

# School Management Shuras – A Bridge between Girls' Education and the Communities?



## Case Study on Community Mobilization for the Promotion of Girls' Education

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FINAL REPORT

**giz** Deutsche Gesellschaft  
für Internationale  
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



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# Acronyms

**ACTED** – Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development

**AKF** – Aga Khan Foundation

**BEPA** – Basic Education Programme in Afghanistan

**CDC** – Community Development Council

**CS** – Case Study

**DED** – District Education Department

**EQUIP** – Education Quality Improvement Programme

**FGD** – Focus Group Discussion

**GIZ** – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

**GPE** – Global Partnership in Education

**KII** – Key Informant Interview

**MoE** – Ministry of Education

**NGO** – Non Governmental Organisation

**SDP** – School Development Plan

**SIP** – School Improvement Plans

**SMS** – School Management Shura

# 1. INTRODUCTION

*"We must make a journey around the world to see if a back door has perhaps been left open."*

*Heinrich von Kleist, On a Theatre of Marionettes*

Over the past decade, addressing gender inequality and promoting education has been a key tenet of humanitarian and development assistance in Afghanistan. And, to a large and remarkable extent, this effort has been successful, as millions of girls have entered school, thanks to a joint effort from the Government of Afghanistan and the international community.

However, as highlighted in 2012 by the participants to the Tokyo conference, access to education is still an important challenge for many children in both urban and rural areas, and it is more than ever necessary to stress the importance of promoting education, and especially girls' education. The latter, in particular, is made more difficult by cultural conventions and socio-economic constraints leading, among other things, to a stark drop between attendance at primary school (48.3% of those in age to do so) and secondary school (23.2% of those in age to do so).<sup>1</sup> Previous research studies conducted by *Samuel Hall* have highlighted problems in terms of quantity and supply (lack of infrastructure and availability) as well as of quality of education provided (absence of teachers and poor quality of teaching).<sup>2</sup> More recently, the Executive Director of UNICEF, visiting girls' schools in October 2013, reiterated that, despite significant gains, the future of Afghan girls' education remained largely uncertain.<sup>3</sup>

Over the past few years, a worsening security situation and the international community's focus on short-term development goals have indeed put these gains at risk and it has become urgent to hold onto the progress that has been made while developing longer-term approaches. In this regard, one strategic lesson that can be learned from the past decade and the experiences of multiple girls' education programmes and initiatives, is *"that the definition of gender roles is so central in Afghan society and culture that any perceived or planned changes require consultations, not only with the individual household but rather with the larger local community. Men and women to a large extent share the same cultural ethos and values, including their conception of gender roles, and they seek to validate these within their local communities."*<sup>4</sup>

This strong emphasis on community participation and mobilisation has gradually become a cornerstone of any sustainable educational approach in Afghanistan. Community mobilization is generally defined as *"a capacity-building process through which community individuals, groups, or organizations plan, carry out, and evaluate activities on a participatory and sustained basis to improve their health and other needs, either on their own initiative or stimulated by others."*<sup>5</sup> It is the fundamental element that empowers individuals, households and communities by giving them the

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<sup>1</sup> Central Statistics Office (2014), *National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-2012*, Kabul, Afghanistan, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> DMOYA/UNICEF/UNFPA/UNICEF/Samuel Hall, *A Participatory Assessment of the Afghan Youth*, 2013,

<sup>3</sup> See UNICEF, October 2013 at [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan\\_70759.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan_70759.html)

<sup>4</sup> World Bank (2005), *National Reconstruction and Poverty reduction – the Role of Women in Afghanistan's Future - 2005*, p.126

<sup>5</sup> Howard-Grabman, L., and Snetro, G. 2003. *How to mobilize communities for health and social change*. Baltimore, MD: Health Communication Partnership.

opportunity to influence and control the decisions and resources that affect them. From 'beneficiaries' or 'recipients' of services and grants, communities become the real actors of their development and decide what their priorities are – which improves collective ownership and increases sustainability.

Symmetrically, with the community mobilization approach, the role of the development actor shifts from a more traditional one of 'benefactor' or 'advisor' to that of 'facilitator'. This is one of the objectives of the Basic Education Program for Afghanistan (BEPA), a joint program by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Afghanistan's Ministry of Education of (MoE), co-funded by the Swiss Development Cooperation. The program is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and aims to strengthen teacher education and to promote gender equality in education. In order to tackle increase girls' access to education, the GIZ BEPA initiative is implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and has two overarching objectives:

- Support girls' attendance at secondary school
- Enable an increase in the number of qualified female teachers

In practice, these two objectives are reached through four interlinked outcomes that strongly rely on community mobilization and participation:

- 1) Encouragement of girls to attend upper secondary schools (grade 10-12) and attend Technical Training Colleges (TTCs) or satellite TTCs upon successful graduation for grades 13 and 14;
- 2) Promotion of girls' education through community based schools and Islamic education institutions (madrasas);
- 3) Community mobilization to increase the acceptance of female teachers and girls finishing secondary school;
- 4) Capacity development in the Teacher Education Directorate (TED) through establishing a functional gender unit within the TED."<sup>6</sup>

Under its third outcome, BEPA created a pilot programme strengthening school shuras and promoting girls' education through community mobilization, in line with the national policy of the MoE. Indeed, the school shuras are called for by the Ministry of Education in the '*2012 Policy Guidelines for Community-based Education*'. The goal is to increase community involvement – parents, students, and further members of the community – in the schools and to address the obstacles to girls' secondary education through this community-based structure. Community mobilization is particularly important in Afghanistan given the importance of local-level and informal authorities in making decisions about what is socially and culturally appropriate in the community, and the role that this type of institutions can play in guaranteeing the sustainability of outcomes.

The first phase of the Pilot programme ended in August 2014. The present study was commissioned to help understanding the impact of this programming, its sustainability and potential for replicability. It is timely given the current political and security transition and the potential increase in socio-political changes and general instability it may induce. This evolution will impact future interventions in rural areas; understanding the strengths, weaknesses, impact and consequences of community-based interventions on girls' education is therefore crucial.

The present study was designed to answer to three main objectives:

### **1. Firstly, from a strategic perspective,**

It will aim at reviewing the relevance and impact of the strategic choice made by GIZ BEPA's to use community mobilization as a conduit for the promotion of girls' secondary education.

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<sup>6</sup> GIZ, Terms of Reference, p. 4

## 2. Secondly, from an evaluative perspective,

It will aim at evaluating the quality of implementation, the impact, the sustainability and the replicability of BEPA's fourth component and assessing verifiable changes traceable to BEPA interventions.

## 3. Thirdly, from a programming perspective,

It will provide GIZ with practical recommendations for the improvement and potential extension of the programme.

Ultimately, the end goal of the GIZ-BEPA initiative is to assess whether community participation and participatory approaches can positively impact the mind-set, attitudes, and practices of a community as a whole – men and women, children and adults. As highlighted in the 2005 World Bank report quoted earlier, *“Gender gaps are widespread in health, education, access to and control over resources, economic opportunities and power and political voice, and while women and girls bear the direct cost of these inequalities, the negative effects are felt throughout the society.”*<sup>7</sup> By promoting a participatory approach towards girls' education, GIZ-supported School Management Shuras (SMS) may be the cornerstone of a real behavioral change, while initiating a longer-term social and economic development process within the targeted communities.

### Key findings of the World Bank / Samuel Hall 2014 Gender Report

According to a 2014 World Bank / Samuel Hall report, the key challenges for improving female education are:

- **Poor education infrastructure** – Many schools still do not have enclosing walls, lack buildings, books and access to clean drinking water, and have poor sanitation.
- **Schools are still targeted in attacks** – While attacks on schools seem to have slowed in recent months, the last seven years have witnessed many atrocities.
- **Few qualified female teachers** – There are not enough female teachers to meet the demands for segregated schools.
- **Lack of support for female teachers** – Female teachers with children do not have access to day-care facilities or kindergartens, and Afghanistan's poor transport infrastructure makes it difficult for many women to work far from their homes.
- **Perceived low value of female education** – Many parents still do not recognise the importance of sending their daughters to school beyond primary school age. This is particularly pronounced at university level.

Indicator	WB 2005 <sup>1</sup>	WB 2012 Report	2012 Sources
Percentage of primary school students who are female	34% (NA)	40% (2,141,833)	Ministry of Education 1390 Data Set – “Students Grade Level Gender”
Percentage of secondary school students who are female	-	35% (513,320)	Ministry of Education 1390 Data Set – “Students Grade Level Gender”
Percentage of secondary higher school students who are female	-	34% (246,648)	Ministry of Education 1390 Data Set – “Students Grade Level Gender”
Percentage of university students who are women	19% (5,890)	19% (14,811)	Central Statistics Organisation - “Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2011-2012”
Percentage of teachers who are women	28% (19,600)	31% (53,636)	Central Statistics Organisation - “Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2011-2012”

Source: World Bank (2014), “Women's Role in Afghanistan's Future – Taking Stock of Achievements and Continued Challenges” – WB/Samuel Hall, Kabul, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> World Bank (2005), National Reconstruction and Poverty reduction – the Role of Women in Afghanistan's Future – 2005, p.xi

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### Research Framework

Going beyond a simple evaluation framework, the present case study aims at analysing the specifics of the issue GIZ is trying to address through this component of the BEPA, looking specifically at the issue of girls' education and the articulation with community mobilization. The overarching research question it tackles is:

***To what extent is the use of community mobilization on girls' education both relevant in the broader context (themes 1 and 2) and to what extent is it being used and applied effectively by GIZ (themes 3 and 4)?***

In order to provide GIZ with lessons learned and provide a robust review of what has been done so far through BEPA's pilot programme, the research was framed using the OECD-DAC evaluation framework and its 5 key dimensions.

The evaluation team used the five evaluation criteria defined by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC). The OECD-DAC definitions of these criteria are as follows:<sup>8</sup>

**Relevance:** "The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies.

**Effectiveness:** "The extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance."

**Efficiency:** "A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results."

**Impact:** "Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended."

**Sustainability:** "The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed."

### Methodology

The research was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative information in order to triangulate information from multiple sources and tools in the **three provinces targeted by the pilot: Balkh, Takhar and Badakhshan**. To measure the impact of the GIZ programme and be able to draw socio-economic and pedagogic comparisons, the research was based on a **comparative quantitative survey** and data was collected from both GIZ (test group) and non-GIZ schools in the same areas (control group) in three provinces.

The following GIZ supported and non-GIZ supported schools were visited in Balkh, Takhar and Badakhshan. Two districts per province were surveyed with the following breakdown:

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<sup>8</sup> OECD-DAC (2002), "Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management," OECD, Paris, [www.oecd.org/development/peer-reviews/2754804.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/development/peer-reviews/2754804.pdf).



**Table 2-1: Targeted Schools (Test and Control Groups)**

Province	District	GIZ Schools	Non GIZ Schools
Balkh	Khulm	Amin Hussain	Mahasti
		Khawja Burhan	Naheed Shaheed
	Dawalatabad	Paye Mashhad	Rabia Balkhi
Badakhshan	Baharak	Khair Abad	Baharak's high school
		Chapchi Yardar	Dashte Farukh
	Argo	Wahadat	Ganda Chashma
Takhar	Khuja Ghar	Khuja Ghar High School	Amu
	Yangi Qala	Bibi Fahima	Kaftar Ali
		Jilga	Abdul Rahim

▪ **Qualitative Data Collection**

**Qualitative data** has been collected by the Samuel Hall research team in 3 provinces using a variety of tools and methods. These tools were developed to capture perceptions of various stakeholders at the community level, both inside and outside the schools. They also aimed at collecting qualitative data on the state of the school, management practices and the level of interactions with and acceptance by the community. In each of the 18 communities surveyed, the following tools were used:

- **In-depth interviews with community leaders (18)** - In each community, semi-structured interview guidelines were used to interview community leaders. The objective of these interviews was to triangulate information provided in the schools, map out the local governance structures and their interactions with the SMS, and get insights on community acceptance and perceptions on the work of SMSs and on girls' education.
- **Focus Group Discussions (18)** – 18 FGDs were organised to foster a dialog between stakeholders involved in school management and girls' education at the community level. FGD were moderated by national consultants and gathered male and female respondents from the following categories of respondents: teachers; school managers; community leaders; community members and students. The FGD guidelines covered a range of issues from community satisfaction and reaction to the work of the SMSs to the evolution and changes – If any – that the SMSs brought in at the school and community levels.
- **School Management Shura Observation Tool (18)** – For each school visited, the research team was asked to collect qualitative data and observations to fill in an observation checklist. The SMS observation tool was designed to get comparable data on each of the schools on a series of aspects: school management and institutionalisation; school records; level of equipment and quality of school environment etc.
- **Case Studies (18)** – In each community, a qualitative individual case study was conducted aiming at gathering particular insights on the experience of girls attending school. Case studies were designed to get information on the reaction of families to girls going to school, the perception of students on the quality of education they receive and the studying conditions in their school.
- **Key Informant Interviews** – At the Kabul level and at the district level, international and national consultants conducted rounds of interviews with key stakeholders, including: staff members of the BEPA, of the World Bank funded EQUIP initiative, of the DED and of other

NGOs working on education issues in the provinces covered for the study. Key informant interviews were conducted based on semi-structured guidelines and adjusted to each kind of respondents, based on their area of expertise to collect the most relevant data from each of them.

The following table provides an overview of the qualitative data collected in each province during the 3-week fieldwork:

**Table 2-2: Overview of Qualitative Data Collection (Breakdown by district)**

Province	District	Tools			
		CL	FGD	SMS	CS
Balkh	Khulm	4	4	4	4
	Dawalatabad	2	2	2	2
Badakhshan	Baharak	4	4	4	4
	Argo	2	2	2	2
Takhar	Khuja Ghar	2	2	2	2
	Yangi Qala	4	4	4	4
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>

#### Quantitative Data Collection

**Quantitative data** – The present research is based on a large quantitative survey, composed of the four following components. These different surveys enabled the research team to compare perceptions about the BEPA pilot, the SMS and the schools, as well as girls' education more broadly across these 4 groups:

- Community survey (20 respondents per community)
- Parent survey (20 respondents per community)
- Student survey (30 respondents per community)
- Teacher survey (5 respondents per community)

**Table 2-3: Final Sampling**

		Type of community	Number of communities	Type of survey	Target # of respondents per community	Total respondents
<b>Total (Badakhshan, Balkh, Takhar) surveys, by type</b>	<i>GIZ BEPA</i>	9	Student	30	<b>273</b>	
			Parent	20	<b>179</b>	
			Teacher	5	<b>46</b>	
			Community	20	<b>183</b>	
	<i>Non-GIZ BEPA</i>	9	Student	30	<b>274</b>	
			Parent	20	<b>178</b>	
			Teacher	5	<b>45</b>	
			Community	20	<b>184</b>	
<b>Total surveys</b>					<b>1350</b>	<b>1362</b>

For each subgroup, the final sample size was determined, in collaboration with GIZ-BEPA, to ensure the representativeness of each sample and the accuracy of our conclusions.<sup>9</sup>

Because community members and parents could present overlaps, these two categories were surveyed through a common questionnaire with a filter question at the beginning in order to be able to differentiate the two groups in the quantitative analysis. There were therefore 3 quantitative questionnaires used in the field: one for teachers, one for female students and one for parents and community members.

The initial target for quantitative data collection was 1350 questionnaires. The research team has exceeded this target, having completed a total of 1363 quantitative questionnaires, broken down as summarised in the above table 2.3.

**Sampling** – Sampling methodology varied for each type of respondents.

- **Female students and teachers** – The research team used the lists provided by the schools (both GIZ and non-GIZ schools) to make a first random selection of respondents, who were asked to come to the schools for the interviews. To make up the targets, further students were randomly selected directly in the schools to make up for the students and teachers who could not make it to the interviews. School management helped the research team in identifying further students, when the first round of random selection was not enough to meet the targets. That was most frequently the case in Balkh province where the summer vacation had started and made it more difficult to access students. Interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis within the vicinities of the school. Enumerators were asked to find private spots within the school to guarantee the confidentiality of the data collected and make sure that respondents were at ease with the interview process.
- **Parents and Community Members** – A snowball methodology was used to identify and interview parents. Through discussions with school managers, students and community leaders, parents were identified in the communities and enumerators went to their homes to interview them. For community members, enumerators randomly selected respondents on the streets and in the local market.

