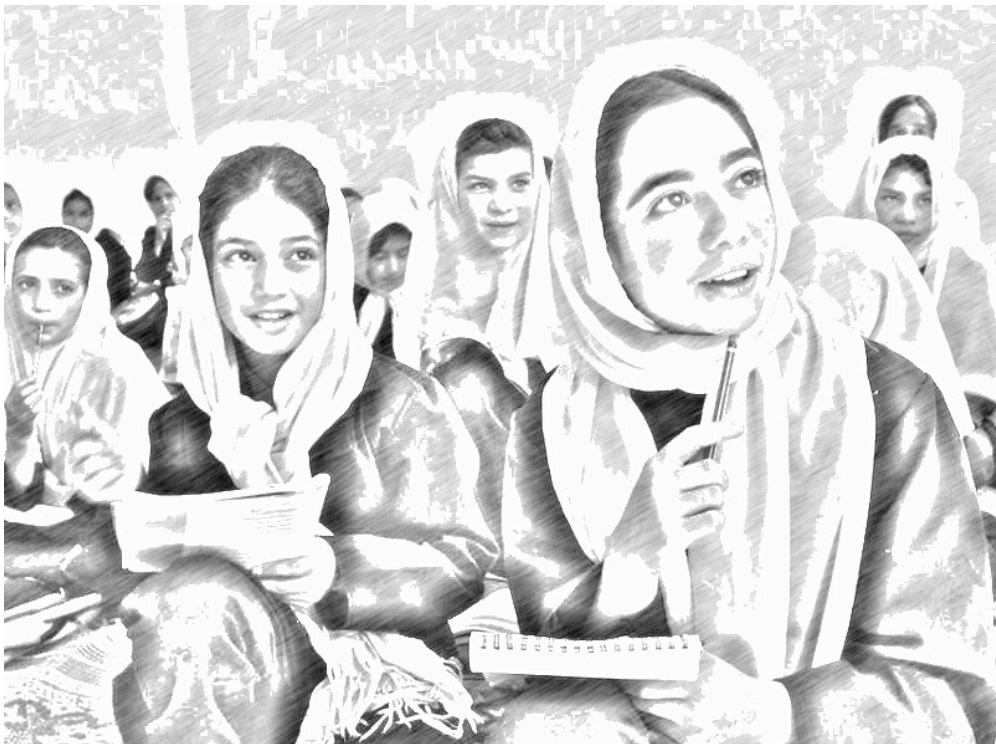


MASTER THESIS

**Alternative Spaces for Women's Education in Afghanistan**



**Case Study of Kabul**

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**Castellón, September 2013**

**Dedication**

To Afghan Women

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## **List of Abbreviations**

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

AFCECO: Afghan Child Education and Care Organization

AGEI: Afghanistan Girls' Education Initiative

AIL: Afghan Institute of Learning

ANDS: Afghanistan National Development Strategy

AWC: Afghan Women's Council

AWEC: Afghan Women's Education Center

AWRC: Afghan Women's Resource Center

BPFA: Beijing Platform for Action

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against  
Women

DKG: Norwegian Church Aid, Delta Kappa Gamma Society

EFA: Education For All

GDI: Gender-related Development Index

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GEM: Gender Empowerment Measure

GII: Gender Inequality Index

GIZ: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit

GNP: Gross National Product

HAWCA: Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan

HDI: Human Development Index

HDR: Human Development Report

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency virus

IHDI: Inequality- adjusted Human Development Index

MDG-F: Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund

MDGs: Millennium Development Goals

MOE: Ministry of Education

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations

NHDR: National Human Development Report

OPAWC: Organization of Promoting Afghan Women's Capabilities

RAWA: Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan

SAAJS: Social Association of Afghan Justice Seekers

SADC: Southern African Development Community

SOLA: School of Leadership Afghanistan

TTCs: Teacher Training Colleges

UN: United Nations

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNGEI: United Nations Girls' Education Initiative UNICEF: United Nations  
Children's Fund

WAPHA: Women's Association for Peace and Human Rights in Afghanistan

WHO: World Health Organization

W4WAfghan: Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan

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## **General Introduction**

This thesis is an empirical research based on an ethnographic and a theory-seeking approach. This study aims to analyze the progress and the challenges of women's education in general and particularly in Afghanistan. It also aims to identify the impediments to education for Afghan women. Through the struggle of Afghan women, this study seeks to analyze alternative methods that are derived from the struggle for women's education.

Moreover, this thesis is also based on my own perspectives as a researcher. As a peace student and as an NGO worker, I had an opportunity to visit Afghanistan and to volunteer with some local NGOs that work to provide women's education. I was able to observe and understand the reality of Afghanistan in general and the situation of women's education better. I believe that achieving gender equality could bring positive impacts to Afghan society and across the globe. I believe that empowering women through education could provide them real opportunities to create and experience their own freedom and to be self-reliant. I believe that change is important and should be based on self-realization, enhancement, and transformation from within. Finally, I believe that every problem and conflict can be transformed by using alternative methods that can promote change.

Throughout the research, I have based my arguments and worked diligently with four main questions: 1) How is women's education conceptualized in the academia and in policy-making?; 2) How have Afghan women been empowered and found alternative methods for education through their struggle?; 3) In comparison to formal education, what and how are the roles of alternative education for women in

Afghanistan?; and 4) How do NGOs in Kabul provide alternative spaces for women's education and what are its impacts. Based on the main research questions, the research has been conducted and focused on women's education in Afghanistan. Moreover, I have examined NGOs in Kabul as a case study in order to understand and to deeply analyze the real impacts of alternative education for Afghan women. The field research in Kabul was conducted for four weeks with two main NGOs through participant observation and through informal and detailed interviews.

During the long history of war and oppression, Afghanistan has been facing many difficulties in providing education for women. Many Afghan women have been living in poor conditions and are denied their rights to access education. In an effort to provide women's education, Afghan government, and many international and local organizations have been gradually emphasizing and addressing issues of education and have been implementing policies and programs such as the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All. The international community is implementing policies based on the capability approach that puts human beings at the center of development and focuses on providing real opportunities. Local civil society is also implementing many programs that follow the international agendas. However, there are still many impediments and challenges for Afghan women. Therefore, I posit that there is a need to find and support alternative methods to provide education that is not limited to only formal education system. Women's networks and NGOs that are formed under oppressive societies and war can be revolutionary. They are strong, empowering, independent, and transformative. Thus, I presume that NGOs are playing significant role in providing women's education and create positive impacts on women's lives in Afghanistan.

Therefore, this thesis questions the situation of gender equality, women's empowerment, and women's education both in the area of academia and the international agenda. In addition, it investigates the progress of the efforts in providing women's education both at the international and national level. In relation to women's education, the international development agendas, such as Human Development Report and Millennium Development Goals have been emphasizing on gender equality, women's empowerment, and education for all that are based on the capability approach. These three issues are interrelated and are the main emphasis in policy-making. However, even with many efforts, there are still inequalities and many challenges such as corruption, political instability, insecurity, and the reinforcement of a patriarchal system.

In the case of Afghanistan, this study investigates the struggle and the impediments to women's education. Under an oppressive and violent environment, Afghan women have found ways to survive and to access education. Therefore, the thesis investigates the alternative methods to access women's education. Moreover, the thesis probes a more specific case of women's education in Kabul. Through this research, differences are revealed in the situation of women's education in the urban and suburban areas of Kabul. The primary objective for the field research in Kabul was based on finding the role of NGOs in providing alternative spaces for women's education and its impacts. This new finding has led to pointing out the importance in comparing the differences of women's education in urban and suburban areas. Thus, this study finally investigates challenges and impacts on women's lives in general and compares differences between the urban and the suburban areas.

## **Research Problem**

The long history of war in Afghanistan crippled education and the most vulnerable groups are women who have had to endure war, trauma, and oppression. This situation is a great challenge to all the people of Afghanistan. Although there has been an improvement of education provision in post-Taliban Afghanistan, there are still problems of low quality education. In an effort to improving women's education, the international agenda has led to a series of changes in policy-making of Afghanistan. There is an increase of gender and education related policies such as the Back to School campaign and the Gender Equity Cross Cutting Strategy. However, in reality, many Afghan women still live in poor condition, face many impediments, are threatened by chronic insecurity.

In such limited and difficult situations, many Afghan women have failed, but some have found ways to build their networks and their strengths to support one another. The prolonged violence and conflicts such as Taliban attacks, violence against women and patriarchy within Afghanistan severely limit women's social and political participation. The struggle for education in Afghanistan is not only the greatest challenge, but it is also the greatest source of strength for both women and men.

Therefore, it is important to identify the struggles and the limitations that can be transformed for a better and a more sustainable society, particularly for women in Afghanistan. I posit that education can be revolutionary for women under an oppressive culture and situation like that which exists in Afghanistan. In the case of Afghanistan, it is important that the alternatives are derived from the local communities and from women themselves. Many development agendas and the

capability approach stress the importance of women and community participation. One reason is because the alternatives are transformed from the hardship, the contribution, and the struggle of the people. Therefore, NGOs that provide alternative methods are important in this struggle.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The primary objective of the thesis is to examine the progress, the impediments, and the impacts of women's education in Afghanistan with a scholarly and practical approach. This study seeks to analyze the situation and the impacts on the access to education of women in Afghanistan. Moreover, this study identifies alternative methods for women's education that are derived from the struggle of women under oppressive regimes in Afghanistan. The work of NGOs in program implementation is examined concerning its significance and impacts. Finally, this study seeks to find challenges, impacts, and lessons learned from the case study of NGOs in Kabul.

### **Research Questions**

The focus of the thesis is based on the following questions.

1. How is women's education conceptualized in the academia and in the policy-making?



2. How have Afghan women been empowered and found alternative methods for education through their struggle?
3. In comparison to formal education, what and how are the roles of alternative education for women in Afghanistan?
4. How do NGOs in Kabul provide alternative spaces for women's education and what are its impacts?

## **Methodology**

The research methodology used in this thesis is based on theory-seeking approach. "The theory-seeking approach aims to understand and interpret a given phenomenon using conceptual tools developed while reflecting on the phenomenon in question. This approach is an explicitly non-linear approach to theorizing" (Ackerly and Jacqui, 2010: 80). The approach is used to examine the phenomenon of women's education in Afghanistan and a case study of two NGOs in Kabul. Based on the theory-seeking approach, I use qualitative method. With respect to qualitative method, I use relevant secondary resources. The main authors that are used to conceptualize the main concept of women's education are Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. Moreover, I use resources from different UN agencies and non-governmental organizations to conceptualize the approach of the international agenda. The main organizations in this thesis are UNDP, UNESCO, and UN Women. Furthermore, I use statistical data from different UN's reports such as the HDR and the MDGs report. Most importantly, I use primary resources from participant observation and informal interviews. I conducted a field research in Kabul based on ethnography for four weeks

starting from June and finishing in July of 2013. Two NGOs were selected for this study based on the finding in chapter 2.3.2 concerning the differences in demography. One NGO is located in the urban area and the other is located in the suburban area. The interviews were conducted informally. According to Fetterman (1989: 41), “informal interviews offer the most natural situations or formats for data collection and analysis”. Moreover, the questions of the interviews were designed using open-ended questions and have several series of questions. This aims to “discover and confirm the participant’s experiences and perceptions” (Fetterman, 1989: 43). In addition, comparative analysis approach is also used to reflect the differences of the two NGOs in order to confirm the arguments and the findings in chapter 2.3.2. Furthermore, for the analysis of the case study, I use phenomenological approach to analyze individual experience and perception of students and NGO staff.

## **Structure**

Chapter One’s topic is “Conceptualizing Gender Equality, Women’s Education and Capability Approach”. It is divided into 2 main topics: 1) Conceptualizing Gender Equality, Women’s Education and Capability Approach, and 2) Women’s Education in the International Development Agenda. The first part aims to conceptualize the significance of women’s education in the academia and in the policy-making. First it examines the concepts of gender equality, women’s empowerment and the capability approach. Gender equality and women’s empowerment are examined in this chapter to find their significance and challenges. Moreover, the situation of education access is analyzed to understand the progress of women’s education in terms of education

provision and impediments. This, thus, sets a standpoint of the research to emphasize women's issues that are being neglected and that need to be addressed in the international agenda.

Second, the concept of women's education is explained in relation to the international development agenda. It first examines the approach of human development developed by different scholars and the use of the approach in the international development agenda. UNDP's Human Development Report and Millennium Development Goals are examined here of its approach and progress in relation to women's education. More importantly, this chapter links the progress and the challenges of human development in Afghanistan to the international agenda in term of policy-making.

Chapter Two's topic is "Alternative Spaces for Women's Education in Afghanistan". It is divided into 3 main topics: 1) Overview of Education in Afghanistan, 2) The Struggle for Women's Education in Afghanistan, 3) An Approach to Alternative Spaces for Women's Education. The first part aims to examine the situation of education in Afghanistan in general. However, it focuses more on formal education. Second, it analyzes the situation and impediments of women's education in Afghanistan. Moreover, it highlights the main impediments that Afghan women are facing in Afghanistan since the beginning of the civil war. Women's education in Kabul is specifically analyzed in this chapter. Through analyzing the struggle of Afghan women, alternative methods for women's education are introduced in this chapter. Finally, it focuses on the concept of non-formal education and informal learning. By comparing to formal education in the case of Afghanistan, the significance of non-formal education and informal learning is highlighted. Moreover,

NGOs and their educational programs are examined in this chapter. To support the importance of alternative women's education in Afghanistan, an interview with a staff of an important NGO that has been supporting women's education during the Taliban rule is presented.

Chapter Three's topic is "Researching local NGOs in Kabul: Impact of Alternative Women's Education". This chapter first provides an overview of 2 NGOs that are the main focus of the field research. Second, it presents the results of the interviews from the 2 NGOs. Finally, it concluded with analysis and findings from the interviews.

## **CHAPTER 1 Investing in Women's Education and its Impacts on the International Agenda**

### **1.1 Chapter Introduction**

In this chapter, I posit that women's education is an important key to eliminate gender inequality and to achieve human's well-being. Therefore, I first propose to conceptualize the concept of women's education and its significance both in the area of academia and in the international agenda. In addition, the concept is explained through the context of Afghan society. In relation to women's education, this study first investigates the concepts and the progress of gender equality, women's empowerment, and the capability approach. Gender equality and women's empowerment are examined in this chapter to find their significance and challenges.

