent ability to process all this data and understand complex place deeply in order to do anything remotely useful. You don’t fully appreciate layers, complexions, shades of terrain until you’re actually in it. It’s too easy to lose the way – focus. It’s too easy to half close the eyes - don’t neglect the cultural element, don’t lose sight of the history.

Journal Extract, 21 Sept 2007
Security  The issue of security was a tricky one to balance. I travelled an almost schizophrenia spectrum of emotion that moved erratically from extreme vigilence and self-awareness, to an edgy paranoia, where every delapidated taxi corolla I saw was about to explode, to the final state of a dull complacency. Although only in-country for three months, there were those who had experienced the field much longer and harder than I, also passing through a similar pattern of behavioural response. Eating out at restaurants, for example, was a risk that needed to be weighed up beforehand, particularly following the recent kidnapping and subsequent release of an international aid worker from a restaurant well fraternised by the international crowd.

NOTE: Whilst restaurants inside Kabul city centre are allowed they are not entirely without restriction. CARE recommends a minimum standard of safety, which must be assessed by each staff member as follows:

1. The presence of guards at the main entrance to deter/repel the entry of hostile persons;
2. A reasonable distance (30 m) from the nearest place you could park a car to the seating area. This will minimize the impact of a vehicle bomb left outside. A shorter distance can be acceptable if walls are reinforced with HESCO type barriers;
3. A policy of no weapons in the eating/drinking area (most offer storage boxes at the entrance);

(extract from CARE Afghanistan’s Staff Security Regulations)

Not all INGO’s shared the same type or level of security protocols. Some, it seemed, were extremely ‘light on’, or were perhaps simply not being enforced or observed. Expatriates, for example, would take a standard taxi home following a night out in Kabul or stay in nightspots beyond their given curfew. Had I behaved similarly, my actions would have undoubtedly resulted in harsh reprimand or something more severe. In accordance with CARE’s security protocols, for example, ‘Failure to adhere to the letter and the spirit of these
regulations is ground for disciplinary action and/or removal from the country program’.

Although the situation in the streets wasn’t safe, as the state of the world seemed so unpredictable and difficult to guard yourself against, there still needs to be a way to enjoy a semblance of ‘normal’ life in an otherwise less than normal environment. Only an illusion of normality, perhaps, however it was a healthy one for me to preserve and not lose sight of.

2.5 CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS TO THE RESEARCH AND RESEARCHER

2.5.1 TREADING LIGHTLY: A CONSCIOUSNESS OF ‘DO NO HARM’

The ‘lived experience’ of the context became integral to the research process itself and both the voices of the researcher and the researched maintain a presence throughout this study. As someone who is passionate about soaking up the smell and feel of place, Afghanistan challenged and often thwarted my attempts to do so.

In a climate with strict security protocols designed to limit independent movement and exploration, connecting with people from outside the international circle was difficult. Absorbing local colour and flavour of the streets was often done from behind the tinted windows of the aid organisation’s Toyota Land Cruiser.
Beyond the borders of Kabul, the research carried me into some deeply conservative pockets of the country where, as a woman, I often felt conspicuous, ‘foreign’, intrusive and somehow always immodest. Rein (2006) talks about ‘affecting a presence’, which made a great deal of sense once I had entered the field. Whether intentional or not, a researcher affects the system s/he is researching purely by entering the situation (p.14).

It’s not possible to be an invisible observer, no matter how low a profile one may take. Asking questions, however innocuous they may seem, creates a response. I felt a responsibility, as a Western researcher, to tread as lightly as I could and evolved a ‘do no harm’ kind of consciousness which helped guide me in my behaviour and actions.

Mary Anderson in her 1999 publication, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace or War*, invokes the words from the Hippocratic oath that calls upon medical doctors to put the interests of their patients first. She challenges aid agency staff members to ‘take responsibility for the way their assistance affects conflicts’ (p.161).
The challenge for me, in an environment that was conflict-affected with a population traumatised by memories of the recent past as well as surviving the present, was therefore rooted in the desire to not do harm. To remember who I am, in this particular context, and how my questions, behaviour, and perhaps even gender, might affect a presence, particularly within some of the rural villages I was taken into along the way.

2.5.2 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS: REPRESENTATION OF VOICE

My Voice Ethical considerations were woven into every phase of my research from documenting steps taken related to planning and collecting data, to analysing and representing it. This documentation of ethical considerations was facilitated through the use of field notes (that record the chronology of the activities and events being described)\(^9\), formal interview transcripts and my own reflective journal. As described earlier in the chapter, this was more of an emotional, less detached unravelling of personal reaction and response to my environment, to myself, to the development of the research and what I found worked and hadn’t worked so well and why. I was vigilant in recording the detail, mainly because I found it such a comforting and restorative practice.

Indigenous Voice The representation of the voices of participants in the research, and how to most responsibly and fairly interpret and articulate them, was always a consideration and at times, weighed heavily. The ‘trickiness’ of playing this ‘insider-outsider’ role is ensuring that you continually engage in

\(^9\) The host agency requested I keep an ongoing record of the work I was doing in the field. As a result, I wrote a weekly narrative documenting how the week had been spent and which people/organisations I had met. See Appendices for a sample narrative which illustrates the kind of documentation kept at the request of the host.
active self-reflection about how you represent the knowledge claims you are making on behalf of these ‘insiders.’ This proved a very challenging exercise in my study, primarily because of limitations of time. Over the three month period I was in-country, I listened to and shared conversations with many people from a community-level to the Donor and Ministry of Education level. It proved an impossible task, however, to faithfully follow what Guba and Lincoln (1994) refer to as ‘member checking’ my initial understanding of participants’ perceptions. I took copious field notes, sometimes audio recordings of more formal interviews, and spent evenings transcribing transcripts onto the computer. However, along with fluctuating electricity, a laptop battery shelf life of forty-five minutes and waning energy levels, I was not successful in feeding back everything I heard, or thought I had heard.

Consequently, I am aware this study could be seen to have issues of voice and representation, where I may be seen to ‘lead the data.’ I struggled continuously with the need to find reliable methods to represent the voices of the less powerful, without overshadowing these voices with my own readings of the literature and theory. Access to communities, particularly girls in communities, was limited increasing my reliance on the insights and observations of practitioners more directly interfacing with the field. As the study essentially places girls at the centre of its investigation, and given my position as a Western researcher, I realised I was unable to speak on their behalf. I therefore had to use caution in how authoritatively I articulated my understanding of the reality lived by Afghan girls concerning their schooling.

---

10 Guba and Lincoln (1994) use the term ‘member check’ to refer to the process of asking research participants to tell you whether you have accurately described their experience, or whether you have produced a ‘recognisable reality’ in their view.
Inspired by the work of scholars such as Mitchell and Reid Walsh (2002), there is much potential for developing more participatory and creative ways of researching and working with girls. At the same time, however, there remained culturally-specific, security-driven methodological challenges of attempting participatory approaches with girls in this particular context whose learning experiences appear to have been characterised by passivity, obedience and submission to the wisdom of age, experience and gender. I was extremely fortunate, however, to have had time talking through translators to fathers with daughters. Although only a handful of conversations took place, some interesting and conflicting views came to light which have been incorporated into the discussion in the fourth chapter dedicated to exploring the reality of girls’ education.
Connecting

…. comes in many guises and forms and it took time to plug into this understanding. It can happen without having to exchange a glance or touch a hand. My life in the field had, to this point, been so richly coated in open smiles, opportunities to practice language, eating local food on low stools on the footpath. I’d been spoilt for choice with all of this at my fingertips and I can see that so much more clearly now!

Connecting in Kabul looked a little different and happened in unexpected ways. I found a kind of connection which I’d christened the ‘Chipped Orange’ connection. She was covered from head to toe in the sweltering polyester blue of her burqa, all except for her fingernails. These were flecked with a psychedelic orange polish that never seemed to wear off. Sometimes I’d catch a glimpse of a squirming brown bundle buried under the accordion pleats of her burqa, but never caught a face. Just a movement.

Every morning I’d be driven to work and the car would sit in the usual horrendous downtown Kabul traffic jam. The driver was adamant about the car being locked with windows up. Although the streets were lined with women in blue moving through the traffic, stopping at car windows as they went surviving on the generosity of others, the ‘Chipped Orange’ connection unfailingly happened. Her sturdy brown fingers would press up against the tinted, tightly wound-up window and I’d silently swing through the same emotions of self-loathing and frustration I experienced every morning. I’d become the foreign woman in the air conditioned Land Cruiser looking out as she looked in.

Another time, another place, another country, I would’ve at least had my head outside that window and been able to meet her eyes. Again, is it self-indulgent to desire this level of connect? And over time, in a place such as this, will I simply succumb to remaining hidden behind the glass and removed from this life on the street? That wasn’t me. I was sure of that.
Kabul city stands alone in thin air, ringed by mountains
3. **AFGHANISTAN IN CONTEXT**

This chapter presents a broad backdrop to Afghanistan, incorporating both the literature in its description as well as first-hand experiences of the context by the author. It will not vigorously probe in-depth the socio-political dimensions of the country’s rich and complex past to present, however it will reflect on issues concerning Afghan culture, gender and society and the role of Islam. Attention will also be paid to the educational context, as well to educational policy initiatives of 2006 and the drafting of a much needed coherent national strategy for education in 2007.

3.1 **INTRODUCING AFGHANISTAN: A SENSE OF PLACE**

‘There’s a lot to see in the city, even if most of it is wrecked’\(^{11}\). This is the note upon which the national capital of Afghanistan is introduced in the 2003 guidebook to Kabul, an initiative of two humanitarian aid workers in the summer of 2002. A much richer chronicled history of the country is the black and white, still locally famous Nancy Hatch Dupree version, *An Historical Guide of Afghanistan*\(^{12}\), where much of the historic sights the book recommends you see are either no longer standing or difficult to recognise if they are.

---


\(^{12}\) Nancy Hatch Dupree’s 1970 book is still for sale in Kabul and was published by the Afghan Tourist Organisation.
The legacy of over three decades of protracted war and upheaval have taken its toll and are evidenced in the mounds of disused tanks and weaponry that lie in rusty, mangled heaps along the roadside intermingling with the sounds and smells of an everyday life that is still very much ‘going on’. The streets of Kabul are full of people carrying arms, some in full combat attire whilst others in plain black clothes and dark, wrap around sunglasses. Afghan soldiers, American soldiers, soldiers of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The ISAF armoured vehicles moving too quickly through Kabul’s choked up streets in convoys of armoured vehicles, sometimes at the peril of children caught unawares in play on the roadside.

The context of Afghanistan (emergency, post-crisis, recovery, development) is difficult to label due to the country’s diversity of security issues, emergency needs, conflict and development interventions and is undisputedly a state teetering on the razor’s edge of ongoing conflict and an unstable peace.

It is a ‘fragile’ environment\textsuperscript{13} that has been in a state of complex emergency for the past twenty years and according to the International Committee of the Red Cross’s (ICRC) assessment, nearly half the country is currently affected by the

---

\textsuperscript{13} Defining country environments, for example, Afghanistan, using terms such as ‘fragile’ is to some extent contentious, as it’s disputed what in fact constitutes ‘fragility’. All States are fragile to some respect and States move in and out of fragility. A country does not need to be affected by conflict, either, to be considered ‘fragile’. However, for the sake of my research, DFID’s working definition of Fragile States is used, which covers those where the government cannot or will not deliver core functions to the majority of its people. The nearest to an agreed list of fragile states is one produced by DFID for its policy paper.
Taliban insurgency, signalling a shift as Afghanistan moves from a ‘development’ to an emergency scenario\(^{14}\).

Throughout the 20\(^{th}\) century, ethnic, religious and tribal divisions have interacted to create an ever shifting landscape of allegiances and power dynamics amongst the different regions and groups. While these feuds and attempts to power are completely beyond the scope of this study, what should be noted is that Afghanistan has never been a monolithic state. Rather, regionalism has dominated the country’s discourse and path for centuries. A microcosm of the failed attempts to unify Afghanistan under an ideology, be it nationalist or Islamic, can be seen in the legacy of Kabul. Kabul, as the capital of Afghanistan, has quite literally been battered by successive waves of modernism, liberalism, Soviet style socialism and strict theocracy.

‘Destination Kabul’: a changed climate, particularly for tourism

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Kabul 1977} \\
\text{Kabul, capital of Afghanistan since 1776, is a fast growing city where tall modern buildings nuzzle against bustling bazaars, wide avenues are filled with colourful turbans and a multitude of handsome faces... Travellers have written glowingy of Kabul for centuries and modern visitors continue to be captivated by its charm} \quad \text{[Afghan Tourist Organisation, 1977].} \\
\text{Kabul 2007} \\
The city of Kabul, which used to be a tourist attraction, has lost its charm during the last 24 years of its history. Infrastructure such as roads and traffic system, telephone and electricity system, water sanitation, renovation of buildings is in shambles and the need for reconstruction is very much needed to make the city a better place for living. The city is war torn, especially the western part. Don’t be despaired though, you can still enjoy yourself in the city \quad \text{[South Asian Tourism Society, 2007].}
\end{align*}
\]

---


3.2 A WORSENING SECURITY SCENARIO

In Relief Web’s Humanitarian Profile\(^{15}\) of the country, 2007 marked the most violent year in Afghanistan since 2001. According to the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, 1,678 civilians died in the month of August, 2007 alone, 16% more than in the previous month. Suicide bombings – a very effective means of warfare employed by the Taliban – have also seen a marked increase since 2005 and reached a new peak in 2007.

