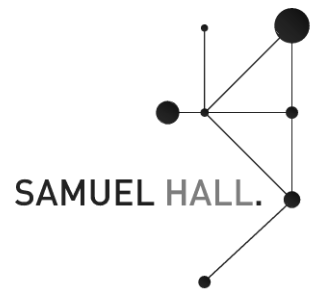




SCHOOL-IN-A-BOX 2015 EVALUATION
Commissioned by Womanity Foundation
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The school-in-a-box programme is a broad educational initiative, created and implemented by the Womanity Foundation. Launched in 2007, the programme was developed while working at the Al Fatah School in Kabul and as of 2015 has been replicated in 11 other public schools. The programme aims to improve the quality of girls' primary and secondary education in Afghanistan through teacher training, student counselling, improvements in infrastructure, and community outreach. This evaluation, the fourth of its kind, was commissioned to assess conditions at twelve schools where the programme is completed or ongoing, as well as three schools where it is soon expected to commence.

The research credits Womanity and its implementing partners with a number of important achievements at their beneficiary schools: community mobilization was clearly a success, as evinced by the fact that almost without exception, community members are today in favour of girls' education. At the same time, parents, students and teachers are fearful in the face of a deteriorating security context. Key informant interviews confirm that security is the most important risk faced by girls' education initiatives in Afghanistan in the current political climate. The teacher trainings provided are both highly efficacious and very popular. Womanity-supported schools are generally considerably better off than their non-beneficiary peers in terms of infrastructure and equipment. Womanity's intervention was particularly important in terms of the much-needed renovation of hygiene facilities – while further improvements could be made, the state of latrines generally improved from dismal and posing a serious health concern to an acceptable state of sanitarianess. Students attending the Womanity schools consider themselves fortunate to be attending school, and are almost without exception preparing for the national board exam, often with the help of preparatory classes offered by the Foundation and its partners.

A number of concerns were identified. While the science labs provided are mostly useful and appreciated, even if the lack of a qualified teacher sometimes prevents them from being used in their full capacity, the computer labs sometimes remain an underutilised resource. Despite an increase of sport and recreational activities in schools, sports classes remain often purely theoretical, as a number of factors limits their possibilities, chief among them (again) the lack of qualified instructors. Finally, a number of schools are overstretched in terms of capacity. The massive inflow of students has resulted in a degradation of materials provided and causes tension over available space and resources.

This report recommends that, in addition to the *needs* assessment which takes place before the start of the Foundation's involvement in beneficiary schools, Womanity also consider the *ability* of communities to provide additional assistance needed to make good use of some of the provided materials – commitments to provide fuel to power computers or to assist with the cleaning of the facilities have not always been respected in the past. It is suggested that the Foundation make further efforts in terms of hygiene improvements, especially given that most beneficiary schools are facing an important influx of students. It is recommended that the Foundation continue its very successful teacher trainings, especially in the sciences and in physical education, and give thought to finding a way to encourage the Ministry of Education to retain the trained instructors at the beneficiary schools. Given the current labour market situation in Afghanistan, the research team suggests that Womanity consider adding a vocational component to its student trainings. Finally, as it is clear that Kabul and its surroundings are relatively better off than other regions in terms of educational facilities, it is recommended that, budgetary constraints permitting, Womanity consider expanding the school-in-a-box initiative to other locations.

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METHODOLOGY

Twelve beneficiary schools and three “control” schools were examined for this research:

Table 1: Schools examined for this project

School	Location	Years of Womanity support	# girl students
Al Fatah –School for Girls	Kabul City, District 9	2007-2014	3,263
Naswan Paghman	Paghman District	End 2011-2014	941
Khauja Lakan	Paghman District	End 2011-2014	728
Qalaï Malik	Paghman District	End 2011-2014	413
Malalaï	Annaba District (Panjshir Province)	End 2011-2014	1,075
Paindah	Farza District	End 2012-2014	445
Keraman	Dara District (Panjshir Province)	End 2011-2015	282
Wahdat	Kabul City, District 5	End 2012 -2015	5,817
Nasaji Gulbahar	Hesa Awal Kohistant District (Kapisa Province)	End 2012 -2015	2,043
Sardar Daud Khan	Kabul City, District 9	End 2013 -2016	4,386
Naswan Mer Bacha Koot	Mir Bacha Kot District (Kabul Province)	End 2013 - 2016	1,507
Abdullah Bin Omar	Paghman District	End 2013- 2016	1,179
Spen Kalai	Kabul City, District 5	2015-2018	3,450
Char Asyab	Char Asyab	2015-2018	1,448
Gholam Haidar Khan	Rokha district (Panjshir Province)	2015-2018	475

The tools used by Samuel Hall were designed to ensure wide-ranging access to all relevant qualitative and semi-quantitative data through five distinct tasks:

1. A literature review of existing documents on academic papers of current and past NGO educational programmes, national and international initiatives and other topics related to improving education in settings such as Afghanistan.
2. A series of key informant interviews (KIIs) designed to assess the impact of the programme and understand the roles of important actors in the education sector, including government bodies such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Provincial and District Governorates, national as well as international non-governmental organizations working in the field of girls’ education.
3. Semi-quantitative interviews with students, teachers, households, as well as school observations:

Table 2: Semi-quantitative data collected

	Number of student interviews	Number of teacher interviews	Number of household interviews	Number of School observations
Test schools	20 per school	3 per school	5 per school	1 per school
Control schools	20 per school	1 per school	1 per school	1 per school
Total	300	39	63	15

4. Focus-group discussions (FGD) with female students, parents, teachers and community leaders:

Table 3: Qualitative data collected

	Student FGD	Parent FGD	Teacher FGD	Community leader FGD
Test schools	1 per school	4 in total	4 in total	4 in total
Control schools	1 per school	1 in total	1 in total	1 in total
Total	15	5	5	5

All tools were based on those used in the baseline and midline surveys conducted by Samuel Hall.

The accompanying project website presents the fifteen individual school reports and all data collected.

https://sites.google.com/a/samuelhall.org/school-in-a-box_krar7graduxy/

Nota bene: This site is accessible through the above link but nowhere listed publically. The URL contains a random element to protect proprietary data.

1 SCHOOL-IN-A-BOX: ORIGINS AND CONTEXT

In order to provide a background to Womanity’s intervention, this first section examines the historical and cultural context of girls’ education in Afghanistan, the progress which has been made and the challenges which remain. It sheds light on important programmes working on girls’ education and their approaches. Finally, it briefly presents the school-in-a-box programme.

1.1 DEVELOPMENTS IN GIRLS’ EDUCATION SINCE THE TALIBAN ERA

When the Taliban took power in Afghanistan in 1996, a new system based on a radical interpretation of the Sharia law was instituted. The Taliban enforced a complete ban on women’s work outside the home and strictly enforced *Purdah* and the segregation of women. They also imposed a nominally temporary suspension of the education of girls above eight years of age. The educational system deteriorated tremendously as a consequence.

