



For Afghan Women's  
Education

## **INFORMATION for THE PRESS**

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**Afghanistan Statistical Year Book 2014-15,**

# **Afghan Central Statistics Organisation**

## **The Population of Afghanistan:**

Was 24.485 million in 2010 - 12% aged 10-14, 9% aged 15-19, 8% aged 20-24  
Approximately 5% (or 1.2 million) of the population are females of University age

## **There are 126 Universities in Afghanistan:**

95 private, 31 state Universities

The private Universities offer limited courses

## **Women make up 25% of all University students:**

201,182 students of which 51,979 are female students

An increase from 38,489 the previous year

## **Female students are equally spread between state and private institutions:**

26,669 female students at state Universities

22,310 female students at private Universities

## **There is a lack of female teachers:**

10,949 teachers at all Universities of which 1,214 teachers are female

726 female teachers in state universities

488 female teachers at private universities

## **Most scholarships are for study outside of Afghanistan:**

FT estimates more than 2000 University scholarships abroad a year

FT estimates possibly 300 University scholarships for inside Afghanistan

The selection process is nepotistic



## **Higher Education in Afghanistan**

### **Afghanistan desperately requires educated professionals**

Rebuilding higher education is a pressing and critical need for Afghanistan. With a critical shortage of professionals and leaders – engineers, technicians, administrators, accountants, agriculturist, business leaders – the country found it difficult to meet the needs of reconstruction, growth and poverty reduction. Afghan universities suffered from a large majority of the problems that typically plague public tertiary institutions in many developing countries: low quality, lack of relevance, insufficient funding, a lack of appropriate physical facilities, weak links with the economy, and weak governance and management. While these problems have certainly been exacerbated by war and its negative economic consequences, they reflected deep structural dysfunctions that required careful attention. Also, problems of extremely low girls' enrolment in the higher education needed to be addressed. **ARTF at work: results stories series. Improving higher education in Afghanistan. The World Bank. 2013.**

### **Higher Education is central to lasting peace**

Afghan Higher Education has become the most sensitive field for reforms on all levels of governance: rule of law, welfare and security. Compared to primary and secondary education, access to the universities is still a neuralgic point for status distribution and the stabilization of the entire system of education. Admission policies and traditional forms of reproducing disciplinary elites endanger a differentiated development of qualifications and diversified status....It is likely that Higher Education will play an important role during the transformation period 2014-2024 in fields like urbanization, emerging middle class elite, and serving schools by improved teacher training. It will be central to peace-building processes by comprehensive reforms in its governance structure. How much state will be needed in order to provide fair and equal access to the common good of Higher Education, and how much private and individual initiative must emerge in order to create quality and stability of the system? **Higher education in Afghanistan: governance at stake. SFB 700 Berlin, 2013.**

### **The biggest problem women face in Afghanistan is lack of education**

The Asia Foundation Survey seeks to examine the problems faced by women in Afghan society. All respondents were asked to identify the biggest problems women face in their local area. A quarter of respondents (25%) identify lack of education and/or illiteracy as the biggest problem faced by women in their areas. Lack of education and illiteracy are also identified as the biggest problem facing women in all regions, with the exception of the South West. At least a quarter of respondents identify

a lack of education and illiteracy as the biggest problem facing women in Central Hazarajat (33%), Central/Kabul(30%), North West (28%) and West (27%) regions. **Afghanistan education sector gender equality - situational analysis. IMPAKT/NCG, 2012.**

### **The Afghan Government has a ‘C’ grade for girls’ University education:**

The 2015 Gender Equality Report Card, of EPD, scores the Afghan Government as follows -

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Enrolment of girls up to secondary education                       | B  |
| Enrolment of boys up to secondary education                        | B  |
| Sensitivity of primary and secondary schools to the needs of girls | B  |
| Availability of female teachers                                    | C+ |
| Government efforts to recruit qualified female teachers            | C  |
| Provision of courses for girls to prepare for university exams     | C  |
| Sensitivity of university facilities to the needs of women         | C+ |
| Improvement in women’s literacy                                    | B  |

### **The main obstacles to Afghan girls’ education are poverty and early marriage:**

In ‘High Stakes: girls education in Afghanistan’ Oxfam 2011, ranks obstacles to girls’ education as follows -

1. 42% - Poverty
2. 40% - Early and Forced Marriage
3. 32% - Insecurity
4. 32% - Lack of family support
5. 26% - Lack of female teachers
6. 24% - Long distance to school
7. 16% - Poor quality of education
8. 13% - No girls only school
9. 11% - Harassment
10. 10% - Lack of community support

### **Families sacrifice to send children to University but expect students to become high earners**

Females were more likely to say that women should go to university in order to ensure their economic or financial security. Some women said that they could contribute to the household income, while others focused on economic independence for the female students. Parents also focused more on the perceived economic benefits that could stem out to their daughters and to themselves if their daughters attended university. Men were more likely to raise farz, and the idea that both genders should be pursuing an education in alignment with the teachings of Islam.