Gender inequality is an issue of both men and women. Both are an inventor of this socially constructed norm that has inherently perpetuated over generations. It has negative impacts on the society, especially on women. This is because most women are marginalized and neglected. By addressing gender inequality, it could positively contribute to other developmental issues. As Kofi Anan highlights, “gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance”. Moreover, this chapter focuses on women’s empowerment, as it is important for achieving gender equality.

Education is seen as a tool to empower and to provide real opportunity for women to make choices and to achieve what they value of being and doing. Based on the capability approach, everyone should have real opportunity or possibility to make choices. It is important that the ability to make the choices is built based on self-realization and empowerment. Furthermore, it is important that the choices they make lead to self-reliance and to positive development. Thus, this chapter explains the significance of education in achieving gender equality and human’s well-being. Moreover, the situation of education access is analyzed to understand the progress of women’s education in terms of education provision and impediments. This study specifically focuses on women’s education because women are marginalized and are denied of their right to education. However, this study does not intend to claim that only women’s issues should be solved and addressed. Rather it intends to raise the voice of the unheard and to spread the untold story.

Second, I posit that it is important that women’s education be addressed in the international agenda. Thus, this study investigates the concept of women’s education

in relation to the international development agenda such as UNDP's Human Development and the Millennium Development Goals in terms of policy-making and implementation. Moreover, It examines the approach and the progress of human development based on the capability approach. More importantly, this chapter relates the progress and the challenges of human development in Afghanistan to the international development agendas. The approach of human development has been adopted by many development organizations. This has shifted the focus of development from economic growth to center on human being. The issue of gender equality, women's empowerment, and women's education have been gradually addressed in the global agendas. For example, there have been many conferences that focus on women, such as World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975, in Copenhagen in 1980, in Nairobi in 1985, in Beijing in 1995, in New York in 2000, and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Thus, There have been many improvements and contributions on the issues. However, the persistence of impediments to education access for women is still great.

In Afghanistan, it is challenging for the international development agenda to pressure the government to address the global policies on women's education. According to UNDP (2005:1), "Afghanistan today is not just one of the poorest countries in the world, but also has the worst human development indicators, comparable to only two equally war stressed countries in Africa – Sierra Leone and Angola". In the last part of this chapter, it thus examines the progress and the challenges to human development in Afghanistan.

## **1.2 Gender Equality, Women's Education and Capability Approach**

In many parts of the world, women have been given equal rights as to men such as the right to vote and the right to work. However, gender inequality still exists in every society and it threatens human well-being. Gender inequality is about power relations. Those who are more threatened and who have less power are women, since in many societies they are mostly perceived as subordinates to men and are marginalized especially in extreme patriarchal system. However, gender inequality would not be possible without women's involvement. In other words, both men and women are inventors of unequal power and they both control acquisition and maintenance. The discourse of gender inequality is socially constructed and has been ingrained into our daily life. In many parts of the world, it has become part of the culture and been normalized, which has made it difficult for both men and women to critically question the status quo and to seek alternatives. Therefore, it is of significant importance to take courage in challenging the dominant discourse of gender inequality and to find alternatives. Change is required and it should be based on self-realization, enhancement, and transformation from within which would impact the society in the long run and be more sustainable. The concept of women's empowerment and education will be introduced in this part of the thesis as a tool for change that assists women to realize and to increase their ability to make choices for their well-being. "Education is widely perceived as an indicator of the status of women and even more importantly, as an agent for the empowerment of women" (Jayaweera, 1997: 411). However, education in this thesis will be discussed not only in formal sector, but also in non-formal and informal learning sectors. This type of education is not only limited to official education such as primary, secondary and tertiary education, but it also

includes underground schools, training centers for women and literacy classes organized by NGOs. Accessing to this resource can provide benefits to women, as it is an intrinsic knowledge that can be developed and transmitted. Hence, the ability to access education for women will be discussed. Unfortunately, there are many limitations for women to access education particularly in countries such as Afghanistan that is the focus of this study. In Afghanistan, limitations such as extreme patriarchy and war have contributed to the persistence and the reinforcement of gender inequality that has prohibited many Afghan women from receiving education and participating in social and political activities. Therefore, women's empowerment through education could provide real opportunities for these women to be included in society and to be able to make choices for their well-being. As a result, it could contribute to the decrease of gender inequality.

In chapter 1.2.1, both gender equality and women's empowerment will be discussed, with a focus on the significance and challenges in women's lives that impact the society. as to establish main approaches that will be used to analyze in the context of Afghanistan as a case study. Most importantly, women's education will also be explored in chapter 1.2.2 to set an understanding of the thesis's emphasis on women's education as well as its relation to the capability approach. The approach is taken as the main concept of human development that will be closely examined in chapter 1.2.3. In summary, chapter 1.2 aims to interrelate all the approaches that are being focused in both local and international policies such as in civil society's projects, UNDP's Human Development and Millennium Development Goals. It also aims to find critiques and recommendations that can be used to support and analyze in Afghan context.



### **1.2.1 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**

Gender equality and women's empowerment have been major areas of concern in local, national, and international development. As Kofi Anan stated, "gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance". Therefore, when inequality in gender is constructed and ingrained into every sphere of our society both unconsciously and intentionally, its impacts are greatly degrading to human progress and to the ability to achieve well-being. Giving an example in economy, according to Kabeer (2003: 40), gender inequality has negative impacts on economic activities especially to countries in South Asia and Sub-Saharan African. It is, thus, important to ensure that the aspect of gender equality is integrated into every development policy and implementation. As the main focus of this paper, gender equality in this sense will be discussed and analyzed in term of equality of women as women have been most marginalized in society. Supporting evidences will be presented later in this part of the thesis. Furthermore, one most considerable tool to tackle the issue is empowerment. Empowerment, especially women's empowerment has been utilized to create changes, to provide access to resources and enhance human's ability to access those resources in order to make good choices and fulfill their choices. The concept that will be later explored is related to power relations. However, in many societies women are subordinated, marginalized and victimized so that they have less or no power in making decision. Vice versa, this struggle of women has disempowered them not to raise their voices and stand up against more powerful actors. Therefore, both gender equality and women's empowerment should be put into the center of human development. The most notable UNDP's report, Human Development

Report 1995 stated that equality of opportunity for all people including women and men and empowerment of people are at the heart of basic objective of development as enlarging people's choices (UNDP, 1995b). This part of the thesis provides recommendation for policy-makers, especially the ones related to female education that will be further discussed in chapter 1.2.2.

According to WHO (2009: 3), differences in gender roles and behaviors often create inequalities, whereby one gender becomes empowered to the disadvantage of the other. In every society, women and men play different roles based on constructed social norms. This has been creating differences in gender role and gender inequality. Men privilege is very common in many societies that subordinate women to center on men. Based on this social constructed norm of women being subordinated and lower than men, women are usually victimized and perceived as weak. In many societies, women are viewed as subordinate to men and have a lower social status. This allows men to have power and to control over greater decision-making than women. Gender inequality is often maintained the society and is inherently perpetuated over generations through institutionalization and reinforcement by women and men who have been conditioned and indoctrinated to believe in natural, normative and unchallengeable features of the system. As Subrahmanian (2005: 398) argues, this has become an ideology in society as part of basic social norms, practices and rules, which is marked as culture and create the identities of feminine and masculine. In other words, gender inequality is socially constructed. It comes in many forms such as, gender-based violence, patriarchy, as well as the unequal distribution of economic power and relations.

One detrimental aspect of gender inequality is gender based violence, including sexual violence. Sexual violence, a form of gender-based violence, has occurred in every part of the world. Although it does not occurred to only women, men as well have been sexually violated, “often inequalities in gender increase the risk of acts of violence by men against women” (WHO, 2009: 3). In the case of Afghanistan, sexual violence such as rape has been used systematically to control the population and as a weapon of war. Gender inequality has been identified as a major root cause of sexual violence against women. According to United Nation Secretary-General, the most common form of the violence is physical violence by an intimate partner. Intimate partner violence can be defined as, “any behavior by a man or a woman within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm to those in the relationship” (WHO, 2009). This also demonstrates that household and kinship system have great influence on both women and men. As a result, this has also led us to another issue of gender inequality, patriarchy. In relation to women’s education, gender-based violence is one of many impediments that discourages and limits women from access to education. Moreover, the violence has disempowered women to exercise their rights and their right to education. For example, in Afghanistan, because of rape and female discrimination women are fear to go outside or to go to school. In some parts of the world that practice female genital mutilation, many girls and women were prohibited from going to school due to consequent health issues. There are great numbers of women who have become victims of this violence and has suffered physically and psychologically. UN women reports that “globally, up to six out of every ten women experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime” (UN Women). Therefore, gender-based violence that

disempowers women and reinforces gender inequality is identified as a major impediment to women's education.

Patriarchy, the most marked form of gender inequality and especially seen as major resistance to women in Afghan society, is characterized by socially and culturally constructed hierarchical social stratification in divide and rule fashion which prescribes value judgment, defines and imposes expectations, roles and behaviors deemed appropriate to social groups based on biological and other forms of distinction (Michael, 2000: 1). It is invested in social structure that gradually disempowered human abilities to critically question, discern and challenge the structure. For example, in Afghanistan, women's responsibility is to stay at home, do housework, and raise children. Men control resources and income and prohibit women to go outside. This has put women under the control of men whose status is traditionally more powerful than that of women.

The discourses that emerge around gender and patriarchy are not necessarily confined to individual man-woman relationships but rather the exploitative power relation of the dominance and subordinate manifested in various forms of injustice such as violation against women as already mentioned, child abuses, racial, linguistic, religious, cast, environmental exploitation and etc. Even though it is not only women who suffer from gender inequality, women are still the majority who are sexually violated. Murray (2008: 12) argues that, "the subordination of women as well as the persistence of poverty, the proliferation of violence, and continuing gaps in access to food, health care, education, and living wages are in their breadth and depth like a war on women". Thus, the impact of gender inequality on women is emphasized in this thesis and most importantly it should be urgently addressed along the process of

development.

This thesis focuses on women because many women are still marginalized and live in poor conditions. Therefore, by eliminating gender inequality and women's marginalization, the impacts could positively contribute to development in terms of economy and society. In relation to socio-economy, women's issues can be linked to poverty. The first Human Development report in 1990 stated that, "poverty has a woman's face. Out of 1.3 billion people in poverty, 70% are women" (UNDP, 1995a: 4). However, poverty definition in this case does not lie in poverty itself. It does not mean that women do not have food to eat, but it is a matter of who gets to eat lesser food and who gives permission to work outside or to go to a hospital; it is a matter of distribution and choices that women receive. The relation between women and poverty is a convincing reason to put a focus on women's disadvantages as well as advantages. Women receive advantages when they are empowered and are able to exercise their power such as power in decision-making. This has great benefits on the situation of the households. As Kabeer (2003: 81) argues, "...women in poor households were largely responsible for meeting families' basic needs". When women have power in decision-making in the households, they are likely to prioritize on meeting basic needs such as food and medicine of the whole family.

In relation to economy, because half of the world population is women and they have potential to work and exercise their ability, they could contribute to better and more sustainable economy. In 2012, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development stressed that, "women have central, transformative roles in sustainable development, and that gender equality must be a priority for action in areas including economic, social and political participation and leadership." (Kabeer, 2003: 207-209). However,

economically women still lack of supports and opportunities as can be demonstrated in inequality in workplaces and in the lower distribution of wages and loan. For example, many women are facing sex discrimination and sexual harassment at workplaces and without effective legal support (Nussbaum, 2000: 1). Furthermore, they are limited to loan access. For example, according to Schuftan (2010: 437), “worldwide, only about 1% of all loans are granted to women”.

In relation to society, women’s issues are emphasized in this study because women’s status is still lower than men in many societies such as in the case of son preferences and patriarchal system. As Nussbaum shared an Indian proverb that said, “a daughter born / To husband or death / She’s already gone” (Nussbaum, 2000: 2). Moreover, patriarchal society that portrays women as subordinates to men limits the actual opportunities for women. As a result, women are forced to face difficult situations such as lack of education, nutrition and other resources as well as women’s right to inheritance. Many women have been forced to live in poor and harmful conditions. For example, there is high rate of maternal mortality due to lack of nutrition and improper health care. In addition, many girls and women are forcibly exposed to harmful health related jobs such as prostitution that has been associated with Sexual Transmitted Infections (STIs) and the spread of AIDs.

In addition, women are focused in this thesis because it is an issue of justice. As Murray (2008: 15) states, “we focus on women...because women's experiences are different and understudied, because societies need women to be healthy and fully engaged, because it is only fair that women have full equality in their societies”. It is the job of both men and women to engage everyone into the process of deconstructing and reconstructing the gender discourse and ending gender inequality. This is because

it does not only benefit women, but also the society as a whole. Differences between men and women do not only restrict women's freedom to choose and have negative impacts on the well-being of women, but also negatively implicate their families and communities (Schuftan, 2010: 438). Therefore, when women are empowered and given real opportunities to access resources and to exercise their rights, consequently their families and communities will be positively benefited.

To have real opportunities and access to resources for women as mentioned earlier, women's empowerment should be prioritized as it is important for achieving gender equality goals. Some positive outcomes from women's empowerment promoted by the Millennium Development Goals in terms of health and education are that poorer women who are empowered are likely to seek out contraception and maternal health services, to ensure the survival and health of their children and other family members, to promote the education of their children, to reduce gender discrimination against daughters in health and education, and to negotiate successfully for safe sexual practices that leads to reduction of HIV-AIDS (Kabeer, 2003: 219). Therefore, the concepts of empowerment can be explored through two aspects: first, through power relations and second, through the three interrelated dimensions of agency, resources, and achievements; both aspects explain empowerment as the ability to make choices.

Empowerment can be discussed through the concept of power relations as argued by Kabeer, "...power is in terms of the ability to make choices. To be disempowered means to be denied choice..." (Kabeer, 2005: 13-14). Empowerment, thus, gives ability to those who are denied choice. In addition, poverty can be related to disempowerment in the aspect of power and ability to make choice. Poverty

represents inability to make choice or ones who have no or less power. Nevertheless, Kabeer (2003: 169) argues that, “poverty manifests itself as material deprivation, but its causes can be found in the power relations that govern how valued resources- material and symbolic- are distributed in a society”. Therefore, the poor people who are disempowered are the ones who lack the power and are in need of alternatives in order to acquire the ability to make different choices, which in this sense is the choice to be empowered.