## Limitations and Challenges in data collection

- The **month of Ramadan** limited the availability of participants, especially parents. The combination of high temperatures and Ramadan forced many respondents to stay home instead of participating in surveys and limited the time teams could stay in each community.
- **Summer vacation:** Most schools were closed due to summer vacation in Balkh. This limited availability of participants, especially students and teachers. The SH team was therefore dependent of the school principals to help arrange some students and teachers to come to school for surveying purposes.
- **Cultural taboos:** Due to the delicate of the topics addressed, it was sometimes difficult to freely speak to respondents when trying to understand traditional/ cultural reasons for not permitting girls to leave the houses once they have reached puberty. Participants were especially reserved in speaking about cultural restrictions ‘jawaan’ women (young women) face when reaching puberty in both mixed gender and same gender Focus Group Discussions. This was circumvented by asking participants to explain cultural norms and tradition in isolation from girls’ education.
- **Gender distribution:** The gender distribution amongst parents and community members was not balanced:

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<sup>9</sup> Using a 90% confidence interval and a margin of error of 7%.

- Nearly all parent questionnaires were conducted with women. Researchers had to go to students' homes to speak with parents. During the day, when research was conducted, most male parents were busy working on their fields or other jobs. Therefore, the research team was left with interviewing mothers as respondents for parent surveys.
  - Most community questionnaires were conducted with men. While conducting community member surveys in the local markets and villages, enumerators only found men in public open places.
- **Absence of baseline and midline surveys:** To better assess the third pillar of the GIZ-BEPA initiative, a dynamic and longitudinal assessment would have naturally been better – using a coherent evaluation framework including baseline, midline and endline surveys. However, as no data has been collected on the surveyed schools during the inception phase of the project, the evaluation team favoured a comparative approach with non-GIZ schools (for a total of 18 schools) to mitigate the impact of external socio-economic factors and draw an accurate, albeit indicative, picture of the SMS pilot initiative.

# 3. Evaluating the GIZ Pilot at the School Level

## EVALUATION OF THE PILOT AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL: KEY FINDINGS

### SMS Membership

- ✓ Most of the GIZ-supported SMSs fell short of fulfilling the 30% gender quota required by the programme, even if the female participation is still significant.
- ✓ GIZ-supported SMSs fare slightly better than the non-GIZ ones in that regard. Amongst GIZ schools, Khawja Burhan in Khulm district is a notable exception as it only counts one female member.
- ✓ Within GIZ-SMSs, women have been able to carve specific role and responsibilities for themselves and contribute actively to the SMS. Yet, the transformative power of structures like the SMS on gender dynamics is limited and women remain mainly tasked with 'women's issues'.

### SMS Functioning

- ✓ In accordance with SMS regulations, SMS members in both types of schools have reported regularly holding and attending monthly meetings. The level of absenteeism for monthly meetings is low.
- ✓ Observations from the field showed that SMSs from both types of schools were well aware of their responsibilities and implementing them thoroughly.
- ✓ GIZ-supported SMSs are more likely to go beyond the simple scope of their responsibilities and to adjust their role to the needs of girls in the communities, adding on ad hoc functions, such as keeping an eye on violence against children or convincing parents to let girls do their homework for example.
- ✓ The level of awareness about and interactions with SMSs of students and teachers is satisfying in both types of schools, with GIZ faring slightly better on important indicators such as students' awareness about the existence of the SMS.

### Impact of SMS on School Environment

- ✓ The GIZ pilot had a significant impact on the environment of the schools it supported, through the efficient provision of material and equipment. In this regard, GIZ schools fare much better than their non-GIZ counterparts.
- ✓ Another key dimension on which the GIZ pilot has an impact is on the presence of female teachers, one of the key objectives of the programme. Here too, the difference between GIZ and non-GIZ supported schools is clear.

### Impact of SMS on Quality of Education

- ✓ Parents and students are satisfied with the quality of education provided in GIZ-supported schools. Yet, the difference between GIZ and non-GIZ schools is more nuanced than is the case for the school environment, suggesting a more general dynamic of improvement of pedagogical skills.
- ✓ In both types of school, the level of satisfaction of students with the methods, skills and behaviour of their teachers is high. The lowest level of satisfaction was recorded in Takhar province.
- ✓ Students in GIZ schools were significantly more likely to report an improvement in teachers' pedagogical skills and knowledge than in non-GIZ schools, another indication of the impact of the pilot.
- ✓ The good quality of education services provided to community has an impact on girls' education as it enters into the calculations of parents who take decision about their daughters' education.

### Institutionalisation of SMSs

- ✓ The SMS structure has a clear impact on transparency and accountability within the school. The collective structure of decision-making means that all members of the shura are aware of the resources available and of their allocation, making it difficult for members to cheat the system or divert funds.
- ✓ SMSs from both types of schools reported dense interactions with local actors, including community leaders and DED in particular. Non-GIZ schools were slightly more connected to local authorities.
- ✓ Schools have developed their own horizontal links and share information, and sometimes, lessons learned, a positive sign of institutionalisation of these entities.

The following sections give an in depth evaluation of the GIZ BEPA Pilot Project and draw the main features of the GIZ pilot by analysing the impact of the pilot on girls' education at two main levels of analysis:

1. **At the school level:** the following section reviews the functioning and concrete impact of the SMS supported by GIZ on girls' school and education
2. **At the community level:** the evaluation will then look at the mechanisms ensuring community mobilization, their efficiency, sustainability and impact on girls' education.

## At the school level: Efficiency, relevance and impact of SMSs on girls' schools

### How Well Do These Structures Function On The Ground?

- **Membership of SMSs**

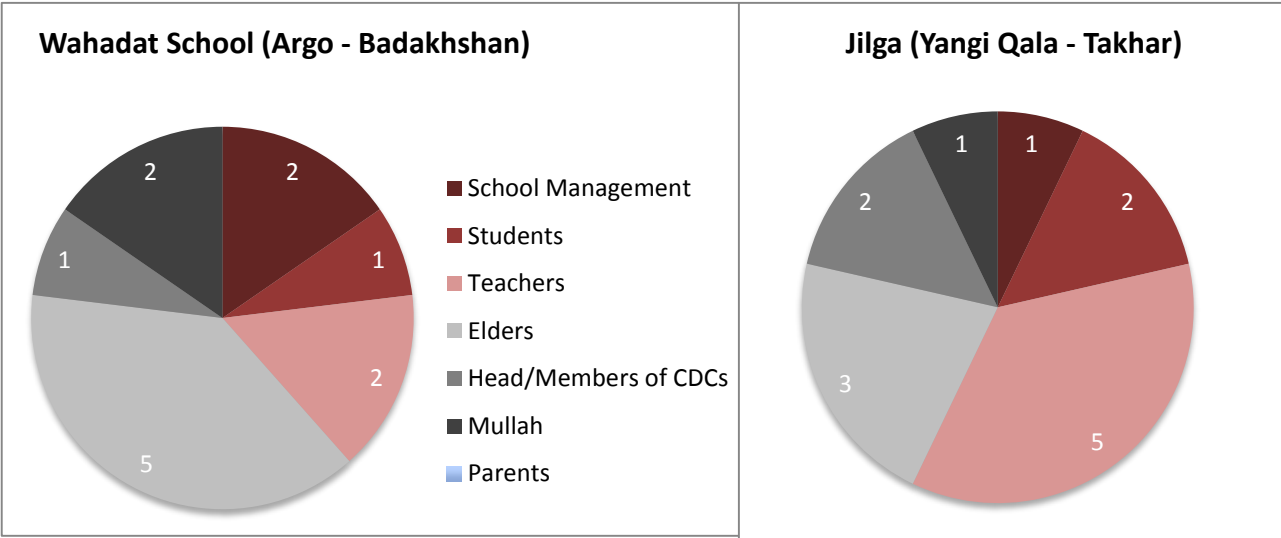
Fieldwork observations and qualitative data have shown that **overall SMSs in both GIZ supported and non-supported schools were functioning well** in terms of membership, awareness of their responsibilities and activities. The following table gives more detail on each of these dimensions.

#### Membership of the SMS

**Table 3-1 SMS membership (gender breakdown)**

BADAKHSHAN			
Name of the School	GIZ?	# of members	# of female members
Chapchi Yardar (Baharak)	√	16	5
Khair Abad (Baharak)	√	16	3
Wahadat (Argo)	√	16	4
Baharak Girls' High School (Baharak)		15	3
Dashte Farukh (Baharak)		15	3
Ganda Chashma (Argo)		16	4
BALKH			
Amin Hussain (Khulm)	√	13	9
Khwaja Burhan (Khulm)	√	13	1
Paye Mashhad (Dawalatabad)	√	17	5
Mahasti (Khulm)		11	2
Nahee Shaheed (Khulm)		15	8
Rabia Balkhi (Dawlatabad)		15	7
TAKHAR			
Jilga (Yangi Qala)	√	16	5
Bibi Fahima (Yangi Qala)	√	16	3
Khuja Ghar Girls' High School (Khuja Ghar)	√	16	3
Amu (Khuja Ghar)		15	2
Kaftar Ali (Yangi Qala)		13	1
Abdul Rahim (Yangi Qala)		15	3

According to the programme guidelines, School Management Shuras (SMS) in girls' schools are composed of approximately 13 to 16 members. The programme also plans for 30% of SMS members to be women.<sup>10</sup> Each SMS has 2 representatives from the local shura, while the rest of the members consist of a mix of teachers, parents, students, and religious leaders, the principal of the schools taking the role of head of the SMS.<sup>11</sup> SMS Observations conducted in all 9 GIZ supported schools across Badakhshan, Balkh and Takhar confirmed that the shuras supported by GIZ had been established according to the plan. SMSs in the field are indeed characterised by the variety of stakeholders wanted by the programme. As summarised in table 3.1 above, SMSs tend to be relatively large. The following graphs give an overview of stakeholders' participation in the SMSs supported by GIZ:



All the schools visited presented a similar proportion of community members vs. staff and students of the schools, with a proportion of parents involved varying slightly from one school to the other. The same was true of SMSs in non-GIZ schools, which showed a similar spread of categories of members. Overall, the composition of SMSs is well balanced, except for a certain **under-representation of students**, who are only represented by 1 or 2 members against 10 to 15 adults. Giving a voice to youth is not easy in communities where age is an important factor of authority and SMSs could be used to make sure that this is systematized. It would also help the SMSs keeping in touch with the needs and issues of students.

**Yet, most of GIZ-supported SMS fell short of fulfilling the 30% gender quota required by the programme, even if the female participation is still significant** (often around 25%) and if GIZ-supported SMSs fare slightly better than the non-GIZ ones in that regard. Amongst GIZ schools, Khawja Burhan in Khulm district is a notable exception as it only counts one female member.

Data has also shows interesting findings when comparing SMS membership of GIZ supported to non-GIZ supported schools as well as provincial patterns. In Badakhshan and Takhar, non-GIZ SMS tend to be slightly smaller and count less female members than their GIZ counterpart. In Takhar in particular, female membership seems a bit more challenging for non-GIZ SMS. In Balkh province, on the other hand, female membership is easier to achieve in both GIZ and non-GIZ shuras and some of the schools visited for the present evaluation counted a majority of female members.

<sup>10</sup> GIZ internal documents on SMS information sessions in GIZ supported schools in Balkh and Takhar and KILs with programme staff.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

## Gender Dynamics within SMSs

GIZ-supported SMS are designed to be gender-sensitive. Through the inclusion of female members in the SMS, GIZ hopes to better address girls' educational needs at the same time as it empowers female members of the education system to take responsibilities. One of the objectives of GIZ is the participation of women in the school development process and transparent financial management/accountability. It is therefore important to assess the level and quality of participation of female members to the affairs of SMSs.

All respondents were well aware of the importance of gender dimensions and of gender-based challenges related to education, in and of itself a sign that the training sessions provided by GIZ have some impact.

However, **qualitative fieldwork highlighted interesting gender dynamics within the shuras.**

Qualitative fieldwork showed that, in both GIZ supported and non-supported SMSs, a gender-based repartition of responsibilities occurred and female SMS members had different responsibilities than their male counterparts:

- *“Female SMS members are particularly involved in **sharing information and raising awareness about girls’ education**, sending them to school, letting them do **homework** and particularly **speaking to students’ mothers**.”*  
**SMS Observation Tool at non-GIZ supported school, Khuja Ghar, Takhar**

- *“The women in our SMS usually **speak to students’ parents**, to students themselves and **have a more consultative role**. Men handle the physical work of building or renovating or going to the bazar to buy things. Men also have a consultative role by dealing directly with other men from the bazar or authorities. But we all sit together in our monthly meetings to take decisions together based on their activities and experience in their field.”*  
**SMS Observation Tool at GIZ supported school in Baharak, Badakhshan**

Overall, female members are much more in contact with parents – especially mothers – and deal with problems directly related to girls' education, including raising awareness, dropouts, and absenteeism. Male members, on the other hand, are more responsible for solving problems, where contact with other men in markets, organizations and local authorities is required. Male members of the SMSs are usually also in charge of procurement and organisation of construction work related to the school. This distribution of responsibilities is unsurprising and mirrors that which occurs within other community governance bodies, as typically women would 'deal with women's issues' in the community shuras and CDCs. The main determinant of this repartition of responsibilities is the inability for women to interact with men and to occupy public functions, as well as the restrictions of movement they can be subjected to. This gender-based division of roles shows the relevance of the modalities of the pilot implemented by GIZ as they give female members the opportunity to negotiate their roles within the structure, without antagonising communities.

Yet, it is important to assess whether the set up of the SMS has a more decisively 'transformative' impact on gender dynamics and allows female members to go beyond the field of 'women's issues' to access decision-making power and influence in other fields of action of the SMS. Here data from the field draw a more nuanced picture:

- *“Women work within their own responsibilities. That is mostly with other women, to solve their problems.”*  
**FGD at GIZ-supported Jilga school in Yangi Qala, Takhar**



- *“Women are very active in the School Management Shura, they have their own responsibilities. These differ slightly from the work men do in this shura. Women speak to families and parents and do more consultative work, whereas men go to the bazar and buy things, deal with other men and even authorities when needed. This way, we respect the man’s and women’s role in society and give it a place in our work. But when it comes to making decisions, **we all sit together, report about our activities and consult each other to solve certain problems and take decisions together.**”*  
FGD at non-GIZ supported school in Khulm, Balkh

The role of women in decision-making and in other areas of work than traditional female tasks seems to vary quite significantly from one place to the other. Yet, only in a few instances, qualitative observations revealed a role that would go beyond women’s issues, suggesting that the traditional repartition of roles remains the norm in GIZ and non-GIZ supported schools. Still, by their mere participation in the SMS, female members do take part in the development of the schools and – to a certain extent – to the reinforcement of transparency and accountability.

**This shows that SMSs have been able to incorporate gender sensitivity into their implementation and have found suitable activities for women within traditional boundaries. Women have been able to carve their specific role and responsibilities and contribute actively to the SMS, while keeping a high level of acceptance within communities.**<sup>12</sup> Yet, the transformative power of structures like the SMS on gender dynamics remains limited while the SMS structure offers an interesting opportunity for women to incrementally access different types of responsibilities. In particular, SMSs open opportunities for women to develop their participation in decision-making, leadership and management, areas that do not require women to be go out or to endorse a public role, and which could represent interesting first step to strengthen women’s role in the SMS without endangering the sustainability of the structure.

