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Rapid Assessment
Education Sector Support Project
for
Afghanistan
(A.I.D. Project 306-0202)

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Education Development Center, Inc.

October, 1988

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Education Sector Support Project (ESSP) began in 1986. It was designed to meet educational needs of Afghans in several ways: support of primary schools inside Afghanistan, literacy training in Pakistan for Afghan Freedom Fighters (Mujahideen), and assistance in building institutional structures and capabilities among Afghan groups in Pakistan who were involved in education. A special program for scholarships at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) was added in 1987. In addition to these educational objectives, the Project was also designed to serve political ends. The circumstances of the ongoing war in Afghanistan required that the Project be planned and carried out rapidly, working initially with Afghans who had taken refuge in Pakistan.

The current status of the project is as follows: 1,610 primary schools inside Afghanistan have been supported, to varying degrees, with textbooks, teaching aids and salaries for headmasters and teachers; monitoring of the schools has been carried out by Afghans; literacy training has been provided for approximately 8,000 Mujahideen in the first year and almost 12,000 the second year (some of whom are repeaters from the first year); new literacy classes are about to begin; and 42 Afghans are in training at UNO in the U.S. The Project is being supervised by the Education Council of the Seven Party Alliance (ECSPA) and its operating arm, The Education Center for Afghanistan (ECA). Each operates in both Peshawar and Quetta, Pakistan and receives technical assistance from the Project-provided UNO team located in Peshawar.

Project management has been strengthened as the UNO team has added staff and the ECSPA and ECA have gained experience. Management of substantial amounts of funds, teaching materials and data has required complex systems, and these are operating as well as can be expected, given the wartime circumstances. Early difficulties in data collection and management have mostly been overcome.

Education of Afghans has progressed in several areas of Project concentration. Literacy training for Mujahideen has been carried out, but supervision and evaluation need to be strengthened. Support of cross-border primary schools has also been accomplished to a substantial degree, although monitoring has produced incomplete results and has been difficult because it must depend on Afghan personnel traveling within Afghanistan, while the war continues. A system of District Directors has been initiated which provides supervision and in-service training for the teachers in addition to building an institutional structure for administering educational affairs at the district level. Effective teacher training, however, remains a problem. The scholarship program is well underway, but questions should be raised as to its educational value and cost effectiveness. The Project has not addressed middle and secondary education to date.

Institutional development has been substantial. The UNO has worked effectively with both the ECSPA and the ECA, bringing both institutions to a degree of planning and management sophistication. However, neither institution is, as yet, able to function completely independently of the UNO team. Nor is it known how effectively the ECA could reassemble itself inside Afghanistan, should it be called on to do so.

The conclusion of the assessment is that the Project has, in a remarkably short time, accomplished a complex, important and difficult series of tasks with efficiency and effectiveness, notwithstanding the difficulties of the environment in which it must operate.

II. INTRODUCTION

In assessing the ESSP, it is necessary to bear in mind that the Project was strongly influenced by a number of political considerations. Activities selected for Project support offered opportunities for strengthening the political resolve of the Mujahideen (Afghan Freedom Fighters) and for enhancing their political position among Afghans inside Afghanistan and in Pakistan. Literacy training of the Freedom Fighters in Pakistan, for example, besides providing reading and writing skills, carried political messages of support for the Afghan resistance cause and usefully employed the time of the Fighters during their periods of refuge in Pakistan. The program of support for cross-border schools also has served to promote allegiance to the resistance cause since the schools are supplied through resistance commanders and the organization of resistance political parties headquartered in Pakistan. Nominations for training under the Project's scholarship program were likewise handled through the political parties. The Project, therefore, must be seen in its political context as well as for its developmental effects.

III. GOAL AND PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

Within the context of overall U.S. support for Afghanistan during the period of the Soviet occupation, the Project addresses Afghan educational needs. The stated purposes of the project are to:

- o Assist the Afghan political parties in the development of a management unit in order to meet the immediate and long-range educational needs of Afghans still within Afghanistan,
- o Assist in the development of administrative, technical, and professional skills critical to the reconstruction of Afghanistan,
- o Provide primary education for school-aged children and assist in the development of middle and secondary education,
- o Provide literacy training programs for Afghan Freedom Fighters, and
- o Initiate teacher training programs.

IV. PRINCIPLES OF THE PROJECT'S DESIGN

A set of unusual program decisions had to be made to plan the ESSP for Afghanistan. The ongoing resistance to Soviet occupation of the country meant:

- o There was no Afghan Government as such with whom to plan the activity;

- o The need for assistance was so urgent as to require rapid planning and implementation mechanisms;
- o Measurement of the need, with precision, before obligation of funds, was impossible;
- o Monitoring of activities within Afghanistan could not be carried out by U.S. personnel.

In the face of these conditions a series of special arrangements were incorporated into the project design:

- o The Project would be planned and carried out through the Seven Party Alliance, a grouping of Afghan resistance political parties headquartered in Peshawar, Pakistan. The political parties in the Alliance were in regular contact with local military commanders throughout most of Afghanistan.
- o The Alliance would establish an Educational Council, made up of the Education Presidents of each of the seven parties, called the Educational Council of the Seven Party Alliance (ECSPA), which would, in turn, create and staff an educational operating arm, the Education Center for Afghanistan (ECA). U.S. technical assistance would be provided to assist the ECSPA and ECA in carrying out the Project.
- o The amount of AID assistance needed would be estimated on the basis of information supplied by the Alliance.
- o Efforts would be exerted to identify or establish Project schools within Afghanistan and support the schools as rapidly as possible.
- o The extent of coverage of the Project would expand as the need became apparent.
- o Monitoring of Project activities within Afghanistan would be done by Afghan counterparts.