I was in Kabul on the 29\(^{th}\) of September, when a suicide bomber detonated himself amid soldiers of the Afghanistan National Army (ANA), killing 30 and injuring many more. The day after the bombing, expatriates living in Kabul were placed under *Lock Down* and I recall being driven to work the following day past the site of the explosion. Body parts were still being pulled from the trees.

‘A man wearing a suicide vest was arrested by ANP (Afghan National Police) as he was trying to board an ANP bus. 3 ANP officers noted that he was acting suspiciously therefore he was apprehended by 6 officers. The suicide bomber dropped the detonating device and was reported to be wearing civilian clothing. ANP have stated that the suicide bomber is not of Afghan origin and is currently under investigation at the KCP (Kabul City Police) Crimes Department.’


The month of September, it should be noted, also marks the beginning of the holy months of Ramadan, the Muslim religious holiday of fasting and prayer. Historically, the number of attacks and casualties spike during this time. The Australian Consular’s advice was inevitably strong in deterring Australian nationals from remaining in Afghanistan at this time.

We strongly advise you not to travel to Afghanistan because of the extremely dangerous security situation and the very high threat of terrorist attack. If you are in Afghanistan, you should consider leaving. Australians who decide to remain in Afghanistan should ensure that they have personal security measures in place.

Australian Consular Advice, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Sept 2007

3.3 SITUATING AFGHANISTAN: FACTS AND FIGURES

Afghanistan is a landlocked country bordering Pakistan to the east and south, Iran to the west, Turkmenistan to the northwest, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to the north and China to the northeast. There are 34 provinces in the country and the capital is Kabul.

According to the UNDP, the Human Development Index (HDI) was 173 in 2004, which places Afghanistan close to the bottom of the 177 countries ranked, way behind all its neighbours and sitting just above five African countries.

---

16 http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/Afghanistan
17 http://www.maplandia.com/afghanistan/
No population register has ever existed in Afghanistan and no census has been conducted since 1979, with a national census scheduled for some time in 2008. According to the UNDP’s Afghanistan- National Human Development Report 2004, the total 2003 population was estimated at almost 24 million inhabitants and the Central Statistics Office (CSO) estimated a total population of 24.5 million in 2008. It is a very young population and based on the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment\textsuperscript{19} by the CSO in 2007, 52% of the population is 17 years of age or younger and of this, 16% is pre-school age.

The social costs of a protracted period of warring are immense. Civilians, in particular women and children, have been the prime victims of the atrocities following the Soviet invasion in 1979. More than one million civilians have been killed and injured in bombardments and shelling of residential areas, while tens of thousands arbitrarily arrested, tortured, murdered, raped, or just ‘disappeared’. Between 1979 and 1992, millions of Afghans were displaced and dispossessed, with over six million fleeing the country mainly to Pakistan and to Iran. UNHCR\textsuperscript{20} records Afghanistan as having the largest number of refugees in the world, followed by Iraq and Sudan, as of June, 2007 with 7,908 refugees currently in my homeland of Australia (as of February 2007). Since 2002, more than 3.5 million Afghans have returned to their homeland, but as conflicts persist, particularly in the southern region of the country, this has caused new refugee outflows.

\textsuperscript{18} The HDI is a composite index measuring average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living.\[http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/pdfs/report/HDR06-complete.pdf\]


\textsuperscript{20} UNHCR (2007). UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database. \[http://www.who.int/globalatlas/dataQuery/\]
3.4 A COLLECTIVIST CULTURE: HONOUR, SHAME AND SAVING FACE

Afghans live in a society in which group interests prevail over that of the individual. The power of the group is a strong force and it occurred to me, as I was stumbling through another early morning Dari lesson, also reflected in the language. The pronoun ‘I’, at least in the two main languages of Dari and Pashto, is omitted from the sentence, only the ending of the verb informing the subject. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005)\(^{21}\) observe this phenomenon exists in other languages too, usually in collectivist cultures.

Family cohesion is more important than friendships between individuals and the upbringing of children aims to strengthen the bonds of the collective, or as Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) observe, ‘collectivist cultures encourage an interdependent self’ (p.93). Leslie and Johnson (2005) in their book, *Afghanistan: The Mirage of Peace*, write, ‘Afghans survive because people do not operate only as individuals; they also operate as members of networks’ (p.38). You look after those in your network and a salary, for example, doesn’t just feed your immediate family, it supports an entire group of people to whom you have obligations. Although networks are more diffuse in urban areas, there remains a high degree of interdependence between country, town and beyond.

Honour and shame are closely related concepts. Every member of the family will be shamed if someone violates the rules of the society or infringes the code of conduct, provided, notes Leslie and Johnson (2005), if the misbehaviour has become known to others (p.25). An old Afghan saying goes, ‘A shame that is not seen is not a shame’. If you drink alcohol or have illicit sex, for example, you

---

don’t do it in public! Similarly, face is important and losing one’s face is the ultimate humiliation. Conflicts and confrontations are avoided, whereas appealing to honour or making someone feel ashamed is more effective (p.27). Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) note shame as a social phenomenon while guilt, which is more common in individualist cultures, is an individual feeling and not dependent on others’ knowledge of the misdeed (p.94).

As I talk with Afghan staff about the project, I’ve become aware of the perennially ‘rosy picture’ they paint. It’s been a challenge moving beyond the surface. I’m not interested in drawing out the negatives but am curious about aspects of project life they feel could be improved. I’ve already registered it’s not just about me!, having listened to my international colleagues express frustration over this exact thing, This is a culture of honour, of saving face. Since I’ve been here, there have been three separate resignations of Afghan staff from the project where all resigned, telling the issue after they’d already left. One colleague’s answer to this was that ‘exposing something in a way of moving forward seems not so understood’.

Journal Extract, 23 Sept 2007

3.5 A GENDER SEGREGATED SOCIETY: EMBEDDED IN CENTURIES-OLD TRADITIONS

NANCY DUPREE WROTE IN HER 1984 PUBLICATION, ‘REVOLUTIONARY RHETORIC and Afghan Women’, that it is family attitudes, not government guarantees, that determine the fate and future of Afghanistan’s girls. As the study deepens its exploration into the diverse forces and contradictions facing Afghan girls and their education, Dupree’s insight still seems largely relevant. Although one among many factors determining the educational future of girls, the all-powerful depth of tradition across the country and the role institutional structures of family and community plays cannot be ignored.
One colleague made the point that when the Taliban fell in 2001, many international aid workers she’d worked with seemed to believe that by removing the Taliban, restrictions would fall away and the problems and obstacles faced by Afghan women and their daughters would fall away with it. If only it were that straightforward.

Gender relations in Afghanistan’s patriarchal society are a deep rooted and multifaceted issue and this study has been limited by time and scope to pay it due consideration. However, the study did learn that restrictions are rooted in restrictive practices that had long prevailed within the more conservative elements of Afghan society. Even in urban areas, many women would not go back to doing what they were doing before the Taliban came to power. For many women, a mahram was still necessary if they were to travel, not because of the Taliban restriction but because the family demanded it. In post Taliban Afghanistan, the edicts have gone but many restrictions still remain which ultimately play a significant role in determining the educational futures of girls.

Women carry the honour of the family and their behaviour reflects on the men of that family; change for women does not seem possible unless there is a change in the attitudes of men. These attitudes, it’s important to remember, are
not simply those that exist in rural areas, nor are they held by those who are uneducated or illiterate. Through my exposure to the field and listening to Afghan colleagues reveal bits about themselves over time, I recognised how dangerous it is to flirt with such assumptions. The most deeply conservative attitudes, or conversely the most open and progressive, can be engrained in the most educated, those who do work and have worked for a significant length of time for international aid agencies, the UN, Embassies. Again, to reiterate a comment made earlier in this study and perhaps to restate the obvious, Afghans are not all the same.

‘The pen that records the rights of women is always held in the hand of a man.
The pen that recorded the Holy Quran was also held in the hand of a man’

(Afghan project staff member speaking aloud her frustrations to a group of male participants at a staff training day workshop in Kabul, September 2007)

Nancy Dupree (1984) speaks of men as being free to move as they please and are able to build a life outside the home; whereas to an educated woman, ‘it is like being allowed to look through the open door and not go through it’ (p.65). That the colleague described in the following journal extract, a strong and determined young woman, could not push that door fully open gave me some indication that the process of change takes time, generations perhaps.

It was sobering to hear my colleague recount her own personal struggle for education. It started for her at age 6, when she pulled out her baby teeth because the teacher said she could not go to school with baby teeth. Her family fled to Peshawar during the Taliban time and when they made a decision to return, she fought to stay to continue her education rather than accompany her parents to a distant rural village with no girls’ school. She managed to make her way to university, then started work with CARE International. Recently she went to Bangkok for an international education conference. She was only given permission by the family to go if she took her brother as her mahram. She didn’t want to go with her brother, yet would never have gone against parental wishes.

Extract from Journal, 2 Oct 2007
Pushing Gender Boundaries for Small Change: Provoke, Unsettle, Question

Had a discussion today with Anita about pushing boundaries in this country. She definitely takes a tough stance with the Afghan staff, she talks about meeting the culture in the middle, not pandering to it or lowering expectations. Pushing the Afghan male, pushing entrenched beliefs and gender roles. She said structures don’t shift so how can behaviours change. Yes, it takes time but conversations need to happen to introduce new thought and ideas. Provoke, raise questions, unsettle. Ripple effects do lead to small change.

I’ve noticed she’s the only international member of the project who makes a point of sitting in the front seat with the driver and never ever veils unless she goes into the provinces. She’s been here since 1994, she doesn’t seem optimistic about the direction the country is travelling. She’s been working in this country since the early 90’s, speaks Dari fluently and seems to sway between extreme optimism about where the country’s heading, while other days she’s banging her head against a wall. She seems to want to confront it all, head on.

Journal Extract, 23 Sept 2007

The Women’s Market in Kabul: Freedom to Shop Unescorted

Inside the Women’s Garden of Kabul is also the Bazaar-e-Zanana, or Women’s Market. This is a space where women now have the luxury and the freedom, away from the eyes of male customers or male shop assistants, to do things I take for granted. They can actually buy their own bras, for example, and get them properly fitted! It sounds so simple, but until the market opened, many women would have to ask their husband, brothers or sons to do this kind of shopping for them. I spoke with some Afghan women who said buying things such as sanitary products was always deeply embarrassing, as they’d either be teased in the street bazaars if they shopped for themselves, or would have to engage the services of a male family member.

Advertising the Women’s Market in ‘Afghan Scene’, a glossy magazine designed for the expatriate community’s consumption
3.6 **ISLAM: THE ROLE OF RELIGION**

According to Doogue (2005), Muslims see society as the place where they should experience in a concrete way what it is to be Muslim. Historian of religion, Karen Armstrong (2000), expresses this well:

*In Islam, Muslims have looked for God in history. Their sacred scripture, the Quran, gave them a historical mission. Their chief duty was to create a just community in which all members, even the most weak and vulnerable, were treated with absolute respect.. Politics (for Muslims) was, therefore, what Christians would call a sacrament.* (pp.x-xi).

For all Afghans, regardless of ethnic origin, Islam provides the basic cultural unity and defines the frame of reference for social behaviour, rights and obligations, moral value and ethical principles. Ahmed (1988) claims the norms of the social world are ‘embedded in and often identical to those of the wider world of Islam’ (p.105). The religion influences all aspects of daily life and references to the Quran and to the *hadiths* justify and motivate actions, behaviour and beliefs. Few Muslim peoples in the world observe the rituals and the piety of Islam with such regularity and emotion as the Afghan (Rashid, 2000, p.82).

‘You need to consider the Islamic religion and culture of the country. The population has seen war and destruction for over 25 years – they are a damaged society. Almost every adult has lost someone to war..... I think there is a residue of fear which only breeds compliance and obedience. Easy to do when the Islamic doctrine requires just that. There is a whole country that looks the same, dresses the same, believes the same and regurgitates the same doctrine. For me – it is very,very frustrating and I wonder if this country will ever move forward when there is no analysis, no critical appraisal, no application and absolutely no tall poppy who may think differently!! Where to go with the education system?’

*Comment by international colleague, Sept 2007*

---

22 See Glossary of Arabic Terms for explanation
3.7 PROFILING THE STATUS OF EDUCATION: CHALLENGES ON THE ROAD AHEAD

Education is the right of all citizens of Afghanistan, which shall be provided up to secondary level, free of charge by the state.


As a nation emerging from many years of conflict, the challenges facing Afghanistan’s education system are overwhelming and unique. The destroyed education infrastructure needs to be rebuilt and in some parts of the country, general insecurity and attacks targeted directly at schools are also a major threat to education23. Dealing with the legacy of war and rebuilding the education system requires both vision and long term commitment. Afghanistan certainly has the vision, although the task ahead is daunting, and in recent years has made great strides towards improving the education of its children. There are approximately 5 million children attending school today in Afghanistan. This is an increase of 50% since 2003 and almost 350% since 200124; without a doubt, these are impressive statistics. The Minister of Education, His Excellency Haneef Atmar, says that ‘It is the greatest achievement in the history of the country’, but sadly adds that ‘at best it represents 50-55% of our primary school-aged children’.25

It is true that more than half of Afghanistan’s children – almost 7 million – are out of school today. The majority of these children live in remote districts and villages where access to a school is limited or non-existent. Schools are often

---


too far away for children to walk to, particularly for girls and young children, or there are no literate or willing people within their village to take on the responsibility of teaching these children. Lack of access and opportunity are keeping millions of children, especially girls, out of the classroom. Coupled with the problems of sheer logistics is the prevailing attitude in some rural communities that educating their daughters is not necessary.

