

## A. Purpose of the consultancy

This consultancy began simultaneously with a one-day workshop held in Islamabad on April 30, 1998, attended by 40 representatives of major assistance agencies involved in education. The purpose of the workshop was to facilitate a process aimed at clarifying the overall objectives and strategies in the sector. As a next step this paper addresses technical issues surrounding potential future strategies for the assistance community.

The overall purpose of this consultancy was to assess international assistance to the education sector inside Afghanistan and in the diaspora, and to suggest strategies for maximizing the quality of impacts in the sector.

The paper assumes the political and policy contexts are too unstable to confidently describe or predict the conditions that will affect the assistance community's work in the near or distant future. However, *we can no longer afford to let this uncertainty in Afghanistan prevent us from planning our strategies for future assistance to education* (as has been the case for the last 20 years). Consequently, the paper confines itself to reviewing the extent to which the assistance community currently addresses key technical issues in the education sector and, given the general conditions of the Afghan context, seeks to identify which strategies might prove cost-effective in addressing a range of short and long term needs.

The specific objectives of the paper are:

- to identify and explore technical issues in the provision of education services that challenge or provide opportunities for assistance initiatives in the Afghan context
- to identify and describe present capacities in the assistance community to implement initiatives in the education sector
- to identify appropriate strategies and technical supports to maximize the impact of assistance to education.

The logic of the approach is that by identifying key technical issues of the sector and the capacities of the assistance community to meet them, it will be possible to determine where present gaps exist. Once the gaps are known, they can be addressed by specific strategies to improve current and future initiatives in the sector.

Although full reform of formal education may eventually be desirable in Afghan education, it is not the intent of this paper to suggest that the assistance community become involved in such a task at this time. Instead the paper identifies cost-effective strategies to improve the efficiency and quality of the programs now being provided through the assistance community. Due to time constraints, the paper focuses mainly on primary education and the various formal and non-formal channels through which it is delivered.

## B. Method

This paper is based on a review of project documents, descriptions, proposals and other literature describing the current situation of Afghan education. A number of meetings were also held with representatives of assistance agencies and donors to solicit their views on technical issues, and to review the processes and products that comprise their initiatives in the education sector. Visits were made to a number of schools and projects in Kabul, Jalalabad and Kunar province inside Afghanistan, as well as in the refugee camps near Peshawar.