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Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC)

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List of abbreviations

- AOG: Armed Opposition Group
- ECCD: Early Childhood Care and Development
- FTEP: Female Teacher Education Project
- MoE: Ministry of Education
- NAC: Norwegian Afghanistan Committee
- PED: Provincial Education Department
- ToR: Terms of Reference
- TTC: Teacher Training College
- TVET: Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Introduction

This is the final evaluation report on the Female Teacher Education Project (FTEP), in Afghanistan. The FTEP project was a five year (2013-2017), pilot, teacher education project implemented by the partner in Afghanistan under agreement with the Afghan Ministry of Education (MoE) in Kabul and the Provincial Education Department (PED) in the province. The project had the overall objective of providing teacher education to 15 young women from districts in the province, to prepare them to work as professional, qualified teachers in their villages. The project also worked with the MoE/PED to facilitate the placement of these young teachers back in schools in their villages and to provide them with support in their new jobs.

This evaluation has been conducted by the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC), a solidarity organization between Norway and Afghanistan, which has been working in Afghanistan for more than 36 years. Much of NAC’s work in Afghanistan involves education, and NAC runs programs that cover the full spectrum of formal and informal education from Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), to primary and secondary schooling (both government and community-based), to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), to work with colleges and universities (e.g. in Health Nursing and Midwifery education, Disaster Risk Reduction and Management, Agriculture, etc). NAC has a particular focus on teacher education and works closely with a number of Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs), including the TTC in The provincial capital, as well as the Shaheed Professor Rabbani Education University in Kabul (e.g. in building capacities of staff and students on inclusive education, and upgrading under-qualified teachers to diploma level). NAC’s varied experiences with teacher education have informed this evaluation.
Methodology

The evaluation used a qualitative research methodology involving a combination of:

- review of FTEP’s key policy, internal evaluation/reporting, and financial documents;
- 18 individual interviews with key stakeholders, including: the partner in Afghanistan/FTEP staff, FTEP graduates, school headmasters and principals, and Provincial Education Department (PED) staff;
- 4 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with school Shura members and teachers from FTEP participants’ school communities;
- 3 school and classroom observations in schools where FTEP graduates are teaching; and,
- a series of informal discussions with school students.

The evaluation was conducted by a team of four NAC staff members, (one woman and three men). The team included NAC’s Northwest regional manager and education specialist, based in Faryab; two education specialists, based in The provincial capital; and one international education specialist, based in Kabul.

Specifics regarding interviewees and FGD members are detailed in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Evaluation Type</th>
<th>District/city</th>
<th>School/location</th>
<th>Research participant(s)</th>
<th>No. of Interviews/FGDs</th>
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<td>V1</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>V2</td>
<td>Principal</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>V3</td>
<td>Head master</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>V3</td>
<td>Principle</td>
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<td>Interview</td>
<td>Provincial Capital</td>
<td>PED</td>
<td>Provincial Education Monitor</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Provincial Capital</td>
<td>the partner in Afghanistan-FTEP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Interview</td>
<td>V1, V2, and V3 districts</td>
<td>Project schools in visited districts</td>
<td>FTEP graduated teachers</td>
<td>9 interviews with 8 FTEP graduated teachers</td>
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<td>Interview</td>
<td>Dubai</td>
<td>GIZ temporary office</td>
<td>FTEP project manager</td>
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<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
<td>V2</td>
<td>School Shura-Community members</td>
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<td>1 FGD</td>
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<td>FGD</td>
<td>V1, V2, V3 districts</td>
<td>Project schools in visited districts</td>
<td>FTEP Graduated teachers, other teachers, school students</td>
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<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
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<td>Observations</td>
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<td>Project schools in visited districts</td>
<td>FTEP Graduated teachers, other teachers, school students</td>
<td>3 observations</td>
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<td>Informal discussions</td>
<td>All districts visited</td>
<td>Project schools in visited districts</td>
<td>School students</td>
<td>3 informal discussions</td>
</tr>
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**Evaluation findings**

Findings are organized under the following headings, as framed in the ToR (the specific questions from the ToR are italicized):

**Efficiency**

*What is the level of efficiency in the program based on input vs output?*

- *The program employed nine staff in addition to the project manager who worked on a voluntary basis, its budget covered accommodation and transportation for its students, the time span of the program was five years. The immediate visible output was 15 professional teachers.*

First, it must be emphasized that FTEP was resource, labor and time intensive, in comparison with many other teacher education initiatives. However, these costs seem more than justified given the projects’ achievements.

Indeed, the ‘immediate visible output’ was the professionalization of the 15 FTEP graduate teachers. This is, in itself, an achievement given what the evaluation has determined is the high quality of training and ongoing mentoring and support these teachers have received through the project; and the corresponding benefits in terms of the positive, follow-on impacts when FTEP graduates returned to teach in their school communities.

