



a global fund for education in emergencies

PRESS RELEASE

The Government of Afghanistan, Education Cannot Wait, UNICEF and a coalition of UN, NGO partners and donors launch a multi-year education response programme to benefit ½ million children annually

Kabul, Afghanistan, 21 February 2019 – Today, the Government of Afghanistan, the Education Cannot Wait, global fund for education in crisis, and UNICEF launched a multi-year (2018 – 2021) education response programme, for which an initial US\$ 22 million has been secured. The new programme will support the government’s policy on community based-education and improve access to safe and reliable education for 500,000 most vulnerable children, including 325,000 girls, in Afghanistan annually.

During the past decade, Afghanistan has been making progress in improving children’s access to education. Primary school enrollment rate increased from 1 million to 8.5 million between 2002 and 2019. Yet, violence, poverty and drought are among the many issues that threaten to reverse these gains. Approximately 3.7 million children remain out-of-school. Girls and children with disabilities are especially vulnerable. About 60 per cent of the out-of-school children are girls, and only 5 per cent of children with disabilities are able to access education.

Only half of the schools in Afghanistan are housed in buildings, and 1,000 schools remain inactive or closed due to security issues. Reports of attacks on schools have increased significantly during 2018, putting children at risk of injury, increased violence and threats of dropping of out-of-school.

The ECW programme in Afghanistan will contribute to reducing the number of out-of-school children in Afghanistan by identifying the most vulnerable boys and girls who have been affected by emergencies, and providing them with immediate learning opportunities. Using community-based and innovative initiatives over a three-year period, access to quality education will increase particularly for girls, and at the same time teachers and community members will be key stakeholders in the process.

“Today’s education provides the foundation for tomorrow’s economic recovery and growth and supports society as a whole”. says Dr. Mohammad Mirwais Balkhi, Minister of Education of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. “This new programme is part of our commitment to ensure that every girl and boy in Afghanistan are in school and learning by the year 2030.”

The multi-year response programme, whose total cost is US\$ 157 million is facilitated by Education Cannot Wait and is implemented by a broad coalition of international and national organisations¹. Building on the significant progress made through Afghanistan's first emergency response in providing most vulnerable children access to schools, the programme aspires to raise over US\$ 35 million for unmet needs in the first year.

"The Government of Sweden, and its people are committed to supporting the most vulnerable girls' and boys' education," says Ambassador Tobias Thyberg, Embassy of Sweden in Afghanistan, who is representing the significant donor country to this programme. "Through innovative community-based approaches, we can help retain school attendance, improve quality of education, and create a safe and protective learning environment."

This programme resonates with the aims of the Ministry of Education Girls' Education Policy to remove barriers to education for all Afghan girls and women; to close the gender gap in the school enrollment of boys and girls, and to bring out-of-school girls into the education system; and to undertake affirmative action for girl students and female education personnel.

"This is a new way of working in delivering education in emergencies, by bridging humanitarian and development aid efforts. Only by working together can we achieve universal education by 2030," says Yasmine Sherif, Director of Education Cannot Wait. "The girls and boys of Afghanistan have suffered enough and have a right to develop their potentials to rebuild this war-torn country. Today, we have an opportunity to invest in them through quality education, to empower them to fulfill their full potential and that of their country. Let us seize it, sustain it and never let go of it."

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Notes to Editors:

About Education Cannot Wait (ECW)

ECW is the first global fund dedicated to education in emergencies. It was launched by international humanitarian and development aid actors, along with public and private donors, to address the urgent education needs of 75 million children and youth in conflict and crisis settings. ECW's investment modalities are designed to usher in a more collaborative approach among actors on the ground, ensuring relief and development organizations join forces to achieve education outcomes. Education Cannot Wait is hosted by UNICEF. The Fund is administered under UNICEF's financial, human resources and administrative rules and regulations, while operations are run by the Fund's own independent governance structure. Additional information is available at www.educationcannotwait.org

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¹ [Afghanistan Ministry of Education](#), [IOM](#), [OCHA](#), [OHCHR](#), [UNAMA](#), [UNESCO](#), [UNFPA](#), [UNICEF](#), [UNOPS](#), [UNHCR](#), [WFP](#), [WHO](#), the [World Bank](#) and [Education Cannot Wait](#), national and international NGOs such as [Save The Children](#), [Norwegian Refugee Council](#) and [International Rescue Committee](#).