A number of parents said that families sometimes sold their family jewellery in order to help pay the costs of pursuing a university degree and other families had been forced to take loans from banks and from money lenders. One mother narrated how she used all of the money she earned making handicrafts to send her children to university. Mothers in Badakhshan testified that their families did not buy new clothes or participate in functions where they would have to buy gifts, such as weddings and other celebrations in their community, in order to support their child’s education. Mothers in Kabul also talked about not buying new clothes and having to take out personal loans from neighbours or family. Parents in Kandahar told the assessment team that some families relocated from their villages in order to provide their children with access to better education in the city, which also can be expensive.

Boys have greater and easier access to such courses (preparatory courses in advance of University entrance exams) as they have a greater amount of freedom of movement... while most women were restricted from attending such courses as their families were not certain of the security...and there were no gender segregated courses available. To add to this, all such classes or courses are an additional expense that many families cannot afford to pay...many families put a great deal of pressure on their daughters in particular, to go to the medical faculty, and if they do not obtain the necessary score for medicine their families no longer support their pursuit of higher education, preventing them from attending other faculties which their scores allowed them to enrol in.

**Women's access to higher education in Afghanistan: understanding the current situation. Equality for Peace and Democracy 2011.**



## Questions & Answers

## **Q: Why was the Farkhunda Trust (FT) formed?**

**A: We saw there were gaps in support for higher education for girls and young women so the FT was formed to empower and enable poor female University students studying in Afghanistan** - most attention from individuals and donor countries focuses on girls' basic and primary education. Strategically Afghanistan needs women with advanced education in all areas of public and professional life. Living expenses and fees are high which means that its mostly rich families that are able to send their children to University.

## **Q: Who are the Farkhunda Scholars?**

**A: Farkhunda Scholars are exceptional female students, who are committed to their own and other women's education**, and who study at institutes of higher education inside Afghanistan. They come from poor and vulnerable backgrounds. For 2016, the FT has been able to fund five Farkhunda Scholars.

## **Q: What is the situation of higher education in Afghanistan?**

**A: There are 126 institutes of higher education in Afghanistan, of which 31 are State and 95 are private.** There are Universities in most provinces. Many private Universities have questionable academic standards – being set up for ideological and religious reasons. In addition many do not have adequate space or libraries. State Universities have more than 147,000 pupils nationwide but have problems attracting young professional staff, and issues around treatment of women. The Afghan budget for state education is less than £400 per pupil per year.

## **Q: What is the situation of women going to University in Afghanistan?**

**A: There are probably around 1 million girls of University age in Afghanistan. Approximately 50,000 or 25% of all higher education students are female** – more or less spread equally between State and Private Universities. Challenges faced include lack of places in University hostels for women; sexual harassment by male staff and students; pressure to only study financially viable topics; pressure to marry and have children; elite capture of University places, scholarships and professional positions; lack of female staff at Universities particularly in the south.

## **Q: What do women study at University?**

At private Universities, mostly economics, language, business, political science, engineering and law are taught. At state Universities the topics are much broader.

At state Universities, for 2014-15, an approximate average of women is as follows:

- 50% in science, education/psychology, dentistry and nursing faculties;
- 30% in literature, pharmacy, social sciences faculties;
- 20% in law, economy, sports, veterinary science, arts, theology, education faculties;
- 10% in management, policy, geology, journalism faculties;
- 5% in engineering, agriculture, construction, mining, chemistry, IT faculties.

- 0 in the trade and management faculty.

**Q: What is the difference of the Farkhunda Scholarships with others?**

**A: Most scholarships are for MAs and are for Afghans to study abroad. Most are taken by men.** There are more than 2000 scholarships for outside of Afghanistan but less than 300 scholarships for under-graduate students studying in Afghanistan. As well as supporting exceptional female students from poor backgrounds we place priority on students who have strong commitment to women's rights. FT will provide additional counselling to the Farkhunda Scholars as they progress through education onto their careers. We will create a network of Scholars who in turn support each other.

**Q: Do you intend to engage with more academic institutions?**

**A: Due to small funds we are starting small by partnering with the Gawharshad Institute of Higher Education (GIHE), Kabul.** This is well established University with strong pro-women credentials – it is named after a woman, founded by a woman, and has women's studies courses. Once our fundraising has increased we intend to partner with other Universities of repute, including outside of Kabul. If possible we would eventually like to find ways to support women students at state Universities.

**Q: How do you ensure that donations are spent properly?**

**A: To date, over 90% of funds raised by the FT have been allocated directly to scholars.** Running expenses are supported by volunteer work, and charitable events such as networking lunches, and sale of handicrafts. We have coordinators at the partner University in Kabul, who undertake administration without payment. We have an agreement with partners in Afghanistan which includes a clause to request to see financial statements. Our trustees include seasoned development professionals, most of whom have many years of experience working on gender equality issues in Afghanistan.

**Q: What does FT currently need in order to take its mission forward?**

**A: We need a greater range of skilled people – particularly trustees and volunteers with backgrounds in academia and in fund-raising.** We would like to have a staff member in Afghanistan in order to reach out and build relations with other Universities, as well as to provide support to Farkhunda Scholars. We would like to be able to have resources to have some permanent staff in the UK as well. For this we need to grow our financial base, and fund-raising capabilities.