Further, FTEP has yielded additional beneficial outputs in terms of movement towards positive institutional and cultural changes in participating school communities. Meaningful, lasting changes, both in regards to teachers’ pedagogy in schools, and women’s empowerment in Afghan communities, require the kinds of intensive and sustained efforts, and overall holistic approach to education taken by FTEP. The evaluators note that far too many teacher education initiatives in Afghanistan and elsewhere underestimate the resources (e.g. time, money, effort) needed to affect sustainable, positive changes in participating school communities, let alone impact wider education systems.
The specific benefits of the project will be discussed in detail, further into this report.

- **If the project were repeated, replicated elsewhere or scaled up, would there be economies of scale?**

Representatives from all of FTEP’s stakeholder groups interviewed expressed the desire that the project be continued and expanded. However, it is a vexing question as to how to effectively scale up a project of this nature. As noted by the former FTEP manager, the project’s effectiveness, in part, can be attributed to its relatively small scale. This has afforded participating student teachers and their communities a high level of individualized support with specific attention to their needs and challenges, as well as their strengths. It has also allowed for the development of a close-knit and mutually supportive group of participants, who were enabled and encouraged to bond during their time living together in the project dormitory.

Simply expanding the number of participants, going forward, without a corresponding increase in staffing and financial support, is likely to impact negatively on the quality of this program, and minimize its potential positive impacts. As suggested by the former project manager, if the program is expanded, it would be desirable to keep the actual class sizes of participants small (the current 15 participants seems reasonable). In this way, there could be several FTEP classes running concurrently, but they would all need an equal level (to the current project) of resources directed towards them to ensure a consistent level of high quality outputs.

On a related area, FTEP took two different approaches in recruiting and selecting participants; in some cases, FTEP recruited and selected individual participants from communities and in other cases, took a pair of participants from the same community. It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to systematically compare the results of the two different approaches in terms of their efficacy and impacts.

However, we believe that going forward in mind of long-term sustainability, the more participants from the same community who can participate on such a program together, the more likely there will be sustainable changes to attitudes and practices.

In our experience in teacher education (e.g. NAC has just recently completed a pilot Master’s Degree program in inclusive education for Afghan educators and most of the students were TTC lecturers or managers) it is far more difficult to affect positive changes in school (or TTC) communities when the responsibility for enacting change lies on one individual, particularly if that individual is not in a position of power in relation to their peers. However, when at least two members of a school’s/TTC’s staff are able to support each other and work together to influence their colleagues, positive and sustainable changes in attitudes and practices are more likely.

The same can be said for FTEP, and the former project manager has noted
that although some FTEP participants who are the sole representatives of their community schools have been able to positively influence teaching/learning attitudes and practices in their communities, it has been more difficult for these individual participants than for those who were working together with a colleague who had also been through FTEP.

There are many examples of highly resourced development initiatives in education which perform poorly and have limited lasting impacts. However, FTEP is not one of these and the project seems to have made efficient and effective uses of its resources towards achieving its objectives.

Although it is too early to speak of long-term impacts, several indicators suggest that FTEP is already yielding significant benefits for participating communities and that these may well be sustained and even grow, if properly nurtured.

It is the opinion of the evaluators that, ultimately, for a teacher education initiative to truly achieve FTEP’s objectives, it cannot be done on the cheap, but that the investment is likely to yield significant benefits down the line. This is opposed to more short-term oriented teacher education projects which are focused more on the quantity of participants than the quality of their experience, and the benefits of which, in our experience, dissipate quickly.

Effectiveness

To what extent was the program’s purpose and objectives achieved?

- The curriculum of the Teacher Training Program introduced methodology and educational philosophies that were new or not actively used in Afghanistan. To what extent has the curriculum successfully trained professional teachers who are qualified to give quality education at a high school level?

Feedback from evaluation participants and observations in participating schools suggests the project has been successful in achieving its pedagogical objectives in the following ways:

- FTEP graduates are introducing innovative, learner-centered teaching/learning methods in their schools.

Learner-centered approaches to teaching were in evidence during the evaluation teams’ classroom observations of FTEP graduates teaching in their schools. These included: greeting the students warmly at the beginning of class – establishing a ‘friendly’ teaching/learning environment; clearly articulating the objectives of the lesson at the beginning; organizing and facilitating small group work and pair work; the use of positive and constructive feedback with students; linking theoretical concepts to practical activities; the use of engaging visual aids (e.g. charts and pictures); summarization of key points from the lesson towards the end; the use of an ‘evaluation ball’ (a ball of paper that gets thrown from student to student -
whoever catches the ball answers a question about the lesson); and, giving the students relevant homework assignments.

During informal discussions with several school students from a science class, the students explained that they now waited excitedly and impatiently for lessons to begin and although, in the past, they were not very interested in science, they were interested now because of their teacher’s (an FTEP graduate) practical focus during the lessons, which is very different from what they had in the past. They suggested that this was improving students’ enthusiasm for learning overall.

A principal from one of the participating schools (with two FTEP graduates) said that the FTEP graduates rarely ‘lecture to’ their students and use a lot of group work and practical assignments and are, in his opinion, better trained than TTC graduates and other teachers in his school with higher degrees and more teaching experience. He sees the FTEP graduate teachers as being very beneficial to the school.