3.7.1 COMMUNITIES TAKING OWNERSHIP: COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION

In spite of this, thousands of remote villages have found space in homes, mosques, under trees or under tents to serve as places of education. Community-based schools (CBS) are supported by local and international organisations in the absence of the government, where the Ministry of Education has been unable to serve. They are not currently linked with the formal education system and are run with different approaches and standards by partners. While these schools are meant to complement and support the Government’s efforts in areas where children do not have easy access to education, in some instances they compete for students with local government schools.

In consultation with partners, and driven by the active Minister Atmar, community-based education policy guidelines were drafted in 2007 in order to ensure that the education of the children who attend these schools is officially

26 The 2004 adult literacy rate (the latest statistics currently available) totals 28% of the population, 43% male and 13% female http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan_afghanistan_statistics.html.
27 Community-based classes have had a long history in Afghanistan. Home-based or community-based classes have provided a safe space for children’s education, particularly during the Taliban times. In August 2006, the MoE developed policy guidelines for community-based education and have recognized community-based primary classes as ‘out-reach’ classes of the MoE. There are approximately 20,000 such schools operating in Afghanistan, compared to the MoE’s 9,000 formal schools (Spink, 2006)
recognised. In addition, so children who attend these schools at a primary level can then continue their education in government schools.

Afghanistan has seen four Ministers of Education in the last three years since 2007. This has meant inconsistent strategies and fragmented administration. It has not assisted in strengthening or expanding the country’s reach or delivering free and basic education to all children of Afghanistan.

Minister Atmar began to make drastic changes in the first six months of his office and is making great efforts to create a national education system that is unified and co-ordinated into a formal system. This will not happen overnight, but there is optimism that it will happen in the course of his office.

The current Minister of Education is Hanif Atmar – he is the 4th in 3 years. He is very good – his background is with NGOs. He represents the country in international forums to do with the Millennium Development Goals and is an ambitious visionary. I like him a lot and think that the education in this country can move in leaps and bounds under his office. He started in April 2006 – and already there are rumours that he will leave for Ministry of Interior. This could be because he just did a major re-shuffle in his ministry and sacked over 1,000 people he felt were corrupt and counter-productive.

Comment by International Colleague, Aug 2007
3.7.2 A CHANGING POLICY ENVIRONMENT FOR EDUCATION

In December 2006, the MoE launched its five year National Education Strategic Plan for Afghanistan\(^{28}\). This is the first time the MoE has systematically developed a work plan that directs efforts and fund to realise its targets. Funding, however, is meagre. Excluding defense personnel, 60% of the government employees are in the Ministry of Education, yet is only afforded 7% of the national budget\(^{29}\). Limited and inconsistent funding is a dilemma shared by many conflict-affected countries. In 2006, education received only 1.1% of humanitarian assistance globally, despite representing at least 4.2% of humanitarian needs\(^{30}\).

The challenge that lies ahead for the MoE to meet its national and international targets\(^{31}\) are numerous with the general message coming from remote and rural communities that there is a strong demand for education for their children, that Afghanistan’s children have a right to education.


\(^{29}\) Statistics have been drawn from Oxfam’s Briefing Paper (Nov 2006) http://www.ungei.org/infobycountry/files/oxfam_bp93_afghanistan.pdf

\(^{30}\) Save the Children Alliance April 2007 http://www.savethechildren.org/publications/

\(^{31}\) Afghanistan has signed up meet the Millennium Development Goal for Education target for 2020 whereby all children in Afghanistan, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary education (Grades 1 – 6). By 2010, net enrolment in primary schools for girls and boys will be at least 60% and 75%, respectively.
vignette

Vulnerability

…. is all around but overwhelmingly and in the face so one morning, again stuck in traffic on the way to work. This morning the streets were packed with the usual chaotic throng of UN vehicles, pomegranate sellers with wooden carts, old men with long beards on decrepit bicycles with a grandchild somehow balancing on the handlebars, legless panhandlers on makeshift carts, kids selling mobile phone recharge cards, Afghan army police vehicles, a couple of ISAF tanks and of course, the women in blue, the widows of Kabul moving through the mosh pit, begging for their family’s survival and somehow emerging on the other side of the road unscathed. Insh’allah.

This morning one woman was not so lucky and I found myself again locked behind tinted glass up to an hour until the traffic had cleared and the body removed from the road. It happened so fast and directly in front of me. She was slipping between a narrow gap in traffic directly in front of one of the Afghan police vehicles, her small son following behind carrying a chewed up plastic orange plate holding the few grubby Afghans his mother had begged that morning. There was a sudden shift in traffic; the police car moved forward pinning the woman between its front and a corolla taxi’s rear. She didn’t have a chance.

The scene played out directly in front of me and the memory of the small boy and his orange plastic plate caught in the middle of it just wailing and watching was a bit too much. I did nothing, could do nothing. My driver began to panic which panicked me, as the crowd swelled and the traffic stood stock-still and we both could do nothing but wait. He was nervous, three streets up a few days before an Afghan army bus had been blown to pieces outside the cinema. We were all vulnerable to something, but watching someone’s life slip away on the street and simply sit there and stare was something I didn’t quite know what to do with.
PART IV

AFGHAN GIRLS & THEIR EDUCATION

*Learning without Walls,*
Jari-Sorkh Village, Chargharan District, Ghor Province
4. AFGHAN GIRLS AND THEIR EDUCATION

4.1 INTRODUCING THE CHAPTER: THE STORY SO FAR AND WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Having travelled through the story so far, a sketchy outline of a personality of Afghanistan, as well as a partial picture of its socio-economic and cultural landscape, begins to emerge. This section will now add additional layers to the story by casting a lens directly on the girls of Afghanistan and explore some of what the study determines as significant factors impacting girls’ participation in education. Issues around security and safety, female teachers, presence of and proximity to a girls’ school, family attitudes and economic concerns will each, to varying degrees, be raised throughout this discussion.

As stated in Chapter Two, the research was limited by its inability to have direct contact with girls in communities. This would have been an ideal means of learning, from the girls’ perspective, what it is they feel inhibits them from going to school, as well as what attracts them to the classroom enough to keep them there. Community-level views and attitudes were glimpsed, although somewhat superficially, through an unexpected invitation to a village in the provinces outside the national capital. Here, I was exposed to the views of men, mostly fathers, as they shared their ideas about a girls’ right to education. My observations from this experience are later included in this chapter. They are offered not as conclusive evidence of anything, other than to say I observed complexity rearing her head in beautiful ways as the contradictions, culture-bound conundrums and inconsistencies surrounding Afghan girls and their education leapt to life.
4.2 **AFGHANISTAN’S GIRLS ARE NOT ALONE: A UNIVERSAL PICTURE**

Before examining some of the barriers to education nominated in this study as significant, it is important to make the point that the existing situation facing Afghan girls is not universally unique. Significant socio-cultural, economic, religious/ethnic, and institutional factors contribute to girls lower enrolment and achievement levels in schools all over the world. As empirical studies suggest, in countries and regions in which extreme poverty, debt and poor health are endemic, it is girls’ educational opportunities that often get pushed aside (FAWE 2000)\(^{32}\). This situation is compounded by the prevalence of ongoing conflict and insecurity, hostile, unsafe school environments, as well as entrenched cultural practices that do not favour girls.

To contextualise the current situation concerning girls’ education in Afghanistan, where 1.7 million of the 7 million primary-school-age children are currently out of school\(^{33}\), it is worthwhile to take a quick look beyond this country’s borders. UNICEF’s *State of the World’s Children Invisible and Excluded* (2006) cites 93 million primary school age children worldwide are out of school. The number has declined remarkably from 115 million in 2002 to 93 million 2005-2006. Many countries are close to delivering universal primary education, yet in sub-Saharan Africa, where 41 million primary-school-age children are out of school, and in South Asia, where 31.5 million remain out of school\(^{34}\).

---


While primary enrolment rates for girls have increased 50 percent since 1960, 130 million school-age children worldwide are still not in school, and 56 percent of them are girls\textsuperscript{35}. Furthermore, while there were increased girls’ enrolments in 29 countries between 1985 and 1995, there were simultaneous decreases in 17 other countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East (UNICEF, 2003).

Despite gains in improving access and quality of education for girls in the last two decades, there remain significant gender disparities across the world in literacy rates, enrolment rates, educational attainment, distribution across subject specialties, and most other educational indicators.

4.3 THE PRICE OF FREEDOM: GIRLS AND THEIR RIGHT TO EDUCATION

From the Taliban years of no official education for girls to free primary education for all\textsuperscript{36}, to March 2002 only three years after Afghanistan’s interim government came into existence, over three thousand schools across the country threw their doors open to more than 1.5 million girls and boys, many of whom were entering a classroom for the first time in six years. The demand for education was tremendous. Girls are ‘free’ to be educated, the ban had been lifted yet the barriers and constraints impeding so many young girls and

\textsuperscript{35} These statistics coming from UNICEF’s 2006 The State of the World’s Children Excluded and Invisible
See http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/pdfs/sowc06_fullreport.pdf

\textsuperscript{36} The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Article 43(1) states, ‘Education is the right of all citizens of Afghanistan, which shall be provided up to secondary level, free of charge by the State’. In other words, the government will provide free education from grade 1 – 9 and recognises all children have the right to go to school. The Constitutions also says the State should ‘devise and implement effective programs... for promoting education for women’ (Article 44(2)). See The Afghanistan Compact (2006) http://www.ands.gov.af/admin/ands/ands_docs/upload.pdf
women from attending school remained. In accordance with the Afghan government’s constitution, education was now compulsory yet girls’ education is strongly linked to certain conditions. Girls in principle have the same right to education as boys, but enactment of this right is clearly conditioned by many factors.

4.4 CONVERSATIONS IN THE FIELD: INTRODUCING A MALE PERSPECTIVE ON A GIRL’S RIGHT TO EDUCATION

4.4.1 EXPOSURE TO THE FIELD: A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY

As the field placement with CARE International was being negotiated back in July/August 2007 before I had in fact stepped foot inside Afghanistan, it was one of their conditions that the research not demand any visits to the communities themselves. With security and cultural considerations an ongoing concern, the organisation felt it wiser I design the research in a way that excluded any direct interaction with those communities they were working with. The risks seemed too high.

Consequently, it was a genuine surprise to learn I’d been granted permission a month after my arrival to travel to the province of Hirat on the Iranian border, in order to experience the life of the education project beyond the national capital. Whilst there, I was invited to join the female project field staff to one of the communities in which they work.
and I found myself wading thigh high through the Hari River with these women in order to reach the village of Charbagh37. There is an active community-based school (CBS) here, supported by CARE International since 200438. There was also a government school in the area, however as it was over five kilometres from the village, girls were more or less precluded from attending.

It wasn’t completely clear on the ratio of girls to boys attending the community school, however I did learn it had recently been expanded to incorporate a sixth grade and offered separate-sex classes staring in fourth grade.

### 4.4.2 Meeting the Community: Exercising Awareness Though Still Affecting Presence

Although both field workers were there primarily to support the female teachers in the community village, it was by chance the following interaction took place as a group of men who form the local village shura were finishing up their own meeting and seemed interested to sit and talk. They had not been informed of my arrival, yet I was made to feel welcome and comfortable. At this moment, I appreciated my ‘foreignness’ as it meant not having to strictly abide by the cultural norms of gender segregation and separation.

37 A photograph documenting the river crossing has been included in the colour photo section which follows immediately after this chapter.
38 The village we visited was predominantly Pashtun, although both Pashto and Dari were spoken. On first sight, the village seemed densely populated and according to CARE’s own assessment there are 386 households in the main village and 74 families in new settlements outside the village. School-aged children in Charbagh constituted approximately 41% of the population. In 2006, the security situation close to the community had heightened with 2 schools put on fire and partially burnt down. The village shura of Charbagh engaged night guards for the village community school in response; each student contributes to the guards’ salaries by about 10Afs, about US 20 cents. I noted a brand new mosque in the village, possibly a sign of remittances from families outside the country.
The observations I made and the various comments translated back to me by my companions are being included as a way of incorporating an additional voice on the girls’ education agenda, beyond that of practitioners and the literature. They are by no means conclusive nor have they been rigorously tested or triangulated in any way. The sample of voices was small, random and not all men engaged in the discussion were in fact fathers. However, most importantly, this occasion presented an opportunity to listen to men share views on girls and education.

4.4.3 LISTENING TO A MALE PERSPECTIVE: A CAPTURED SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS AND TRANSLATED RESPONSES

Although this chapter ideally refers to the factors which represent barriers or constraints girls must work with or around in order to receive an education, the discussion with community members around a girl’s right to education focussed more on conditions they felt should be present to enable girls to go to school. The discussion, although limited by time and my own understanding, seemed to reveal a consensus on girls and boys in their community having the same right to an education, yet girls’ education also seemed strongly linked to certain conditions being present. Provided these conditions were in place, then girls should go to school.

At this point, a dilemma to my mind emerged. Those conditions cited as being necessarily present to enable girls to have the same education as boys, for example the presence of female teachers, if the school is close to the community and whether or not there are segregated classes for boy and girls, are, more often than not, unlikely to be in place. To begin with, as will be mentioned in
greater detail later in this chapter, there is an acute shortage of female teachers countrywide, which in many cases immediately precludes girls from attending school if cultural norms are to be observed. In this community, for example, the shortage of female teachers is dire and although the community school goes up to sixth grade, the future for the girls of some families to continue in school after grade three seemed uncertain.