The second aspect of empowerment is discussed through the three interrelated dimensions: agency, resources and achievements. As Kabeer (2005: 15) acknowledges, agency as the central concept of empowerment represents process of making choices and of making these choices happen through resources seen as the channel for agency. With agency and resources, there are outcomes that are referred as achievements. This interrelation can be explained through one example from my research in Afghanistan using the interview of a 36-year-old woman who is taking a literacy class organized by a local NGO. She is motivated or empowered to take the literacy class while she has to hide it from her husband who thinks that she should not learn how to read and write. This kind of motivation is explained as agency. The literacy class and the process of learning are explained as resources. With both agency and resources, achievements can be created. In her case, her achievement is that she uses her ability in reading and writing to choose proper medicine for her children. Additionally, Kabeer explains that, the concept of resources and agency relate to Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach that refers to as “capabilities: the potential that people have for living the lives they want, of achieving valued ways of ‘being and doing’” (Kabeer, 1999: 438). This approach will be specifically examined in chapter



1.2.3 in a relation with women's education.

In conclusion, the concepts and the significance of gender equality and women's empowerment examined above can be put into practice such as in policy-making and implementation. To act on the issue of gender equality and women's empowerment, both local and world's policy makers need to include women in decision-making and policy implementation. Women's participation is crucial as to give equal opportunity to women to make choices and include women's aspects onto the policies. The Human Development Report of 1995 that emphasized the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment provided five steps to gender equality: 1) mobilization of national and international efforts to bring about legal equality in an agreed period of time; 2) altering economic and institutional arrangements to promote more choices for women and men in the work place; 3) at least 30% of decision-making positions to be held by women; 4) programs to ensure universal female education, improved reproductive health and increased credit for women; and 5) national and international programs to provide people, especially women, with more access to economic and political opportunities (Kabeer, 2003: 16). In the step four, giving access to female education is one of the important steps as well as a main indication of success in achieving gender equality. Although giving access to credit, creating constitutional provision for political participation or equalizing educational opportunities do not automatically empowering themselves, they create alternative spaces for transformation (Kabeer, 1999: 462). Empowering women by providing access to education will be specifically analyzed in chapter 1.2.2 of its potential to create alternative spaces for women so as to find how it can provide real choices and opportunities for women and bring positive impacts to the society.

### **1.2.2 Access to Women's Education**

A Pakistani education activist, Malala Yousafzai, delivered her inspiring speech on Malala Day 2013 at the UN General Assembly. She stressed out the importance of achieving the global education goal, Education for All, and the urgent need to address girl's right to education.

So here I stand one girl among many. I speak – not for myself, but for all girls and boys. I raise up my voice – not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard. Those who have fought for their rights: Their right to live in peace. Their right to be treated with dignity. Their right to equality of opportunity. Their right to be educated (Malala Speech; cited in The Independent, 2013).

Malala survived from a gunshot by some Taliban gunmen trying to kill her because she advocated education for all girls. Her life being threatened by the Taliban has never stopped her from continuing to fight for girl's education. Her activist work has inspired people around the world including Afghans who have long been threatened by the Taliban. The Taliban is one of many threats to education especially to women's education. During the time that the Taliban ruled Afghanistan, women were prohibited from going to school and from participating in social activities. Although, the Taliban government has collapsed since 2001, the opportunities available to Afghan women to receive education are still limited. As Malala also stated in her speech, “the extremists are afraid of books and pens. The power of education frightens them. They are afraid of women. The power of the voice of women frightens them” (The Independent, 2013). Education does cause to women to become more powerful. It is such a powerful strategy, because the number of marginalized women is great. When they are empowered through education, the impact is enormous. However, at present, most adult illiterates are women and most out-of-school children are girls (UNESCO, 2009: 30). This situation is happening worldwide and in need of

change.

This chapter, therefore, aims at understanding and examining the significance of women's education as well as its impacts on the society both positively and negatively. Moreover, limitations to access to education will be examined so as to find alternatives and recommendations.

Firstly, it is important to clarify what is implied by education in this thesis. There are different forms and levels of education. The one that is best known is formal-education or official education. There are also other forms – non-formal education and informal learning – that are mostly provided and organized by NGOs. The levels of education that are usually emphasized in development policies are primary, secondary, tertiary and higher educations. However, the concept of education in this paper does not confine to only completion of primary or secondary school, but it highlights the effects of education from the level of literacy. As Nussbaum (2004: 334) also argues, “a person who can read the newspapers has a much fuller and more independent voice than one who cannot”. Even for a basic literacy class, it can empower women to continue to a higher education. In other words, it is a stepping-stone to better quality of education. In Afghanistan, a study by Tembon and Fort (2008: 197-198) argues that the real core of women's education and true empowerment is that they can choose for themselves, that education opens their minds to critically think and analyze even learning from basic reading and writing. It is important that women are able to act on their own and to make their own choices. In other words, they should not be imposed by other people to act or to make choices. Rather they should be guided for self-realization or self-enlightenment. This is thus the true empowerment. Moreover, education in this paper is not limited to classroom education, but rather describes a

form of education that exists everywhere especially in a society where there are many impediments to women's education. As Murray (2008:33) argues, "education can be offered on a railway platform in Rajasthan, India, and in a private school in the United States; it can be grasped by an eager child, in a war-torn building in Kabul or in the mobile schools of Sudan". Although there is no proper classroom, both women and men who are eager to learn or to teach can always find alternative places that offer education. Each form and level of education will be deeply discussed later in this thesis.

Women's education can be linked to many socio-economic measurements such as poverty, economic growth, power relation and health. In this context, women's education means gender equality in education. For example, in the international development agenda such as Millennium Development Goals, gender equality in education has been used to measure MDG 3: promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Moreover, the goal to achieve universal primary education in MDG 2 focuses on ending gender disparities. Many researches (UNDP, 1995b; Kabeer, 2003; Kabeer, 2005; Swetman, 2005; UNICEF, 2006; UNESCO, 2009) found that there is also a strong link between poverty and gender equality in education. They suggest that children whose mothers are illiterate tend to be out of school, that decreasing educational gaps between men and women increases GNP rates, that education increases women's and their family's well-being, and that female educational attainment has a positive effect on economic growth and etc (UNESCO, 2009:31, Kabeer, 2005: 16, Kabeer, 2003: 41).

In the context of power relations as it relates to gender inequality and empowerment, education suggests a change in power relations within and outside the

household (Kabeer, 2005: 16). Many problems such as domestic violence and son preference that women are facing within the household can be interpreted as a consequences of the patriarchal system. However, women can challenge this system and other problems through women's empowerment. Therefore, education takes an important role in challenging the negative traditions. According to Kabeer (2003: 41), "educated women also appear less likely to suffer from domestic violence". This is because educated women appear to be stronger in decision-making and more confident to raise their voice. When they can read and write, they can have better access to more knowledge to realize their own rights and fight against their husbands when beaten by them. In a research of Sen in West Bengal, he mentioned the significance of women's education that educated women can deal better with their violent husband. He argues, "access to secondary stages of education may have an important contributory role in enhancing women's capacity to exercise control in their lives...through a combination of literacy and numeracy skills, and enhanced self-esteem" (Sen 1999; cited in Kabeer, 2005: 16). Moreover, educated mothers tend to support their daughters to go to school. Kabeer suggests that maternal education have larger effect than paternal education, because they tend to use unearned incomes in favor of daughters investing in their education. (Kabeer, 2003: 162) Moreover, women with higher education in the household can help their families to bring more income than ones that only depend on their fathers or male members. Furthermore, education suggesting the change in power relations outside the household relates to women's capability to deal with public services including government officials, different service providers (Kabeer, 2005: 17), and even health related service providers. A study in Nigeria shows that women who have received more education will attend prenatal clinics, births will be attended

by proper medical staff, children will receive complete immunization, and sick children will receive proper medical care (Kabeer, 2003: 161-162).

Finally, as just mentioned above, women's education improves health of both mother and child. Maternal education reduces maternal and child mortality rates. This, for example, relates to learning how to prevent HIV and AIDs. "More educated mothers are more likely to know that HIV can be transmitted by breastfeeding, and that the risk of mother-to-child transmission can be reduced by taking drugs during pregnancy" (UNESCO, 2011: 36). A study shows that "1-3 years of maternal schooling reduce child mortality by 15 per cent" (Kabeer, 2003: 161-162). The same study also suggests that there is a link between women's education and fertility rates. It explains that education increases women's age of marriage and it delays the age of the first birth. Moreover, it opens access to contraception and improves their treatment by health providers (Kabeer, 2003: 161-162).

Nevertheless, misuse of education can negatively impact women and society. In a discourse of education, it can mean preparing girls to become better wives or mothers that increases their chances of getting better husbands. This type of education does not enhance the ability of women to make choices, but to construct a discourse that put women in subordinate status (Kabeer, 2005: 17). This social discourse has been hidden in school's curriculum and materials that teach girls and women of how to behave towards men and to obey their husbands, which reflect male domination. Moreover, some studies suggest that teachers could see that boys learn more important subjects whereas girls are assigned to clean the classroom or to do more simple tasks. This, thus, creates a culture of low self-esteem and aspirations that could impede their personal development (Kabeer, 2005:17, Jayaweera, 1993 cited in Jayaweera, 1997:

417). Another misuse of women's education is by policy makers. The implementation to provide education for girls and women is focused only on improving family health and welfare, rather than really preparing them for a more equal place in the economy and the society (Kabeer, 2005: 18). This, thus, is not a policy that truly aims for sustainability, but rather self-interest.

Although there are both positive and negative aspects on women's education, it has many positive outcomes if it is used properly. It is undeniable that women's education needs more attention from both local and international policy makers. This means providing equal access to women. However, achieving gender equality does not mean only providing education for women, but should focus on both women and men receiving equal access. Equally important, men are great supporters of women and may contribute to the decrease of gender inequality and help support women to access education and participate in social activities. For example, Malala Yousafzai's father has always seen the importance of education and has great influence on her life and work on advocating girls' education. Therefore, women and men together need to put an effort to achieve gender equality in education to support illiterate and uneducated women who are outnumbered.

In the development agenda, education is measured by gender parity. According to many statistical data, the gap is getting smaller. The latest data in Millennium Development Goal Report 2013 shows that gender disparity is closest to being achieved at the primary level. However, in many parts of the world, it also shows that girls are still facing high impediments to schooling (UN, 2013b). Moreover, a collection of data demonstrates for example that "in South Asia, female literacy rates average around 50% of those of males. In some countries the rate is still lower: e.g. in

Nepal 35%, Sierra Leone 37%, Sudan 27%, Afghanistan 32%. Two-thirds of the world's illiterate people are women” (Nussbaum and Glover, 1995: 2). Therefore, impediments to education access need to be examined by both data analysis and by social context. By analyzing some collections of data, it can guide development policy-makers to tackle the prioritized and needy issues. Nevertheless, keeping in mind that there is much uncollected data, and therefore any conclusions reached do not represent the real situation in many parts of the world. In Afghanistan, for example, because the country had been in war for three decades, it had been difficult to collect data from many parts of the countries. This reflects that the present data alone is not enough to present the real situation. Analyzing the social context should go hand in hand with data analysis.

Hence, some impediments to access education are highlighted. “Insecurity, social issues, the geographical coverage of schools, inadequate facilities, lack of separate schools for girls, the demand for domestic work, and poor educational quality are some of the causes of the inequitable educational opportunities and the high numbers of drop-outs” (Center for Policy and Human Development, 2011). The issue of insecurity has a negative impact on everyone. The war with the Soviet Union, the warlords, the situation under the Taliban regime, and the Taliban attack during the government of President Karzi have all caused a high level of insecurity in Afghanistan. For women, insecurity has prevented women from going outside. Nowadays, many girls are still prohibited from going to school and from going outside due to fear of rape, kidnapping and sexual assault. Moreover, violence against women has worsened educational opportunities of Afghan women and girls. As mentioned by the United Nations, “The pervasive violence against women is now considered “a



silent epidemic” that has its roots in the low status of women, and is compounded by long exposure to hostilities and conflict” (UNDP, 2005).

The geographical coverage of school is also one of the major obstacles to education especially in rural areas. Due to the low budget of the government and to low attendance, schools in remotes areas are closed down or difficult to get to. The number of schools is usually concentrated in capital cities or in big cities. This has more of an effect on girls and women, since poverty in rural areas forces girls to do housework and fieldwork. Murray (2008: 44) argues that parents prefer girls to work in the field or to do housework, rather than to spend time and money for schools. To choose between son and daughter, parents prefer to spend money on son for school than on daughter. Thus, many girls and women especially in remote areas have no choice, but to stop going to school and work instead. This demonstrates that poverty coupled with son preference have negative impacts on women’s education.

Inadequate facilities, lack of separate schools for girls and poor educational quality result in low number of attendance and reinforce traditional gender roles. Girls might be registered to schools due to compulsory education, but inappropriate facilities discourage them from continuing. In addition, fear of sexual taboos has been challenging women’s education. As Murray demonstrates a situation in South Asia, “...social contact with male teachers and students may violate social norms of chastity” (Murray, 2008: 46). The poor quality of education such as lack of female teachers, gender-biased teachers, and gender stereotyping in curriculum has devalued status of girls. As a result, it has discouraged girls from attending the school. In South and West Asia, the lack of female teachers is one of the major obstacles to girl’s access to education (UNESCO, 2009: 31, Kabeer, 2005: 17). Also, some studies

concerning the attitudes of teachers toward students show that teachers give more attention to male students and that teachers have the perception that boys need a career and girls need a husband. These opinions reinforce gender biases and disadvantage female students. Furthermore, girls are portrayed as passive, modest and shy, while boys are portrayed as assertive, brave and ambitious (Kabeer, 2005: 17). This has been portrayed by gender stereotyping in curriculum.

In addition, cultural practices and norms such as female genital mutilation and child marriage have prevented girls from attending schools. Many girls suffer from female genital mutilation that is seen as a rite of passage. This cultural practice has prohibited girls from going to school and causes serious health issue. Many girls fall sick after the cutting. Many have high fever and infection from unclean cutting procedure, which could take months to recover. As a result, they stop going to school because they are unable to catch up with the class and some have to prepare for their marriage.