#### ▪ **Activities of the SMSs**

SMS responsibilities and activities are diverse. Working on school improvement, SMSs brainstorm over, design and implement a School Improvement Plan (SIP) and a School Development Plan (SDP).<sup>13</sup> All SMSs’ members (GIZ supported and non-GIZ supported) are given an initial introductory training on SMS activities and responsibilities by the School Management Shura Department at a provincial level.<sup>14</sup>

According to this training, SMS members have the following job description and responsibilities:

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<sup>12</sup> Supported by SMS observation; CL; FGDs; CS from Badakhshan, Balkh and Takhar

<sup>13</sup> GIZ BEPA School Development – Design Workshop Manual (2013)

<sup>14</sup> Supported by KII with GIZ BEPA Project Manager Takhar

**Table 3-2 SMS Responsibilities**

SMS ToR		
1. Prepare SIP	11. Create better cooperation with administration and teaching staff	19. Identify community opposition to (girls') education
2. Prepare annual school curriculum plan	12. Ensure enrolment of students according to enrolment criteria	20. Cooperate with male and female students to ensure better learning in school
3. Improve school's spot activities	13. Collect data and report teacher and student absenteeism	21. Encourage the community to donate land for further school construction
4. Improve school environment for students	14. Ensure text books for students	22. General problem solving at school
5. Organize school's administration and procurement matters	15. Ensure that teacher teach and use the time allocated for teaching	23. Encourage/ motivate community to send their children to school
6. Monitor quality of school construction	16. Collect data on security in school environment and disseminate to DED and local community	24. Motivate students to do their homework
7. Approve construction documents	17. Involve community members in grant monitoring and other school activities	25. Cooperate with local authorities/ organs to improve school
8. Cooperate with contractors	18. Improve school environment and maintain these improvements	26. Prevent students from doing wrong things
9. Provide timely administrative reports to EQUIP		27. Report any illegal activities done by students to relevant authorities
10. Deliver SIP to PED and get approval		

Additionally, in 2013 with the help of EQUIP, GIZ BEPA supported 9 selected schools across 3 provinces (Badakhshan, Takhar and Balkh) as part of the GIZ BEPA 5-step School Development Pilot.<sup>15</sup> The 5 steps of the pilot are:

1. **Motivation:** contacting local partners and stakeholders on a district level to involve them in the implementation of their SIPs and SDPs
2. **Diagnostic Analysis:** conduct a diagnostic analysis of schools' needs by identifying and prioritizing what needs to be improved in its learning environment
3. **School vision:** prioritizing school improvement activities based on the school vision and development strategy
4. **SIP Planning and Implementation:** GIZ BEPA assists SMSs in developing a SIP, establish a management system, including steering and structure, a communication policy, cooperation agreements and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) measures. Furthermore, SMSs are assisted in how to apply for grants and how to conduct M&E and document observations
5. **Evaluation:** evaluating school development by SMS members. SMSs should implement SIPs based on needs assessments, goals and school development strategies.

**Both GIZ supported and non-supported SMSs had reported to have a written/documented SIP, meaning that this objective has been reached by GIZ.<sup>16</sup>**

<sup>15</sup> GIZ BEPA School Development Model Pilot internal document

<sup>16</sup> Supported by SMS Observation Tool conducted in Badakhshan, Balkh and Takhar

## SMS Responsibilities and Activities in practice

Data from SMS Observation Tools, conducted with 18 SMSs of GIZ supported and non-supported, shows that **all SMSs were well aware of their responsibilities and that some of the requirements of the ToRs of SMSs are followed correctly in the field.**<sup>17</sup> The main SMS responsibilities and activities named by SMS Observation Tool respondents were:<sup>18</sup>

- Attending monthly meetings to identify challenges in and current needs of the school; discuss and analyse conducted activities and come up with further school improvement plans and measures
- Monitoring drop out rates and absenteeism
- Implementing and observe implementation of SIP
- Caretaking and maintenance of school building and environment
- Improving schools' teaching and learning environment
- Improving security in and on the way to school
- Solving problems in schools
- Advocating girls' education by primarily speaking to parents and convincing them to send their girls to school
- Informing parents and other community members about the benefits of girls' education
- Conducting community mobilization in terms of asking community for monetary and non-monetary contributions/ donations/ provisions for the school, such as textbooks, desks and building school walls and bathrooms
- Involving and informing community members about school activities, challenges and progress

Although SMSs from both type of schools have reported conducting activities according to the SMS' list of responsibilities, **qualitative data shows that GIZ supported SMSs gave more detailed accounts of their responsibilities and named additional activities as part of their portfolio, suggesting a higher commitment of GIZ supported SMSs**, as they take own initiative to conduct following additional activities:

- Employ competent and well trained teachers
- Encourage women in the community to be more active in the community
- Checking the quality of teachers, by checking if they are teaching the subjects they are supposed to teach
- Monitor expenditure of grants and procurement of goods closely
- Check for violence against students
- Check if students are receiving physical education lessons
- Speak to parents to bring back drop outs to school
- Speak to parents to let children do homework at home
- Conduct measures if girls are harassed on way to school, such as reporting this to local security authorities
- Created parents' committee, through which parents are in direct contact with teachers and headmasters

**These additional activities not only show personal engagement of SMS members, but moreover may have a positive impact on the girls education in terms of creating a safe, more engaged and better quality of learning environment for students, which enhances access to girls' education.**

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<sup>17</sup> Supported by SMS Observation Tool conducted in Badakhshan, Balkh and Takhar

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

In accordance with SMS regulations, **SMS members in both types of schools have reported regularly attending their monthly meetings.**<sup>19</sup> All SMSs hold monthly meetings, in which they report about activities conducted, financial investments, determine current challenges and needs and make a plan to continuously improve the school.<sup>20</sup> Based on reports from the field, non-attendance to these meetings is very low. If at all, between 1-2 SMS members may miss a monthly meeting. Absenteeism is primarily caused by lack of financial means to pay for travel expenses from further villages to the locations where meetings are held:

*“Sometimes other members do not come to our monthly meetings, because they are poor and come from other villages. The distances are long and they cannot afford to pay for their travel expenses. Also, some SMS members cannot attend the monthly meetings, because they have jobs. As they do not get reimbursed for coming to the meetings, it is more beneficial to them not to skip work and earn money instead.”*

#### **SMS Observation Tool conducted at Khulm, Balkh**

→ Overall, the evaluation found that the GIZ pilot – based on a pre-existing model established by EQUIP – runs smoothly and that most of the procedures highlighted in the programme guidelines are followed on the ground.<sup>21</sup> **If at all, GIZ supported SMS were only slightly more motivated, informed, organized and conducted additional school improving activities than non-GIZ supported SMS.**<sup>22</sup> These findings show that the SMS structures work very well on the ground. SMS members across both types of schools are not only well aware of their responsibilities, but are performing their activities according to SMS guidelines, implementing SIPs, countering obstacles according to their guidelines and are actively involving their communities through community mobilization to achieve SIPs and SDPs goals for overall girls’ education improvement.

#### **SMSs’ Functioning: Interactions with teachers and students**

Measuring the level of interactions between teachers, students and the SMSs is a good way to assess whether these two groups benefit fully from the establishment of the SMSs, as they are both supposed to be its direct beneficiaries.

**Students** – 99% of students surveyed in GIZ-supported schools knew about the existence of the SMS in their school, versus 81% for non-GIZ schools, suggesting a solid information policy within GIZ-schools. Yet, case studies conducted in both GIZ supported and non supported schools **students were aware of SMSs, but were not very clear on their roles and responsibilities, suggesting that the main beneficiaries of the SMSs may not be the best informed about their key functions.** This can be a potential threat to the sustainability of the project, as all beneficiaries, especially students should have means of being included in SIPs directly.

**Teachers** – The survey shows a good integration of teachers in the SMS system, as all of them knew about the existence of the SMS, and more than half respondents reported interacting personally with the SMS. In that regard, a higher proportion of teachers in non-GIZ supported schools personally interact with the SMS (76% vs. 50% in GIZ schools). For both types of schools, the main reasons for teachers to interact with SMS were a) to talk about problems at school (>90% of teacher respondents for both types of schools); and b) to discuss about cases of girls’ dropout (52% in GIZ schools and 68% in non-GIZ schools). Teachers employed in GIZ schools were more likely to list ‘to take important decisions about the school’ as one of the reasons for their interactions with the SMS (61% against 27% for non-GIZ schools).

<sup>19</sup> Supported by SMS Observation Tool conducted in Badakhshan, Balkh and Takhar

<sup>20</sup> Supported by SMS observation; CL; FGDs; CS from Badakhshan, Balkh and Takhar

<sup>21</sup> Supported by SMS observation; CL; FGDs; CS from Badakhshan, Balkh and Takhar

<sup>22</sup> Supported by SMS Observation Tool in Badakhshan, Balkh and Takhar.

→ Overall, the level of awareness and interactions of SMSs with two of the main beneficiary groups is satisfying in both types of schools, with GIZ faring slightly better on important indicators such as students’ awareness about the existence of the SMS.

### 2.3.2 What is the impact of GIZ-supported SMS on girls’ schools?

#### School Environment

##### Enhanced Equipment and Environment

One of the most significant impacts of the GIZ pilot on girls’ education regards the improvement of girls’ school environment, as demonstrated by both qualitative and quantitative data. Construction work and improved equipment represent the bulk of the activities conducted by GIZ SMSs so far. That includes more or less for each school the provision of computers, projectors, desks and chairs for example. Constructing a surrounding wall in the schools that did not already have one was also on the top of the priorities of the SMSs surveyed for this evaluation.

Examples of upgrading in GIZ-supported schools	
Bibi Fahima – Yangi Qala (Takhar)	Naswane Wahadat – Argo (Badakhshan)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Construction of a surrounding wall</li> <li>✓ Money to construct a football field</li> <li>✓ 150 chairs</li> <li>✓ Repaired the building</li> <li>✓ Container</li> <li>✓ Computers</li> <li>✓ Electricity</li> <li>✓ 10 tables</li> <li>✓ 500 books for the library</li> <li>✓ 4 cupboards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Reconstruction of the school</li> <li>✓ Collected money for a playground</li> <li>✓ Repaired generator</li> <li>✓ 488 study books</li> <li>✓ 4 bookshelves</li> <li>✓ 4 desks</li> <li>✓ 16 chairs</li> <li>✓ Lab with entire equipment</li> <li>✓ 10 computers</li> <li>✓ 20 chairs and desks for computer classes</li> </ul>

The quality of equipment and availability of material is one of the most striking difference between GIZ-supported and non-GIZ schools as 83% of students interviewed in GIZ schools rated the availability of material as “very good or somewhat good” against 61% in non-GIZ schools. The split is particularly evident in Balkh province. Furthermore, 75% of students attending GIZ-supported schools reported that the availability of material was improving in their schools against 22% for non-GIZ schools. The following graph illustrates the precise areas where GIZ’s support has had an impact:

**Figure 3-1 – Does your school have enough of the following? (% of students saying yes)**

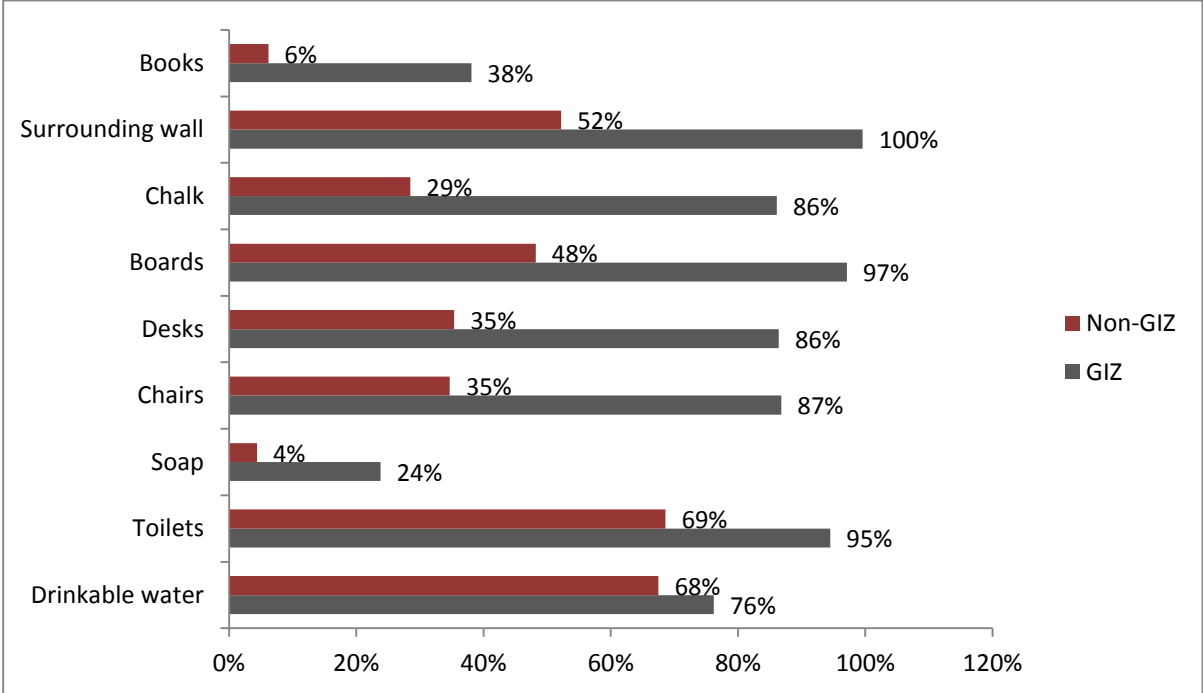


Figure 3-1 confirms the clear divide between the two types of schools and the impact that the pilot has had on the quality of equipment. It also shows that in the absence of external support, schools struggle to secure even the minimal equipment for their students, confirming the relevance of this type of interventions. Qualitative fieldwork confirmed that most non-GIZ schools were in a very poor state, with little adequate equipment, except for the Baharak Girls’ High School, located in the district centre of Baharak, and the only one which could compare favourably with GIZ-schools.

Only the provision of water, books, soap and drinkable water could be further improved in GIZ-supported schools. In contrast to GIZ supported schools, non-GIZ supported SMSs have reported lack of sufficient funding to implement school improvement plans.<sup>23</sup> Unlike GIZ supported schools, that received additional provisions such as computers, laboratories and libraries, non-supported schools went through EQUIP to received such goods from EQUIP. According to KIIs with EQUIP staffers, it seems that GIZ supported schools received provisions faster than EQUIP supported schools, since these have to wait for government authorisation to receive the grants they requested.<sup>24</sup>

**POSITIVE SYNERGY BETWEEN GIZ ACTIVITIES**

GIZ makes a difference here not only because of the material procured but also because the new material is actually used. Other evaluations of education related projects conducted by Samuel Hall showed that often computer equipment and science labs remained unused because teachers lacked the necessary skills or students did not know what to do with these. Some of these facilities had been turned into storage rooms shortly after being set up.<sup>25</sup> In schools supported by GIZ on the other hand, field observations and interviews confirmed that these new facilities were in use and that specific teachers were available, guaranteeing that this equipment had not been supplied in vain. This shows that the synergy between GIZ training and other components of the programme – such as procurement – is extremely important to ensure an efficient allocation of money and the sustainability of the overall initiative.

<sup>23</sup> Supported by SMS Observation Tool and CL conducted in Balkh and Takhar  
<sup>24</sup> Supported by KIIs conducted in Badakhshan, Balkh and Takhar  
<sup>25</sup> Samuel Hall (2013), ‘Creating a Network of Model Schools to support the future of Afghanistan’s Children: An Educational Baseline Survey for the Womanity Foundation’, commissioned by Womanity, p.19-20



**Pic.1: Classroom in GIZ-Supported Amin Hussain High School (Khulm, Balkh)**



**Pic.2: Classroom in non-GIZ supported Dashte Farukh School (Baharak, Badakhshan)**

The improved school environment fostered by the programme is not benign as it has a direct impact on girls' education in two main respects:

- **Improved school environments prove to be an incentive for girls to come to school and families to support them.** Qualitative fieldwork showed that for teachers, parents and

students libraries and most importantly, computers, play a role in the increased support for girls' education. The improved educational environment has caused an increase in the number of female students. The enhanced educational environment is a further evidence for parents and students of the quality of the education the girls receive, convincing parents that it is worth it for their daughters.

