

Ex post evaluation – Afghanistan

>>> BRIEF EVALUATION

Sector: Education facilities and training (11120)

Project: Afghanistan: Project: Contribution to "Second Education Quality Improvement Programme" (EQUIP II) as part of the ARTF, tranche VIII (201567734*) in addition to the ex post evaluation in 2017, tranche IV-VII (BMZ no. 2011 65 026, 2012 65 990, 2013 65 014, 2014 67 661)

Implementing agency: Ministry of Education

Ex post evaluation report: 2019

		(Planned)	(Actual: 31 December 2017)
Investment costs	USD million (EQUIP II - total)	460.00	422.34**
Counterpart contribution	EUR million	0.00	0.00
Funding	USD million	460.00	422.34**
of which BMZ funds (tranche VIII)	EUR million,	20.00	20.00

*) Random sample 2018;

**) At the time of the completed ex post evaluation of tranches IV-VII, the investment costs were still estimated at USD 460 million.



Summary: The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), a multilateral trust fund administered by the World Bank, is used to fund running costs and priority investments by the Government of Afghanistan. The FC funds evaluated here were deployed by the ARTF in five tranches to co-fund the "Second Education Quality Improvement Programme" (EQUIP II). Following a third extension, EQUIP II's term ran from 2009 to 2017, and was designed to improve basic education in the country as well as, in particular, gender equality. The project was implemented on a national scale by Afghanistan's Ministry of Education. EQUIP II consisted of three components: 1) Grants for school renovations, construction and equipment; 2) Training and advancement for teachers and head teachers, and 3) Reinforcement of the Ministry of Education's management, monitoring and evaluation skills.

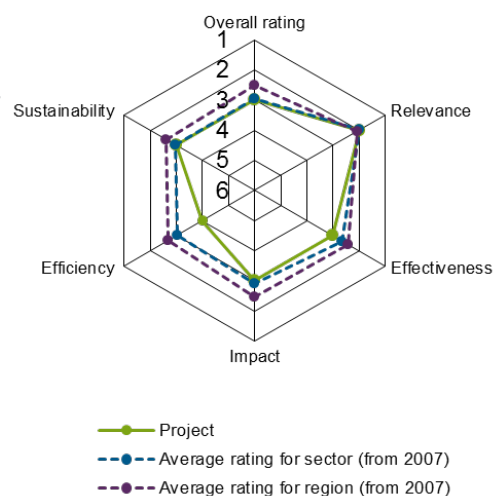
Development objectives: The goal of the project was to improve both the quantity and quality of educational opportunities in the primary and secondary school sector (outcome). With this goal, the programme was designed to contribute to the stabilisation of Afghanistan and help reduce poverty by improving basic education (dual overarching developmental objective/impact).

Target group: The target group was made up of school children, teachers and school managers, as well as representatives from the local community involved in the management of schools.

Overall rating: 3 for EQUIP II, tranche VIII

Rationale: The programme focused on Afghanistan's huge shortfalls in the areas of educational infrastructure, teacher training, and educational management. It has made important progress in these fields, which has been reflected in falling illiteracy rates, for example. So far EQUIP II has not been able to make sufficient headway on the consistently poor capacity and inefficient processes at the Ministry of Education. EQUIP II's positive impact on human development and stability is overshadowed by the poor economic situation and low level of safety.

Highlights: The strategy of incorporating communities into the administration of schools is a central factor for the programme's success in light of the fragile context. School committees perform important tasks regarding school maintenance and support swift reopenings when schools are closed due to low levels of safety. In addition, they help to deal with conflicts by bringing together various groups involved in common educational projects.