In conclusion, access to education is still limited in many parts of the world. Countries that are in restricted conditions such as long decades of war, extreme patriarchy, and extreme poverty struggle more to equally provide education to women and men. Gender inequality in education resulting from different gender related issues has put women in impoverished situations. For years, local and international actors have been trying to solve poverty by concentrating on economic growth, the benefits of which was assumed to trickle down to the other issues and achieve human well-being, including but not limited to female education. However, as Nussbaum (2004: 328) argues, “all concerned should recognize that promoting economic growth is not a sufficient way to promote education for women”. The growth-oriented policies do not

simple solve the issue. Thus, it is important to recognize that women's education is an issue of human rights, that gender equality in education is an issue of right to education and social justice. These recognitions need to be prioritized by nations as well as strong cooperation and support from wealthy nations to support in the form of resources (Nussbaum, 2004: 328). However, a prominent international effort, the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, has proposed women's education as both a human right and a strategy for development. Since then, more international cooperation has been strengthened and many projects have been implemented on women's education.

Most importantly, policy change and implementation should involve women's participation. Women's self-reliance and capacity should be recognized as a positive contribution to development. The 1995 conference in Beijing highlighted literacy as a key to women's participation in societal decision-making. Furthermore, according to Murray (2008: 42), "education earns community respect, and being respected builds confidence and encourages participation". Another study also suggests that "education and employment together appear to contribute more effectively to increasing women's self-reliance and capacity to control their lives (Jayaweera, 1997: 422). Thus, equal access to employment also reflects gender equality and women's empowerment. This indicates that women and men with the same level of education should be given equal employment opportunity and that such opportunities should not be limited by class or gender.

Finally, more intervention into women's education from local and international NGOs will suggest alternatives that could be more effective and involve community participation in project's planning and implementation that will lead to a more

sustainable future.

### **1.2.3 Women's Education and the Capability Approach**

During my research in Kabul, I met two girls who both graduated from high school and are pursuing university degrees. Raihana (not her real name) is from a middleclass, affluent background and Madina (not her real name) is from an orphanage. With the support of her family, Raihana is now studying at American University of Afghanistan in Kabul. Madina is also studying at the same university. With the support from the orphanage and donors, she was able to finish her high school education and receive a scholarship to attend the university. Since English is an official language in the university, they have to communicate in English in every class. Raihana had gone to a good school that offered good English classes and prepared her for higher education. Therefore, she always speaks English with confidence, has high self-esteem and good social skills. On the contrary, Madina has been struggling with her English, because she did not have a chance to learn much English at the orphanage and at her high school. She, thus, always has no confidence to discuss or raise her voice in the class resulting in a low class attendance. Moreover, being an orphan is not a good image in Afghan society that put her in a difficult situation for making friends and socializing. Nevertheless, she works hard to receive good grades in every class. Still, she lacks social skill due to the negative perceptions toward orphans in her school. They both nonetheless are expecting to graduate soon and receive a bachelor degree. In the future, Madina wants to become a politician and Raihana wants to become a professor. This shows that both girls are achieving the same functioning which is the university degree, but with different capabilities. Without the opportunity

that Madina received from the orphanage, she would have never finished high school, nor would she have continued to a university.

The above story is an example related to the capability (capabilities) approach developed by a Nobel-Prize economist, Amartya Sen and a notable political philosopher, Martha Nussbaum. Also, it demonstrates differences between capability and functioning that define the central concept of the capability approach. In brief, capabilities refer to real opportunity to achieve; and functionings refers to actual achievement. Furthermore, it shows the importance of having an educational opportunity or any opportunity in order to achieve what a person values doing or being. Madina would never have gone to school, if there was no real opportunity. She would never have dreamt about or intended to become a politician, if she did not have the capability that she gains from her education.

This part of the thesis conceptualizes women's education in the context of the capability approach. It focuses on how education improves and empowers women and on setting a universal approach for the issue of injustice against women. The capability approach has become increasingly prominent in both the academic world and in the policy making world. "In academia, the approach is now part of the standard curriculum in courses on welfare economics, development studies and political philosophy, and it is regularly taught as part of courses in education, disability studies, public health, and gender studies, among others" (Robeyns, 2006: 351). The capability approach has also been adopted as a core of human development in the international development agenda such as in UNDP's Human Development. It is, thus, of great significance to understand the concept of the capability approach. Secondly, women's education will be explored to see how it is conceptualized in the capability approach

and to see how its stands in the international agenda.

In the last few decades, many thinkers and policy-makers have adopted the concept of the capability approach as a core approach for human development. As already mentioned, there are two main contributors to this approach: Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. Amartya Sen, an Indian economist and development and human rights scholar, has contributed to many economic and development theories that have been followed by the international community, civil society and government. According to Robeyns (2006: 351), “the core claim of the capability approach is that assessments of the well-being or quality of life of a person...should not primarily focus on resources, or on people’s mental states, but on the effective opportunities...”. Therefore, it is an approach that puts the human being at the center of development and approaches more complex social issues. Moreover, Nussbaum (2004: 337) argues that the approach emphasizes the presence of human dignity, which should be developed as an urgent issue of justice. The second contributor is Martha Nussbaum, considers the capability approach consisting of two core concepts: capability and functioning. Meanwhile, Sen has defined capability as, “a person’s ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being; [it] represents the alternative combinations of things a person is able to do or be” (Sen, 1993; cited in Walker and Unterhalter, 2007:2). In this context, capabilities are not just opportunities or freedom, but effective opportunities that provide real possibilities for individuals to achieve their functionings. Functionings are consisted of being and doing. Sen (1987: 36) defines functionings as achievements or achieved outcomes. Hence, in every sense, functionings are different from capabilities. Functionings could refer to for example being able to write and being healthy. Capabilities are the abilities to achieve. For

example, a person who has functionings to read and to write would need to have an opportunity to go to school or to attend a literacy class that is considered a capability. In addition, a capability in this case could also mean a suitable, friendly environment that enhances a person's ability to concentrate and learn in the class so as to achieve how to read and write. A girl who lives in a part of Afghanistan where it is dangerous to travel to school has no or real opportunity. To summarize the two core concepts, capabilities are real opportunity to achieve and potentiality; and functionings are actual achievement and outcomes. Walker and Unterhalter (2007: 4) explains that it is vital to acknowledge the distinction between functioning and capability because by analysing only functioning or outcome does not provide the whole information about how well people are doing. Therefore, it is important to differentiate between capability and functioning. According to the story of Madina and Raiha, analyzing only their functionings would not reflect their capabilities.

Regarding to health and education, they both are “functioning achievements in themselves as well as capabilities that allow people to achieve other valued functionings. Since capabilities are not only about what people 'choose' but what they are able to achieve...” (Kabeer, 2003: 84) Hence, understanding and evaluating of what makes functionings is very important. This is a fundamental for policy-making to evaluate the situation such as inequality and to appropriately decide and implement policies. “Evaluating capabilities rather than functionings is a significant contribution to discussions of social justice in education...” (Arends-Kuenning and Amin, 2001). For example, we should not equalize resources such as a ratio of teachers and students and not outcomes, rather we should equalize the real ability of human to be and to do which is considered as human capabilities (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007:3).

Another core concepts of the capability approach are freedom and agency. According to Sen (1999: 292), freedom is important “in making us free to choose something we may or may not actually choose”. There are two aspects on freedom by Sen: process aspect and opportunity aspect. Process aspect or agency refers to ability to act on behalf of what matters. Opportunity aspect or capability refers to real opportunity to achieve valued functionings, selected from among various good possibilities (Sen, 1999). Moreover, Sen (1987: 36) argues that capabilities “are notions of freedom, in the positive sense: what real opportunities you have regarding the life you may lead”. Freedom in this sense, thus, is effective freedom that a person could have in order to achieve whatever he or she values as important. Agency or Agent refers to “someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well” (Sen, 1999: 19). For example, a girl who demands her education is prohibited from going to school because of the practice of female genital mutilation. This means that she as an agent is empowered and wants to shape her own life, but she has no freedom to do so. In other words, even though she is empowered and realizes the importance of education, she has no real freedom or real opportunity because she is forced to go through the cultural practice. Hence, agency and freedom go hand in hand. Both men and women need freedom to be educated and live their lives without fear.

The concept of the capability approach has centered on human beings. However, it is also important to clarify how an individual is regarded within this theory. Walker and Unterhalter (2007: 2) argue that each person should not be regarded as a means to economic growth or social stability, but as an end. Thus, it is vital to expand people’s



capabilities to remove impediments from freedom of people so that they are able to make valuable decisions. Yet, it is not an individualistic framework that refers to self-actualization above all other goods, rather it embraces ethical individualism (Robeyns 2005: 108). Accordingly, a person who has an opportunity to choose what they value without considering its consequences on other individuals is not regarded as a real capability or as an effective opportunity. The capability approach, thereby, includes ethical concerns. Also, the approach looks at a society which is constituted of individuals. How individuals act or become influences society and vice versa society shapes the individuals.

Nevertheless, Nussbaum has a different idea on the concept of capability. Her fundamental approach is influenced by Marxian and Aristotelian conception of truly human functioning. She has created a list ten capabilities and points out that, “we need to have some idea of what we are distributing, and we need to agree that these things are good” (Nussbaum 1998: 314). Her list of central human capabilities consists of life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play and control over one’s environment (Nussbaum, 2002: 60-62). Her approach of creating the list is to set a cross-cultural standard that can be used in development policies. However, she also mentions that the list is flexible and can be adjusted. Furthermore, Nussbaum points out the difficulty with adapted preferences. There are external circumstances such as unequal social circumstance that influence and shape preferences and choices. These circumstances either in terms of material or culture “affect the inner lives of people: what they hope for, what they love, what they fear, as well as what they are able to do” (Nussbaum, 2000: 31). Barnes and Boddy tell a story of a girl from Somalia who had

been told all her life that female genital cutting is considered as an honor and pride to the family. She looked forward to her day with excitement. Although it was painful, she pretended to laugh. She was so proud and thought that they did it to her because they loved her (Barnes and Boddy, 1994; cited in Parrot and Cummings, 2006: 78). The cultural practice and her society affected her preference and decision to go through female genital cutting, while many girls would prefer not to be cut. This also reflects in Nussbaum's concept of the cross-cultural approach. Even though in many cultures female genital cutting is considered as a part of culture and a right of passage, girls and women should not be suffering from this practice, because it is considered injustice to women.

Therefore, the capability approach does not only analyze the basic outcomes, but also complex social ones such as social structures, cultural practices and norms, and environmental impacts. With regards of the complex circumstances, people are facing many threats to their well-being. Taking the capability approach into consideration, it helps to understand and identify real causes and impediments so as to find transformative methods and alternatives in providing capabilities or real, effective opportunities to both men and women. To put into the context of women's education, this thesis argues that to enhance women's capability is to equip them with education. As Arends-Kuenning and Amin (2001) argue, "in the capabilities approach, education is a force that enables women to have expanded choices". Thus, first, the significance of education is highlighted in relation to the approach.

In the capability approach, education is the medium for people's empowerment and transformation. Walker and Unterhalter (2007: 11) acknowledge that in the capability approach education is transformative and empowering. A person can be

empowered through education, because education makes a person to think critically and realize more options so as to make choices. It is transformative, because when an educated person learns more and is literate he or she can seek alternatives for what they intend to do or to be. Moreover, Nussbaum has emphasized the importance of public education for women's empowerment as crucial for democratic societies (Nussbaum, 2006). Education is cultivating a power of imagination that contributes to the judgment and the sensitivity of responsible citizens. As a result, the responsible citizens will contribute to the moral-political participation that plays an important part in democratic societies. Women's empowerment through education enhances women's capabilities to engage in political activities, which as a result has led to gender equality measured by ratio of women in parliament. In addition, the role of education mentioned in the capability approach can also be demonstrated in two ways: as a source of images of worth and possibility and a source of skills that make possibilities real (Nussbaum, 2000: 288). Regarding education for children, schooling and compulsory education is important for children, since it will enable them to have genuine and valued choices such as a choice not to go through traditional practices (Saito, 2003). Schooling also helps children to grow up and become responsible citizens. With appropriate learning environments, children are able to develop their skills and abilities to think and to contribute to their community. As a result, it is important to emphasize not only the lack of education, but also the quality of education. It is true that education itself is a basic capability that affects the development and expansion of other capabilities (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007: 8). However, if the quality of education is low, the students will not be able to fully learn and develop their skills. In term of capability, it does not reflect the possible

opportunity. For example, the government has made education compulsory in Afghanistan. Yet, many Afghan students who are in higher education are still illiterate or have low skills. Students who did not receive quality education due to obstacles in life will not be able to fully participate in the higher education, which will have effects on their future careers. Nevertheless, having the opportunity for education is still significantly important especially to women.

In the capability approach, an important aspect in developing central human capabilities is education. The central concerns related to women's education in the capability approach are increasing livelihood opportunities, reducing pressure for girls to be married early, and more possibilities to achieve more of their potential (Raynor, 2008: 129). With the use of capabilities analysis, the better education is for women, the more opportunities they can succeed. As mentioned earlier that education is seen as an expansion of other capabilities, it is connected to women's ability to earn equality. Unterhalter argues that, through the concept of capability approach the impacts of education on people can be analyzed and can reflect a fuller picture of how education effects gender equality (Unterhalter, 2008; cited in Raynor, 2008: 119).

Hence, education is important for women and men as it is both itself a basic capability and an expansion of other capabilities. However, there are other circumstances that limit human capabilities through education. As mentioned earlier about low quality education that could limit real opportunities. This can be analyzed through the formal education system. Walker and Unterhalter (2007:11) support this idea that, the way people live and make choices in their lives negatively or positively are affected by their experiences through formal education system such as through curriculum, pedagogy and the culture of the school. Moreover, especially to women,

women go through many difficulties in school such as sexual harassment and discrimination. This, thus, minimizes women's ability to gain full access to education, which leads to less opportunity to achieve their functionings. Additionally, a woman may value the ability to raise her voice to discuss in the class, but find herself being powerless and silent. This kind of classroom environment constrains her from having real opportunities. Therefore, unequal environments or circumstances give women unequal capabilities.

In conclusion, the capability approach is a broad normative framework that puts humans in the center of development. It is used to evaluate the social complexity to assess human well-being, to design policies, and to propose transformative methods for societal change. It is adopted as main approach in international agenda. The prominent UNDP's Human Development Reports have shifted the approach of development from focusing on economic growth to centering on human beings. The approach is used as an evaluation tool in the reports which assess individual's or group's well-being. There are indices that were based on the capability approach such as Human Development Index (HDI), Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Equality Index (GEI). These are used to evaluate achievement in Human Development Reports and in the Millennium Development Goals. The aspect of the approach on women's situation has been used to assess other development goals such as poverty, education and health. Gender equality in education is being mentioned more and is set as priority in post-2015 development agenda; this will be discussed in the next chapter. Moreover, civil society and organizations have also been based on this fundamental approach. Many initiatives and projects are being implemented to provide education for women. Some are being implemented with support from the

international community and government. Therefore, I engage the following questions: What have the international community and the global agenda done to provide education for women and to ensure that they have collective capabilities? What kind of cooperation have the international community done with government and civil society? What have been the challenges or impediments for the policy-makers and thinkers in providing women's education? In difficult circumstances, what could be alternatives to provide women's education? These questions will be examined and a progress of human development in Afghanistan will be analyzed in the next chapters.