V. PROJECT STATUS

A. Cross-Border Support of Schools

To date, the ESSP has supported 1,610 primary schools in all of the provinces of Afghanistan. All of these schools have been supplied under the Project with textbooks, and teachers salaries have been paid by the Project in 280 of them. Some other cross-border schools not belonging to the ECA have also been supported with books and teaching materials.

Textbooks in both Dari and Pushto have been prepared for all subjects in grades 1 to 5 and 360,000 books have been printed, and books for grade 6 are nearing completion. In addition, teaching kits, which contain maps, charts and letters, are prepared for each class. When the schools have received their books and materials,

teachers salaries are paid by the ESSP. While exact numbers are difficult to obtain, 87,004 students are believed to be enrolled in Project schools.

A three-phase monitoring system has been developed to establish the existence of the schools and to see that supplies and salaries arrive. Level 1 monitoring consists of two or three-man teams drawn from staff of the ECA and representatives of the Afghan political parties in the Alliance who go into Afghanistan to verify the existence and/or status of supply of Project-supported schools and to identify new schools for support. Level 2 monitoring involves checking on the reports of Level 1 monitors. Level 3 monitoring consists of informal and sporadic reporting back to the UNO team and the ECA by Afghans and others who have recently traveled inside the country and who are willing to share their findings and impressions. In October 1987, 10 Level 1 monitoring teams started collecting data in 20 provinces. They found 305 of the 644 schools that had been initially supplied. In May and June, 1988, another 14 Level 1 monitoring teams were trained in a three-day workshop in May and June of 1988 and are now inside of Afghanistan. Most have now returned and their reports are being reviewed or are expected soon. Twenty-two Level 2 monitors were briefed, and sent to their assigned provinces in May and June of 1988.

In addition, a database system has been developed by the UNO team to keep track of the growing school system. The database records key information in 72 separate fields of information including geographic, personnel and political identification, student data, teacher preparation, source of support, language of instruction and verification dates.

A District Director program has been developed to train and send into Afghanistan a Director to all of the districts of Afghanistan to supervise and train the teachers in the schools. One hundred and thirty-three District Directors have been trained in a three-week course on school management and teacher training and are now in place in Afghanistan. Another group of 58 District Directors is now being trained in Quetta to go into the southern and western areas.

B. Literacy Training

The literacy training program began in January of 1987, a remarkable achievement in the light of the October 1986 arrival of the UNO team. About 5,000 Afghan Freedom Fighters attended the first literacy classes which took place in 10 Winter camps in the Peshawar area. Two sessions were conducted, one beginning on January 18, 1987, and lasting to March 31, 1987, the second session beginning February 15, 1987, and lasting to the end of April. Teachers were nominated from the parties and tested at a 12th grade level. Five hundred twenty-nine teachers were hired. Student supplies, tents and portable blackboards were supplied to each of the 529 literacy classes. A literacy two-volume text was commissioned, called the Alphabet of Jihad Literacy and 8,000 copies were printed in both Dari and Pushtu.

In November of 1987, to plan for the second year of the literacy program, Dr. Abdul Aziz Hamid was brought in as a consultant to provide technical support for the literacy program. With Dr. Hamid's help the ECA prepared a manual for the second year of literacy. In the 1987-88 literacy sessions 398 teachers were tested and

selected to teach in their camps. From December 5, 1987, to December 13, 1987, Dr. Hamid, with Mr. Asmaie, the author of the Literacy Text, held a seminar for ten selected members of the ECA, who were both to teach the literacy teachers and to supervise the literacy classes.

During the winter of 1987-88, 11,860 students were enrolled in 598 classes. Students with 75% attendance who passed the final exam are allowed to re-enroll the second year, therefore the above number includes both new and old students. In addition 78 administrative personnel were employed to supervise the literacy program and to train literacy teachers.

The literacy program was evaluated by surveying teachers. They reported that they believed that 77% of the students attained some literacy, while the final exam indicated that 71.5 percent obtained literacy. Literacy is defined as the ability to read and write at the 3rd grade level.

C. Scholarship Program

In February of 1988, 21 Afghans with college degrees were sent to the UNO in the U.S. for training in public administration as related to particular technical fields (e.g. agriculture, health, veterinary science, education, liberal arts and engineering). This summer, another 21 trainees were sent. The program is to be one-year and includes courses in English language, administration and management as well as intern or apprentice experiences. The Scholarship program is subcontracted to the Asia Foundation for selecting and preparing the trainees going to the UNO.

VI. ASSESSMENT

A. Management

1. UNO

The UNO team operating in Pakistan is divided broadly into program and administration personnel. A diagram of the team's organizational division of responsibility is attached as an Annex.

a. Administrative Management

The UNO team's office is centrally located within the area of Peshawar where most Afghan relief organizations are situated. Occupying a large house, the UNO has office space which appears to be reasonably adequate and conveniently arranged to facilitate activities. The UNO experienced difficulties in its early operations when cramped office quarters hampered the adding of staff, and professional education staff were obliged to perform a good deal of their own office support work.

Financial administration within the UNO office is under the supervision of a finance officer who is a fulltime expatriate professional. The accounting system follows detailed instructions set forth in a specially developed Procedures

Manual. The system includes accounting for Project components – literacy training and cross-border support of schools – and for the internal operation of the UNO office. Procedures appear to be reflective of AID regulations and the demands of accountability, and to be suited to the special operating mechanisms of the project. The UNO office releases funds to the ECA which oversees, on the Afghan side, the operation of the project (see below). Requests are carefully reviewed by the UNO before the releases are made. UNO itself obtains advances of funds for Project activities from the AID controller's office in USAID/Pakistan, Islamabad. Recently, a USAID controller arrived in Islamabad, assigned to the AID Representative Afghanistan office full-time.