According to one of the field staff accompanying me at the time, the topic of male teachers as an alternative is on the top of their agenda to discuss with the school management committee (SMC). She claimed that although mothers mostly preferred female teachers, they realised both the shortage and therefore a need to be more pragmatic. However the issue remained, she said, in how to convince others, notably the husbands.

What the opportunity to listen to these men did reveal is that the issue of girls’ education is complex and does not always neatly coalesce with what would have been predicted answers or responses.

The reality is neither black nor white and there are many differing points of view on the issue of girls going to school, or not.
4.4.4 Girls and Boys have the same right to education: Fathers speak

‘Boys are like the right rib, everything is done by the right hand but girls are like the left rib. There is little responsibility put on girls’

One of the men made this comment in response to whether both his sons and daughter went to school. He believed in ‘enough education’ for girls and that they should be able to go to school until they had learned to read and write. He also claimed he was against girls marrying until they had reached between 18 to 20 years of age. I was surprised by this, already having made a completely miscalculated assumption he would be a proponent of early marriage for his daughters.

‘Boys and girls have the same right to education, they are the same people. Men and women have the same duties towards Allah and the same things are required by both of us.’

Another man participating in the discussion, who had spent over four years studying in a madrasa in a refugee camp in Pakistan.

The discussion focussed mainly on aspects of safety and security, on the need for female teachers and on cost, whether or not they could afford it. Although education is free up to secondary school, as the Afghan Constitution clearly states, there is a significant cost borne by families to send their children to school which often acts as a deterrent. One father claimed that due to economic problems in his household, his daughter didn’t go to school. If the situation were better, however, she would go.
4.4.5 THE ISLAMIC PRINCIPLE OF FARZ\textsuperscript{39} IN EDUCATION: OBLIGATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

At one point in the discussion, one man in discussing equal rights of both boys and girls to education, referred to an old Islamic principle known as farz\textsuperscript{40} (obligation) in education. According to an Afghan colleague I later spoke with about this principle of farz, which was completely new to me, is that it has two closely related meanings: obligation and responsibility. In general, both education and knowledge were considered farz and beneficial for both girls and boys. However, contradictions quickly arise in the principle and practice of farz, which were not discussed in this particular forum. The equally strong principle of separated education, which requires girls to be taught by female teachers, seemed at odds with farz as the shortage of female teachers, both countrywide and within this particular community, makes observing both principles of separation and obligation not possible.

Later, my colleague clarified the meaning of farz, in accordance with the scriptures.

\textit{According to one hadith, knowledge is farz for both males and females. In previous times, this was interpreted so that only some Islamic education was obligatory for women but not learning how to read and write. But the needs of our present society indicate that both men and women should get the same knowledge.}

He then referred to the hadith: ‘The search for knowledge is an obligation laid on every Muslim’ (Mishkat-al-Masabih, Vol 1 Book III).

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{39} Refer to glossary for further explanation
\textsuperscript{40} Following this discussion, I started to hear the term ‘farz’ be used more often in the context of farz in education, which seemed to be a principle my Afghan colleagues also believed. It obliges women, men, boys and girls to seek knowledge and receive an education. Although, at the same time, not entirely meshing with the gendered practice of segregation in education!
It was also repeatedly emphasised that it is not the community’s responsibility to support education in Afghanistan, but a basic service that should be provided by the government. ‘The government system is forever, and better for the future of our community’, was one remark. Some of the men referred to UNICEF’s ‘Back to School’ campaign in 2003, aimed at getting between 1.5 and 1.7 million children back to school (Johnson and Leslie, 2005, p.202).

4.5 BUILDING ON THE CONVERSATION WITH FATHERS: EXPANDING ON BARRIERS TO GIRLS’ EDUCATION

The discussion in Charbagh Village, although a random sample of only men, was a valuable one nonetheless. It revealed the myriad of attitudes and beliefs that spring to life around the very issue of girls and education. Through the conversations with fathers, a number of constraints to girls’ education were raised and will be now be explored a little more deeply.

4.5.1 ACCESS TO A GIRLS’ SCHOOL WITHIN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE HOME

Years of war have seen most of the school facilities throughout Afghanistan destroyed or damaged. The State of Education report (MoE, 2005), says that just over half of the schools (51.6%) have an actual building and only about 26% are usable. Tents, rooms in homes, places under trees and the mosque are common venues for classrooms. The distance to school has major implications for girls’ attendance, particularly in rural areas where the population is often sparse and scattered. If there is a formal Ministry of Education (MoE) school within reach, many are marked as ‘boys’ only’ schools. There appears to be a resistance to organising split shifts or dividing buildings so that girls can attend these schools, too. While I was still in-country, this issue of split shifts
and sharing schools was a burning one and although seemingly such a logical and pragmatic response to the situation, the project staff revealed it was a struggle to communicate this to the Ministry.

4.5.2 VIOLENT ATTACKS TARGETING GIRLS AND GIRLS’ SCHOOLS

Threats against facilities that are educating girls appear to be on the rise in Afghanistan. Violent attacks such as burning school buildings, kidnapping, poisoning, killing of teachers and students by anti-government forces are causing a great deal of insecurity among communities. The sense of insecurity and danger can mean families withdraw their support of girls’ attendance at school.

According to estimates by UNICEF in 2007, 262 of the total 740 schools in the southern provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan and Zabul were suspended as students are not attending due to insecurity. The drop-out rate of students, especially girls, in highly insecure provinces is higher than the other provinces both at primary and secondary levels.  

4.5.3 PRESENCE OF FEMALE TEACHERS INTEGRAL TO GIRLS ATTENDING SCHOOL

As already observed in discussions in Charbagh Village, girls’ enrolment is determined by not only the availability of girls’ schools but also whether there are female teachers. The urban-rural distribution of teachers was (and still is) highly uneven in favour of urban areas, particularly in the capital and other cities in the north and west of the country. It should be noted, however, that

the presence of female teachers in the classroom does not automatically ensure girls’ enrolment and retention.

The acute shortage of female teachers has been addressed by CARE International and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) by accepting community-selected women (and for younger age groups, possibly a man) with lower levels of education and providing teacher training supported by regular on-the-job monitoring and mentoring.

While the weakness of this approach may be the quality of education, it has nevertheless reinstated female education disrupted by conflict or lack of qualified teachers, and more remarkably, it has also facilitated first-time ever female education in a number of rural communities. For example, CARE International has achieved 48% female participation among its students in five of the eight provinces it works in throughout the country.
4.5.4 EDUCATION IS FREE. SCHOOLING IS NOT.

Although the situation is slowly improving, the vast majority of people still face some degree of food insecurity, in terms of both nutritional quality and adequate quantity. Girls have been forced into arranged marriages at unusually young ages as a means of securing income for the household\(^\text{42}\).

Although tuition is free in the government schools, other costs are incurred for items such as uniform, stationery, and transportation. Sometimes girls drop out because families cannot afford to prioritise the materials such as the *burqa* for an older girl, which she may need to wear on her way to school\(^\text{43}\).

4.5.5 A SOCIAL COST TO GIRLS’ EDUCATION

What seems to be the real obstacle are the gender roles that are so strictly applied in Afghan society and apply to all spheres of life. Education of girls had no meaning for parents who aspired to marriage alone for their daughters. In this frame, a girl becomes a wife, joins another family and has children\(^\text{44}\).

In conservative Afghan culture, there is a perceived social cost for girls to study. While girls attend school, they cannot do the family household chores of cleaning, tending livestock etc. Attending school can have a more

\(^{42}\) National Human Development Report 2004, UNDP

\(^{43}\) National Reconstruction and Poverty Reduction – The Role of Women in Afghanistan’s Future, World Bank, March 2005

\(^{44}\) Statistics have been drawn from Oxfam’s Briefing Paper (Nov 2006)

dangerous cost of negatively positioning girls and families within their communities. This sanction becomes more acute as girls become teenagers.45

Reasons determining why girls drop out of school, once they have in fact got there, remains murky water and demands deeper exploration. The comments in the side box indicate early marriage as one reason girls prematurely leave the classroom, however through some early findings from research driven by CARE International, I learned girls were leaving of their own accord because they claimed they were bored. This raises questions about the quality of teaching in classrooms, if teachers show up to teach at all, and whether, although there may be more schools, is there in fact less education?

4.5.6 RELIGION AS A BARRIER OR DRIVER TO GIRLS’ EDUCATION?

Afghanistan’s policy towards girls under the Taliban illustrates the way religion can be a barrier to girls’ empowerment through education. There is evidence that in the post-Taliban era, it is essential to sensitise moral authorities on the relevance of girls’ education. Since girls’ education is a duty in Islam, imams, mullahs and other religious figures have been identified as key opinion leaders and essential partners to promote school attendance for girls.

45 Household Decision Making and School Enrolment in Afghanistan, Case Study 1: Chahar Asyab District, Kabul Province, AREU, December 2005
For that reason, UNICEF are working with the Ministry of Education to engage religious and community leaders in the design of widespread education campaigns that incorporate Islamic teachings to promote education and illustrate the extent to which violence against women is anathema to Islam.

**Journal Extract, 16 Oct 2007**

My Afghan colleague and I delivered a workshop together and I observed a session he did on monitoring and evaluation. He had to find a quote from the Quran in order to show participants that even Prophet Mohammed monitored. It was some little quote about collecting money and counting it. Participants, according to my colleague, won’t take monitoring seriously if it wasn’t reflected in Islamic thought. Everything is Islam. The Quran is very clear that girls should be educated and my colleague mentions the many references it makes to Mohammed’s wives being businesswomen and teachers. These verses are fundamentally important in the drive to get girls into schools.

4.5.7 **PARENTS AND CHILDREN**

Because most parents have not received much formal schooling themselves, building their confidence in schools and convincing them that schools are a safe place for their children can be a challenge. Many girls are given the responsibility of caring for their younger siblings and this responsibility often prohibits girls from attending school. Recent surveys among Pashtun women noted that the desired number of children ranged from seven to ten. The rearing of these children is shared with the older girls and child care facilities or kindergartens operational at the same time as school classes could relieve girls of their care-giving burden. Facilities in shared premises would allow younger children to learn pre-school skills while their older sisters attend regular school.

46 Altai Consulting (March 2007) Girls’ Education Formative Research, Kabul.
4.6 A HARD REALITY, BUT GAINS ALREADY MADE

As the exploration into girls’ education has already determined, the future for Afghan girls seems riddled with complex cultural and gender constraints which are not as straightforward to ‘solve’ as erecting a new school is, for example. Even without targeted violence against teachers, schools and children, Afghanistan still faces a major challenge in educating its people and bringing girls into the formal education system. The reality evidenced by the statistics is bleak, with the low literacy rate for young women aged between 15 and 24 at 18 percent and the situation for boys not much better, with only half of Afghanistan’s boys being able to read.

In 2006, UNICEF commissioned a study of the attitudes behind the low priority granted to girls’ education in Afghanistan and the ways to change this situation (Spink, 2006). The findings were encouraging in the sense that they revealed the clear positive values attached to education by men and women across all social groups, as well as the general understanding that education for boys, as well as for girls, should be considered a religious duty.
Walking the Wall - This day I really woke up to the reality of living in Kabul. I needed to pull out of the throng to appreciate its sprawl. It was less a walk and more a treacherous scrabble upward through a winding labyrinth of alleys releasing the sounds and smells of peoples’ lives. As Kabul sits at 6000 feet above sea level, there were frequent pauses to puff. A few days after I had walked, other expatriates doing a similar thing were shot at. Local boys were believed to be taking random pot shots for fun. Since that moment on, the wall for me was ruled off limits and the last time I saw Kabul from above was the day I flew over it.
Zakira Jan and her husband, Mohamed Azim – both asked to pose for this portrait the day I left Kabul. They were two people I depended upon possibly the most through this time and although we stumbled over the Dari/English divide, there was definitely an understanding. He was the man who guarded the house, who rushed in to rescue me from an exploding toilet one midnight when the plumbing went awry, who faithfully thawed out the gas bottles so we could boil water for tea. Zakira Jan kept the Kabul dust at bay in the house and became my slightly shuttered window into the world of women. She said she is still wearing the burqa because it makes her feel safe. Too many problems at the bazaar, she claimed, if she goes without it.
Buzkashi Season: Buzkashi is known as Afghanistan’s national sport and invites opportunity for men to make or lose some money. I encountered this game by chance. To me, it resembled a kind of rough hewn polo with its own flavour of pomp, ceremony and showmanship. A stunned goat and brandished whip to replace ball and mallet.

