The Asia Foundation re-established an office in Kabul in February 2002 to launch new program initiatives in key areas central to the development of post-Taliban Afghanistan. Essential among these initiatives is the creation of a functional system of education which is vital for long-term reconstruction of the country.

The Afghan system of higher education, particularly Kabul University, had been developed into a relatively strong set of institutions by the late 1970s, in part through assistance from The Asia Foundation. Today, the Foundation continues to play an integral role in aiding the higher education institutions in Afghanistan by providing essential support to Kabul University, the American University of Afghanistan (AU Af), other educational institutions, and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

From 1989 to 1994, the Foundation supported activities in basic literacy, numeracy, and vocational skills training for hundreds of poor Afghan women in refugee camps. Since the re-establishment of The Asia Foundation’s office in Kabul, a major emphasis of the Foundation’s re-emerging program in Afghanistan has been working to help women and girls rebuild their lives in the aftermath of the Taliban era. As part of its current programming, the Foundation has established strong links with the formal education system of Afghanistan and is providing small grants to local NGO partners in order to enable and expand educational opportunities for girls and women.

**SUPPORT FOR THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF AFGHANISTAN**

With the fall of the Taliban in 2001, higher education became a crucial part of reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. The American University of Afghanistan (AU Af) was created in 2004 to provide young men and women with American style higher education while celebrating the cultural heritage of Afghanistan.

Since 2005, the Foundation has been assisting the university to ensure that AU Af can run as an independent, transparent, and accountable entity. To achieve this, the Foundation has been responsible for providing technical assistance, with support from USAID, facilitating the USAID pre-award assessment, and finalizing an audit. Through the Foundation’s support, AU Af has seen several substantial achievements including: the establishment of independent financial management and functional logistical facilities, the commencement of preparatory school and graduation classes, the finalization of a facilities master plan, and reaching adequate staffing levels. In light of these accomplishments, the Foundation’s technical assistance will end in late 2008.

**NATIONAL COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION PREPARATORY COURSE**

One of the significant barriers facing students in Afghanistan is the lack of adequate and effective preparation for the national college entrance examination. Most Afghan students have little or no access to preparatory examination

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**ADVANCING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN AFGHANISTAN**

The Asia Foundation addresses strategic educational needs in Afghanistan by supporting initiatives in higher education and increasing educational opportunities for women and girls.
materials and are unfamiliar with registration procedures. This presents an enormous barrier in accessing higher education.

The Asia Foundation, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, has implemented a nationwide college preparatory course program to ensure students are prepared for their national college entrance examination. The program will engage around 6,600 teachers in 34 provinces who will reach the approximately 100,000 students nationwide eligible to sit for the national college entrance examination. Additionally, 60,000 Dari and 40,000 Pashto examination guidebooks will be distributed to students and teachers in 2009.

**INCREASING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS**

The Asia Foundation has established a small to medium grants initiative in order to address emerging and strategic needs in education across Afghanistan. These grants help to provide opportunities and access to educational institutions across Afghanistan for both girls and women.

Grants are given to local partners in order to support programs that benefit students in formal educational institutions or programs that have strong links with formal education systems. Since its inception, the program has supported various initiatives, including the establishment of 280 community libraries, a public campaign to further girls’ education on three national TV stations, providing schools with laboratory equipment and training for science teachers, and psychosocial training for teachers and girls.

**REMEDIAL AND ACCELERATED EDUCATION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Afghanistan’s educational system suffered greatly during 15 years of war, and girls were forbidden to attend school. Today, women and girls are eager to resume their education. The Asia Foundation, in partnership with Aid Afghanistan for Education (AAE), is supporting a two-year initiative to provide remedial and accelerated education programs to at least 2,000 students each year in five provinces. Students move up one grade level every eight months in order to complete their education. After completing the program, some students integrate into the regular school system while others continue their education with AAE. This program provides fundamental educational building blocks so that women and girls can have increased opportunities and enter university or the job market.

**SUPPORTING KABUL UNIVERSITY’S WOMEN’S DORMITORY**

Kabul University plays a particularly important role in providing technical education and training needed for reconstruction. In 2004, the university inaugurated a modern dormitory for 1,000 female students, made possible through a grant from USAID. The Asia Foundation has provided vital material upgrades for the living space, library, and clinic of the women’s dormitory. Through this support, the dormitory is becoming a place where both students and staff can build a healthy and caring community and is fostering an academically supportive environment where the students can flourish to their full capacity.

**RABIA-E BALKHI GIRLS’ HIGH SCHOOL**

Since 2004, The Asia Foundation has been providing support to Rabia-e Balkhi Girls’ High School in Kabul. Our support has helped to rebuild 14 classrooms, establish five science labs, and construct a new resource center with a library, multi-purpose conference and training hall and functional computer lab with 22 computers connected to the Internet.

The Asia Foundation continued its support during 2008 to both the Rabia-e Balkhi high school and the Resource Center. This support has brought visible changes to the school’s physical condition and improvements to some essential facilities which are used on a daily basis by nearly 3,000 girls. The sidewalks of the school were renovated, a new shaded meeting area was constructed, the sanitary system of the Resource Center rehabilitated and the water supply system was largely improved. In order to assist the resource center become more sustainable, the conference room of the resource center was upgraded and equipped with improved conference facilities.

The Asia Foundation is a private, non-profit, non-governmental organization. It is funded by contributions from corporations, foundations, individuals, and governmental organizations in the U.S., Canada, Europe, and Asia, and an annual appropriation from the U.S. Congress. Through its programs, the Foundation builds leadership, improves policies, and strengthens institutions to foster greater openness and shared prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.

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