- Firstly, the education sector that employs a large number of females suffered greatly from the female employment ban: In 2001 there were no female teachers enrolled in any teacher training institutions.
- Secondly, the already very poor enrolment rates in primary schools dropped precipitously. According to UNESCO’s *Education for all* Global Monitoring Report, the girls’ gross enrolment ratio fell from 32% just before the Taliban captured Kabul in 1995 to 5% in 1999.¹
- Lastly, with the Taliban in power, the international community severed relations with the Afghan government. Education funding fell from 22% of all Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 1993 to just 0.3% in 1997.²

Following the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the Bonn Agreement aimed to re-create the State of Afghanistan by stipulating that a new Afghan constitution be adopted. Today, the right to education for all is protected in the 2004 Constitution, which also commits the Government to devise and implement effective programmes for balancing and promoting education for women (Art 43). The Ministry of Education has identified girls’ education as a priority. These efforts met with undeniable success: in 2010, over 90% of girls eligible for first grade education were in school. 250,000 new students were added to primary and secondary institutions in 2011 alone.³ Nonetheless, there are still significant regional variations access to schools, the quality of educational infrastructure, the availability of school materials and the supply of qualified female teachers. There are still 200 (of 398) districts in which no female students are enrolled in secondary school and 250 with no female teachers.⁴

¹ UNESCO, (2000) *The Education for All (EFA) Assessment: Country Report Afghanistan*: http://www.unesco.org/education/wef/countryreports/afghanistan/rapport_2.html

² American Institutes for Research, (2006) *Education and the Role of NGOs in Emergencies: Afghanistan 1978-2002*, p5.

³ Lynne Bethke, (June 2012) *Education Joint Sector Review 1391 / 2012 Primary and Secondary Education*.

⁴ Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), (November/December 2011) *Fifth Report Situation of Economic and Social Rights in Afghanistan*.

Furthermore, governmental instability and weak political institutions have had a negative effect on capacity within the Ministry of Education, which caused massive delays in programme implementation. Several NGOs (AFRANE, Afghanistan Libre...) interviewed for this assignment complained that they had pending projects awaiting the renewal of their protocol with the MoE, and representatives of both UNWOMEN and UNICEF expressed their concern with the difficulties of implementing education-related projects in the current climate.

1.2 CULTURAL CHALLENGES TO GIRLS' EDUCATION

Social pressure and local norms regulating female behaviour often play a deleterious role in hampering their participation in the public life once they have reached puberty. Three main social factors limit girls' education and extracurricular engagement: social norms, fear and pessimism concerning women's economic potential.

1.2.1 The risk of "shameful" behaviour

In some regions in Afghanistan, especially the southern provinces, girls who enter adolescence are expected to avoid contact with men who are not close relatives.

As a direct result of this, girls' enrolment rates decrease steadily every year with sharp declines between Grades 4 and 5, Grades 7 and 8 and again between Grades 10 and 11.⁵ Grade 4 appears to be a critical time for dropping out, which is of particular concern since the completion of Grade 5 is considered essential for maintaining life-long literacy and numeracy. Yet although girls make up approximately 40% of total enrolment at the primary level overall, female enrolment rates in Grade 6 as compared to Grade 1 fall sharply, reaching declines of 90% in Zabul and 80% in Hilmand.⁶

The only way to provide schooling for girls is to set up segregated facilities where concerns for safety and protection are paramount. Although progress has been made, the logistical obstacles to achieving a perfectly segregated system were massive and could not be overcome in a few years. In 2010, 63% of schools still didn't have a surrounding wall⁷, which prevented many parents from sending their girls to school.

1.2.2 Insecurity and physical danger

Security is a significant obstacle to girls' education in Afghanistan. The restrictions imposed on women's mobility are mainly related to the fear for their safety. Since not all the regions are connected with the public transportation network and many cannot afford a car, the journeys to and from school are particularly problematic.

Indeed, girls are vulnerable to harassment by boys in the street and also to attacks by groups who oppose girls' education. The UN reported more than 1,000 attacks on educational facilities in 2009-2012. Attacks range from the burning and bombing of schools, to threatening "night letters", kidnapping, and acid attacks on female students. In 2012, the Ministry of Education reported that more than 590 schools had been closed in areas at risk, especially in the Southern provinces. Recent years allegedly saw the poisoning of hundreds of school girls through gas or chemicals in their drinking water.

⁵ Lynne Bethke, (June 2012) Education Joint Sector Review 1391 / 2012 Primary and Secondary Education.

⁶ IMPAKT/NGC, (July 2012) Afghanistan Education Sector Gender Equality - Situational Analysis p24

⁷ Ibid.

To counter this, the main strategy adopted by the Ministry of Education as well as NGOs is to involve communities in the protection of schools. In 2011, the MoE reported establishing 7,000 school protection councils composed of parents, elders, religious leaders and other influential people in the community. All NGOs interviewed stressed the importance of social mobilisation and the inclusion of communities to preserve the safety of their children.

1.2.3 The treatment of girls' education as an "empty investment"

Social norms in Afghanistan generally view marriage, schooling and working as incompatible: even in poor households women are often not allowed to work for an additional income. Domestic responsibilities and the burden of childbearing further complicate young married girls' access to education. Moreover, parents tend to invest more in educating their boys because girls generally leave home upon marriage. Educating a girl is thus perceived as an empty investment.

The general division of labour in Afghanistan follows the traditional scheme with men as breadwinners and women as homemakers. Education and health are the main professional sectors that women have access to because they allow for gender segregation in the work environment. However, women essentially remain confined to labour-intensive, small scale activities.

1.3 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMMES FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION AND THEIR OBJECTIVES

This section briefly outlines the objectives of a number of programmes involved with girls' education in Afghanistan.

- **Back to school: Increasing girls' enrolment**

In 2011, children under 14 years of age constituted close to half of the total population in Afghanistan. Today, the availability of educational facilities is insufficient and an estimated 3.5 million children remain out of school. The establishment of Community Based Education and accelerated classes has been an important response to promote the access to school especially for the marginalized communities. More than 7,000 community based classes were put in place in 2011. These are the only schools in which girls outnumber boys: 57% of the students enrolled in in community based school in 2011 were female.⁸

- **Retention of girls' in secondary education, recruitment of teachers**

As mentioned above, different reasons make it more difficult for girls to go to school, as they get older. Significant investment is required in higher levels of education if the gains achieved through girls' enrolment in primary school are not to be wasted. The expansion of secondary schools—still heavily concentrated in urban areas—is necessary to permit girls' access to higher levels of education.

The Girls' Education Support Programme (GESP) implemented in Badakhshan, Bamyán and Baghla by the Agha Khan Foundation (AKF) supports the expansion of schools from primary to secondary, in many cases helping these schools become the first secondary schools in remote districts. This programme had very encouraging results in terms of girls' enrolment rates and girl's retention in higher grades.

⁸ IMPAKT/NCG, (July 2012) Afghanistan Education Sector Gender Equality - Situational Analysis p7

The shortage of female teachers combined with the shortage of girls' secondary schools has resulted in a complete lack of enrolment by girls in upper secondary grades in 200 districts.⁹ There are important disparities between the provinces: in 2011, the percentage of qualified female teachers stood at 73% in Kabul City while there were no qualified female teachers in 250 districts (i.e. more than half of all districts).¹⁰

- **Teacher capacity building**

The old teachers trained before the Taliban are good in terms of pedagogy and academic level, but they are not up to date with the program. Young teachers freshly out of the academy are motivated but not very skilled. Those who became teachers when was not very complicated to become a teacher have neither the academic nor the motivation nor the educational level.

