

REPORT

School in a Box:
Advancing Girls' Education
in Afghanistan 2011-2014

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SCHOOL IN A BOX:

ADVANCING GIRLS' EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

2011-2014

The Womanity Foundation believes that girls' education is a cornerstone investment that enables women to change their status in society, advocate for their rights, pursue their aspirations and ultimately contribute to the socio-economic development of their country. Learning opens new doors and opportunities for girls and women, from which they would otherwise remain excluded. In 2007, Womanity launched a program in Afghanistan to build a model of excellence in girls' public education (grades 1 to 12).

The project began by supporting the Al Fatah School for Girls in Kabul, one of Afghanistan's largest public girls' schools. With having successfully identified and addressed the needs and weaknesses of the school, Womanity developed an innovative model for girl's education in public high schools. In 2011 the model was replicated in girls' schools across the country.

A 3-year program called *School in a Box : Advancing Girl's Education in Afghanistan* was developed and during the period 2011-2014, was adopted by 11 additional public high schools for girls in Kabul City, Kabul Province, Panjshir and Kapisa. The program, co-funded by the UBS Optimus Foundation, addressed the needs of 23,003 students (including some boys) and 935 teachers and administrative staff.

The present report combines data and information collected internally by the Womanity Foundation's team and externally by the research company Samuel Hall¹ that conducted an evaluation on the achievements of the program during the period 2011-2014.

¹Samuel Hall Consulting (2015), *School-in-a-box 2015 Evaluation*, commissioned by the Womanity Foundation.

THE CHALLENGE

While the enrolment of girls into schools has increased considerably since the fall of the Taliban, many challenges to acquiring a quality education still exist:



Infrastructure

Many schools in Afghanistan are not adequately built or have no building at all, especially in rural areas. 47% of schools do not have any infrastructure (Source: MoE, 2010). This is a major obstacle: schools with no or little infrastructure do not provide a safe and healthy educational environment.



Qualified female teachers

68% of teachers do not have a minimum standard qualification (source: MoE, 2012). The lack of qualified female teachers prevents parents from sending their girls to school, especially as they get older, and the poor quality of education does not encourage poor families to send their girls to school (Source: Care, 2011).



School attendance

Only 55% of primary school-age children and 32% of secondary school-age children were enrolled in school in 2010 (Civil Society Organization and UNICEF, 2012). It is estimated that 45% of the total children's population and about 60% of girls are still out of school.

There is also a gap between school enrolment and attendance. It is estimated that in grade 4 (ages 9 -11) the drop-out rate of students reaches 10% without including temporary and permanent absentees² (Bethke, 2012).

Enrolment gaps between boys and girls increase in higher levels of education. Girls make up 40% of total enrolment at primary level, and approximately 35% and 34% in lower and upper secondary levels, respectively.



Early or forced marriage

Girls are frequently married at an early age preventing them to continue their education. Although this practice is socially and culturally embedded, the lack of economic resources of the family is often the prevailing reason for early marriage (source: Care, 2011).

²Education Joint Sector Review Primary and Secondary Education June 2012, Lynne Bethke, Consultancy performed within the Global Partnership for Education and in partnership with the Ministry of Education.

AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION

THE SCHOOL IN A BOX MODEL

The *School in a Box* Model supports quality education and aims to increase girls' attendance and keep them in school. This holistic approach consists of five key components:

Teacher training

Training to under-qualified teachers and school staff in subject matters, pedagogical approaches and basic school management.

Health and hygiene education

Promoting health and hygiene education to reduce school days lost from sickness and encourage girls to attend when menstruating.

Infrastructure improvements

Repairs or creation of physical infrastructure with a focus on latrines and clean water, and the set up of libraries, science and computer labs and physical education facilities.

Community engagement via Parent-Teacher Associations and Student Councils

Teacher Associations and Student Councils building trust-based relationships with the local community and engaging men in the empowerment of girls and female teachers.

Academic and professional career preparation

Students in higher grades are offered tutoring classes in preparation for the National Entry Exam to University (provided in partnership with Afghanistan Libre until 2014) and vocational training courses to prepare them for professional careers.

Schools are supported for a period of 3 years and afterwards become Alumni Schools, which are monitored regularly and receive needs-based support from the Womanity Foundation.

SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

2011-2014

1. GIRLS' ATTENDANCE AND DROP OUT

In 2014 we aimed to **increase girls' enrolment in grades 10-12 (aged 15-17) by 15%** in the target schools and **reduce by 30% the dropout rate** in girls' schools in grades 8 to 12 (age 13-17) in the 12 target schools.