AID processing of the UNO's requests for advance of funds was said to take six weeks to two months on occasion, a period which is excessive. The assessment team recommends this be looked into. AID processing procedures may be too cumbersome. The UNO Finance officer does not believe the time required for processing fund advances has been particularly troublesome because Project needs for funds have been estimated to include a margin for unexpected requirements, (such as greater-than-foreseen demands for school teachers' salaries).

Accounting information in the UNO office was recently computerized, greatly easing the record-keeping and financial monitoring functions. Review and recording of bills and vouchers received and the system for expenditure control and payment appear to be sufficient for sound management.

UNO home office accounting information is available in Peshawar to a limited but acceptable extent: costs of the scholarship training of Afghan participants on the UNO campus, charges for UNO campus staff working on project activities, and overhead charges. Dollar disbursements to the UNO in the U.S. are managed by the AID controller in Islamabad through the AID controller in Washington.

b. Project Data Management

Project implementation data of various kinds is collected and analyzed by the UNO, including:

- Primary schools in Afghanistan selected for support by the ECSPA: numbers of teachers and students; the status of salary payment verification by ECA and back-up monitors; the status of distribution of books and teaching materials; and salary payments to teachers.
- Literacy training in Mujahideen camps in Pakistan: numbers of administrative staff, teachers and participants, textbooks and teaching materials distributed.

School monitoring information is furnished to the UNO by the ECA as discussed in the section above. It is entered into UNO records by computer. Gradually the Project database has been expanded. A review of a draft portion of the UNO's quarterly report for the period ending September 30, 1988 indicated to

the assessment team that the most important questions to be raised in evaluating Project progress are recognized by the UNO team. New analyses have been carried out by the UNO which examine cost effectiveness and progress in verifying schools. The assessment team was favorably impressed by the additional data which is being collected, and the aptness of analyses. Information relating to quality of instruction and learning results is not yet available, as will be discussed in section VI.B.1.b below.

The UNO team has had, and to some extent continues to have, a problem with definitions. Schools can be categorized according to whether they were established by the ECA, found already existing by ECA monitors, have been sent textbooks and supplies, have received these textbooks and supplies, have a known roster of teachers and other staff, have sent a representative to receive salary money, have received this salary money at the school, have been sent or received a resupply of texts and materials, etc. There are, in fact many kinds of "ECA schools" and many levels of "verification." Figures dealing with schools have been contradictory, and will probably continue to be so, until better definitions of key terms are devised, and data collected and reported according to these definitions.

The UNO also keeps records of the UNO/ECA-developed books and materials which are requested by, and distributed to, PVO's operating cross-border schools and refugee literacy training programs. As of September 30, 1988, the UNO had distributed to the PVO's 72,980 copies of textbooks for schools, 300 copies of textbooks for literacy training and 88 sets of instructional aids. The UNO did not have responsibility for monitoring the use of such materials by the PVO's. UNO records also reflect that 14,122 school textbooks and 2,050 literacy books were distributed directly to mujahideen commanders who requested.

2. ECA

As explained above, the ECA was established by the ECSPA to plan and manage activities of the ESSP. Personnel were selected by six of the seven parties to serve in the ECA in its seven departments (Academic and Supervision, Curriculum, Literacy, Teacher Training, Planning and Foreign Relations, Finance, and Administration).

Financial administration is, of course, largely the responsibility of the Finance Department although other departments are involved in the ECA's system of financial controls. The Finance Department maintains sets of ledgers for payment of teachers salaries, travel by ECA monitors, and expenses of operating the ECA office. Ledgers and cash balances are frequently reconciled, both within the ECA and with the UNO office. Particularly elaborate procedures are used in the payment of teacher salaries. These are described in Appendix C of the UNO's Quarterly Activity Report dated June 30, 1988. The assessment team reviewed the procedures with the ECA Finance Director and looked at ledgers for the teacher salary payments. The assessment team believes that the system used, involving verification of teacher salary payments, cross-checking of information by the ECA departments and officials, careful attention to the

identity and reports of the school representatives who collect the cash amount in Peshawar, and back-checking by ECA monitors of salary received by teachers in a payment system which is as precise as the war situation allows. Indeed, in the assessment team's view, the ECA is to be commended for its conceptualization of a payment method which so ambitiously seeks to head off opportunities for fraud.

3. ECSPA

It appears that little or no financial oversight of the ECA takes place within the ECSPA. During the assessment, the UNO Finance Office discussed this with the Finance Director of the ECA and UNO assistance was invited in developing a payment system for Council review of ECA financial affairs. The UNO is prepared to offer this assistance.

The assessment team was unable to ascertain with any certainty the extent to which the Council exercises effective control over the policies and procedures of the ECA. Although the Council's discussions can be lengthy and cumbersome compared to Western standards, it appears to function well in an Afghan mode. Nevertheless, the ECSPA members differ in ability and in knowledge about educational affairs, and the extent to which the members can form themselves into an effective and efficient policy-making group in responding to complex and rapidly-changing educational needs remains to be seen. They clearly deserve credit for the progress they have made so far in overcoming philosophical, religious and political differences among the various political parties because the parties represent views ranging from modern reformism to Islamic fundamentalism.