Victor Nouis, AFRANE - Pedagogy coordinator

In 2015, the first generation of fully post-Taliban professors will graduate from training centres; however there is still a large number of teachers who are not up to date on the new curriculum. Since the recruitment of new teachers is problematic in a number of districts, retaining all existing teachers and upgrading their skills and qualifications is particularly important. Due to the high number of students in the classrooms and to the short period of time devoted to each class (45 minutes maximum), most classes consist of the teacher reading a page of the school textbook and the students learning it by heart. Both the Ministry of Education and several NGOs have initiated programmes to change this.

- **Advocating for changes in social attitudes and norms**

Various actors inside and outside the family exert influence over the decision to send girls to school: parents, religious figures, elders. Although families in urban areas tend to be slightly less conservative, social pressure is still an important factor. Community sensitization and mobilization programs participate in reshaping the attitudes of the families and the community.

The schools should be owned by the community not the government.

Pawan Kucita, Chief of Education at the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Office

The success of Community Based Schools in enrolling large numbers of females is proof that community mobilisation is a key success factor for advancing girls' education.

- **Improving infrastructure**

Another important factor in improving girls' enrolment rates is to ensure that the schools are "girl-friendly". School facilities should ensure girl's safety, with sufficient female teachers and segregated classrooms for older girls. The hygienic and sanitation conditions of schools are critical. In this spirit, UNICEF initiated a Global Child Friend School (CFS) strategy in Afghanistan that sets five criteria for the schools, one of which is "Safety": The school must be healthy and protective, equipped with surrounding walls and decent water and sanitation facilities.

⁹ Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), (November/December 2011) *Fifth Report Situation of Economic and Social Rights in Afghanistan*.

¹⁰ Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), (November/December 2011) *Fifth Report Situation of Economic and Social Rights in Afghanistan*.

1.4 WOMANITY FOUNDATION'S SCHOOL-IN-A-BOX PROGRAMME

In 2007, the Womanity Foundation launched a programme to build a model of excellence in girls' public education. Womanity's approach addresses a number of the challenges outlined above, most notably through raising community awareness and involvement, qualifying teachers and providing improved infrastructure.

The chosen "beneficiary schools" were provided assistance through from a dynamic mix of approaches:

1. Training of under-qualified teachers and school staff in subject matters;
2. Promotion of health and hygiene practices;
3. Creation and remediation of physical infrastructure with a focus on latrines, clean water, libraries, science and computer labs and physical education facilities;
4. Establishment of trust-based relationships with local communities and engaging men in the empowerment of girls and female teachers;
5. Supporting students to overcome obstacles they face in attending school and encouraging them to pursue higher education.

The project began by supporting the development of Al Fatah School for Girls in Kabul, one of Afghanistan's biggest girls' schools. WF and its implementing partners built and renovated classrooms and other infrastructure, equipped the school with furniture, science and computing laboratories and teaching materials, and provided electricity. The Foundation also organized and funded the training and capacity development of teachers and school staff in Management, Information Technology (IT), English and novel teaching methods. Students were prepared for the National Entry Exam to university with great success. Today, Al Fatah is widely regarded as a model school for girls in Afghanistan.

Armed with this success, Womanity started the School-in-a-box initiative with the goal of providing other districts with model schools for girls designed to enable a new generation of Afghan girls to learn and contribute to the development of their country. Following in Al Fatah's footsteps, the programme enrolled five schools in 2011, a further three schools in 2012 and three more in late 2013.

One goal of WF was to monitor activities in a rigorous fashion and provide evidence-based reports on the impact of the programme on its beneficiary schools. This report, the fourth in as many years, describes the twelve schools that have benefited or are currently benefiting from Womanity support. It also introduces three schools which have not yet received any assistance but will in the near future. This research follows in the footsteps of the 2012 school-in-a-box baseline evaluation and the 2013 school-in-a-box midline evaluation conducted by Samuel Hall research teams and uses similar tools to allow for direct comparisons of the results.

2 OVERVIEW OF THE RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION

This section serves as an introduction to the individuals interviewed for this evaluation. It examines community attitudes towards girls' education before shedding light on students' background, interests and concerns. Finally, it presents a portrait of the teachers - their attitudes, methods and salaries.

2.1 COMMUNITY ATTITUDES

Community attitudes regarding girls' education in Afghanistan are traditionally conservative. This is not easily changed over the course of a few years, as evinced by this research.

Elderly people and religious scholars (...) insist that girls should stay at home. According to them, girls do not need to learn and get an education. They do not need to earn money and have their own income because their husbands will provide for them after they get married.

FGD students, Paghman

However, interviews conducted during the course of the research also revealed that community elders very frequently stress the importance of education, including girls' education, referring to the Prophet's emphasis on the need to learn from the time of one's birth to the end of one's life. Understanding the rules of Islam is commonly mentioned as a crucial reason for encouraging children to go to school. It seems clear that for the great majority of inhabitants of the communities where Womanity is active, Islam is not considered an obstacle but—to the contrary—a factor in favour of girls' education in Afghanistan. This places the individuals interviewed squarely in opposition to more conservative actors such as the Taliban. Another strong factor in favour of education in general and girls' education in particular in the eyes of interviewed community leaders is its importance to the development of the country:

Education for children will lead the country on the road to development. It will keep the country from backwardness. Education is the secret of success of a country!

FGD community leaders, Spen Kalai

The primary deterrent to communities' acceptance of girls' education is a lack of security. A number of interviewed students note that families are not against their education but simply afraid for them. Education, while good in and of itself, is often simply not considered worth the risk of losing one's daughter.

If we have security we will be happy if our girls go to school; but if there is insecurity we won't allow it.

FGD households Char Asyab

Families that are educated would like their girls to be educated but they are afraid of the insecure situation in Afghanistan. There are people who harass girls and even threaten them. They say things like: "If you continue going to school we will kidnap you".

FGD students, Al Fatah

Older women appear to have a particularly dichotomous view of girls' education. According to the interviews with the students themselves, that generation is strongly divided on the value of girls' education, either encouraging it strongly (supposedly because they themselves did not have the opportunity to benefit from an education) or on the contrary discouraging it to the extreme, suggesting instead that girls stay home and help them with household tasks.

Elder women in our community say: "Girls don't need to go to school. They just need to learn about the Quran and praying." Because they are uneducated, they say that girls will marry, which means that they don't need to study. Instead, they should marry and bring children into the world.

FGD students, Keraman

Elder women encourage us to go school. (...) They say : "We didn't study. Now we are like blind people. We do not know our rights, we do not know about religious things. We spent our lives without being able to see anything. We do not know anything."

FGD students, Paidah

Teachers generally agree that while community attitudes towards girls' education differ, they have become more positive over the past years. The advent of television is commonly cited as an important reason for this development.