RESULTS

- The **net enrolment** (gross enrolment minus permanent absentees³) increased by 8.74% from 2013 to 2014 across the 12 schools enrolled in the program, reaching a total of 23,003 students.
- The number of **permanent absentees** (the number than acts as an indicator on the dropout rate) decreased by 18.18% in grade 8 to 12 and by 10.3%, across all grades from 2013 to 2014. Between 2013 and 2014, the total number of permanent absentees in the 12 schools decreased from 4,572 to 4,102 (470 girls).
- According to the survey from Samuel Hall carried out in the schools Womanity supports, 97% of the 300 girls interviewed, state that they like school "very much" because they "like to learn new things". Students interviewed demonstrated without exception that they were thrilled to attend school and proud of their knowledge.

2. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCES AND CAREER PREPARATION

We aimed to achieve an **annual rate of 30% of students passing the academic year** with a mark higher than 70 and for **40% of female students to pass the National Entry Exam** in the schools covered by the program (the latter in partnership with Afghanistan Libre).

RESULTS:

- In 2014, the **ratio of students who passed the academic year** with a mark equal or higher than 70/100 was 44.1% (10'146 students) in the 12 schools enrolled on the program. In 2011, this ratio was only 7.3% or 712 students in the 6 schools enrolled in the program at the time.
- Since 2011, Afghanistan Libre organized 4 rounds of **tutoring classes** in preparation for the National Entry Exam to University addressing a total of 2,147 participants, of which 1,033 passed the exam (48%).
- Results significantly improved year-by-year. In 2011, this ratio was 23% of 442 students who attended the tutoring classes and in 2014, 63% of 631 students.

³In Afghanistan students remain technically 'enrolled' in school for three years after they drop out. To estimate better the school population, we collected the number of permanent absentees and considered the net enrolment as a more appropriate figure of the school population

- All students interviewed by Samuel Hall Consulting said they intended to **pursue their studies**, pass the university exam (94%) and for the most part (75%) go to university.

“We want to become influential and powerful people in the future. We want to have a high level of education such as a Master’s degree or a PhD to serve our people”

- Focus group discussions students, Gholam Haidar Khan (Samuel Hall Consulting, 2015).

3. TEACHER TRAINING

Womanity aimed to organize **3 to 4 teacher (and admin staff) training modules** per year, per school with the objective that 80% of school staff and teachers who met the attendance requirements (80% of classes attended by students), would pass the final test of the training class.

RESULTS:

- During the period 2011-2014, a total of 179 **teacher training modules** in science (biology, chemistry, physics and mathematic), English, Dari and Pashto, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT), teaching methodologies and disaster preparedness (the first time this was taught in Afghan schools) were organized. 2,941 participants took part and 2,622 participants (89%) passed the final test. The company also suggested that an increase of trained teachers and a further improvement of their competences might boost the use of laboratories to their full capacity and encourage a more regular practice of physical education in schools.
- On average the knowledge of participants increased by 39 points against the pre-test scores (average 31/100) and post-test scores (average of 70/100).
- In 2014, it was observed that teachers were using activity- based learning techniques and problem-solving questions-and-answer sessions.
- A number of headmasters consider the teacher training that Womanity provided, as the most durable change that will have lasting effects in the long term⁴.

⁴Samuel Hall Consulting: 2015.

4. HYGIENE EDUCATION

A program on hygiene education was conducted in the 12 target schools by adapting the WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) program designed by UNICEF and based on peer-training.

RESULTS:

- In the 12 schools enrolled, the **Hygiene Education team** informally interviewed 1,173 students in 72 groups. We estimate that 78% of them knew the answer to 9 basic questions on good hygiene (personal and environmental hygiene, food conservation, water conservation) after having received the hygiene education program.
- Informal meetings in class, regarding **girls' health issues** were conducted. In the 1st semester 29% of the 389 girls interviewed knew the answer to 3 questions on symptoms of anaemia, vaccinations and nutrition during menstruation. In the second semester, we interviewed 412 girls and the ratio increase to 89%.
- In 2014, with the support of the Vitol Foundation, Womanity distributed 2,000 leaflets on hygiene behaviour and painted murals on the walls of the 12 schools with key hygiene messages. Students in charge of **peer-training on hygiene** organized a Hygiene Day in 4 schools to advocate for good hygiene and school cleanliness through performance.
- The survey from Samuel Hall Consulting reported that "Womanity's intervention was particularly important in terms of the much-needed renovation of hygiene facilities - while further improvements could be made". In particular safe drinking water was provided to all schools but one and schools have now access to decent hygiene facilities. In addition, decorative materials are displayed both in the classroom and on the corridor walls with various posters on hygiene instructions.

5. INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT

Womanity had the objective to **set up science and computer labs** in all schools and to **equip libraries and sport facilities**, and provide necessary and **urgent maintenance works**.

