



Independent Joint Anti-Corruption
Monitoring & Evaluation Committee (MEC)



Monitoring the Education Sector Fourth Monitoring Report



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- **Executive Summary**

On the 26th of October 2017, MEC released its “Ministry-wide Vulnerability to Corruption Assessment of the Ministry of Education”. Based on findings in this assessment, MEC identified key areas of vulnerability and issued 113 recommendations for improving different aspects of education provision and bringing much needed reform to the Ministry of Education and the wider sector.

MEC actively monitors the implementation of its recommendations, proposed reforms, and related anti-corruption efforts in the education sector, and develops and releases a monitoring report approximately every quarter. MEC’s First Monitoring Report was published on the 24th of June 2018, Second Monitoring Report on the 12th of November 2018, and Third Monitoring Report on 12th of March 2019. This current Fourth Monitoring Report covers the period between December 2018 and March 2019. This report is divided into two parts: the first part addresses “donor-related issues” in the form of a Thematic Focus, and the second part details the status of progress against MEC’s original recommendations from the MVCA report.

During this fourth active follow-up monitoring period, MEC visited three Provinces, Kandahar, Kapisa, and Maidan Wardak.

In its Provincial visits, MEC conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews and guided Focus Group Discussions to collect information about the status of recommendations. These discussions involved representatives from relevant Provincial Education Departments (PEDs), school principals, education *Shuras*, Civil Society Organizations and Provincial Council members. In addition, MEC conducted direct observations in schools and classrooms.

- **Thematic Focus: Donor-related Issues**

The MEC Active Follow-Up Team has selected “Donor-Related Issues” for its Thematic Focus in this 4th Monitoring Report. Under the broader theme of donor-related issues, we focused on three key areas: **coordination**, **institutional memory**, and **resource mobilization**. The MEC team pursued interviews and Focus Group Discussions with a broad range of stakeholders to explore this theme. Stakeholders consulted included representatives from coordinating bodies, international non-Governmental organizations/national non-Governmental organizations (INGOs/NNGOs), donors, multilateral entities and the Ministry of Education (MoE).

- I. **Coordination and Donors**

The Team explored how donors relate to and coordinate with stakeholders in the delivery, funding, or other support for education activities, including managing gaps, or overlap and duplication. Some of the main issues identified on the topic of coordination include:

- Key coordination meetings in the sector are too infrequent, too short in duration, too broad in focus missing (or not inclusive of) relevant stakeholder representatives, and dominated by a few powerful and/or outspoken individuals.

- MoE lacks the capacity to effectively manage coordination and faces conflicting internal and external pressures which hinder its effective coordination efforts.
- Coordination in the sector is largely donor-driven and can be subject to the agendas of powerful donors, which is further complicated by a lack of alignment between donors and multilaterals.
- There is a lack of coordination in regards to roles and responsibilities of donors, multilaterals, and NGOs under the National Education Strategic Plan III (NESP III), as well as a lack of trust and belief in the efficacy and relevance of formal coordination mechanisms, contributing to these mechanisms being sidelined.
- The current reform process in education is timely, but chaotic and without effective management and coordination. This has in turn caused unnecessary duplication of programs, projects and initiatives.

II. Institutional memory and donors

MEC defines institutional memory as, “The way that information, knowledge, facts and experiences about education initiatives and activities – *both past and current* – are documented, shared and re-enforced within organizations.” The main issues of institutional memory raised during development of this Thematic Focus were:

- Those responsible for coordination and decision-making sometimes lack technical competency in education within the Afghan context.
- Many organizations lack a formal process of handover when staff change.
- Experience with MoE Technical Assistants (TAs) has been mixed, including ineffective capacity building from TAs to MoE counterparts, and questions about sustainability.

III. Resource mobilization and donors

The MEC Team agreed on a functional definition of resource mobilization as “Activities undertaken to secure new and additional financial, human, and material resources to achieve organizational goals.” The main issues related to resource mobilization were:

- When resources are mobilized, this is not necessarily happening at the right time and frequently not at the correct scale, or critically, where they are most needed.
- All stakeholders share some responsibility of poor resource mobilization, however donors were seen as being particularly remiss in not addressing related weaknesses.
- There is the perception that resources are not always allocated/distributed fairly and that this is often to the disadvantage of NNGOs.
- There is sometimes a mismatch between national priorities and donor priorities.
- The MoE lacks effective oversight over resource mobilization and poor resource mobilization is both an enabler of, and consequence of, corruption.

IV. Positive developments and suggestions for improvements

Despite the challenges, education is considered one of the better functioning aspects of governance in Afghanistan. More specifically in regards to coordination, there was a general sense that there

have been improvements in this area over the last few years. Key positive developments and suggestions for improvements from stakeholders included:

- There has been good work in streamlining Working Groups and developing formal reporting mechanisms.
 - The development of the National Technical Advisers (NTA) salary scale has been beneficial.
 - Education Quality Reforms for Afghanistan¹ (EQRA) has improved internal coordination between donors; the NESP process has been valuable but needs to be improved to enable more effective management and coordination of the sector.
 - While the education system undertakes widespread reform, the timing is right to focus on improving coordination, institutional memory and resource mobilization.
 - School communities should be more involved in these processes (e.g., through community-based monitoring).
 - The re-introduction of quarterly meetings for donors and other Development Partners to discuss progress could be beneficial – as well as more focus on a sector-wide approach to prioritizing and aligning funding for education.
 - There is a need for improvements in the handover process between staff who are leaving and those who replace them (for donors, multilaterals, INGOs and MoE).
 - There are positive examples of systems for transparent coordination which can be built on (e.g., some initiatives from the Education Cannot Wait [ECW] project).
- **Status of Recommendations during the Fourth Follow-up Period**

During the fourth follow-up monitoring period, 12 recommendations have been fully implemented by MoE and other relevant entities, including the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC), Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and other Development Partners.

I. Recommendations fully implemented

During the previous monitoring period, 16 recommendations were fully implemented. In total, 28 recommendations out of 113 have been fully implemented since the original MoE MVCA was released.

These include:

- The development and release of a comprehensive Reform Plan and Anti-Corruption Plan;
- Improvement in public awareness;
- A 10 per cent increase in the number of internal auditors in Internal Audit Department;

¹ EQRA is the successor to Education Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP)

- Increased note-taking and documentation of active School Administrative Councils' meetings;
- Implementation of lessons learned through MoE's examination of Community-Based Education implementation that has taken place;
- Increased women's access to participation in MoE's school and administrative structures;
- Improvement in coordination of Teacher Training Colleges in relation to market conditions by recruiting teachers through "in-service" programs. MoE claims to have enrolled 20,000 teachers in Bachelor's Degree programs through in-service programs, however MEC could not verify this number;
- Increased participation of Civil Society Organizations in electronic monitoring of teacher recruitment, including the monitoring of *Kankor* exams, particularly for 1st and 2nd grade teaching positions.

II. Recommendations 50 per cent implemented

Out of the 113 recommendations, 28 have been achieved to 50 per cent (14 during the fourth monitoring period). These include:

- Review and revision of the general education curriculum;
- Development of a pilot "Teacher Certification and Accreditation of Teacher Training Institutions in Afghanistan" (TCAP) program;
- Review of the Terms of Reference for school administrative councils;
- Establishment of a Working Group to align the general education curriculum with what is taught in Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs);
- Expansion of practical teaching in TTCs;
- Expansion of literacy programs for women;
- Increased digitization of education certification;
- Establishment of a High Level Oversight Committee;
- Expansion of capacity-building programs for teachers and other MoE staff;
- MoE reporting on the implementation of their Anti-Corruption and Reform plans;
- Organizational review on the management system and structure of the Independent Technical and Vocational Authority.

III. Recommendations 25 per cent implemented

According to MEC's findings, out of 113 recommendations, 21 recommendations have been implemented by 25 per cent. During the previous monitoring period, 15 recommendations were implemented by 25 per cent. These include:

- An increase in the use of electronic payments for teachers' salaries – at the time of MEC's original MoE MVCA, 53 per cent of salaries were paid through electronic payments and this has now increased to 62 per cent with the remaining 38 per cent receiving payments through Mpaia or mobile bank teams;
- Further development of a transparency and accountability system (including rewards and punishments) for MoE staff;

- Application of anti-corruption policies and procedures in procurement;
- Monitoring contracts in accordance with World Bank Guidelines;
- Provision of technical assistance to the Internal Audit Department;
- The development of a Terms of Reference for the High Audit Office.

IV. Recommendations – ‘Work has begun’

During this fourth monitoring period, 38 recommendations come under the ‘Work has begun’ category. These include:

- Conducting Anti-Corruption Forums across the country, although these have, to some extent, been planned, they have not been implemented outside of Kabul;
- Establishment of a network for monitoring reforms at the Provincial level;
- Use of new methods to track teachers’ attendance;
- Documentation of Members of Parliaments’ (MPs) interaction with MoE;
- Strengthening reporting to the Internal Audit Department.

V. Recommendations classified as Pending and Not addressed

After four monitoring periods, out of 113 recommendations, 11 are still pending. Pending means that these recommendations either depend on the implementation of other recommendations, or are related to other entities or actions beyond the scope or control of MoE. For example, MEC recommended that MoE begin the accreditation process for private schools, however MoE’s perspective is that such accreditation necessitates consultation with the private sector, State agencies, and parents, and therefore requires more time.

In addition to the 11 recommendations classified as Pending, two recommendations have not been addressed by MoE.

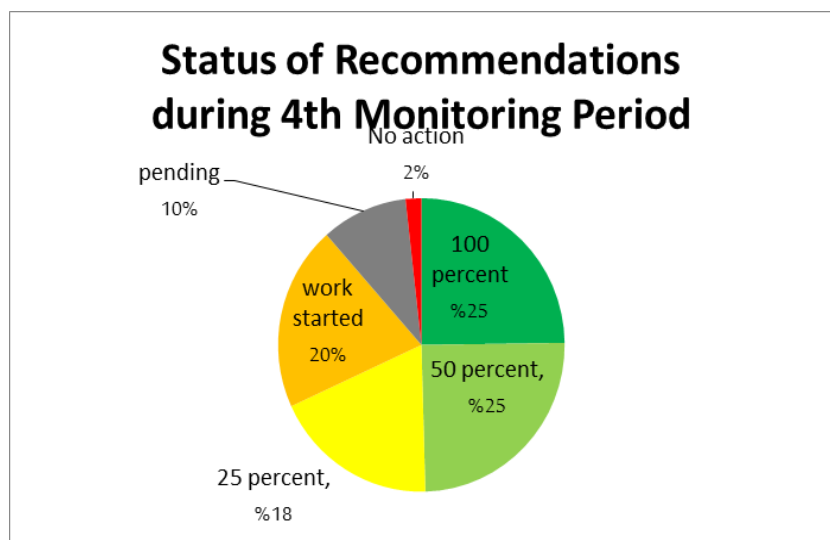
VI. Other issues addressed in the fourth quarter monitoring period

During this fourth monitoring period, MEC studied progress towards the establishment of 6,000 new schools that President Ghani pledged in 2018. Out of \$298 million allocated for these 6,000 schools, under the World Bank-managed EQRA program, \$157 million has been budgeted for school construction. According to an estimation by MRRD’s technical team, the budget will only stretch to the construction of a maximum of 2,700 schools, not the 6,000 planned. In addition, not much progress has been seen in the construction of the 2,700 schools that could be covered under the budget allocated. MRRD has made notable progress in the construction of 221 of these schools and reportedly plans to begin construction of the rest of the 2,700 schools in 17 already-identified Provinces by the end of 2019.

During this fourth monitoring period, MEC’s team visited PEDs in Kandahar, Kapisa and Maidan Wardak Provinces. Stakeholders consulted in these three Provinces reported the following as their most serious challenges: A lack of an adequate organizational structure (*Tashkiel*); a lack of teachers and lack of professional teachers; lack of schools for girls; a lack of school buildings, facilities and material resources (including textbooks, lab equipment and furniture – e.g., chairs); lack of a budget

to train school *Shuras*; lack of a budget for capacity-building programs for teachers and Provincial and District MoE staff; illegal interference of MPs and power brokers in the deployment of teachers; inappropriate mobilization of resources by donors, cultural constrains against attendance of girls in schools – particularly in Kandahar and Maidan Wardak (a number of schools in Kandahar and Maidan Wardak were closed). It should be noted that these challenges have also been reported in other Provinces MEC has visited during previous monitoring periods. It is necessary that MoE leadership make greater efforts to address these challenges.

Overall status of recommendations during this third monitoring period is outlined as follows:



Recommendation Status	Numbers
100%	28
At least 50 %	28
At least 25 %	21
Started	23
Pending	11
No Action	2
Total	113

Taken together, MEC’s findings show that although there has been notable progress this period, compared to the previous one, the pace of reform is still slower than it should be. MEC requests MoE and other relevant Ministries, Government entities and development partners to accelerate anti-corruption reforms through increasing the speed and depth of implementation of MEC’s recommendations in future.

1. Background and introduction

On the October 26th 2017, MEC released its “Ministry-wide Vulnerability to Corruption Assessment of the Ministry of Education”. Based on findings from this assessment, MEC identified key areas of vulnerability to corruption and issued 66 recommendations for improving different aspects of education provision and bringing much needed reform to the Ministry of Education and the wider sector. Subsequently, the original 66 broad recommendations were revised into 113 more specific recommendations.

Further, MoE’s structure was reviewed resulting in several structural changes which include:

- The responsibility for school construction was handed over from MoE to MRRD and Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD).
- The Deputy Directorate of Technical, Vocational, and Educational Training (TVET) was removed from MoE to become a separate entity, the TVET Authority (TVETA).
- Recruitment was one of the aspects of MOE deemed most vulnerable to corruption and so responsibility for recruitment of teachers was hand over to the IARCSC after a Presidential Decree was issued.

In connection with the structural changes and shifting responsibilities outlined above, some of MEC’s recommendations have been shifted from MoE to other Government entities. Accordingly, MEC now monitors and follows up on recommendations with IARCSC, MoE, Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), MoUD, MRRD, TVETA and other entities when needed.

MEC monitors implementation of recommendations at MoE and releases a follow-up report, roughly, every 4 months. So far, MEC has released three follow-up Monitoring Reports on implementation of its recommendations. MEC’s First Monitoring Report was released on the 24th of June 2018, the Second Monitoring Report on the 12th of November 2018, and the Third Monitoring Report on the 12th of March 2019. This current Fourth Monitoring Report covers the period between December 2018 and March 2019. MEC requested MoE to share data related to implementation of recommendations by the 30th March, 2019 and MoE fulfilled this request with one week’s delay.

As stated above, in order to produce its follow-up reports, MEC consults with multiple stakeholders including Government entities – such as IARCSC, MoE, MoHE, MoUD and MRRD, donors, multilateral organizations, Civil Society Organizations, and other Development Partners. In addition, in order to verify claims and collect data, MEC’s team conducts Provincial field visits to ascertain the ‘reality on the ground’ at sub-national levels.

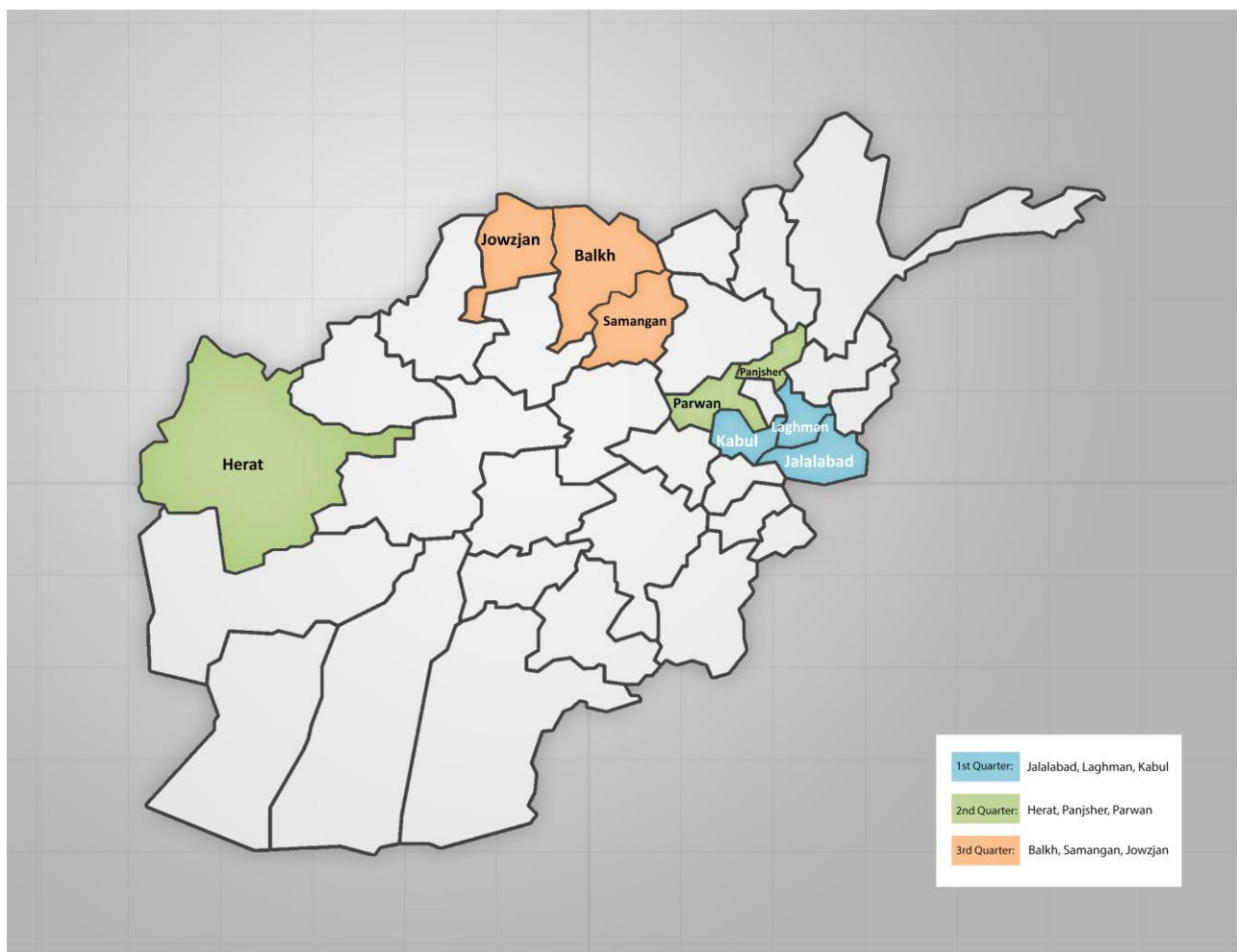
During Provincial visits, MEC’s team meets with PED and DED authorities, TTC faculty and students, representatives of other Government entities (as noted above), members of Provincial Councils, and representatives of Civil Society Organizations, as well as visiting a sample of schools to observe and consult with school community members. To inform this 4th Quarter Monitoring Report, MEC’s team (during the 4th monitoring period) visited PEDs in Kandahar, Maidan Wardak and Kapisa.

This report is divided into two parts: The first is this quarter’s Thematic Focus on ‘donor-related issues,’ specifically, regarding coordination, resource mobilization and institutional memory; the

second part of this Report details progress by MoE and other relevant entities towards implementation of the recommendations. In addition, there are several Annexes at the end of the Report.

MEC's data verification process is not focused exclusively on Kabul and includes trips to three Provinces during each follow-up period. Provincial visits have two goals: (1) to verify claims and check the accuracy of reported data, and (2) to gain a better understanding of the education system 'on the ground' at sub-national levels, specifically in relation to anti-corruption.

During first monitoring period, MEC visited Kabul, Laghman and Nangarhar; and during the second period, MEC visited Herat, Panjshir and Parwan. In addition, in the second monitoring period, MEC's team held a phone conversation with the PED in Uruzgan. Balkh, Jowzjan and Samangan were visited during the third period and a phone interview was conducted with the Director of the PED in Nooristan. During this fourth monitoring period, MEC visited Kandahar, Kapisa, and Maidan Wardak.