*"GIZ supported the construction of a wall. The SMS also build a well for water inside the school. This was very beneficial for female students. It led to an increase in the number of girls enrolled".*

**KII – Balkh Province**

- **The construction of surrounding walls has a direct impact on access to education**, as their absence is a major – and documented – obstacle for girls to attend school everywhere in the country. This is in particular true for higher grades, when girls approach puberty and parents fear that girls will be harassed by boys at school. As noted in the recent Gender Stocktaking exercise conducted by Samuel Hall for the World Bank: "The MoE data points out that almost half (48.2%) of all schools have no buildings, while 64% of state schools do not have a surrounding wall. (...) These deficiencies disproportionately impact girls. Where such requirements are missing, parents may be less supportive of education in general, but are more likely to keep their daughters at home than their sons."<sup>26</sup> These conclusions still stand true.

*"In the past one or two years, the school has immensely improved. Before the school did not have any boundary walls. Now, the girls feel no longer scared and come to school, where they feel safe."*

**School Management, Paye Mashad School, Balkh Province.**

The feeling of increased safety was confirmed by the survey, which showed that on average 51% of students attending GIZ schools reported that safety at school had improved, as against 38% in non-GIZ schools. The difference is particularly striking in Balkh and Badakhshan provinces with 56% and 63% respectively, against 41% and 39% in non-GIZ schools of the same province.

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<sup>26</sup> World Bank (2013), *AFGHANISTAN Women's Role in Afghanistan's Future – Taking Stock of Achievements and Continued Challenges*, p. 73-74.



**Pic.3: Science Laboratory in Ami Hussain High School (Khulm, Balkh)**

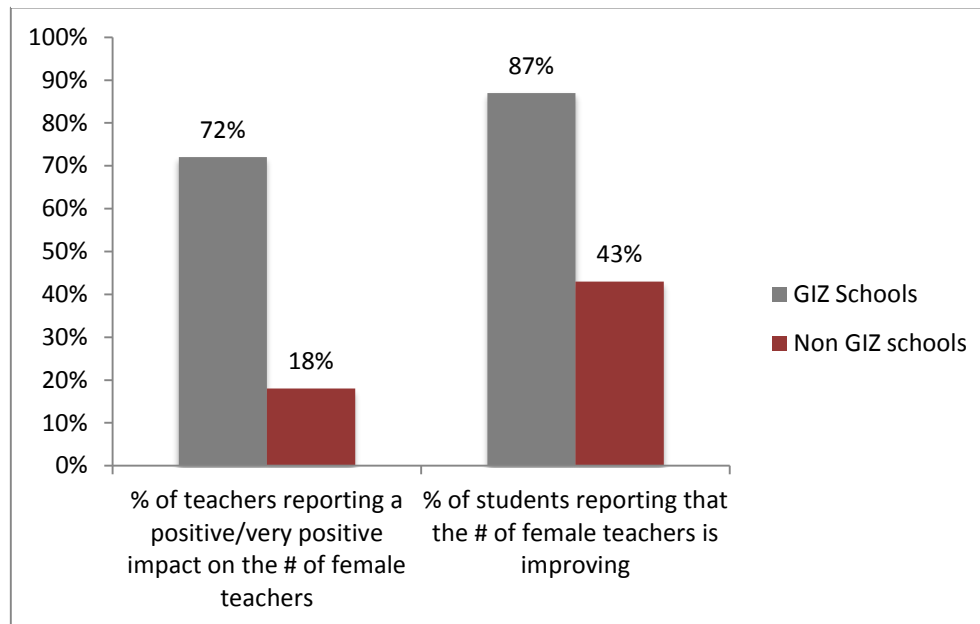


### Presence of Female Teachers

Also key for many parents and girls is the presence of female teachers. Here as well, the survey found a noticeable difference between GIZ-supported and non-GIZ supported schools, as 91% of teachers reported that there was enough female teachers in GIZ schools as against 38% of their non-GIZ counterparts.

Figure 3-2 confirms this significant difference between the two types of schools:

**Figure 3-2 Impact of SMSs on the number of female teachers (breakdown by type of schools)**



By contrast, the lack of female teachers is still an important obstacle in the schools of the control group surveyed for this study. For example, 73% of parents of students attending non-GIZ schools interviewed in Takhar province reported the number of female teachers in their daughters' schools as being 'very poor'. In several schools, the lack of female teachers was pointed at as one of the reasons why girls would not attend school – especially in the higher grades:

*"The lack of female teachers is not a problem for primary school, when the girls are very young. But for secondary and high schools, it is a real issue."*  
**Community Leader, Amu School, Khuja Bad District – Takhar Province**

## Quality of Education

On a number of metrics, the evaluation showed that parents and students were satisfied with the quality of education provided in GIZ-supported schools. Yet, the difference between GIZ and non-GIZ schools is more nuanced than is the case for the school environment, suggesting a more general dynamic of improvement of pedagogical skills.

### Pedagogy and quality of teaching

GIZ provided each school with training sessions which appear to have caused an overall improvement in the quality of education and school environment:

*“The GIZ training was very good, because teachers are now better than before, as they know how to teach classes. The training sessions for SMS members has taught them how to hold school improvement meetings and how to increase transparency by monitoring purchasing activities. Over time, this has made the school better and stronger.”*

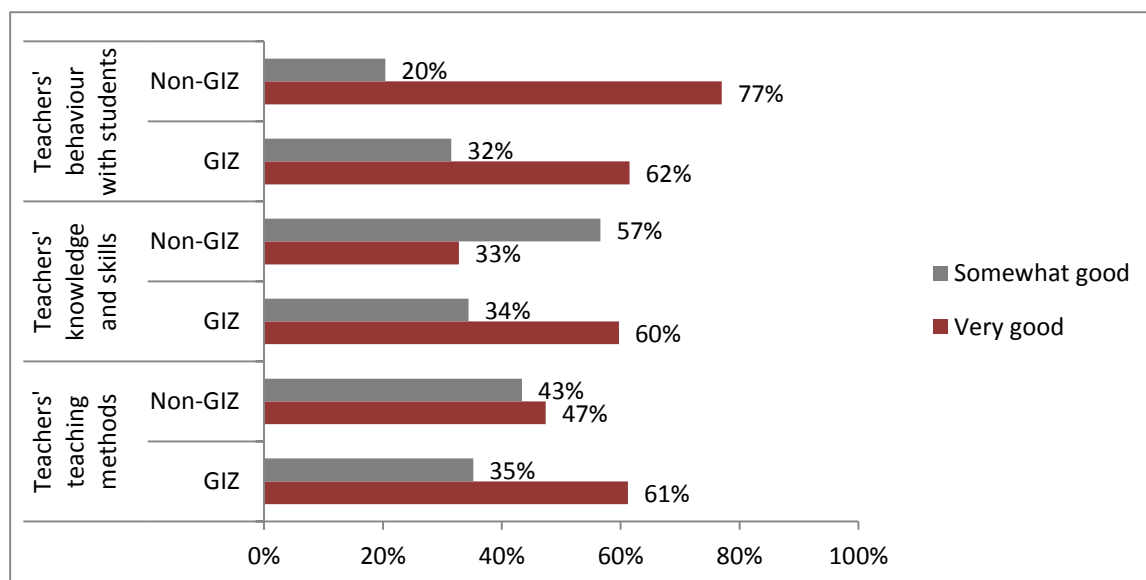
**KII with EQUIP – Baharak, Badakhshan**

*“The SMS has received training from GIZ on how to improve the school and teaching methods. This has helped teachers and the SMS to improve the level of education and has encouraged parents and the community to send their girls to school.”*

**FGD – Dawlatabad, Balkh**

This translates into the high rate of satisfaction of students with the education they receive:

**Figure 3-3 Satisfaction of students with methods, skills and behavior of teachers**



As shown in Figure 3-3, in both types of school, the level of satisfaction of students with the methods, skills and behaviour of their teachers is high. The lowest level of satisfaction was again recorded in Takhar province, where the proportion of respondents answering ‘very good’ to these metrics was significantly lower than in the two other provinces, confirming the provincial pattern observed above with the two provinces better off than Takhar. The main difference is one of nuance with students of GIZ schools more likely to rate their teachers on these metrics as ‘very good’ than their counterparts in non-GIZ schools. Yet, interestingly, when asked about the evolution of these various parameters,

students from GIZ-supported schools were significantly more likely to report an improvement, especially in regards to teaching methods and teachers’ skills.

This points again at the positive impact of the pilot, even after only two years:

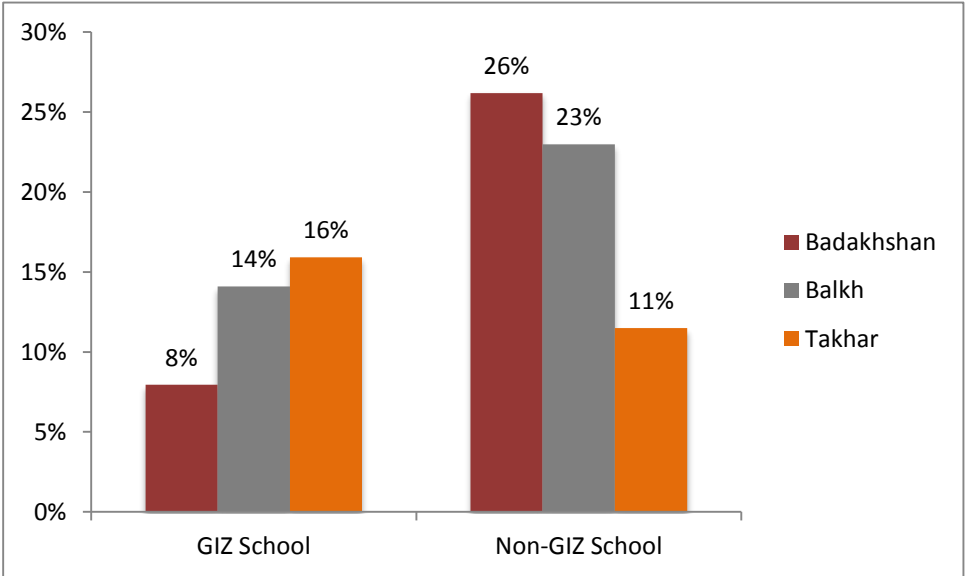
**Table 3-3 – Percent of students saying metric is improving**

Indicator	Students at GIZ schools	Students at non-GIZ schools
Teachers' teaching methods	93%	58%
Teachers' knowledge and skills	83%	43%
Teachers' behaviour with students	71%	79%

**Teacher absenteeism**

Teacher absenteeism was only rarely reported as an issue in the schools visited for this assessment. In general, teachers are absent because of illnesses or because they are needed at home, in the case of female teachers in particular. Only 20% of 91 teachers have reported to have been absent from school in the past 12 months, out of which 16% were absent because they were sick, and 2% needed to help their families at home. The survey of students confirms a relatively low level of absenteeism of teachers overall and a slightly better situation in GIZ schools, which suggests that the monitoring of SMSs does have an impact on teachers’ absenteeism:

**Figure 3-4 - % of students reporting at least 1 absence of teachers in the past month**



By speaking to teachers, parents and students, SMS members record and document cases of absenteeism, find out their causes, and address them with the relevant stakeholders, contributing to a general monitoring of absenteeism amongst teachers:<sup>27</sup>

*“As part of our SMS responsibilities, we note absenteeism. This has helped us in formalizing this process and we also try to speak to absent teachers and students. Finding out the reasons for absenteeism makes it easier for our SMS members to*

<sup>27</sup>Supported by SMS Observation Tools conducted in all schools across Badakhshan, Balkh and Takhar. Documentation of teacher and student absenteeism is part of SMS responsibilities.

*understand and speak to the parents. Going through this process of formally noting absenteeism and addressing it with people effected has helped reduce absenteeism."*

**GIZ supported school in Baharak, Badakhshan**

This robust monitoring of teachers' absenteeism is also an achievement for GIZ programme and the SMSs it supports. Here as well, in comparison with other evaluations of education programmes, GIZ's programme is a lot more convincing: a 2012 evaluation showed the issue of absenteeism as severely impacting the quality of education provided to children as well as an important discrepancy between absenteeism as reported by children and as reported by teachers themselves, two features that do not appear in GIZ-supported schools.<sup>28</sup>

→ Overall, the quality of services delivered in GIZ-supported schools is high and has improved over the past two years, as has the quality of the equipment and material that the students have access to. The difference with non-GIZ supported schools is particularly significant when it comes to material equipment and provisions but it is also visible on other important metrics such as the number of female teachers, absenteeism or improved quality of education provided.

Sending a girl to school is a calculation for parents who hope to see the future of their children, and potentially their own socio-economic situation, improved thanks to the education their daughter received. Poor education or services may simply mean that it is not worth investing in girls' education. Quality education services, modern equipment are therefore not insignificant as they have a role to play to tip off the balance in favour of girls' education within each household's calculations.

*"In general, the situation of the school has improved in the past two years. There is a playground now, a lab, computers, toilets etc. Absenteeism has decreased because students like it here now."*

**Naswane Wahadat, Argo, Badakhshan**

## How institutionalised and sustainable are GIZ-supported SMSs?

### School management

**The SMS Observation Tool shows that the impact of SMSs on school management is very positive. Interestingly, no significant difference was noted between GIZ supported and non-supported schools on that matter, suggesting that the shura model is effective in and of itself.** This positive impact may be ascribed to the fact that both GIZ supported and non-supported SMSs received training sessions in introduction to SMS, roles and responsibilities of SMS members (Supported by SMS observation).<sup>29</sup> These capacity building training sessions have had a positive impact on SMS and school management.

As part of creating SIPs and SDPs, SMS members have learned how to systematically identify existing challenges of girls' education and find solutions. Furthermore, SMS members have attained training in how to use community mobilization to increase accountability, transparency, access to girls education, improving the quality of education and school environment and therefore sustainability of programme implementation by involving various key actors from their communities:

*"SMS members have also received training from GIZ on how to increase girls' school attendance and enrolment rates, on how to convince community members to come to school."*

**SMS Observation Tool in GIZ supported school in Yangi Qala, Takhar**

<sup>28</sup> Samuel Hall (2013), 'Creating a Network of Model Schools to support the future of Afghanistan's Children: An Educational Baseline Survey for the Womanity Foundation', commissioned by Womanity, p. 21.

<sup>29</sup> Supported by SMS observation from Badakhshan, Balkh and Takhar

**Transparency and accountability** – Qualitative fieldwork showed that the SMS structure had a clear impact on transparency and accountability within the school. The collective structure of decision-making meant that all members of the shura are aware of the resources available and of their allocation, making it difficult for members to cheat the system or divert funds.

*“Everyone is involved in managing the shura. This is why it is such a success. We are all responsible and all accountable.”*

**SMS Member, Paye Mashad, Dawalatabad – Balkh**

The survey confirmed that decision-making within the schools was a collective process, under the responsibility of the shura, confirming that these institutions have not led to undue concentration of power in the hands of a few individuals: 100% of teachers in GIZ-supported schools and 98% in non-GIZ supported schools reported that important decisions were taken collectively within their schools.

The procedures established by the programme to reinforce transparency and accountability were observed directly in the field and found to work efficiently, with a system of reporting to GIZ and to the District Education Department in place in each of the SMSs. The high level of community acceptance and its awareness about the programme and its detail provides a robust mechanism of control and oversight over the SMSs’ activities and, perhaps more importantly, handling of funds. In none of the communities visited did community leaders or other stakeholders in the communities raise issues of misallocation of funds or complained about opaque decision-making.