Rating according to DAC criteria

Overall rating: 3, tranche (VIII)

Ratings:

Relevance	2
Effectiveness	3
Efficiency	4
Impact:	3
Sustainability	3

The evaluation report for tranches IV-VII was prepared in 2017, but tranche VIII was not bundled. The final reporting for tranche VIII took place in 2016. Since the funds from tranche VIII were already fully disbursed at the end of 2015 and the project (EQUIP II) was completed on 31 December 2017, it can be assumed there were no fundamental changes to its impacts. The ex post evaluation (EPE) of tranches IV-VII relates to the indicators relevant for the achievement of the objectives as at June 2016. An updated analysis is therefore carried out below, meaning that in the respective sections on the individual DAC criteria, the aspects and indicators for which current data or information exist and which provide supplementary background information for the overall situation are discussed in particular. The ratings above and the underlying reasoning remain valid. For a detailed analysis, see EPE 2017 (tranche IV-VII).

General conditions and classification of the project (for complex projects only)

EQUIP II (Education Quality Improvement Programme) was completed on 31 December 2017 and aimed to improve equal access to quality basic education, especially for girls. It was implemented by the Afghan Ministry of Education and initially funded by the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank Group's fund for the poorest countries. The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) took over the funding of the programme, which is managed by the World Bank in Kabul as the central multilateral trust fund for the civil reconstruction of Afghanistan. The ARTF had two overarching funding windows: the Investment Window to fund infrastructure measures in line with national priorities and the Recurrent Cost Window to support the Afghan government and administrative apparatus.¹ One of the programmes in the Investment Window was the national Education Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP), which the federal government supported through the ARTF.

Relevance

Afghanistan remains a country shattered by armed conflicts and is one of the poorest countries in the world. The educational system had clearly suffered from the decades of Taliban rule. At the time of the disbursement of the first tranche in 2011, 35% of the boys and 60% of the girls did not attend school, only 57% of the schools had buildings and only 28% of the teachers held suitable qualifications.

The aim of the project was to improve both the quantity and quality of educational opportunities in the primary and secondary school sector (outcome). With this goal, the programme was designed to contribute to the stabilisation of Afghanistan and help reduce poverty by improving basic education (dual overarching developmental impact). The basic impact logic seems plausible, but may work only to a limited extent due to the fragile context and presupposes that the population understands the improvement of education as an expression of the state's ability to act and that this thus has a positive effect on the legitimacy of the state and its stability.

The individual measures under EQUIP II mostly focused on quantity. From today's perspective, they should have been complemented more by measures to improve the quality of education. Likewise, the

¹ Since mid-2018 ARTF now has four fund windows.

programme activities should have been more strongly adapted to the security situation and the substantial regional differences in access to education.

Even 17 years after the change of power in Kabul, the Afghan state is still a long way from funding its expenditure from its own resources and so providing adequate public social services. Afghanistan's development is thus heavily dependent on external part-funding of the Afghan budget, and so support for the education sector remains highly relevant.

The ARTE, and thus EQUIP, was and is an important instrument for donor coordination and harmonising donor policies as well as for the reform dialogue between donors and the Afghan government.

The overall relevance of the project is still rated as good.

Relevance rating: 2 (tranche VIII)

Effectiveness

The fulfilment of the goal regarding utilisation of the better quality and quantity of educational opportunities in the primary and secondary school sector, particularly in relation to access for girls, can be summarised as follows:

Indicator	Status	Target values ²			Results			
	2009	2014	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016*	2017**
Number of school children registered (million) ¹	6.3	8.5	9.0	9.0	8.2	8.5	8.7	8.9
Number of female school children registered (million)	2.2	3.0	3.8	3.8	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.4
Proportion of female school children (%)	34.9	35.3	42.2	42.2	39.0	38.8	39.1	38.2
Number of school children per classroom	74	-	70	70	69.7	65.5	-	60.2
Number of extra qualified teachers (thousand)	37	200	210	-	236	278	-	-
Proportion of teachers with a professional qualification (%)	28	-	48	48	44	49	-	58

* In classes 1-12 of the state school system; as at July 2016, **World Bank (2018): Implementation completion and results report.

Since the end of Taliban rule, education has been a priority area for the Afghan government, international organisations, donors, and local NGOs. These efforts had a significant impact on the Afghan education system. For example, the number of registered students at Afghan schools rose steadily from 6.3 million in 2009 to 8.9 million in 2017. ³ So as expected in the EPE of 2017, the target value of 9.0 million was almost reached. The number of registered schoolgirls rose to 3.4 million at the end of 2017, meaning girls

²No target values were formulated for 2015.