Although perhaps not revolutionary or particularly ‘new’ in the global sense, the approaches to teaching/learning that have been instilled in FTEP participants during their teacher education and which they are now practicing as they teach back in their community schools, does represent a radical shift in pedagogy in the context of Afghan schooling. This has not been without its challenges. The FTEP graduates themselves noted that there was initially some resistance, particularly from school students and parents, to the new teaching methodology. For example, students and parents were not used to homework, and at first, many students avoided doing homework assigned by the FTEP graduates.

Some parents also resisted the idea of ‘foreign’ teaching methods in their community schools. However, despite some initial fears and resistance, representatives from all stakeholder groups have expressed that participating school communities have gradually become used to and supportive of FTEP’s style of pedagogy. Support has grown, particularly as school communities have noticed an increase in girls’ school attendance, enthusiasm for learning, and attainments in exams – these impacts will be discussed further in the following section on ‘Impact’.

- FTEP graduates are able to manage their classrooms without resorting to corporal punishment using positive classroom management techniques.

Classroom management is another important aspect of pedagogy. Classroom management by fear and control, backed up with corporal punishment is commonly practiced in Afghan schools and classrooms. In contrast, FTEP’s approach to positive classroom management relies on supporting students to regulate their own behaviors and eschews corporal punishment.

In interviews, stakeholders have noted that FTEP graduates use positive classroom management techniques. Accordingly, it was also noted that the FTEP graduates do not verbally or physically abuse their students, despite the
The fact that such practices are still commonly used in the schools where they teach, and are what they will have experienced when they were school students. More than simply being a pedagogical adjustment, the changes from corporal punishment to more positive forms of classroom management, represent a more profound cultural shift in the power relationships between teachers and students. It speaks well of the FTEP program that graduates have been able to engage with such changes, not just in theory, but in their own classroom practices and have seemed to sustain positive classroom management, often, against prevailing practices in their schools.

Several school principals and (non-FTEP) teachers reported that the FTEP graduates have, at least to some extent, influenced other staff and teachers in their schools to stop using corporal punishment (e.g. beating students with hands and sticks) and at least try more positive approaches to classroom management. This can also be seen as an example of the wider, positive impacts of FTEP on participating school communities.

- FTEP graduates are making use of local resources in developing teaching/learning materials.

Building teachers’ capacities to use local resources in developing teaching/learning materials is beneficial in several ways, including in: encouraging and developing their creativity, critical thinking, and resourcefulness; making teaching/learning more relevant to local contexts; providing a sustainable approach to the development of teaching/learning materials, particularly in an environment where materials brought in from outside school communities are typically prohibitively expensive, if they are even available.

During the evaluation, it was evident that the development of teaching/learning materials from local resources has been a set of skills promoted through FTEP. Our evaluation team has seen the evidence of this in participating schools and classrooms, for example, in which simple and relatively inexpensive materials were used to make creative and innovative science related teaching/learning materials, such as colored paper boxes representing the elements, DNA helixes made from wire, and even a microscope made from paper and a small mirror. The FTEP graduates were clearly proud of these materials and were confident in sharing them with the evaluation team. When photos of some of these materials were shared with science lecturers from the TTC in the provincial capital, they were impressed and wanted to ‘borrow’ some of the ideas to use in their own teaching practices in the TTC.

This should not gloss over the fact that there is a dearth of practical teaching/learning materials in most Afghan schools and indeed, several interview respondents in this evaluation pointed out that they had a lack of laboratory facilities and materials, stationery, books and related resources in their schools.

- Is it likely that the students will continue to apply what they have learned about effective teaching when they continue as teachers in...
their villages without monthly follow-up? Has our monitoring and follow-up program strengthened its likelihood?

The sustained follow-up mentoring and support the project provides to FTEP graduates and their communities should be considered as a vital aspect of the project and a desired feature of any future incarnation. As FTEP now moves from a system of monthly follow-up, to a gradually more reduced level of support for its graduates, the actual potential for the sustainability of the initiative will become clearer. It follows also that the individualized nature of the project should be seen as an advantage of the project methodology, in that it is designed to account for the differentiated support needs of participants, enabling such support to be offered when and where needed - as opposed to a ‘one size fits all’ approach.

- What has been learned about the selection process of students? What could make it more effective?

FTEP stakeholders have largely praised the selection process of students and the fact that so many of the project’s graduates (11 out of 15) have been able to return to teach in their communities despite the challenges, speaks to the great need for female teachers in these communities and relevance of the selection process. Unfortunately, four of the 15 FTEP graduates were unable to take up teaching positions in their villages, although they are still in contact with and have been receiving support from FTEP. FTEP staff explained that due to the poor security situation in two of the graduates’ villages, the young women have not been able to return to take up teaching positions and no girls in those villages are attending school. The other two FTEP graduates that are not currently teaching in their communities, are unable to take up teaching positions due to corruption.