### Relations with other institutions

Respondents from FGDs, KIIs and SMS Observation Tools have reported their SMSs to be in contact with relevant local authorities such as the DED, local shuras, the district governor, the district police head quarters, the local CDC and other humanitarian or development actors such as ACTED, AKF, AWEF, EQUIP and NAC. This suggests that the SMSs are well connected to a relevant network of actors and authorities in the three provinces where GIZ operates. The SMS Observation tool conducted in all 18 schools reveals that all schools are closely linked to the local DED, which is involved in the various steps of SIP implementation. The process is now well established and runs smoothly and in close cooperation with the DED for both GIZ-supported and non GIZ-supported schools alike:<sup>30</sup>

*“When we first started our SMS, we received a training on how to do this. In this training we were taught to also contact the local DED for support. Then we made a School Improvement Plan and sent it to DED for approval. Other schools sent such a plan to EQUIP. After these are improved, we get funding for our plans. Once we have executed our plans, we write a report, which shows how we spent the money. Then we repeat this process the next time we need more funding.”*

**SMS Observation Tool in GIZ supported school in Yangi Qala, Takhar**

*“The SMS received training from AWEF about gender improvement of girls’ education and the responsibilities of SMSs in schools. The SMS is also in contact with district authorities and with the police chief, when girls’ are being harassed. We are also in contact with the DED. We have to always include them and keep them informed about the status of our SIP and our implementation.”*

**SMS Observation Tool in non-GIZ supported school in Khuja Ghar, Takhar**

*“The SMS works together with local departments such as the DED, the governor, the security commander and the police HQ.”*

**GIZ-School Argo, Badakshan**

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<sup>30</sup> Supported by SMS observation; FGDs; CL conducted in GIZ supported and non-supported schools in Badakhshan, Balkh and Takhar

### Difference in links to local actors between schools

Although both GIZ supported and non-supported schools demonstrate high level of institutionalisation and solid relationships with governmental and non-governmental counterparts, differences were noted in the density of relationship between SMSs and their government counterparts. The **SMS Observation Tool showed a difference in terms of how well schools are linked to local authorities**. Knowledge of links between schools and local authorities was more transparent in non-GIZ supported schools that gave more detailed answers. Such schools reported being linked to local authorities such as the governor, the DED, the local police head quarters and above mentioned NGOs. This is unsurprising given that GIZ-supported schools may be more likely to turn to GIZ, while schools from the control group do not have this option.

Interestingly, qualitative fieldwork shows that schools have **developed their own horizontal links** and share information, and sometimes, lessons learned, which is a positive sign of institutionalisation of these entities.

*“Our SMS received training from the local DED about the promotion of our responsibilities...Our SMS sometimes contacts other schools and some of our members are members of several SMSs.”*

**SMS Observation Tool in GIZ supported school in Baharak, Badakhshan**

The information provided above suggests that the institutionalisation of the pilot project into a wider social structure by means of community mobilization is successful. The SMSs have been successfully linked to their government and community counterparts such as the local governors, DEDs, police headquarters, EQUIP and other NGOs. This not only increases transparency by informing different sections of the community of programme implementation plans and its status, it also reallocates responsibilities among different individuals and organs in the community.

## 4. COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION – A bridge between the school and the community?

GIZ BEPA defines community mobilization as the promotion of stakeholder dialogue with parents and relevant actors from local authorities as well as the wider community as a whole.<sup>31</sup> It is the cornerstone of GIZ programme as community mobilization is one of the conduits used to strengthen girls' education in the communities. Community mobilization plays a crucial role in SMS implementation. To strengthen their activities and impact, SMS members work together with different community actors such as religious members, shura members, the local authorities, parents, teachers and students.

### COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION: KEY FINDINGS

#### Community mobilization on the ground

- ✓ Community mobilization and the inclusion of community members in the school management is first and foremost achieved organically, as most community members seating in the SMS are 'respected members of the community'.
- ✓ Quantitative surveys in the communities indicates that **the GIZ pilot has fostered a more systematic effort of community mobilization**, as SMSs in GIZ-supported communities appear to have implemented community mobilization initiatives to a larger extent than their counterparts in non-GIZ schools.

#### Assessing community mobilization

- ✓ Although SMSs function very similarly in both GIZ supported and non-supported school communities, SMSs in GIZ supported school communities have shown to be slightly more successful in terms of community mobilization; causing not only a stronger integration of and link amongst various sections of the community but also targeting a wider public in the community.
- ✓ 51% of community members in areas with GIZ-supported schools aware of the existence of the SMS against only 33% in communities with non-GIZ supported schools.
- ✓ Interviews with community leaders confirmed the high level of information and transparency that characterise the work of the SMSs, as most community leaders had a very precise and informed idea about SMSs' responsibilities, plans and achievements for the schools.
- ✓ Quantitative data showed a dichotomy with parents from non-GIZ schools being better informed than their counterparts in GIZ schools, while community members more generally were better informed in GIZ schools. This suggests that GIZ-supported SMSs are more effective in reaching out to communities while SMSs in non-GIZ communities focus more on outreach with parents.
- ✓ Communities contribute actively to the development of both types of schools but qualitative observations suggests that it is happening more frequently in communities supported by GIZ.

→ **The inclusion of different types of community members has not only positively affected the schools and ensured information dissemination, but it has enabled strong community mobilization and formed a sense of unity and motivation amongst different sections of the community. Spreading awareness of girls' education and decentralising responsibility ensures sustainability, as the programme is no longer dependent of one central person, but is now moreover a communal effort and responsibility.**

<sup>31</sup> GIZ BEPA School Development Model Pilot internal document



### How does community mobilization work in the field?

Community mobilization and the inclusion of community members in the school management is first and foremost achieved organically, as most community members seating in the SMS are ‘respected members of the community’, that is elders or members of the village shura.<sup>32</sup> That was confirmed by field observations. There is therefore a direct conduit between the school management structure and the village governance structure, facilitating collective decision-making, dissemination of information and, ultimately, acceptance in the community. In this sense, the SMSs have proven that they were instrumental in improving good leadership and collective decision-making, as per UNESCO’s model. The SMSs are inclusive structures that bridge the gap between the school and the community, opening the management of the school to members of the community. In Afghanistan, local governance can hardly be called ‘democratic’ as communities usually respect age and social hierarchies when choosing their representatives and the SMSs follow the same model. Yet, it is a model that is adjusted to the social realities of the country on the ground and it is clear that SMSs have had an impact on transparency and collective decision-making, two important milestones for community decision-making.

Apart from the involvement of the community born out of the natural interactions between traditional governance bodies and the newly-formed school structures, SMSs work on community mobilization through a series of initiatives implemented at the community level. Figure 4-1 gives an overview of the initiatives that have been implemented, as seen by parents and community members:

**Figure 4-1 - Which, if any, of the following have occurred in your community to inform people about girls’ education? (GIZ vs. non-GIZ schools)**

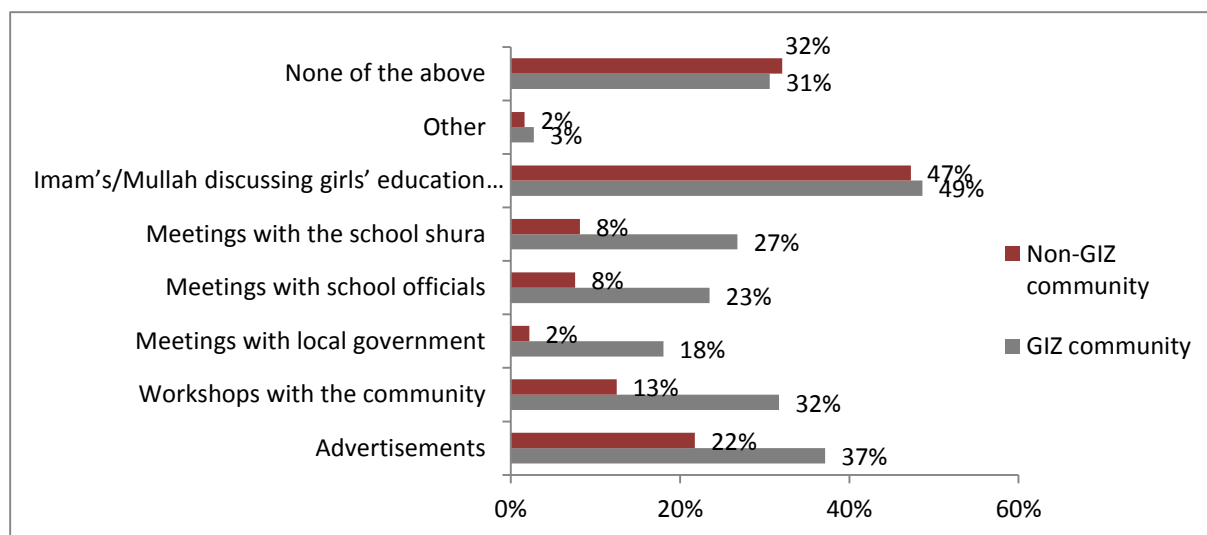


Figure 4-1 shows the range of initiatives taken to support girls’ education and mobilize in the communities, from meetings with important stakeholders to workshops or advertisement campaigns. **The GIZ pilot has fostered a more systematic effort of community mobilization**, as SMSs in GIZ-supported communities appear to have implemented community mobilization initiatives to a larger extent than their counterparts in non-GIZ schools. In particular, the proportion of community members reporting that workshops with the community and advertisements campaigns occurred is significantly higher in GIZ-supported communities.

<sup>32</sup> FGD.

### Assessing Community Mobilization

Community mobilization has been strong in both GIZ and non-GIZ supported school communities due to SMS intervention. SMSs have successfully managed to incorporate various key actors and bodies of the community into their school improvement plan activities.<sup>33</sup> Overall, respondents have described SMSs as being very active in advocating the benefit of girls’ education to local mullahs, parents and other relevant local shura members. The SMSs also contacted the parents of girls’ that irregularly attend school or have dropped out. In some districts SMS members have mobilized the community to provide financial contribution or labour force to for school improvement. **Although SMSs function very similarly in both GIZ supported and non-supported school communities, SMSs in GIZ supported school communities have been shown to be slightly more successful in terms of community mobilization; causing not only a stronger integration of and link amongst various sections of the community but also targeting a wider public in the community.**<sup>34</sup> This is visible through a number of indicators:

#### Awareness of community members about the SMS

Parents and community members were interviewed to test their knowledge and awareness about SMSs. The following graph illustrates the various levels of awareness about the SMS between categories of respondents:

Figure 4-2 - % of respondents who know there is an SMS in their school

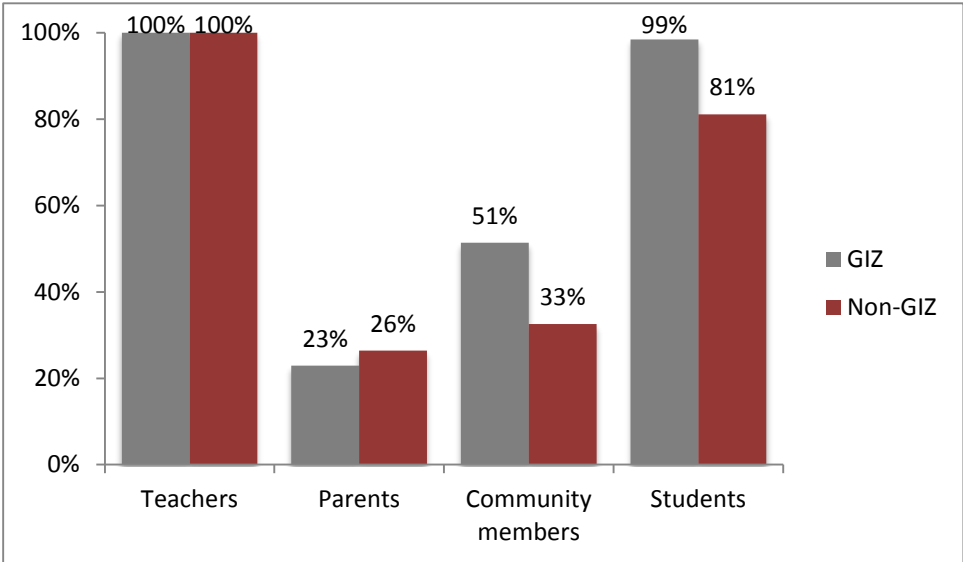


Figure 4-2 shows comparable levels of awareness across GIZ and non-GIZ schools for stakeholders directly involved in the school, students and teachers in particular. Parents also show similar levels of awareness if much lower. **Overall, in both types of schools the level of awareness of stakeholders not directly involved in the schools remains relatively low, showing that if community mobilization through the SMS is strong, it remains confined to the stakeholders directly involved in the process. The low level of awareness amongst parents can be explained by the high proportion of women amongst respondents, suggesting a lower level of awareness of female members of the community, and a failure of GIZ-supported SMSs to adequately reach women.**

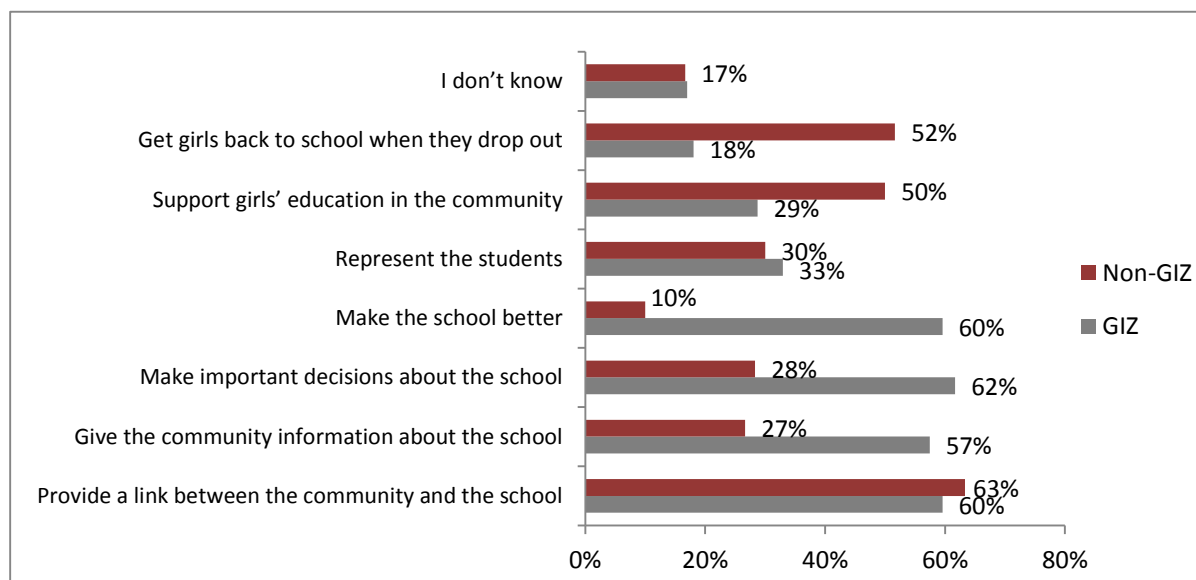
Yet, there is a larger difference for community members between GIZ and non-GIZ schools, as 51% of community members in areas with GIZ-supported schools aware of the existence of the SMS against only 33% in communities with non-GIZ supported schools. This suggests that GIZ-supported SMSs are

<sup>33</sup> Supported by SMS tool; CS; FGD; CL; KII conducted in Badakhshan, Balkh and Takhar  
<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

more effective in diffusing information beyond the circle of stakeholders directly involved in the school (students, parents etc).

Amongst those who knew about the existence of the SMS, most respondents in both GIZ-supported and non-GIZ supported communities showed a relatively high level of awareness about the span of activities and responsibilities of the SMS:

**Figure 4-3 - What are the responsibilities of the SMS? (Community members)**



These findings suggest that the level of information provided about the SMSs is relatively precise, as amongst those who know about it, most people know about the various types of tasks the SMS is supposed to perform. Interestingly, only 10% of community members for non-GIZ schools cited 'make the school better' as one of the SMS's functions, as against 60% for GIZ schools, suggesting once again that GIZ-supported SMSs are more effective on that sector of activities than their non-GIZ counterparts. Interestingly though, the survey showed that the level of awareness of parents (as opposed to community members more generally) is generally higher for non-GIZ supported schools, suggesting that the SMSs in these schools focus more effectively on the dissemination of information with parents directly. Interviews with community leaders confirmed the high level of information and transparency that characterise the work of the SMSs, as most community leaders had a very precise and informed idea about SMSs' responsibilities, plans and achievements for the schools. Community leaders and interviews with community members showed that the SMSs had been active in a) informing community members about their role; b) speaking to community members to ask for contribution, donation or support; and c) speaking to parents about drop-outs.

**These findings suggest that communities from GIZ supported schools are better informed and have higher knowledge of SMS responsibilities than non-GIZ supported school communities, while parents from non-GIZ schools are better informed.** This implies that in non-GIZ supported schools community mobilization is more successful in targeting parents, whereas it has a wider spread in GIZ supported schools by reaching the broader community. With the community at large understanding SMS responsibilities and activities a greater change can occur in regards to girls' education, even for those that have no daughters.