Before, when a girl was going to the school, people would throw stones at her. But now there are many girls' schools, and crowds of girls are coming and going to the school.

FGD students, Paghman

One young discussion participant noted that a successful female student might incite other families to send their daughters to school. This is, in some respects, a principal achievement of initiatives such as Womanity.

Earlier evaluations also revealed positive community attitudes regarding girls' education. The 2012, 2013 and 2014 studies saw communities in favour of sending their daughters to school. This year, the research shows that the media, the evolution of the country and community outreach have indeed resulted in strong community backing. However, the perception that the security situation is deteriorating is likely to have a considerable negative effect on girls' enrolment in the future, especially in the urban zones where this sentiment seems more prevalent than in the more rural locations.

2.2 STUDENT BACKGROUNDS AND ATTITUDES

The students interviewed for this assignment live in rather homogenous neighbourhoods, with five out of six students of the opinion that they were neither richer nor poorer than most other households they knew. Besides their school work, their time is generally occupied by household tasks. Few play games and none have any kind of sports activities outside of the home: school, for them, is the only place where they can be children. Two thirds of interviewed pupils do play at school.

- **Attitudes towards education**

This might be one of the many reasons that an overwhelming 97% of the 300 girls interviewed at 15 schools state that they like going to school “very much”. The principal reason, however, as stated by nine respondents out of ten, is that they “like to learn new things”. Not a single respondent subscribed to the statement “I would prefer to stay at home” rather than going to school. In fact, without exception, the interviewed students were thrilled to be able to attend school, and proud of their knowledge:

A few days ago, one of our relatives came to our home. They had received a letter but they were not able to read it. They brought the letter to our home to be read by me. These are benefits of education.

FGD students, Abdullah bin Omar

Two thirds of the interviewed students spend more than one hour every day on their homework. While close to three quarters of our interviewees could count on their parents’ support with their homework, a non-negligible quarter does not. For many this is because they do not want or need the help, others cite the lack of their parents’ ability to read. While this phenomenon was observed in all the districts under consideration, it appears especially prevalent in Annaba district (Kabul), Mir Bacha Kot District (Kabul) and Farza District (Panjshir).

The students interviewed for this research expressed an acute awareness that not all girls have the opportunity to go to school, with over half of them stating that other children in their community did not do so. The overwhelming reason cited was a lack of permission from families. More than a third of interviewed students said they knew girls who dropped out of their school this year.

- **Safety**

Students generally walk to school, which takes most of them (80%) less than half an hour. The girls are usually accompanied by other students. Just like in the 2012, 2013 and 2014 evaluations, the overall quantitative data suggests that most students feel safe on the way to school. Nine interviewed students out of ten stated that they felt safe or very safe both on the way to school and at school. However, this number differs considerably between schools.¹¹ Furthermore, the quantitative information collected is somewhat nuanced by the qualitative interviews:

Yes, I am afraid that, God forbid, one day a suicide attack will happen on my way. But an incident like that has not happened yet. But the problem I have in my way is that sometimes boys harass me. (...) My family said: Do not respond, keep your head down. If you do not tell them anything, they will go away.

FGD students, Spen Kalai

¹¹ In Wahdat school, for example, six out of 20 students professed not feeling safe. This is the case for seven students out of 20 at Sardar Daud Khan. On the other hand, all students interviewed feel safe on the way to Malalai School.

I myself found a really good job at Char Asyab, which is a dangerous place quite far from Kabul. But even though the salary was very good, it was out of the question for my husband to let me accept it. He would not have been able to accompany me there every day...

KII Choukria, teacher training implementer, Afrane

Finally, it is generally acknowledged that a professional woman can become a target in the Afghan context.

A girl who was living in Nowabad was killed because she was working in a private organization.

FGD teachers, Wahdat

As in earlier evaluations, this research shows that young beneficiaries' expectations might be slightly unrealistic. While this does not argue against the provision of education which is clearly needed and appreciated, it should be noted that these students will almost invariably be disappointed once they leave school.

2.3 TEACHER BACKGROUNDS AND ATTITUDES

Figure 2: Spen Kalai School (future beneficiary school) celebrates its teachers



The teachers interviewed, all female, are examples of working women in Afghanistan who face the challenging task of juggling family and professional life. Many state that their main objective for their private lives is to become better organized between their household duties and their work, which they are very proud of and dedicated to. The absence of childcare facilities in the schools is mentioned several times in teacher focus group discussions:

Having young children and not having a kindergarten is a big challenge we face. If we could bring our children with us, we would have spiritual composure and we could teach better.

FGD teachers, Qalai Malik

- **Educational background**

All of the teachers interviewed had at least completed 12th grade; the majority of them having graduated from the two years teachers' training programs. Only very few teachers at the 15 schools examined had graduated from university. All declared having benefited from trainings either by the MoE or by one of various NGOs as well as, of course, the Womanity Foundation. However, most of the teacher respondents stated that support was still needed especially in the technical subjects.

- **Salaries**

A structural problem of all the surveyed schools is the fact that their teachers only receive a small (and quite uneven) financial incentive: the average monthly salary of a teacher at the rural schools of Qalai Malik or Paindah is 6,000 Afghanis, compared to 8,000 Afghanis at Kabul District 9's Sardar Daud Khan or Al Fatah. This is an important factor in teachers' retention, even though it should be noted, that Womanity as an independent NGO, has no influence on teacher salaries at public schools. However, there are multiple consequences to such a lack of financial attraction: the teaching staff's capacity is often poor and staff turnover is important (especially with skilled teachers).

- **Absenteeism**

Measuring the actual absenteeism of teachers is not an easy task, as it is considered a very sensitive topic in a country where there is a high proportion of "ghost" civil servants and oftentimes low salaries lead civil servants to take other jobs. Following this logic, the review team prioritized children's answers and asked them about the frequency of absenteeism among their teachers. Results show that teacher absenteeism was a rare occurrence, reported by less than a quarter of students and mainly at the very large schools such as Al Fatah, Sardar Daud Khan and Wahdat. Normally the number of teachers absent was rather low, at one or two, and not very frequent. Furthermore, none of the teachers interviewed for this assignment reported a second source of income.

- **Teaching methods**

Womanity and its implementing partners made a considerable effort regarding teacher training. During the period 2011-2014, a total of 179 teacher training modules (with close to 3000 participants) were organized in order to get teachers to move away from recitation and towards more innovative teaching methods. Teachers are generally very appreciative of the training they received and the trainings appear to have had a notable effect. As in the 2014 evaluation, the teachers observed during the field visits were using activity-based learning techniques and problem-solving question-and-answer sessions.

The relationship between the teachers and the students is very good. We are like mothers and daughters. They treat all students equally well and they never insult us. During the discussion inside the class or outside of the class, they answer and respond to our questions. They try their best to teach us the subjects.

FGD students, Paghman

3 SCHOOL EVALUATIONS: OVERVIEW

This section first presents an overview of the students' and staff's opinions of their educational establishment. It then provides a comparative overview of the infrastructure and equipment in both beneficiary school and control schools, with a particular focus on the aspects which the Womanity Foundation aims to improve. The last part of section 3 reveals which of the materials provided for the computer, science and PE classes are in fact being used.