1.1. Acknowledgement

MEC thanks all organizations and individuals who helped in the development of this Report.

1.2. Methodology

MEC is actively monitoring and evaluating the anti-corruption efforts, reforms and implementation of its recommendations in the education sector. MEC, in its active follow-up process, engages with education sector stakeholders, not only relying solely on updates from MoE focal points, but also collecting evidence to support and verify focal points' claims, updates, and other responses.

The MEC Active Follow-Up Team conducts Provincial-level field visits to monitor reform and anti-corruption progress in the education sector and also to verify and assess the status of each MoE recommendation 'on the ground'. For example, if a focal point in MoE claims that they have developed an Anti-Corruption Strategy and disseminated this to 34 Provincial Education Departments (PEDs), MEC verifies this claim through Provincial visits to ascertain whether or not PEDs are aware of relevant MoE reforms and have actually received an MoE Anti-Corruption Strategy.

MEC conducts semi-structured, in-depth interviews and guided Focus Group Discussions to collect information about the implementation status of recommendations. These discussions involve representatives from relevant PEDs, school principals, education *Shuras*, CSOs and Provincial Council members. In addition, MEC conducts direct observations in schools and classrooms.

The content of quarterly Monitoring Reports is based on evidence, including documents. MEC takes care to avoid a *perception*-based analysis, by actively engaging with focal points, and verifying the data and the updates provided as evidence.

MEC will provide quarterly Monitoring Reports on the status of recommendations for two years after the release of the original MoE MVCA. These are made publicly available and incorporate inputs and feedback from the Government, Development Partners and CSOs.

After the 1st quarterly, active follow-up monitoring period, MEC took an approach to study special themes or topics for subsequent monitoring periods. During the 2nd quarterly monitoring period, the Thematic Focus was on 'human resources'; during the 3rd monitoring period, the Thematic Focus was on 'education reform'; and in this 4th monitoring period, the Thematic Focus has been on 'donor-related issues', as addressed in the following section of this Report.

2. Thematic Focus: Donor-Related Issues

2.1. Introduction

Education in Afghanistan remains inextricably linked to the aspirations and priorities of the international donors that support the sector. Even after nearly 18 years of donor investments for development, some variation on this statement would probably be accurate for every sector in Afghanistan. Claims of success in the education sector (and explanations of failure) are dynamically connected to the actions of donors, more than in any other sector in Afghanistan -- with the possible exception of the security-intelligence sector. This is due to the outsized role of donors in the allocation of resources, as well as the Afghan State's enduring financial dependency for its on-budget expenditures and off-budget supports for education.

After considering these realities, the MEC Active Follow-Up Team has selected "Donor-Related Issues" for its thematic focus in this Monitoring Report. The three areas of study in this theme included coordination, institutional memory, and resource mobilization. The MEC team pursued interviews and Focus Group Discussions with a broad range of stakeholders to explore this theme.

Stakeholders consulted for the study included representatives from coordinating bodies, INGOs/NNGOs, donors, multilateral entities and MoE.

2.2. Coordination

In discussing how to approach the concept of coordination, the MEC team settled on a practical definition of coordination as: "Organized, active cooperation." Specifically, we wanted to explore how donors relate to and coordinate with stakeholders in the delivery, funding, or other support for education activities.

This meant exploring how Development Partners coordinate and cooperate in relation to their priorities and resources, including managing gaps, or overlap and duplication.

Although the main focus of our enquiry was related to coordination between donors and between donors and other education stakeholders, discussions with MoE and Development Partners have also touched on other aspects of coordination not specifically related to donors, some of which are addressed in the following.

To understand the scope of coordination in education in Afghanistan and what this actually means in practice, it is worth defining the different stakeholders and coordination mechanisms that do exist, keeping in mind the following list is not exhaustive, but is intended to give an overview.

The stakeholders in education – listed alphabetically, in a simplified breakdown include:

- Coordinating bodies (e.g., ACBAR – The Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development)
- Civil Society actors – not otherwise covered under school community members (e.g., student groups)
- Donors

- INGOs – (e.g., multi-country INGOs such as Save the Children, and single-country focused INGOs, such as Swedish Committee for Afghanistan)
- MoE (at national, Provincial, District, and school community levels)
- Multilateral entities (e.g., World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO)
- NNGOs – (including the Afghan National Education Coalition [ANEC])
- School community members (including members of school *Shuras*)

Coordination mechanisms include:

- Formal national level coordination – For example, NESP III steering committee meetings; Human Resources Development Board (HRDB) meetings; Development Partner Group (DPG) meetings; specific topical education Working Group meetings between MoE and Development Partners such as the Education in Emergencies Working Group (EiEWG), Community Based Education (CBE) Working Group, etc.; internal MoE coordination meetings; program/project meetings and workshops such as for Education Quality Reform in Afghanistan (EQRA), Education Cannot Wait steering committee (ECW), Global Partnership for Education (GPE) steering committee; the curriculum reform process; ACBAR meetings; ANEC meetings
- Informal national level coordination – For example, meetings between individual donors and/or multilaterals and/or MoE;
- Formal sub-national level coordination – For example, official program/project meetings between PED/DED and NGOs and/or school communities; Citizen’s Charter National Priority Program (CCNPP) meetings;
- Informal sub-national level coordination – For example, meetings between PED/DED and NGOs and/or school communities and/or civil society actors.

Broadly, MEC’s discussions with stakeholders focused on challenges and difficulties in relation to coordination as well as positive experiences and suggestions for improvements.

2.3. Challenges in coordination

General challenges with coordination mechanisms

Stakeholders consulted for this Thematic Focus outlined a range of challenges in relation to existing coordination mechanisms, particularly in regards to meetings and discussions, including: key meetings not taking place (e.g., the bi-monthly NGO advisory board meeting) or taking place too infrequently, being too short in duration, or not offering opportunities for meaningful discussion (e.g., NESP III steering committee meetings); too many meetings happening at the same time and/or dis-coordinated from one another (e.g., the many MoE technical Working Group meetings); meetings which are too diffuse or too broad (e.g., HRDB steering committee meetings); meetings that are too inclusive of multiple stakeholders, or conversely, too exclusive (e.g., Development Partner Group meetings, some technical meetings organized and managed by multilateral entities); meetings where key representatives are not present (e.g., due to conflicting schedules, a lack of personnel, or security issues) and meetings and other coordination mechanisms which are dominated by particular organizations or individuals within organizations (e.g., by the more powerful donors and multilateral entities).

Coordination gaps

Some stakeholders consulted during our interviews and Focus Group Discussions were concerned that weak MoE leadership was preventing the MoE from overall management of coordination in the sector – a responsibility that then falls to donors and other powerful Development Partners. However, this in turn was seen as sometimes leading to gaps, when, for example, donors and multilateral partners are unable or unwilling to coordinate directly, or consult with NGOs, smaller Civil Society Organizations, or school communities. A representative of one NGO explained, “Development Partners are not involved at the Provincial-level. They are involved on a policy-level, instead. USAID only engages directly with their big contractors instead of with the NGOs. They’re not open to hearing how things are going if it’s not great”.

The lack of engagement of donors/Development Partners with smaller organizations has potential negative consequences for the sector, or as a representative of an NGO put it, “There is no networking happening with smaller NGOs. We have deep experience, but we’re not engaged with. There’s a lack of interest and the lack of a means to engage”.

Donors and multilaterals have limited direct access to the ‘field’². Given that it is almost impossible – due to current security protocols – for expatriate donor and multilateral representatives to directly access the Provincial, District, or school community levels, donors and multilaterals are dependent on national staff and third-party monitors. However, this raises concerns as some stakeholders mentioned that the relationship between donors/multilaterals and their national staff and national consultants can be problematic in that such nationals are not always engaged with or consulted with effectively. Some stakeholders also questioned the reliability of third-party monitors. Further, Afghan nationals may be underused, or underrepresented. As one donor representative explained, “Not engaging local counterparts and staff caused some problem in some parts of education nationwide”.

Another challenge raised in regards to coordination is the current, sweeping, education reform process, which was widely seen by stakeholders consulted as being, although on the one hand, timely and necessary, on the other hand, a process that in its planning and implementation can be characterized as being chaotic and poorly coordinated at all levels. In this sense, the process of reform in education lacks transparency and accountability as key aspects of it are not visible to all stakeholders. Some stakeholders consulted felt the process is being further complicated by reliance on external consultants – who often, due to a combination of limited time in country, security and other constraints – are unable to consult with key stakeholders. As one donor representative explained, “And I think that one of the kind of things I’ve found difficult is that some multilaterals bring all these consultants in and they have no relationships with other donors – they don’t make those contacts. The curriculum reform process has been invisible to donors – completely invisible – which is bizarre”.

² The MEC Active Follow-Up Team notes: To a certain extent this is also true for MoE in Kabul – How many MoE staff based in Kabul Headquarters actually visit schools, even in Kabul City?

An additional important issue raised was coordination between national and sub-national levels. This is felt keenly by those operating on the ground-level, in Provinces, Districts and school communities. This also presents vulnerabilities to corruption, as one NNGO representative explained, “Coordination between national and Provincial levels is non-existent. Even at the Provincial level, we faced some cases that the PED asked some money from us for them to endorse our program”.

Exploiting coordination gaps

One issue that arose in consultation with stakeholders for this Thematic Focus is the mutually reinforcing relationship between corruption and gaps in coordination – that is corruption can lead to a worsening of coordination, while gaps in coordination, conversely, can enable greater corruption.

In discussing what leads to gaps in coordination, an NGO representative explained, “The existence of rampant corruption could be one of the causes, and also rivalries among donors.” Notably, during individual interviews and Focus Group Discussions, several respondents mentioned tensions, rivalries, or perceived competition among donors as a concern.

In the sense that poor coordination can be willfully exploited, a coordinating body representative explained, “...there is no coordination between MoE, donors and implementing agencies, and the main consequence is that people and civil society are unaware of the implementation of programs”. The gaps here appear to have opened up opportunities for corruption. As the interviewee continued, “We see, for example, that donors and large organizations have misused the national and small organizations. They [in the case of this example, a UN organization] used the small organizations’ permissions and license to implement the program themselves and then pay a certain amount to the small organization”.

Donor and Development Partner driven coordination

There were concerns expressed by a variety of NGOs, MoE representatives, multilateral representatives and donors that more powerful, or dynamic donors and multilaterals were taking a lead in coordination, sometimes at the expense of MoE.

As one donor representative put it, “Formally, donor coordination in the education sector does exist, but this is driven mainly by the perspective of the largest donors, instead of by the Ministry itself”.

Coordination was sometimes seen as representing particular donor agendas, as opposed to a more comprehensive representation of the needs in the sector. What particular donors and other Development Partners were interested in – their respective education priorities – was seen by many as having influence on the coordination that does take place. As a consequence, coordination may have less strategic value than it ideally could. As one donor put it, “...we believe that it really should come down to the quality of teachers, on the most basic level, and not on infrastructure or whatever else these [other] donors articulate as their priorities. A great teacher can deliver meaningful lessons working outdoors, under a tree. But a weak or unprepared teacher will still be ineffective at education no matter how nice a classroom or well-equipped a school building might be! I mean, coordination among donors directly depends on donors’ perspective about education’s definition”.

One issue, mostly discussed as being a challenge, is that in some cases, donors' decision making around what specific areas of education to focus on and coordinate around are not made by donor representatives in Afghanistan, nor are they necessarily reflective of Afghanistan's most pressing needs and priorities, but are driven by priorities in donors' home-office Headquarters. This was something pointed out by donor and MoE representatives. As an MoE representative explained, "...sometimes States, not their agencies in Afghanistan, determine the priorities. It means, the priorities are given by States, not their embassies or development agencies that exist in Kabul and they also cannot do anything".

Some stakeholders also raised issues around the lack of oversight that donors have over what NGOs do on the ground in Afghanistan negatively affecting their perspectives and the quality of decision making. As one donor representative explained, "...donors thinking they can come into Afghanistan, and they have all the solutions and they have like these great projects, in Africa and whatever, and they pour money into it without the necessary oversight on that. You have another problem that NGOs in Afghanistan appear to have a very negative stereotype, as far as money is concerned, and waste is concerned, and ineffectiveness is concerned. I just think people [donors] in country don't tend to respect NGO work as something that is cost effective. And I think this comes from a need for the oversight to be improved".

A number of donor and multilateral representatives consulted for this Thematic Focus expressed empathy for MoE and the situation they face with donors and Development Partners. As one donor representative put it, "In a way I feel for them too because they have to deal with an onslaught of different donor characters' demands and issues and every few months they have waves of work related to different requirements, like Reform Plan requirements, and sometimes they have a trip to India and sometimes they have, I don't know, things like the ECW stuff that they have to prepare, and really competent people are drained. And at the same time you have donors that are changing every year and a half, at best. Right, USAID, I think they have a year [for their assignment]. And then in between that they [donors] have all this Leave and all this stuff where they have a replacement, if their lucky, or they don't. So in between all the R&Rs and the short-term, you have people that don't actually have a very comprehensive understanding of the history and the culture because they are behind embassy walls. This is a very big problem actually. When you speak to some of these people they don't really have a sense of the Afghan culture. So you have so many barriers".

Prioritization and funding for education

Many stakeholders consulted in our interviews and Focus Group Discussions suggested that there are challenges in terms of how different aspects of education are prioritized and funded.

There is a consensus amongst stakeholders consulted that the responsibilities for who is responsible for which aspects of education under the NESP III (e.g., MoE, donors, multilaterals, NGOs), is not well coordinated.

In regards to budgeting. As one donor representative put it, "The, I think, critical constraint is that to aligning off- and on-budget financing is that Government budget planning is not transparent and it's not consultative". This perspective was echoed by other donors.

MoE capacity

The relationship between the MoE and coordination around education is somewhat paradoxical in that, on the one hand, most stakeholders consulted agreed that the MoE should be driving coordination – or at least have a more central and active role in it, but on the other hand, the MoE is also seen by many stakeholders consulted (including some in MoE) as being “too weak,” “lacking in capacity,” or “dysfunctional” to meaningfully manage coordination.

Stakeholders consulted for this study suggested that part of the problem is that MoE lacks capacity to manage the information it receives from the field. As one NGO representative put it, “I believe that the Ministry never reads the reports. They just receive the reports from different implementers and print the reports and put them on the shelf and that’s it. If the Ministry read the reports they would get informed about the situation and consider this while making plans”.

There is also a sense amongst some stakeholders that the MoE is overwhelmed by its responsibilities, which impacts on its capacity to coordinate. One NGO representative explained, “I think the Ministry is very busy with their daily activities and not able to pay attention to coordination”.

Over the years, various donors and multilaterals have commissioned needs and gap analyses of the education sector (and continue to do so), but that these have often been based on relatively cursory engagement with the issues (e.g., when analyses are done by external consultants who get limited time to complete them, limited time in Afghanistan, and limited access to stakeholders when in country). MoE has also, often, had relatively limited involvement in the processes of conducting such analyses, although there are examples, such as the Education Joint-Sector Review, where research into needs and gaps have been managed by MoE. Regardless, there are concerns about the overall impact of such research and the effects on MoE: As a multilateral representative put it, “I think the Government is wary because the studies that have been conducted on needs and gaps don’t make a difference.”

A further aspect of MoE capacity, in regards to capacity-building, is the use of Technical Assistants (TAs), which will also be discussed in the following section on *Institutional Memory*.

The relationship between formal and informal coordination

Many of the stakeholders consulted for this Thematic Focus suggested that some degree of coordination around education happens outside of the formal mechanisms designed to structure and promote it. Of course, this is something that occurs globally, in all big systems, and there is a value to informal coordination. However, there is a sense, that in Afghanistan, some key aspects of coordination and related decisions about education are happening outside of formal coordination mechanisms, and in some cases, in intentional circumventions of such mechanisms. The principle risks here, when stakeholders avoid formal coordination mechanisms for whatever reasons, is that the informal coordination that does take place typically lacks transparency and accountability, creating corruption vulnerabilities, amongst other problems.

Principle reasons cited for the need to engage in informal coordination around education in Afghanistan included: A perceived lack of effectiveness, relevance and equity – including a lack of access – within and between existing formal coordination mechanisms. At a fundamental level, stakeholder disengagement with formal coordination mechanisms can represent a lack of trust in existing systems as well as in other stakeholders.

Our consultation with education stakeholders found that there is a sort of fluid relationship to coordination in which the choice of which mechanisms to engage with (both formal and informal) and when to do so is, at times, mandated (e.g., certain stakeholders are required to attend, if not facilitate particular meetings), at times, opportunistic (e.g., certain stakeholders attend meetings if/when they are invited, or become aware of them) and also, often, pragmatic – in line with what coordination mechanisms particular stakeholders have the most interest in, or feel they have the most impact in or through. How this works in practice is further dependent on several intersecting factors, including:

- *Accessibility*, in terms of power and status – For example, who is invited to what meeting, who knows who, and who has more power/status within meetings (which voices are heard and taken seriously), but also physical access – including that even if they wanted to, the most powerful donors are typically unable to directly access the programs and stakeholders they support in the field (without the use of third-party monitors), to coordinate at that level, due to a lack of personnel, insecurity, long distances, poor infrastructure (e.g., roads), difficult terrain, climate, etc.;
- *Relationships* (closely related to *Accessibility*, above) – A particular stakeholder’s access to and impact within a particular coordination mechanism depends, to some extent, on the relationship of the organization they represent to other stakeholders and on the particular individual representative’s relationships with other stakeholders. This is determined, largely, by their experience (including length of time in the sector, country, etc.), knowledge and personality (including, importantly, their ‘social skills’). Relationships are heavily personality driven. Stakeholders’ professional positions and related Terms of References (ToRs), may appear straightforward, or neutral on paper, but in practice, the way these roles are implemented depends to some extent on the personalities of the people who fill them. In discussing a former donor representative from another donor, a representative explained, “He had an attitude about him that was good at rallying people together and a good, consultative, leadership style. So, it comes down to some level of personality.”
- *Resources* – Particularly human resources and time, and;
- *Perceived efficacy* – Some coordination mechanisms are seen as being more effective and relevant than others. This may be generally the case, or contextual – that is certain coordination mechanisms may be more relevant for certain purposes, or at certain times, compared to others.

Interestingly, to a certain extent, all stakeholders consulted for this study felt that at times they were not participating in key, formal coordination activities, either because they were not privy to these (because they were not aware of them, or not invited), or they were unable to participate in them (whether by circumstance – e.g., insecurity, oversight, or intention).

As noted previously, the tendency of stakeholders to rely on informal coordination, as opposed to more formal mechanisms, has sometimes been a result of perceived lack of relevance. The NESP III steering committee meeting was raised by several stakeholders as an example of this. This meeting, in theory at least, has the potential to be a key forum for coordination and discussion of education issues. However, this potential was seen by some as not being fully realized in practice, as there is typically very little discussion that takes place during these meetings. This is, perhaps,

unsurprising as NESP III steering committee meetings typically last for three hours (or less) and are intended to cover all aspects of education under the NESP. As one donor representative explained, discussing the use of NESP III steering committee meetings as forums for making PowerPoint presentations, “I think this is the fourth time I’ve mentioned it to [senior MoE representatives] that the NESP...it’s supposed to be a platform where you talk at high level key issues. The problem with the structure – and it has been like this for the last 15 years – is that nobody thinks out of the box and when you talk to them like this that ‘you don’t have to bring presentations’, it sounds to them too radical.”

