

## Activity 1: A lesson in Afghanistan

### Learning objectives

- To feel what it is like to have a broken education system.
- To compare and contrast schools in Afghanistan with schools in the UK.
- To suggest priorities for education reform in Afghanistan.

### Resources

- Photos from Afghanistan (see below)
- [Video: Nazifa's Story](#) (3min 51sec)
- [Video: Education for Girls: "Our Future Depends on It"](#) (2min 33sec)
- Flip-chart or A3 paper and marker pens

**Time required:** 60 mins

This activity asks teachers to simulate the learning environment faced every day by many students in Afghanistan.

Here are some of the challenges faced by Afghan students. Conditions in Kabul and other big cities are better than those listed below, while conditions in rural areas may be significantly worse. For example, only 8% of schools in Balkh actually have a building.

- Children often have a long walk to school – journeys of up to three hours each way are common, particularly in rural areas.
- Children are often bullied or harassed by adults on the way to or from school. This is much worse for girls than for boys.
- Violence and conflict affect many parts of the country. This closes schools and disrupts education.
- Although more new schools are being built, many schools still do not have a building.
- Many teachers are unqualified. Lessons are often of poor quality.
- Many schools do not have toilets, washing facilities, adequate textbooks, desks, chairs, writing paper, pens, and so on.

### Introduction (10 mins)

- As this lesson will be an unusual one for young people, contextualise it by first showing them the photos (see below) and/or showing the videos (links above) to illustrate life in Afghanistan.

### Experience an Afghan lesson (25 mins)

- Teach part of a regular lesson under as many of these conditions as are possible. This will vary depending on the circumstances, and young people should be prepared to reflect on their experience. Where it's not possible to directly simulate conditions in Afghanistan, young people could be asked to imagine them.

- Aim to teach the lesson, or part of it, outdoors. Under a tree may be a suitable location. If it's either very hot or very cold, students in Afghanistan manage as best as they can.
- Teach without desks and chairs. Young people should sit on the floor or the ground. It would probably be dusty in Afghanistan.
- Teach without textbooks, exercise books, pens, pencils and other school equipment. You may use a blackboard and slates if they are available.
- The class is likely to be large, so consider amalgamating two or three classes and teaching them together.
- Your teaching style will be predominantly “chalk and talk”. Ask young people to repeat and recite answers. Select one or two young people to work out calculations or write answers on the blackboard.
- Many girls do not have the opportunity to attend school. Some girls could be excluded from the lesson and given chores to do instead.
- Young people will be tired from their long walks to school, hungry, thirsty and needing to use the toilet. Several of the girls in the lesson will be having periods and there will be no bathroom.
- After you have taught some curriculum content, bring the young people out of role and back to their usual classroom setting.

### Reflection (20 mins)

- Ask the young people to work in groups and reflect on their Afghan learning experience. The groups should start by discussing the questions below. If the groups are going to report back to the class about their discussion, a scribe should note their thoughts on flip-chart or A3 paper.
  - What were the main differences between the Afghan lesson and the young people's usual lesson?
  - Was it difficult to learn effectively in the Afghan lesson? Why?
  - Do you think it was particularly difficult for girls to learn in the Afghan lesson? Why?
- Ask young people, still in their groups, to discuss ways in which education in Afghanistan could be improved. They should try and answer these three questions:
  - What is education currently like in Afghanistan?
  - What would you like it to be like in ten years' time? (Be realistic!)  
What five things should the government and international donors prioritise to make the improvements you would like to see? This question is about setting priorities and, if possible, identifying how they are interconnected.
- If time permits, bring the groups back together and ask them to feed their ideas and answers back to the class.

### Plenary (5 mins)

- Conclude the activity with a brief plenary. Stress the challenges faced by governments aiming to provide education for all the children in their country. When a country experiences conflict or other crises, these challenges are even more daunting.

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## Photos from Afghanistan



*A school in Jalalabad, Afghanistan  
Photo: Shah Bibi/ACBAR*



*Girls collect water in the Parwan-e-duo slum, Kabul  
Photo: Jason P. Howe/Oxfam GB*



*Children on the way to school, Shar-i-Buzurg.  
Photo: Elissa Bogos/Oxfam GB*



*A recently built school, Parwan.  
Photo: Louise Hancock/Oxfam GB*