RESULTS:

- During the period 2011 -2014, Womanity equipped 12 science laboratories, 12 computers labs (with 124 computers), 12 libraries by purchasing 4,574 books, and 12 sport Facilities. We distributed first aid kits and supported schools with **maintenance and renovation** needs. This included providing furniture, stationary, room partitioning to increase the number of classrooms in many schools, and the provision of generators for electricity.
- Based on the interviews of 36 students from grades 10 to 12, the foundation estimate that 58% regularly, and at least once a week, attended classes in computer laboratories and 81% in science laboratories. About 75% reported having had physical education classes.

- However computer labs sometimes remain underutilised because of the frequency of power shortages. Samuel Hall Consulting noted that computer labs in some schools, generators were introduced to overcome the absence of electricity but many still struggle to find a reliable solution. The company also suggested that an increase of trained teachers and a further improvement of their competences might boost the use of laboratories to their full capacity and encourage a more regular practice of physical education in schools.

- During monitoring visits in the last quarter of 2014, Womanity checked the library books in the 12 schools. A total of 1,217 users (or 5.2% of the net student population in target schools) used the libraries during the last month with an average of 101 users per school.

- Despite the massive infrastructure improvement supported by the Womanity Foundation, the survey from Samuel Hall Consulting noted that a number of schools were overstretched in terms of capacity due to the massive inflow of students and this could cause a rapid degradation of materials provided and tension over available space and resources.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Womanity aimed to **build trust-based relationships** with the local community and engage them to **contribute to school needs** and to **support girls' education** via Parent-Teacher Associations and Student Councils.

RESULTS:

- Womanity set up, trained and supervised a **Parents and Teachers Associations** (PTA) and a **Student Council** (SC) in each school. Throughout the program duration, they met regularly, found solutions to schools' problems and interacted with communities. In particular, they negotiated community responses to school needs and to girls' challenges and, where necessary, mediated with families to enrol their daughters back into school.

- Samuel Hall reported that community engagement was clearly a success of the *School in a Box* program with the large majority of community members interviewed supportive of girls' education.

External evaluators interviewed students in the schools supported by Womanity and revealed that students often quoted the **committees**, the **quality of their teachers**, the **quality of their equipment** and the **“peaceful and secure environment”** in their school as factors that differed from other schools (Samuel Hall Consulting, 2015).



Dr. Foley, an international education expert conducted a mid-term evaluation of the program as mandated by Womanity partner UBS Optimus Foundation. He concluded:

*“The girls (in schools that I visited) showed astounding **maturity** and ability to take on major **responsibilities** in helping to run their schools. They also were determined to go as far as they could in their education. These young women had **poise** and **leadership** skills far beyond their teenage years. Most would be married and have children soon. They spoke of the **confidence** an **education** had given them”⁵.*

⁵from an article he wrote for Womanity Annual Report 2013 on his evaluation of the program in March 2013.

NEXT STEPS

In 2015-2018, Womanity will be leading an expansion of the programme into a further 12 schools over the coming four school years. Every year the program will enrol 3 new schools and continue to actively support previously enrolled schools, which enter in a network of Alumni schools.

Overall (2011-2018) the program will enhance the secondary education of 48,000 students across a total of 24 girls' high schools in Afghanistan.

Cost of the program 2011-2014 : CHF 1'250'000

Donors : UBS Optimus Foundation (72%); Womanity (22%); Roshan Telecommunication Company and the Vitol Foundation (6%)

BENEFICIARY MATRIX AND TIMELINE OF SCHOOLS ENROLLED IN THE PROGRAM

	Beneficiaries Jul 2011-Dec 2012		Beneficiaries 2013		Beneficiaries 2014	
	Students	Teachers/ Admin	Students	Teachers/ Admin	Students	Teachers/ Admin
Al Fatah - School for Girls	3'740	191	3'550	186	3'389	186
Kauja Lakan girls High School	1'921	66	1'747	54	1'889	57
Naswan Paghman Girls High School (formerly Hazrat Osman School)	721	43	644	38	581	40
Qalaï Malik High School	746	35	701	29	754	34
Keraman High School (girls' shift)	301	15	260	15	277	16
Malalaï - School for Girls	950	36	879	24	961	21
Wahdat - School for Girls	5'077	220	5'596	202	5'608	202
Paindah - School for Girls	449	28	292	15	335	15
Nasaji Gulbahar - School for Girls	2'106	78	1'697	77	2'050	76
Abdullah Bin Omar - School for Girls			997	37	1'125	36
Sardar Daud Khan - School for Girls			4'058	206	5'166	206
Naswan Mer Bacha Koot - School for Girls			734	43	868	46
Total (students plus teachers and admin staff)	16'011	712	21'155	926	23'003	935

Thank you for your interest in the work of the Womanity Foundation in Afghanistan. The work continues with the new strategy 2015 to 2018 and an expansion into more schools, bringing quality education to more girls in Afghanistan.

To support the next phase of the projects' development, you can get involved with our new Chime for Change (an initiative of Gucci) and Global Giving's project investing in 250 teachers for Afghan Girls. You can find the link here or you can donate to us at www.womanity.org.

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