### **1.3 Women's Education in the International Development Agenda**

An international symbol for the right of girls and of all children to education, Malala Yousafzai has addressed the importance of girl's education and has called for international support at UN Youth Assembly on July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Supported by her father who has been advocating education for all children, Malala is well-known for her contributions to the fight for education and for women's rights, for her speaking out against the ban of girl's education by the Taliban, as the winner of Pakistan's National Youth Peace Prize, and as a nominee for the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize. Her local work in Pakistan has become worldly known and now has caught international attention. The UN has declared her 16<sup>th</sup> Birthday on July 12<sup>th</sup> as Malala Day. However, her education campaign has been criticized as being exploited by the West and that it furthers Western Imperialism (Ahmed, 2013). During my research in Afghanistan, I was watching her speech on Malala Day on the television with some local Afghans who are working with different local NGOs in advocating education.

One of them said, “she is real, but she just falls into the wrong hands”. The NGO staff and I ended up discussing the role of the international community especially in Afghanistan that in many cases are more political rather than intending to solve and to reflect the real problems and on the ground. Nevertheless, regardless the criticisms, in a situation of war, terrorism and extreme patriarchy like in Pakistan and Afghanistan, it is not easy for a woman to raise her voice and to speak of the situation that many people have never heard before. It is, thus, important that women’s education be addressed in the international agenda.

To understand and effectively analyse the role of the international development agenda in relation to women’s education, this study explores the intention and the progress that the international development agenda has of advocating women’s education. This study also aims to compare them to the real situation in Afghanistan that will be explored in chapter 1.3.3, in order to present an alternative and transformative method that collaborates with the international agenda and fulfills the overlooked or neglected aspects of women’s education. Moreover, this chapter tends to find theories or frameworks that are used as a basis and measurement in the international agenda concerning women’s education. At the same time, it puts those theories into practice by examining the progress in Afghanistan. This chapter, therefore, first explores the concept of human development in relation to the capability approach and women’s education in chapter 1.3.1. Second, it examines the progress of women’s education in the international development agenda focusing on the two most prominent ones: HDR and MDGs and the future milestone of the post-2015 development agenda in chapter 1.3.2. Finally, chapter 1.3.3 analyzes the participation

and implementation of human development in Afghanistan and its progress concerning women's education.

### **1.3.1 An Introduction to Human Development**

The approach of development has become the ultimate goal in the international agenda. The concept of development, according to Sachs, has been launched and adopted by every nation after the Second World War. Since then, it has divided North and South by declaring the Southern hemisphere as an under-developed area. The concept of development provides a framework that has become a reference to policy-making to the South (Sachs, 1992: 3). However, the approach has raised many critiques stating that it is not bringing positive changes to the societies, and instead giving reasons and justifications for powerful countries to exploit the impoverished ones, which in turn has led to many economic, societal and environmental problems. The major critique that is presented here is the focus of development as economic growth. Some argue on the critique that poverty will not be eliminated by the expansion of economic growth and the trickle-down effects of capitalism (Streeten et al. 1981; Stewart 1985; cited in Elaine, 2008: 25). Nevertheless, it is too radical to solely blame the economic development approach. As Nussbaum (2004: 330) states, “the dominant economic paradigm encourages continued insensitivity to the situation of the world's poorest people and to the special disadvantages suffered by women—not because economists are by nature bad people, but because they see things through the lens of a bad theory...”. I disagree here that the lens of the economic development approach is bad in itself, but the simplistic idea that GNP per capita can accurately



measure quality of life is too narrow. In other words, it lacks other focuses and aspects that are significant for human well-being. For example, as Nussbaum and Sen argue, the economic development paradigm is inadequate to analyze the problems that women are facing in the impoverished world (Nussbaum and Sen 1993; cited in Nussbaum, 2004: 329). From this statement, it is assumed that the problems that women are facing especially in Afghan society is so complex that any approach using only a single economic metric will not contribute to long term, positive impacts. Nussbaum supports this ideas that, “development is a normative concept and that we should not assume that the human norms we want will be delivered simply through a policy of fostering economic growth” (Nussbaum, 2004: 328). The approach of human development is introduced by Mahbub Ul Haq who is a prominent economist and the founder of internationally influential Human Development Report. The approach is also developed on the basis of the capability approach by Amartya Sen. The human development paradigm sets a new framework for international development policy-making and is revolutionary. According to Haq (1999:21), the reasons are as follows: 1) it agrees that development must put human beings at its center, 2) it focuses on building human capabilities and on using those capabilities for development, 3) it consists of four important components: equity, sustainability, productivity and empowerment, and 4) those four components see economic growth as important element, but emphasizes the need to pay attention on its quality and distribution that contributes to human well-being and sustainability. With the shift from economic paradigm to human development, policy-makers are able to look at the problems through different lenses, especially in socio-political context. As Nussbaum (2004: 330) argues that the policy-makers will use different paradigms that tend to focus on

growth, unless the human development paradigm exists. Moreover, the paradigm is based on the capability approach, which includes all the aspects related to real possibilities and freedoms. As a result, it focuses on not only the measurement of growth such as GNP per capita that is used in the economic development paradigm, but also on what people can do or cannot do. According to Haq (1999:23), "...the human development paradigm is the most holistic development model that exists today. It embraces every development issue, including economic growth, social investment, people's empowerment... and all other aspects of people's lives". The issues of women that are being neglected, therefore, can be addressed using this fundamental approach.

UNDP is one of the most influential international organizations that measures and evaluates human development and has published its first HDR<sup>1</sup> in 1990. It is stated in the report that the measurement and evaluation are grounded in the capability approach (Robeyns, 2006: 351). The framework of the capability approach is important for guiding development agencies, communities, and individuals along the process of human development. Capabilities in the human development approach can refer to "the freedom to be or to do according to the values of the individual, the family and the community" (Center for Policy and Human Development, 2011). For this reason, Sen has developed the capability approach and integrated it into HDR to gain attention from government and development agencies such as the World Bank (Nussbaum, 2004: 329). However, since the capability approach emphasizes values of

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<sup>1</sup> Human Development Report (HDR) was first published in 1990 by UNDP by that time having Mahbub ul Haq as the director of UNDP. With the approach of human development and the framework of the capability approach influenced by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, there are more than 600 national and regional Human Development Reports that use the same guidelines in policy-making. Its recent publication of HD is focused on the rise of the South. See more in Human Development Report 2013 (UNDP, 2013).

individual, family and community, it is equally important to make the approach accessible for all levels: international, national and local.

Hence, to make this approach work at the international level, and to argue against the dominant economic growth paradigm, governments and international agencies agreed that no country incorporated the approach and engaged in this effort would be denied resources (Fiske, 2012: 8). Many National Human Development Reports <sup>2</sup>and Regional Human Development Reports such as Afghanistan Human Development Report and SADC Regional Human Development Report are published and use the same human development paradigm and analytical tool and measurement base on the capability approach. The international and national human development reports drew on the framework of the capability approach to put human being and quality of life at their central perspectives (Center for Policy and Human Development, 2011).

To summarize the human paradigm that is claimed to be vital to development as an expansion of people's capabilities, it is a framework that embraces all development issues. The well-known UNDP's Human Development Reports, Regional and National Human Development Reports have been published and provided assessment of human's quality of life. More importantly, they do not only provide statistical data, but also a measure of people's capabilities such as a measure of empowerment (Kabeer, 2003: 170). These are all based on the human development and the capability approach. Thus, it is important to use those approaches to analyze the significance and the progress of women's education in the international agendas

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<sup>2</sup> National Human Development Report (NHDR) is published by the support of UNDP. "These reports are policy analysis tools that focus on highlighting the national priorities of countries, helping strengthen national capacities, engaging civil society partners, identifying inequities and measuring improvements in well-being" (Center for Policy and Human Development, 2011).

and the international efforts on the issue. The international agendas that will be discussed in the next chapter refer to the prominent HDR and the MDGs<sup>3</sup>.

### **1.3.2 Women's Education in Human Development Report and the Millennium Development Goals**

Women's education has a place in international development. As a matter of fact, it is an important catalyst to achieve other goals in the international agendas, which in this paper focuses on the HDR and MDGs. However, gender related issues were not mentioned in the international agenda until the first publication of the HDR in 1990. Since then, the attention on gender issues has become a major concern in development. Espinosa (2013: 172), discussing the impacts after the inclusion of gender issues in the early 1990s, argues that it has varied the ways that the international development agencies address and evaluate the issue of gender inequality. As a result, the involvement of the international community in gender education has increased. Arnot and Fennell mention that this tendency began in the 1990s and was enhanced by the emergence of the MDGs and the publication of MDGs Report in 2000. This has also established the relation between gender equality and education (Arnot and Fennell, 2008: 2). There are only a few years left to achieve the

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<sup>3</sup> Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was established in the year 2000 in the UN conference and the Millennium Declaration. There were eight main goals that are set in an attempt to develop concrete, measurable commitments and to call for international supports from all countries aiming to achieve them by the year 2015. The eight goals are eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality rates, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability, and developing a global partnership for development. They also provide "a common conceptual framework and language for the work of governments, UN agencies, international financial institutions, and development organisations from civil society" (Sweetman, 2005a: 3). The recent publication of the MDGs is in 2013. See more in the MDGs 2013 (UN, 2013b).

MDGs by 2015. Therefore, it is of foremost importance to analyze the progress of human development presented in the HDR and the MDGs so as to review the undermining issues and to follow-up the goals that will not be achieved by 2015.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part examines the role of women's education in the HDR and in the MDGs by looking at the emphasis of gender equality in education, women's education, and the indicators to measure it. The second part examines the progress of women's education and challenges in relation to the HDR and the MDGs. Finally, the last part explores post-2015 landscape in order to find recommendations.

The first HDR that emphasized the importance of gender equality and addressed the issue of gender inequality was in 1995. Its theme was Gender and Human Development (UNDP, 1995b). The report referred to gender inequality in terms of "capabilities (education, health, and nutrition) and opportunities (economic and decision-making)" (Elson and Keklik, 2002: 6). Education has become widely used as a dimension in indicators of gender equality and women's empowerment that reflects the status of women. The indicators that are used in the HDR were created based on the capability approach and are used as guidelines for policy-making. The indicators that are mainly used in relation to gender and education in the HDR are HDI<sup>4</sup>, GDI<sup>5</sup> and GEM<sup>6</sup>. In 2010, the HDR introduced two new indicators: IHDI<sup>7</sup> and

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<sup>4</sup> Human Development Index (HDI) is a component of life expectancy, educational attainment, and income (UNDP, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Gender-related Development Index (GDI) "focuses on the same three indicators as the HDI Life expectancy at birth represents overall health status; a composite indicator of educational attainment (adult literacy rate and combined gross school enrolment ratio) represents knowledge; and real per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) represents standard of living" (Kabeer, 2003: 85).

<sup>6</sup> Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) "moved the focus of gender inequality from basic capabilities to disparities in wider opportunities and choices. It combined national data on gender inequalities in

GII<sup>8</sup>. GII has replaced the previous GDI and GEM. These two new indicators aim to analyze more complex situations and present statistical data that reflect more complex social issues. For example, GII shows “the loss in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements in the three GII dimensions” (UNDP, 2013). The recent indicators have shown more emphasis on gender issues such as the reflection of gender-based inequalities. Moreover, the HDR provides statistical data measured by those indicators and reflects the status of women including the level of gender equality in education. However, it has neither a specific goal for women’s education nor for women’s right to education.

Nevertheless, in 2000, the MDGs emerged as a result of the Millennium Declaration following the Millennium Summit of the UN. The MDGs have set eight concrete, measurable goals that include specific gender and education related goals. According to UNDP (2013), “the Millennium Declaration commits states to 'promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger, disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable’”. The goals are established in a relation of HDR concerning the number of human development outcomes. What is being highlighted in the MDGs is the Goal 3<sup>9</sup> on promoting gender equality and empowering women. It mentions that gender equality and women’s empowerment are human rights, at the heart of the MDGs, and preconditions to

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income earned in professional, managerial and technical occupations and in parliamentary representation” (Kabeer, 2003: 85).

<sup>7</sup> Inequality Adjusted HDI (IHDI). “The HDI can be viewed as an index of 'potential' human development and the IHDI as an index of actual human development” (UNDP, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Gender Inequality Index (GII) is an indicator that reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity. In terms of empowerment, it is measured by attainment at secondary and higher education of each gender (UNDP, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> The target in goal 3 is to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015. The indicators are ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education, ratio of literate women to men of 15- to 24- year-olds, share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector, and proportion of seats held by women in national parliament (Subrahmanian, 2005: 396).

overcome poverty, hunger and disease (UN WOMEN, 2010 and UNDP, 2011). The world leaders who commit to the MDGs agree that gender equality and women's empowerment are important components in achieving all the other goals such as Goal 4 reducing child mortality rates and Goal 5 improving maternal health. As it is written in Article 7 [ii], "participants commit to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005. The second commitment is to achieve gender equality in education by 2015" (Subrahmanian, 2005: 396). Furthermore, Goal 2 aiming at achieving universal primary education has a strong gender component and is also central to the MDGs. According to the targets for education, "a commitment to achieve universal primary education (UPE) by 2015...achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, included a specific target for the elimination of gender disparities in education over the same period" (Colclough, 2008: 53). Vice versa, the target of the Goal 2 (to eliminate gender disparities in education) is also the target of the Goal 3. Therefore, the relation of these two goals of education and gender equality and empowerment highlight the significance of women's education in the MDGs. In the same vein, Ban Ki-moon also describes the importance of women in the MDGs, "social, political and economic equality for women is integral to the achievement of all Millennium Development Goals. Until women and girls are liberated from poverty and injustice, all our goals – peace, security, sustainable development – stand in jeopardy" (UN WOMEN, 2010). Many supporters of the MDGs argue that the goal on gender equality and women's empowerment is seen as a successful symbol of success for the international feminist movement (Swetman, 2005: 3). Furthermore, the Task Force on Education and Gender Equality under the Millennium Project has been setup. It produced a report on gender equality entitled Promises to Keep: Achieving Gender

Equality and the Empowerment of Women (Elson and Keklik, 2002: 52). This is to ensure the achievement of MDG 3. Thus, it is clear that women's education is playing an important role in the MDGs. Each nation and the international communities which pledged to commit to the MDGs plans and implements their policies based on the MDGs' framework that establishes the current status of gender educational equality (Arnot and Fennell, 2008: 3).

