Appraisal and Endorsement of the Afghanistan Education Interim Plan

February 2011

Overall comments

Based on the supporting data and information available in the education sector in Afghanistan at this time, the appraisal team feels the Ministry of Education (MoE) has utilized and integrated, to the extent possible, the most current and accurate information available to develop and substantiate the Interim Plan (hereafter The Plan).

The MoE has played a strong leadership role in the development of The Plan and has been very amenable to collaborating and working with the donor appraisal team. This MoE leadership instils confidence in the appraisal team that The Plan will be implemented and supported to the best of the MoE’s ability and capacity at this point in time. There is clearly a strong willingness and interest on behalf of the Ministry to ensure its successful implementation.

Strengths

The Plan is well structured and clear in its objectives. The Plan is prioritised and better focused than in previous strategic and operational documents presented by the MoE. The Plan has for each program and sub-program a well elaborated result and indicator framework.

The Plan has clearly addressed the importance of improving gender equality, quality and access to education.

The appraisal team commends the MoE for identifying the general risks and counter-measures associated with various elements of The Plan.

Contextual Realities and Challenges

1) Capacity – despite significant efforts to date, the MoE will need to continue to do considerable work to strengthen its capacity in key areas such as procurement, financial management and internal audit. Those entities and administrative systems need to be firmly in place to ensure progress related to the MoE’s commitment to anti-corruption. Furthermore, enhanced capacity in these areas will help the MoE meet the implementation deadlines and disbursements on an annual basis.

The Plan will invariably stretch the capacity within the MoE. However it is mainly at the provincial and district levels, where direct services are delivered, that capacity tends to be the weakest. The Plan speaks to the existing capacity constraints throughout the Ministry but the implementation of The Plan will have to address how these matters will be overcome.

2) Budget - it is difficult to fully assess the fiscal viability of The Plan at this stage in the absence of a complete picture of the GIRoA’s domestic budget and of the total amount of donor resources available to support it. However, The Plan is based on the Medium Term Fiscal Framework (MTFF) prepared by the Ministry of Finance (MoF). The MoE has used the MTFF to develop the “Low Case Scenario” as the financial basis for The Plan, which seems to be relatively realistic considering the uncertainties related to available funding in general. It is important to acknowledge that some of these factors are beyond the control of the MoE, and that they are inherent in an undeveloped, fragile state.

3) Security – given the fragility of many areas of Afghanistan, in the implementation of The Plan, the MoE will need to evaluate its current risk mitigation measures through a security/instability lens according to the Education and Fragility Framework adopted by the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies.
4) Gender Equality – despite the fact that The Plan provides increased focus on improving gender equality and inclusive education, in its implementation, the MoE will need to propose a number of concrete activities that will address the challenges related to providing female teachers, and ensuring access to the disabled, internally displaced children and ethnic minorities. The Ministry will need to work with donors and implementing partners during the implementation of The Plan to maximize inclusivity.

Conclusion

Overall, The Plan is thorough and responds well as a strategic document to address the core needs of Afghanistan’s education sector. The appraisal team is confident that implementation of The Plan can succeed. The MoE must adhere to the core measures mentioned in the appraisal report in order to reach the objectives for the sector.

The Low Case Scenario (the number one priorities in Part 2 of The Plan) is achievable by the Ministry, given the anticipated enhancement of its existing capacity. However, the appraisal team would like to emphasize that any scaling up or increased “core budget” activities would require immediate actions in administrative restructuring and strengthening of the MoE.

The Annual Operating Plans and Budgets will be key documents in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of The Plan, and donors would need to review these documents as part of their support.

MoE, donors and partners will need to work diligently to ensure that The Plan’s goals, targets and results to which costs are tied are met in a timely fashion to ensure its overall success.

Kabul: February 2011
Note: Signature page provided below.

Jesper Andersen, Counsellor Development, Royal Danish Embassy, DANIDA

Heather Cruden, Head of Aid, Canadian International Development Agency, Embassy of Canada

Marcela Lizana, First Secretary, Embassy of Sweden

Robert Hellyer, Sr. Deputy Mission Director, United States Agency for International Development
### Endorsement of the Afghanistan Education Interim Plan (IP)
March 2011

We the education local donor/development partners in Afghanistan, extending our solidarity with results of the donor appraisal team report of February 2011, herewith, endorse the Education Interim Plan (IP) which has been developed in a participatory process to address the education priorities in Afghanistan for 2011-2013:

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Agency: German
Signature: 
Name: R. GULMOHER

Agency: Save the Children
Signature: 
Name: Colin ALFRED, Senior Education Program Manager

Agency: SCA
Signature: 
Name: Amin Mazari

Agency: SDC
Signature: 
Name: Willi GRAF, Country Director

Agency: ANCB
Signature: 
Name: Eng. B. OMARVA