The players tussle over the animal until it lies in the hand of the victor, an exhausted somewhat mangled carcass. I learned it was originally fought over a goat, the ‘buz’ in ‘buzkashi’, but now sturdier calves are used as they, ‘hold together better and prolong the game’ (words of international colleague who seemed to know a lot about the game!).
The Women’s Garden of Kabul – I visited the garden on a Friday, the one day when the only males allowed entry have to be under the age of 12. Women with women relaxed into throwing off the veil and burqa, filling the space with a noisy conversation buzz, a sea of lipstick and kohl and even a few short sleeves on show. The ‘garden’ is more than a space with swings – there’s a gym under construction, even an internet cafe. This same space has been traditionally reserved for women since the early 20th century, falling into a wasteland during the Taliban years. Its revival is being driven by Afghanistan’s Ministry of Women’s Affairs.
The Third Gender: I observed this discussion between both Afghan and international female project staff around, what one Afghan woman referred to as, ‘the third gender’. She said in her country there are men, there are women, and there are ‘foreign women’. Her comments weren’t resentful or begrudging of the ‘special status’ she felt was afforded to ‘women like me’. She was merely being pragmatic. “To me, I am not as professional as you. We learn by experience, by observing you and learning. Being professional is a power. You can speak to the Minister of Education and convince him to collaborate. It works. An Afghan woman’s ideas are undervalued. That is always a concern for us”. 
Women in the Field – This was a day when I really tasted the rigours of traversing the field in Afghanistan. Both women work to support female teachers in village community schools which are often always in hard to reach places. Both women were extraordinary in their ability to preserve a grace, humour, implacable calm and observe cultural tradition all at once, whilst crossing a swollen river with nothing more than a stick and each other for support. Women are forbidden to hold the hand of any man who is not her son, brother, father or husband. I also had to use the stick but wasn’t hampered by the voluminous weight of sodden folds of veil and burqa.
PART V

PRACTITIONERS IN PARTNERSHIP

Workshop with PACE-A Partners,
PACE-A office, Kabul
5. **Practitioners in Partnership**

‘*We are not political strategists, we are educators – but perhaps we need to have more political nous that we do.*’  
Comment by International Project Staff Member, Sept 2007

For three months, I experienced a ‘lived’ experience of an international education project working as a consortium of four well-established international NGO’s, CARE International, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF)\(^\text{47}\). The project has been designed to ‘fill the gap’, working with the Ministry of Education to establish community schools in villages that are currently out of reach of the formal Ministry system. All organisations have had significant experience working in the education sector in Afghanistan, with CARE International for example having run programmes here since 1961\(^\text{48}\). It was one of the few organisations to have continued to operate under the Taliban regime. This research has particular currency in light of the limited evidential information available on the experiences of partnerships working in conflict-affected environments\(^\text{49}\). More so, a long-term partnership project working on the agenda of girls’ education throughout rural and remote regions of the country.

This chapter explores some of the unique contextual constraints experienced by the education project, based on observations and interviews I conducted over the course of my stay. The partnership, although still relatively young, in 2008 moving into its third of a five year long project, has gone

---

\(^{47}\) The consortium worked under the project title of PACE-A, *Partnership for Advancing Community Education in Afghanistan*.

\(^{48}\) CARE’s country office closed from 1979-1989 due to the Soviet conflict.

\(^{49}\) [http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Pubs/files/fragilestates-paper.pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Pubs/files/fragilestates-paper.pdf)
through an incredible period of internal and external change over a short period of time. The external policy environment in Afghanistan has shifted tremendously since late 2006, impacting the project’s strategic direction and design. The internal dynamics of this group of four are also forever in flux as increased pressure and tight deadlines are placed on the shoulders of people who are working across a range of education programmes, not simply this one. As such, the people working on the project are integral to its success, however it was clear a great deal of the leading and driving of the partnership was in the hands of the international project staff, who were for the most part female. It was recognised as important to incorporate ways, through mentoring, coaching and modelling, to nurture and build up the leadership capacity of the Afghan staff. Recruiting female staff to work both in the field and in the country office was an ongoing battle. Without female teacher trainers, for example, it is not possible to provide the same level of field support to those female community teachers working in the village schools.
Map showing the PACE-A partnership’s geographical spread in 2007. Over the 5 years (2006-2011), PACE-A will be operational in 90 districts in 20 provinces. The organisation’s current education programmes and working partnerships with community-based organisations will largely determine this allocation. The second year of implementation (April 2007-April 2008) is focussing on 17 provinces and 73 districts.
5.1 REMUNERATING TEACHERS: ONE OF THE MOST CHALLENGING ISSUES

The whole issue of teacher compensation has been the most challenging for the PACE-A project. The donor, the Ministry of Education, managers, field staff, School Management Committees and teachers have all faced issues regarding the rationale for community contributions and the requirement for regular and sustained compensation of teachers. The government has been announcing their commitment to free basic education for all which should also include remote communities. Some resentment brews over the requirement of PACE-A communities to compensate teachers themselves when urban families do not. This is further complicated when other NGOs providing community-based education pay salaries directly to the teachers. This confuses field staff and community members when they see a need for money in communities to alleviate poverty. There is no conclusive evidence to prove or disprove whether organisations paying community-based teachers’ salary does result in higher teacher motivation or improved quality of instruction; there is only anecdotal information.

Recently, one of the other community-based education providers working in Afghanitan handed over 14 of their classes to the PACE-A project to better coordinate geographic focus. Its commitment to pay teachers’ salaries continued until the end of the academic year. The academic year finished and all 14 teachers refused to continue to teach unless the organisation continued to pay their salary. Nor were they satisfied with relying on the community for their compensation. Sadly, all fourteen teachers have closed their classes. The sentiments shared by teachers, communities and field staff about compensation and the need for creating sustainable education programs in villages have
pushed practitioners to make significant efforts in supporting field staff in their work as well as continuing to work at the national level to get community teachers on to the Ministry pay roll.

5.2 CONVINCING THE PROJECT STAFF: HOW DEEPLY DO THEY BELIEVE?

The main issue the project has faced with teacher compensation is with the members of the national staff who work as community mobilisers and with the community themselves. Much of the discussion during the time I was working alongside the project was around the growing need to identify how to work to improve the mobilisation of communities, particularly those in some of the most remote regions of the country. Many of the community mobilisers working on the project are not convinced of the rationale behind communities supporting teachers. Without thorough understanding or commitment to the approach, they are not always successful in convincing the community, let alone assisting them to find ways to compensate the teacher. This is further complicated when other NGOs supporting community-based education initiatives are paying salaries directly to the teacher. The recent policies and Millennium Development Goal targets of the Ministry of Education regarding free basic education to all has provided tension in this discussion. Remote communities and field staff feel somewhat resentful that urban families can access free education, when they are required to find support for their teachers.

The communities themselves are situated in remote Afghanistan and are mostly very poor. Some communities are also facing drought or severe cold or other natural occurrences thus putting more strain on the community. Their poverty and frugal resources are often used as an excuse for not compensating
the teacher. Some teachers understand the constraints of the community and are still willing to teach as a volunteer, whereas other teachers are not. The notion that teachers can also be supported with services (e.g., mending houses, child care, caring for animals) is not always accepted but still presented as an option.

5.3 FINDING FEMALE TEACHERS: AN ONGOING CHALLENGE FOR THE PROJECT

One challenge the project faces is finding women to teach. Cultural restrictions coupled with the fact that many remote women have not received any education, and are therefore illiterate, present obstacles to finding female teachers. 27% of PACE-A teachers are female, but this has also presented challenges for male teacher trainers. It is not culturally acceptable for an unrelated male to be in the classroom with a female teacher and so support to female teachers is probably not as extensive as it is for male teachers. The project recognises that to really support female teachers, there is a need to recruit female project staff. PACE-A’s partners are trying their utmost to find female teacher trainers but are finding it exceedingly difficult.

The other issue with female teachers is that in-kind support as compensation is viewed as begging and rather shameful to the family. This is not the case for a mullah as classroom teacher or even a male teacher. There is little community mobilisers can do to shift this attitude. However, because males are the family providers they need to be assured of contributions from the community. When they are not being compensated, they are more likely than female teachers to stop teaching and look for an alternative income.
5.4 Advocating for Girls’ Education through Learning Networks

Through the PACE-A initiated Community Based Education (CBE) forum, new opportunities for intra-organisational learning and exchange have sprung. The forum invites the participation and attendance once a month of any national or international organisation working in community-based education. It began in 2007, driven by two of the international female members of the partnership project. It has since provided a much needed platform for advocacy and lobbying around education related issues in Afghanistan, with a clear focus on concerns around girls’ education. Some of the items on the forum’s agenda while I was there included quality of education, addressing root causes for girls’ high drop-out rates across the country, issues around teacher training and quality of training, and finally the burning issue around teacher compensation. With the PACE-A project being the only community-education provider in the country not paying teacher stipends, instead placing responsibility for compensation teachers on the community itself, issues and complication have inevitably surfaced. Although there is a strong history in Afghanistan for the community supporting local teachers, it has become increasingly difficult to encourage communities to compensate their teachers on time, or at all.

The forum seems a strategic endeavour to facilitate learning, encourage sharing and reduce the risk of overlap and replication in the CBE sector, in particular. I attended three such forums through the research period and was overwhelmed how well-attended and engaging these workshops were. It provided a forum for organisations new to the country, involved in CBE-related activities, to introduce themselves, their project activities and key
project sites across the country. This level of coordination across the international NGO community working in education was significantly greater to any I have previously experienced. In North East Cambodia, for example, it had always been a tremendous struggle to bring the international community working in the education field around the same table to discuss issues of mutual interest.

5.5 A RATIONALE FOR PARTNERSHIPS AND GIRLS’ EDUCATION: ESTABLISHING A LINK

In preparation for my field placement with PACE-A, I delved into some of the literature produced by multilateral and donor agencies on the extent to which girls’ education programming involves coordination between the range of actors involved in the sector. This documentation advocates investing in a partnership model to enhance the overall planning, implementation, management and evaluation of basic education programs. This strong rationale for partnership is described in the following statement from Article 7 of the World Declaration on Education for All (WDEFA):

_National, regional, and local educational authorities have a unique obligation to provide basic education for all, but they cannot be expected to supply every human, financial or organizational requirement for this task. New and revitalized partnerships at all levels will be necessary: partnerships among all sub-sectors and forms of education; partnerships between government and non government organizations, the private sector, local communities, religious groups and families._ (UNESCO, 1990)\(^\text{50}\)

\(^{50}\) The World Declaration on Education For All

http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/background/jomtien_declaration.html
In more practical terms, there is increasing attention being paid to building and negotiating new, multi-levelled relationships and forms of institutional and organisational and community collaboration that have as their primary objective the goal of creating a world free from gender inequality. Multi-sectoral partnerships and alliances in support of girls’ education are an example of this new strategic direction. They are being promoted based on the premise that every sector in society has a role to play in making quality education available to girls. Multi-lateral bodies such as UNESCO (2002) stress the importance of this collaboration in their policy documents, stating that:

_Governments alone do not have all the resources needed to accomplish the critical agenda of reaching girls and boys [through schooling]. Other sectors, such as religious organizations, the media, the private sector, and other civil society entities, must be engaged to ensure that primary education reaches all girls and boys_ (p.45).

Governments, donors, academics, civil society organisations and non governmental organisations (NGOs) are therefore being brought around the table to distil the strengths and challenges of their unique sectoral characteristics. International initiatives such as UNESCO’s Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education for All and their Community Partnerships in Education Study, or national programs such as the USAID-funded Strategies for Advancing Girls’ Education (SAGE), are experimenting with a range of multi-sectoral strategies for advancing girls’ education. And although there has been a recent surge in handbooks, manuals, reporting and assessment of such multi-

---

sectoral partnerships (in all sectors, not just education), and the growing
literature on development partnerships has presented a comprehensive
assessment of the inherent power dynamics involved in bringing different
organisational actors together to work on shared goals, there appears to be an
opportunity for further exploration into the more contextualised, nuanced
experiences of education partnerships working in complex environments (Rao
and Smyth, 2005).

Recent studies on the effectiveness of delivering educational aid in fragile
states\(^{52}\), such as Afghanistan, place an emphasis on the promotion of a co-
ordinated, collaborative approach towards advancing the educational agenda.
What is also interesting to note is the fact that partnership is now explicitly
perceived as instrumental to the achievement of the Millennium Development
Goals\(^{53}\). According to Helmich, “if the objective of reducing by 50 per cent, the
number of people living in poverty by the year 2015 is to be achieved, one key
factor should be a co-ordinated approach to address the needs of those living
in poverty in the South” (1999, p.3).

\(^{52}\) See Chris Berry’s September 2007’s Briefing Paper on Education Aid in Fragile States

\(^{53}\) See http://wwwunorg/millenniumgoals/
vignette

Women

..... of Afghanistan took time to win the trust of and get to know. I found men, in fact, much more readily accepting. I wondered a lot what happens to women who have lived this kind of conflict soaked history. I saw them exercise incredible restraint in meetings, where clearly they were in the right but said nothing. They seem to possess a kind of unassuming fortitude, indistinguishable from passivity, enabling them to survive hard times and hard people perhaps. A complex survival strategy designed for waging life in places I would never understand. Many books describe Afghan women as ‘hidden’ or ‘veiled’ as indeed they had to be under the Taliban when so many women risked death to carry out the task of teaching children. Books are written about these women and their heroism, courage, fortitude, resilience. Heroism sometimes consists in lying low.

Afghan women, I learned, have a right to a social and cultural life of their own, separate to the men. Every Wednesday, once a month, the dynamic Najiba would organise a night out for her friends. That’s when I saw women under burqa exposed and although asked not to take pictures, was certainly invited to partake. These women all came from privileged backgrounds, one an advisor to the Minister of Finance, another more entrepreneurial with her own export business selling rugs and turquoise over the internet. So many stories in that room but they were there only to eat and to dance; House Music a big hit and the moves they had on the dance floor beyond description. Very ‘MTV’, Shakira, seductive, sensual, elegant, shocking. Women dressing up for each other, lipstick heaven, sequinned shawls from Pakistan, rich embroidered silks from Delhi and Dubai.