It has been pointed out that the selection process was lengthy, in part due to the challenges and inefficiencies experienced in working with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Provincial Education Department (PED) (which in our experience is certainly typical in trying to do any education innovation in Afghanistan). Despite the challenges of a lengthy process, the former FTEP project manager suggested that in future, any further FTEP should stick to the full and proper selection process. She explained that FTEP had been pushed at one point to take a shortcut and there was one case in which – to save time – an FTEP candidate had not been as rigorously vetted as was possible and as it turned out, this candidate was not actually from the village she was claiming to come from.

Undoubtedly, a full and rigorous selection process does take time, but given the ubiquity of corruption in the Afghan education system and the challenges and time involved in determining the most relevant communities to participate, and then preparing these communities to allow their young women to live and study outside of the community, a proper selection process is warranted to help ensure that project impacts are as meaningful and sustainable as possible.
Impact

What long-term effects will the program likely produce; Positive and negative, primary and secondary, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended?

- What impact did the training have on the 15 village teachers?

Alongside the impacts on participants' pedagogy (as outlined in the previous section on ‘Effectiveness’) the program had significant impacts on the participants' development of social skills and confidence.

Given the social contexts in the communities where FTEP participants were recruited from - rural villages - where women traditionally have limited social and professional opportunities outside of their households, a key aspect of the project was to socialize participants in order to prepare them to teach in their community schools. A factor in this has been the placement of participants (with a few exceptions) in a dormitory.

Living in the dormitory allowed for the development of an environment in which project participants bonded with and supported each other socially, alongside getting mentorship and other forms of support from FTEP staff. Because the participants were also completing their high school education (to year 12) together in a school close to the dormitory, they were able to support each other with their studies as well.

The benefits participants gained from living together in the dormitory should not be underestimated and it was noted by FTEP staff that the several participants who did not get permission from their families to stay in the dormitory (they stayed with family members nearby) struggled more than the others in adapting to teaching back in their school communities.

The positive socialization of FTEP participants has been a process supported, not just through dormitory living, but very much through the specific teacher education components of the project.

FTEP staff reported that over the course of the project, participants gained important social skills, becoming better communicators, more polite and respectful with each other, and more considerate overall.

Crucially, the socialization process, discussed above, linked with the specific methodology and content of the training, were seen as supporting the participants in becoming more confident and articulate (e.g. in engaging in discussions, working together with peers, managing a classroom).

The confidence and professionalism of these young FTEP graduates, in their schools and classrooms, has been evident from observations and interviews
during our evaluation team’s visits to participating school communities.

- What impact has one year of teaching by the village teachers had on their schools and on the students in their classes? Has there been an increase in female attendance? Have learning outcomes been strengthened?

Note – It is important to mention that this evaluation has been qualitative in nature and has not sought to systematically measure enrollment/attendance rates, or quantitative learning outcomes (e.g. exam scores) in relation to the project. Further, in Afghanistan, such quantitative data is notoriously difficult to obtain and questionable in terms of accuracy and consistency. In parallel to the FTEP evaluation, NAC is involved in a comprehensive evaluation into vulnerabilities to corruption in the Afghan education system. This evaluation is highlighting widespread and pervasive corruption in all aspects and at all levels of the Afghan education system. In particular, student enrollment and attendance rates, student exam scores, and teachers’ placement and attendance data, are proving not to be consistently accurate or reliable, because they are intentionally manipulated, or poorly recorded (due to a lack of competency and capacity in monitoring and evaluation at all levels of the system), or a combination of both.

There is evidence of FTEP’s positive impacts on participating schools, one year into the placement of graduates in teaching positions.

An inclusive approach to education looks at three factors in relation to students’ experience of schooling: presence, participation and achievement. These are also useful in considering FTEP’s impacts on school students.

**Presence:** In terms of student enrollment, the numbers of new students enrolling (in many cases, students who were on the register, but had not been attending classes) and students who had left school, but have now returned, seem to have increased as a result of the project. This has been attributed, partly, to the presence of female teachers in schools (where there had been few if any female teachers before), but also to the learner-centered teaching methods and overall positive attitudes of the FTEP graduates, which seem to have been motivating factors in encouraging girls attendance and participation in school.

As an example, one of the FTEP graduates has been teaching science and other subjects to secondary school students, in xx School in V3 district. In the past, there was no female teacher in the school and although there were 70 girls on the schools’ register, not one of them was actually allowed by their families to attend school. Now, because the FTEP graduate is teaching in the school, all 70 girls have returned to study at the school and the school Shura has reported that the students are happy with the teaching/learning they experience.

**Participation:** As mentioned previously in this report, a variety of
stakeholders including: school students, school principals and (non-FTEP) teachers, and parents/school Shura members, have reported that school students are responding positively to the FTEP graduates. This has also been noted in classroom observations. Such improvements in students' participation include: increases in school attendance, greater student participation in the classroom, and an increase in motivation for and engagement in learning. As mentioned, this has been attributed to FTEP graduates’ positive and friendly attitudes towards their students (and their teacher colleagues), other aspects of positive classroom management (e.g. encouraging students with positive feedback and reinforcement, and not using corporal punishment), and the use of engaging, learner-centered pedagogy, which is very practically focused.

