

ARTF Strategy Group Meeting

September 15, 2014

Summary of Discussion

An ARTF Strategy Group Meeting was held at the World Bank office in Kabul on September 15th, 2014 with participation from 11 donor countries, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and the World Bank to discuss preliminary findings of the EQUIP II Impact Assessment. The meeting was initiated by a presentation by the Ministry of Education (MoE) on the methodology and preliminary findings of the study.

EQUIP II Impact Assessment: MoE delivered a presentation primarily focused on the methodology of the EQUIP Impact Assessment, which consists of both qualitative and quantitative evaluations of EQUIP II. The assessment is being conducted in different phases and components, including: Education Sector Analysis, Program Assessment and Teacher Education. The schedule for completion of the assessment and presentation is expected in February 2015. Some general findings, although very preliminary at this stage, were discussed focusing on quality, capacity, expenditures, and off and on-budget support to MoE.

Quality: The preliminary findings of the study suggested that there is a need to focus on subnational level service delivery to improve quality. The quality of inputs has been steadily increasing including in learning materials, curriculum revision and teacher trainings. However, there is an opportunity cost associated with the expansion of services and the quality of input. In order to continue increasing access, especially for girls, more schools need to be built, which could detract from the resources to improve existing investments in education.

Expenditure: Expenditure still suffers from delays at the provincial levels due to excessive bureaucracy. MoE has initiated an internal discussion on how best to address this problem. One of the approaches discussed was the legalization of School Management Shuras and their recognition as legal entities which can help enable quicker direct transfers of money to communities.

Building Capacity: There is a pressing need to continue building capacity within the MoE which can only be accomplished by using the systems in which capacity is lacking. Many education projects continue to be off budget and are therefore bypassing government systems compromising the sustainability of the projects.

Off vis-à-vis On-budget support: The presentation also touched upon the decreasing rate of off-budget support to the education sector and has recommended further support on this front. On-budget as opposed to off-budget support has helped MoE in strategic planning and proper management.

The World Bank also provided an update on the Financing Strategy: The Update of the Financing Strategy has been delayed due to the delay in the election process. Technical level discussions are ongoing. However, strategic discussions will be held once a new government is in place and ready to engage on development priorities. The annual ARTF Results Workshop will be held in early November to ensure a new government has time to settle in and thereby allow for substantive discussions.