B. Education of Afghans

1. Primary Schools

a. Teacher Salaries

There is general agreement that:

- o It is vitally important for the success of any cross-border program to determine what, exactly, is happening inside Afghanistan to anything that is sent there, and
- o It is almost impossible to do this with any degree of confidence.

In this case, that which is sent is money for teachers' salaries. No commodity is more susceptible to "disappearance" than money.

Nevertheless, the procedures instituted by the ECA seem to offer as much assurance as is reasonably possible that money sent into the country arrives at its proper destination. There are those who feel that this may not be the case. The private voluntary organizations are the principal doubters, but they were unable to back up their expressed misgivings with specific detail when queried by the assessment team. It is difficult to see what more the ECA could reasonably do to

satisfy them. The method used for paying teacher salaries appears to be a bit cumbersome, but the various forms and cross checking procedures are fully justified under the circumstances. While they do not offer total assurance that salaries reach the intended teachers, they offer as much assurance as can be expected under the conditions in which the program operates and considering the large number of schools being served.

It is unfortunate that payments to teachers did not start until late November 1987. However, given the complex logistics of the program, this was probably inevitable. The decision to make payments only to school representatives who come to Peshawar clearly delays some payments and works hardships on the representatives of some schools which are located far away or in poor or war-torn areas. At September 30, 1988, the UNO's records showed 280 schools as having received salary payments.

b. Monitoring

The monitoring effort is crucial to the program in that it assures that schools to which materials and salary payments are sent actually exist, that the materials actually arrive at these schools, and that the salaries are received by the teacher. Due to conditions inside Afghanistan during the time the Project has been in operation, no monitoring system, no matter how well conceived and executed, could be expected to be completely successful.

The three stage monitoring process described above (see V.A above) appear to be as appropriate as could be expected given time and money constraints, volume of supplies and money crossing the border, and trained personnel available. Some monitoring teams have not been able to reach their destination due to winter weather or fighting in the area, but the minimal evidence available to date indicates that the monitoring system is working in the sense that it is producing the information it was designed to produce. Some outsiders to the Project feel that fewer schools exist and that fewer schools are being supplied than are reported by the monitors. However, it is not clear that their evidence is any more accurate or reliable than that obtained by the Project.

It should be noted, to the credit of the ECA, that the task of finding people to be monitors has not been an easy one. The monitoring job is extremely dangerous and requires the identification of persons who are not only willing to risk their lives but can be counted on to perform the monitoring function in a trustworthy manner.

The Project experienced initial difficulty in handling the data which the monitors brought back from their trips inside Afghanistan. This resulted in incomplete recording and utilization of some of this information. However, the recent addition of staff and the institution of new procedures seem to have solved this problem, and the database can now provide both more information and more useful information.

To date, the monitoring efforts have been quantitative in nature. That is, they have concentrated on verifying the existence of schools and the arrival of supplies. Qualitative aspects of education have not been considered. While this is not surprising, given the constraints on the Project, it now seems time to begin to measure and monitor the effectiveness of the teaching and learning that is taking place. The existence of schools and materials alone does not assure quality or even minimal education. A competent teacher performing in an adequate manner must be present for education to occur. Now that the District Directors are beginning to perform their duties, in-service teacher training will start to take place. While this may be minimal at first, it should be watched as closely as conditions permit and the training efforts of the District Directors nurtured in every way possible. The measurement of quality as opposed to quantity in education can become a complex matter. Clearly, the UNO and ECA teams will not have the time, personnel, or resources to mount sophisticated qualitative studies, nor should they be encouraged to do so. But an attempt should be made to develop some kind of simple quality measurement system which is low in time, money, and personnel costs.

The security situation in Afghanistan is changing with the withdrawal of Soviet forces. The assessment team recommends that the policy of not permitting U.S. Government personnel to travel inside the country now be reviewed. From the standpoint of USAID project management, it would be highly desirable for U.S. personnel to be able to travel to project sites for first-hand observation of what is taking place.

c. Textbooks

As the Project began, it had two options regarding textbook development:

- Create modern, high-quality textbooks "from scratch."
- Choose the best of the existing textbooks and distribute them after a quick and minor revision.

Under considerable pressure to produce results in the field quickly, the Project wisely chose the latter. Revisions consisted mainly of bringing the texts up to date regarding the political reality of present day Afghanistan, adding topics relevant to the Jihad, and strengthening certain religious themes. These were all appropriate revisions, and they were accomplished with admirable speed. While no one argues that the resulting books are models of style, content selection, production qualities, or pedagogical techniques; nevertheless, they have been widely praised by people within and without the Project, and they clearly serve in a most satisfactory way the purpose for which they were designed. Indeed, the ECA and UNO offices receive many requests to use these books in refugee schools in Pakistan and in non-ECA schools in Afghanistan. Since their creation, they have undergone one revision which mostly focused on minor errors of content and printing. The time will come when a more thorough revision will be indicated. Richer content and better production qualities will be

needed, as will the services of a specialist in primary school materials. Nevertheless, the textbooks are appropriate for the wartime conditions they now serve.

Decisions regarding appropriate content for the textbooks is left entirely in the hands of the ECA and the ECSPA. Quite appropriately, these two groups consider content decisions to be completely their responsibility and want no foreign interference in this area, given the religious nature of the war and natural national pride. No attempt should be made to change this philosophy, although it is clear that the UNO team can tactfully exert some influence over some content decisions by means of indirect persuasion. In fact, they have already done this to some extent.