I was so conscious of the stereotypes of veiled women. Watching the CNN special ‘Lifting the Veil’ from a comfortable couch in Kabul was a strange experience; showing a city full of vulnerable women, many victims of self-immolation. I wondered who my ‘Chipped Orange connection’ really was, I wanted to dignify her with a name I never knew. There seem to be so many half truths and ill assorted images of exploitation and oppression. Some women I met were strong enough and lucky enough to determine their own lives and social relationships. Others less fortunate. Not all the same. Not all in subjugation and imprisonment, or accepting of fate.
PART VI

RELATIONSHIPS AT THE INTERFACE
CONCLUDING REMARKS & AVENUES FOR
FURTHER RESEARCH

Children’s work on display at the Ministry of Education in Kabul
Global Action Week 2007
6. **RELATIONSHIPS AT THE INTERFACE: CONCLUDING REMARKS AND AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The story has reached its concluding chapter, having travelled a long and scenic road from introducing the study, to painting in the borders of the research context of Afghanistan, to then colouring in the picture more fully with the separate, yet connecting narratives, of Afghan girls’ education and the practitioners who work within it. This final section will briefly make mention of certain ‘points of connect’ between these worlds, in order to explore how sensitively attuned the realities of the girls and the international education programme really are. It has not been designed to judge or evaluate the efficacy of the intervention in terms of how well, or not, it meets the ‘practical’ needs of its beneficiaries. Rather, it seeks to offer insight and understanding into how this work is done, and why.

As expressed from the outset of this study, complexity is an interesting place to visit and an appropriate lens through which to view Afghanistan. The linkages that interconnect the complex whole were, from the outset, the primary concern of both the research and researcher. In order to garner any real understanding of the research topic, it was critical the study had the energy and stamina to reach beyond the surface story. To simplify complexity for the sake of convenience was never the point, and in the words of Gribbin (2004), ‘a complex system is built on interconnections between the simple parts’ (p.65). As such, this study attempted to take into account factors integral to Afghan society, culture, religion and tradition, to assist in forming a rounder picture of the challenges facing girls’ education, as well as challenges that arise in ‘doing’ girls’ education.
Toward the end of this chapter, avenues for further research into the area of girls’ education have been identified. The notion of ‘girlhood’ is introduced and the need to gain a deeper, more contextualised understanding of ‘girlhood’ as it is experienced in the context of Afghanistan is identified. Although there is a growing international body of scholarship on this concept, it is to date an under tapped area of research in developing countries. Following my recent experience attempting insight and understanding into the complex layers of Afghanistan’s girls, and recognising the absence of published works available on the subject area (Stromquist, 1999), there seems to be a natural opening to engage in further analyses into the complexity of issues Afghan girls face and the lived experiences of their ‘girlhood’.

6.1 AT THE INTERFACE: DRAWING LESSONS FROM THE CASE STUDY EXPERIENCE

One of the key characteristics the group of organisations forming the PACE-A consortium have shown is flexibility and an ability to respond quickly in the face of a changing external education environment. Had it been less effective in doing so, there is a strong possibility the project’s scope would have been dramatically reduced and reputation diminished, to the detriment of educational needs throughout some of the most remote and geographically challenging parts of the country.

The wide geographic variance of the country has lent the project to develop, in consultation with communities, two academic calendars; ‘hot climate’ and everywhere else. Most provinces have school holidays during the harsh winter months while the ‘hot climate’ areas have vacation during the exceptionally hot summer months.
Since the project’s inception in 2006, the education policy climate in Afghanistan has undergone tremendous changes, largely driven by a visionary Minister of Education and his pool of ‘expert’ expatriate advisors. In this time, a National Strategic Policy for Education was drafted, and in August 2006, the Ministry released Draft Policy Guidelines for Community-Based Education in Afghanistan. These policy changes were significant and impacted dramatically on the shape and structure of the partnership’s original design. Targets needed to be shifted, funding allocation reorganised, donor requirements renegotiated.

In its efforts to provide “as many communities as possible” with CBE, the Partnership is adopting a “spread” rather than a “saturation” approach. “Saturating” a geographic area with schools in an effort to achieve 100% enrolment is appropriate where the government has effective means to compel communities to send children to school. In implementing their strategies to date, partners have noticed that schools in one community tend to have spillover effect on other nearby communities, in terms of demand for basic education and for girls’ schooling. However, where the government does not have such means and where establishing a school requires the community to voluntarily contribute the teacher’s salary, saturation is not possible. The spread approach adopted in this proposal will support CBE activities in over 2/3rds of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces.

Extract from PA CE-A original project design document Dec 2005

Only six months into the project, the reverse to what is described in the above extract taken from the project’s original design document, took place. The project had to make a complete turnaround, as it moved from a ‘spread not saturation’ approach, instead to the ‘saturation not spread’ approach. The Minister held firm that the international NGO community working in community-based education should co-ordinate its geographic spread and work intensively in specific regions of the country, rather than spread thinly all the way across. One of the international project staff recounted a story of the meeting held at the MoE, when the draft policy was announced heralding the changed programmatic approach. She claimed Minister Atmar stood in his
office with a large wall map of the country, on which he’d already begun to
colour code which organisations were working in what region.

You will see that our strategic changes are all to do with our relationship with the MoE and the
changes go well beyond the original profile of the project. If we hadn’t done these changes – and
aligned ourselves to the MoE - we would have faced a lot of problems with implementation. We
are on very good terms with the Ministry and these changes were our ideas and received with
great appreciation. Nonetheless, it is always a fine balance that we play and weigh up the pros
and cons of each move.

Comment by International Project Staff Member, Sept 2007

Partnerships do not exist in a vacuum; they are formed and evolve in
accordance with their surroundings and PACE-A was therefore challenged to
‘keep up with the times’ and ‘respond to moves’, whilst still balancing co-
operative agreement outputs, NGO contracts and ongoing Ministry of
Education requests. The fact that the project responded to Ministry-level
changes in the spirit and at the speed in which it did was a strategic, as well as
professional, decision. It is recognised by the project’s leadership how
important it is to cultivate and nurture the INGO / MoE relationship.

In light of this, having the ‘right’ people at the helm of such initiatives is of
critical importance. Constructing meaningful dialogue at the national Ministry
of Education level on behalf of Afghanistan’s girls is both vital, yet delicate,
work. Implicit in the chapter title, the ability to build and sustain relationships
across cultures is an integral component to navigating complexity more
adeptly. I observed the catalytic role individual personalities can play in
building meaningful bridges between diverse groups of actors, and that doing
so takes an incredible investment of time, tenacity and buckets of patience.
Personal observation in the field revealed it is people who can make or break
relationships in a heartbeat.
The project’s leadership is, interestingly enough, driven predominantly by women with significant in-country experience and expertise in educational planning and management. The Chief of Party is a fluent Dari speaker and has a longstanding personal relationship with the Minister of Education, having worked with him in his ‘previous life’ as a national advisor for an international NGO. This personal network has not been a bad thing for the partnership and in recent times, as issues around the MoE taking responsibility for paying community teachers’ salaries have taken on a pressing urgency, this tie to the Minister has been a helpful one.

6.2 CONCLUDING REMARKS AND SUGGESTED AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

6.2.1 PLACING A VALUE ON UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT: INCORPORATING VIEWS OF THOSE IN THE CENTRE

Different perspectives on the systems international aid agencies deal with need to be taken into account. Funtowicz and Ravetz (1994) write that those who are being affected by aid initiatives need to be part of the process of identifying and defining the problems and their solutions (p.568). As there are many perspectives on how to understand the complex social, economic and political contexts of aid work, it is important to bring together as many of these as possible in order to gain a rich picture of constraints and opportunities. If, as Haynes (2003) writes, development and humanitarian work is to incorporate properly the concept of a system of interconnected and interrelated elements, dimensions and levels, which he believes it needs to, then it may be that both qualitative and quantitative data be used to gain insight and contextual understanding into the phenomena at hand.
It may therefore be more useful to address questions of ‘how’ international aid work should be undertaken. The potential value and relevance of this is outlined in the following quote, taken from a recent large scale evaluation of relief efforts:

‘...International agencies need to pay as much attention to how they do things, and their capacities to do them, as they do to the content of their policies and programmes... sensitivity to context and the flexibility to adapt to evolving realities are essential, instead of applying pre-determined strategies and one-size-fits-all solutions...’ (Telford and Cosgrave, 2006, p. 119, emphases added)

I agree it is critically important, as a practitioner and a researcher, to stop and reflect on how I go about my work, and more importantly, why. Am I driven by naive expectations of impact? Are we using too many off-the-peg, cookie-cutter-like approaches? Are we listening to the context in which we are working? These questions are highly necessary as a means of self-checking the work we do isn’t merely tokenistic and that a real commitment has been made to build a relationship to and understanding for those we’re there to support.

In the context of this recent study into girls’ education in Afghanistan, there emerges a need to understand the condition of the girls themselves more deeply in order to ensure programmatic design and delivery is ‘girl-friendly’. What does ‘girl-friendly’ in fact mean in the context of Afghanistan, and what do girls themselves perceive to be significant barriers holding them back from pursuing the education to which they have a right?
6.3 UNDERSTANDING GIRLS’ NEEDS A PRIMARY CONCERN

6.3.1 WHAT IS A GIRL?

What constitutes a ‘girl’ has also been the focus of international attention. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (which called for the protection of the rights of the girl-child) considered ‘children’ as persons under the age of 18. However, outside legal frameworks, the category ‘girl’ has been used very freely as a signifier of anyone past infancy upward to young adulthood. The very word ‘girl’ is highly context specific: it can connote community and inclusiveness amongst friends (‘one of the girls’) or can denote status (little girl, young girl, older girl). It is an index of age. Overlapping definitions coupled with often-contradictory meanings illustrate that ‘girl’ is a far more complicated word (and identity) than many acknowledge. This is an unexplored area in the context of Afghan girls.

6.3.2 HOW WELL DO WE UNDERSTAND GIRLS?: ‘GIRLHOOD’ AND GIRLS’ EDUCATION

Although beyond the scope of this study to go into in any depth, it is critical to mention the growing international body of scholarship on ‘girlhood’. While scholars such as Stromquist (1999) advocate for improved critical investigation of those education programmes in development focussing on girls’ education, there remains plenty of room for analyses that examine the complexity of issues facing Afghan girls in the context and lived experiences of ‘girlhood’. There is a burgeoning body of literature on ‘girlhood’ in North America, the United Kingdom and Australia which explores and understands the different ways in which ‘girlhood’ is constructed and understood. It can be seen as a transitory period between childhood and womanhood, as well as a site and
time of particular gender issues. However, in contrast to the growing literature, studies of girls in developing countries are scarce and rarely take into account the unique socio-cultural issues they face, for example heading up families at an early age, cultural oppression experienced by girls through early marriage. Outside of the body of ‘grey’ literature of donor reports and commissioned studies on targeted development issues such as girls’ education, Stromquist (1999) notes there has little sustained scholarly dialogue about girlhood in the South. With respect to the priority that the Education for All (1999) targets and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) attach to girls’ position in society, there seems to be a need to examine more closely the complexity of issues that face Afghan girls.

A close look at the notion of girlhood, from an Afghan point of view, could have considerable impact on programs being designed for these same girls, particularly those programmes and partnerships in the education sector. Although international development partnerships for education, such as PACE-A, aim to build conceptual bridges about gender and education between a diverse set of organisational actors (e.g. policy makers, NGOs, civil society organisations (CSOs) and donors), there seems little attention is paid to the relationships that exist between the girls (who are the beneficiaries of such partnerships) and the women (and men) who are working on their behalf. This phenomenon is particularly problematic with education sector actors such as School Management Committees (SMCs), local CSOs and NGOs and teachers who spend considerable time promoting ‘girl-friendly’ approaches to teaching and learning, with little consideration for what the girls would actually consider as ‘girl-friendly’.
6.3.3 GIRLS AS ‘KNOWERS’: PLACING GIRLS AT THE CENTRE

To respond to this challenge, Kirk and Garrow (2003) propose a ‘girls-in-policy’ approach to girls’ education programming and policymaking. Drawing on the research of Brown and Gilligan (1992), who investigate what adolescent girls ‘know’, why they may rarely articulate it and the ways in which they do, their girls-in-policy approach is committed to the notion that girls are ‘knowers’ who can contribute their lived experiences of education and their perceptions of the barriers to education to the programming and policy making cycle. This approach has the potential to create radical shifts in the position and power through which girls become institution, organisation and policy-shapers, rather than passive recipients of projects and programmes. In the education context, more girl-responsive programming may improve different areas of schooling experiences such as gender sensitivity in the curriculum and girl-friendly school governance.
Tented School closed for Winter, Chagharan District, Ghor Province
APPENDIX I
TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR CARE AFGHANISTAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms of Reference 54</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case Study Research into PACE-A’s Partnership for Girls’ Education, Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Project Title:**
   Research Study into Development Partnerships in Girls’ Education: Case Study of the PACE-A Consortium, Afghanistan

2. **Name of Institution(s):**
   Centre for Development and Emergency Practice (CENDEP), Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, United Kingdom [http://www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/be/cendep/](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/be/cendep/)
   Director CENDEP: David Sanderson dsanderson@brookes.ac.uk

3. **Name and address of partner with which collaboration is proposed:**
   Proposed Research Partners55
   - PACE-A implementing partners: CARE Afghanistan, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Aga Khan Foundation (AKF)
   - Ministry of Education: representatives at National and Provincial levels
   - USAID Education Sector representatives
   - Education providers working with a partnership approach in Afghanistan (e.g. Creative Associates’ BESST Project working with the MoE in teacher training / the DCOF-Funded partnership with IRC/Save Alliance/CFA in child protection. All are live projects, working with different partnership structures. It would be interesting to establish a basic understanding how PACE-A may be operating similarly/differently to others)
   - Communities involved in PACE-A’s partnership56.

---

54 This ToR is the final draft, following revision and refinement based on suggestions and feedback from project partners. This ToR template belongs to CARE and I was required to complete and submit it before the field placement could be approved.

