



# Assessment of Learning Outcomes and Social Effects of Community-Based Education, Afghanistan (ALSE)

## Research Brief #10: Capacity building for village level community institutions

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### Introduction

Phase II ALSE research tests the efficacy of a community-based education (CBE) sustainability model that involves village-level community institutions in managing the CBE classes inside their villages once NGOs withdraw. First, we assessed the management capacity of three types of local community institutions across the six provinces in our sample. We presented these outcomes in the ALSE Phase II Baseline Report and Research Briefs #6 and #7. Second, based on these results, we conducted capacity building training for members of these institutions to help them continue managing the CBE classes in their villages. Third, with the collaboration of the Ministry of Education (MoE), we facilitated the handover of half of our randomly selected classes from NGO management to joint management by the MoE and local community institutions. Finally, after one school year with the handover in place, we collected data to assess the sustainability model. We will share the assessment of our sustainability model in our endline report. In this Research Brief, we outline ALSE's capacity building training activities with the community institutions and share key lessons learned from this experience.

### Capacity Building for Community Institutions

From April – May 2017, the ALSE team conducted 41 capacity training workshops with 834 members of Community Development Councils (CDCs), Education Subcommittees (ESs), and School Management Shuras (SMSs) throughout six provinces: Herat, Ghor, Daykundi, Bamiyan, Parwan, and Kapisa. Each workshop lasted approximately three days and was conducted in collaboration with the Directorate of Social Mobilization and Shuras (DSMS) of the MoE before the NGOs handed over 69 CBE classes to these community institutions to co-manage. We describe here the pre- and post-training capacity building workshop components and share key insights into this experience.

**Training materials:** Based on extensive research and collaboration with other education stakeholders in Afghanistan, we developed ten training modules and a facilitator's guide for each of these modules. Topics included the CBE national policy guidelines, the Citizen's Charter National Priority Program initiative (CC) and its relevance to village-level community institutions, CBE classroom management as well as key administrative, project, financial management, and leadership skills applicable to the roles of the local community leaders. The DSMS of the MoE reviewed the training materials and provided feedback.

**Pilot test and post-pilot debrief:** We tested the training package in three ethnically diverse villages with 76 members of CDCs, ESs, and SMSs. The post-pilot debrief session organized in Kabul helped us revise and improve the training materials by (a) simplifying the language used to define terms and concepts; (b) adding details and specific examples to explain ideas; (c) improving strategies to address the needs of illiterate participants; and (d) incorporating local customs and norms more deeply.

**Training of trainers (ToT):** ALSE held a three-day workshop in Kabul to train master trainers—12 from ALSE and 10 from DSMS—to then train CDC, ES, SMS members in the provinces. The ToT had three objectives: (a) enhance trainers' knowledge of community institutions and these institutions' role in sustaining CBE in the villages; (b) improve the trainers' presentation and group facilitation skills; and (c) establish productive partnerships within six sub-teams of master trainers that included ALSE and MoE personnel.

**Coordinating with local authorities and village shura members:** Communicating the goals, objectives, and necessity of this training to provincial and district-level government authorities, including provincial education directorates (PEDs), district education directorates (DEDs), and local governors was critical. We coordinated activities closely with our NGO partners—CARE and CRS. The NGOs introduced the training team to the village shura members and provided security-related information. After initial introductions, the ALSE team reached out to the shura

members and invited them to the training. Master trainers often traveled to the villages to inform them of the training.

**Delivery of the Training:** Six teams, each with 3-4 ALSE and DSMS trainers, implemented the 3-day training in the ALSE provinces. We encouraged women to participate; as a result, 147 of the total 834 participants were female. The collaboration with DSMS was vital to making the training a success. The DSMS staff's local knowledge about the communities complemented ALSE's expertise in CBE and CC. Most important, the collaboration helped gain support and trust from PEDs and DEDs. Still, only about 40% of all participants responded to the post-training evaluation, despite our efforts to make it easier for individuals with low literacy to respond. Most respondents expressed satisfaction and suggested organizing this type of training more frequently. According to the participants, the workshop "allowed CDC, ES, and SMS members to get together, build relationships, and work together."