**Achievement:** Although evidence is anecdotal (and our evaluation team has not been able to access quantitative data such as exam scores), stakeholders in participating school communities have reported that school students are learning more as a result of the FTEP graduates teaching/learning interventions and, at least in some cases, achieving higher exam results, than before the project. As an example (linked to both participation and achievement), some school students who participated in informal discussions with our evaluation team said that once they became used to the FTEP graduates’ new teaching methods, particularly group work, they were very interested and motivated to learn and participate and even to help teach their peers.

- What impact did the program have on local stakeholders? (Education authorities at a village-level, district- and provincial?) Has there been any change in attitudes regarding education for girls, has the project contributed to spur local initiative in the field of education? How has the new methodology and philosophies about learning affected the stakeholders of the project so far?

The overwhelming support, from all project stakeholders consulted, for the continuation and expansion of FTEP speaks to the projects’ positive impacts on stakeholders’ lives and attitudes.

More specifically, FTEP is having a variety of positive impacts on local stakeholders, including on:

- Other teachers and school staff

Teachers and principals in the schools our evaluation team visited reported that FTEP graduates have gradually, and increasingly, been able to positively influence other staff/teachers in their schools, through formal (e.g. workshops) and more informal (e.g. discussions during break times or after school, and modeling behaviors and practices) methods. They have been able to support some of their colleagues in developing teaching/learning materials, trying more learner-centered teaching methods, and even in abandoning corporal punishment.

- School students
See above under ‘presence, participation and achievement’.

- School shuras, parents and other community members

A range of project stakeholders have noted that it has been challenging and taken time to change community attitudes towards being more accepting and supportive of girls’ education. However, positive changes in attitudes are widely understood to have happened in participating communities. This has been attributed to the ongoing, close support and advocacy that FTEP has provided for participating teachers and their communities throughout the project, alongside the relatively high quality of teaching FTEP graduates are providing.

Although participating communities were initially resistant towards allowing their young women to leave their communities and to live and attend the project in The provincial capital, they did ultimately allow this to happen and are now able to recognize the benefits as they have welcomed the FTEP graduates back home to teach in their community schools (with the exception of two graduates who have not been able to gain teaching positions back in their communities due to corruption in the education system, and two who have not been able to take up teaching positions due to the security situation).

School Shura members who were interviewed during the evaluation have expressed their understandings of the value of girls’ education in general and FTEP in particular.

- PED (Note – We recognize that participating District Education Departments were important project stakeholders and deeply involved in the recruitment/selection process of FTEP participants. However due to time and scheduling constraints, we were, unfortunately, unable to interview District Education officials during the evaluation.)

The PED education monitor who was interviewed during the evaluation offered his support for FTEP and suggested that the PED was aware of the project’s benefits, in particular that it has helped meet the pressing need for more trained, female teachers in rural areas. He said that the close cooperation during the project between FTEP and the PED was important and had contributed to the success of the project. He also reported that the PED was aware that the project had increased student enrollment and attendance rates in participating communities.

It is interesting to note that given the previously mentioned high levels of corruption in the Afghan education system (our research into over 100 schools in 7 Afghan provinces indicates that almost all teaching positions in the provinces we worked in have either been acquired through influence – nepotism – or purchased in cash for, what is on average, the equivalent of a year’s teaching salary), the fact that 13 out of 15 FTEP graduates were able to be placed in official, salaried, teaching positions back in their community schools without bribery, or undue nepotistic influence, stands in stark contrast to what the norm in the country seems to be. This suggests that the project
has had some positive impacts on the attitudes and practices of education officials at national, provincial and district levels. Through interviews with FTEP staff, and community level stakeholders, we have come to understand that the selection of participants and ultimate placement of FTEP graduates back in their community schools was not a quick, or easy process and has required intensive and sustained work and lobbying with various education departments and individual officials to achieve the gains that have been made. However, the FTEP’s process of working and its outcomes suggest that fairly and genuinely filling the needs for female teachers in rural Afghan communities is possible, if difficult.

Relevance

Were the objectives of the program consistent with the requirements of the beneficiaries, the country needs, global priorities and the priorities of the donor?

All evidence suggests that the project has been designed, very specifically, to fit local needs and address national and global priorities. Inasmuch as local, national and global priorities are aligned, there is a consistent understanding that there is a crucial need for well-trained female teachers in Afghan community schools, particularly in rural and hard-to-reach areas of the country. This impacts tremendously both on girls’ access to education and on the quality of education they receive. The project has been designed to address these issues alongside the needs for awareness raising and positive attitude and practice changes in Afghanistan towards gender equity, and a more high quality, inclusive education system overall.

Given NAC’s longstanding relationship with Norad in regards to support for education in Afghanistan, the evaluation team believes that FTEP’s objectives have been well formulated to align with Norad’s priorities for education and development in the country, particularly in regards to: promoting the education and empowerment of Afghan girls and women; improving the quality and relevance of education for teachers and school students; and developing a more sustainable education system overall.