Although many stakeholders consulted suggested that the process of developing NESP III was one an example of effective coordination between MoE, donors and other Development Partners, the NESP III was also criticized for:

- Being too broad, open and vague – allowing donors to pick and choose which aspects of education under NESP III they were interested in prioritizing without properly coordinating with MoE and other Development Partners to ensure all aspects of education are effectively being addressed. As one donor representative said, “...ok, we don’t want to say the NESP isn’t good because the NESP is the one thing we’re all agreed on, but the NESP...it feels very...I don’t want to shake the NESP, but the NESP is too big. The NESP allows us to do everything and anything. Because, at the moment, one of the drivers of poor donor coordination is that [a donor] can choose to do some random thing like Early Childhood Education because the NESP allows it to”.
- A lack of wider Government buy-in, and fragmented approach to implementation. As one donor representative explained, “...I think at the heart of all this, the Ministry was able to sell NESP to donors very well, but they haven’t been able to sell NESP to the Government itself. Because if you have a government that looks at NESP as the fundamental document for the sector against which it will do resource allocation, then it would focus on that. But that hasn’t happened, and that’s why you have Ministry pushing all of these individual issues; if they see an opportunity for funding of 30,000 female teachers, they push for it. It has to be otherwise right? I think that’s the heart of the problem there”.

However, despite the criticisms of NESP III processes, stakeholders consulted by the Active Follow-Up Team had many positive things to say which will be discussed further in the following section on ‘positive developments and suggestions for improvements’.

MoE’s relationship to formal coordination mechanisms

As with the nature and extent of other stakeholders’ engagement with formal coordination mechanisms, there was much speculation about MoE’s relationship to such mechanisms. In particular, donors and other Development Partners were concerned that MoE may not fully understand or trust the formal coordination mechanisms that are in place – that they lack confidence in these. Partly, this was seen to be a result of the formal coordination mechanisms being somehow alien to MoE’s institutional structures and overall culture. As one donor representative explained, “...these structures have never worked to the extent that gets confidence of the Ministry to rely on them permanently. Because the overall programmatic structure of the Ministry is different. You know, every program does its own thing and they do

kind of collaborate or coordinate with Planning Department at the beginning of the year and with the Finance Department, to some extent. But, then they do their own final business because that's how the structure is, right. None of the Working Group structure exists under the former *Tashkiel*, so anything that's detached from *Tashkiel* is something that a lot of these public servants are not familiar with".

When MoE (and other stakeholders for that matter) doubt the value or efficacy of formal coordination mechanisms and therefore do not fully engage with them, there was some that this can become a self-fulfilling prophecy among those consulted for this Thematic Focus. That is, without full commitment, such formal coordination mechanisms will not function properly and then be seen as ineffective – with a further loss of trust and legitimacy. There is a tricky balance here, which is further complicated by external pressures on MoE. Touching on this, one donor explained, "I think there is also a concern inside the Ministry that if you try to consult on every issue, it's going to end up delaying those and some of those things can be pressing. You get the example of the reform agenda: There was a lot of pressure from the President himself [for reform] and if the Ministry was to open it to broader discussion, it was going to take time and they were not prepared for it. The other side of that coin is that if they had given consultation a chance it would have been a more enriched document and it would have convinced the President that 'Actually our consultation shows this: X, Y, Z', so it's a two way street".

Picking up on the issue of the factors affecting MoE's engagement with formal coordination mechanisms, many stakeholders consulted in the study acknowledged that MoE faces a number of often conflicting internal and external pressures. These include: political pressures – For example, from Parliamentarians who want MoE to focus resources on the communities they represent, or from particular donors related to their specific agendas; and time pressures – such as from the President and from donors to institute reforms quickly. In this way the pressures MoE faces can become barriers to proper engagement with formal coordination mechanisms.

To the extent that MoE, as one donor representative put it, 'lacks ownership' of formal coordination mechanism, the result can be that MoE engages only superficially with these to please donors. As a donor representative elaborated, "These meetings, for example, with the steering committee: I was, like, also a little bit appalled. They [MoE] only report, rather than seeing it as something where they can have a proper dialogue with us on issues and so it's more like they see it as reporting and pleasing the donors, and that's it, and they may have done their share and then they go back and do whatever they want to do, rather than seeing us as a proper partner, but also having their own ownership in it. It's a way they can keep donors a little bit distant from what we should really be involved in – so they can kind of batten you off a little bit and they can go about their business".

Representation in coordination forums

Several donors suggested that the reason that some donor decision making was happening informally, was because the Development Partner Group (DPG) meeting (which at one point was specifically a donor coordination meeting) now involves representatives from multilateral entities and NGOs and was therefore not a proper forum for donor coordination as it precluded frank discussions about non-donors. As one donor discussing donor coordination commented, "The thing which sometimes makes me confused is the attendance of some NGOs which are not

defined in the actual role of donors. When we call for a donor coordination meeting, there should be donors, not other stakeholders. In this situation we cannot frankly discuss”.

Interestingly, the DPG meeting represents a wider crisis of representation for different stakeholders. Pointedly, MoE is not invited to this meeting as they are, at least sometimes, the focus of ‘frank’ conversations during the meetings. Some in MoE, as well as other stakeholders, believe that MoE should attend these meetings. At another level, the Afghan National Education Coalition (ANEC), which is a coordinating body representing Afghan national education actors, had been lobbying for quite some time to attend the DPG meeting and has only recently been admitted. Also, in the past there have been discussions about how/if INGOs should be represented at the DPG meetings. This also raises questions about how genuinely representative one INGO would be of others (e.g., INGOs that have been represented at DPG meetings have not typically reported back to other INGOs, such as through coordination bodies, like ACBAR). Currently, some INGOs are invited to (and do attend) the DPG meetings, but there is no clear, transparent mechanism for gaining such access or ensuring the sharing of information.

Duplication

The notion that there is wasteful duplication of programs, projects, initiatives, or resources because of poor coordination was raised by a number of stakeholders. Duplication, in this sense, can be seen to exist at different levels of the system.

On the community level, a representative of a coordinating organization explained, “We see that many activities are duplicated. And there is more inconsistency among implementing agencies, because the number of implementing agencies is far more than donors. Also, there is lack of coordination among the implementing agencies and the Community Development Councils in villages”. This also has implications for corruption, as the interviewee continued, “This negligence of MoE indicates the existence of corruption in the implementation of projects, because if there is not corruption, they can easily reject repeat projects and prevent them from being implemented. Of course, bribery and corruption are not directly taken, but through indirect ways such as ‘donations’ and *bakhsheesh*”.

As an NNGO representative remarked, “The lack of coordination between donors has resulted in many programs being duplicated. For example, we have been working with MoE to prepare a book for high school students on technical training, but at the same time another organization is implementing the same program. They want to re-write the book. It is a complete waste of time because we already have the book”.

2.4. Institutional Memory

For the purposes of this Thematic Focus, MEC defines institutional memory as, “The way that information, knowledge, facts and experiences about education initiatives and activities – *both past and current* – are documented, shared and re-enforced within organizations.”

As part of this study, we wanted to explore the strengths and weaknesses of institutional memory among Development Partners – and the effects on MoE. This means being clear that there are benefits to learning being passed-along to new leaders and staff – and *risks* when key information is

constantly needing to be re-discovered or re-assessed. Time and resources are wasted by constantly repeating the learning process because organizations do not ensure that what has been decided or learned is documented and passed-along in a systematic way. Institutional memory does not happen by accident; it requires attention and consistency.

Ideally, those responsible for coordination and decision making in the sector should have technical competency in education and deep knowledge of the Afghan education context in general and the different stakeholders involved in particular. However, as a number of stakeholders consulted during the study pointed out, this is not always the case. As one donor representative said, “Development Partner Technical Advisors often don’t have first-hand education experience to inform their decisions. They use the right ‘buzz words’ of course, and it shapes how they approach donor coordination”.

A general lack of institutional memory amongst NGOs and donors was also noted by NNGOs, with one representative suggesting, “Institutions [NGOs] have no institutional memory, although [they are] legally obliged to arrange their experiences as institutional memory at the end of each project's implementation in order to be used in future programs. Even, they sometimes ignore their institutional memory and do repetitive work. Unfortunately, the donors also do not have an institutional memory, while a donor has to have an institutional memory to guide the implementing agencies”. This was also noted as a challenge in MoE, in part because people with the relevant technical knowledge and experience are not always in positions of power, as the NNGO representative continued, “More problems with institutional memory go back to the Ministry of Education itself. Unfortunately, it is not considered. For example, there is no culture of expertise and specialization in Afghanistan. For example, an electrical specialist comes as the Minister of Education”.

Technical Assistants and consultants

One of the mechanisms used to develop MoE capacity has been the use of Technical Assistants (TAs) who are embedded within MoE Departments and tasked with building MoE technical capacity in relation to their specific areas of expertise. In some cases TAs are also deployed more generally (e.g., in improving communication). In the early years, post-2001, many TAs were expats with particular education and development technical expertise, but over time this has shifted so that most – if not all – TAs are now Afghans. TAs are typically funded directly by donors, multilaterals, or INGOs, off-budget and off- *Tashkiel*. In the past this has meant that TAs have been on higher salaries, and in some cases, significantly higher than their MoE colleagues³.

Also, the notion of external consultants has been raised as a challenge. Although there have been positive experiences of external consultants, several stakeholders raised concerns about the quality and sustainability of the use of consultants, particularly expatriates. For some, the problem is seen to be worsening, as several donors and multilaterals suggested it is currently more difficult than in the

³ The issue of differential TA salaries was also touched on previously, in the section on *Coordination*.

past to recruit high quality consultants to work in Afghanistan, at least in part, because of the deteriorating security situation in the country. As donors and multilaterals are typically the organizations recruiting external expatriate consultants, they were seen as having ultimate responsibility for ensuring quality and relevance. As one donor representative put it, “I think donors and multilaterals have a role in plugging consultants into the right networks – and that’s sometimes not happening”.

Although there have been positive experiences with TAs, the majority of respondents in our present study were more inclined to negatively criticize this kind of initiative.

Sustainability is a major issue here. As one donor representative explained, “Of course the sustainability is always a concern that when the donor is not present who will support the TA? This is a concern for all donors”. There are also issues raised around unrealistic expectations put on TAs related to their influence at the MoE. As one representative from a multilateral put it, “You have someone who’s been working in a position for many years and then you have a young person coming in [as a TA], making more than twice their salary, and telling them what to do. That’s never going to work, so what do you do?”.

Handover

Handover ideally involves the exchange of information and other resources within an organization and/or between organizations over time, and particularly when there are changes in staffing. All stakeholders consulted for this Thematic Focus suggested that there was room for improvement in handover within their organizations.

Several representatives from donors and multilaterals mentioned that they did not experience any formal (or even informal) handover from their predecessors when they arrived in Afghanistan, although others noted that they had experienced a handover process. Many of the participants in our interviews and Focus Group Discussions acknowledged that this variability was a point of discussion in their agencies and organizations; some commented that this had been a concern raised repeatedly over time.

Information management

Information management – How education information is gathered, stored and shared – is a key aspect of institutional memory which is related to the notion of handover discussed previously. Many stakeholders consulted for this Thematic Focus highlighted problems in regards to information management around education in Afghanistan. One donor representative explained, “You know about information management system, IMS, and we have several IMSs which are not connected to each other. We are facing a lack of a central IMS to support each other within the MoE”. There have also, as discussed previously, been a number of studies and related reports on gaps and needs analyses as well as several reports on restructuring MoE, but little sense from our study participants that these build on one another, or are widely known, shared, or influential.

Empowerment of Afghan nationals

Several donors and multilaterals discussed the issue of empowerment, or lack of empowerment of Afghan nationals, as being a particular concern. Many organizations (including donors, multilaterals and NGOs) which have had a high turnover of expatriate staff, have had relatively long-serving national staff. However, some stakeholders suggested that such national staff are sometimes not empowered by their organizations to share their knowledge and experience. Further, stakeholders remarked that certain long-serving national staff had ‘given up trying’ and were, in effect, ‘waiting out’ expatriate staff, with the minimum level of engagement, until they inevitably left and were replaced by new expatriates. One donor representative explained, “They [national staff] are not strong because they are not empowered. [A donor organization] has [a national staff member] who has such strong institutional memory and knowledge and just gets it, but I don’t think he’s empowered in any of these discussions to push things forward at speed”.

2.5. Resource Mobilization

In order to explore this topic – to understand when resource mobilization has worked well (and where, and how, and when it *hasn’t*) – the MEC Team agreed a functional definition of this part of the Theme as “*Activities undertaken to secure new and additional financial, human, and material resources to achieve organizational goals.*” It soon became clear, however, that there have been difficulties and disappointments in matching resources to the requirements in the Ministry of Education, compared to the mobilization of resources aimed at achieving the goals of donor entities. These were perceptions from each of the Ministry itself, implementing NNGOs and INGO, and the sector’s donors. Many of our study’s respondents made similar comments about this.

On a practical level, effective deployment of the correct resources to meet priority requirements must be based on a shared understanding of what resources are actually required, and whose priorities take precedence. Several stakeholders participating in this study described resources being mobilized, but not necessarily at the right time and frequently not at the correct scale, or critically, where they were most needed. The Team also documented vivid descriptions of the failure of the systems and structures designed to prevent these errors from occurring, and the apparent inability of the Ministry to overcome these flaws – or to effectively influence the situation.

In individual interviews with stakeholders and in Focus Group Discussions among implementers, as well as in discussions among education sector donors themselves, the Team heard clear and detailed disappointments related to mismanaged resources, as well as familiar comments about gaps in resources. While every sector in Afghanistan would likely be described as under-resourced to one degree or another, the responses from the education sector’s key stakeholders about inadequate resource mobilization were particularly harsh.

One of the potential consequences of poor resource mobilization is an erosion of trust. As one NGO representative explained, “...when donors do not consider people’s priorities through their project implementation, the level of trust will be reduced and no one can trust on their aid and support. For example, in a school where there is a lack of textbooks, but donors established a laboratory for them, this is not the people’s priority”.

Responsibility for difficulties related to resource mobilization was laid at the feet of both the Ministry and the wider education sector’s donors – But even on extensive probing by the MEC Team – Donors were subject to the brunt of the criticisms for having failed to address weaknesses in a sector where

they have such an important role, and where they have been active in some cases for decades. Predictably, the criticisms were frequently linked explicitly to the other two elements of this Thematic Focus: Donor coordination and donor institutional memory.

Regarding the challenges of resources, an INGO representative commented, “It’s important to think about how we should prioritize. There’s going to be less funding to Afghanistan, in general, and to the sector... and that’s something the Ministry needs to understand. So, how should we prioritize? And it’s important *to us*, but it’s important the Ministry understands their own priorities... That is something that we can do, with a gap analysis of financing, but also, we have to consider *what* will we cover? How will we contribute, jointly, without spreading ourselves too thin? How could we, other than building 10, build three *that actually work*?” Another INGO representative confirmed this concern in her remark, “[The Ministry] has some scary ideas about resource mobilization; [these ideas] don’t make sense.”

There was also a sense, amongst NNGOs that resources were not always being fairly allocated, to the advantage of INGOS and the distinct disadvantage of NNGOS. Not only was this seen as negatively affecting opportunities for work in the sector by NNGOs, but also as a sustainability issue in failing to take advantage of existing, local resources. As one NNGO explained, “...donors always create an unfair competition between national and international NGOs in order to implement their plans and projects which makes the INGOS always win, because, INGOS have more possibilities to implement programs. This has meant that many NNGOs could not work and this is also why proper use is not made from local resources”.

In comments from the Ministry about donor and implementer actions related to resources, MEC noted the recurring connection between mis-matched priorities and lack of coordination: “Another challenge [has been that] donors projects were duplicated in the field level. For instance, three community-based education projects implemented at the same time in a District of [a Central] Province, while no CBE project was implemented in other Districts. There was no need for CBE projects in [that District] because people have access to schools nearby their home... there are probably many in other Provinces and other Districts.”

An Afghan NGO representative also commented, “More clearly, donors also have their own priorities for resources that do not meet [Afghanistan’s] national priorities.” In a parallel discussion, an Afghan representative of an NGO implementing agency commented, “Donors don’t consider the principle of proper allocation of resources... And the Government does not have proper monitoring of the work of donors, and only tries to attract financial support.” A different Afghan NGO representative pointed to this as well, remarking, “...institutions that have literacy courses should coordinate with the Ministry of Education, and still, the Ministry’s Literacy Program is not known at all... Literacy is a priority of the Afghan State.”

Naturally, the MEC Team was also quite interested in the presence or the effects of corruption, which was mentioned by some, but not all, of the interview and Focus Group Discussion participants.

When the relationship between corruption and resource mobilization was questioned, there was a perception that “There is a problem of corruption among donors, which has caused their money to not be mobilized properly,” according to an Afghan NGO representative. Another participant of the same Focus Group Discussion agreed, “The Ministry of Education also has difficulty in assessing the

issue, which has led to poor reporting of programs – But the Ministry also selectively supervises these [donor] institutions.”

An international representative from one of the key donor countries commented, “[It’s] bad luck: Resource mobilization is largely affected by corruption; get rid of corruption and this would be solved – There are some individuals with political will to fight corruption, but not institutionally. I mean the system is corrupted. There’s no straightforward way to achieve success in the fight against corruption in this circumstance.”

When questioned about opportunities to exert leverage on resource decisions, the representative further commented, “It’s possible for the MoE to influence responsible choices about resource mobilization – It works within [our agency]. It’s linked to the staff at the second- and third- and even fourth-tier of the structures being able to exert influence. We’ve seen that even at the level of the teachers themselves; they can have influence on resource mobilization... If the sector has duplication or gaps, and MoE don’t explain that, then the Ministry has to own the problem of the right resources not being correctly mobilized.”

2.6. Positive developments and suggestions for improvements

Despite the challenges, education is seen by many of the stakeholders consulted for this Thematic Focus as being one of the better functioning aspects of governance in Afghanistan. More specifically in regards to coordination, there was a general sense that there have been improvements in this area over the last few years.

In addition, the timing for a renewed focus on improving coordination, as well as institutional memory and resource mobilization, ‘seems right’ to many of the stakeholders consulted in this study. As one donor representative put it, “I think now is a really good time in a way. A lot of things are being prompted and we’re seeing a lot of change and part of that is us being a little more honest about the crisis in the sector, because I think for a long time the sector and the donors and the Ministry were riding on this thing – ‘In 2001 few women and children were in school and now it’s nine-million’. Ok, but we haven’t seen any progress in like four years and according to the Ministry’s own data we have plateaued and the population is increasing and loads of returnees are coming back from Pakistan and Iran and whatever, so actually we’re in a crisis. And I think we’re seeing an attitudinal shift, maybe of like, ‘We can’t just ride on the progress of what we saw 10 years post-Taliban’. So, hopefully that sends a panic. [and] the MEC report prompted some stuff, but also created a question to some things. But, things like that [the MEC MoE MVCA] which make transparent the issues in the sector have been really good prompts to get us to do something”.

A streamlining of coordination and consequent reduction in the number of education Working Groups alongside improvements in processes of measurement and accountability have been noted by some stakeholders as being recent, positive developments. As one donor representative explained, “There have been some really good steps taken. For example, putting in place coordination committees above the Working Groups. I mean one of the big challenges we face is the abundance of Working Groups. So, in the last year I’ve definitely seen a Ministry recognition that that’s not working and a bit of a slash and burn so actually minimizing the coordination groups, putting in place formal reporting mechanisms up to the steering committee – putting in place clear indicators and reporting

frameworks for doing that and I think that if those things actually happen, and are not just agreed that they ought to happen, then there's an opportunity to put the right systems in place".

Many stakeholders consulted for this study agreed that the combination of multiple coordination meetings and limited human resources makes representation challenging. One donor representative discussed how their donor organization handles this, saying, "...there are difficulties with Development Partners fully engaging in the important meetings, and that remains an obstacle. They just can't always be in the room. They're limited by restrictions. At our agency we have learned to rely on our local national counterparts, on staff to engage when we can't be there – they have the confidence to deliver our agenda entirely, and we trust them with this responsibility. It is very helpful to engage us with first hand data and reality that we are working in the field in different DEDs".

Another, often overlooked aspect of representation in coordinating processes, is that of school communities themselves. An NGO representative discussed this in relation the need to expand Community-based Monitoring of education systems, "This would also fit with current movements towards a more decentralized education system, as specified in the NESP III."

It was also mentioned by some of the stakeholders consulted for this Thematic Focus that in the past, there had been coordination mechanisms that are not currently operating, but which would benefit from being re-introduced. As one coordinating body representative suggested, "I would suggest that MoE has a quarterly meeting for donors and Development Partners to discuss progress, as we had before – and I would suggest annually elected NGO rep[resentative]s to ensure feedback to the wider community".