3.1 STUDENT AND STAFF OPINIONS

Students' opinions about their school were positive across the board. The usefulness of their education is universally recognized, be it to educate one's children, to read the inscription on a bottle of medicine, or to be able to have a career and of course to serve one's country.

If a person gets sick, an educated person can read the name of the medicine on the bottle and save their lives. An illiterate person might give the wrong medicine which may even lead to the death of the patient.

FGD students, Abdullah bin Omar

All students interviewed in the Womanity schools recognized that there were important differences between their school and other schools. When asked about the particular differences, students frequently spontaneously evoke the committees, the quality of their teachers¹³, the quality of their equipment and the "peaceful and secure environment".¹⁴ School principals were frequently praised.

We think we are a role model for other schools. Our school is different from other schools in many respects!

FGD students, Qalai Malik

Our laboratory is different from other schools. (...) The teaching methods of our teachers are perfect, whereas we know it is not very good in other schools. We have a very strong and powerful management and a peaceful and comfortable environment.

FGD students, Khauja Lakan

The teachers in the Womanity schools for the most part share their students' enthusiasm, although they complain on occasion about the lack of electricity (Malalai) and the sheer number of students (Al Fatah, Wahdat) stretching available resources. Sanitation facilities were a problem frequently mentioned, with Womanity's substantial efforts in this regard doubtlessly dampened by the strong increase in student population. However and without exception, teachers in Womanity supported schools appear particularly proud of their own professionalism and methods. They stress the good relations with their students.

¹³ Invariably and as befits teenage students, there are also occasional violent criticisms

¹⁴ "Security is very necessary and significant, and if students study in a peaceful environment they can learn better. If they feel scared they cannot learn their lessons well." FGD students, Qalai Malik

Our teachers are very professional and hardworking, they work on students' lessons a lot and they try different types of teaching methods in order to see which one of them works best for students. The teachers of our school are kind, patient and they have a good behaviour with students.

FGD teachers, Malalai

In the **control schools**, while girls appreciated their teachers, they did not appreciate the equipment and infrastructure.

Our school is very different from other schools. Other schools have classrooms, books, computers and library, which we do not have in our schools. We face many shortages in different areas that other schools were helped with. No seminars had been held in our school. We would like seminars to be held in our school as well.

FGD students, Char Asyab

The teachers at the control schools echo the concerns of the students, and many also state being overworked, overwhelmed and underpaid. Womanity teacher trainings were requested by the great majority of teachers in schools who have not yet had the opportunity to benefit from the Foundation's support.

3.2 SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

In terms of infrastructure, the differences between the Womanity beneficiary schools and the control schools are often drastic.

- **School building and surrounding walls**

The situation has drastically improved in the majority of schools supported by Womanity since the baseline surveys. Most of the schools under examination have a concrete structure with good floors, solid roof and a suitable surrounding wall. That said, even in the best-equipped schools the winter and the rainfall seasons damaged most of the walls, paints and ceilings.¹⁵ Even in Al-Fatah School, the classrooms don't always have suitable doors and have old and damaged chairs and tables. Two beneficiary schools (Keraman and Bacha Koot) were found to still have temporary annexes and tents in the garden, while two others (Naswan Paghman and Khauja Lakan) still do not have sufficiently high surrounding walls, which causes some security concerns.

The infrastructure situation in the control schools is diverse, ranging from comparable to a number of Womanity-supported schools (Spen Kalai) to devastating in Malalai Char Asyab.

¹⁵ There might be room for improvement of community ownership and upkeep of infrastructure.

Figure 3: School buildings Al Fatah (beneficiary school) and Char Asyab (future beneficiary school)



- **Electricity**

Two thirds of the schools visited during the course of the research are connected to the public electricity network, while only two schools use solar power as a source of energy. Two beneficiary schools (cf. Keraman, Paindah) and one school in the control group (Gholam Haidar) do not have electricity at all, but with very few exceptions the schools visited by the research team faced *power shortages on a regular basis*. These power cuts are either due to the nature of the equipment of the school or caused by delays in the payment of the electricity bills - responsibility of the Ministry of Education. This caused major difficulties in the use of the school equipment. The computer labs provided by Womanity are a particularly striking example of the type of facility that often cannot be used because of the inadequacy of the schools' infrastructure.

However, it should be noted that a number of schools have generators to overcome power shortage. In a number of cases, Womanity provided computers labs with the mutual understanding that schools and communities would have been responsible of acquiring the fuel to run a generator to power the computers. This happened in at least two schools, with others still struggling to find a reliable backup solution to frequent outages or outright absence of electricity.

- **Classrooms and teaching materials**

Even though most of schools have the necessary infrastructure in terms of classrooms buildings, both in the test and control schools, lessons are sometimes still held under tents in the garden of two beneficiary schools (Keraman and Bacha Koot) and one control school (Char Asyab). Despite the fact that Womanity distributed a large number of chairs and desks, students occasionally complained about there being not enough of them. This can be attributed to the large influx of students over recent years. Where there are classrooms, they are usually equipped with blackboards.

All the schools supported by Womanity have decorative material both in the classrooms and on corridor walls. Various posters, maps, periodic tables, hygiene instructions and messages against violence serve to convey educational messages.

- **Toilets and hygiene conditions**

Only three schools have improved flush-toilets, while the remainder are equipped with traditional Afghan toilets sometimes built or renovated by Womaniy on the basis of the design provided by the Ministry of Education. While cleanliness could be improved in a number of cases, this constitutes a vast improvement over conditions in the past.

Not all the toilets were equipped with close-by taps for hand-washing, which are located in some case 20 to 150 meters away. Furthermore, the waste management system of the ECO SAN toilets implies that two pits are used alternatively which can cause significant quantities of faeces to accumulate inside the open pit over six months after which the pit is closed and the sludge gets digested.¹⁶ This system is recognized as a valid and safe solution to provide hygiene facilities, although it can produce an unpleasant smell and might attract flies and insects.

As of mid-2015, all Womaniy beneficiary schools but one (Nasaji Gulbahar) benefit from drinking water, the quality of which is frequently monitored by Action Contre La Faim.

Figure 4: Toilet facilities Sardar Daud Khan (beneficiary school) and Spen Kalai (future beneficiary school)



- **Computer Labs**

The computer labs are usually equipped with ten to fifteen computers placed on individual desks. Most schools have an additional computer for teachers, a printer and a projector. Nine interviewed students out of ten are aware of the presence of a computer lab in their school. Significant differences emerge between the test schools when students were asked how often they used their computer lab. Practical computer classes start generally from Grade 10, and the majority of students state that they visit the computer lab at least once a week.

¹⁶ Once digested the sludge is safely removed and used as soil-conditioner.

Figure 5: Computer lab Keraman

However, even though there is the necessary material at Al Fatah, Pindah, Keraman, Wahdat and Sardar Daud Khan Schools, the electricity problems mean that in practice the majority of students is not always able to work on a computer directly.

Among the control schools, only Spen Kalai is equipped with a computer lab but it does not appear to be in use. All students in the control schools state that they never work on computers.