It should be noted that in the first months after the Project began, a radical Arab Muslim group which was providing money to Afghans in Pakistan circulated highly critical stories to the effect that the U.S. was going to corrupt Afghan education. As the fact became known that the Project-financed textbooks and school curriculum were drawn up entirely by Afghans at the ECA, the stories and criticisms virtually ceased.

Starting with first grade textbooks in both Dari and Pushtu and advancing grade by grade as time and resources allowed was clearly an appropriate decision. Numbers of books produced (360,000 alone in the period March 31 - June 30) are quite impressive. Although the textbooks are well bound, the expectation that they will last no more than two years is realistic. While this short timespan increases resupply problems, it insures that students will not lack proper learning materials. Fourth and fifth grade texts are now being produced, with sixth grade materials to follow. The addition of an expatriate staff member to help with this task was appropriate. Content decisions for textbooks in the upper elementary grades will be more difficult to make, and it is not at all clear that the present ECA staff, by no means all trained educators, will be numerous enough or will have the technical ability to accomplish this task successfully on their own. This lack of adequate technical staff is seen throughout all the resistance activities that have come to the attention of the assessment team.

Distribution of books inside Afghanistan was fraught with all the difficulties mentioned in the section on Teachers Salaries (VI.B.1.a above). Since textbooks have less resale value than most other goods, it is likely that a healthy percentage of them reached their intended destination. The UNO team estimates 60%, but all figures are guesswork until more monitoring reports are available. Nevertheless, the distribution procedures used are appropriate and include safeguards which are as thorough as could be expected under the circumstances. As peace returns to the country, better distribution procedures can be devised.

d. Materials

Kits of teaching aids have been created and produced at the UNO office. These consist of letter and number boards and of simple maps and charts. The materials are lightweight, low cost, durable, easy to understand, and adaptable to

multiple uses in the hands of a creative teacher. All indications are that they are popular with the teachers who have received them, and effective aids in the instruction of Afghan students. While it might be asked why these particular seven maps and charts were chosen instead of others (for example, a map which shows Afghanistan's relationship to surrounding Asian countries, or its principal physical features), it is clear that these are creative and useful teaching tools. The development of these aids continues, with new and imaginative additions to the present kits soon to appear. Unlike the textbooks, this development is in the hands of the UNO team rather than the ECA. As ECA capabilities increase, they should assume some or all of this responsibility.

In addition to these classroom kits, educational supplies are delivered for each student. These supplies consist of individual slates, chalk, notebooks, and pencils. These are high quality and useful items which make the students who receive them better supplied than most of their predecessors before the Russian invasion. These materials are presently assembled at the UNO office. As the purchasing and warehousing effort involved is relatively straightforward, it might be successfully turned over to the ECA. There is an obvious political advantage to providing all the supplies through Alliance auspices.

2. Literacy Training

Literacy training for almost 12,000 Mujahideen appears to have been accomplished in an effective and timely fashion. This is a tremendous achievement, given the challenges of starting a program "from scratch;" building relationships among the Council, the ECA, and UNO team; producing quality instructional materials under severe time pressure; coordinating with other groups attempting to meet the needs of the Mujahideen; selecting and training high-quality instructors; and other political, financial, and temporal difficulties which had the potential to stall the program.

Two problems did emerge:

- Training in Peshawar began three to four weeks late, resulting in poor attendance at the end of the training period when Mujahideen were already returning to Afghanistan.
- Organizing difficulties in Quetta caused the postponement of training there.

The organizational manual produced by Dr. Abdul Aziz Hamid, short-term consultant to the Project, appears to be a timely addition to the literacy effort, as it brings needed detail, clarity, and standardization to the administrative aspects of the program. The one-week seminar for nine trainers conducted by Dr. Hamid was successful, although a longer training period would have been desirable. The issue of training for teacher trainers is, indeed, an important one. Attention to this issue was timely, and increased emphasis should be placed on it in the future. Likewise, the two-day training which these trainers gave to prospective teachers was well done, although probably too short to accomplish much beyond lower level objectives.

Two of Dr. Hamid's recommendations are particularly important. These are:

- Select appropriate individuals and train them specifically to do the necessary supervision rather than relying on ECA staff, and
- Prepare supplemental reading pamphlets.

Perhaps some ECA staff should be involved in the supervision in order to remain aware of problems and progress and to maintain a direct link with the ECA. However, good supervision is likely to require more time and effort than can be spared by this staff. Supplemental reading material will soon be crucial to the success of the project. It is useless to create literacy when there is nothing to read. This issue will be returned to in the project redesign.

The literacy textbooks, Alphabet of Jihad Literacy, have been praised by people both within and without the program. Minor improvements could be made in these volumes, but they appear to serve their purpose well. The use of the same instructional aids that are sent to the primary schools seems wise, as these have proven to be effective in their primary context (See section V.B.1.d above). The relatively small size of classes which allows for more discussion and individual attention to student problems is another plus in this program.

The weakest part of the literacy training effort appears to be its evaluation. The teacher questionnaire used contains items of dubious usefulness: for example, whether teachers agree that most words in the textbook are used more than once. The structure and administration of the questionnaire was such that many of the results were inconclusive. In addition, the teachers were surveyed at the end of the literacy training. However, this survey was too brief and general to be particularly useful. The UNO team is aware of these deficiencies and is taking steps to rectify them. The test now administered to students who complete the literacy training is overlong and poorly constructed. A simpler and shorter test should be developed. The current pass rate (40% correct on the test in at least two of the three subjects) is probably too low. Nevertheless, even at this low rate, the percentage of students who pass (71%) is truly impressive.