Prioritization and funding for education

How to prioritize in the education sector, in regards to planning, funding, and other forms of support, is a critical issue for donors and other development partners and poses questions for the future, particularly in the current period of political uncertainty and instability. As one donor representative said, "It's important to think about how we should prioritize. There's going to be less funding to Afghanistan in general and to the sector, as such, and that's something the Ministry needs to understand. So, how should we prioritize? And it's important to us, but it's important in relation to the Ministry to understand their own priorities... But that is something that we can do with the gap analysis of financing, but I think that is also something that [needs consideration]... What will we cover? How will we contribute jointly, without spreading ourselves too thin?"

The alignment between donors on coordination for prioritization and funding of education is of critical concern to all stakeholders and although stakeholders consulted in this study generally agreed there have been attempts to improve such coordination, more efforts are warranted. As a representative from MoE put it, "A sector-wide approach for funding should be considered by donor partners. This was committed by the international community in the Geneva Conference. This means, [considering what] the sector needs. What priorities do they have? What projects should be given to them?". As a donor representative suggested, "I think donor agendas have to be more thoughtfully considered with the host Government as an equal process towards self-sufficiency, rather than setting up a structure of aid dependency and a structure that is actually politically motivated, even if it's not politically motivated on paper and in the books. Separation between political and

development is very important for donors”. To support this process, the donor representative went on, “...MoE needs to become more effective and efficient in guiding donors in this process”.

The challenges of improving coordination of off-budget and on-budget funding, alongside managing the complexities of sometimes disparate donor and MoE interests, was also addressed. One donor representative suggested, “So, it would be one really small kind of, small, but still ambitious tweak, would be if there was a shared sense of what the process is, irrespective of how donors operate in terms of decision making on financing – If there was a systematic approach to [considering] at what point you get Government sign-off. Because I think a lot of donors kind of make decisions, as part of big central funds, of what NGOs to fund. And then, we kind of tackle getting Government buy-in at a later stage. So, if there were kind of clear rules about what, at what point Government sign-off has to happen, what that Government sign-off is based on, what it looks like. Then, that would kind of expedite the process of coordinating off-budget financing”.

As well as funding for education programs, suggestions for changes related to the funding for MoE staffing and Technical Assistants was discussed by the stakeholders consulted during this study.

As one donor put it, “So, I think having a functioning coordination mechanism using the committees will mean that the committees will have *Tashkiel* staff within it that will go to Departments and get a sense of what the progress is. And unless we show them how it would work, these side [discussions]... kind of doing a lot of things out[side] of the coordination system... [that] will continue to happen”.

The development of the NTA [national salary scale] was seen by some stakeholders as a positive development in regards to coordination and capacity-building⁴ in that it replaced differential salaries. As one donor representative said, “Like NTA, before NTA you might remember that everybody had their own salary scales and they were providing for their own Technical Assistant. And the worst part of the scenario starts from there because somebody was paying ten times to others and that created a huge problem in each sector. NTA is better compared to that time”.

Continuity

The challenge of donor and multilateral representatives lacking knowledge and experience of the Afghan education sector – due, at least in part, to the high turnover of expatriate staff and relatively short duration of contracts – is not easily addressed. A representative of MoE suggested that donor partners “...should extend the duration of their employees’ contracts,” but this seems unlikely given the current political and security situation context. MoE representatives also suggested that donors needed to improve their systems of handover from departing staff to new staff, and to improve the way they handle and share their reports and other documentation.

Resource mobilization

⁴ The NTA is not specific to education as it covers all sectors of Government.

On the topic of influence and leverage over resource mobilization, some participants in this study zeroed-in on quality. An international representative from an INGO commented, “We should work on promoting quality. It comes back to quality again and again because we can encourage and convince people to send their children to school when they see it’s increasing; by ensuring that schools are properly constructed, that the books the children use are quality textbooks; when [parents] see the change, they will be convinced to send their children for education.”

Another donor’s representative, an Afghan, commented, “We do reviews and consult on with the Ministry before accepting any proposals. Based on the need, and the quality of the proposal. We check whether we have the resources to implement or not, in close coordination with the Afghanistan Government. We need to see quality before we dedicate resources to any proposal, both by evaluations done here in country, and also back in [the capitol of the donor country]... Ultimately, our priorities are in line with the National Priority Program.”

When asked directly about solutions, and how to encourage better resource mobilization for MoE, an INGO representative responded, “I think we need a system, rather than a person. The strengthening of the systems would lead to better resource mobilization.”

Access to information

A number of stakeholders consulted in the course of conducting this study suggested that improvements in access to relevant information, including, reports, needs analyses, EMIS data, policies, program and project evaluations, was needed to strengthen coordination and the education sector in general.

One example given was the MoE website which could be more regularly updated with relevant information. A representative from MoE also suggested that there was a need to develop better communication between MoE and school communities, as many school communities are often unaware of policy changes and MoE is likewise unaware of the challenges and successes experienced in school communities.

Capacity-building and empowerment

There was a sense among stakeholders consulted, that because the TA system was quite ineffective in genuinely building MoE capacity, other capacity-building mechanisms should be explored. It was also noted, by a number of stakeholders, that aside from MoE leadership, there was a cadre of knowledgeable and competent mid-level, MoE staff who would benefit from greater empowerment and development of their leadership capacity. As one donor representative put it, “There are a couple of star mid-level employees who are reliable, smart and competent, and some sort of leadership empowerment or something so those mid-level guys can actually take forward what’s missing from these [existing] structures. There might be some kind of gems hiding behind the screen that can be mobilized, but [they] don’t have the voice because [a senior member of MoE] is so dominant”.

2.7. Specific projects, programs and coordination mechanisms

NESP

The coordination mechanisms that do exist, whatever their inefficiencies and other flaws, are still seen as having value, at least at times. Describing the overall situation, one donor representative commented, “If you compare education with other sectors, like labor, employment and all that, I think the education sector is in a much better position. ...the NESP Steering Committee has been a platform, whether it is effective or not, but it has been a platform where at times, when it needed to be effective, people gave come together and voiced disagreements and came to some kind of agreement”.

Particularly in relation to the process of developing the NESP, a representative of another donor explained, “The structure of setting up the NESP was effective, because as it was divided into the three sections – access, management and education quality – there were Working Groups set up and people gravitated towards where their strengths were”.

Many stakeholders found value in NESP processes and there were a range of suggestions for strengthening these. One donor explained, “The way I had envisioned it, we have a NESP steering committee; that’s between Government, donors, civil society, private sector, everybody else and that’s where you are supposed to talk about bigger strategic issues of interest to everybody... that’s why I recommended that if we have more functional reporting mechanisms for all these committees, then the secretariat for all three committees (access, management and quality) – that one individual can give a five-minute presentation and say ‘These are 150 indicators on the NESP, this is how much of its funded and this is the progress percentage wise and these are the reasons for good percentage of progress and these are the five key problems that we are facing – let’s discuss this’. Then you will have a more meaningful NESP meeting. I’m hoping that if this system works and we have some kind of more quantitative reporting mechanisms, that you kind of don’t go into a lot of details at that level – the committees can go and the Working Groups can discuss a lot of those issues in detail, but you don’t have to bring all those (to NESP steering committee meetings). So you need some kind of a sub-layer where you clear things and bring them at the NESP. But for that to happen, you need to have somebody working in the Ministry, at the agenda setting time, where they kind of sit there and say ‘no presentation and this and this and this’ and you push the committees to come prepared in that sense. Unless you have that, it’s going to be business as usual”.

The need for a more structured approach to NESP processes and related accountability mechanisms was also discussed. As another donor representative stated, “I think reforming the NESP structure and the kind of coordination committee stuff is really important. Because, again, having kind of quantitative indicators will rebalance what those Working Groups need to be doing. So, then, like maybe the role of donors is to be kind of supportive of good policy making, but not...the actual delivery; [that] needs to come from Government – kind of like quality assuring and more that kind of role”.

As touched on previously, the sheer volume of different Working Groups, committees and sub-committees under the NESP – not all of which are functional – create challenges in regards to resource (e.g., human resource) allocation and can sometimes be barriers to effective coordination in the sector. To address this challenge, one donor representative suggested, “Under the NESP Steering Committee, you have the pillar of ‘quality’ and then in that there’s a big Working Group and under that you have sub-committees on Curriculum or whatever. Because of the limited pool of people who work in education, there aren’t nearly enough people to actually be able to attend all those meetings. So, I personally think, that all of those sub-committees that are there, that are basically non-

functioning, or functioning to a very non-inclusive degree – like the curriculum stuff – they should be basically collapsed. So maybe the structure does need work, or maybe the structure needs more resourcing to actually have people to attend these meetings”.

A NESP which is less open and more *directive* was also discussed by some stakeholders as a way forward. As one donor representative explained, “If the NESP could be a bit directive, it could actually say to them [donors] – in the same way that ECW is – telling donors, ‘You can’t all work in Herat or Uruzgan, or whatever’ – in the same way a prioritized or sequenced NESP could be telling donors, ‘You can’t work on Early Childhood Education, you can’t work on higher education; the pressing issue we have is 3.7 million children out of school and our strategy for that is expansion of CBE, or expansion of whatever”.

Education Cannot Wait

The relatively new, Education Cannot Wait (ECW) program is seen by a range of stakeholders as offering positive solutions for coordination challenges, which could be built-on to improve coordination in the sector more widely. One donor representative explained, “...things like ECW create better accountability structures. You’re operating at scale; there’s joint... you know, the Ministry doesn’t solely direct, but the Ministry has a voice in the Steering Committee. These are kind of sub-sectoral areas where we can do things like that. So, ECW is basically like a pooled fund. We’re all putting money into ECW centrally. Some donors, like Sweden, is putting money in country to give an extra push to the Afghanistan program, rather than the central ECW program. And we all have a voice on you know...what the quality...signing-off on proposals; ensuring shared quality and shared standards. I was really skeptical about it at the start, but I think now I can see that it’s a really good thing”. A representative of a coordinating body also recognized the benefits of ECW processes, suggesting, “This [ECW] has an Advisory Board/Steering Committee based in Afghanistan with donors, UNICEF, MoE and 2 NGO reps – ACBAR and ANEC. I think this is a good model and is based on the OCHA Humanitarian Pooled Fund”.

An aspect of ECW that some stakeholders felt could be replicated (in other areas of education coordination) is the ECW approach to distribution of project funding – such as who works where, in what ways, and in what geographic areas of the country. ECW funding recipients are allocated funding in a way that intentionally avoids unnecessary duplication of projects as well as over-representation of projects in particular geographic areas covered in the program, at the expense of other areas.

EQRA

In addition to the NESP, there were some positive comments about EQRA and improvements in EQRA over the EQUIP program that preceded it. As an MoE representative stated, “Internal coordination among donors is much improved compared to the past. EQRA project is a good example of coordination among donors”. A donor representative further explained, “So, on EQRA, I think I’ve seen internal coordination among donors get stronger, and a sense of the World Bank working better with donors... and the World Bank, donors and Government kind of increasingly being on the same page on what are expectations are, on what comes out of EQRA, and how we coordinate on EQRA”.

Conclusion

Efforts to reduce vulnerabilities to corruption in the Afghan education sector are not taking place in a vacuum – rather, these are deeply enmeshed in a dynamic socio-cultural and political system. In this sense, anti-corruption in education needs to be seen as a part of broader development and humanitarian efforts in the country. It follows that the nature and quality of *relationships* between development and humanitarian actors largely determine the efficacy of their endeavors to develop and sustain a safe, inclusive and prosperous Afghanistan. It is these relationships between key education actors that MEC considered in this thematic focus on donor-related issues.

Our discussions with MoE, donors, multilaterals, and (I)NGOs have helped us better understand the wider context in which anti-corruption in education exists. The insights gleaned through our research suggest that, ultimately, reducing vulnerabilities to corruption alongside achieving wider education reform, depends on two key, interconnected factors: 1) improving communication, cooperation and trust between the different education actors; and 2) developing more streamlined and transparent mechanisms for coordination in which there is space and time to go beyond superficial formalities to actually address critical, underlying issues around improving access to and quality of education in Afghanistan. Hearteningly, there is good progress towards these goals in the education sector, particularly in comparison with other social service and governance sectors in Afghanistan. However, as was clear from our discussions with education actors, there is still much work to be done.

3. Status of Recommendations During Fourth Period of Monitoring

3.1. Findings and Analysis

3.1.1. Recommendations which are 100 per cent Achieved

During previous follow-up periods, 16 recommendations were considered by MEC to be fully implemented. In this fourth period of MEC's active follow-up monitoring, 12 additional recommendations were considered as fully implemented (by IARCSC, MoRRD, MoUD, MoF and Development Partners), bringing the total of fully implemented MEC recommendations to 28, detailed as follows:

- **R#1a:** MEC recommended involving local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in active monitoring and oversight of teacher recruitment for their respective Provinces in order to ensure transparency and build trust. Notable progress has been seen with IARCSC in their efforts to shift MoE recruitment processes from being paper- to electronic-based. Recruitment of teachers and MoE 1st and 2nd positions is now, for the most part, electronic. A representative of IARCSC stated, "Wherever there is an opportunity for civil society to monitor the process, they can monitor it." For instance, CSOs monitored the process of the distribution of application forms to applicants and also the shortlisting process (performed in Kabul). The next steps of the recruitment process are electronic and therefore, there is no opportunity for CSOs (or other Provincial monitoring entities) to be engaged in those steps. The test is being administered by MoHE's *Kankor* Department, according to their procedures. MoHE's *Kankor* Department explained that the reason they have not included CSOs, the media, and any other stakeholders in monitoring the process of teacher recruitment is that they believe such stakeholders will interfere in the process. According to MoHE's *Kankor* Department, CSOs and the media do not act professionally – for example, members of the media take photos to support specific candidates in the recruitment process. Although, it is certainly possible for CSOs, media and other stakeholders to be biased and interfere in the process of recruitment, this is not a given, and MEC does not believe this is a credible reason for excluding them – it is MoE's responsibility to find meaningful ways to involve these stakeholders.
- The teacher recruitment exam is given by IARCSC every 2-years. During this year, IARCSC used the results of the previous exam to recruit those with the highest scores. IARCSC has developed a complaints mechanism. Although the IARCSC has suggested that there they are open to CSO monitoring of IARSC activities, a representative of IARCSC explained, "CSOs are not willing to regularly and consistently monitor their (IARCSCs) daily activities and further, CSOs don't have the capacity to do so". However, CSOs are monitoring some IARSC activities in order to ensure the recruitment process is transparent, for example, 12 CSO representatives have observed verbal and written exams.
- MoHE's *Kankor* Committee consists of university professors and representatives from the National Directorate of Security (who do not allow any other officials to access the sites of the testing). *Kankor* Committee members are also responsible for developing test questions. During this process, they are in quarantine and all communication tools (e.g., mobile phones, tablets, laptops) are taken from them. During these days they are confined to the Ministry and not allowed to go outside. The doors

of the rooms where they work are locked. MoHE's *Kankor* Department has claimed that all vulnerabilities to corruption of the process are mitigated through these preventative measures, and based on past experiences, opportunities for corruption in the *Kankor* process are minimal.

- IARCSC administers tests for grades 1 and 2 MoE positions. The exam is administered electronically and video/audio will be recorded during exams to ensure transparency. Exams for grades 3 and 4 positions are conducted with participation of representatives from IARCSC. These grade 3 and 4 exams, conducted by IARCSC, are vulnerable to corruption and IARCSC admits this. The recruitment process for grades 5 and 6, which includes recruitment of teachers, is administered by IARCSC, together with the MoHE's *Kankor* Department via a questionnaire; scoring and the announcement of results are done electronically. Grades 7 and 8 positions (drivers and cleaners) are recruited directly through PEDs.
- During this fourth monitoring period, MEC visited PEDs in Kandahar, Kapisa and Maidan Wardak. All three PEDs are satisfied with the transparency of teacher recruitment, although there were some complaints about technical issues in the process. MEC previously analyzed the *Kankor* process in Balkh, Herat, Jowzjan, Panjshir, Parwan, and Samangan Provinces.
- **R#2a:** The Terms of Reference for School Management *Shuras* (SMSs) has been revised based on MEC's recommendations (the revised SMS ToR and SMS meeting journal are available from MEC). However, the revised ToR has not yet been disseminated to SMSs. During Provincial visits to Herat, Panjshir and Parwan in the 2nd period of monitoring, MEC found that these Provincial SMS Departments were unaware of the changes/revisions related to SMSs. Likewise, the principals of schools (who are the heads of SMSs) that MEC interviewed were also unaware of the revisions of SMS ToRs. MEC will continue its monitoring to make sure that the revised ToR is disseminated to all SMSs and is being used effectively by them.
- In the 1st period of monitoring, MEC interviewed SMS members in Kabul, Laghman and Nangarhar and found their engagement with education to be extensive, as they provided land, books, money and other types of support to their communities' schools. For instance, in the year 1396, SMSs in Kabul City had donated approximately AFN 61 Million to Kabul City schools. In addition, some of Kabul's SMSs have supported repairing schools, building play areas and toilets, and equipping schools with furniture, carpets and other material resources. In Herat, Panjshir and Parwan, SMSs have similarly contributed towards building, repairing and equipping schools. In Uruzgan, the PED reported that SMSs are not active in the Province and exist mostly in name only. According to Uruzgan's PED, the SMSs, where they do exist, create problems and it is challenging for the PED to monitor them.
- In the 2nd period of monitoring, MEC interviewed SMS Members in Herat, Panjshir and Parwan and found that some SMSs are active in schools. For example, alongside donating chairs, solar panels and desks, they had provided technical support to schools. Some SMSs actually conduct monthly meetings and some are SMSs in name only and do not meet, or otherwise operate. Some of the SMSs know about their roles and responsibilities as specified in their ToRs, while others do not. In this period, MEC found there is a different understanding of SMSs' roles in schools in the Provinces. For instance, some school principals told MEC that they do not allow SMSs to monitor their schools. Three schools principals in Herat told MEC that they only expect SMSs to solve schools' problems and encourage the local people to send their children to school. They said that they do not allow SMSs to

directly monitor school affairs. However other principals discussed the monitoring role of SMSs. These differing understandings show that there is still a need to conduct training for SMSs and school managers about SMSs roles and responsibilities, as specified in their ToRs.