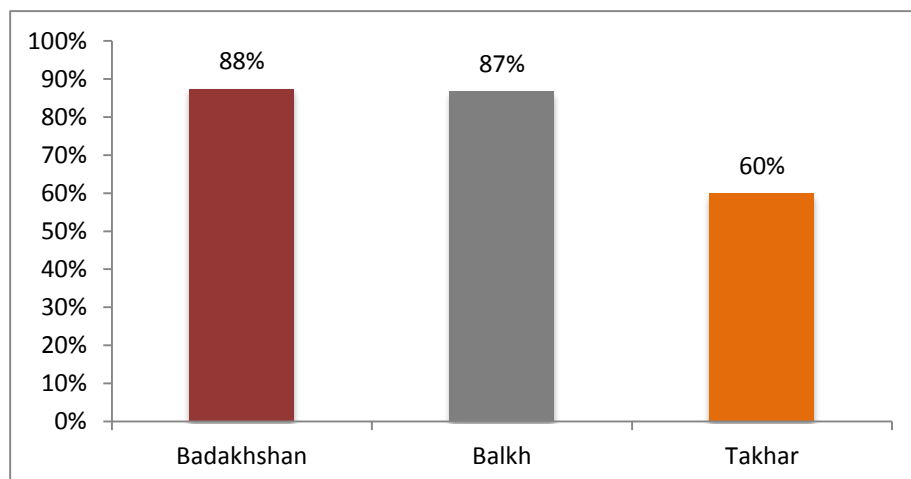
### Contribution and direct participation of parents and community members

Other indicators of the level of community mobilization reached by the GIZ pilot include a) the level of parents' involvement in and interactions with the school; and b) the level of voluntary contributions made by communities for the schools.

### Parental involvement in the schools

Teachers from both GIZ and non-GIZ supported schools reported a relatively high level of interactions between teachers and parents with respectively 76% and 78% of teachers reporting having meetings with students’ parents. Parents were more likely to report that they had turned to the SMS to solve an issue when they had one than their counterparts in GIZ-supported schools: 36% vs. 12%. For GIZ-supported schools, the provincial pattern that shows Takhar a bit worse off than the two other provinces is also measured on that indicator:

**Figure 4-4 - % of teachers who reported having meetings with parents (GIZ schools)**



Looking at the frequency of parents-teachers meetings shows that GIZ-schools have developed slightly stronger links, as 56% of teachers reported meeting parents more than three times a year, as against 38% in non-GIZ schools. In Chapchi Yardar high school, in Baharak district (Badakhshan province), the SMS created a parent committee for the school with the support of GIZ, a practice that was praised by community leaders.

### Community contribution

An important indicator of the level of acceptance and support that the pilot fostered in the community is the level of contribution that community members are willing to put in to support the schools. The following table gives a comparative overview of the level of contributions, as reported in the field, in GIZ and non-GIZ schools:

**Table 4-1 – Comparative overview of community contributions<sup>35</sup>**

Examples of contributions in GIZ schools	Examples of contributions in Non-GIZ schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Monetary contributions: money for construction of surrounding wall; money collected to build a playground; 10% of the expenses to paint the school; 10% of the expenses for surrounding wall</li> <li>✓ Land: community buying or providing land for the school</li> <li>✓ Labour: for the construction of surrounding walls, playgrounds and buildings; to flatten the ground, to plant trees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Monetary contributions: 150,000 AFA to build a laboratory; money for a custodian;</li> <li>✓ Land: community providing land and planting trees</li> <li>✓ Labour: man-power to repair school roof; support to flatten the ground</li> </ul>

As shown in Table 4-1, the type of contribution that communities are able to provide is of similar nature between GIZ and non-GIZ schools. The main difference is the frequency of that happening with community contributions being reported much more frequently in the communities where the GIZ pilot was implemented. This suggests that, once again, the SMSs work in a similar fashion – and

<sup>35</sup> Source: SMS Observation and interviews with community leaders in the 18 communities.

overall quite effectively – in communities supported by GIZ and in non-GIZ communities but that often GIZ-supported SMSs are slightly more efficient, as it is the case for community mobilization. On both dimensions (parental involvement and community involvement), students from GIZ-schools noted a more significant improvement than in non-GIZ schools, suggesting the impact of the pilot on both these dimensions.

**Table 4-2 - % of students who report an improvement on these indicators**

Indicator	GIZ-Schools	Non-GIZ schools
Parental involvement in the school	56%	34%
Community involvement in the school	74%	51%

Granting SMS membership to a variety of diverse key community members and stakeholders in such as community leaders, religious leaders, teachers, parents and members of local authorities has been very beneficial for programme implementation. **The inclusion of different types of community members has not only positively affected the schools and ensured information dissemination, but it has enabled strong community mobilization and formed a sense of unity and motivation amongst different sections of the community. Spreading awareness of girls’ education and decentralising responsibility ensures sustainability, as the programme is no longer dependent of one central person, but is now moreover a communal effort and responsibility.**

# 5. Challenges and Achievements of the GIZ-BEPA Pilot in supporting Girls' Education

## IMPACT OF THE PILOT ON GIRLS' ACCESS TO EDUCATION: KEY FINDINGS

### Main obstacles to girls' education on the ground

- ✓ Marriage and family opposition once the girls reach puberty remain the main obstacles for girls to complete their education in the communities visited. Mullah and religious leaders remain sensitive to this question and are still preaching against girls' education in some areas.
- ✓ Often resistance to girls' education is not against education in general but rather against some precise components of the curriculum. For example, the computers introduced by GIZ have raised some concerns in the communities, as they were perceived as exposing girls to immorality.
- ✓ Poor households may refrain from sending their girls to school as a) they cannot afford the costs; b) they do not want to be exposed – or expose – their daughters to shame because they cannot pay for proper clothing; and c) they may need their daughters to work from home. Yet, increasingly the economic calculation made by households favours the long-term investment that girls' education represents for the family. Security on the way to school is often cited as an obstacle, yet the immense majority of girls and parents interviewed felt that the girls were safe on the way to school.

### Analysing the impact of GIZ pilot and its community mobilization component on girls' access to education

- ✓ The perception of the pilot in the communities is extremely favourable and community leaders and members see a direct link between GIZ support, the SMSs' work and an increase in girls' attendance and enrolment in school.
- ✓ The SMSs impact girls' drop out and enrolment in 3 main ways:
  - By directly targeting families where girls have dropped out and trying to convince parents to change their position.
  - Indirectly, by impacting people's perception of girls' education at the community level: respondents almost unanimously highlighted the impact SMSs had on this aspect, especially in GIZ-supported communities where interventions at the community level were more intense. This is one of the greatest achievements of the pilot.
  - Indirectly again, by improving the security environment for girls going to school as FGD participants noted that security on the way to school improved in relation with the effort of community mobilization led by SMSs.

### Measuring Impact

- ✓ Quantitative data did not reveal a strong difference between GIZ and non-GIZ schools in terms of drop-outs, as teachers reported cases in both types of schools. When asked about the number of girls who dropped out in their schools, teachers from both types of schools answered in majority 'less than 5' although teachers from GIZ schools were more likely to answer between 5 and 10 (33% against 4% in non-GIZ schools).
- ✓ Data provided by GIZ nuance the perception of communities about a decrease in girls drop outs at it shows that the impact of GIZ pilot on girls' drop-outs is still limited, two years after the beginning of the programme. Yet, this indicator needs to be carefully analysed school by school, as several factors can enter into play, including the quality of the data recorded.
- ✓ Data shows a positive trend in terms of the number of girls enrolled in grade 10 to 12 in schools supported by GIZ, where the numbers have been increasing year by year. This confirms findings from the survey showing a very high support for girls completing their education at least until grade 12 amongst parents and community members.

## Analysing Obstacles to Girls' Education

**SMS members of both GIZ supported and non-supported schools are aware of the main obstacles of girls' education.** Qualitative fieldwork showed that similar types of obstacles are at play in both GIZ-supported and non-GIZ communities, where respondents named the following main obstacles to girls' education:<sup>36</sup>

- 1. Drop out rates due to early marriage and/or puberty** – As is the case across Afghanistan, primary education for girls is increasingly accepted – and supported – by communities, even in rural areas. Yet, puberty is still an important cut-off point, as fathers are reluctant to expose their daughters to 'public life' once they have reached puberty. The fear here is for them to be in contact with boys, a situation that could threaten the reputation of families and the ability of the girl to get married:

*"People are worried about their girls when they turn 15. Because that is the moment when they may get in contact with boys and cause bad reputation for their families. This is why families prefer marrying their girls away at that age and do not give them the permission to attend secondary or high school."*

**Naswane Wahadat, Argo, Badakhshan**

This opposition has to be understood in a broader cultural context where girls' reputation is crucial for families and where their marriage represents an important source of income for families. Poor rural families often prefer not risking putting their reputation and potentially the 'bride price' at risk. This link between puberty, reputation and the economics of marriage is important to understand and explains why amongst the respondents who knew of girls who had dropped out of school this year, a majority pointed at the family's opposition to them going to school as one of the main reasons. Family opposition shall not be purely interpreted on cultural lines but has to be put into perspective, taking into account the socio-economic dynamics at play within rural households, when it comes to girls' puberty and marriage.

Marriage is also a key obstacle to girls' completing their education, as girls' husbands may be reluctant to allow their wives to go to school for the same question of reputation. Plus, once married, girls are expected to help managing the household and may get pregnant rapidly, further complicating their school attendance. Teachers who reported cases of drop outs in their school over the last year cited marriage as the main reasons why they did (84% in non-GIZ schools and 81% in GIZ-supported schools).

*"Many girls have dropped out, left school because they got married and their husbands did not allow them to continue their education."*

**Khuja Ghar High School, Takhar**

Family resistance to girls' education is reinforced by the lack of female teachers as fathers and husbands will be even less willing to send their girls to school if their teacher is a male:

*"This area is remote and it makes it difficult to find female teachers. Because of this, some people refuse to send their daughters to school, they do not want male teachers for their girls."*

**FGD, Abdul Rahim School, Yangi Qala, Takhar**

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<sup>36</sup> Supported by SMS Observation Tool, FGDs and Community Leader interviews and Case Studies conducted in Badakhshan, Balkh and Takhar

- 2. Religious and cultural opposition to girls' education** – Beyond the question of family reputation that can be at stake when teenage girls go to school, some stakeholders in the communities are opposed to girls' education on religious grounds. Qualitative fieldwork showed that mullahs are often the ones who are still opposed to girls' education, even when the rest of the community now supports it.

*“Some mullahs preach against education in our areas. One mullah preaches against girls going to school every Friday during the prayer because girls are now learning computer science and are connecting with foreigners outside Afghanistan”*

**Rabia Balkhi High School, Dawalatabad, Balkh**

Interestingly and as shown in this example, this opposition is less and less against girls' education in general but more about certain components of the education that girls can receive that raise doubts in the communities. Linked with the GIZ-pilot for example, access to computers in girls' schools raised some issues in the community:

*“Some people were against girls learning how to use computers and accessing computers. Now we understand what it is and what the benefits are, so no one opposes this anymore.”*

**Jilga School, Yangi Qala, Takhar province**

It is an important nuance to make as much as it is a lesson learned for the future of GIZ intervention: a) it means that cultural opposition to education should not be seen as a principled and monolithic opposition to education for girls per se and that it has to be analysed through a finer lens as some components of girls' education can raise problems and should be addressed specifically; and b) the introduction of new pedagogical components should not be seen as neutral as it can have unintended consequences and endanger the fragile support for girls' education within rural communities. This is not to say that these introductions of 'modernity' should not be supported but that they should be accompanied with a strong effort of information and awareness raising to diffuse the tensions – and the rumours – they may raise.

- 3. Poor socio-economic conditions of families** – The third main set of obstacles limiting girls' access to school has to do with the poor socio-economic conditions of their families. This can impact girls' access to school in various ways:

- **Costs:** qualitative fieldwork showed that some families preferred not sending their girls to school because they could not afford the expenses related to education. Interestingly, these expenses have not only to do with direct school requirements (notebooks, pens etc.) but also with indirect expenses, such as clothing. Some interviews showed that girls who could not afford a proper uniform for school would be ashamed to go.
- **Need of girls for labour:** The need for girls to generate income and help with the household is also an important obstacle to education, especially in provinces where carpets are traditionally produced. Carpet weaving is indeed an activity usually conducted by girls and women in their houses.

*“ Girls do not go to school because people are too poor in this area. They need their girls to work at home instead. The girls knit carpets and sew clothes at home. These families cannot afford girls to go to school”.*

**Paye Mashhad School, Dawalatabad, Balkh**

Increasingly, girls' education is seen as a calculation for households, who can either bet on the future and the benefits educated children may bring to the household's well-being in the long run or cannot afford such a long-term calculation and need the additional sources of income their daughters may represent. Understanding girls' education as a calculation for each household is important because it means that some aspects can tip off the balance in one direction or the other. As briefly mentioned above, this explains why the quality of education and of the education environment matters as they are on way to further convince parents that the choice



they are making for their daughters will pay off. On the other hand, this calculation may be problematic as it does not mean a support for girls' education in principle. Field observations show for examples cases where girls who do not get good grades at school will not be authorised to complete their secondary education and high schools because 'it is not worth it'.

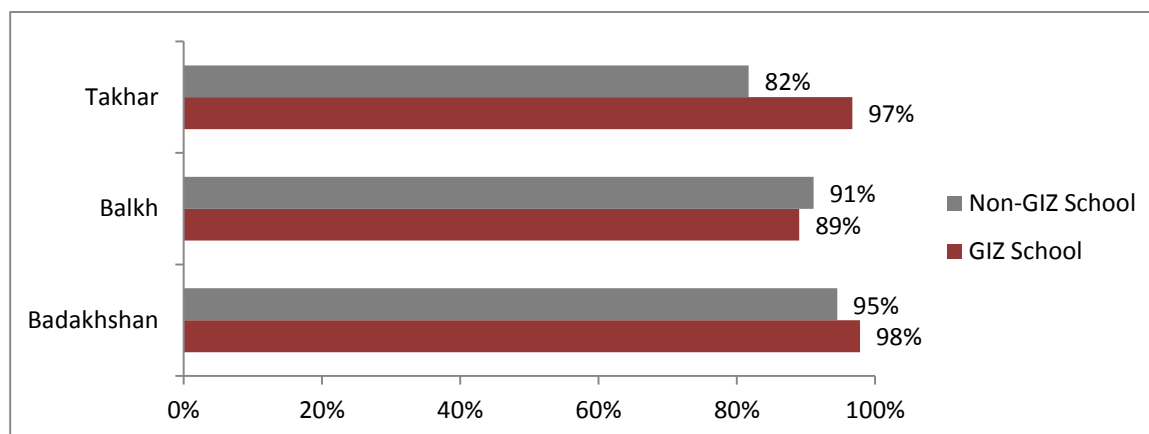
*"If the girls are not good at school and are not able to learn anything, then usually the families do not support them going further to school. They do not learn anything, it is not worth it."*  
**Case Study, Dawalatabad, Balkh Province**

- 4. Far distance to school, poor security conditions** – Finally, the practical obstacle of distance to school and safety on the way to school is also seen by many stakeholders as an important obstacle to girls' education. In particular, the further the school is, the more chances girls have to be harassed on the way.

*"Most girls drop out of school after grade nine because the high school is 90 minutes away from the village, so it is too far for them to go."*  
**Ganda Chashma, Argo, Badakhshan**

Yet, interestingly, quantitative data showed that a vast majority of girls felt safe on their way to school:

**Figure 5-1 - % of students who feel 'always safe' on the way to school (by province and type of school)**



'Safety on the way to school' can be a mental barrier regardless of the objective conditions of security for girls but in the schools surveyed it does not appear as a major obstacle. The obstacle of distance on the other hand is real and difficult to overcome.

→ This review of the main obstacles to girls' education confirms that the GIZ pilot is supporting interventions at the right level of action: family and community levels through the SMS. At the family level, fathers and husbands are the main decision-makers, and potential obstacles, on the matter. At the community level, while a majority of influential members are now actively supporting girls' education, some can still be active against it. Mullahs should be the object of specific attention in the programme as they are respected voices of the communities and some of them are still actively preaching against girls' education.