- **Science Labs**

Science labs are usually located in large rooms furnished with benches and chairs. The equipment available ranges from the material necessary for chemistry experiments (beakers, chemicals, stirring rods, etc.) as well as biology demonstrations (plastic models of a human skeleton and organs, etc.) to physics experiments (optical materials, batteries, etc.).

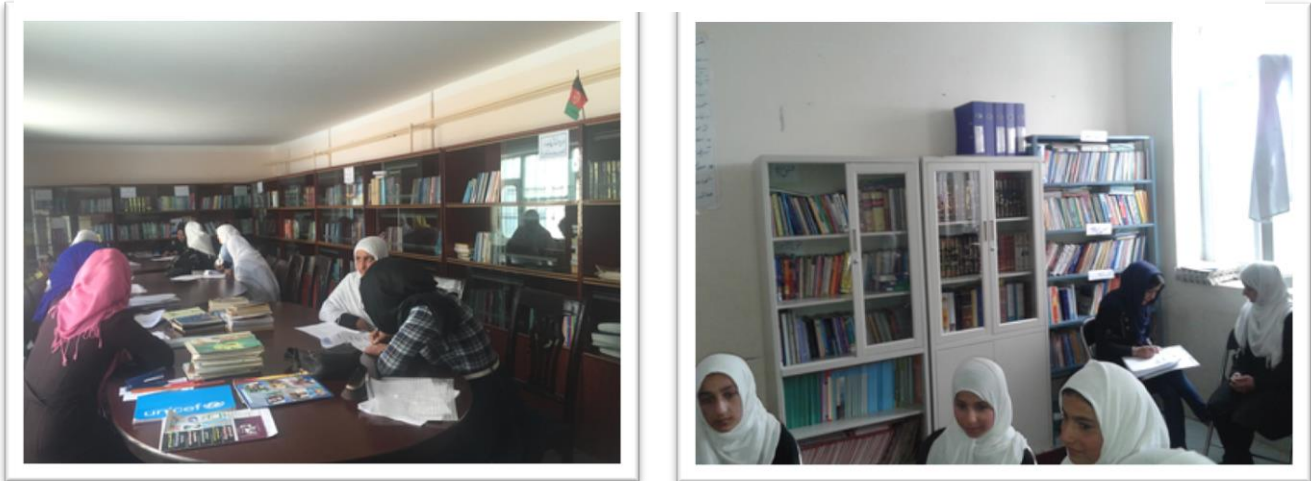
The great majority of students stated that there was a science lab in their school and the labs visited for this research were very well equipped. In certain schools some of the equipment remained untouched. This was sometimes due to the fact that Womanity provided enough materials to last for three years and not all of it needed to be unpacked right away. But on other occasions, the inability of teachers to perform specific experiments causes the equipment to go unused. Other science labs suffered from a discontinuous procurement process: perishable supplies for example had sometimes expired and not been replaced.

The only schools where certain respondents did not know of a science lab were, for the beneficiary schools, Wahdat (3 students out of 20) and, for the control group, Gholam Haidar Khan (6 students out of 20). Overall in beneficiary schools and in the control group, four students out of five use the science lab at their school at least once a week for practical physics, chemistry and biology works.

- **Library**

All students interviewed stated there was a library in their school, which two thirds of them professed to use "at least once a week". Al-Fatah has the most substantial library with 4,700 books followed by Sardar Daud Khan, Wahdat and Malalai School with 2,500 books. The others count less than 1,000 books. The library is clearly not perceived as a place for socializing with friends or talking to teachers, but rather a place to read (47%), to learn (60%) and to do homework (55%).

Figure 6: Library Khauja Lakan (beneficiary school) and Gholam Haidar Khan (future beneficiary school)



- **Sport facilities**

Physical education is one of the one of the most important areas pursued by the Womanity Foundation in its beneficiary schools.

Today, most schools have available nets for basketball or volleyball activities. Womanity also provided PE equipment which can be used indoors (ping pong tables), an important addition in a country where female students are often prevented from pursuing activities outdoors, especially in the absence of a teacher or suitable surrounding walls. All of the interviewed students stated that they had PE classes, which usually occurred once a week and usually lasted only 45 minutes.¹⁷

Figure 7: Volleyball courts at the beneficiary schools Abdullah bin Omar and Keraman



¹⁷ But considerably less time in Keraman, Wahdat, Sardar Daud Khan.

3.3 CLASSES

At all fifteen schools examined, students study the official state curriculum. The schools generally offer classes in Dari (and often Pashto), Science, Religion, English, Mathematics, History and Geography, as well as Physical Education. Womanity's support was overarching in terms of the much appreciated teacher training efforts, but aimed specifically at science, computer and PE courses in terms of infrastructure provided. The following table provides an overview of which of these courses are indeed provided as intended.

Table 4: Womanity-supported classes

School	Science class in laboratory	Computer class in Computer lab	Physical Education
Al Fatah	✓	✓ (theory mostly)	✓
Naswan Paghman	✓	✓	✓ (theory only)
Khauja Lakan	✓	✓	✓ (theory only)
Qalai Malik	✓	✓	✓ (theory only)
Malalai	✓	✓	✓
Paindah	✓	✓ (theory mostly)	✓ (theory only)
Keraman	✓ (theory only)	✓ (theory mostly)	✓ (theory only)
Wahdat	✓ (theory only)	✓ (theory mostly)	✓ (theory mostly)
Nasaji Gulbahar	✓	✓ (theory mostly)	✓ (theory mostly)
Sardar Daud Khan	✓	✓ (theory mostly)	✓
Naswan Mer Bacha Koot	✓	✓	✓
Abdullah bin Omar	✓	✓ (theory mostly)	✓
Spen Kalai	✓ (theory only)	✓ (theory only)	✓
Char Asyab	✓	X	✓
Gholam Haidar Khan	X	X	X

This table shows that while the science labs are used in most of the schools supported by WF, the computer labs aren't put to full and regular use in more than half of the cases. As mentioned above, this is due to the fact that *electricity outages* tend to limit the practical use of the material and that the promised community support in terms of provision of generator fuel appears to still be lacking in a number of cases.

Similarly to practical computer classes, also PE courses are in place only in five beneficiary schools (and in two in the control group) and sporadically in other two beneficiary schools, despite the fact that most schools have received at least some equipment which would allow for sports activities¹⁸ and Womanity has offered sports education courses to two teachers in every beneficiary school since the programme's beginnings in 2011.

But in a fluid job market for teachers, some of the trained instructors have left since, or started to be in charge of other subjects. Physical education nevertheless remains a pillar of Womanity-supported schools' curriculum and improvements in sport and recreational activities in schools have been noticed.

¹⁸ We noticed that often, ping pong tables, intended to allow for indoor recreational activities, are stored away and volleyballs go unused.

In some cases, if there is no teacher available to teach sports classes for a certain period of time, volunteers have been found and trained to coach the basketball and volleyball teams.¹⁹ Even where this is not the case, the field research team observed young female students using the playground and the sports facilities without an instructor in a number of cases or, in other cases, under the supervision of school staff (the librarian of Sardar Daud Khan school, for instance).