- In Panjshir PED, the SMS department explained that roughly half of SMSs in the Province are active and conduct regular meetings. In the past, the World Bank- administered EQUIP project conducted workshops and trainings for SMSs, however since the project ended, no training had been conducted. There are roughly 154 SMSs in Panjshir.
- In the 3rd period of monitoring, MoE explained to MEC that due to a lack of personnel at the District level, it was not possible to prepare and distribute ToRs to SMSs at school community level. According to MoE, the ToR will be revised for the implementation of the new EQRA (the World Bank-administered program which replaces EQUIP) in 2019. During the 3rd monitoring period, MEC visited Balkh, Jowzjan and Samangan Provinces. In these Provinces, similar to what MEC found in other Provinces during the previous two periods of monitoring, SMSs that MEC consulted were unaware of their ToRs and had disparate views regarding SMSs' roles and responsibilities. For some SMSs, the understanding was that they would be limited to supporting the construction, repair, equipping and financing of schools.
- **R#2c:** According to MEC's recommendations, SMS meetings should be documented, and this should include formal minutes. MoE's Directorate of School Management *Shuras* (DSMS) developed 'SMS Meeting Journals', in both *Dari* and *Pashto* languages. For the time being, the SMSs are directed to take minutes of meetings in notebooks and keep these records. In Kandahar, Kapisa and Maidan Wardak, MEC observed that where Council meetings were taking place, minutes were being taken. In the nine aforementioned Provinces that MEC has so far visited during the MoE active follow-up, it was observed that when SMS meetings take place, minutes are recorded.
- **R#3c:** MEC recommended the contracting of local communities to provide unskilled local labor in school construction. Since responsibility of construction of schools shifted from MoE to MRRD, this recommendation goes to MRRD. MoE reported that they will follow up with MRRD and MoUD to apply the same concept in the Citizen Charter National Priority Program (CCNPP) as well, in which the construction of 2,700 schools has been mandated. Reportedly, all school construction projects under MoUD are using local labor, except for the construction of pre-fabricated buildings, which is done by construction companies. MEC studied this issue in Kandahar, Kapisa and Maidan Wardak. In addition, MoE reported that both MoUD and MRRD use local labor for construction.
- **R#5:** Another MEC recommendation focused on expanding the use of electronic methods for candidate examinations in general recruitment (in addition to teacher recruitment.) According to Order 1289 dated 9th July, 2017, the responsibility for recruitment of all civilians has been delegated to IARCSC. IARCSC, as mentioned above, has taken some steps towards e-recruitment for the entire Civil Service of Afghanistan, including MoE.
- The application process for grades 1 and 2 positions are now fully electronic - first, an applicant enters the position code, title of position, name of agency, location of position and *Tazkira* number, then, personal information, education, experience, skills and references are added. Required documents such as copies of *Tazkiras*, education certificates, contracts and Governmental records can be uploaded. After an applicant completes the process and uploads all document, s/he receives a confirmation email. Shortlisting is done by an 'Experts Committee'. Written tests are entirely

electronic and the IARCSC has established an Exam Center within the IARCSC compound. IARCSC plans to expand Exam Centers to four zones during 2019. MEC visited IARCSC's Electronic Exam Center and found that IARCSC has taken security concerns into consideration to prevent corruption. Exam questions have been developed by relevant experts and entered into the system. The Exam Center has two doors guarded by two security staff. Qualitative and quantitative questions are automatically selected by computer in relation to the relevant field, and exams last for 2 hours. After the exam, results will be tabulated as quickly as possible and the top five scorers will be invited to participate in the next step of the recruitment process, which is an interview. The interview process is recorded on video and ultimately the person who attains the higher scores in the exam and interview will occupy the open position, with the second highest scorer considered as a stand-by. They will be later introduced to relevant line agencies for further processing.

- **R#12a:** To improve the alignment of Teacher Training College (TTC) graduates with available teaching positions, the MoE signed an MoU with MoHE to prepare a strategic plan to enhance teachers' qualifications. MoE, together with MoHE, made progress in establishing a functional Coordination Group for fulfilling this MoU. The Coordination Working Group developed an action plan and also a list of teachers (candidates) submitted to universities. According to MoE, as result of an MoU signed by both parties, the capacity and educational level of all existing teachers should be improved to bachelor's level through in-service teacher education. Last year, 2000 teachers and this year 20,000 teachers have been enrolled in in-service teacher education programs to upgrade them to bachelor's level. It must be noted that there is still a great deal of uncertainty around the future of TTCs and the whole teacher education system in Afghanistan.
- **R#20a:** MoE and IARCSC should establish measurable criteria to evaluate these two bodies' performance in teacher recruitment and placement. According to MoE, during the first period of monitoring, a mechanism was created to measure performance in this regard and results would be released after the recruitment process was completed. IARCSC publicly published its Annual Report for the year 1397, a part of which details teacher recruitment. The adoption of an electronic method of teacher recruitment is among the fundamental achievements of IARCSC in the last year. MEC verifies positive progress in teacher recruitment by IARCSC in cooperation with MoE and the *Kankor* Department. MEC has examined the transparency of this process at central and Provincial levels. MEC's findings suggest that the electronification of the process has greatly reduced vulnerabilities to corruption.
- **R#20b:** success stories related to the teacher recruitment process should be shared with education stakeholders. IARCSC published its 1397 Annual Report in which one section addressed teacher recruitment. During this year, IARCSC publicly announced the results of its teacher recruitment on the IARCSC website.
- **R#34:** To apply lessons learned from CBE to MoE schools. MoE is attempting to apply lessons learnt from CBE to Government schools (e.g., more focus on engaging communities in education of children and school support, and recruitment and training of more female teachers), as outlined in the NESP III. During the second monitoring period, MoE reported that an additional 3000 female teachers would be hired to serve in rural areas of the country. The positions were announced in 1396 and 97, but no teacher had been recruited at that time due to a lack of budget. During MEC's third

monitoring period, 2,764 female teachers were recruited to provide improved access to education in rural areas, particularly for girls.

- **R#36:** when needed, Development Partners help MoE in outsourcing. This recommendation is at the stage of completion after several initiatives have been recently undertaken: the responsibility for school construction has been shifted from MoE to MRRD and MoUD; Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been removed from MoE and now operates as a separate entity (TVETA); responsibility for teacher recruitment and recruitment of MoE administrative positions is now under IARCSC; private companies are being contracted to print textbooks; in some areas, responsibility for monitoring education programs has been given to third- party companies; some of the writing of textbooks will involve recruitment of experts outside of MoE. All of this frees up MoE to focus on its core mission of ensuring access to quality education in Afghanistan.
- **R#41a:** To increase the number of auditors inside MoE by 10 per cent within two years. MoE reported in the first monitoring period that they had revised the Internal Audit Department structure and made a request to the Office of the President for 12 new auditors. During the fourth monitoring period, MEC has found that MoE's organizational structure for 1397 has been approved following Presidential Order number 1688, dated 11/Nov/2018. This involves a roughly 10 per cent increase in auditors, bringing the number of MoE auditors from 79 to 88.
- **R#46a:** MEC recommended to MoE to develop and publish its Anti-Corruption Strategy. Subsequently, MoE developed an *Anti-Corruption Action Plan* based partly on the findings of MEC's MVCA. MoE has also established an Anti-Corruption Committee to ensure that the *Anti-Corruption Action Plan* is implemented. In the second period of monitoring, MoE reported that the *Anti-Corruption Action Plan* had been shared with all MoE departments. However, when MEC visited PEDs in Herat, Panjshir and Parwan during the second period of monitoring, none of them were aware of MoE's anti-corruption strategy or *Anti-Corruption Action Plan*. MoE reported that it had shared its anti-corruption strategy to PED Directors through a seminar. MoE has also published its *Anti-Corruption Plan* on its website. Although, technically, MoE has developed and published an *Anti-Corruption Plan*, there is still much work to be done in ensuring this is properly shared and understood within MoE at national level, let alone at sub-national levels in PEDs, DEDs and school communities.
- **R#49:** It was recommended that MoE's Public Relations Directorate provide success stories and information about all of its anti-corruption initiatives, in an accessible form to the public and report on this to MEC. MEC expects MoE to not only release information and make it accessible to the public in Kabul, but PEDs should do the same. In the Provinces MEC visited, this initiative is undertaken. It shared the following links as evidence (and MEC confirms that there are some success stories available at the links provided below).
 - <http://moe.gov.af/>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/Ministry-of-Education-Afghanistan-179138145552114/>
 - https://twitter.com/Education_Af

As mentioned above, during previous monitoring periods, 16 recommendations were fully implemented by IARCSC and MoE, which are detailed in previous monitoring reports. Below is a brief summary of all 16 recommendations that have been fully implemented.

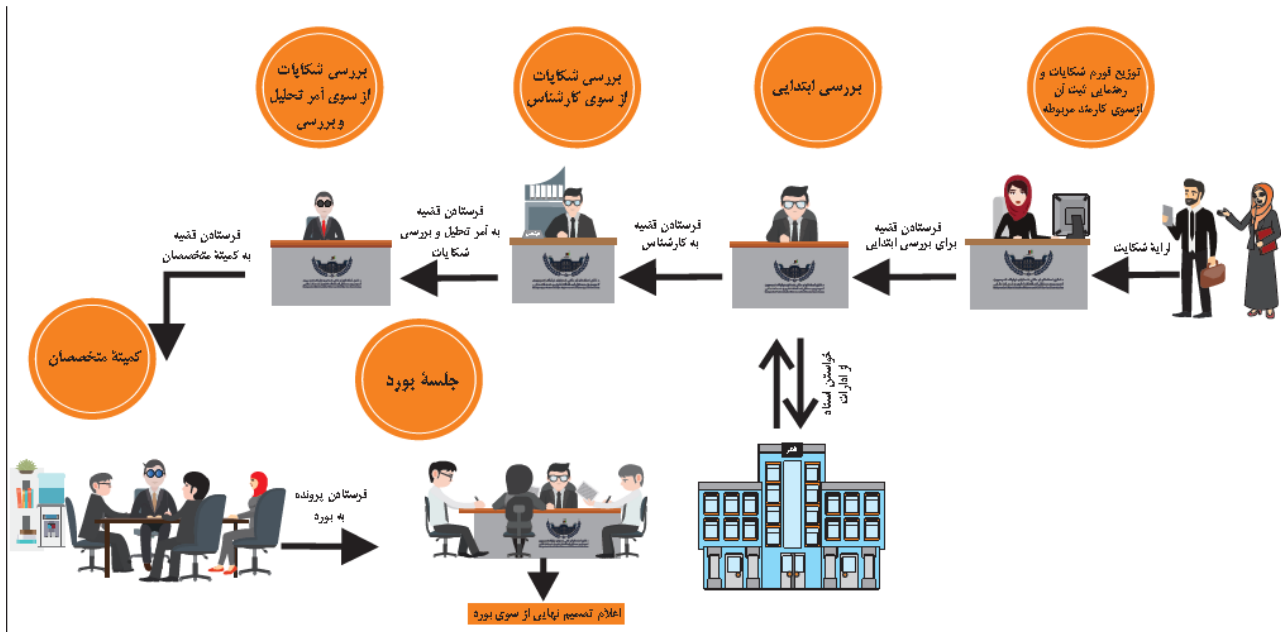
No	Recommendations.	Status
1	R#4: A) MoE should revise the Community-Based Education policy.	Fully Implemented
2	R#6: A) Lists of vacancies should be published on MoE/IARCSC websites.	Fully Implemented
3	R#6: B) Lists of applicants should be published on MoE/IARCSC website.	Fully Implemented
4	R#6: C) Lists of shortlisted candidates should be published on MoE/IARCSC websites.	Fully Implemented
5	R#6: D) Recruitment results should be published on MoE/IARCSC websites.	Fully Implemented
6	R#7: MoE, in consultation with NUG leadership, should develop a proposal outlining the steps and measures for restructuring the MoE and reducing the overall size of the Ministry.	Fully Implemented
7	R#8: To ensure guaranteed female participation, a specific percentage of the posts should be allocated to women candidates.	Fully Implemented
8	R#19: Minister and IARCSC should issue public statements: "The lead objective of MoE is to resolve improper appointments of teachers within three years."	Fully Implemented
9	R#22: The Minister should actively engage at a Cabinet-level to obtain resources and support to implement education sector reforms.	Fully Implemented
10	R#27: A) MoE should amend and revise the current Code of Conduct for all MoE staff to ensure Equity, Integrity, Right to Education, Accountability, Trust (MoPH has such a model in place.)	Fully Implemented
11	R#29: A) Responsibility for the implementation of all rural construction contracts be moved to the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation Development.	Fully Implemented
12	R#29: B) Responsibility for the implementation of all construction contracts in cities be moved to the Ministry of Urban Development.	Fully Implemented
13	R#40: C) Revise data collection guidelines covering all aspects of the data collection process.	Fully Implemented
14	R#40: E) Within 6 months EMIS data should be accessible to anyone visiting the MoE website.	Fully Implemented
15	R#44: A) Establish an Education Quality Committee within 3 months.	Fully Implemented
16	R#59: Teacher recruitment tests should be changed to include multiple-choice questions and long answer written format.	Fully Implemented

3.1.2. Recommendations Which Are At Least 50 per cent Implemented

Out of 113 recommendations for MoE, 28 have been implemented by 50 per cent. A notable improvement can be seen in the implementation of recommendations handed to IARCSC. Details of these recommendations are as follows:

- **R#1f:** IARCSC’s complaints handling mechanism for the education sector should let local civil society organizations (CSOs, councils) engage in monitoring recruitment process. IARCSC has a Complaints Handling Board to provide civil society opportunities to support the education sector. If an applicant or CSO has a complaint, s/he can bring up the case with the Board. The process for addressing complaints is depicted in IARCSC’s Annual Performance Report as following:
 - IARCSC welcomes monitoring by Civil Society Organizations, but since addressing complaints is to be done in a daily basis, IARCSC believes that CSOs cannot monitor the work every day. IARCSC

ساده‌سازی پرونده‌های اجرایی رسیدگی به شکایات



has also suggested that national CSOs do not have the capacity to monitor their daily activities transparently and professionally. There are also questions as to whether CSOs will be willing to carry out such a task. CSOs have monitored performance of IARCSC in some cases, particularly the teachers recruitment process. IARCSC received and addressed 9,110 complaints during 1397.

- **R#3a:** This recommendation relates to building schools with locally available materials. MEC recommended that MoE ensure school construction used locally available materials. As mentioned previously, responsibility for school construction was shifted from MoE to MoUD and MRRD following a Presidential Decree. Currently, MRRD is tasked with school construction in rural areas of the country and MoUD in urban areas. MRRD and MoUD agreed that they would use locally available materials and consider that as their priority. Given the shift in responsibility, MoE has not constructed any schools in 1398, however, repair and maintenance of existing schools is still MoE’s responsibility. School construction projects are currently funded by EQRA and implemented by MRRD and MoUD, with technical support from the NGO Danish Assistance to Afghan Rehabilitation and Technical Training (DAARTT).
- During this fourth monitoring period, MEC’s team spoke with PEDs in Kandahar, Kapisa and Maidan Wardak and verified the use of locally available materials by MoUD and MRRD in school construction. It has been reported that local labor and locally available materials are used in the

schools being constructed by MRRD, and only when necessary, are materials that are not available locally brought in from outside.

- **R#3b:** MEC originally recommended ‘Build schools using relevant aspects of indigenous design, adhering to MoE standards and universal design principles’. MoE’s Infrastructure Service Department (ISD) reported during the 1st period of monitoring that they are using ‘standard designs,’ which are approved by the World Bank, and have been discussed with MRRD and MoUD. Also, MRRD reported that they had developed a ‘unified design’ for building schools in rural areas which was shared with a third-party for their feedback. During this fourth period of monitoring, according to an agreement between MRRD, World Bank and MoE, the NGO DAARTT has been commissioned to develop new school designs which utilize cost-effective materials. MoE’s technical team and MRRD, in cooperation with DAARTT, completed 31 different designs for schools which utilize local materials and address safety concerns related to earthquakes and flooding. MoE reported that based on these plans, 2,700 school construction projects would be completed by MRRD within two years.

Progress in construction of 6,000 Schools

At the beginning of the 1397 educational year, President Ashraf Ghani announced 1397 and 1398 as being two years of “support for education” and pledged the construction of 6,000 schools in Afghanistan. President Ghani stated that \$200 million has been allocated for such school construction.

As part of its monitoring activities in the education sector, MEC aimed to approach MRRD and MoUD with regards to the construction of the 6,000 new schools. The World Bank-administered EQRA program has allocated \$157 million out of the total \$298 million budget for school construction. According to MRRD’s technical team estimation, this amount can only cover the construction of somewhere between 2,647 and 2,700 schools. This would mean that only a maximum of 2,700 schools out of the 6,000 that President Ghani pledged could actually be constructed – and currently there is no budget for the remaining 3,300 schools. Discussions over the allocation of a budget for building the remaining schools has recently begun. MRRD authorities have reported to MEC that “the construction of 6,000 schools within two years is realistic.” MRRD plans to implement the project in cooperation with Community Development Councils (CDCs) through the Citizen’s Charter Program. However, MEC considers the construction of 6,000 new schools in two years to be an unrealistic goal given the current lack of an adequate budget and the considerable amount of time that will be required to decide on the locations of new schools, as well as completing lengthy legal and procurement processes. There has been limited progress on the construction of the 2,700 schools for which there is a budget allocated under EQRA. MRRD reported that there is notable progress in the construction of only 221 out of the proposed 2,700 schools. MRRD claims that it has begun construction of 1,500 schools in the beginning of year 1398. MRRD has also reported that it plans to begin work on construction of the remaining schools (within the budgeted 2,700 schools), in 17 Provinces by end of 2019.

In addition, MoUD has responsibility for school construction projects in urban areas through the national budget. MoUD is planning to construct 322 schools during the years 1396, 1397 and 1398. Out of these 322 schools, 118 are currently under construction. The rest are either at the procurement or survey and design stages. There have been some challenges in regards to the relationship between MoE, MoUD and MoF related to proposals for school construction and in gaining approval for funding.

- **R#3f:** MEC recommended that MoE actively engage community members (representatives of Civil Society Organizations, including CDCs) in monitoring school construction. MoE's Procurement Directorate added a clause to contracts which gives permission for local communities and CSOs to monitor MoE contracts. MoUD reported that the Citizen Charter process has engaged local communities in all aspects of school construction projects (based on MoUD information, there are 36,000 CDCs throughout the country). MoUD implements school construction in rural areas through Citizen Charter *Shuras*. In addition, other local mechanisms such as active CDCs and SMSs monitor school construction. During this fourth monitoring period, MEC noticed that active SMSs were involved in monitoring school construction in the Provinces visited. However, the process of shifting from the National Solidarity Program (NSP) in which CDCs were established, to the new Citizen's Charter Afghanistan Project (CCAP) – which relies on different community organizing and leadership mechanisms – is far from complete, and it is likely that there are gaps in citizen's monitoring and participation in all the relevant aspects of schooling, including school construction.
- **R#4b:** Lessons learned from analysis conducted by MoE on the Community-based Education Policy should be publicly released. MoE stated that lessons learned have been shared with Development Partners during a workshop and in CBE Joint Working Group meetings. The CBE Policy has been finalized and the English version is accessible online. Also, according to MoE, based on lessons learned from implementation of the CBE Policy, a national plan for enrollment of out-of-school children in CBE, in consultation with Development Partners, has been developed; funding will be sought accordingly (e.g. , through the Education Cannot Wait project). In addition, the Communication and Public Awareness Department of MoE publishes information about CBE in print media, on its website and Facebook page, and through interviews.
- **R#9:** Discussions have taken place between MoE and MoHE to establish a Coordination Working Group involving the MoE Curriculum Department, the Teacher Education Department and MoHE to better align school curricula and curricula of teacher education programs for primary and secondary levels. Based on these discussions, an MoU for alignment of curricula of schools, TTCs and Universities has been developed and signed⁵. There is a push towards TTC graduates

⁵ MOE clarified that a Curriculum Development Working Group was formed in 2017, under the Quality Coordination Committee of their NESP Steering Committee. The Working Group consists of relevant MOE Departments (Curriculum, Teacher Education, Academic Supervision, General Education), MoHE, Development Partners (UNESCO, UNICEF), and Civil Society Organizations. *MEC continues to recommend formal participation in this WG should include representatives from TTCs themselves, as they are engaged directly in the training of teachers.*

achieving a Bachelor's Degree, and apparently this will be resolved through the signing of the MoU. Accordingly, recent TTC graduates can now join Teacher Training Universities as junior students after passing a special entry exam. It remains to be seen how this will work in practice, as there is limited institutional capacity in Afghanistan to provide Bachelor's Degrees in teacher education and there are far more recent TTC graduates than available places in university teacher education programs.

The revision and reform of the general education curriculum is still in process and critical questions remain regarding the specific mechanisms of this process, the timeline, and the funding. After completion, the TTC curriculum will also be revised and aligned accordingly.

According to the latest information from MoE, meetings to coordinate the curriculum between the Teacher Education Department and the Curriculum Department have not yet been conducted.

- **R#10:** MEC's MoE MVCA indicated that the current curriculum was too large and complex and the teaching hours were too short, all of which open up vulnerabilities to corruption. MEC recommended a reduction in the size of the curriculum, based on findings from the systematic curriculum review. MoE has now revised (although not finalized) the curriculum framework, including specification that the textbooks for each grade would be reduced, as follows:

1. Textbooks of grades 1-3 *from 6 to 3*.
2. Textbooks of grades 4-6 *from 14 to 6*.
3. Textbooks of grades 7-9 *from 17 to 7*
4. And textbooks of grades 10-12 *from 15 to 12*.