3. Scholarship Program

The scholarship program is designed to develop administrative skills among Afghans who have college degrees by sending them to the UNO for training. Since the success of this program will be measured only after the students have returned to Peshawar or Afghanistan for sometime, the evaluation of this program can only be tentative at this time. Nonetheless, several preliminary observations can be made.

Favorable marks must be given to the Asia Foundation and its officer, Carla Grissman, for effectively executing the program within a very short timeframe. Efforts were made to select those who would benefit most from the program, and the first twenty-one who went were culled from an initial list of forty-two. Given

the political climate in Peshawar and the traditional Afghan method of selecting friends or relatives for positions rather than the most meritorious, and the need to balance those selected among the six participating political parties, the selection team did an excellent job. In addition, strong efforts were made to ease the culture shock and make the Afghans feel welcome in the U.S.

Since the assessment team has not been to the UNO campus, the performance and adjustment of the students in the States can not be measured, except indirectly. The team has heard that the first group of 21 students had some difficulties in cultural adjustment but that the second group has been considerably more successful in coming to grips with U.S. life. The question of whether they are learning the skills and knowledge that the program was designed to provide them with however, needs to be asked at some point.

Despite the successful execution of the scholarship program as designed, the assessment team has the following reservations about the program as a whole:

- Level of Students: It has not been demonstrated that the skill level of students this project is designed for is the appropriate level given the needs of Afghanistan. There is a tremendous need in the Afghan community in exile and in Afghanistan for skilled people at all levels. It may be that simpler training is more of a priority, training that could be done locally.
- Cost: According to the June 30, 1988, ESSP quarterly report, the estimated cost of the Scholarship Program for FY 1988 is \$600,551. Cost will be considerably greater in the following years. While this expense does not constitute a huge portion of the ESSP budget, it is very expensive education per student, especially compared to the other parts of the ESSP. The costs seem especially high since much of the time in Omaha is spent in English classes that could be taken in Pakistan. There may be more cost effective methods of teaching these skills to Afghans.
- Returning Positions for Students: Apparently little thought has been given by the UNO team as to what specific roles these returning students will play in Peshawar or Afghanistan. To best use these students and their skills, it would be helpful to have arranged for them to have something to do commensurate with their newly acquired skills when they return.
- Omaha: The decision to send all of the students to Omaha has advantages and disadvantages. Having the students together in a small city like Omaha helps with cultural adjustment and homesickness. Also, the University has developed a special program for them that would not be found at other Universities. On the other hand, there are advantages in sending the students to other universities in the United States. They would see a larger cross-section of the U.S. and would acquire English more rapidly. There are certainly other universities that would welcome them and where the students might get a

broad experience. At this time, Del Weber, Chancellor of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, is in the process of sending letters to 1,500 university presidents, asking them to provide scholarships for Afghan students at their universities.

- Method of Selection: While the final selection of the students to go to Omaha was made according to merit, the initial pool of applicants was created through the political parties. As a result, the process was not open to all qualified Afghans, but only to those with party connection. While it is possible in theory for any qualified Afghan to seek out party sponsorship, in fact, access to party assets such as this are jealously guarded and given to those related to the party or to relatives. There needs to be a method of broadening the selection process, or the scholarship program may create as much bad feeling among the Afghan community as good.
- AID Representative Office Involvement. The assessment team was told that the job of processing candidates for scholarships was imposing a heavy burden of AID paperwork on the subcontractor. Such work would be far more easily handled by regular AID staff members. It is, therefore, recommended that the AID Representative office gear up for such support to the scholarship program.
- The scholarship program seems overly dependent on the presence and ability of Ms. Grissman. Were she to be unavailable, the program would cease to function, and all momentum would be lost until a suitable replacement could be found.

Whatever the reservations concerning the scholarship program may be, it has undeniably served an important political purpose at a time when the Russians are sending thousands of Afghans to the Soviet Union for education and training.

4. Teacher Training

There have been two efforts in teacher training to date. These are:

- Training of teachers for the literacy program for Mujahideen.
- Training of District Directors who will, in turn, provide in-service training to elementary school teachers in their districts.

Regarding the literacy program, any deficiencies in the training of teachers must be balanced against the need to get a large number of such teachers active in a very short time. Each teacher received only two days of training – a woefully short period in which to learn a complex art, but doubtless the best that could be done under the circumstances. This training seems to have concentrated more on the content of the literacy textbooks than on the methodology to be used in presenting the material effectively. This is a weakness. Teachers were selected partially on the basis on their previous educational background and teaching experience. The program is confident that

it obtained the services of the best teachers available, but their abilities doubtless covered a wide range, and the weaker of them probably encountered considerable difficulty. It can only be surmised that students in such teachers' classes did not progress as much as they might have. However, whatever the educational outcome of this program, it is clear that political ends were well-served.

An important point is simply that the only really adequate way to measure teacher quality in this type of situation is to measure the mastery of reading and writing skills by the students. The recommendation for improving the assessment instrument used is contained in section VI.B.2. above. The primary method used to date – that is, asking the teachers if they think the students are becoming literate – is a good start, but it is not adequate in the long run.

Regarding the in-service teacher training to be offered by the District Directors, it can only be said that almost no evidence exists to date regarding its effectiveness. Topics relating to supervision and in-service training were included in their own training program. But, due to the shortness of this program, such topics could not be covered in great detail, nor did they really have sufficient time to practice the skills in these areas which they were learning. As these Directors return to Peshawar in the coming months, it will begin to be possible to assess their effectiveness as in-service trainers - although specific means for doing so have not been built into the program. Yet, a great deal of the success of the Project's chosen strategy for primary school improvement rests on the success of this effort, and it will be important to monitor the effectiveness of their activities carefully. Qualitative concerns of educational measurement as mentioned above in connection with the monitoring activities (Section VI.B.1.b), must be borne in mind.