55 The researcher understood security restrictions may inhibit travel outside Kabul. However, if conditions permit, it would enrich the research significantly to travel to suggested provinces and meet with PACE-A staff at the field level. Similarly, if possible and culturally appropriate, the researcher would enjoy meeting with any available provincial Ministry of Education officials too, involved in PACE-A activities.

56 This contact, however, is not integral to this research. The researcher understands security conditions are deteriorating and will impact travel and access to communities. The researcher is also aware of the potential risk to communities with international visitors to their villages.
4. **Name of principal investigator(s) with designation, address, telephone/fax, and e-mail:**

Lucy Strickland, Masters student (Humanitarian and Development Practice)  
Oxford Brookes University, UK  
mobile: +447767 260 836  email: stricklucy@gmail.com

5. **Source of funds:**

Self funded, however acknowledges contributions in the form of transport / translators / accommodation / security support from partner organisations may be sought.

6. **Villages, districts, provinces involved:**

To be determined upon consultation with project partners. As already stated, the researcher is aware security conditions and available project resources (time/vehicles/translators) will impact access to PACE‐A project sites in the provincial regions. She is interested, however, in visiting AKF in Bamiyan Province and CRS in Hirat Province.

7. **Target population:**

- PACE-A partner organisations  
- Representatives from MoE (and/or Provincial Education Departments)  
- USAID education sector representatives  
- Other education providers working in partnerships in Afghanistan

8. **Duration of project:**

Suggested duration of 3 months. September to November 2007. This period is negotiable with project partners as the researcher acknowledges her presence will place additional pressure on PACE-A resources

9. **Broad aims of the project:**

1. *To engage* project partners in a process of shared reflection and evaluation of the PACE-A partnership to date through initiating a start-up and end-of-project workshop  
2. *To ensure* the research is of potential value and relevance to the partnership itself.  
3. *To explore and document* partner perceptions of how this partnership has added value since start-up.  
4. *To investigate* how a partnership approach, as opposed to ‘going it alone’, can be a more efficient and sustainable delivery mechanism for working in this particular extreme environment.  
5. *To identify* some of the challenges and constraints the partnership faces operating in this environment
6. To understand the external context in which the partnership operates. To learn of any key factors that contribute toward making the environment an enabling/disabling one for the partnership to work effectively.

10. Expected outcomes:
   - A comprehensive report (max. 12-15 sides) on the research and practice of partnerships, based on the PACE-A partnership experience and the relevant literature. Explicit focus on the value-added dimensions of partnership will be made, as experienced by research participants. A draft document will first be disseminated to partners for input and comments. A final report will then be produced, informed by this feedback.
   - A presentation of key findings from the report and room for Q&A and discussion.
   - Two interactive workshops (start-up and mid-way points) around (i) characteristics of effective partnership and measurable indicators and (ii) defining the core function of the Program Management Unit (PMU)

11. Expected benefits to the target population:
   - To potentially enhance an appreciation of ‘how far we’ve come’ vis-à-vis the life of the project to date. To open space for critical discussion and reflection towards visioning for the future, i.e. building from what worked best to inform future practice
   - For research into PACE-A partnership to potentially reveal new insights to project partners, other field practitioners and researchers, that may inform ongoing and future strategic planning and practice around working in partnership in complex contexts undergoing constant flux and change.
   - Project partners potentially benefit from collaborating with an independent researcher, with prior field experience in community-based education (therefore, not risking inexperience in the field), to undertake localised research without the same time constraints and pressures involved in working for the project itself.

12. Anticipated risks to the target population:
   - Taking the time of those involved in the process of proposed research.
   - If granted permission to make site visits to community schools in respective areas, to respect and observe local tradition and culture in terms of behaviour, dress and appropriacy of interaction with Elders, men, women and children.
13. Expected assistance from PACE-A collaborating parties:
   o Dedication of time and goodwill of project partners towards input into the design development of proposed research and its deliverables. The researcher is not arriving as ‘expert’ with any answers; rather holds a set of assumptions and seeks to test them in collaboration with partners.
   o Dedication of time of individuals to participate and engage in one or two proposed workshops, facilitated by the researcher. Potentially two such sessions are suggested over the duration of the research placement, with an additional closing meeting to disseminate findings and receive feedback to improve upon report / briefing paper.
   o Willingness to participate in a review of data and analysis and give feedback for the final report / briefing paper
   o To share information / knowledge of local context & conditions unknown to researcher
   o To be willing to share project-specific information (internal reports / evaluations) on the understanding it will be kept in confidence and/or if used in final report and MA dissertation, will be acknowledged through referencing and citation.
   o To support the researcher in setting up focus-group and individual interviews. To be willing to be present on such occasions, if deemed appropriate.
   o To share project translator/s for fieldwork as the researcher recognises such people are valuable (and often scarce) resources.
   o To be patient as the researcher finds her feet in developing an understanding of local context and the complexity of ‘the issues’ within it.

14. Plan of results dissemination to PACE-A and groups representing the target population as well as the acknowledgement they will receive on any published or presented documentation:
   o To consult with PACE-A partners on most appropriate and accessible form in which to disseminate and present findings and suggest appropriate audiences for this.
   o To consult with PACE-A partners on additional ‘venues’ to document the research, if considered a worthwhile endeavour, to enable other field practitioners / community partners / fellow researchers to learn from
PACE-A’s experience and wealth of knowledge and practice in the context of Afghanistan

- To recognize the contributions of all participants in the research project through acknowledging them in all written outputs resulting from this research in Afghanistan.

15. Methodology:

The researcher will take an *Appreciative Inquiry* approach to the research, which works on the premise of ‘what’s working’, rather than ‘what’s going wrong’. Input is invited into the design of and selection of research tools with project team, while in-country. A selection of participative qualitative research techniques are proposed, but are contingent on agreement and collaboration from host agency/ies.

The researcher wishes to use a combination of data collection methods –

- semi-structured interviews with representatives of partner organisations, the community or other key stakeholders
- facilitate discussions in small groups either from the same partner organisation or from different partner organisations together
- observation of project activities or partner meetings
- casual remarks made in informal / social situations (*these would always be verified before use*)
- secondary sources such as partnering agreements, LoUs, minutes of meetings, project proposals and statistics collected by others, evaluations of project already documented.
APPENDIX II
A GUIDING FRAMEWORK\textsuperscript{57} AND METHODOLOGY\textsuperscript{58} FOR INTERVIEWS/FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Sets</th>
<th>What are some of the characteristics of a ‘good’ partnership?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using words or by drawing, can you explain your understanding of what partnership means?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A language and terminology about partnerships (e.g. trust, respect, equity, shared decision making, accountability) has developed. In your culture, is there a similar ‘sense’ or understanding of what partnership means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior experience off / involvement in partnership</td>
<td>Have you worked / been a part of a partnership before?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you recount a personal experience in partnership, from your own background in the development sector? What makes this a good experience and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And a less positive experience of a partnership that was not working so well and why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation / the girls’ education agenda</td>
<td>I know some of the background of your organisation and am familiar with the scope of your programming. What would you say is particularly unique/innovative in your girls’ education work? Please provide examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why does your organisation think it is important to educate girls?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{57} This served as an initial guide only and was written in-country. As the research progressed and I began to internalise the life and context of the partnership, the reliance on the prompts fell away and I relaxed into listening to participants’ experiences and stories. I would occasionally step in to bring things back on-track or to ask for clarification. I was also conscious of not exceeding the agreed to timeframe for each interview.

\item \textsuperscript{58} Given the exploratory aim of the case study, research was carried out using an inductive and qualitative approach. This afforded the research process an element of elasticity to adapt to the research context of Afghanistan, which is characterised by constant flux and wavering levels of insecurity. I also chose to adopt an Appreciative Inquiry approach to the research, whereby as an outsider encountering the partnership for the first time, I could ask, ‘what’s working well?’, rather than ‘where are the problems?’. This latter line of inquiry would have been completely inappropriate given my role and relationship to the partnership.
\end{itemize}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Sets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisational involvement in the PACE-A partnership</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your role in the PACE-A partnership? How long have you been involved and in what capacity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you believe are the strengths and challenges of working within PACE-A? e.g., enhanced knowledge and awareness about gender and education issues? Improved organisational capacities and skills in girls’ education programming? Improved networking with different types of education actors?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you describe the way that the PACE-A partnership works? e.g. How do the different actors inter-relate? Who makes decisions? What is the leadership style? Who has control over the agenda and development of the partnership and program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well is the partnership addressing the priorities for girls’ education in Afghanistan?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How have you/your organisation benefited as a result of being part of PACE-A (value-added). Can you tell me a story that illustrates this?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX III
SESSION I WITH PARTNERS: INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH / REFINING PARAMETERS & SCOPE
7TH SEPTEMBER 2007, KABUL AFGHANISTAN

This session is designed to:
- *briefly explain* currency of research around partnerships (A)
- *highlight* some of the researcher’s own research interests concerning PACE-A & partnership (B)
- *highlight* topics of enquiry into partnerships that contribute to building a richer and more detailed picture of partnership (C)
- *open up* conversation with partners around respective views on the research agenda, key objectives and outputs. Mostly, to extrapolate how the research can be made ‘most useful’ to all PACE-A partners.

A  EXPLORING PARTNERSHIPS – Currency of Research
Why do it? Where are the information gaps? How can we fill them?

Partnering is being promoted internationally as a vehicle for addressing development challenges. Partnerships are becoming central to the work of international agencies such as the UN and the World Bank, as well as a growing number of businesses, government agencies and NGOs. A growing interest in partnerships has increased over the last decade, as has the need for information that captures the *richness and complexity* of the partnering process in a ‘more evidential’ and ‘less anecdotal’ manner.

There is a dearth of documentary evidence of how these partnering processes have been played out in diverse contextual settings over time (Tennyson, 2004):
- *How do partners work through different phases and find common ground?*
- *What issues and challenges do they confront?*
- *What tools and mechanisms are adopted to address them?*
- *How is the learning from this fed back into the partnership and beyond?*

These details are crucial to a more profound comprehension of partnering and they can only be obtained by researching partnerships more closely.
B. EXPLORING PARTNERSHIPS - Case Study of PACE-A

The researcher proposes undertaking a review of PACE-A in the context of Afghanistan, as a case study model of an ‘effective’ partnership working, over time, in a particular historical, political, socio-economic and cultural environment.

The researcher emphasises the importance of studying the partnership’s context as a means of understanding the richness & complexity of this partnership more deeply. She has many interests!! concerning PACE-A’s experience in partnership. These will need to be refined to fit the research requirements of all involved.

- She is interested in the linkages between context, partnership, processes & outcomes, in order to question “how” PACE-A’s intervention makes a difference in this particular situation and why it might work here, rather than somewhere else.
- She is interested in identifying factors contributing to PACE-A’s positive experience in partnership, and more importantly, identifying indicators (visible/non-visible) to evidence this ‘success’ in partnership.
- She is interested in exploring PACE-A’s national and international partnership, among the INGO’s themselves as well as with the MoE.
- She is interested in exploring perceptions and perspectives of partnership from various stakeholders.
C. The researcher lists various areas around PACE-A’s partnership experience that could be explored more deeply. Partners are invited for comment and feedback on these – they are broad and it may be preferred to focus the research on one area or aspect of partnership that is of more immediate concern and value to all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSSIBLE AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION</th>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>ADDITIONAL REMARKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| CONTEXT                         | Is it conducive to partnering?  
Is there an 'enabling environment'? | This might include pro-partnership government policies, supportive legal & regulatory frameworks, existence of intermediary organisations and/or key individuals capable of bringing different institutions together or triggers that can positively influence partnership development |
| DESCRIPTION OF PARTNERS        | Who are they? – size, aims, remit |  |
| AIMS & OBJECTIVES OF PARTNERS  | History / incentives for working together? | This latter point particularly important as the individual organisational incentives for working together (over and above the common goal) and how well they are satisfied through partnering, will impact their commitment to partnership |
| ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS | Who will do what and how?  
Are there agreements / MoUs (LoU) in place that affirm this? |  |
| RESOURCES                      | What each partner brings to the table (cash and in-kind) and how these are valued by other partners | This relates to who is seen/behaves as the most powerful partner – often determined by money |
| GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY    | How is the partnership structured and managed?  
What systems are in place for decision-making, internal & external communication, evaluation, conflict resolution and administration etc? |  |
| EVOLUTION                      | How has the partnership developed over time? |  |
| INSTITUTIONALISATION            | How the partnership leverages its work so that it gets institution buy-in.  
How it creates policy and wider societal linkages so that attitudes and practices are impacted/changed. | As opposed to relying on individual reps from different organisations |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSSIBLE AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION</th>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>ADDITIONAL REMARKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHALLENGES</td>
<td>Of partner relationships &amp; project activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT</td>
<td>General achievements (outputs &amp; outcomes), benefits for partners and for communities / beneficiaries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXIT/MOVING ON STRATEGY</td>
<td>Are they in place? What happens next?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Session II with Partners: Defining Partnership

**16th September 2007**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>23 participants (13M:10F) representing the four implementing partners of PACE-A from Kabul-level, and USAID. The researcher (F).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What</td>
<td>The purpose of the workshop was to engage participants across organisations and stakeholder groups to reach consensus around two central issues: (i) defining characteristics of an ‘effective’ partnership and categorise them into emerging groups &amp; (ii) negotiate any qualitative and/or quantitative indicators these key categories could be qualified or quantified by.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Why | The researcher was invited to facilitate the workshop by the partnership’s Program Management Unit (PMU), in order to initiate conversation and thinking around the theme of partnerships. 

