MOORE Afghanistan

PAST PERFORMANCE

AFGHAN CHILDREN READ

USAID/ACR - April 2016

ABOUT ACR

Afghan Children Read was a USAID-funded primary education initiative designed to improve equitable access to education and generate measurable reading outcomes for girls and boys in Afghanistan. Afghan Children Read project aimed to pilot an evidence-based Early Grade Reading (EGR) program for students in grades 1 to 3. The project was tested in the three provinces of Kabul, Herat, and Nangarhar and covered both formal and Community Based Education (CBE) schools.

THE CHALLENGE

The majority of the children in early grades in Afghanistan at both public schools and CBE are not reading at the required level of instruction (Dari, Pashto or other languages).

A variety of conditions contribute to this state of affairs in early grade reading education. Teachers are

10 districts
248 schools
53 CBEs

not specifically trained in teaching early grade reading, which uses an approach that develops phonemic awareness and provides deliberate instruction focused on phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Teaching and learning materials are not developed to support students' reading proficiency. Communities do not recognize the potential of their significant roles in early grade reading education. In addition, the educational policies as well as the management systems of education in Afghanistan are highly bureaucratic and centralized, leaving little room for techniques that support quality classroom instruction.

Afghan Children Read planned to bolster education service delivery through forming school clusters. Clusters connects five to eight schools, one of which is the main point of contact (called a hub school). School clusters are formed in order to help reach target schools efficiently, encourage interaction between schools, facilitate teacher and community awareness, devolve decision making, and share ideas and provide feedback. Afghan Children Read intended to utilize school clusters to optimize the processes of teacher training and distribution of textbooks and learning materials to students and ensure

efficiency. The establishment and strengthening of school clusters also supports equitable participation of all children and allow communities to foster a protective web to safeguard learning spaces.

In Afghanistan, the process of forming school clusters is hampered by the dearth of reliable data on schools, students, and teachers. This assignment sought to address this issue through conducting a survey of schools in selected districts in the provinces of Kabul and Herat.

OUR ROLE

This assignment aimed to assess school, student, and teacher demographics, CBE learning models, and existing learning circles, shuras, and clusters, and identify school hubs for an informed program roll-out selection and strategy.

A census was conducted in Herat and Kabul, in 10 districts, 248 formal schools, and 53 CBEs, which constitute all Afghan Children Read intervention schools, to gather primary, quantitative data on the aforementioned topics. Data was collected from school principals and CBE teachers and data analysis was conducted at grade, school, and district levels.

Potential pilot population for formal and CBE schools were identified. Census was conducted in Herat City and the districts of Injil, Guzara, Kuhsan, Ghoreyan, Zenda Jan, Kushk, and Karukh in Herat province and the districts of Shakar Dara and Bagrami in Kabul.

These districts were selected by Afghan Children Read team in coordination with the Ministry of Education (MoE) based on security, infrastructure, and access criteria.

The research sample size for this study was comprised of all 248 schools and 53 CBE schools across 10 districts in Herat and Kabul.

Two separate quantitative questionnaires, one for schools and one for CBEs, were developed which mainly focused on school demographics, existing clusters and issues, and identification of potential school hubs. The questionnaires included 69 and 71 main questions, respectively, and other follow-up questions. The survey was comprised of a number of questions about the number of students, classes, and teachers and others on learning circles, school shuras, existing clusters, and attitudes towards

clusters. Information on location, personnel and enrollment data of schools and CBEs was also collected from principals. Finally, factors related to distance, topography, security and infrastructure of schools were also assessed.

After the finalization of survey instruments, a Smartphone-Assisted Personal Interviewing (SAPI) application was developed for data collection using the Open Data Kit software package. The application allowed enumerators to collect GPS coordinates of school locations, record audio, and capture images when necessary. SAPI was coded to dynamically alter the flow of questions based on the received responses and to upload the data to a cloud server, which was downloaded by the data quality assurance and analysis team in Kabul on a daily basis. The above steps were followed by trainings, data collection and cleanup.

THE OUTCOME

As a result of this assignment, ACR received a comprehensive report that they then used in their strategic decision making.

The report covered the number of schools in Kabul and Herat, with a breakdown of formal schools to primary, lower secondary and upper secondary; student demographics; number of teachers; rate of teacher retention; model of CBE delivery; learning circles; school shuras; existing school clustering relationship; perceived issues, and other topics that were of interest to ACR.

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