



WORKING GROUP PAPER ON HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
(EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING)

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Afghanistan and Regional Cooperation	4
Five Priority Areas for Regional Cooperation	6
Proposed Action	6
Topic Two	7
Proposed Actions	7
Topic Three	8
Proposed Actions	8
Topic Four	9
Proposed Actions	9
Topic Five	9
Proposed Actions	10
Working Group Sessions Discussions	10
Quality Human Resources.....	10
Preparing the workforce for the labor market	10
Reduce the reliance on foreign labor and skills	10
Establishing a Human Resource Development policy for Afghanistan and the region	11

A) INTRODUCTION

- i. Human resources are the foundation of a nation's economy. The effective development of these resources is one of the most significant challenges needing to be addressed for national capacity development and economic growth. Only by strengthening the pool of qualified human resources can nations be provided with the skills necessary for boosting economic growth and productivity and for fostering stability and security.
- ii. Education and skills development are the main instruments of human resources development. The main challenge to human resources development is the nation's ability to provide access to quality education and training to all citizens, irrespective of race, religion, gender, economic background, disability and to overcome other access-related constraints such as security issues.
- iii. Success in human resources development is attained when the wide range of educational initiatives, including the provision of mandatory basic education, access to higher education, and the availability of programs in skills development, available to both male and female citizens, meet the demand of the market. When the labor force, as a whole, is not equipped to meet the demands of the market, this results in negative repercussions such as unemployment, dependence on foreign labor and sustained reliance on international assistance.
- iv. Although human resource development is primarily a national responsibility, regional cooperation can play an important role in this development and can offer significant value-added for the region as a whole. Effective regional cooperation in human resources development, through greater coordination of large-scale regional initiatives and internationally-supported programs, that recognize the centrality of Afghanistan, can significantly contribute to increased prosperity and stability to the region at large.
- v. Long term benefits of a regional approach to human resources development not only have the potential to yield increased stability, prosperity and development of the region as a whole, but also promise to build significant linkages between Afghanistan and its regional partners. This paper elaborates on five priority areas for human resource development with a set of recommendations in each sector for action, which will be followed up through the RECCA process.

B) AFGHANISTAN AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

- i. Human resources development in Afghanistan, despite significant improvements achieved in recent years, continues to face a significant skills gap between labor supply and market demand.
- ii. However, there have been important initiatives and successes achieved towards closing this gap. Over the past five years, 440,000 people in Afghanistan have gained employment through demand-driven training. The government's capacity for providing skills training has been expanded now to train 200,000 students per year. Two million people have been provided with skills training in order to acquire functional literacy. Thousands of new schools have been established and constructed. Currently, 60% of school-aged girls and 75% of school-aged boys have access to basic education. Moreover, access to basic health care services through expansion of human resource in the health sector has significantly improved the public health in recent years.
- iii. However, significant challenges remain across the board both in access particularly for women, and in the quality and relevance of human resource development that is available. Despite the establishment of a wide range of educational initiatives, including formal and informal education, literacy programs, technical and vocational skills-building programs, neither recent graduates nor the labor-force as a whole are meeting the skill demands of the market.
- iv. Another challenge is the access and quality of higher education in the country. Only 17 per cent of the population aged 25 and over has attended formal education; for women the ratio stands at 6 per cent. Universities are still unable to provide the qualified professionals needed for the labor market, particularly in the management and technical fields where the demand is critical.
- v. Furthermore, the energy, ideas, initiatives and market awareness of the private sector remain largely untapped in the development of labor-driven human resources, which in part, contributes to the wide skills gap and the high unemployment rate. Overall, unemployment has reached 35 per cent (2008 est.).
- vi. However, there have been many positive efforts made by regional partners to contribute to human resources development in Afghanistan. Some of these contributions include the provision of academic scholarships to promising Afghan students, the establishments of Model Schools (e.g. Afghan-Turkish Schools), the provision of short term vocational training and long-term technical education, the construction and renovation of schools, the establishment of partnerships between universities, and the provision of on-the-job training opportunities. Many countries in the region have provided scholarships and fellowships to Afghan students and officials among them India, Pakistan, Turkmenistan and China. However, it is essential to establish a coordinated strategy which reflects the long-term vision for Afghanistan and the region. This strategy

would serve to identify our mutual goals and the means by which they can be achieved. This would, in terms of specific large-scale internationally-supported projects, be supported by relevant regional partners. Without the establishment of such a strategy, it will be challenging for Afghanistan's long-term goals to be achieved. A regional approach to developing an education strategy will ensure that expected deliverables will be accomplished in an effective and efficient manner, and reduce the risk of duplication of effort on the part of the international and regional partners.

- vii. Since stronger and more coordinated regional cooperation is crucial to addressing the challenge of more effective and timely human resources development in Afghanistan, one of the priorities of the fourth Regional Economic Cooperation on Afghanistan is to urge regional partners to be proactive, coordinate their activities, and use all means available to contribute and provide support to the regional programs and projects in human resources development below.