## What impact does the GIZ-BEPA pilot have on girls' education through community mobilization?

Through its community-based intervention and the bridge that the SMS represents between girls' schools and the communities, GIZ aimed at addressing the issue of girls' education. This study confirmed the impact of the SMSs on girls' education in the targeted communities through a series of indicators:

### Impacting access to education: drop out rates, absenteeism, enrolment

The clearest indicator of an impact of the pilot on girls' education is drop out rates. **Qualitative fieldwork showed that communities were convinced that the SMSs had had a significant impact on reducing girls drop outs through their outreach and monitoring efforts in GIZ and non-GIZ schools alike. Respondents were unanimous on that point.**

The following gives a short oversight of how community mobilization has impacted drop out rates. Qualitative data shows that drop out rates have decreased due to SMS intervention and community mobilization in both GIZ supported and non-supported schools.

### There are three main ways SMSs impact drop out rates and enrolment:

a) **Through direct interventions and advocacy targeting families where girls have dropped out:** SMS members primarily speak to teachers and parents to find out the causes and motivations behind such decisions and convince parents to change their decisions. Parents are regularly addressed about non-attendance, drop out rates and reservations they may have to send their girls to school, which in return has increased access for girls to school.<sup>37</sup> This type of community mobilization appears to have been successful:

*"Before girls used to drop out more, now this has changed, because SMS members go to students' houses and speak to the parents to counter drop outs. In some cases they were even successful in bringing back 2-3 students that had dropped out."*

**FGD in GIZ supported school in Yangi Qala, Takhar**

b) **Indirectly, by changing people's perception of girls' education at the community level** – this is one of the greatest impact of the SMSs, particularly in GIZ-supported communities, where interventions at the community level are more intense.

*"Female drop out rates have decreased, because people understand the benefit of education for their kids."*

**SMS Observation Tool conducted in non-GIZ supported school in Dawlatabad, Balkh**

This is one of the most important impacts that the pilot has had on girls' education so far is that it has caused a change in people's perception. **With the help of community mobilization and specific outreach to parents, teachers and religious leaders, SMSs have successfully demystified girls' education by not only explaining what it is but also explaining its benefits.**

Respondents from SMS Observation Tools, FGDs and KIIs have reported a change in community perception of girls' education due to understanding the benefits of education.<sup>38</sup>

*"People now understand the benefits of education. SMS members speak to the community and now people understand that especially in a war affected and instable country like Afghanistan, husbands can die any day, leaving their wives and children behind as helpless widows and orphans who have to fend for themselves. People have now understood that widows can still support and feed*

<sup>37</sup> Supported by SMS Observation Tool, FGDs and Community Leader interviews conducted in Badakhshan, Balkh and Takhar

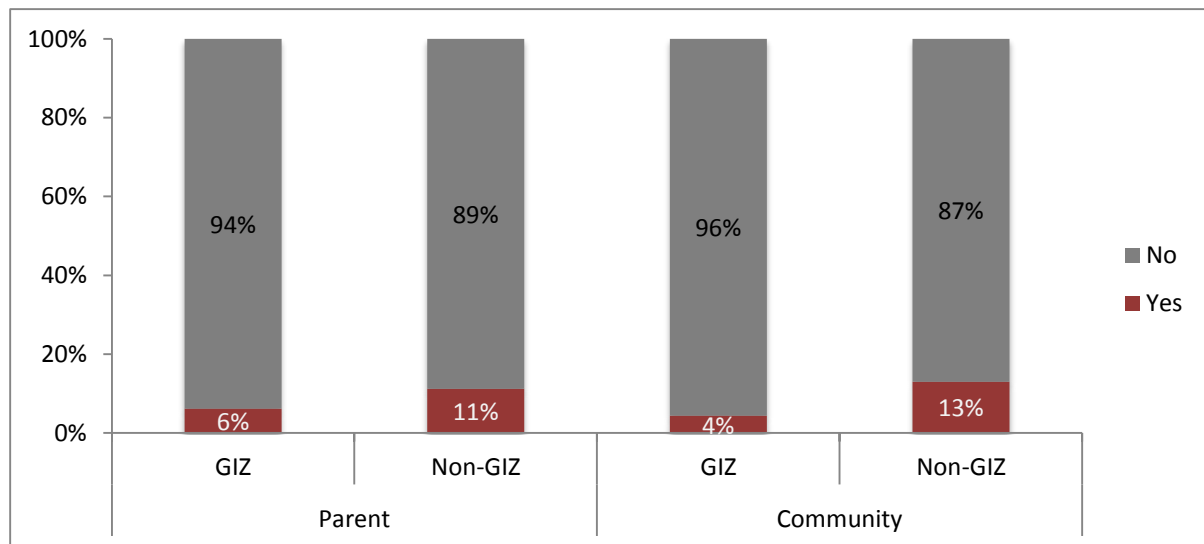
<sup>38</sup> Supported by FGDs in Balkh, Takhar and Badakhshan and KIIs with DED in Khulm, Argo and Yangi Qala

*their families with the help of an education. That is why people now send their girls to school and encourage them to finish school.”*

**FGD at GIZ supported school in Khulm, Balkh**

This shows that SMS community mobilization has positively impacted community members’ perception of girls’ education. Furthermore, such change in perceptions may have created an environment in which girls are encouraged to finish school, which in return may solve the problem of lack of female teachers in girls’ schools.

**Figure 5-2 - Are there people in your community opposed to girls’ education?**



Of particular note in Figure 5-2 is a) the fact that the overall level of opposition to girls’ education reported by parents and community members is relatively low in both types of communities, suggesting that acceptance of girls education has indeed made significant progress; and b) GIZ-supported communities show higher level of acceptance for girls’ education, especially when considered at the community level, confirming the fact that SMSs supported by GIZ are more effective in their community mobilization and outreach.

**c) Indirectly again, by improving the overall security environment for girls going to school** - The majority of FGD participants reported having good security conditions in their community and that this has improved, **particularly in the GIZ supported school areas, where SMS members have been very active in the community to increase community mobilization:**

*“The security has improved, as the entire community is united because of the SMS and understands the SMS; all community members are well informed about each other and the school and are friendly, that is why they will not decrease the security situation.”*

**FGD in Jilga Girls’s School Community – Takhar**

This is an important point as field data show that security and threats to girls’ education remain a challenge in the three provinces targeted by GIZ. In Balkh and Takhar, FGD participants reported an attack by the local Taliban and unknown perpetrators on the girls’ school. Takhar has reported most security incidences, as girls have recently been kidnapped and released, as a protest against girls education and Taliban had set the school on fire two to three years ago. However, respondents noted that the presence of surrounding walls and – in some cases – of custodians improved the security. Security is also an issue for teachers as FGD participants reported that two girls’ teachers were killed, confirming that teachers specifically may be in danger.

### Measuring impact on drop outs and enrolment of girls

**Drop outs** – In order to go beyond the perception of drop outs and school attendance in the communities, the present study collected two kinds of quantitative data: a) reports of drop outs from teachers; b) records from schools provided by GIZ.<sup>39</sup>

Teachers from GIZ and non-GIZ supported schools were asked whether they knew of any girls who had dropped out of their school this year. The survey provided the following answers, broken down by province and type of schools:

**Figure 5-3 - Do you know of any female student who dropped out of your school this year? (% of teachers who answered yes)**

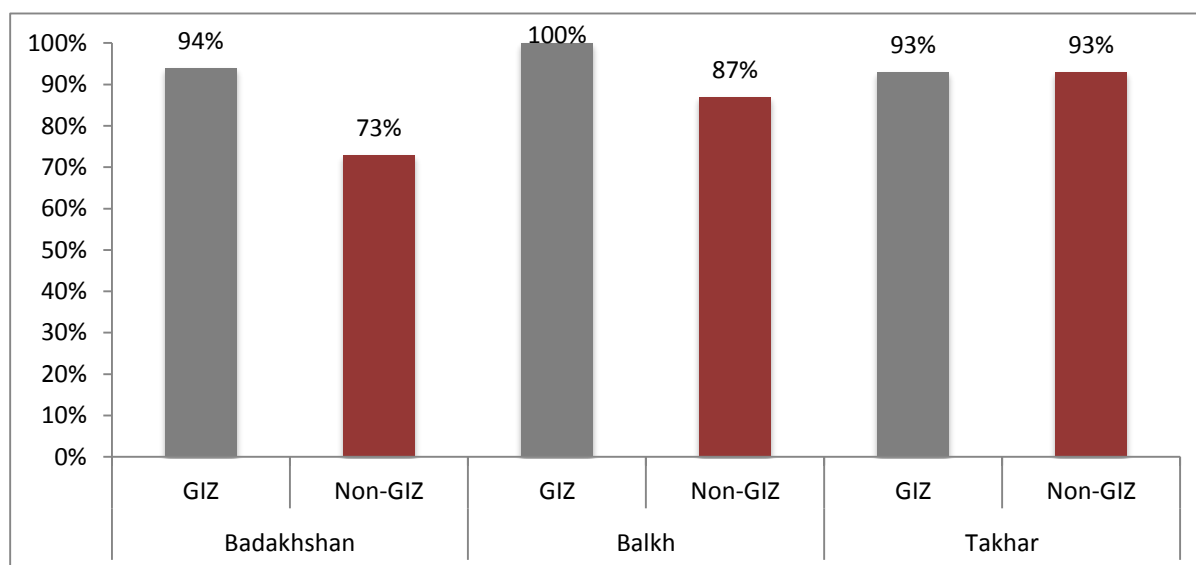


Figure 5-3 is a good reminder that, despite the work of SMSs, drop outs are still a reality of all Afghan girls schools, especially in rural areas. The difference between GIZ and non-GIZ schools may be linked to two main parameters: a) the fact that there is no significant difference in terms of drop outs between the schools supported directly by GIZ and the ones part of the EQUIP programme; b) the fact that teachers in GIZ schools may be slightly more sensitized to the problem of drop outs, hence paying more attention when it happens in their schools. When asked about the number of girls who dropped out in their schools, teachers from both types of schools answered in majority 'less than 5' although teachers from GIZ schools were more likely to answer between 5 and 10 (33% against 4% in non-GIZ schools) .<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, although on small samples, teachers from GIZ schools were more likely to report having reacted to these drop outs, either by talking to the parents (86% as against 50% in non GIZ schools) or to the school shura (52% as against 24%).

Data provided by GIZ nuance the perception of communities about a decrease in girls drop outs, as illustrated by the table below:

<sup>39</sup> GIZ provided data from school records for Balkh province (1389 to 1392) and Takhar province (1391 to 1393). As Samuel Hall is not in a position to directly check this data, the findings presented here are only indicative.

<sup>40</sup> Answers to these questions are indicative only, as the sample does not provide statistically robust data on that question.

**Table 5-1 - Records of female drop outs in girls schools (1389-1392)**

RECORDS OF DROP OUTS – GIZ SCHOOLS (1389 – 1392) <sup>41</sup>					
Province	School	1389	1390	1391	1392
BALKH	Amin Hussain (Khulm)	24%	22%	28%	26%
	Khwaja Burhan (Khulm)	32%	27%	21%	21%
	Paye Mashhad (Dawalatabad)	4%	19%	27%	41%
TAKHAR	Jilga (Yangi Qala)	--	--	34%	28%
	Bibi Fahima (Yangi Qala)	--	--	13%	2%
	Khuja Ghar Girls' High School (Khuja Ghar)	--	--	24%	20%

Table 5-1 shows that the impact of GIZ pilot on girls' drop outs is still limited, two years after the beginning of the programme, although this indicator needs to be carefully analysed school by school. A timid trend seems to be in place in Takhar province but the time span does not give enough distance to assess whether a durable decrease is happening. In Balkh, GIZ schools present very varied profile and drop out rates seem to be stabilized between 20 and 25% of each year's promotions in Khulm district. Paye Mashhad appears as an outlier with a worrying trend of increasing drop outs: this should be further investigated by GIZ field teams as it is either the consequence of a local issue or a problem with the data recorded. Given that the qualitative fieldwork did not show any particular issue in this community, the latter is more likely.

**Enrolment and completion of study** – If drop out rates do not provide conclusive evidence on the impact of GIZ pilot and of SMSs more generally on drop outs, looking at the number of girls enrolling for grades 10 to 12 shows an interesting upward trend in all the schools for which GIZ provided data. For example, Amir Hussain school in Balkh province went from 88 students in these grades to 141 in 1392. In Takhar province, the three GIZ-supported schools recorded 25 to 40% increase in the numbers of female students attending these grades between 1391 and 1392. **This is a noticeable achievement as completing secondary education and high school remains one of the main challenges for girls, as detailed above.** This increase in the number of girls attending school until grade 12, sign of a better retention rate of girls within each school, explains the positive perceptions of the communities and the general impression that SMSs have a positive impact on girls' education. It also confirms qualitative observations, some pointing at the fact that girls would increasingly come back to school, even once married. Interviews of parents and community members show that the support for girls completing their secondary education – at least in theory – is now very high in the communities with 100% of respondents reporting that it is a good thing for girls to complete their education until grade 12 and less than 2% of parents reporting that they want their girl to stop their education before grade 12 in both types of schools.

<sup>41</sup> Based on registration data provided by GIZ.

**Figure 5-4 - When should a girl stop her education?**

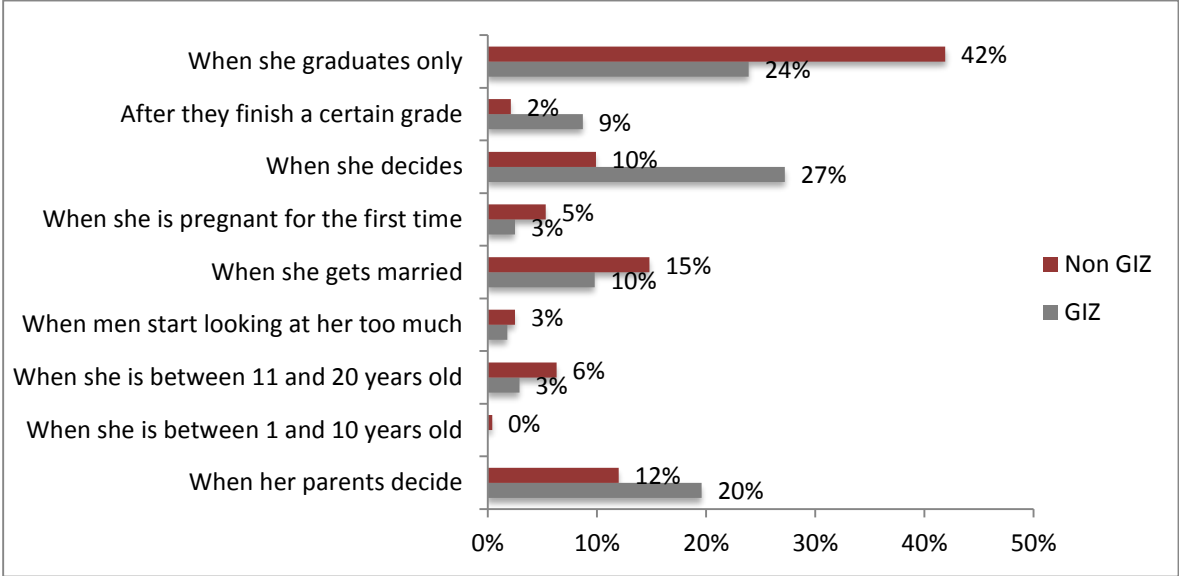


Figure 5-4 confirms that there is no major difference between GIZ-supported and non-GIZ supported communities where respectively 10 and 15% of community members answered that girls should stop their education upon marriage. In a majority of cases, community members think that girls should stop their education when she graduates or when she decides.