- How is the educational situation in the villages now compared to the beginning of the project? Are the needs the same? If not, what impact, other than the project objectives has the program had in the village?

As mentioned previously in this report, the project has been seen to improve the access to and quality of education for girls in participating communities. This conclusion is widely shared by all stakeholders consulted during the evaluation. In relation to these objectives, stakeholders have also reported (and/or demonstrated) positive changes in attitudes and practices towards women’s empowerment and girls’ education, as well as towards more inclusive education generally.

However, the project has been small in scale (by design) and the training and placement of a relatively small cohort of female teachers is never, on its own, going to be enough to meet education needs, even in participating villages, let
alone in the districts, the province, or the country. That is not to denigrate the impacts the project has already demonstrated – FTEP can be seen as a very positive step in the right direction and it is just this kind of initiative that is likely to have the deepest and most sustainable impacts on education, as will be discussed in the following section.

**Sustainability**

*What is the probability of continued long-term benefits when the assistance provided by FTEP is completed?*

- **Project sustainability is dependent on support from parents, village leaders, education authorities, teacher training facilities, the local and the provincial government. Describe the relationship of the project to these groups.**

FTEP seems to have developed positive relationships with the following stakeholder groups during the life of the project: parents/school Shuras, village leaders, school administrators and other staff, and local and provincial education officials. All of these stakeholder groups have reported, or are reported as being, highly supportive of the project and this support, in many cases, has been developed, painstakingly over time and against some initial opposition – particularly at the community level. This hard won and seemingly genuine support speaks well to the long-term sustainability of this initiative.

The project, as yet, has not engaged much with the existing teacher education system (e.g. TTCs) in the province, but there is certainly scope for future engagement if FTEP is continued/expanded.

- **How effective has the project been in getting government approval for the students’ official teacher certification? Are all the teachers currently employed as government teachers? What could have been done differently? How important is it that the teachers are fully accredited vs. working as contract teachers?**

The process of getting government approval for FTEP graduates’ teaching certificates and securing their placements as teachers in their community schools has been very time-consuming and at times challenging. However, this is not surprising (nor specific to FTEP) given the high levels of corruption, bureaucracy and inefficiency in the Afghan education system. It may well be that some of the groundwork that has gone into securing government support for the initial FTEP will make things easier for future incarnations of the project.

As mentioned previously, the fact that 13 out of 15 FTEP graduates have been able to be placed as official, government teachers in their community schools should be seen as a great success, especially given the challenges.

We do not have much to suggest in terms of what could be done differently, as FTEP has been very successful in meeting its objectives in this and other areas. As FTEP staff have noted, they initially underestimated the time it
would take to recruit and select participants and to secure teaching certificates and school placements. This suggests that the project and donor, have been flexible enough to allow for the additional time needed and that such flexibility should be a feature of any continuation/expansion of the project, especially given the unpredictable and challenging nature of working with the Afghan government, alongside other issues such as security, and conservatism in participating communities.

We believe that it is highly important that participating teachers are fully accredited, as much as possible. As we see in other areas of the country, in far too many schools, teaching gaps are filled (if at all) by contract teachers, or volunteer teachers (who receive little, if any salary). Such temporary solutions are constantly at risk, and are not ultimately very sustainable. That being said, there are certainly important roles for contract and volunteer teachers, but it would be advantageous for FTEP to focus on more sustainable solutions. Being a fully accredited, full time teacher, represents a long-term investment by the government, the school and the teacher.

- **What aspects of the program have the potential to prevent sustainability?**

For the most part, FTEP, seems to have been designed to and is operating in a way to maximize sustainability.

Of course, any project that is as resource intensive as FTEP, is at risk of the vagaries of donor agendas and interests. We see, in general in Afghanistan (and specific to NAC’s interests in sustainable development), that as international funding in Afghanistan shifts from a focus on long-term development, to shorter-term humanitarian response, increasingly, development projects such as FTEP are at risk of losing funding and support. In this sense, the prioritizing of humanitarian response over development in Afghanistan threatens the sustainability of all social services in the country.

On a different note, to improve sustainability, it would be valuable for FTEP to work on developing relationships with teacher education institutions in the province. If done in a positive and productive way, such relationships could be mutually beneficial and may impact more widely on the teacher education system as a whole.

**Risk management**

*What kind of threats have the project faced and what responses have they produced? How can FTEP improve their risk management skills with a potential second round?*

The project has faced a number of threats, both in terms of communities’ initial resistances, and in terms of security.

Travel to some participating communities has been dangerous (both for FTEP graduates and staff) and the threats posed by Armed Opposition Groups (AOGs) are myriad and have worsened over the lifetime of the project, as the
security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated.

It seems that FTEP has managed to work carefully with communities to successfully overcome resistances and FTEP’s approach to sustained advocacy and support should be a feature of any continuation/expansion of the project.

In regards to security, it seems that FTEP has taken the security of its staff and students seriously and has endeavored to balance the needs for security with those of project implementation. As far as can be determined from our evaluation, FTEP has regularly assessed the security situation in The provincial capital and participating communities and made implementation decisions accordingly.