C) FIVE PRIORITY AREAS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION

Topic One: Assuring access to elementary and secondary education for all. Expanding opportunities for access to higher education by increasing its quality and developing new curricula for emerging market needs.

- i. According to the goals and objectives of the Human Resource Development Cluster, all school-age children should have equitable access without discrimination to quality education to acquire competencies needed for a healthy individual, family and social lifestyle, in order to contribute productively to the economy and to pursue higher education.
- ii. Included in this objective is the need to tackle illiteracy, which remains a fundamental constraint to pursuing educational opportunities, knowledge-building and skills development. By promoting literacy, it is possible to boost people's productivity, and integrate more into the wider economy.
- iii. In this sense, the increase of enrollment to students in basic education and secondary schools together with providing a conducive learning environment, adequate number of teachers, and ensuring that all Afghan students have access to learning materials, is of importance. Accelerated learning programs, and skills-development programs can address those over-aged and mature students needing to acquire functional literacy.
- iv. The employability of school graduates in the job market can be increased by teaching vocational subjects introduced at lower secondary grades, combined with a three-year technical education program taught at the upper secondary schools.
- v. Enhancing and improving the curriculum in this regard will also help prepare student for enrolling in higher education programs. However the higher education system in Afghanistan also needs to improve in order to provide greater access and quality of services. New universities need to be established, dormitories for women need to be constructed, and faculty qualifications should be up graded.

Proposed Actions:

- Establishment of a coherent national policy framework to guide professionals and vocational training.
- Establishment of new schools by regional partners in a coordinated manner.
- Usage of existing schools and teachers as literacy centers with the assistance of regional partners to provide necessary curriculum material development.
- Establishment of new literacy centers.
- Printing text books and teachers' guides in line with the goals of Afghan Government.
- Preparing new curriculum for secondary grade schools with inclusion of vocational training subjects.

- Preparing educational programs and curriculums across universities in Afghanistan and in partner countries throughout the region.
- Extension of scholarships to those students in secondary and higher education institutions.
- Establishment of an internship program for Afghan students in secondary and higher education institutions in the region through programs like AISEC (Association Internationale des Étudiants en Sciences Économiques et Commerciales).

Topic Two: Preparing the population for the labor market by expanding qualified technical education and vocational training opportunities.

- i. 50 percent of youth, living in urban areas of Afghanistan, call themselves jobless or unemployed. Surveys have pointed out that one of the major factors for unemployment is the lack of marketable skills among the jobless people.
- ii. There are 52 technical education schools with a total of 26,000 students (3,000 girls). The ratio between students from technical and vocational training centers to high school students was only 1:25 in 2009. Moreover, the vast majority of technical and vocational schools and institutes are located in the capital, where as the most need is in the provinces and rural areas.
- iii. In order to provide relevant and quality technical and vocational education for both men and women and to enable them to meet the requirements of the labor market in Afghanistan and the region, additional technical schools and vocational training centers will need to be established and the capacity of existing ones expanded.

Proposed Actions:

- Offering vocational training opportunities in regional and partner countries, or in Afghanistan.
- Providing scholarships, especially by neighboring countries, and international partners.
- Establishing programs for skills training in sectors, such as health, mining, construction etc. where there is high demand.
- Improve basic skills and training for unemployed Afghans by establishing vocational training centers (e.g. Agha Khan Development Network or the Economic Policy Research Center in Turkey)
- Supporting technical and vocational training centers, schools and institutes through student/ teacher exchange programs.
- Establishment of five Training of Trainers (ToT) Centres. Five ToT Centers for vocational training needs to be established in five regions (Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, Balkh and Jalalabad). These centers will be primarily aimed at providing refresher courses to existing trainers and initial training to new instructors on a continuous basis.

- Specialization of the current technical and vocational training centers, schools and institutes to meet the demands of specific markets.
- Establishment of new schools by regional partners in a coordinated manner especially in the bordering provinces.
- Establishing and improving multi-purpose Community Centers (CATOM) for women. Conducting training in these Centers to improve their employment skills and help generate incomes.
- Promotion and engagement of the private sector (across the region) to establish technical and vocational training centers, schools and institutes in private-public partnership.
- Establishing the modality for public-private partnerships in the provision of education from basic to tertiary levels.
- Furnishing technical and vocational training centers, schools and institutes with necessary equipment.
- Signing bilateral agreements between employment institutions of RECCA participating countries.

Topic Three: Encouraging entrepreneurial training programs to promote innovation and improve the adaptability of workers and enterprises.

- i. Every economy is in continuous need of regenerating itself through new ventures and capitalizing on new ideas. Afghanistan needs those who have the knowledge, expertise, and the entrepreneurial spirit to enter new sectors and areas of business to provide sustainability in the labor market and to promote new ideas and innovations.
- ii. In that respect, other than supporting vocational training, trainees could be provided with venture capital. In the short-term this would create an employment multiplier by creating jobs and businesses that would further create more jobs. In the long-term, it would improve employment prospects. This would in turn reinforce close cooperation with the private sector and facilitate public-private partnerships.