## 6. CONCLUSION

### ASSESSING GIZ-COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION PROCESSES - SYNTHESIS

Community mobilization is commonly defined as “a capacity-building process through which community individuals, groups, or organizations plan, carry out, and evaluate activities on a participatory and sustained basis to improve their (...) needs, either on their own initiative or stimulated by others.”<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, organisations point at the importance of community mobilization as a point of entry in communities, establishing governance procedures, which, if sustainable, bring larger development outcomes than the narrow project for which they were established. This over-arching definition can therefore be broken down in 7 key components:

1. Capacity-building
2. Community participation and awareness
3. Collective decision-making
4. Needs identification and planning
5. Resource mobilization and Implementation
6. Monitoring
7. Optimization of development outcomes

The present evaluation provided evidence that GIZ-BEPA had been very effective in supporting a robust process of community mobilization on the ground even if the programme fares differently on each of these components:

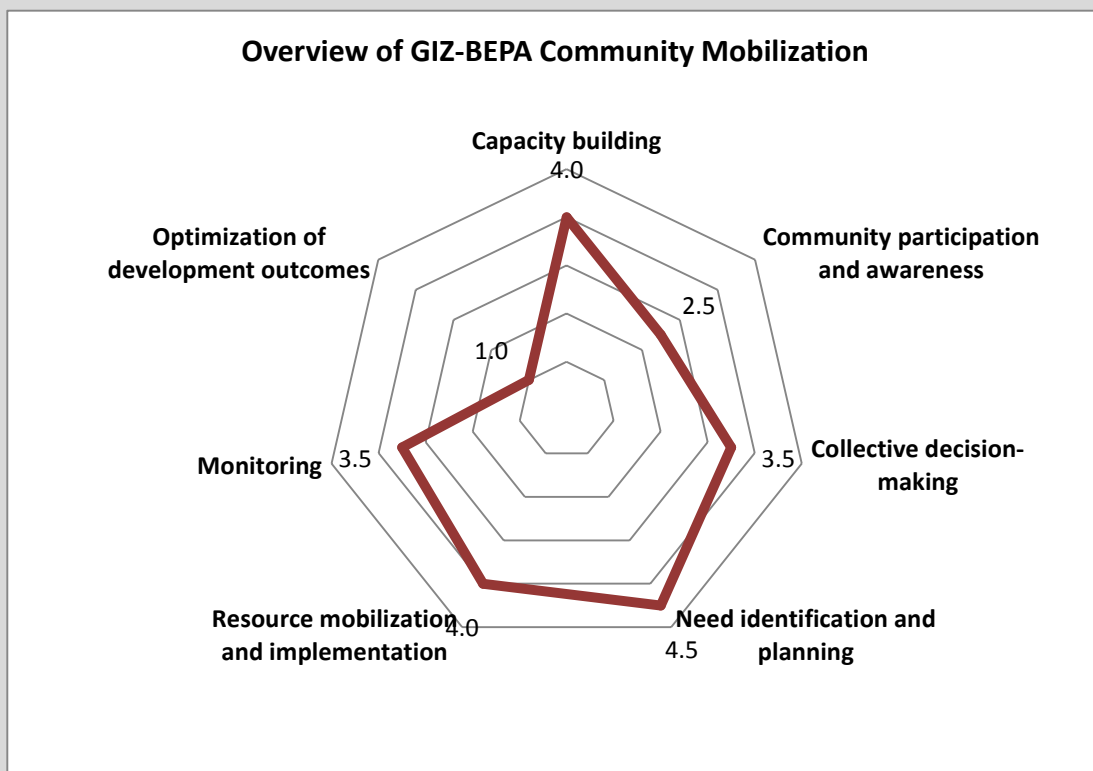
1. **Capacity building (4/5)** - Data confirmed unequivocally that GIZ had provided adequate training to the various stakeholders crucial for the success of the project, from teachers to SMS members. This evaluation also found that training adequately complemented the modernization of the schools and allowed new equipment to be swiftly adopted and used in the schools.
2. **Community participation and awareness (2.5/5)** – Qualitative observations showed that in both types of schools the SMSs were successful in including a variety of stakeholders from the community, building organic linkages with community governance structures. Yet, replicating the structures of power in the community, SMSs still show a deficit of women and youth. This translates in lower levels of awareness amongst two key groups: women of the communities and female students.
3. **Collective decision-making (3.5/5)** – Overall, GIZ-supported SMSs were characterized by collective decision-making and a good integration of various stakeholders in the process. Yet, the role of women in decision-making seemed to vary significantly from one SMS to the other. In some of them, female members of the shura would see their role limited to a rather traditional role of mediation and awareness-raising with female community members.
4. **Need identification and planning (4.5/5)** – All GIZ-supported shura had been able to develop SIP and to identify key obstacles to girls’ education and the most urgent needs of their schools. GIZ proved effective in procuring new equipment rapidly to the schools.
5. **Resource mobilization and implementation (4/5)** – GIZ-supported SMSs were able to secure significant levels of contribution from the communities, a sign that acceptance and support for the structure are high. The high level of satisfaction and optimism of students

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<sup>42</sup> Howard-Grabman, L., and Snetro, G. 2003. *How to mobilize communities for health and social change*. Baltimore, MD: Health Communication Partnership.

about the improvement of their school in the past 2 years shows that the implementation was carried out in a satisfying manner.

6. **Monitoring (3.5/5)** – GIZ-supported SMSs were more acutely aware of their responsibilities in terms of monitoring than their non-GIZ counterparts as they cited various facets of their monitoring activities as part of their scope of work, from the quality of teaching to the recording and investigation of absenteeism. Community leaders were also involved in a monitoring process as they were well informed about the activities and funding planned by the SMSs and aware of their progress. Data collection could still be improved.
7. **Optimization of development outcomes (1/5)** – This aspect of community mobilization is relatively absent from GIZ BEPA. The programme does not capitalize on the development outcomes that the community mobilization offers, as it remains very narrowly focused on girls’ education whereas this successful programme could be used for other socio-economic development tools (including hygiene, nutrition etc). The ultimate goal of community mobilization should be to initiate a virtuous circle with communities and develop other socio-economic dimensions, something that is relatively absent from GIZ pilot but that could be taken into account for further iterations.



BEPA’s pilot is generally a success. The present case study shows that the model of the SMS and the strong focus it puts on community mobilization to support girls’ access to education is robust and well-adjusted to the realities of Afghan rural communities. SMSs represent real bridges between girls’ schools and communities. In particular, it allows for an integration between the school management structures and the more traditional governance institutions of communities, building an organic relationship between the school and the community. This leads to a high level of acceptance of the structure in the communities, which unanimously expressed their support for the work of the SMSs, despite the fact that some resistance to girls’ education still exists in some of them. The SMS model also guarantees collective decision-making and a mechanism of checks and balance on the decisions taken for the school and the way funds are spent to improve the education environment.



**The main question for this study to answer is that of the value added by the BEPA when supporting pre-existing structures like the SMS: Is it relevant for GIZ to add on to EQUIP's and the MoE's efforts? Findings from the present evaluation confirmed the real impact of GIZ's support on the following dimensions of girls' education:**

- ❖ **Thanks to the effective support of GIZ, SMSs were able to significantly improve the school environment of their schools**, through the provision of modern equipment, the construction of surrounding walls and the establishment of libraries, scientific laboratories or playground. There was a significant difference between schools supported by BEPA and others on that matter and procurement was considerably more effective in GIZ-supported schools. This translated into a noticeable difference in terms of school environment for girls, increasing the motivation of students. Improvement in the quality of school infrastructure and equipment was noticed by parents and communities and increased their trust in the institution and the possible brighter future they would bring to their daughters.
- ❖ **SMSs supported by GIZ have been more effective at impacting the recruitment of female teachers for their schools**. This is an important dimension as it directly impact parents' decision to allow their daughters to go to school and as it is one of the two objectives of the programme. Communities supported by GIZ were significantly more satisfied about the impact of the SMSs on that aspect than in the control schools. The impact of the BEPA on gender dynamics within the school is also relatively positive, as female members of the SMSs are respected and have carved out their own responsibilities.
- ❖ **Students were significantly more likely to report an improvement in teachers' methods, skills and knowledge in GIZ schools than in non-GIZ schools**. This suggests that the training provided by GIZ pay off already and that the impact training has on the quality of education is perceived by the main beneficiaries, further supporting their motivation to get education.
- ❖ **Although SMSs function similarly in GIZ and non-GIZ schools, the case study found a more systematic and intense effort of community mobilization conducted by SMSs in communities supported by GIZ**. This leads to a higher level of transparency on what the activities the SMS is conducting in the school, a higher level of engagement with parents and community members on the question of girls' education and a better adjustment to the specific needs of girls at the community level.

On the other hand, the case study also reveals a lot of similarities in the way the two kind of SMSs function and in their impact, to the extent that it can be measured. Fieldwork did not uncover a real gap between the two kinds of SMSs; rather it showed a difference in degree and nuances between the quality of services delivered by GIZ and non-GIZ SMSs to the school. This means that the **SMSs are structures that have proven able to operate and have an impact with the sole support of the DEDs and EQUIP. GIZ is adding quality and increasing impact and effectiveness pre-existing structures that function relatively significantly.**

**What challenges did the pilot face?** The present evaluation showed that the pilot ran smoothly and that SMSs had proven effective in filling most of their responsibilities and in having already an impact on the quality of education received by girls, the quality of the environment they study in and the overall level of acceptance for girls' education in the communities. Few challenges and areas of opportunity were identified during the study:

- ❖ **While students were aware of the existence of the SMS in their school, they were not very clear on the specifics of their role and responsibilities**. Students are the main targets and beneficiaries of the work of the SMSs and they should develop the habit of turning to the SMS to report and solve issues.

- ❖ **On several indicators, Takhar province proved to be worse-off than the two other provinces.** This can be explained by the remoteness of the communities visited in Takhar and means that efforts should be concentrated on Takhar province, where difficulties are more significant than in Balkh or even Badakhshan.
- ❖ **Drop outs related to marriage and puberty are still frequent in the rural communities where GIZ operates.** The present study showed that the pilot had an impact on increasing enrolment and that the SMS was in some cases able to bring back girls who had dropped out. It also showed an increase in the number of girls who would complete their study until grade 12, which is in and of itself a great achievement. Yet, drop outs still occur and marriage represents a huge barrier for girls to complete their education.
- ❖ **Female members of SMSs are active and respected. They have managed to find their role in these structures.** Yet, the present case study found that gender dynamics at play within the traditional shura and the CDCs were often replicated within the SMSs, that is that **'women were designated to take care of women's issues'**, meaning that they would be sent to talk to girls and mothers in priority. Yet, the SMS represents a great opportunity to incrementally increase the scope of responsibilities of women and develop their managerial responsibilities.

**What future for the BEPA?** At this stage, the BEPA has showed that it was an effective programme, having a positive impact and based on accurate assumptions about the role and power of communities to address the challenges raised by girls' education, even in rural and remote areas. Yet, GIZ must consider the question of how to optimize its added-value and where to focus its efforts. Working through the SMS structure is undoubtedly a good strategic choice and GIZ should look to strengthen these structures on a larger scale. The important impact GIZ has on procurement and the quality of equipment and school infrastructure is very positive but it is also hardly sustainable or replicable at a very large scale. Working at a structural level, improving procurement procedures and investing in the general effectiveness of SMSs appears like a more sustainable option for the BEPA.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## ❖ At the school level:

- **Provide awareness raising to students** to increase their knowledge about the responsibilities of the SMS and encourage them to make use of the entity to address their issues at school or out of school. **A complaint box and/or a permanence time can be established for students to raise their concerns more easily.** Opening a more direct channel of communication between girls and the SMS will help SMS members identifying issues at the grassroot level, and potentially prevent difficult situation. It will also ensure that SMSs stay in touch with their main beneficiaries.
- **Increase the number of representatives of students in the SMSs and tailor specific training for them to make the best use of this role.** The present case study showed that it was often difficult for female students to find their place in the SMS, as age and traditional hierarchies make it difficult for them to speak freely. Increasing their number in the shura and, more importantly, tailoring training for them to learn how to make the best use of the opportunities opened by the Shura would be beneficial. In particular, the link that student representatives should establish between students and the school management should be emphasised.
- **Insist on SMSs meeting the gender quota of minimum 30% of female members.** A close monitoring should be made on this aspect as SMSs represent a great opportunity for women to get involved in one of the key issues of the communities.
- **Identify a series of managerial responsibilities that can be fulfilled by female members of the SMS.** This will help female members get meaningful positions, beyond the roles that they already play. The structure and delineation of responsibilities should not be imposed on but suggested to SMSs to avoid threatening acceptance. SMSs can be monitored and awarded a general grade at the end of the year, for which female membership and responsibilities could be taken into account.
- **Strengthen data collection and documentation of drop outs.** The data collected by GIZ do not allow for a robust analysis of the problem of drop outs and the reliability of the data is questionable. Each drop out case should be documented and a file kept open until a satisfying solution has been found. SMSs should develop a standardised excel file to record precise data on drop outs and inform DED policies: reasons for drop out, main person responsible for the drop out, time of the year, action taken by the SMS, success or failure of the action are some of the indicators that should be thoroughly recorded and shared with GIZ and the DED.

❖ **At the community level:**

- **Assess the risks posed by the introduction of ‘new components’ in the girls’ curriculum and prepare the communities through specifically-tailored awareness raising campaigns.** As shown above, some specific components of the education provided to girls have the potential to raise criticisms in the communities and potentially threaten the delicate balance in favour of girls’ education. Computer classes are a case in point. The introduction of innovation should therefore be carefully thought through beforehand and negotiated with influential leaders of the community to diffuse potential tensions.
- **Work in priority with mullahs.** The present case study showed that mullahs are still sometimes active and influential actors against girls’ education in the communities. SMSs should therefore be trained to interact with mullah in priority and to answer to religious argument using the Qur’an and Hadiths adequately.
- The present case study confirmed that the decision of sending girls to school and supporting them until they complete their study is often based on a socio-economic calculation at the household level. Efforts of awareness-raising at the community level should show how girls’ education can ‘pay off’ in the future for families.

❖ **At the strategic level:**

- **Concentrate efforts on Takhar province.** The case study shows that the general situation of girls’ education is relatively worse in this province and that the level of satisfaction and effectiveness of the pilot are comparatively lower there. In order to optimize GIZ impact, it is therefore recommended to concentrate efforts on this province.
- **Work at the structural level.** While the procurement of quality equipment is needed, it is more difficult to transform it into a sustainable and large-scale programme. Yet, GIZ has proven that its support had an impact on the motivation, organisational skills and effectiveness of the SMSs it supports. It has therefore a very good model to replicate on a larger scale to enhance the impact and sustainability of its programme. Procurement procedures of DEDs and EQUIP can be reviewed with the support of GIZ to help them bridge the gap with GIZ programme.
- **Use SMSs as conduit for girls to reach higher education.** SMS structures and expertise can be used to further enhance girls’ education by planning and building higher education opportunities in the districts. SMSs should be trained to provide counselling to girls attending grade 10 to 12 to help them work within the parameters they have (family and community requirements in particular) to reach higher education.
- **Improve SMSs’ abilities to counsel girls on job and careers.** SMSs should be trained to raise awareness of girls on the possible professions they can aim for. SMSs should also be linked with the local department of labour to work on job placement opportunities for girls that have graduated from upper secondary school. Not every student will be able to be a teacher but this is the main aspiration of most girls surveyed for this study. Other jobs can be perfectly acceptable for women and answer needs of the community (nurse, mid-wife,

psycho-social counsellor etc.). SMSs should be aware of these possibilities and work on raising awareness of students on these aspects.

- **Optimize the development outcomes of community mobilization.** Once established for girls' education, the processes and mechanisms of community mobilization should be linked with other type of programming in order to optimise the impact that this structures can have on community development. The gender focus of the programme can be kept through further initiatives in hygiene, maternal health or livelihood supported through the community. In this regard, the fact that GIZ can benefit from strong community networks built over the past decade in Balkh, Badakhshan and Takhar is a strong asset. GIZ may also build its socio-economic development strategy through partnerships with actors committed to local communities (AKF, Mission East, Concern...). Ultimately, the end goal of the GIZ BEPA Community Mobilisation initiative should be to use girls' education as a stepping stone toward a more holistic and comprehensive socio-economic development of communities, involving other GIZ programmes as well as other development actors active in these regions.

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