However, it should be noted that there is still a lack of certainty and clarity around the general education curriculum reform process, and importantly, the curriculum framework has not yet been finalized.

- During this fourth monitoring period, as a part of the curriculum reform process, competency-based content has been developed for different subjects including third languages. Pilot subject content has been developed for grades 4, 7 and 10. Textbooks and guidebooks have also been developed for grade 11. However, despite some progress in the development of content and related textbooks for the new curriculum, the problem of the critical lack of textbooks in schools for the current curriculum has not been solved, as will be addressed further in this report. Regardless, contracts for printing of new textbooks have been signed between MoE and private companies.
- MEC originally recommended MoE conduct a functional review about the management and structure of TVET. Subsequently, the new TVET entity (TVETA) was established. This functional review of TVETA was then undertaken with World Bank's support. TVETA has reported that the functional review conducted by World Bank-contracted consultants has been completed and that the new organizational structure of TVETA is based on this review, and has been approved by IARCSC. When evidence for this claim is shared with MEC, this recommendation will be classified as fully implemented. MEC has not yet received a copy of functional review of the new *Tashkiel*.

- **R12f:** MoE has reported that although a teacher accreditation system (TCAP –Teacher Certification and Accreditation Project) has been developed with the support of Canada, there is no budget to implement this beyond the pilot phase. The system was piloted in Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) in Bamyan, Kabul, and Nangarhar. At present, accreditation of teachers is still pending due to the lack of budget; MoE is exploring solutions to implement this system.
- **R12c:** MEC recommended an extension of the scope and duration of teacher training courses to achieve an equivalent status to a Bachelor Degree (Diploma). MoE, in the month of *Dalw* 1396/January 2018, signed an MoU with MoHE to provide opportunities for teachers to upgrade their education level to Bachelor’s Degree level and shift pre-service teacher education from TTCs to universities. Implementation of this MoU requires funds, which have not been added into 1397’s national budget. MoE and MoHE have prepared the list of teachers who need to improve their education. Promotion or retention of teachers is not finalized yet. Both ministries discussed the subject in different meetings and ideas were developed, but the final decision shall be made by the President. MoE says that they are looking forward to the President’s decision. According to the joint plan of MoE, MoHE, MoF and Presidential Decree, TTCs no longer recruits students in pre-service programs and are focused more on in-service teacher education. However, there is still (and has been for two years) a great deal of uncertainty and confusion within MoE, TED and in Teacher Training Colleges about the current state and future of teacher education in Afghanistan.
- **R#12d:** This recommendation called for extending practical teaching experience in classrooms as a component of teacher education programs in all TTCs. According to MoE, the number of credits for practical teaching have been increased from 6 to 10 to provide more opportunities for practical school/classroom experience for pre-service teacher education students and for practicing teachers through in-service teacher education. According to MoE, practical teaching has begun for TTC student’s 2nd semester and related training materials have been developed. In addition, another MoU was signed with MoHE regarding the provision of job opportunities for TTC graduates. MoHE is responsible for preparing the guidelines for practical teaching for the Bachelor’s level. However, given the uncertainty around the future of TTCs (and teacher education in general, as noted in the point above), it is unclear to what extent innovations in practical teaching are actually being implemented in TTCs – MEC will follow up on this in future monitoring reports.
- **R#13:** MEC recommended that MoE conduct a review of the management and structure of Adult Literacy Programs. MoE was also recommended to conduct an examination of options to expand monitoring of literacy courses. During this fourth monitoring period, MoE and IARCSC made an MoU with regards to conducting an organizational review and establishment of Human Resource Information Management Unit. In addition, as indicated in previous monitoring reports, the Deputy Ministry for Literacy has taken some basic measures to review and reform its structure. During this fourth monitoring period, MEC verified that the Deputy Ministry for Literacy had the following achievements:
 1. Continued activities to reform the *Tashkiel* of the Deputy Ministry for Literacy and share it with MoE’s *Tashkiel* Department.

2. Developed a draft for reform in adult education and shared it with the National Literacy Committee.
 3. Conducted direct observations in 12 Provinces (Baghlan, Balkh, Herat, Kabul, Kapisa, Laghman, Logar, Maidan Wardak, Nangarhar, Panjshir, Parwan, and Samangan) in which 2,897 literacy courses have been monitored by DEDs. Also, members of the Deputy Ministry for Literacy observed 153 courses in the abovementioned Provinces.
 4. Conducted direct observation of 18 PDs in Kabul.
 5. Conducted direct observations through SALA Mobile Applications in five Provinces: Farah, Kabul, Logar, Panjshir and Parwan.
- **R#14:** In order to develop flexible Adult Literacy Programs for women, three specific actions have been taken so far:
 1. First, an agreement has now been signed with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA) to establish special literacy courses for women. A coordination committee with MoWA was established to apply terms of the agreement. In order to monitor progress in the implementation of literacy courses, this committee conducts meetings. The implementation procedure and operational plan has been prepared and shared with the Provinces and eight coordination meetings were held to improve the implementation of the Program.
 2. Second, the MoE’s Deputy Ministry for Literacy signed another MoU with the Ministry [previously covering each of] Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD) to establish literacy courses for women in its ‘Economic Empowerment of Women’ program. A proposal had been prepared and sent to the Ministry now covering Labor and Social Affairs for approving the budget and then followed up by ‘letter No 135’ dated 1397/3/9.
 3. Third, an agreement has been signed with the MoF to include women’s literacy education in the Citizen’s Charter Program. During this fourth monitoring period, the Deputy Ministry for Literacy reported that it had two meetings with Development Partners and MRRD in relation to “inclusion of literacy programs in the Citizen’s Charter program,” the development of a work plan, and sharing of a new model of a practical approach to literacy has been developed. In addition, the “inclusion of literacy programs in the Citizen’s Charter program” was approved by the National Literacy Committee and shared with MoF and MRRD to finalize the budget. The full implementation of the MoU will require more time. MEC verifies the existence of literacy courses in Kandahar, Kapisa and Maidan Wardak Provinces.
 - Literacy courses are classified into three categories, in terms of finance: 1) the courses funded and implemented through the State budget (Deputy Ministry for Literacy); 2) the courses funded by Development Partners and implemented by NGOs/INGOs; and, 3) courses established within communities by volunteers (which make a small proportion of the total). Comparing three Provinces, MEC learned that literacy courses implemented by NGOs/INGOs tend to be the most successful of the three categories, due to the following reasons: 1) courses conducted by NGOs/INGOs provide more facilities and incentives; 2) most of these courses are longer than the other courses, allowing teachers to cover more aspects of literacy; 3) these courses can be conducted when and where most needed because their *Tashkiel* is more flexible than the State-funded literacy courses. In State-funded courses, the *Tashkiel* is official, and a literacy teacher can only conduct a class in her/his area of residency. Accordingly, authorities in the Deputy Ministry

for Literacy are proposing to shift the status of literacy teachers in the *Tashkiel* from “official” to “unofficial” so that teachers can conduct courses where/when needed. There are notable reasons for this: first, contract-based teachers are recruited where needed and as result duplication is prevented; second, official teachers get paid 12 months of the year (despite teaching only 9 months) while a contract-based teacher is paid only for the 9 months they teach; third, an official teacher can only conduct a course in one area, while unofficial teachers do not have such limitations.

- **R#17:** MEC recommended that MoE should digitalize the issuance of 12th grade Diplomas. In order to digitalize the process, MoE developed a procedure, a format, and revised the process, as well as developing related software. The Kabul City Education Department has now 100 per cent digitized the process. In addition, MoE has digitized graduation Certificate issuance in Balkh, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Khost, Kunar, Laghman, Maidan Wardak, Nangahar, and Paktia Provinces and for graduates from Pakistan and Tajikistan. Also, results of graduates in the years 1396 and 1397 from 10 Provinces have been entered into the electronic system. Graduation Certificates were sent to graduates from Kunar and Laghman Provinces and from Pakistan and Tajikistan. According to the Results and Graduation Department, all staff working on the new system are contract-based or temporary employees and permanent staff are unable to operate this system. According to the Results and Graduation Department, they have between 800 to 1,000 clients making different requests daily, which are addressed by only 15 employees.
- MoE has begun developing an online system to issue graduation Certificates. If this system is implemented, applicants will be able to register online to receive their graduation Certificates which should reduce the bureaucracy involved in the current system and mitigate related vulnerability to corruption. In the online system applicants should be able to electronically send required documents and information and pay the certification fee to a bank or through telecom services, with no need to pay directly to MoE’s Results and Certificates Department (replacing the current cash-based process, which is highly vulnerable to corruption). Currently, the issuance of a Certificate takes at least one week, and in Kapisa and Maidan Wardak Provinces, where MEC visited PEDs, the issuance of Certificates is still paper-based and not yet digitized.
- **R#18:** MoE was asked to establish a system with integrity and transparency to conduct placement tests for returnees who claim to have studied in schools in other countries. MEC has reviewed the Guidelines/procedures that MoE developed in this regard. This document is ready for MoE’s approval. According to MoE’s report, a committee of 23 people has been established following a Presidential Decree to review documents related to Islamic Studies as well as to assess the education level of returnees. The draft procedure for such assessment has been sent to MoE’s Academic Council for review.
- **R#21a:** MEC recommended the establishment of a High Level Oversight Committee to oversee, monitor and press for reforms in the education sector. MoE subsequently established a Technical Committee on Reform, which produced a *National Education Reform Paper*, and developed a related set of Guidelines on restructuring the Ministry. IARCSC, in cooperation with an MoE Technical Committee, is in the process of conducting a functional review – and revising the structure of MoE accordingly. The Technical Committee, which according to MoE is conducting regular meetings, is reported to consist of civil society representatives and other relevant

stakeholders. MEC has requested MoE to invite MEC representatives to participate in the High Oversight Committee as an observer, but this has not yet happened.

- **R#21b:** MEC has further recommended that the High Level Oversight Committee include MoE leadership, DPs, CSOs, and other stakeholders as members. MoE reported that membership of the High Level Oversight Committee currently consists of MoE leadership, IARCSC and other Departments of MoE. But MEC cannot verify such a structure exists as it has not yet been invited to participate in relevant meetings. So far, MEC has not received the ToR to determine whether or not related recommendations have been implemented.
- **R#21c:** The High Level Oversight Committee coordinates and monitors reforms across the Ministry. In R#21a, it was pointed out that MoE has established a technical committee for reforms, developed a *National Reform Plan* and prepared Guidelines to revise MoE's structure. MEC continues to press MoE on being invited to attend Committee meetings as an observer.
- **R#25:** In relation to systematically addressing complaints related to staff recruitment and appointment, an official system for addressing complaints has been introduced by IARCSC, and is intended to be implemented in all aspects of the Civil Service, including MoE. It should be noted that the complaints addressing mechanism is not only for recruitment. 70 per cent of civil personnel in Afghanistan are MoE staff and therefore a large and comprehensive mechanism for addressing complaints is needed. In an interview with MEC during the third monitoring period, MoE leadership reported that they use seven different methods to address complaints, as follows:
 - Using a 'Complaints Box' in MoE.
 - Directors of MoE Directorates allocating every Monday afternoon to hear and address complaints from the public.
 - Allocating one day per week to address complains through Ma'arif TV.
 - Assigning a focal point to respond to public complaints.
 - Providing a phone number for the public to call-in and submit their complaints⁶.
 - Receiving complaints through Facebook and other forms of social media.
 - Facilitating access to MoE leadership for MoE personnel.
- As stated above, various Provincial Directorates and Departments have noted the existence of different mechanisms for addressing complaints. For example, a representative from Herat PED told MEC that they receive complaints through letters and phone calls. Another Department within the same Directorate pointed out a different mechanism in which they have assigned a focal point to address complaints. Some PEDs reported that they had installed a 'Complaints Box.' The District Education Department (DED) in Injil district, Herat Province, stated that they do not have a proper system for soliciting and addressing complaints, however on their Facebook page, the public is informed that they can express complaints to the DED via phone calls. MEC's Provincial level follow-up research has found that most teachers, students and parents are

⁶ MoE has plans to create a Call Center to address complaints; Afghanistan Telecommunications Regulatory Authority has promised to assist in this regard.

entirely unaware of any mechanisms for soliciting and addressing complaints in regards to education. Some MoE authorities seem to view Internal Audit as a mechanism for addressing complaints, but this would seemingly not be in line with the ToR for education Directorates which specifies that Internal Audit should be mainly focused on financial transparency and identification of illegality. Although MoE has been mandated to clearly define its mechanisms for soliciting and addressing complaints and to implement related processes at the Provincial level, MEC's research has found that such systems still operate, for the most part, on a superficial level, if at all.

- **R#33:** MEC recommended that Development Partners (DPs) expand the Capacity Building Activity (CBA) initiative. As noted by MoE, the need for capacity development is highlighted in NESP III. DPs were requested, through NESP III Steering Committee meetings, to support capacity development. Donors have expanded development plans. MoE reported that an MoU has been signed between SIDA and UNESCO for capacity development of MoE in planning and monitoring, literacy, curriculum and teacher education at national and sub-national levels. The CBA initiative has been expanded and now includes training for staff in the areas of planning, procurement, EMIS, HR and finance, as well as systems development. During this fourth monitoring period, MoE carried out a needs assessment to expand capacity-building programs. Also during this fourth monitoring period, MoE began new capacity-building projects funded by Sweden, Switzerland, UNESCO and UNICEF on curriculum development, literacy, planning and education monitoring. In addition, international experts were recruited to contribute in capacity-building of staff at national and Provincial levels. As noted previously, capacity-building for teachers is included in the EQRA program. Through Change Program (the replacement for the CBR Program), contracts of Directors at central and Provincial levels are extended to take up responsibilities in capacity-building. Also, CBA, funded by USAID since last year, worked to develop capacity in relevant directorates of MoE (Internal Audit Department, IMIS, Human Resources and Finance). Despite efforts at capacity- building in MoE, a recent UNESCO⁷ commissioned (on behalf of the SIDA-supported BESAF project) assessment of capacity-building in MoE and MoHE found many gaps and an overall lack of efficacy in existing capacity-building initiatives – in particular in regards to the use of Technical Assistants (TAs). MEC believes that in the absence of a comprehensive, systematic and realistically implementable professional development plan for the entire MoE, capacity- building initiatives will remain superficial, *ad-hoc*, vulnerable to corruption, and largely ineffective.
- **R#39a:** MEC recommended that MoE support community members (CSO representatives and *Shuras*) in actively monitoring school construction. Since responsibility for school construction has been shifted from MoE to MRRD and MoUD, this recommendation relates to both Ministries. Through the Citizen's Charter Project, MRRD engaged local communities in all aspects of projects (according to MRRD, there 36,000 CDCs around the country). Now CDCs implement their own construction projects through Citizen Charter and are engaged in monitoring the projects. In

⁷ UNESCO (2019). Draft – UNESCO/BESAF Capacity Needs Assessment Report – May 2019.

addition, SMSs monitor projects as well, although they lack technical capacity to do so. During MEC's Provincial visits, SMSs were seen to be monitoring school construction projects.

- **R#40b:** MEC recommended that MoE consolidate/collate MoE's EMIS, Human Resources Management Information System, and Payroll databases within one year. MoE reported that consolidation of EMIS, HRMIS and Payroll system is now completed. Data from Parwan has been entered into the system as a pilot, and data entry for other Provinces is ongoing. MEC will visit relevant Departments to verify this claim.
- **R#40d:** in order to improve the quality and validity of information for the MoE's Education Information Management System (EMIS), MEC proposed training for all data collectors in data collection, documentation of information and reporting skills. In order to improve data collection and develop capacity of EMIS staff, MoE reported that they trained all EMIS staff in 34 Provinces in six types of research and determined key indicators for data collection so that they can regularly and consistently clean and sort EMIS data. MEC also recommends that MoE train data collection staff at school level, particularly school management. MoE reported that it plans to provide training for heads of DEDs and schools on how to fill-out data collection forms based on the new system. There were many problems with the previous system and the new system was developed to address and mitigate such issues.
- During the third monitoring period, MEC interviewed representatives from PEDs in Balkh, Jowzjan and Samangan Provinces, and during this fourth period, interviewed authorities from PEDs in Kandahar, Kapisa and Maidan Wardak. According to these interviews, information forms filled-out by school managers in these Provinces still contain many errors.
- **R#47:** MoE should report quarterly on the progress of the implementation of its Anti-Corruption Strategy. During 1397, MoE provided three reports to the High Council for Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption about the implementation of its Anti-Corruption Strategy and other reforms. This is a positive step towards addressing MEC's recommendation, however MEC also expects MoE to release such reports to the public, online.
- **R#48:** MEC recommended that MoE release all information, including documents and reports, according to the Access to Information Law, and develop a mechanism to provide access for the public to information, on request. During MEC's first monitoring period, MoE reported that it worked on a system to enable it to provide access to information, when requested. However, during MEC's second monitoring period, nothing further was reported about this system. MoE's Press Directorate told MEC that they share information daily with the media. They also said that they share information through the following links:
 - link: <http://moe.gov.af>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/ministry-of-education-afghanistan-179138145552114>
 - http://twitter.com/education_af

Although this is appreciated, MEC expects MoE to go beyond only sharing information with journalists. MEC expects MoE to *publicly release* information, as mandated in the Access to Information Law. Under this recommendation, MoE recently established a committee led by MoE leadership to regularly conduct meetings with the decisions of the committee to be published, as needed. Also, MoE publishes information regarding its achievements and progress through Ma'arif Magazine.

- **R#51:** To establish a formal relationship with AGO. According to Article 134 of the Afghan Constitution, all criminal cases, should be referred to the AGO. MoE is in contact with the AGO via official correspondence. MoE's Internal Audit Department will report to MEC at each monitoring period with regards to cases referred to the AGO showing improvement in coordination and communication. Also, focal points will be introduced by Internal Audit Department and AGO.
- **R#54:** MoF should release the MoE budget and details of its related expenditures to the public. MoE reported that MoF publishes a general budget document every year on the Budget General Directorate website. MoF also produces a quarterly report on Government budgetary units, which is sent to the Afghan Cabinet and National Assembly – a copy of this report is also published on the General Directorate's website. MEC acknowledges that the national budget, which includes MoE's budget, was published online, but this does not contain details of MoE's budget, disaggregated by Province and District. MEC expects MoE to publish the budget (and actual costs, in detail) and disaggregated by Province and District.

3.1.3. Recommendations Implemented to 25 per cent

According to information MEC received from relevant entities, out of 113 recommendations, only 21 recommendations were implemented by 25 per cent. During the fourth monitoring period, there has been notable progress in this category. The details of recommendations achieved to 25 per cent are as follows:

- **R#1b:** MEC recommended that MoE implement active monitoring of the teacher recruitment process by Civil Society Organizations, initially, as a pilot project. As the recruitment process and responsibilities have been shifted to IARCSC, this recommendation has likewise shifted from MoE to IARCSC. IARCSC has stated that they have provided opportunities for CSO monitoring, where possible. For instance, CSOs observed the process of distribution of teacher recruitment application forms. During this fourth monitoring period, MEC observed that IARCSC invited CSOs to monitor the testing for DED positions.
- **R#3d:** MEC recommended implementation of the National Procurement Law, and anti-corruption policies and procedures on procurement and construction. Although such responsibilities have shifted to MoUD and MRRD, MoE showed MEC that they have a detailed section on procurement reform in their recently finalized *Reform Plan*. MoE leadership has assigned a support team to the Procurement Department to speed up the process and ensure transparency in all projects. In order to address complaints and prevent corruption in the Procurement Department, they established a special committee. Procurement tenders and announcements will be published online on the National Procurement Authority's website, MoE's website, through Ma'arif TV, and Afghan Elanat so that interested parties can access all documents electronically. According to the Procurement Law, all relevant documents will be used in to guide the procurement process including standard forms developed by the National Procurement Authority; additionally, a database has been developed to collect thorough and accurate data. MRRD and MoUD have taken into account anti-corruption mechanisms in implementation of school construction projects.
- **R#12b:** To coordinate strategic plans between MoE and MoHE to achieve recommendations in *The Competency Framework for Teachers in Afghanistan*, MoE has made progress in establishing

functional coordination between the two Ministries. MoE stated they have signed a MoU with MoHE for alignment of Strategic Plans. There are currently some capacity-building programs for teachers, including in-service 'upgrading' programs in some TTCs for underqualified teachers to achieve Diplomas. However, as noted previously, MoE lacks a comprehensive and systematic plan for professional development for teachers and other MoE staff. MEC will provide more details of the implementation of the MoU between MoE and MoHE in following reports.