We have no specific suggestions for improvements in these areas, however we note that as security in Afghanistan is generally worsening, rather than improving, careful attention to security will need to be a feature of any extension/expansion of the project.

**Anti-corruption measures**

*What measures have the management taken to avoid corruption within the project? How has the project responded when directly confronted with corruption?*

As far as can be determined from the evaluation, the project has avoided corruption through lengthy and transparent processes of recruitment, selection, training, and placement of participants as teachers back in their communities.

As a part of these processes, the project has seemed to work diligently and transparently with participating communities, District Education Departments, the PED and the MoE in Kabul, as well as other relevant government authorities. FTEP has for the most part, avoided taking shortcuts, and has invested the time and effort needed to secure official permissions and accreditations at all levels.

Both the current and former partner have a set of anti-corruption policies and guidelines which were utilized for FTEP. These include: an ‘Anti-Corruption Code of Conduct’; a ‘Whistleblowing Policy’; and a ‘Procurement Policy’. These documents have been reviewed by the evaluation team and seem clear and comprehensive.

As explained by the former FTEP manager, ‘All FTEP staff went through DIGNis own anti-corruption training early in the program, when we still worked under our former partner in Afghanistan International. They all signed a “code of conduct-document”. These principles were strictly followed throughout the course of the project, also when we joined our partner in Afghanistan.’

It has been beyond the scope of this evaluation to determine the nature and extent to which anti-corruption policies were adhered to during the project.
However it is important to mention that the evaluation has found no indication of corruption on the part of FTEP, the partner in Afghanistan, or the former partner in Afghanistan, and none of the stakeholders consulted during the evaluation raised issues about corruption or other improprieties in relation to these organizations or their individual staff members.

Although corruption in the education system has created challenges for FTEP, the project itself seems to have actively resisted corruption and avoided participating in, or even being complicit in, corrupt practices.

The delays or other difficulties FTEP may have encountered through resisting corruption can be seen as being outweighed by the benefits of having established a reputation as an honest, fair and transparent organization and this has added, positive implications for the future sustainability of the project.

**Additional concerns to be investigated**

- A project strategy was to train the teachers while they completed their secondary education. **Comment on the strengths and weaknesses of this approach. Should the project consider a different strategy if they were to do another round?**

The project seems to have been largely successful in combining the completion of secondary education with initial teacher education for its participants. Indeed there are benefits to this approach, as explained by FTEP staff. It has been suggested that being in schooling and teacher education simultaneously has supported participants in making connections between pedagogy and subject theory and practice. Also, the fact that the majority of participants were studying in the same high school together and living together in the dormitory enabled them to effectively support each other during their studies – this was, of course, also a bonding opportunity for them.

Inevitably, combining the completion of a high school education with initial teacher education has time implications – taking longer than teacher education alone, but it would seem that the benefits of this approach outweigh the disadvantages, particularly in that this system meets the realities and needs of participating communities, where few girls complete secondary education.

- The project is funded in it’s entirety by UiO in Norway, with funds from Norad (via DIGNI, a member organization of Norwegian aid organizations receiving funding from NORAD). **UiO requests comments and recommendations regarding the quality of it’s partnership in the project as seen by our partner in Afghanistan and the project staff. How are UiO’s role and requirements regarding the project perceived, and have UiO’s needs for reporting and financial accountability been met?**

The partner in Afghanistan and FTEP staff have reported that UiO has been a highly patient, supportive and flexible partner and willing to work with them to
overcome the challenges faced (e.g. in the unanticipated delays in starting the project). The former FTEP project manager noted that the overall organization and management of the project has benefitted greatly from UiO support.

The evaluation team has also received positive feedback from the donor in regards to the partner in Afghanistan/FTEP management of the program. In response to an initial draft of the FTEP final evaluation report, UiO noted that, ‘…reporting and financial management met donor requirements in all respects.’

A separate but related issue concerns the partner in Afghanistan’s role in managing and supporting FTEP. This has not been an explicit focus of the evaluation. However, in response to comments on the first draft of this evaluation report, the former FTEP project manager was asked to share her perspective on the partner in Afghanistan’s relationship with FTEP.

She explained that although the partner in Afghanistan was not able to provide technical support in relation to teacher education as the organization had limited experience in that area, they did support the project in other important ways. She said that the partner in Afghanistan’s, ‘…administrative support especially with security protocol and financial management has served the program well and improved its ability to deal with the challenges in these particular fields’. It seems that although the partner in Afghanistan had its own internal struggles to deal with during the mid-period of project implementation, these did not seem to have much in the way of negative impacts on FTEP. As the former FTEP manager went on to explain, ‘…2015 and 2016 were difficult years for the partner in Afghanistan as an organization with shifts in leadership, a dramatic loss of staff, both program staff and more seriously, staff in key management roles. The organization failed to recruit for important positions like Operations Manager, Finance Manager and the Executive Assistant to the Executive Director. These positions still remain vacant, although the partner in Afghanistan has found alternative and temporary solutions of which the board has approved. Because FTEP already had worked independently and with a lot of autonomy under our former partner in Afghanistan, this uncertain period for the partner in Afghanistan didn’t affect the project results directly.’