Besides the HDR and the MDGs, women's education is also emphasized in other development agendas such as the Dakar Framework for Action,<sup>10</sup> which focuses on the Education for All goals, which are supported by UNESCO. "The terms gender parity and gender equality are reflected in one of the six EFA goals<sup>11</sup>" (Subrahmanian, 2005: 395). Together the Dakar Framework for Action and the MDGs set the goal to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and to achieve gender equality by 2015. In addition, UN Women that works for gender equality and women's empowerment also has a focus on women's education by working with MOE, NGOs, and other UN agencies such as UNDP and UNICEF<sup>12</sup>.

There have been many conferences that focus on women such as the World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975, in Copenhagen in 1980, in Nairobi in 1985, in Beijing in 1995, in New York in 2000, and the UN Convention on the

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<sup>10</sup> "In April 2000, 1,100 participants from 164 countries gathered at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, to reaffirm their commitment to the notion of education as a fundamental human right and to the goals of EFA" (Fiske, 2012: 8)

<sup>11</sup> "Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality" (UNESCO, 2000; cited in Subrahmanian, 2005: 395).

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) "supports Afghanistan's government in efforts to direct children to schools, while also distributing "school-in-a-box" which includes pens, textbooks and teaching instructions to provide education in a more flexible manner. UNICEF also addresses the issue of the lack of female teachers by providing female literacy programs in hopes to create more female teachers" (Economic and Social Council: 4).



Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>13</sup>. The World Conferences on Women are the parallel to NGOs forums that have become a vital part of all UN major conferences, Moreover, they offer open spaces for organizations from around the world to engage in lobbying governments on international policies and to form cross-national networks (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2002: 344). As a result, many women's NGOs are able to exchange information and adopt a common agenda.

However, the most influential conference under the framework of human development and supporting the MDGs is the UN Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995 that was attended by non-governmental organizations and the international community. The conference launched Platform for Action<sup>14</sup> and started the adoption and implementation of gender mainstreaming in the international development policies. The gender mainstreaming is adopted nearly by every important international organization including World Bank and UNDP (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2002: 340). More importantly, it is significant for the development policy-makers to adopt the agenda of gender mainstreaming, since it provides a gender-sensitive lens that is more effective in regards to improve women's situation.

As a result of the world conferences on women, "gender mainstreaming is now official policy in many developed countries...and among international organizations such as the UNDP, the World Bank and the European Union..." (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2002: 341). Predating the Beijing conference, gender mainstreaming is an effort of women's movements that aims to increase women's visibility and

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<sup>13</sup> The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is "an international women's bill of rights that obligates governments to take actions to promote and protect the rights of women" (Elson and Keklik, 2002: 3).

<sup>14</sup> "One of the most important and innovative elements of this Platform was a provision calling on the UN and its signatory states to 'mainstream' gender issues across the policy process, 'so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made on the effects on women and men, respectively'" (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2002: 339)

significance of gender in the policies. After the Beijing conference, MDG-F<sup>15</sup> has also been established adopting “a dual strategy for achieving gender equality that supported both targeted gender programming and gender mainstreaming as a part of its overall funding portfolio” (UN, 2013: 1a).

The progress of gender equality and gender mainstreaming have been addressed and emphasized in the international agendas. However, many criticisms have been raised. Some of them are contested, such as the criticism that argues that the international community has set unrealistic target dates to achieve the MDGs. According to Colclough (2008: 55), in term of education, “the targets set for 2000 or 2005 envisaged an impossibly rapid reform agenda: achieving universal primary education over ten years from 1990, or gender parity of enrolments over five to ten years from 1995 or from 2000 were infeasible tasks”. Furthermore, MDGs are also accused of being too narrow. According to Kabeer (2005: 23), “gender inequalities are multi-dimensional and cannot be reduced to some single and universally agreed set of priorities”. Finally, some data that are used to assess the progress of human development and the MDGs are insufficient and unreliable. For example, it was impossible to collect data of Afghanistan to assess the level of poverty during the war in 1978-79 (UNDP, 2005: 1). Furthermore, there is a lack of reliable data such as the differences of data of Afghan population by UNICEF at 24 million and by Michigan State University at 31 million and girl’s gross enrolment by UNICEF at 63% and by NESP at 35% (Jones, 2008: 278).

Due to many impediments such as the persistence of war, violence against

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<sup>15</sup> The Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F) builds on more than two decades of knowledge, experience and internationally accepted norms, standards and conventions (UN, 2013a: 1).

women and extreme patriarchy, there is still a long way to achieve the goals. Yet, the deadline to achieve the MDGs is approaching. Therefore, it is vital to keep an eye on the Post-2015 development agenda. Recently, a report was published on the initial findings from the Post-2015, entitled *The Global Conversation Begins*. This report consists of “an unprecedented series of consultations with people the world over to seek their views on a new development agenda to build on the successes of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)” (UNDP, 2013). The importance of gender equality is also emphasized in the report as “a precondition for several agendas, including reducing food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition, decreasing violence and making inroads into energy poverty” (Gough, 2013). In shaping a new agenda, the Global Conversation has established and called for participations and consultations from all governments and development agencies. The consultations are divided into three forms: national consultations<sup>16</sup>, thematic consultations<sup>17</sup>, and a global online conversation<sup>18</sup>. The call aims to find a new framework and to develop a better, effective and realistic agenda taken from the lessons learnt in the MDGs and from different development organizations and government. Moreover, it aims to expand global cooperation beyond the MDGs (UNDP, 2013: 41).

In summary, women’s education is facing great challenges in the international development agendas. Although, there have been many improvements and

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<sup>16</sup> National Consultations are “being organized by UN Country Teams, under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator, and are working with a wide range of stakeholders including governments, civil society, the private sector, media, universities and think tanks” (UNDP, 2013: 5).

<sup>17</sup> Thematic Consultations “are being held on 11 topics covering the existing MDG areas and prominent challenges that will shape the prospects for sustainable development in the coming decades: Conflict, Violence and Disaster; Education; Energy; Environmental Sustainability; Food Security and Nutrition; Governance; Growth and Employment; Health; Addressing Inequalities; Population Dynamics; and Water” (UNDP, 2013: 7).

<sup>18</sup> A Global Conversation “is taking place on the [worldwewant2015.org](http://worldwewant2015.org) website, on Facebook and other forums in various countries, as well as through the MY World survey which enables individuals to rank their own priorities” (UNDP, 2013: 7).

contributions on the issues, the persistence of impediments to education access for women are still great. In a country with lack of data due to unstable social and political conditions like in Afghanistan, it could be even more challenging for the international development agenda to pressure the government to address the global policies on women's education. The ongoing insecurity has negative impacts on human development of Afghanistan. In the next chapter, thus, will be examining the progress of human development in Afghanistan and its participation in the MDGs.

### **1.3.3 Women's Education and Human Development in Afghanistan**

To understand the situation and the progress of Afghanistan's human development, this thesis focuses on efforts in building nation after the fall of the Taliban. It is vital to acknowledge that the progress of building nation and human development is slow in Afghanistan. As UNDP (2005: 1) reports that Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world and has the worst human development indicators. From the statement, what is important is to reflect on the Afghan government's efforts in building the country and in committing to the international agenda. Regardless of the U.S. intervention, are the government's implementations to improve education guided by the global agenda effective and contributing to positive impacts for the impoverished people? It is also important to note at this point, that the country has been under endless insecurity and an extreme patriarchal system. Are the indicators and the collected data used in the policy-making sufficient and are they engaging women's participation in the process? Therefore, for us to understand and effectively analyze the effectiveness of the government and the international community, in this chapter, I provide a general overview of human development of

Afghanistan in relation to women's education. Keeping in mind my earlier statement in Chapter 1.2.2 and 1.3.2 on the lack of education access of women and insufficient data collection due to the long period of war and the silent epidemic among Afghan women, change is required and not only by the government and the international community, but also by the people and the community. Therefore, this chapter will establish a basic argument to highlight the importance of NGO involvement in women's education that will be presented in the next chapter. This chapter, thus, first examines the problems of human development related to women's education. Secondly, it explores the involvement and the efforts of the country in the international agenda. Then, it points out the important progress of human development from recent human development reports. Finally, it concludes with some opinions and recommendations.

The long history of war in Afghanistan disadvantaged education and the most vulnerable groups are women who have had to endure war, trauma, and oppression. Although the education in Afghanistan was advanced in a period of Afghan history, especially during the time of King Amanullah Khan<sup>19</sup>, the war with the Soviet Union, with the warlords, and the subsequent ban of girl's education by the oppressive Taliban regime have had continual and deep impacts on the education of Afghans. As Moghadam (1994: 859) states, "women's education and productive activities are key to both national development and women's capabilities". It is, thus, accurate to say that women's education is playing an important role in nation building. The destruction of the education system and the lack of Afghan women's access to education have led to the degradation of human development of the country.

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<sup>19</sup> During the time of Amanullah Khan (1919-1929), constitution was established and the education was free until the university level.

However, after the Taliban regime, there have still been many attacks by the Taliban and by other fundamentalist groups against girl's education. For example, "in 2008 alone, there were 283 violent attacks on schools, resulting in 92 dead and 169 injured" (Banbury, 2013). Moreover, in 2010, the Taliban launched a gas attack targeting Afghan schoolgirls in Kabul causing at least 36 students to fall ill (Aljazeera, 2010).

Consequently, since the fall of the Taliban the country has been working on improving education and on getting children back to school and Afghanistan has been receiving many international supports and funding for women's education. In 2002, the government launched the Back to School campaign aiming to get 1.5 million children enrolled in primary and secondary education (ANDS, 2008: 114). Moreover, UNICEF has been working on many education programs to provide education for children in partners with Kabul University and the Democratic Youth Organization (Moghadam, 1994: 867). With help from the UNICEF's education programs, "over 2.2 million girls are now in school...and we expect a 20 percent increase in primary school enrollment for girls by 2013" (Banbury, 2013). In addition, in 2007, The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) launched the Afghanistan Girls' Education Initiative (AGEI) and began working in collaboration with many local Afghan NGOs.

Furthermore, regarding the participation in the HDR and the MDGs, Afghanistan was still in a war and did not participate in the UN summit nor committed to the MDGs when they were established in 2000. Even after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, the country was in a transition period to the establishment of the Karzai government. However, in 2004, it signed the Millennium Declaration and committed to the MDGs setting its own target by 2020 based on data from 2002 to 2004 (UNDP,

2005: 1). The government developed the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) to affirm its support on human development and the MDGs. The ANDS's strategy is based on the MDGs-based Gender Equity Cross Cutting Strategy with a vision on education that all Afghans should have equal access to quality education (ANDS, 2008: 113). In 2008, the ANDS published National Human Development Report (NHDR) in partnership with the Centre for Policy and Human Development. The report is based on the strategy in providing a roadmap to create changes in women's status in society (ANDS, 2008: 113). Besides the commitment to the MDGs, the government and the international community have established a series of agreements and treaties concerning the country's efforts on development and women's participation. The agreements and the treaties are the Bonn Agreement, the Afghanistan Compact, CEDAW, and BPFA<sup>20</sup> (ANDS, 2008: 113).

Due to limited access to resources and data, the progress of human development in Afghanistan is summarized based on the HDR and the NHDR. In the HDI that has educational attainment as part of its component shows that "Afghanistan's 2012 HDI of 0.374 is below the average of 0.466 for countries in the low human development group and below the average of 0.558 for countries in South Asia" (UNDP, 2013). Moreover, Afghanistan's GII has ranked the second last from 148 countries in 2012 index (UNDP, 2013). However, if I analyze Afghanistan's life expectancy at birth between 1980 and 2012, it has "increased by 9.9 years, mean years of schooling increased by 2.3 years and expected years of schooling increased by 5.8 years" (UNDP, 2013). Also, the percentage of women in the parliament has increased in 26.7

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<sup>20</sup> The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) is an outcome of the Beijing Conference in 1995. It "deals with removing the obstacles to women's public participation in all spheres of public and private lives through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making" (Women's National Commission).

percents (UNDP, 2013), which shows a positive improvement on gender equality. Another set of data shows the highest enrolment rate at 75 percent in Kabul. However, there are more than 63 percent of the enrolled children living double lives: in school and on the streets (Center for Policy and Human Development, 2011). These children go to school and after school they go to work on the street to beg for money. This shows that although they enroll at school, many are not attending. Therefore, with this kind of situation that HDI does not capture, this supports my argument on the insufficient collected data and that the situation in Afghanistan is more complex than to analyze by using the data alone. Another example is to look at the percentage of women holding seats in the parliament. In making this statement, it is presumed that the percentage does not show if those women in the parliament are really working effectively nor reflects the significance of women's education.

In conclusion, the international agenda has led to a series of changes in policy-making of Afghanistan. There is an increase in gender and education related policies such as the Back to School campaign and the Gender Equity Cross Cutting Strategy. Due to the long history of war and the transitional period of nation building, Afghanistan still has a long way to achieve their targets. Some data from NHDR shows some improvements. However they are also unreliable. Therefore, the lack of reliable data raises many questions as follows. Does the data reflect the real situation? Are the poor profiting from the international support? Are the policies including people at the grassroots level? Having data and indicators as guidelines for policy-making could be an effective method. Nevertheless, it can also become a political tool. Keeping in mind that Afghanistan is one of the most corrupted countries with the persistence of warlords in the government, it is important that the government is



transparent and includes the civil society in the process of policy-making and implementation.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter found that women's education is an important catalyst to achieve gender equality and other goals in the development agendas. It found that most women are still marginalized, live in poor conditions, and are discriminated. There is a strong link between women and development in the context of poverty. According to UNDP (1995a: 4), "poverty has a woman's face. Out of 1.3 billion people in poverty, 70% are women". The relation between women and poverty is a convincing reason to put an emphasis on women's disadvantages as well as the advantages, which will benefit the whole society when women are empowered and are able to exercise their power. According to Murray (2008: 15), "we focus on women...because women's experiences are different and understudied, because societies need women to be healthy and fully engaged, because it is only fair that women have full equality in their societies". This study thus presented the significance of the focus on women.