Dr. Juma Gul Bandawal provided a two-month consultancy in teacher training in early 1988. This consultancy provided a two-week course in administration and supervision for selected ECA members, a three-week course in teaching methodology for ECA members who would become District Director trainers, and a two-week course designed to up-grade the English speaking skills of this same group. By all accounts, these courses were quite successful, although it is doubtful that an expensive foreign consultant is a cost effective way to provide English language training. However, due to the time it took to select District Director candidates from inside Afghanistan (correctly perceived as a necessary precondition for success) and transport them to Peshawar, Dr. Bandawal's time in Pakistan ran out, and he was unable to participate personally in their training. This was unfortunate, but probably unavoidable for the most part. Dr. Bandawal correctly stresses in his consultancy report the need for increased emphasis on teacher training in the Project.

5. Middle and Secondary Education

Although the development of middle and secondary education is a stated goal of the Project, activities in this area were not the highest priority and have not been undertaken to date. Given the number of competing tasks to be

accomplished by the project, this is not surprising. However, when the sixth grade textbooks are completed, the issue of continuing on with the development of seventh grade materials will naturally arise. Afghanistan will, obviously, need to reconstruct its system of secondary education, and USAID's role in this effort will be discussed in the redesign document. The UNO team has already made plans and budget projections for activities in this area.

C. Institutional Development

1. UNO Technical Assistance

The University of Nebraska technical assistance team consists of four expatriates and twenty local hire positions. The decision was made early on in the project to allow the Afghan counterparts, namely the ECA and the ECSPA, to take the responsibility for initiating and executing educational programs with the assistance and oversight of the UNO team. The UNO team has largely done that with the exception of a few areas in which they felt they should take the lead. These include textbook revision, preparation of teaching kits, monitoring, financial control and planning.

The UNO technical staff appears to be operating very well. The office staff works well together and they appear to be efficient and well organized. Despite earlier problems of space, the offices now are adequate and they have the equipment needed to carry out their task. The work relationships between the staff and the counterparts are very good, although at times frank discussions on educational and managerial policy between the counterparts and the UNO team take place.

The positive institutional development engendered by the UNO team can be attributed in part to the personnel selected for the assignment in Peshawar. Given the situation in Peshawar and the cultural characteristics of Afghan society, strong decisive leadership is needed. No doubt Dr. Glidden's drive and personality contributed greatly to the success of the Project and to the development of a smoothly functioning office. In addition, Dr. Moqim Rahmanzai, who was part of the team from the beginning, was invaluable in getting the program going and in getting the Afghan counterparts to participate in a constructive way. Because of his ability and longevity, Dr. Rahmanzai is a key person on the team. Indeed, although he is now ably assisted by Mr. Yasir, it is difficult to see how his valuable services could be done without were he to decide to leave. Dr. Boardman and Dr. Azimi are relatively new, and it is too early to judge their performance. Finally, Ms. Ramona Klaasmeyer has made, and continues to make, a major contribution to the financial integrity of the Project.

2. The ECSPA and the ECA

A major goal of this Project is to develop an Afghan educational institution that can not only develop and administer cross-border education in Afghanistan, but could also provide part of the core of an educational administration structure

in Kabul once the country is fully liberated. The attempt to develop an Afghan educational institution involved two parts: convincing the ECSPA to expand its purview and activities beyond its original mandate to establish refugee schools in Pakistan, and create an administrative institution to carry out the development of education inside Afghanistan. Both of these goals have been accomplished to a considerable degree, as discussed in this assessment.

The ECSPA meets on a regular basis to formulate educational policy. Six of the seven parties are represented at the meetings (the Yunis Khalis branch of Hezb-e-Islami refuses to participate on philosophical grounds). There is normally a member of the UNO team at the Council meeting, usually Dr. Rahmanzai. The ECSPA appears to take its job seriously, and after some disputes in the early months, now seems to function well in setting the agenda for education in Afghanistan and to settle political issues that the ECA or the UNO team could not deal with. Nonetheless, disputes still arise, as with any educational board, and mediation by Dr. Rahmanzai is sometimes necessary.

The UNO does not yet have enough confidence in the ECSPA to accord it complete independence, especially with regards to hiring and budget for the ECA. Issues arose, for instance, with regards to the selection of staff for the ECA and the selection of students to travel to the United States on the Scholarship program. Some members of the ECSPA wanted to use these positions for patronage by giving them to friends or relatives rather than according to merit. While this method of selecting people to receive scholarships or jobs is a traditional Afghan method of operation, it nevertheless brought conflict between the ECSPA and the UNO staff. This and other events indicate that the ECSPA has not developed fully into a smoothly operating educational board. However, much progress has been made in the three years, and the UNO and ECA staffs should be given great credit for this progress.

An additional problem with the ECSPA is that it does not represent nor is it always sympathetic to a broad range of Afghans. Several requests have been made by Shi'iah groups for schools, but the ECSPA has not yet consented to accept these requests. Since the Shi'iah constitute 15% to 20% of the population of Afghanistan, and have participated actively in the Jihad, refusal of the requests, based on religious or ethnic grounds, would weaken the ECSPA's claim that it represents all Afghans. The assessment team mentioned the Shi'iah requests to the ECSPA and was told the issue was still pending because it was sensitive politically. It is strongly recommended that the AID/Rep office follow up to see if the Council does, in fact, agree to accommodate the Shi'iah groups.