### Importance of capacitating village shuras

Recent national policy initiatives undertaken by the Afghan government (such as CC and CBE Policy) aim to enhance more direct participation of local communities in national development and public service provision. Thus, village shuras will be essential in sustaining education services at the local level. Systematic capacity building for these shuras is important to help them embrace their new roles, and our data show great potential for it. According to the ALSE household survey conducted in Fall 2017 with 5,130 heads of households in the six ALSE provinces, people believe that shuras play an important role in children's education (Figure 1). Villagers are almost as satisfied with their shuras as with NGOs regarding the "job they are doing in relation to children's education in the village." Satisfaction with shuras was higher than with local government officials (Figure 2). Finally, when asked how helpful talking to the shura would be about problems with children's education, 78.1% said either "a lot" or "a little," whereas 9.5% said "not very much." Only 12.4% responded either "not at all" or "don't know."

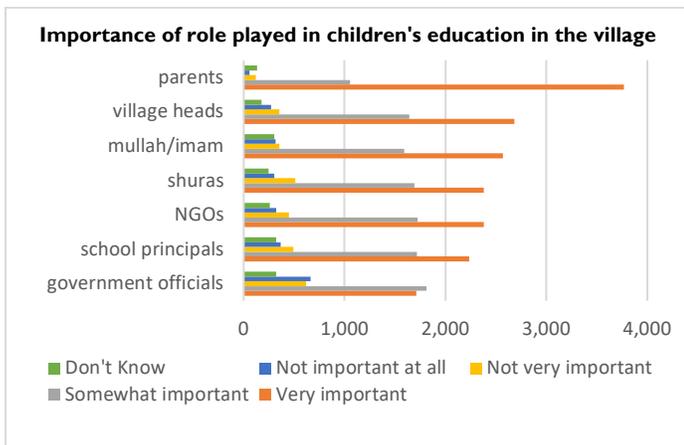


Figure 1. Importance of role in village children's education

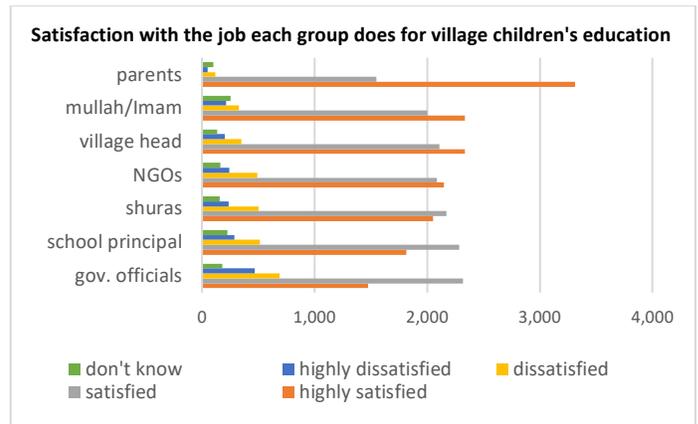


Figure 2. Satisfaction with various groups

Our data suggest that shuras are already a significant part of local governance in the country. Indeed, the reputation and trust in shuras among villagers indicate that the status of local shuras is well-established. This offers an opportunity for the government and NGOs to build on local community institutions' capacity to play the roles envisioned by national policies and fulfill their potential to become a competent body of the local governance structure. Below we share main lessons from our capacity building training that others may find helpful in planning and implementing similar efforts for rural and remote communities in Afghanistan.

### Lessons learned

- Meticulous planning is critical in reaching out to villagers, explaining training purposes, and informing them of the dates and locations. Community members need to be informed at least three days in advance of training. Due to limited cell phone service, trainers often need to visit villages in person to extend invitations. Thus, additional travel time and expense should be taken into account.
- Training venue and location affect attendance. The venue must be suitable for the training with access to basic equipment and facilities such as electricity, a prayer site, and an ablution room. The location and neighborhood must be appropriate for all participants, especially women. A busy urban area with many public or commercial activities is not comfortable for many rural women and can discourage their participation. A local government building is not an ideal choice either due to standard security measures (e.g., armed guards), which may cause discomfort among participants. Participants suggested that a school building was a more appropriate location than a restaurant or hotel.
- Careful consideration of local norms and expectations specific to each community is critical for the training team. This includes attention to dress, use of language, and gender dynamics within a group. Addressing the needs of illiterate participants is crucial, including preparing additional resources to accommodate them. Pictorial representation and small group activities were effective. The post-training evaluation must be short. Trainers should budget sufficient time for and integrate the evaluation into the agenda.