Furthermore, this chapter found that women's empowerment through education provides positive outcomes in terms of health and education. For example, the study found that poorer women who are empowered are likely to seek out contraception and maternal health services. Moreover, they are likely to ensure the survival and health of their children and other family members and to promote the education of their children (Kabeer, 2003: 219). Therefore, to act on the issue of gender equality and women's empowerment, both local and world's policy makers

need to include women in decision-making and policy implementation. Women's participation is crucial as to give equal opportunity to women to make choices and include women's aspects onto the policies.

By analyzing women's education in the international agenda area, this study found that access to education is still limited in many parts of the world. Gender inequality in education resulting from different gender related issues has put women in disadvantaged situations. Many local and international actors have made and implemented policies based on the approach of economic growth that is believed to trickle down to the issue of gender inequality and other issues, including but not limited to women's education. However, the growth-oriented policies do not simply solve the issues. Therefore, this study found that the capability approach that is adopted as main approach in many international agendas such as in UNDP's Human Development and the Millennium Development Goals contribute to better outcomes. Many international development organizations have shifted their approach of development from focusing on economic growth to the capability approach that centers on human beings. The approach has been used as evaluation in the reports which assess individual's or group's well-being. Based on this approach, the aspect of women's situation has been emphasized and used to assess other development goals such as poverty, education and health. In relation to the capability approach, human development approach is also claimed to be vital to development as an expansion of people's capabilities. Therefore, it is important to use those two approaches to analyze the significance and the progress of women's education in the international agendas and the international efforts on the issue.

Although there have been many improvements and contributions on the issues, the persistence of impediments to education access for women are still great. In the case of Afghanistan, this study found that there is a lack of data due to unstable social and political conditions. It is more challenging for the international development agenda to pressure Afghan government to address the global policies on women's education. Since the fall of the Taliban, the country has been working on improving education and on getting children back to school. With regards of the international agenda, it has led to a series of changes in policy-making of Afghanistan. There is an increase of gender and education related policies such as the Back to School campaign and the Gender Equity Cross Cutting Strategy. Nevertheless, due to the long history of war and the transitional period of nation building, Afghanistan still has a long way to achieve their targets.

## **CHAPTER 2 ALTERNATIVE SPACES FOR WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN**

### **2.1 Chapter Introduction**

In this chapter, I posit that alternative spaces that refer to non-formal education and informal learning provided by NGOs and women's networks are necessary in such limited and difficult situations like in Afghanistan. Therefore, this chapter is divided into three main subchapters. First, it presents an overview of education in Afghanistan. This study examines the situation of education in Afghanistan in general. However, it focuses more on formal education. With the long period of war and poverty especially during the Taliban rule, it has made it difficult to improve the situation of women's

education. After the fall of the Taliban rule, the Afghan government has shown some efforts to improve women's education. However, this study questions the effectiveness of the efforts and quality of education provided by the government.

Second, it investigates the struggle and the impediments to education for Afghan women. Moreover, The thesis probes a more specific case of women's education in Kabul. Through analyzing the struggle of Afghan women, alternative methods for women's education are also introduced. The prolonged violence and conflicts such as the Taliban attacks, violence against women and patriarchy within Afghanistan severely limit women's social and political participation. This has thus become major impediments to education access for women. To access education, it is important that women find their own strengths and alternative methods. The strengths should be derived not only from the external help, but also from within individuals and community. Furthermore, women's education in Kabul is specifically examined in this chapter. Although the majority of Afghan population lives in rural provinces, the situation of women's education in Kabul reflects the recent impediments caused by the Taliban attacks that have negative impacts on the national level.

Third, this chapter proposes alternative methods for women's education. First, it focuses on the concept of non-formal education, informal learning, and alternative. By comparing to formal education, the significance of non-formal education and informal learning is highlighted. Moreover, the concept of alternative is conceptualized in relation to non-formal education, informal learning, the capability approach, and community participation. Second, it investigates NGOs and their educational programs for Afghan women. Finally, to support the importance of alternative women's education in Afghanistan, an interview with a staff member of an

important NGO that has been supporting women's education during the Taliban rule is presented.

## **2.2 Overview of Education in Afghanistan**

As important as nation building, education is a key focus for the development of Afghanistan. The experience of the three decades of civil war has made the country one of the world's lowest ranked in term of education with about five million children receiving no formal education <sup>21</sup>(Economic and Social Council: 3). The number of children out-of-school is great, because approximately 80% of the population lives in remote areas where insurgency is common, low quality of education, and low access to education, which has led to the corruption of local governments and to more difficulty in policy-implementation. This situation is a great challenge to all the people of Afghanistan and to all the stakeholders: the government, the international community and civil society. "The issue of education and literacy has profound implications for the stability of Afghan society and for the country's future economic viability" (Intili and Kissam, 2006: 3). The government, thus, has invested in education at the primary and secondary levels by allocating 20% of the national budget for education (Guimbert and others, 2008: 426). However, after the fall of the Taliban in 2001, upon which the country entered a transitional period, the policy on education is also competing with other nation building policies.

Therefore, I posit my argument on the need of more attention on education and that it is important to understand and effectively analyze the situation and limitations

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<sup>21</sup> The formal education in Afghanistan refers to primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

in the context of Afghanistan. An important question to begin with is: is the formal education supported by the government an effective and sufficient method to improve the low quality educational situation of the whole population, especially of the majority who live in remotes areas? Moreover, if the government can achieve its goal of providing education to all children, will that be a good quality education? This chapter, thus, provides an overview of education in Afghanistan focusing on the formal sector, which is the main focus of the government's planning. Second, it highlights the government's effort in providing formal education. Finally, it identifies problems and limitations that the government and the people are facing.

The history of education and education system of Afghanistan can be traced back since the period of King Amanullah Khan in 1919. The education system in this period was the older religious schooling system or Madressa<sup>22</sup> taught by Mullahs<sup>23</sup> in the local mosques. This period shed light on the transition of the education system in Afghanistan. It is the period of change towards the western idea of modernization and the development of infrastructure. It is also a period when women played an important role in the country's development led by Queen Soraya Tarzi. Many works were done such as extending women's marital status, employment opportunities for women, and founding of the first women's press (Emadi, 2002; Moghadam, 1994; cited in Brodeky and others, 2012: 160). Nevertheless, the reign of King Amanullah was so short that his development projects such as new and modern infrastructure and new schools for children were terminated before their completion. In 1964 during the period of King Zahir Shah, a constitution was established that provided compulsory and free

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<sup>22</sup> Madressa or Madrasa refers to religious school that is offered to boys.

<sup>23</sup> Mullah refers to Muslim person who learns in Islamic theology and sacred law. The role of Mullah is to teach the religious content of the Qur'an/Koran, including reading and writing (Economic and Social Council: 2).

education for all children between the ages of 7 and 15 (Jones, 2008: 280). Again, a new system of education was established. This system consists of primary education (grade 1 to 6) starting at age 6, secondary education (grade 7 to 9), and tertiary education (grade 10 to 12). There is also a separation between girl school and boy school. During this period of time, many secondary schools, universities and colleges were expanded. Moreover, half of Afghans under the age of 12 were given access to free primary education (Economic and Social Council: 1). The public schools that offered education from the first through the undergrad level were free (Guimbert and others, 2008: 422-423). However, the civil war from 1973 to 1996 had negative effects on education. Many schools and universities were closed down. Students were unable to go to school due to insecurity. In 1996, the Taliban took power and caused even worse problems for the development of education in Afghanistan. During that time, girls were banned from schools. Many mosque schools were established as the main form of education where only boys were allowed to attend (Economic and Social Council: 6). In 2001, the Taliban government was defeated by the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance Military action. The new government of Hamid Karzai was formed. The government was able to reopen universities and schools. As of 2003, there were 7,000 schools operating and 27,000 teachers teaching in 20 of the 34 provinces in Afghanistan. Furthermore, in 2005, the Ministry of Education (MOE) reported that 4.5 to 5 million students were enrolled in the formal school system (Economic and Social Council: 2). With the support from the international community (as mentioned in chapter 1.3.3) there was an improvement of education. However, in 2009, more than 150 schools were destroyed by Taliban attacks (Economic and Social Council: 6).

It is thus accurate to say that the new government must put more efforts in rebuilding and developing the education. Under the instability of the government and the insecurity caused by the Taliban and other fundamentalist groups, achieving universal education for all children and gender equality in education are necessary. By this, I can closely examine through the past and ongoing efforts of the government.

The government has put in effort to establish a new policy for education, the National Education Strategic Plan for Afghanistan. It is now set to achieve the MDGs by 2020 (Jones, 2008: 277). Moreover, in responding to the post-2001 nation building policies, the government has provided emergency relief in the form of provision of tents as permanent places for children to learn coupled with the Back to School campaign and catch-up programs (Intili and others, 2006; cited in Jones, 2008: 278). One of the main actors in education development of Afghanistan is the MOE who set a vision,

...to provide good quality education for all regardless of gender, ethnicity, language, religion and geographical location, and to provide opportunities for secondary and higher education at international standard to build skilled human resources which are able to meet private-sector-driven national development and reconstruction objectives (Guimbert and others, 2008: 242).

Figure 1: A banner of President Karza hanging on the side of the MOE promoting Education For All





Nevertheless, the MOE and the government are facing many problems, such as corruption, insecurity, low quality education, insufficient numbers of teachers, and high dropout rates. As Afghanistan is ranking the third most corrupted countries in the world in 2012 (Khazan, 2012), it is difficult to control and monitor the implementation of policies and budgets, especially in rural areas. One reason is related to mountainous areas. Due to the long distances, it is difficult to monitor where funds are distributed. “At the provincial level, half of the provincial education departments indicated that the Mustoufiat (the provincial office of the Ministry of Finance) did not release funds” (Guimbart and others, 2008: 426). Security is also a major issue in Afghanistan. Taliban attacks have made it difficult for students to travel to school. The students, especially female students, are affected by those attacks, because schools are the main targets of such attacks and because the Taliban promotes that idea that girls should not be educated. The insecurity is worse in the south where 300 schools were closed and 150 were burnt down in 2006 (Joint Coordinating Monitoring Board, 2006; cited in Jones, 2008: 280). In one of the southern provinces, Kandahar, “all schools are now closed in five districts. Attackers have thrown hand grenades through school windows and threatened to throw acid on girls who attend school” (Constable 2006; cited in

Hayat, 2008: 175). Although there is an improvement of education provision in post-Taliban Afghanistan, there are still problems of low quality education. These problems can be separated into low quality of materials, facilities and infrastructure and low quality of teachers. In many schools, especially in rural areas, the curriculum and textbooks are outdated. From a survey of a group of parents, 38% of their complaints are about lack of schoolbooks and supplies, 25% are about poor quality of facilities, 15% are about lack of teacher, and 11% are about poor teaching (Guimbert and others, 2008: 426). To argue further, only 25% of the schools constructed in 2002 were usable (MOE, 2006; cited in Jones, 2008: 280). The problem of low quality teachers is another problem that requires time and funding. Many teachers do not have proper education. According to Jones (2008: 281), "...the number of teachers has grown sevenfold from 21,000 to 140,000 since 2001 (MOE, 2006, p. 15), only 22% have completed secondary education and have basic teacher training". Moreover, there are not enough quality teachers in rural areas, because many teachers who receive good education prefer to teach in urban areas. This raises a question: how can this be improved? Language is another problem that results in poor quality of education. Afghanistan consists of two main languages (Dari<sup>24</sup> and Pashto<sup>25</sup>), and approximately 200 different dialects. Therefore, language has become barrier to the teachers who are assigned to an area or school where the local people speak a different language. Consequently, it also results in the high dropout rates of students, particularly female students (Jones, 2008: 283).

From the above statements, it can be concluded that the government's efforts in

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<sup>24</sup> Dari refers to Persian language. It is always used in business and government transactions.

<sup>25</sup> Pashto is a language of Pashtun people who is one of the main ethnic groups in Afghanistan and is an official language in Afghanistan.

improving and providing education has been challenged by many issues that have persisted in the country for many decades. The ongoing conflicts have not yet been resolved. They have threatened peace, security, and well-being of the Afghan people. Malala's speech for the UN Youth Assembly in 2013 states that, "peace is necessary for education. In many parts of the world especially Pakistan and Afghanistan; terrorism, wars and conflicts stop children to go to their schools" (The Independent, 2013). This continuation of insecurity has been considered the worst threat to education and the people who suffer most are the Afghan women who have been under oppression. Although today women's rights are stated in Afghanistan's constitution and gender equality has become a primary goal in the country's strategy, women still suffer the most. Nevertheless, this statement does not intend to claim that only women's issues should be solved and addressed. Rather it intends to raise the voice of the unheard and to spread the untold story. Furthermore, it intends to call for attention from men to become involved in a process of change. In this light, the following chapter seeks to identify the struggles for women's education, in order to understand and find alternative approaches.

### **2.3 The Struggle for Women's Education in Afghanistan**

The struggle for education in Afghanistan is not only the greatest challenge, but it is also the greatest strength for both women and men. Through the history of education in Afghanistan, I am able to identify the struggle and limitations that can be transformed for a better and a more sustainable society, particularly for women. In the war-torn country like Afghanistan, women struggle for their freedom, for their rights, for their status, and for opportunities to choose to do and to be what they value being

and doing. These are sources of hope for many women to continue to advocate for women's education. In such limited and difficult situations, many have failed, but many more have found ways to build their networks and their strengths to support one another. The prolonged violence and conflicts such as Taliban attacks, violence against women and patriarchy within Afghanistan severely limit women's social and political participation. In this kind of situation, it is important that the strengths are derived not only from the external help such as the Afghan government and the international community, but also from within individuals and community.

Because the majority of Afghan population lives in rural areas of Afghanistan, the number of women who are denied education is greater in remote provinces than in urban area. Cities like Kabul have more opportunities for women's education and employment. There has been much improvement in terms of women's status and women's education after the current government came into power. This can be identified from the prevalence of women in public spaces, more schools being reopened, and more student enrolment.

Figure 2: Female students at a girl's school in Kabul



However, the Taliban attacks have been increasing since the handover security from the U.S. to the Afghan government in 2013 and they have been targeting government officials, schools, and girls. In 2003, attacks were common in Kabul. Some were claimed by the Taliban and some were claimed by other fundamentalist groups. During my research in Kabul, there was a car bomb approximately 200 meters away from an NGO that I did research with. It was so close that it blew off the windows of the NGOs. People were panicked and screaming. According to the local news, the Taliban claimed the attack and were targeting a group of parliamentary members who were going to attend a meeting at the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC). That day and the next day, there was less activity in the city. People tried to avoid going outside. Many students were not allowed to go to school.