- **R#15:** During the MVCA, MEC found that 53 per cent of teachers' salaries were paid through banks and by other electronic means, and 47 per cent in cash. MEC recommended that MoE expand the payment of salaries by electronic means. Since that time the use of electronic payment for teachers' salaries has increased to 62 per cent which counts as 25 per cent progress towards the goal of 100 per cent electronic payments. MoE plans to expand the electronic payment system in cooperation with MoF and MoCT; in order to achieve the remaining 38 per cent, will utilize a combination of payments:
 - through mobile phones (Mobile Money)
 - through mobile bank teams
- Payments of teachers' salaries using Mobile Money has begun in Parwan, Kandahar, Nangarhar and Parwan Provinces and roughly 17,200 employees are expected to receive their salaries through Mobile Money by end of year 1397. Also, salary payments through mobile bank teams have begun in Badghis and Bamyán Provinces and roughly 3,400 bank accounts have been opened with Azizi Bank and 3,276 employees are expected to receive their salaries through mobile bank teams in Bamyán by end of year 1397.
- During this fourth monitoring period, MEC verified some activity towards increasing electronic salary payments taken by the PED in Kandahar. The process of Mobile Money begins by a team going to the field and getting a list of employees and teachers from PED/DED or other relevant authorities. Then, using biometric system, they register employees and teachers after checking their official documents. Those whose document match and are consistent will be registered. Their registration numbers will then be shared with *Asan Khedmat* (a 'one-stop shop') and will be double-checked with MoE/PEDs. Thus, data will be entered into the Mobile Money system after MoE and MoCT ensure the accuracy of data. Based on this, *Mustofiat* (MoF Provincial Directorate) will pay salaries to a telecommunications company (AWCC) and then they pass the salaries to teachers through their mobile teams.
- Of course, payment through Mobile Money has its own challenges. During visits to Kandahar, MEC learned that senior staff in 10 schools in Boldak District were against salary payments being made through Mobile Money; this is related to absenteeism concerns. Despite the challenges, payments through Mobile Money have several advantages: 1) all teachers will be registered biometrically, which will reduce the risk of "ghost teachers"; 2) only teachers present at schools will be paid; 3) Mobile Money will work towards better transparency; 4) Mobile Money mobile teams goes to schools and pay teachers, saving teachers from needing to leave their schools to collect their salaries.
- In Maidan Wardak, salaries are paid into bank accounts, but this presents some challenges. Due to a lack of bank branches in rural parts of the Province, teachers are forced to leave their schools/classes to travel to the Provincial center to access their salaries. As it seems unlikely that new bank branches will be opened in rural parts of the Province, it is recommended that teachers be paid instead

through the Mobile Money system so they can receive their salaries in their school communities. Maidan Wardak PED reported that they have a plan to make all salary payments electronic this year.

- **R#16:** MEC recommended that MoE implement teacher professional development initiatives, as outlined in NESP III. Generally, there are two types of capacity-building trainings for teachers: teaching methodology seminars and subject-based seminars; the former is for all teachers, but the latter is more specialized training for subject teachers (e.g., in mathematics.) Both long-term and short-term training programs are being implemented to develop teachers' professional capacity, with 2,297 teachers trained in in-service programs (25 per cent female). Additionally, 18,250 teachers participated in short-term trainings (38 per cent female). As mentioned earlier, MoE plans to train over 20,000 teachers in this year through Teachers Training Colleges. MEC has verified, during its Provincial visits, the existence of some programs aimed to improve teachers' capacities at the Provincial level, but these programs are limited and fall far short of being enough either in quantity, duration or quality to meet the real needs for teacher capacity- building in Afghanistan. As mentioned previously, the MoE lacks a comprehensive and systematic professional development plan for teachers and other MoE staff.
- **R#26:** MEC recommended that MoE ensure that a transparent system of accountability (punishments and rewards) is in place and functional for MoE staff. Although a system of punishments and rewards is technically in place in MoE, based on the Afghan Education Law and Civil Servants Law, this has not been consistently implemented. IARCSC is also responsible for developing procedures in compliance with the Civil Servants Law. The MoE HR Department's Code of Conduct Unit is responsible for monitoring the implementation of legal documents. Reports from this Code of Conduct Unit show that during 1397: 100 employees received warning letters; 26 faced salary reductions; 14 were transferred; 13,200 were appreciated; 10 received service medals; and 27 received commendations. MEC will continue to follow and report on the implementation of this recommendation.
- **R#28a:** Donor-funded contracts, including construction, should be regularly monitored by both Development Partners and MoE, following the standardized guidance in the World Bank's *'Best Practices of Contract Procurement'*. Currently, the responsibility of monitoring implementation of construction projects has shifted from MoE to MRRD and MoUD, along with the responsibility for monitoring such projects. School construction under EQRA, which began during MEC's third monitoring period, will be monitored by a third party.

EQRA is a World Bank-administered education program consisting of pooled funds from a variety of donors. EQRA's total budget is USD 298 million. The Project Development Objective (PDO) is "To increase equitable access to primary and secondary education, particularly for girls, in selected lagging Provinces, and to improve learning conditions in Afghanistan". EQRA has four main components as listed below:

- Increasing equitable access to basic education especially for girls in selected lagging Provinces
 - Improving learning conditions
 - Strengthening education sector planning capacity and transparency
 - Technical aid and capacity-building
- Construction projects, implemented by MoE, MRRD or MoUD, are monitored by different mechanisms. MRRD, in implementing the Citizen's Charter Program, monitors construction projects

- through CDCs and to some extent through SMSs. Provincial Departments of these three Ministries will also be engaged in monitoring the projects. In some cases, CSOs and members of Provincial Councils will monitor construction projects, although their capacity to do so is low according to MoE.
- **R#28b:** MEC recommended MoE that MoF and MoE should monitor the contracts and projects funded by MoF, such as school construction projects, by following the “World Bank Standard Procurement Procedure”. Currently, the monitoring of school construction projects is done by several entities, while responsibility for school construction has been shifted from MoE to other Ministries. MRRD monitors school construction projects through CDCs. MoUD has its own monitoring mechanisms. PEDs, and to some extent, Provincial Departments of the Ministry of Economy monitor these projects. Heads of schools and members of SMSs also monitor school construction in some cases, although they are unable to technically engage in projects.
 - **R#31a:** MEC recommended that PEDs publicly share Provincial budgets and actual expenditures for each Province. In other words, they should report their budgets and expenditures to the Afghan public. According to MoE, this objective can be met in different ways: First, MoF can publicly publish a general budget every year after it is approved by the General Budget. Second, recently some MoE Departments have taken the initiative to report directly to the Afghan public. Third, MoE has started results-based budgeting which, from MoE’s perspective, will provide information regarding budgets and expenditures of PEDs and DEDs. For the year 1398, it is planned that PED plans and budgets are shared publicly as a pilot. It is important to note that publishing budgets or any other information online is not enough to ensure access by the Afghan public. People with internet access still need to be made aware that such information is publicly available online and where to access it. Further, a large percentage of the Afghan public does not have internet access, or access to any information from MoE by other means.
 - **R#32a:** As noted previously, a few of MEC’s recommendations involve Development Partners (DPs). MEC recommended that DPs align donor programs around the meritocratic appointment of teachers. The issue had been discussed with DPs through a coordination group meeting (although it should be noted that this meeting mainly involved participation of USAID, with Canada joining towards the end of the meeting; no other DP’s attended). USAID is doing this through the policy level and capacity-building level as they have already included these measures in the EQRA Program. MoE and DPs drafted a costing framework for Community-Based Education (CBE); MoE reported that it along with DPs agreed with the meritocratic appointment of teachers for CBE projects. DPs, particularly USAID and World Bank, support specific projects in this regard, as Change Program and EQRA are funded by these two entities. Change Program is implemented with regards to recruitment processes by IARCSC.
 - **R#32b:** MEC also recommended to DPs to coordinate donor programs related to the meritocratic appointment of teachers. USAID has already focused on coordinating its programs through Working Groups and other mechanisms. Likewise, the World Bank has coordinated its programs through the EQRA Program. MoE reported that DPs have agreed, that based on a developed cost package, the teacher qualifications and salary level for all projects will be coordinated. DPs, particularly USAID and World Bank, fund specific projects in this regard; Change Program and EQRA are funded by these two entities.
 - **R#37a:** MEC recommended DPs support MoE in pursuing organizational structure reform and related anti-corruption reform. DPs, USAID and World Bank in particular, have provided support for

organizational structure and anti-corruption reforms to develop a Reform Plan for the Ministry. MoE's *Comprehensive Reforms Plan* includes plans to reform MoE's organizational structure, as well as anti-corruption efforts. An Anti-Corruption Committee has been established and is being led by MoE's Finance and Administration Deputy. Likewise, IARCSC signed an MoU with DPs to conduct a functional review for MoE. DPs are committed to supporting MoE; USAID is the main donor for MoE, providing support in financial management, recruitment of staff, including teachers, and provision of equipment. USAID's engagement with MoE includes support for the Ministry, including:

- Capacity-building for MoE
- Afghan Child Read (activities to enable Afghan child literacy)
- Afghan Workforce Development Program

Programs by DFID include:

- Girls' Education Challenge
- Community-Based Education
- Capacity-building programs for TTCs
- Early Childhood Development
- Activities which foster literacy development
- Activities which improve access to education
- Teacher Training College Management Information System
- Technical and vocational training institutes
- Education-related activities to promote sustainable development
- Re-structuring the education system

World Bank-supported activities include:

- EQRA
- Activities to improve educational quality

- **R#38:** To improve organizational experience and knowledge sharing between DPs and MoE, MEC recommended DPs to support MoE in recruiting contracted employees for long-term transfer of organizational experience and knowledge. DPs, particularly the Canadian Embassy, have been working with UNICEF in developing an electronic database to improve organizational knowledge and experience-sharing for different aspects of the education sector. This was initiated by UNICEF, but more time is needed to complete this. MoE also reported that DPs have ensured that they would recruit their international employees for longer terms and would consider ensuring longer 'handover' times when staff change. However, in light of ongoing political and security concerns in Afghanistan it seems *highly unlikely* that DPs will extend service periods in Afghanistan for international staff in the near future – indeed these may be reduced.
- **R#40a:** Despite concerns regarding the validity and reliability of school data, MEC recommended that MoE send EMIS staff to 20 per cent of schools two times per year (once at the beginning of new educational year and once at the end) to verify EMIS data. MoE has taken the following measures towards implementation of this recommendation:

- According to MoE, a reliability assessment and verification plan for five per cent of schools has been developed and will be implemented by the Central Statistics Office after data collection is completed for 2018. The MEC Active Follow-Up Team will verify this status in upcoming Monitoring Reports.
- MoE reported that the MoU with the Central Statistics Office had not yet been signed based on which CSOs will provide technical assistance. However, a technical draft to verify reliability of information by CSOs has been developed with the full support of MoE. Also, GPS coordinates for 12,000 schools have been provided by CSOs and 6,000 of these have been mapped, 3,000 are considered suspicious and need to be verified using additional information and the locations of the 3,000 remaining schools has yet to be verified through the existing data and information collection system.
- During the third monitoring period, MoE reported that it assigned staff to address errors on EMIS forms in 33 Provinces, including Kabul, and to collect, clean and verify data from these Provinces. The process of data collection and correction involves comparing schools' completed EMIS forms with data entered into the EMIS system and if there are any errors, the data is checked through a phone call or direct observation by the M&E team. MEC has verified the existence of PED staff in Maidan Wardak to correct and verify information. Authorities in Provinces still complain about errors in filling out EMIS forms due to a lack of training in this area.
- Biometric registration of MoE staff has begun.
- In addition, a mobile system to communicate with school managers and provide data verification has been developed and is in a pilot stage.
- **R#40f:** Regarding an external review of MoE data and MoE control systems, technical assistance is being provided through the USAID CBA project. CBA established a training center for GDHR which has conducted various trainings for the capacity development of employees. Procurement, Payroll, HR, Internal Control, Finance and EMIS data and control systems are being reviewed through technical support from the CBA project. Through this project, information regarding MoE's payment system is being reviewed, and as result, data from seven Provinces regarding HRMIS has been checked (finding a high number of employees who need to be retired). Meanwhile, in order to make records of employees electronic, a 14-member team has been recruited to provide technical assistance, and as result records of 37,000 employees have now been entered into the database. There is a plan to transfer this information to IARCSC's HRMIS. In addition to this technical assistance, one-year English and computer courses are being offered to improve the capacity of MoE employees.
- **R#41e:** MEC recommended DPs to provide technical assistance to MoE's Internal Audit Department (IAD), within one year, based on IAD-DP's assessment of gaps. The assessment of gaps has already been done by MoE and needs and priorities clarified. In this regard, USAID has provided some technical assistance through CBA, as some concepts and legal documents have been revised through this project. In addition, capacity-building programs were conducted through CBA for IAD employees which will continue until 2020. It is expected that implementation of such capacity-building programs will work to support the professionalization of IAD.
- **R#42a:** A ToR has been developed in relation to establishment of High Level Audit Committee. High Level Audit Committee's ToR has been finalized and approved by the Acting Minister of Education. A list of Committee members including Deputies and Heads has been passed to the Acting Minister of Education in a separate proposal. MoE is planning to activate the High Level Audit Committee as soon as possible. MEC cannot verify the establishment and existence of a HLAC.

- **R#42b:** MEC recommended that MoE establish a High Level Audit Committee (R#42a) with its members composed of MoE leadership, MoE IAD, DPs, and other stakeholders. According to MoE, based on the ToR, the Committee consists of at least three and a maximum of five members of MoE leadership. The HLAC is headed by the Acting Minister of Education. Inclusion of DPs and other stakeholders is to be considered based on terms specified in the ToR. During the third quarter of MEC’s monitoring period, MoE reported that representatives of MoF and Supreme Audit Office will participate in HLAC meetings as monitors. MEC does not have access to evidence regarding either the exact members, or the meetings of the HLAC and hence it cannot verify its specific activities. MEC has been requesting for several monitoring periods to be invited to participate in HLAC meetings as an observer, but this has not happened yet.
- **R#45:** To publicly share meta-data on the status of all teacher positions via a database, in detail, within 6 months. IARCSC has signed an MoU with MoE, based on which IARCSC should develop and implement a comprehensive integrated HR management information system (HRMIS) for such sharing of meta-data. This comprehensive, integrated HRMIS has been developed. IARCSC has started registration of employees, including teachers, using a biometric system. Full completion of this recommendation will require additional time.
- **R#50a:** MEC recommended MoE to distribute its Anti-Corruption Plan (ACP) to all 34 PEDs. MoE’s ACP was elaborated in a meeting with participation of all PEDs in Kabul. MEC presented findings of the MoE MVCA to participants. But MoE has not distributed the ACP to PEDs yet. Most of the policies and plans developed by MoE stay in Kabul and MoE’s secondary units in the Provinces are typically not informed. MEC has followed this up in the 12 Provinces visited during monitoring so far, and has confirmed that the PEDs visited have not been informed about the ACP as well as other important policies developed by MoE at the national level. However, PEDs did learn about the existence of an ACP during the previously mentioned meeting in Kabul.
- **R#53:** A lack of adequate numbers of textbooks in schools is a big concern which has contributed to undermining the quality of education in the country. MEC recommended that MoE study options such as ‘market-based solutions’ for textbooks within six months of the publication of the MoE MVCA. In this regard, MoE drafted a procedural manual. During the third period of monitoring, MoE reported that a draft Bill authorizing the printing of textbooks by private businesses was sent to the Academic Council Directorate and Ministry of Justice; this has not been finalized. MoE reports it will be published online after finalization. Through EQRA, MoE receives a specific budget for printing and distribution of textbooks, based on which 49 million textbooks will be printed and distributed. Recently, MoE has authorized local private companies to print textbooks on behalf of MoE. A lack of textbooks is still a main challenge in Kandahar, Kapisa and Maidan Wardak Provinces, which were visited during this fourth monitoring period.

3.1.4. Recommendations in which study and/or work has started

During this fourth monitoring period, 23 recommendations come under the ‘work has begun’ category. The detailed status of each recommendation is explained below:

- **R#2b:** MEC recommended that regular meetings between schools and communities should be conducted with support of school *Shuras*. MoE reported that due to a lack of budget, it could not

recruit staff to follow up on this recommendation. The implementation of the EQRA has begun. After recruiting social mobilizers, this will be followed up. MEC has started following up progress against this recommendation at the Provincial level. There have been some meetings conducted, in Provinces MEC has visited, between local residents and PEDs; for example, PEDs share their annual performance reports with school community members. Such initiatives work to improve relationships between MoE and Afghan communities.

- **R#12f:** In order to prevent teachers' absenteeism, MEC recommended the use of IT in recording teachers' attendance in schools/classrooms. To implement IT solutions for tackling teacher and school staff absenteeism, some basic, preliminary discussions have already happened. An initiative which offers a feasible IT solution for teacher and staff absenteeism will be piloted in one Province and then expanded based on lessons learned. MoE is also seeking a mobile phone application solution for tackling school staff absenteeism. In this regard, a one-day training was conducted on May 9th, 2018 in Kabul for 21 District-based staff from five Provinces (Farah, Kabul, Logar, Panjshir and Parwan). One of the topics covered in this training was mobile monitoring. As mentioned above, currently IARCSC is developing a 'holistic' HRMIS system for the entire Government which will ultimately be used by all Ministries including MoE. Absenteeism of teachers and PED employees is still a concern in Kandahar, Kapisa and Maidan Wardak Provinces, where, reportedly, many PED employees in these Provinces have signed in to work at 9:00AM and signed out again at 11:00AM and some at 12:00PM in the best cases. It should be noted that MEC's visits to these Provinces were conducted after the end of the educational year when schools were not open.
- **R#23a:** MEC recommended that MoE establish 'reform networks' in each Province to coordinate, monitor, and press for sector-wide reforms. MoE reported that reform networks had been established in each of the PEDs – they meet on a monthly and weekly basis. MEC has now visited 12 PEDs and has not found any evidence of the existence of reform networks in these Provinces and none of these PEDs were aware of the establishment of such reform networks. MoE claims that there are reform networks which hold regular meetings at DED and PED levels, but, again, MEC could not verify this claim.
- **R#23b:** Provincial Reform Networks should be composed of Provincial Education Directors, PED Management, DED Management and DPs. MoE claimed that there is a reform network for each PED, and they conduct monthly and weekly meetings. As mentioned previously, MEC has not seen any evidence of the existence of reform network in any of 12 Provinces visited since the beginning of the monitoring process. MEC verifies the claim that there are some reform actions taken by PEDs during last one and a half years, including that 1) 'Open door' policy of PEDs is enacted, 2) Provincial communications have been improved, and 3) PEDs are engaged in active monitoring.
- **R#24a:** MEC recommended that MoE's Parliamentary Affairs Office document any contact and interactions from MPs with the Ministry. The Parliamentary Affairs Office reported that they have been collecting and recording copies of petitions/solicitations to MoE by MPs. For instance, in the month of July (Saratan) 2018, they reportedly recorded 910 applications to MoE by MPs. These applications covered a number of areas including: Building schools, moving teachers and other employees from one school to another, distributions of books, chairs, desks and other equipment to schools, enrollment of students to school, etc. The Parliamentary Affairs Office believes that the abovementioned petitions are in accordance with the law. MEC believes that interference from MPs

in regards to recruitment, transfers and distributions, has no legal justification and therefore constitutes illegal interference. During MEC's visits to Provinces, MEC learned that these PEDs still encounter interference by MPs – although MoE in Kabul seems to consider these interferences as legal. This contradiction is problematic and will be followed up by MEC in subsequent monitoring periods.