This workshop was designed as an entree to a follow-up session on the researcher’s case study ToR, research objectives and parameters. All partners were invited to give input on the ToR to ensure the research was of value and relevance to the partnership, as well as meeting the broad research aims of the researcher toward her MA dissertation. |
| When | 16th September 2007 (Week 2 of the researcher’s placement) |
| How | Interactive workshop done with flipcharts and presentation. This workshop was audio taped on participants’ consent. |

### A: Defining ‘Good’ Partnerships

- Defining characteristics and measurable indicators of good partnerships

  - shared understanding of what ‘good’ partnerships are
  - reflecting all voices in the discussion: both national & international voices
  - agree on a number of indicators (both tangible ‘deliverables’ and broader ‘process’ indicators) to use to track effectiveness of partnership over time. Indicators should cover partner-specific as well as shared goals.
  - 3 subgroups: work collectively to produce 4 to 5 points on what makes a good partnership and/or represent in diagrammatic form
B: MEASURABLE INDICATORS OF GOOD PARTNERSHIP

- keep 3 groups and think hard about 3 indicators on a certain direction or theme on measuring performance or quality.
- each group to present back / other groups to comment and add notes
- Collect material for later synthesis

C: CLOSING BRIEF

- put points together
- what follows on from this session

Activity 1 What is an effective partnership?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Lists of Characteristics of Effective Partnership</th>
<th>Additional Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GROUP 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• good coordination and communication;</td>
<td>• strong focus on values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• working together under specific conditions or for a common purpose;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• common vision and goal;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• mutual trust and respect;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• sharing knowledge, experiences, and resources (e.g. developing standardized tools, unified work mechanisms, good support network);</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• transparency and honest; MoU/Agreement that outlines responsibilities and relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GROUP 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good communication (individually and as a group),</td>
<td>• Julian added in about similarities and differences in a relationship, idea of competition also</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• trust, honesty,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• willingness to share, sense of mutual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Groups negotiate around definitions of partnership. Interestingly, Afghan colleagues preferred to talk about partnership in terms of ‘getting along’ or describing it through proverbs. “You Can’t Clap With One Hand” was frequently referred to.

You can’t clap with one hand (in union is strength / many hands make like work)

آز یک کرده دو خوب است و از دو کرده سه

Two are better than one, and three than two (2 minds better than one etc)

از یک کرده دو خوب است و از دو کرده سه
### Group Lists of Characteristics of Effective Partnership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of Partnership</th>
<th>Additional Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>responsibility,</td>
<td>arose in our discussions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|  • willingness to admit mistakes,  
  enthusiasm, encouraging and supportive,  
  acceptance of difference and different approaches,  
  • good relationship amongst individuals (personal relationships) |

**GROUP 3**

- Sharing of information,
- share work equally, respect each other, show empathy, be honest with each other,
- share resources and knowledge,
- be supportive, help each other in good or bad times,
- team goals come before individual goals, sacrifice,
- be open, “be a friend,” trust, flexibility (non-enforcement of individual ideas, means monarchy vs. democracy)
- Sharing work equally does not mean exact same number of classes, etc., but rather acting as a team: more means active participation of all partners: clear division of responsibilities emphasized by one participant

### Activity 2: Features of partnership and possible ways to measure partnership perceived as effective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of Partnership</th>
<th>Possible Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| TRUST AND RESPECT       | Willingness to share the good and the bad  
  • Willingness to explore or expose weaknesses to the group; sharing good and bad issues: willingness to share information and resources; Generosity |
| CO-ORDINATION           | # of partner meetings resulting in agreed actions  
  • Willingness to accept the good and the bad  
  • Flexibility, we do the coordination to reach the shared goals, you don’t overlap or duplicate one another’s activities, shared actions (global action week), level of effectiveness should be measured – starting of the partnership.  
  • They agreed on goals and objectives for the proposal and had different working groups who were responsible for different parts of the proposal. This partnership was built a bit |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEATURES OF PARTNERSHIP</th>
<th>POSSIBLE INDICATORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>on the ABEP example, a previous partnership or consortium. AKF was the newcomer in the PACE-A partnership that the others had not worked with before. It took a few months for the trust to build with AKF. CRS, IRC, and CARE had all worked together.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COMMON VISION & GOAL**

- Julian thinks this is something that you could really tease into. Anita says this is an easy one to measure with writing a proposal. What is interesting for PACE-A is that the project description has changed throughout the first two years of the program. Even things as simple as shifting from spread to saturation.
- There was suggestion that partnership and its definition can be much wider than something like PACE-A, and the question is how this will be addressed in the research.
- Possibility of triangulating qualitative and quantitative information.
- Looking for consensus on partnership and what it means.
APPENDIX IV
RECORDING THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

Weekly Narrative (Week 1: sample only)
2nd – 9th September 2007

WHO I MET

PACE-A PMU
- Mary-Beth (DM&E Advisor) introduced me to the M & E tools she has developed for PACE-A. Borrowed docs to read on M & E Plan 2006-2011 / Implementation Plan for Yr2
- Anita (COP) & Helen (DCOP) discussed plan of action for me. Decided to have meeting w project partners Monday 10th Sept. Anita to send email / Lucy to email revised ToR

AKF
- Julian Tetlow (Education Manager). He confirmed coming to Monday 10th meeting re: research

CARE
- Lex Kassenberg (CD). Informal meeting at BBQ at CARE compound

IRC
- Nicole (Education & Child Protection Manager). Informal meeting around child protection partnerships / challenges & issues relating to this. She expressed interest in using my research as a vehicle for investigating partnerships in general, not simply specific to CBE-consortiums. Given end-of-project report for DCOF-funded Child Protection partnership – unfavourable report, partnership deemed ‘largely unsuccessful’.
  - Biljana (Dep. Director Programs): introductions
  - Wahid (Security) & Mobeen (HR): introductions / induction to VHS & security briefing / HR policies and procedures
  - Khadija (Education Co-ordinator): introduction / set up time for interview Week 2
  - Jackie Kirk (Consultant – Healing Classrooms): introduction

Save Alliance
- Met Mika (Education Program Manager). Sat in on meeting with Helen & Anita (PMU) and Habib Rahmani (AKF). Save Japan pulling out of Afghanistan following kidnapping of Southern Koreans. Potential to do community based education in Bamyan Province where AKF also work (notes from meeting taken).
**ACTIVITIES**

- Arrival / IRC vehicle unable to reach airport due to roadside bombing 3 days ago. Collected by DynCorp Security Contractors. Staying at CARE compound, relocate to IRC Hotel 3 on 9th.
- Introduced to PACE-A office / staff. Set up desk / internet connection / printer access
- To IRC for security briefing. VHS Radio and mobile, call sign Victor 3. Request from Human Resources for passport for Pakistani visa for evac purposes
- Had various informal meetings with people listed below. Minutes/notes from these meetings were taken & are available FYI.
- Desk-based reading: PACE-A docos on M & E tools / M & E Plan (written by HS / CC.) / Detailed Implementation Plan Yr2 / Integration Research (WG).
- The “Kabul Tour” with HG and NH, all done with a big of tongue-in-cheek: to various sites of ‘touristic interest’ (infamous sites of kidnap, bomb blast & OTA (other terrorist activities). Intercontinental, Serena Hotel, various salubrious eating & drinking houses, supermarkets, beauty parlour for wax and tint, the Royal Palace, Chicken Street
- “Lock Down” day (Sunday) – no movement until after 4.30pm. Curfew at 9pm.
ADDITIONAL REMARKS

My first week in Kabul has been heady, a lot to absorb particularly on the ‘security front’. My experience when encountering new places has always been to take a ‘full immersion’ approach, walking streets, getting lost and meeting local people in the process. Kabul, I understand, cannot be such an experience and there are given boundaries I will need to learn and live within. I understand why security measures are such, so this is not ‘a whinge’ however it will require adjustment and vigilance! Both Wednesday and Thursday I did not remember to make the 9pm security checks and was heavily chastised, in person, by CARE and the IRC’s Country Directors. Adjustment and vigilance!

Thursday, I began Dari lessons with Aimal in an attempt to bridge the yawning chasm between the ‘me’ & ‘them’, at least to a point of being able to share a basic conversation in the morning with the guards and drivers. Although time here is short and my purpose very specific, this is a unique opportunity to experience life in Afghanistan, no matter how limited.

Security stuff aside, the staff at the PMU have already invested a great deal of time and energy into welcoming me to the project and to Kabul. I am slowly becoming familiarised with the details of the PACE-A project - its geographical reach, the various project activities, partners’ roles & responsibilities, current & ongoing issues viz. ‘the partnership’.

Week 2’s Monday meeting with partners is critical in outlining the research parameters and inviting feedback and advice on the feasibility of the current plan. Although the ToR has been sent out already, I will present the research through PPoint as cannot assume all partners will have the time to read the document. I want to ensure from the outset everyone knows who I am, why I’m here and what I’d like to do. The research agenda is flexible to change and adaptation – due to deteriorating security conditions, as explained to me yesterday, it may not be possible to leave Kabul at all. This will make it more challenging to meet with AKF and CRS, who are operating mostly out of the capital. I have been advised to ‘sit on it’ and wait – things change quickly here.

I am grateful that all 4 Country Directors of the PACE-A INGOs have agreed to attend the presentation. Already the IRC’s CD has mentioned the interest in partnership research, in general, coming out of the IRC’s Head Office in NYC. Partnershipping seems to be ‘the go’ around here, although informal conversations since my arrival suggest they are not all working. What does ‘working’ mean??
APPENDIX V

LIST OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS & ORGANISATIONS
The following list comprises those who participated in the research through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions & workshops. Research sites included the provinces of Kabul, Parwan, Kapisa, Bamyan and Hirat.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Participant Organisation</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Warden</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>Education and Child Protection Co-ordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen Stannard</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>PACE-A PMU</td>
<td>Deputy Chief of Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anita Anastacio</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>PACE-A PMU</td>
<td>Chief of Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Shephard</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>USAID/Afghanistan</td>
<td>Cognisant Technical Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Beth Wilson</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>PACE-A PMU</td>
<td>M &amp; E Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khadija Bahram</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>Deputy Manager Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biljana Stankovic</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>Deputy Director Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epifania Amoo-Adare</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>CRS Afghanistan</td>
<td>Program Manager for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julio Ramirez-de-Arellano</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>BESST Project (Creative Associates International)</td>
<td>Chief of Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nazifa Aabedi</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>MoE</td>
<td>General Education Advisor (former)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagma Battoor</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>CARE Afghanistan</td>
<td>Education Co-ordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najiba Siddiqi</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>CARE Afghanistan</td>
<td>Project Supervisor COPE Project, Parwan Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy Guyot</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Undertaking research with PACE-A at this time</td>
<td>Research Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wahidullah Wahid</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>CARE Afghanistan</td>
<td>Education Program Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciaran Donnelly</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>Country Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo Trotter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AKF</td>
<td>Head of External Relations and Grant Management Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamie Terzi</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>CARE Afghanistan</td>
<td>Assistant Country Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara Alexander</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>CRS Afghanistan</td>
<td>Program Manager for Education (former)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Hicks</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>CRS Afghanistan</td>
<td>Country Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karimi Aziz</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provincial Education Department, MoE, Herat Province</td>
<td>Provincial Liaison Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karima Sorkhabi</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>Child Protection Program Manager, Herat Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zia Ahmad Ahmadi</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>CRS Afghanistan</td>
<td>Education Project Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Ali Akhgar</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>Education Manager, Herat Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gholam Hazrat Tanha</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provincial Education Department, MoE, Herat Province</td>
<td>Head of Provincial Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara Bowers</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>CRS Afghanistan</td>
<td>Program Manager for Education (former)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habib-ur-Rahman Rahmani</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>AKF</td>
<td>CBE Project Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julian Tetlow</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>AKF</td>
<td>Education Co-ordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamali (family name unknown)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>PACE-A PMU</td>
<td>Technical Advisor Teacher Training (former)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shafi ul Haq Rahimi</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>CARE Afghanistan</td>
<td>Data Management Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Asif Walizada</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>CARE Afghanistan</td>
<td>Design, Monitoring &amp; Evaluation Technical Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Participant Organisation</td>
<td>Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zohra Ahammad</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>CARE Afghanistan</td>
<td>Technical Advisor for Literacy and ECD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahimi (family name unknown)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Provincial Education Department, MoE Wardak Province</td>
<td>Provincial Liaison Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Younus Serfraz</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>CARE Afghanistan</td>
<td>Teacher Training Technical Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najibullah Attiqi</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>CARE Afghanistan</td>
<td>Project Supervisor of COPE project Ghazni Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aman Mojadidi</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>AREU</td>
<td>Research Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aude Saldana Cazenave</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>CRS Afghanistan</td>
<td>Head of Programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lex Kassenberg</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>CARE Afghanistan</td>
<td>Country Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Respondents (International : Afghan National)</td>
<td>19 (7:12)</td>
<td>18 (12:6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES & BIBLIOGRAPHY

REFERENCES


Chabbott, C. (November 2006). *CARE Afghanistan Community-Organized Primary Education (COPE).*


Partnership for Advancing Community Education in Afghanistan (PACE-A). *Achievements of Year One & Excerpts from Implementation Plan for Year Two: April 2007 – March 2008*.


Stannard, H. (February-September 2007). Email Correspondence to Lucy Strickland.


Strickland, L. (Sept–Nov 2007). Interview Transcripts, Field Notes & Email Correspondence.


from:

USAID / Afghanistan Strategic Plan 2005-2010. (Online). Retrieved on 2 April 2007 from:

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Kids at Play
Kariz Chawgan Village, Hirat Province