During the life of the project, FTEP developed several positive partnerships with other programs of the partner in Afghanistan and these seem to have been of mutual benefit to both FTEP and the partner in Afghanistan. As the former FTEP manager explained, ‘A very positive partnership that FTEP made shortly after it joined the partner in Afghanistan was with its Mental Health Project. The project provided a one-week seminar on Common Mental Health Issues for both FTEP staff and students. In addition, two International psychologists from the project did psychological assessments of all the students. Nine out of fifteen students needed psychological follow-up. The students communicated that the treatment they received had very positive effects on their wellbeing.'
FTEP also partnered with the Peace-Building Program of the partner in Afghanistan. They provided a 3-day seminar on peace-building principles for the FTEP students.

These partnerships within the organization have been valuable and should continue into the next phase.’

**Recommendations**

Some recommendations in regards to FTEP have been discussed throughout the report in relation to specific topics. In this section we highlight and/or reiterate the main recommendations that have emerged during the evaluation, both from project stakeholders, and our evaluation team. It should be noted that the evaluation team generally agrees with the recommendations made by project stakeholders below. We comment on and add to these as follows:

Recommendations from project stakeholders (with comments from the evaluation team):

- It has been suggested by a number of FTEP graduates themselves and some FTEP staff, that future rounds of the project should draw participants from year 12, rather than years 9 - 10 (as in the current round). It is difficult for the evaluation team to comment on this recommendation, as the program has been largely successful in working with participants from years 9 - 10, although we understand this has had its challenges. One of the obvious benefits of working with year 12 students is that less time would be needed to educate participants through to high school completion. However, the socialization process that most of the current FTEP graduates went through when they were living and studying high school together, as well as the opportunity for FTEP staff to work with these participants in supporting them to reflect on the process of their own schooling can be said to have contributed to the success as the program. Perhaps, going forward, FTEP could work with participants from year 12 and years 9 – 10, to compare the differences.

- All stakeholders consulted have asked that the project be extended and expanded to include more participants in future, including those from the most hard-to-reach communities in the target province. The evaluation team strongly recommends that FTEP be extended and expanded if the high quality and depth and breadth of support can be maintained.

- Some stakeholders also suggested that men need access to such high quality teacher education initiatives as well. This speaks to the need for a better quality of teacher education overall in Afghanistan. In response to this recommendation, the evaluation team notes that in particular, the quality and consistency of longitudinal support provided for FTEP participants throughout their initial studies and later placements as teachers in village schools would be of value for all new teachers in
Afghanistan regardless of gender. There are some lessons here for TTCs (see recommendation below on the relationship between FTEP and teacher education institutions).

- Representatives from participating school communities have suggested that it would be useful to supply FTEP graduates and their schools with more material resources (e.g. teaching guides, stationery, textbooks, lab equipment) as part of the project. The evaluation team notes that it is not unusual for schools and their communities to request additional teaching/learning resources both from the government and from NGO projects. This is understandable given the severe lack of such resources for schools. As FTEP has not been designed as, nor should it be, primarily a provider of material resources, the evaluation team does not recommend that the provision of teaching/learning resources be scaled up much in the future. However, there is a clear value in FTEP related teaching guides and related workshops/trainings for developing local teaching/learning resources, both for participants and other teachers in their schools and if these can be produced, organized and shared more widely with participating school communities through the program, it would be beneficial and should not necessitate much of a budget increase.

- Stakeholders from participating communities, including some FTEP graduates, have suggested that even more work is needed in project related advocacy at the community level in future. In response to this recommendation, the evaluation team notes that FTEP’s advocacy component seems to have contributed greatly to the success of the program and should be a key feature of any future FTEP initiative. As a suggestion, future FTEP staff and participants could be offered additional training in advocacy. In addition, FTEP staff/students could be supported to do small action research projects related to advocacy (as well as teaching/learning) in future incarnations of the project. This has been a successful element in NAC’s Master’s Degree Program in Inclusive Education, and is highly recommended.

Recommendations from the evaluation team:

- It is the recommendation of the evaluation team that any scaling up of the project not compromise on quality for the sake of quantity. That means FTEP participant class sizes should remain small (no more than 15 participants per class) and that if more classes are added, there will be a corresponding need for increasing staff numbers so that staff/student ratios remain similar to those of the current project. This also means that the follow-on support for FTEP graduates and their school communities should not be reduced – this will help ensure the sustainability of the project’s impacts.

- On a related note, the NAC evaluation team recommends that in any future version of the project, at least two participants from each participating school community should be trained and supported
together to increase the likelihood of sustainable, positive impacts on attitudes and practices.

- The NAC evaluation team suggests that to improve sustainability and maximize impacts, it would be desirable for FTEP to develop a relationship with local teacher education institutions going forward. This could be of mutual benefit to FTEP and TTCs.

FTEP low-cost science resources – tactile periodic table
FTEP low-cost science resources

FTEP low-cost science resources – paper microscope