In our physical education class we do not have a teacher to work with us. We have the subject in our curriculum only by name. (...)We like the computer a lot, but we do not have a teacher for the subject.

FGD students, Abdullah bin Omar

The Womanity Foundation provided lots of computers and now there is one computer for each individual. At first the teacher will show us on a projector, and then we will practice on our own computers.

FGD students, Al Fatah

Volleyball, basketball and handball are the games we play. They are very useful, because sports are good for health. If we do sports we will be healthier and able to perform our daily tasks better.

FGD students, Malalai

While the 2013 evaluation stated that “science labs are simply not being used”, this evaluation found them to be both well-equipped and, for the most part, in use in most of Womanity’s beneficiary schools. This is not always the case with computer labs, both for frequent lack of electricity and occasional lack of qualified teachers. In spite of Womanity’s considerable efforts in teacher training for physical education, a lack of an instructor for the sports classes was mentioned regularly. The sports and playing materials provided are nevertheless used enthusiastically outside of formal classes in a number of beneficiary schools.

Table 5: % of students listing subject among their favourites

Mathematics	56%
Reading and Writing	48%
Computer	46%
Religious studies	45%
Arts	43%
Hygiene	28%
Science and physics	16%
English	15%
Physical Education	10%

The students interviewed clearly exhibit an interest in the computer courses: Close to half of the 300 interviewed students cite “Computer” among their favourite subjects, while only one in ten appears to appreciate her formal physical education courses.

¹⁹ This is the case at Wahdat school, for example.

Figure 8: Hygiene poster, Naswan Paghman



Hygiene classes

A programme on Hygiene Education was conducted in the 12 target schools by adapting the WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) program designed by UNICEF. In 2013--2014, 656 students and teachers were trained and encouraged in turn to share their knowledge with their peers. In 2014, Womanity distributed 2,000 leaflets on hygiene behaviour and had key hygiene messages painted on the walls. Notably, in four schools, a “hygiene promotion day” was organized during which students acted out plays displaying correct hygiene behaviour and discussed water safety and other hygiene-related issues.

Most student interviewees, including in the control schools, had indeed benefited from hygiene sessions. These sessions consisted mainly in personal hygiene lessons (washing hands, brushing teeth, cutting nails, etc.) as well as environmental hygiene practices (the importance of clean surroundings, food hygiene, hygienic water sources, etc.). These lessons appear to have been well assimilated.

Overall, students and staff at Womanity-supported schools are **very satisfied with their learning establishments** and recognise that they are considerably better-off than their peers in other schools. Womanity and its partners have had an important impact in terms of infrastructure, although the hygienic situation in the majority of the schools could be improved further. Furthermore, this research revealed that practical computer science and physical education classes do not always take place regularly, either for lack of electricity (computer courses) or for lack of a qualified instructor (sports courses).

In the schools which were only recently added to the programme, students express their hope that Womanity will be able to improve the methods of their teachers. In the control / future beneficiary schools, Womanity-aware students are hopeful that Womanity will bring a big change in terms of infrastructure.

Teachers and headmasters in the Womanity schools are universally grateful for the assistance provided and clear on the objectives pursued by the programme.

All of their assistance is remarkable and useful. The quality of lessons and of the school in general has increased.

KII headmaster, Qalai e Malik

It was like a desert before, but it looks like a real school now!

KII headmaster, Naswan Paghman

In short, anything if we have in our school comes from the Womanity Foundation. Our school had nothing in the past.

FGD students, Pindah

They express appreciation for the materials provided and the teaching seminars delivered. Their main fear, shared by headmasters, is that the assistance will come to an end once Womanity turns its attention to other schools.²⁰

4.2. EXPECTED LONG-TERM EFFECTS

The headmasters agree without exception that the effects of Womanity's intervention will last for many years. All the infrastructure and equipment provided should remain usable according to all interviewees. In addition, a number of headmasters consider that perhaps the most durable change brought by WF lies not in the equipment and infrastructure but in the teacher trainings.

The trainings and seminars which increased capacity of teachers will remain for as long as those teachers are alive.

KII headmaster, Keraman

This is in line with the thinking of the two interviewed heads of the Education Departments in Paghman and Kapisa who both state that Womanity's teacher training activities are likely to have a more lasting effect than the provision of infrastructure.

According to most of the headmasters, the time that the positive changes Womanity has brought to their schools will last depends mostly on those tasked with taking care of them.

All the activities that have been done for this school will last and remain because we appointed people in charge who will take good care of them.

KII headmaster, Al Fatah

²⁰ The Foundation is acutely aware of these concerns – and shares them. Staff consciously tries to focus all efforts on long-term effects only, refraining for example from setting up any kind of additional service which would require constant cash inflow and therefore only remain in place over the three-year programme duration.

While I am alive and principal of this school, the programme's impacts will remain. Once I leave, I don't know about its future. I don't know what would happen to these facilities. I hope that the person who comes after me will be a trustworthy and honest person.

KII headmaster, Khauja Lakan

Womaniya is well known by its direct beneficiaries, the students, who also exhibit a clear understanding of the Foundations objectives and express their gratitude and appreciation. The durability of the impact achieved will at least partly depend on the headmasters' safeguarding of the materials and infrastructure provided. It is commonly assumed by stakeholders on the ground that it is the teacher trainings which will have the most lasting effects in the long run.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of this report is to provide Womanity with an overview of its twelve current beneficiary schools and the effects the programme has had in those institutions. Furthermore, the study was intended to examine three schools where Womanity intends to begin assistance in the near future. This section briefly describes the impact the school-in-a-box programme has had in beneficiary schools. It sheds light on potential areas of improvement. Finally, it outlines a number of overarching structural challenges which should be kept in mind when planning the future of the school-in-a-box programme.

5.1. LESSONS LEARNED

1. Womanity and its implementing partners, in combination with other factors such as the media, clearly had a positive effect on community attitudes regarding girls' education. All community members interviewed held positive views of their daughters attending school. Indeed, as mentioned by several interviewees, there appears to be a snowball effect - the more girls are seen attending school, the more seem apt to follow.
2. The programme's teacher trainings were evidently a success. Appreciated by all the teachers interviewed for this evaluation, they were also judged one of the most important and durable effects of the programme by headmasters and other key informants. With few exceptions, teachers at Womanity schools appear to be not only well-versed in innovative teaching methodologies but also motivated and popular among the student body.
3. In terms of infrastructure provided, the renovation of the school buildings and the construction or repair of surrounding walls are evidently a necessity in some schools. The upkeep of infrastructure risks remaining a challenge in the long run for the schools if not adequately supported by the Ministry of Education. A number of schools risk seeing their buildings fall into disrepair, partly due to the harsh climate and partly due to the thinning of available resources due to a high inflow of new students. Community engagement, which encouragingly is very strong, will be needed to maintain what has been built.
4. Womanity's contribution to the improvement of the sanitary conditions of the toilet facilities has been important and very necessary. In most of the beneficiary schools, the toilet facilities are considerably better than in the control schools. Even if toilet paper, cover slaps and soap are still missing in many cases, ventilation is installed in most schools now. Among the schools in the control group (that will become beneficiary of School-in-a-Box in the second half of 2015 following the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding), Spen Kalai school faces fairly deplorable hygienic conditions which would need to be urgently addressed by Womanity.
5. Finally, while the addition of computer labs was noted and appreciated by students and headmasters alike, these rooms remain underutilised due to a general lack of electricity in a number of schools examined. Communities which assured the Womanity Foundation that fuel for generators would be provided to enable the running of the computer labs did not always deliver on their promises.