- **R#24b:** MEC recommended that MoE's Office of Parliamentary Affairs keep a record of any attempts at illegal interference from MPs. As noted above in the discussion on R#24a, the Parliamentary Affairs Office believes that the contents of petitions to MoE by MPs are in accordance with the law. After the release of MEC's MoE MVCA, MoE sent a letter to PEDs and secondary units in Provinces telling them not to carry out illegal requests by MPs or other non-MoE authorities. However as there is confusion over what is legal and illegal, this issue is still far from resolved.
- **R#30a** In order to build the trust of local communities in the education system, PEDs and DEDs were recommended to organize monthly dialogues with their local communities. It was recommended that participants represent the diversity of their communities (e.g., male and female, varied range of ages, different ethnicities, etc.). Due to lack of budget, this has not happened at the school community level yet. Under the EQRA program, MoE has recruited 21 social mobilizers and related recruitment has begun. This will be followed up after social mobilizers are recruited. MEC has followed this up at the Provincial level. MEC's findings suggest that some SMSs are active and have conducted meetings with community representatives and Elders to address their school-related issues. MEC believes that this shows communities' motivation and interest in improving education and is not something that needs a high level of budget. PEDs and DEDs and school managers can conduct a half-day meeting with no- or minimal- budgetary implications to build trust and engage communities more deeply in education. They can report their progress and listen to communities' issues.
- **R#30b:** Participants in monthly dialogues with local communities should be drawn from diverse members of the community (e.g., male and female, varied range of ages, cross section of groups, etc.). Due to lack of budget, MoE has not managed to implement this recommendation in schools; MEC also followed this up in the Provinces visited during monitoring. MEC's findings show that some SMSs are active and conduct regular meetings with community representatives to address their issues.
- **R#31b:** PEDs should publicly share District spending plans and actual expenditures for each District, each year. MoE reported that they are working with MoF to establish a mechanism based on which the approved budgets for the Provinces are clearly broken down to District levels and shared publicly. Currently budgeting in MoF is centralized which does not allow for the disaggregation of District-level budgeting and expenditure.
- During the third monitoring period, it was reported to MEC that PEDs, after the beginning of the new fiscal year (when the budget is approved at the Provincial level according to the guidelines sent by MoE Kabul), are tasked with breaking down their budgets District-wise and sharing them publicly in consideration of the needs of each District. MoE reported that they plan to consider a breakdown of the budget and expenditures at Provincial and District level by the end of the 1398 fiscal year and to publicize related information on their website, and through local media, social media, and share this directly with COSs and Provincial Councils. For now, MoF has no mechanism to break down

- budgets/expenditures by District. MoE reported that, technically, they can publicly share District-level budgets/expenditures if they have the information.
- **R#31c:** MEC recommended to MoE that PEDs should publicly share (or post it on announcement board) individual school spending plans and actual expenditures for each school, at each school site, each year. MoE reported that they have planned to start a School Grants Program in 17 Provinces under the EQRA program. This will help MoE to rollout similar mechanism for other types of budgets in the future, such as O&M. MoE has developed and finalized the School Grants Program in cooperation with MoF, and the World Bank. As EQRA progresses, bank accounts will be opened for schools. Implementation of this program, should provide useful experience for MoE to decentralize funding to the school community level and should enable MoE to publicly share expenditures and indicators. Meanwhile, MoE's Finance Directorate is working on developing a results-based Reform Action Plan; to do so, data from EMIS is being collected. It will be implemented as pilot by end of fiscal year in PEDs and the budget will be shared with PEDs, DEDs and schools.
 - **R#35a:** To standardize Technical Assistants' (TAs) ToRs to explicitly focus on MoE staff skills development as a task, MoE has drafted a basic template for a ToR and the standardization of related ToRs, was planned to be conducted jointly with related departments. In order to have capacity building of employees as its task, it reviews ToRs of TAs. So far, no progress is made in this regard. MoE considers revisions and standardization of ToRs to be dependent on recruitment of TAs through EQRA.
 - **R#35b:** Conduct a formal assessment to determine if MoE staff acquired technical skills with support from their TAs. MoE reported that a needs assessment in MoE was conducted in cooperation with GIZ and the report will be prepared soon. MEC will follow this in upcoming reports. As mentioned previously, UNESCO recently commissioned an assessment of capacity-building in MoE and MoHE which mostly focused on TAs. The assessment report (still in draft form) noted many gaps in the capacities of MoE staff and the need for much work in this area.
 - **R#35c:** MEC recommended that MoE shift operational responsibilities from TAs to full time MoE staff. MoE reported that these responsibilities will be transferred to full time staff during the EQRA project's implementation period. Implementation of EQRA has only just started. Implementation of this recommendation will be pending until the EQRA recruitment process is completed. This has not been applied to Development Partner contract-based employees recruited by other projects at MoE. Although the HR Department, during the previous monitoring period, reported that based on the needs assessment report and capacity-building plan of HR, operational responsibilities have been shifted from TAs to full time MoE staff, there is no evidence to support this claim.
 - **R#39b:** 100% of school construction sites should be regularly monitored and overseen by the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). According to the World Bank, third-party monitoring is considered in the design of EQRA for school construction. The EQRA program was initiated during MEC's third monitoring period. In addition, construction projects overseen by MoE, MRRD and MoUD are managed through different mechanisms. For example, MRRD monitors the implementation of Citizen's Charter-related school construction projects through CDCs and SMSs, to some extent. Provincial Directorates are also involved in monitoring processes. In some cases, CSOs and Provincial Councils monitor these projects although they have limited capacity to do so.

- **R#41b:** Strengthen internal reporting lines of MoE's Departments with MoE's IAD. In this regard, MoE reported that the Internal Audit Charter, Audit Committee ToR and Internal Audit Guideline development process is ongoing and reportedly will soon be completed by CBA and presented to MoE's Acting Minister for approval. During this fourth monitoring period, IAD reported that coordination and reporting between IAD, central MoE Departments and PEDs will be started at the beginning of the 1398 fiscal year in compliance with the Internal Audit Charter and Internal Audit Procedures. Relevant Departments have agreed to implement IAD's recommendations.
- During this fourth monitoring period, MEC's team visited Kandahar, Kapisa and Maidan Wardak. PED authorities put forward three issues with regards to Internal Audit performance: first, audit personnel are not professionally competent and their capacities need to be improved; second, MoE's lacks a modern and standard audit process; and third, there is not sufficient coordination between IAD and other Departments.
- **R#41c:** Strengthen the relationship between MoE's Internal Audit Department and MoF. MoE reported that with the approval of abovementioned documents, the relationship between MoE's Internal Audit Department and MoF will be strengthened. Evidence to verify this claims was not yet been shared with MEC.
- **R#41d:** To ensure transparency, MEC asked MoE to publish 100 per cent of MoE's Internal Audit Department's (IAD) routine reports from June 1, 2018 (this does *not* include publishing IAD's Incident Reports or case files referred by IAD to AGO). During each monitoring period, IAD at MoE generally reports on performance of IAD to MEC, but they don't publicly share it on the MoE website. MEC expects IAD to publish online a brief of what it reports to MEC.
- **R#50b:** MoE, based on MEC's recommendation, should disseminate an anti-corruption plan to all 367 District Education Departments (DEDs). MoE has thus far shared it's Anti-Corruption Plan with heads of PEDs through a workshop, however there is no evidence that this Plan has been shared more widely within PEDs, or at the DED and school community levels.
- **R#52:** MEC recommended that MoE conduct a review of all the existing sanctions, disciplinary measures, prosecution options, and other dissuasive mechanisms that are in place in MoE, within six months of release of the MoE MVCA. This responsibility has been shifted to IARCSC, and although IARCSC has a Code of Conduct for its civilian staff, this is not specific for teachers or other MoE staff.
- **R#55:** MEC recommended that MoE conduct Anti-Corruption Forums for the 34 MoE Education Directorates, the media, and other education sector stakeholders, emphasizing MoE's fight against corruption. In the first monitoring period, MoE had provided MEC with an update that Action Plans for MoE's National and Provincial Departments and Directorates include conducting Anti-Corruption Forums in the PEDs. Provincial visits in all monitoring periods have shown that MoE has not managed to conduct these forums yet. However, some heads of PEDs, when consulted by MEC, discussed the intention to conduct these Forums although, as far as MEC is aware, no such Forums have actually been conducted yet.
- **R#56:** To empower School Management *Shuras* to receive, and act on, complaints and grievances from parents and students, the Directorate of School Management *Shuras* (DSMS) has planned to include these issues in SMS capacity-building training and related materials. During the third monitoring period, DSMS reported that it had included the topic of complaints and grievances in 20 workshops funded by UNICEF and conducted in 2017 and 2018. According to their report, the

workshops were conducted for 5,000 members of School *Shuras*. MEC did not receive any validating evidence in this regard during the first, second third and fourth periods of monitoring and therefore cannot verify such claims.

- **R#57:** MEC recommended that MoE engage School *Shuras* in oversight and monitoring of literacy courses. MoE's the Deputy Ministry for Literacy has developed in which literacy programs will be added to citizen's oversight responsibilities as part of Citizen's Charter project that directly relates to CDCs. During Provincial visits, MEC found that some SMSs monitor literacy courses in their areas. In addition, literacy courses are monitored by MoE's own monitors and remotely through phone calls. MEC reviewed the role of SMSs, CDCs and local *Shuras*. MEC firmly believes that these *Shuras* play a key role in building relationship between people and educational entities – including trust building, and in monitoring education programs.
- MEC recommended MoE to annually appraise the performance of teachers. During this fourth monitoring period, MoE reported that the Performance Appraisal Department of the HR Directorate assessed 143,692 employees at central and Provincial levels as follows:
 - 52,319 teachers
 - 10,920 employees
 - 1,899 short term workers [*Ajir*]
 - 78,344 employees were promoted
 - 205 employees were introduced for educational opportunities
 - And 5 positions were announced

The difficulty with performance appraisal of MoE employees is to ensure they are assessed realistically and accurately. During the second monitoring period, MEC learned that appraisal process is more of a formality than a substantive activity. MEC studied this problem in Kandahar, Kapisa and Maidan Wardak, and PEDs authorities in these Provinces consider it as a formality. Some authorities said that they do not assess teachers because there is no budget to fulfill the outcome of the appraisal when an increment is warranted, and, if they are recommended for dismissal, they would face with a lack of teachers.

Recommendations on which no actions have been taken

As of this fourth monitoring period, MoE has taken no action with regards to 2 recommendations, which are as follows:

- **R#24c:** MEC recommended that MoE's Office of Parliamentary Affairs collate the records of any attempts at illegal interference from MPs and report these to MEC monthly. MoE did not provide any consolidated update about illegal interference of MPs to MEC, due, MEC believes, to political reasons. Interference from MPs remains a serious and persistent problem and MEC as heard many complaints about this issue during visits to the Provinces.
- **R#58:** MEC recommended that MoE engage Student Unions in monitoring and oversight. MoE reported that it will review this recommendation. But MEC has received no new information regarding progress against this recommendation.

3.1.5. Recommendations which are pending

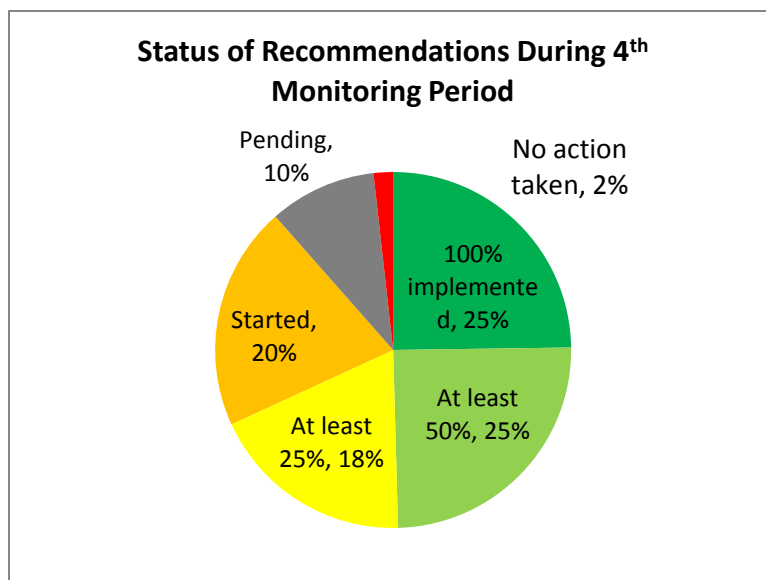
Based on information received by MEC during this fourth monitoring period from MoE and other relevant bodies, 11 recommendations out of 113 recommendations are still pending. Pending means that these recommendations depend on other steps and/or actions taking place prior to their implementation. In other words, unless a series of actions are taken, these recommendations cannot be implemented. These recommendations are described as follows:

- **R#1c:** The pilot implementation of Recommendation 1b should include recruitment criteria agreed between IARCSC and CSO umbrella organizations (e.g., gender balance, etc.)
- **R#1d:** Lessons learned regarding engagement of CSOs in monitoring and oversight should be documented and shared with education sector stakeholders.
- **R#27b:** MEC recommended to MoE that it should inform all staff of the amended and revised Code of Conduct. MoE reported that they 'will do it'. The HR Directorate sent an official letter to IARCSC to request that they share the revised version of the Code of Conduct. IARCSC has not yet shared the revised version of the Code of Conduct with MoE or MEC.
- **R#27c:** The amended and revised Code of Conduct should be publicly posted in all MoE facilities, including schools. IARCSC has not yet shared the revised Code of Conduct with MoE. MoE reported to MEC that as soon as the revised Code of Conduct is shared by IARCSC, MoE will publish it and post it in all MoE facilities.
- **R#37b:** MEC recommended that MoE provide technical support for education sector reformers in each Province. According to MoE, PED Directors are recruited through CBR and have reform plans for the Provinces. EQRA has included technical support components for reforms. MoE reported, in the second period of monitoring that, based on the CBR procedure Directors are responsible for developing and implementing the reform plan in their respective Departments. Reform plans are shared with those who have been hired in the first round of CBR recruitment and the next step will be to collect reports on the implementation of said reform plan. In the third monitoring period, MoE reported that the HR Directorate sent an official letter to all PEDs so that PEDs can send their reform plans to the HR Directorate. MEC has not yet received any evidence to verify this claim.
- **R#42c and R#42d:** The High Level Audit Committee's ToR should include reviewing all internal MoE audit reports, external MoE audit reports from SAO, and all other MoE audit-related reports from external bodies. The Committee's ToR should also include publishing an annual review of the quality of education in Afghanistan. In the second monitoring period, MoE reported that the High Level Internal Audit Committee's ToR had been prepared with the support of USAID's CBA project on the 27th of March 2018. One of the responsibilities of the High Level Audit Committee is to provide financial audit reports. In addition, the Audit Committee is also responsible for providing the following reports:
 - Review of annual financial (*Qateeya*) and audit reports to ensure that reports are in full alignment with the information available from the Committee and reflect the principles and objectives of accounting and auditing.
 - Review of financial and audit quarter reports to ensure that information is updated, completed and accurate.

- During this fourth monitoring period, no information or evidence has been received by MEC to verify such claims. MEC has been requesting to be invited to partake in High Level Audit Committee meetings as an observer, but this has not yet happened.
- **R#43:** MoE should develop a standardized accreditation process for private schools. MoE had reported, in the first period of monitoring, that they started discussions on this issue. According to MoE, this needs a lot of consultation with the private sector, Government entities and parents, so it will take time to come up with a clear plan for an accreditation design. According to MoE data, provided in the second period of monitoring, 3,034 private schools had been registered and licenses have been issued to all of these schools under the rules and regulations of the Government of Afghanistan.
- **R#44b:** MEC recommended that MoE establish an Education Quality Committee (EQC). The EQC should be composed of MoE leadership, MoE's M&E Department, DPs, representatives from private education, and other stakeholders. MoE reported that the EQC was established at the beginning of the year, its ToR develop and recommended directorates will be included as members of the Committee. In addition, MoE claimed that MEC would be invited as an observer to Committee meetings, but this has not yet happened.
- **R#44c:** The Education Quality Committee's ToR should include reviewing all internal M&E systems and reports, and MoE quality-related reports from external bodies. The Committee's ToR should also include reviewing all internal MoE audit reports, external MoE audit reports from SAO, and all other MoE audit-related reports from external bodies. The Committee has been established. MEC has no evidence concerning the establishment, membership and meetings of the Committee and cannot verify any of this information. MEC has, so far, only been invited to attend one meeting of the Education Sector Joint Working Group. MEC's expectation for this recommendation goes beyond Education Sector Joint Working Group's meetings. MEC has been requesting to MoE to be invited to partake in High Audit Committee as an observer, but as mentioned previously, this has not happened yet.
- **R#44d:** The Education Quality Committee's ToR should also include publishing an annual review of the quality of education in Afghanistan. So far, no such report has been published by the Committee. Also, as noted previously, MEC has not been invited to observe the meetings of Education Quality Committee and has no information in this regard. MoE recently said that Joint Working Group's report will be published, but it has not been done yet.

Overall Status of Recommendations

Recommendation Status	Numbers
100%	28
At least 50 %	28
At least 25 %	21
Started	23
Pending	11
No Action	2
Total	113



3.1.6. Related success stories in education during the fourth monitoring period

During each monitoring period, MEC attempts to reflect success stories and challenges facing the education sector during the period. The following are successful MoE initiatives documented by MEC during this fourth monitoring period:

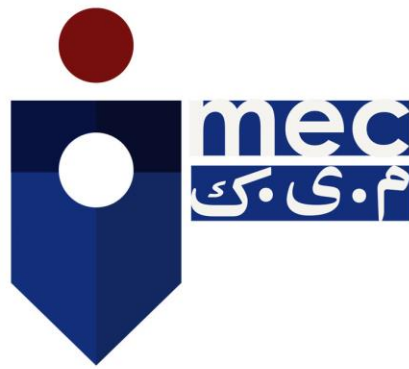
- Biometric registration of MoE employees, including teachers, has begun.
- Implementation of Mobile Money and registration of teachers data has begun.
- Electronic issuance of 12th grade graduation Certificates is being expanded to all Provinces.
- Improvement in monitoring schools by PEDs at District level.
- Extensive enrollment of female students in some Provinces, particularly Kapisa.
- Re-opening of closed schools, particularly in Kandahar and Maidan Wardak.
- Volunteer literacy courses in Maidan Wardak.
- Anti-corruption and reform as a focus at the leadership level within the education sector.
- Improved access to education, compared to previous periods.
- Improvement in the monitoring of school construction projects and contracting, in comparison with previous years
- Greater transparency in teacher recruitment through electronic testing done by IARCSC.
- Contribution and engagement of local community members and some SMSs in school construction projects.

3.1.7. Challenges in Education (during fourth monitoring period from Kandahar, Kapisa, Maidan Wardak)

During this fourth monitoring period, MEC identified a range of ongoing problems and challenges, the most serious of which include:

- Lack of textbooks.
- Lack of teachers and lack of professional teachers and related lack of a *Tashkiel*.
- Lack of adequate school buildings.
- Illegal interference from MPs and other powerful individuals.
- Security challenges in Kandahar and Maidan Wardak.
- Low quality education and related highly compressed curriculum.
- Inaccurate resource mobilization by donors.
- Cultural barriers for girls to attend school, particularly in Kandahar and Maidan Wardak.
- Closure of some schools (particularly in Kandahar and Maidan Wardak).
- Lack of schools/classrooms for girls.
- Lack of a budget for training school *Shuras* and conducting school *Shura* meetings.
- Lack of material resources in schools, such as chairs, tables, lab materials.
- Lack of a budget for capacity-building programs for teachers and other MoE employees.

Note: These are some of the major, persistent challenges for education in the country that MEC has found during its monitoring. There is an urgent need for MoE leadership to take action to address these issues.



Independent Joint Anti-Corruption
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