The institutional development of the ECA has also progressed. The ECA now employs 60 professionals, 44 in Peshawar and 16 in the Quetta office which opened in 1987. In addition, there are now 28 monitors and 133 District Directors who have gone or will soon go into Afghanistan as representatives of the ECA. Most of the employees and all of the Department heads have B.S. or B.A. degrees from the University of Kabul.

The presidency of the ECA rotates, with the present president being Mohammed Aga Mujaddidi, who is also the head of the Department of Finance. The permanent vice-President is Adbul Shukor, who runs the ECA on a day-to-day basis.

The structural development has begun that will make ECA an independent-operating educational institution. The structure is there and the relationship between UNO on the one hand, and with the ECSPA on the other, has developed satisfactorily so that the tasks of the ECA are clearly understood.

The ECA has shown an ability to operate independently in several areas. The ECA developed largely on its own the procedures for payment to Primary School teachers. It also has taken primary responsibility for the teacher training program through the training of District Directors. To prepare for the district directors program the UNO team brought in Dr. Bandawal to help the ECA develop this program. Dr. Bandawal conducted a number of seminars for the ECA staff on teacher training and school administration. The ECA staff themselves then conducted the training of the District Directors. Clearly the UNO staff has tried to create a situation in which the ECA would truly operate the Afghan education projects as much on its own as possible with only technical help from the UNO side.

Institutional development of the ECA has, however, been retarded by the political necessity of working through the Seven Party Alliance. Because the ECA must carry out the policies of the ECSPA, many of its actions are constrained. For instance, each of the seven parties was given an equal number of staff positions at the ECA. However, since one of the parties does not participate, one seventh of the ECA staff positions remain unfilled, although the functions are carried out by others.

In addition, the quality of the ECA staff is uneven. While there appear to be a number of good people, there also appears to be a number of less well-qualified members. Even though most of the members are college graduates, not all appear up to the important task of planning and operating an educational system in Afghanistan. This criticism must, however, be seen in the context of the extreme shortage of qualified people in Afghanistan and Peshawar and of the considerable distance many of the members have come in developing their skills and abilities.

In sum, clearly the structure has been created to develop an educational institution for Afghanistan. However, for several reasons mentioned above, the ECA is not yet able to operate on its own, and is not to the point in its development where it could move into Afghanistan without continued outside support.

3. District Directors

The District Director program is designed to serve two purposes; the administration of the primary schools in each district of Afghanistan and teacher training. Both of these are important functions and both are important for institutional development, although teacher training is probably the greatest need.

The District Director program is to train and place a Director of Education in every district in Afghanistan. To this point, 133 district directors have been trained and 107 placed, and 58 more are now being trained in Quetta for placement in the Southern and Western districts of Afghanistan. When the Quetta group is trained and placed in the field, all of the districts of Afghanistan will have an education director.

Since this program is quite new (the Directors have only been in the field for two months) it is too early to predict how the program will work. Clearly, from an institutional point of view, the program has advantages. Since the number of primary schools in Afghanistan supported by the ECA is now nearly 1,700, although not fully verified, the next logical step in building an operating school system in the country is to put the next level of administrators into place.

In addition, it is generally felt by the assessment team and by other educators in Peshawar that there is a critical shortage of qualified teachers, and many who may now be teachers may well need further training. Thus, the teacher training aspect of the District Director's job, which is the largest part, is of critical importance.

However, it is not clear that the District Directors will have the ability to carry out their job in Afghanistan because of the political situation inside the country. While care has been taken by the ECA and the ECSPA to obtain permission from the Alliance and from the area military commanders, it is still probable that in some cases in some provinces the district directors will not have the freedom to carry out their assigned activities. If this happens in only a few provinces, then the program will be judged a success. If, however, there are many districts in which this happens, it will be less successful.

The political leadership in Afghanistan is increasingly shifting to the major regional commanders and to regional councils inside Afghanistan as the war progresses. The District Directors must be able to operate in their changing political structure. Therefore, care must be taken by the ECA to insure that the District Directors have the political connections with commanders and regional councils so that they can properly do their jobs.

The length of training of these District Directors is too short. Because of their low skill levels, training of more than a few weeks is necessary.

4. Teacher Training

It is the opinion of the assessment team and shared by many people interviewed in Peshawar that teacher training is a critical need. Because of the war, the few Afghans with teaching skills have either fled or have forgotten what they knew. In addition, most Afghans have not had a chance to receive training for the last eight years because of the collapse of the Afghan higher education system. Teachers are critically needed.

The UNO team has approached teacher training from two directions: training district administrators to be teacher trainers, and the training of trainers to train teachers for the literacy program. Neither effort attacks the problem head on and, although promising places to begin, are inadequate as a total approach to the problem. This is an institutional development area that needs much more attention.

VI. CONCLUSION

The ESSP has operated under a large number of serious constraints. Among these were: a tense and ever-changing political and military situation in both Afghanistan and within the Afghan community in Pakistan, doubts about the eventual efficacy of the Seven Party Alliance and its Education Council, the almost-total devastation of educational facilities and a lack of educational personnel in liberated areas of Afghanistan, the impossibility of fully satisfactory monitoring of activities and goods inside the country, the need for rapid action in all aspects of the project, an overburdened AID/Rep office in Islamabad, initially inadequate UNO office space and housing, and the unexpected death of the UNO Director. Given such difficulties, it is not surprising that certain problems have appeared. However, it is the feeling of the assessment team that the Project has responded to these difficulties extremely well and has accomplished a complex, important, and difficult series of tasks with admirable efficiency and effectiveness, in a remarkably short period of time.

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