Proposed Actions:

- i. Introducing entrepreneurship courses in the school curriculum.
- ii. Facilitate the involvement of the private sector in offering short-cycle certificates-level education for school leavers.
- iii. Consider specific market-based vocational and professional training initiatives for implementation.
- iv. Organizing regional seminars and conferences to disseminate information about emerging markets.

- v. Conducting skills learning programs relevant to industries in which Afghanistan has a comparative advantage (such as carpet weaving courses) and also creating opportunities for marketing products.
- vi. Developing a public relations campaign whereby the Afghan Diaspora (particularly those in business fields) could mentor and give advice to Afghans trying to start their business.
- vii. Reversing the brain drain through incentives provided by organizations and international partners, assisting re-integration and defining a comprehensive strategy to utilize their potential in the Development Strategy for Afghanistan.
- viii. Establishing zones for small industries in which graduate trainees can be employed, thereby encouraging Afghans to register for training programs related to sectors.

Topic Four: Providing occupational and vocational counseling

- i. The development and provision of occupational counseling and vocational guidance services in Afghanistan could help provide critical remedies for the country's high unemployment rates. Such services, if effectively developed in concert with the collection of job-related data and analysis of occupational needs, could help alleviate bottlenecks by addressing job-skills matching, identification of occupations in demand, potential areas for occupational growth, and demand-led vocational training opportunities in selected jobs field.
- ii. In light of this need, the establishment of Vocational Information Centers could assist the workforce in acquiring the information needed and to register the quality and quantity of workers needed in order to more effectively solve the needs of the existing labor market.

Proposed Actions:

- i. Establishing vocational guidance/ employment services centers in the provinces under the directives of a national labor-market information and analysis unit.
- ii. Employing regional advisors to serve as vocational guidance specialists in technical and vocational training centers, schools and institutes.

Topic Five: Formulating a systematic human resources policy can be an important component of regional cooperation.

- i. A systematic Human Resource Policy within a regional context will help to improve market-friendly labor regulation and facilitation in order to create an enabling environment for job generation and employment both inside and outside of Afghanistan.
- ii. Establishing such a framework requires a clear understanding of local needs through conducting surveys and developing policies and strategies based on findings to help inform the expansion of employment services.

Proposed Actions:

- Implementing periodic labor-market surveys in a regional context.
- Coordinating and consolidating human resource databases.
- Promoting compliance with the goals articulated in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy through the provision of further skills development opportunities and technical assistance.

WORKING GROUP SESSIONS DISCUSSIONS

Key questions for wider debate:

- i. The overall development goal of Afghanistan is to boost economic growth and increase productivity. To achieve this goal, Afghanistan needs to produce quality human resources and supply markets with the required skills.
- ii. **Quality Human Resources:** There are a number of ways in which Afghanistan can better produce quality human resources to support economic growth: 1) Increase the capacity, quality, and relevancy of the education sector. What else needs to be done or what should be done differently in order to achieve the objectives of 'Education for All' and the Millennium Development Goals set for Afghanistan by 2020? How can we enhance institutional and human capacity building that will significantly enhance capacity for implementation and budget execution in the government? How could the public-private partnerships in the provision of education play a major role? How to assure equal opportunities without any discrimination on the basis of gender, racial or ethnic origin, disability, religion or belief?
- iii. **Preparing the workforce for the labor market:** Without guidance and strategy it is difficult to meet the skills demand on the labor market. Vocational training is the key to reducing unemployment. How can we effectively increase the number of vocational training centers? What could be the contribution of the RECCA participating countries in technical education and vocational training? How can we involve the private sector in generating market oriented training? How to coordinate programs/assistance by different donors and international development partners in Afghanistan?
- iv. **Reduce the reliance on foreign labor and skills:** When the labor force does not meet the skills demand of the market this leads to a dependency on foreign labor. This can be reduced by providing incentives for educated and skilled Afghans to stay in the country and by supporting the return of skilled Afghans back to the country. How can we encourage the return and the reintegration of returnees? What are the possible multilateral or bilateral projects in human resources development that can be supported in the RECCA context? Can an approach to increasing engagement in the region be developed?

- v. **Establishing a Human Resource Development policy for Afghanistan and the region:** The role of the human capital is an important determinant of productivity, both at the individual and at the populous level. It is particularly crucial in today's knowledge-based economy. There is a need for systematic human resources policy, which begs the question, "How can regional cooperation contribute to developing a feasible policy?" How can that policy then be implemented? What would be the contribution and role of universities and educational training centers, especially those in the neighboring countries? How can the RECCA participating countries transfer their best practices in the field of workforce training and development to the labor market? What are some other possible ways of providing assistance?