³ The number of registered schoolchildren does not allow conclusions to be drawn about actual, regular attendance of lessons as many children who are forced to interrupt their schooling due to violent conflicts and migration remain registered for up to three years, making it easier for them to return to the school system later on.

now account for 38.2% of all schoolchildren and the target of 42.2% was only just missed. But, according to UNICEF⁴, almost 3.7 million Afghan children between the ages of 7 and 17 still have no access to school due to ongoing conflicts, increasing poverty of and discrimination against girls. 60% of the children affected are girls.

The target value for the "number of schoolchildren per classroom" is still met and has even improved slightly. The "proportion of teachers with professional qualifications" also continued to improve, rising from 28% in 2009 to 58% in 2017. But the evaluation carried out back in 2017 pointed out that teacher training often provided inadequate pedagogical skills and that teachers have difficulties in transferring methods learned to teaching. It also remains questionable whether the extra qualified teachers are actually employed (see Efficiency).

In light of the improvement in educational use, effectiveness continues to be rated as satisfactory despite the qualitative deficits.

Effectiveness rating: 3 (tranche VIII)

Efficiency

Delays in the construction of schools led to efficiency losses. Given the unstable security situation, low capacity at the Ministry of Education and inefficient coordination not only within the Ministry of Education but also between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance, costs for the construction of classrooms rose in the course of the project. The project ultimately missed its target of 1,758 schools by 156 schools. From the 1,602 schools built, 114 remained unfinished at project completion.⁵ The production efficiency evaluation at the EPE of tranches IV-VII therefore remains valid.

With regard to allocative efficiency, it is still critical that the contribution to teacher training has been reflected only to a limited extent in the improvement of educational quality. Yet the Afghan state only actually hired some of the trained teachers.

Due to the inefficiency in coordinating and implementing the programme, the higher costs, the failure to achieve the targeted number of schools and the poor results in terms of improved quality of education, the project continues to be rated unsatisfactory overall.

Efficiency rating: 4 (tranche VIII)

Impact

The overarching developmental goal of EQUIP II underlying this EPE is to contribute to the stabilisation of Afghanistan and to help alleviate poverty by improving basic education (dual objectives).

According to the Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey, the literacy rate (young people between 17 and 24 years) rose from 38.9% in 2007/2008 to 53.6% in 2016/2017. The proportion of the population (aged 25 and over) with secondary education (but not necessarily completed) also grew from 11.1% in 2000 to 18.2% in 2010 and 25.1% in 2017.⁶

However, the improvement in the level of education is not directly reflected in the youth unemployment rate, which fell from 23.6% in 2000 to 16.5% in 2010, but rose again to 17.7% in 2017.⁷ More than half (54.5%) of the Afghan population also lives below the national poverty line⁸ (2016/2017), indicating a sharp decline in prosperity since 2011/12 (38.3%). The high rates of poverty are due to stagnating economic growth⁹, increasing demographic pressure¹⁰ and a deteriorating security situation after international troops began withdrawing from 2012, against the backdrop of an already impoverished society.

⁴ Unicef (2018): Global Initiative on Out of School Children.

⁵ Also see: World Bank (2018): Implementation completion and results report.

⁶ UNDP: Human Development Indices and Indicators.

⁷ It should be noted though that employment in the informal sector is being ignored.

⁸ The poverty line is the national standard for meeting basic needs, including a range of food items that provide 2,100 kilocalories per person per day, and the necessary spending on housing, clothing, education and transport.

⁹ The Afghan economy's average annual growth rate fell from 9.4% between 2003 and 2012 to only 2.1% between 2013 and 2016.

According to UNDP Human Development Indices and Indicators (2018 Statistical Update, Afghanistan), Afghanistan was still one of the countries with the highest gender inequality in 2017. Despite an improvement in the gender equality index value¹¹ from 0.742 in 2015 to 0.653 in 2017, Afghanistan only ranks 153 out of 160 countries.