5.2. AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

For the schools where Womanity is currently active, as well as future beneficiary schools, a number of areas have the potential for improvement:

- **Support the Ministry of Education in developing contingency plans for potential rapid demographic changes**

Afghanistan's population is growing rapidly, and unevenly. Conflict and insecurity are main push factors leading to displacement, while economic incentives act as important pull factors towards the urban centres. Demographic developments are particularly hard to predict in light of the current political instability. Even if Womanity supports schools only for a limited number of years (three), it should be aware that the possibility of a sudden strong growth of the student body in any given beneficiary school, especially in Kabul, cannot be excluded. Contingency plans should be developed in cooperation with the Ministry of Education to ensure that basic educational services could continue to be provided to students even if their number were to double from one year to the next. A realistic long-term perspective could obviate the need for rapid and suboptimal remedial action in the future.

- **Provide sufficiently numerous classrooms**

While some large schools such as Al Fatah or Sardar Daud Khan have more than 50 classrooms, the other schools examined have 20 or less. The number of students effectively registered in class is on average 36 students, but this figure hides important disparities. The classrooms visited for this research were generally overcrowded, especially at the primary school level. Building additional classrooms or organizing additional shifts are possible solutions to the mounting pressure on schools faced with an ever-growing student population. The Foundation is aware of this concern, and is adding classrooms to the extent possible given budgetary constraints (at Qalai Malik school, for example) while lobbying at the district and provincial levels of the Ministry of Education to provide the required infrastructure to schools.

- **Train and retain more teachers (particularly science teachers and sports instructors)**

This evaluation has shown that even when training classes in specific subjects were offered, the schools were not able to retain qualified instructors. Since the Foundation is not able to directly influence the hiring and payment schemes of Afghan public schools, its direct scope of action is limited to advocacy with local DoEs and the MoE which might result in the creation of better incentives. If the State could provide childcare facilities for female teachers, for instance, their work environment would be much improved and Womanity's laudable training activities could have a more durable effect.

- **Improve regular cleaning activities**

Although the Womanity Foundation made considerable efforts to improve the cleaning of the schools through community mobilization, on occasion financially incentivizing staff to perform additional cleaning duties and organizing "cleaning days" involving the students, further improvements are needed to ensure the day-to-day cleanliness of the schools, especially the sanitary facilities.

Hiring a cleaner could be a simple and effective solution, but the effects of such an action would most likely not last past the Foundation's direct three-year involvement at the schools. Additional efforts at community mobilization should be made to ensure that the importance of shared cleaning duties is understood and that assurances in this regard are respected.

- **Offer classes on vocational skills**

A considerable number of students interviewed expressed an interest in learning vocational skills such as tailoring, embroidery, etc. If some vocational opportunities were created for them, ideally combined with a business skill component, it might foster the capacity of students to earn their own income and have career prospects should the *Kankor* exam and university studies not be an option for them, or in the event the labour market were unable to absorb them in more qualified positions. Vocational training (e.g. tailoring) might have the benefit of enabling women to work in sectors with a higher demand for their labour market contribution. Furthermore, such training would permit women to perform tasks acceptable in their communities and near or in their homes while cultural attitudes evolve over time. While the value of education to all is beyond dispute, it is recommended that the Womanity Foundation liaise with the International Labour Organization and other relevant actors to identify potential niche markets for female employment, thus providing not only an education but long-term professional perspectives to its young beneficiaries.

- **Focus on schools outside of Kabul**

As part of its school selection criteria, the Womanity Foundation has chosen to work only in relatively safe locations. The areas accessed by the Womanity Foundation are close to the capital, and easy to reach on good roads. These factors enable the Foundation to focus not as much on humanitarian work but rather on development initiatives such as teacher trainings. This evaluation shows that much has been accomplished in the Womanity schools in and around Kabul. Presently, if feasible given budget and security constraints, the school-in-a-box programme might be ready for the next step and begin to assist those schools in (even) greater need of assistance. The urgency of this was underscored by the great majority of key informants, from NGOs such as Afrane to the Ministries of Education and Women's Affairs.

There are important differences in girls' education between Kabul and the other provinces. There are schools and other facilities in the centres, but the remote areas do not have sufficient facilities for girls' education in particular. In the cities, the girls can go to schools easily but away from the cities they have many difficulties.

KII Abdul Malik Bakhtiar, Ministry of Women's Affairs

There are some schools with good facilities, but they are limited to Kabul city. There are also some schools where the children sit on the floor; they do not even have chairs and desks. (...) I myself have seen such schools in eastern provinces in Afghanistan.

KII Hasina Safi, Afghan Women's Network

5.3. OVERARCHING CHALLENGES

During the next phase of its operation, Womanity Foundation and its partners will face a number of overarching challenges which cannot easily be influenced by one organization but ought to be kept in mind when planning the programme's expansion.

Firstly, recent political upheaval has resulted in a substantially increased perception of insecurity. Women and girls are particularly affected by this phenomenon and key informants stress the potentially devastating effects this development might have on the efforts made in the field of girls' education:

In spite of all the work that has been done during the past thirteen years, insecurity is the main challenge in girls' education today.

KII Abdul Malik Bakhtiar, Ministry of Women's Affairs

Migratory pressure (i.e. the return of refugee households or the arrival of IDPs, in the cities in particular) has strained the communities' absorption capacities and had a devastating effect on the labour markets as well as all sorts of infrastructure, including schools. Furthermore, the threat of a further decline in economic conditions is real. In remote areas where families do not have the means to buy school books, much less provide for transportation for their daughters to attend schools far from their homes, girls' education is not always a household priority.

Finally, in urban centres, like Kabul, where female graduates are more likely to find jobs, the economic situation has recently declined in almost all economic sectors. Although many of the young graduates have great ambitions, striving to become doctors for the most part, the labour market might simply not be able to absorb them. While creating jobs for young Afghan women is clearly beyond the scope of Womanity's ambitions, this should be kept in mind when designing curricula and vocational training ought to accompany *Kankor* preparations when demand for learning such skills exists.

Despite the space for improvement and the challenges posed by the current and evolving situation, both country-wide and at the schools under consideration, the general consensus remains that the School-in-a-box programme has had a profound and enduring impact on the schools and communities it has touched. With an eye to an evolving Afghan reality and to the growing pool of beneficiaries, it is clear that the Womanity Foundation is well placed to continue to improve and innovate girl's education in Afghanistan and to provide opportunities Afghan girls and their communities might never have enjoyed without it.



The accompanying project website presents the fifteen individual school reports and all data collected.

https://sites.google.com/a/samuelhall.org/school-in-a-box_krar7graduxy/

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