In light of the enormous efforts made in the field of education in this fragile context, the project is still rated as satisfactory.

Impact rating: 3 (tranche VIII)

Sustainability

The follow-up EQRA (Education Quality Reform in Afghanistan) project, approved in September 2018, continues many of the activities initiated under the EQUIP I and II projects and will play a significant role in the sustainability of investments. The goal of the project is to improve equitable access to primary and secondary education in selected backward provinces, especially for girls, and to improve learning conditions in Afghanistan. Here too, the federal government is again involved in the funding through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF).¹²

But there are still sustainability risks from recurring security incidents that are disrupting government functions and school operations in many locations.¹³ The EPE of 2017 already pointed out that the school committees set up by EQUIP II play a key role here as they work hard to ensure the safety of school children and make sure closed schools are reopened. The fragile environment also restricts mobility in Afghanistan, which limits the monitoring of service provision by the Ministry of Education. There is still inadequate reporting throughout the entire administrative chain – but the problem is to be tackled within the EQRA project. Finally, there is the challenge of continuously improving the quality of teacher training and recruiting new teachers. This will also be addressed in the EQRA project.

Due to the security provided by the maintenance of the support and the sustainability-enhancing structures currently being set up, the project is still rated as satisfactory.

Sustainability rating: 3 (tranches IV-VIII)

¹⁰ With an annual population growth rate of more than 3%, GDP per capita has fallen steadily since 2012 and was USD 100 lower in 2016 than in 2012.

¹¹ This reflects gender inequalities in three areas - reproductive health, empowerment and economic action.

¹² Contrary to the previous preference for funds, which signalled the donor's political wish to the administrator of the fund to use the contribution primarily for co-financing a specific investment programme (e.g. EQUIP), the funding is now of a more general nature and therefore not directly targeted at the education sector.

¹³ Also see: World Bank (2018): Implementation completion and results report.

Notes on the methods used to evaluate project success (project rating)

Projects (and programmes) are evaluated on a six-point scale, the criteria being **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency** and **overarching developmental impact**. The ratings are also used to arrive at a **final assessment** of a project's overall developmental efficacy. The scale is as follows:

Level 1	Very good result that clearly exceeds expectations
Level 2	Good result, fully in line with expectations and without any significant shortcomings
Level 3	Satisfactory result – project falls short of expectations but the positive results dominate
Level 4	Unsatisfactory result – significantly below expectations, with negative results dominating despite discernible positive results
Level 5	Clearly inadequate result – despite some positive partial results, the negative results clearly dominate
Level 6	The project has no impact or the situation has actually deteriorated

Rating levels 1-3 denote a positive assessment or successful project while rating levels 4-6 denote a negative assessment.

Sustainability is evaluated according to the following four-point scale:

Sustainability level 1 (very good sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project (positive to date) is very likely to continue undiminished or even increase.

Sustainability level 2 (good sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project (positive to date) is very likely to decline only minimally but remain positive overall. (This is what can normally be expected).

Sustainability level 3 (satisfactory sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project (positive to date) is very likely to decline significantly but remain positive overall. This rating is also assigned if the sustainability of a project is considered inadequate up to the time of the ex post evaluation but is very likely to evolve positively so that the project will ultimately achieve positive developmental efficacy.

Sustainability level 4 (inadequate sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project is inadequate up to the time of the ex post evaluation and is very unlikely to improve. This rating is also assigned if the sustainability that has been positively evaluated to date is very likely to deteriorate severely and no longer meet the level 3 criteria.

The **overall rating** on the six-point scale is compiled from a weighting of all five individual criteria as appropriate to the project in question. Rating levels 1-3 of the overall rating denote a "successful" project while rating levels 4-6 denote an "unsuccessful" project. It should be noted that a project can generally be considered developmentally "successful" only if the achievement of the project objective ("effectiveness"), the impact on the overall objective ("overarching developmental impact") and the sustainability are rated at least "satisfactory" (level 3).