It is presumed that although there is more improvement, there are other obstacles (such as insecurity) that prohibit people from effectively participate in such activities. The recent Taliban's attacks have become the major concern in Kabul. Moreover, it is of significant importance to realize that Kabul does not represent only the urban area. Although Kabul is considered an urban area, the insecurity and the living condition is much worse in the suburban part of Kabul. The fact that there are many internal migrants in Kabul and most of them live in poverty, the suburban part of Kabul does not seem to be better than the rural provinces of Afghanistan. Therefore, I posit that the situation of women's education in the suburban part of Kabul should also be emphasized and studied.

Figure 3: A boy selling vegetables on a carriage in a suburban area of Kabul



This chapter, therefore, aims at identifying the struggle for women's education by exploring women's situation during and after the period of Taliban rule, the situation of violence against women in general, and the impacts of patriarchy that have been ingrained into the society for decades. Second, it focuses on women's education in Kabul that will set a basic understanding to support the research's purposes of chapter 3's case study in Kabul. Finally, it explores alternatives that Afghan women have found under the struggle for their education.

### **2.3.1 Women's Education and Its Challenges**

Education can be revolutionary for women under an oppressive culture and situation like that which exists in Afghanistan. According to Yacoobi (2011: 309-310), women's subordinate position has been part of Afghan culture for thousands years and they are among the most oppressed groups in the world. Moreover, the fact that women suffer most from the civil war and sexual violence has portrayed women as

victims, not also an important part or actors in transforming the conflicts. However, the struggle of Afghan women through those difficult times has become their strength and has provided important lessons, allowing them to find alternative methods for improvement. Through education, they gain freedom, are empowered, develop critical thinking skills, and their networks to fight for their own rights and education. Therefore, education is the heart of women's struggle (Rostami-Povey, 2007: 33).

Nevertheless, impediments such as threats to women and to schools by the Taliban, violence against women, and an extreme patriarchal system limit the actual opportunities for women's education. Throughout history of Afghanistan<sup>26</sup>, women's education has been extremely limited. Hayat (2008: 174-175) identifies the main impediments to women's education as follows: 1) crime such as drug trafficking and extortion committed by warlords and other outlaws; 2) gender-based violence such as rape<sup>27</sup> and forced marriage; 3) threats to girls and women from fundamentalists (the Taliban, Mujahedeen, al Qaeda members, and many Mullahs); 4) terrorism attacks such as suicide bombings, car bombs, and poisonings of schoolgirls; 5) dangerous environments such as areas with landmines and dangerous roads; and 6) violence against Pashtun ethnic women.

There are many impediments to women's education. They are complex and related to many factors. For example, they are primarily related to security issues, reinforced by traditions, and practiced by organized religion. However, in an effort to analyze this complexity, three major focuses are argued in this chapter: the impediments caused by the Taliban, violence against women, and patriarchy. These

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<sup>26</sup> This thesis refers the history to the Russian invasion in 1979, the Taliban rule from 1994 to 2001, and the continuing terrorist attacks after the fall of Taliban.

<sup>27</sup> In Afghanistan, there are prevalence of gang rape and rape as a weapon of war.

impediments to women's education in Afghanistan are inter-related and should be effectively analyzed. Therefore, this chapter first analyzes the impediments caused by the Taliban in relation to women's oppression and insecurity. Second, violence against women is also examined through the three decades of civil war and focusing on the systematic use as power control. Last, the patriarchal system in Afghan society is carefully analyzed based on the universal approach and the capability approach highlighted in chapter 1.2.3.

It is clear that the obstacles to women's education were more severe during the Taliban rule. It is considered the worst period for women's education. The major reason is because of their fundamentalist Islamic views that women are inferior to men. This became a cultural norm that limited women from social and political participation. Girls and women were completely banned from school. Most of education during that time occurred in Madressas, which were run by men and which allowed only boys to attend. Their view is that "male education should be traditional and religion based..." (Economic and Social Council; 5). Moreover, the Taliban established their own military force to control Afghans and made sure that everyone followed their rules. Besides the banning of female education, there were other limitations for women related to the cultural norms. For example, girls and women were prohibited from working outside and appearing in public. If women had to go outside, they had to be accompanied by a male relative and to wear a burqa. Furthermore, they were not allowed to wear bright colorful clothes. The windows in their houses had to be painted so that they could not be seen by from outside. However, women's oppression and abuse were present before the Taliban time such as during the time of Mujahideen rule, and that was also based on a fundamentalist



interpretation of Islam. It was later escalated with the rise of Taliban power. The prevalence of violence during that time was high. Many children witnessed their mothers killed or tortured. With such severe impediments to women, many fled to Pakistan and other neighboring countries. Rostami-Povey (2007: 27) explains that, “thousands of female-headed households, who were internally displaced, lived in refugee camps around cities, most of their husbands having been killed during the civil war years and under Taliban rule”.

Figure 4: An example of a woman in burqa<sup>28</sup>



After the fall of the Taliban regime with the support of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance Military, there was an increase of access to education. However, the obstacles to women’s education, and women’s obstacles in general are still severe and are still reinforced by Taliban insurgents. According to the testimony of a victim of war interviewed by an NGO that I did a research with,

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<sup>28</sup> This photo is taken in Kabul in 2013. After the Taliban rule, women are allowed to go outside without wearing a burqa. However, some women are still wearing it due to traditional practice. Many of women who wear burqa in Kabul come from rural villages where burqa is more common.

After the emergence of the Taliban, I returned to Kabul. With a lot of difficulties and troubles, we made a shelter on our remaining piece of land. Currently, we are hardly earning enough to survive. Poor civilians like us were witnesses to these brutalities and still are in shock and pain since those days. I became disabled due to losing my hand and leg. I lost my beloved daughter. My house was destroyed. Now I am living with only one hope. My hope is that before I die I want to see those who committed cruelties and abuses against citizens of Kabul be prosecuted and punished for their crimes.

Although the Taliban is no longer in power, the damage that it left behind is so great that it will take many more years to restore Afghan society. More importantly, the current Taliban insurgency has been a major threat to women's progress and education. Women who are practitioners and activists receive frequent threats from the Taliban and other fundamentalist groups. Although girls have better access to education now than they did prior to 2001, many girls' schools are still being attacked by violent insurgent groups. There were more than 640 schools bombed, burned, and shut down from 2007 to 2009, 80% of which were girls' schools (Kissane, 2012: 17-18). "Sometimes the Taliban post written notes, or so-called night letters, in villages, warning girls' schools to close or else face the wrath of their military operations" (Coursen-Neff, 2006; cited in Hayat, 2008: 175). Moreover, although many western-based governments and institutions are proud of the improvement of the post-war reconstruction particularly women's literacy and education, the reality is different (Hayat, 2008: 169).

Figure 5: Military Patrol in Kabul after a Taliban attack



The issue of insecurity caused by the Taliban is causing social, economic and political instability of Afghanistan. Because of the insecurity, “many parents are reluctant to send their children, especially their daughters, to remote government schools because of the tenuous security situation rather than because of ideology” (Burde & Linden, 2010; cited in Kissane, 2012: 17). Furthermore, women and girls are raped and sexually assaulted on their way to school.

Figure 6: Girls are commuting to school in a suburban part of Kabul.



In 2013, there are more frequent Taliban attacks, due to the security handover from the U.S. The Taliban claimed many attacks on schools and government places during the past few months. Therefore, it is of significant importance to closely keep an eye on Afghanistan in 2014, since it is the year that the U.S. will fully handover security to the Afghan government. After the fully security handover, will the rate of Taliban attacks increase? How will this situation affect women's education?

During the three decades of civil war, violence against women has had a severe effect. This form of violence is used to oppress women and to manipulate routes of power within the society. There are various different forms of violence against women, such as rape (which is often used as a weapon of war), honor killing, and forced marriage. Moreover, this form of violence is seen as structural violence that is systematically used to control women. In many conflict areas like Afghanistan, rape is used as a weapon of war. Rape is based on the concept of violating women's dignity and victimizing women to create fear, as well as to create power by male domination. In Afghanistan, rape is also used to defend family's honor when there is a conflict. During the period of Mujahedeen, more women were murdered and raped than the period of the Taliban (Rostami-Povey, 2007: 26).

During my research in Afghanistan, I visited a women's shelter and was told the story of a young girl who took refuge there. This young girl was forced to marry a Pakistani man when she was 14 years old. She refused to marry him and ran away to Kabul. Before reaching the women's shelter, she asked for help from a village leader when she was passing through his village on her way to Kabul. The leader kept her and raped her for two days. Then, he sent her to a police station. The police also raped her for two days. After that she was released and found the women's shelter. She was

not able to go back home, because she dishonored the family. A few months later, she demanded to go home. She said because her family had forgiven her and asked to come home. As soon as she knocked on the door of her house, she was shot dead by her uncle. Her uncle flew from Pakistan to kill her, because he believed that her act had dishonored the whole family and that killing her was the right thing to do.

The above story of this young girl's honor killing is one of many stories of violence against women. There are many acts of violence against women and most are related to traditional practices. For example, "the baad—in which women are exchanged like objects in tribal disputes, including the giving of females as recompense for debts of so-called 'honor'" (Walter, 2006; cited in Hayat, 2008: 176). Moreover, the violence against women has led to a growing number of suicides of Afghan women. This includes burning themselves to death when they are unable to escape from the family.

Lastly, Afghanistan consists of a patriarchal social structure that results in an extreme form of social exclusion, in which women are banned from social and political participation (Moghadam, 2002: 19). It was particularly extreme during the Taliban rule. However, the system is perpetuated over generations and reinforced by the society until the present day. Patriarchy has therefore been identified as a major root cause of many social injustices that affect women's education. The centuries long process of this fortification was systematic and sophisticated. It unconsciously embraces the socially and culturally constructed injustices as normative. Moreover, fear is seen as inseparable from violence as the patriarchal mindset lead people to believe that force and violence are the only mean to attain security.

In Afghanistan, patriarchy is often understood as a related to religion. This has been used as a justification of traditional rights and privileges, but this is a misinterpretation of Islam. According to Kissane (2012: 19), “deeply rooted Islamic ideologies have been manipulated to control and subjugate the lives of Afghan women- and the men around them”. Afghan patriarchy has degraded women’s status to far worse than second-class citizens. Moreover, women are seen as properties that belong to male. As Moghadam (2002: 20) argues, “community is the community of men, and that women are assimilated in the concept of resources”. According to an informal conversation with a director of an Afghan NGO working to promote human rights, he is looking for another wife. He said he is bored of his current wife and he did not have a choice to choose his bride, because it was an arranged marriage. He said that polygamy in Afghanistan is acceptable in Afghan society. He can marry as many new wives as he wants. Another person who is also working at the same NGO said that he is also looking for another wife, because his current wife cannot be pregnant. I asked him if he has gone to consult with a doctor. He said no and accused that it is his wife’s fault. I look at both cases as a disadvantage of women. Women in this situation do not have a chance to get divorce or find a new husband. One reason is because Afghan women cannot loose virginity before getting married. Virginity test is often conducted before marriage. In this case, women will have no choice, but to stay with their husbands and with other wives. This thus shows the status of women within domestic sphere that men have more power to make decision than women. In relation to the concept of capability approach, women in this situation do not have real choices to choose to live their lives, because it is limited by their husbands and other social factors. Moreover, it shows that women’s status is controlled by men. Men have

“decision-making power over their wives and children and the right to discipline them – with the use of violence if necessary” (Kabeer and others, 2011: 12). According to an interview with a woman who participates in a literacy class, everyday after cleaning, cooking and sending her husband to work, she secretly walked to the class for more than an hour. She does not tell her husband about the class, because he does not want either her or her daughter to be educated. She said if he knew about this, she could be punished and would not be allowed to go outside again. From the interview, it shows that her rights are conditional on male consent. Without her husband’s permission, her rights would not exist. In addition, “only men have rights, equality, and unlimited access to public space” (Moghadam, 2002: 19). This thus has negative impacts on women’s education and does not seem to be solved easily by policy implementation.

The dilemmas faced by Afghan women and men today are unjust practices and values inherited in the tradition. However human experiences through discourse and struggle have helped people to begin to realize and understand reality better. Women’s education is playing an important role in this realization and understanding. As Moghadam (2002: 28) states, “the greatest threat to the patriarchal community and the power of men is posed by “public women”—those who work, or go to school, or even walk from one place to another”. Nevertheless understanding derived from both formal and informal education would not be enough to transform the unjust social structure. It is very important to take courage in challenging the system and find alternatives.

### **2.3.2 Women's Education in Kabul**

There are many impediments to women's education in Afghanistan. Afghan women have been struggling for their own rights and their education throughout Afghanistan's long history of war and oppression. They have learnt and gained experiences from the struggle. Many have been empowered and have found ways to survive and to fight for their rights. The key to this empowerment is education. Therefore, education has become the heart of the struggle. So far, I have identified the impediments working against women's education in Afghanistan in general. However, it is important to analyze the situation of women's education through multiple perspectives. For example, different demographics affect the situation of women's education in various areas differently. Therefore, women's education in Kabul is analyzed based on this analytical perspective. This chapter firstly examines the present situation of women's education in Kabul. Although the obstacles to access women's education presented in chapter 2.3.1 still stand, this chapter will compare the situation in Kabul to the situation in rural areas in general. Secondly, this chapter will examine issues of insecurity focusing on the impacts of Taliban's recent attacks. Furthermore, an analysis from participant observation and field notes of my research in Kabul is also presented in this chapter. Finally, the situation of women's education in the suburban area of Kabul is also highlighted.

An important question to begin with is: how is the situation in Kabul? Kabul is the capital city of Afghanistan, which at present offers a better economy, more opportunities for employment, and more access to education than other regions of Afghanistan. After the fall of the Taliban regime, there was a rapid growth of population (Kabeer and others, 2011: 11). This was because many came back from



refugee camps in Pakistan and went to Kabul for job opportunities. Moreover, many schools and universities are located in Kabul, providing local children better access to education. Due to the fact that there is public transportation available for students, they face fewer obstacles on their way to school (such as sexual assault and fear of being kidnapped) than rural students who go to school by walking. According to Jones (2008: 287), as of 2008 “Kabul city has a very high net enrolment ratio compared with Helmand province (which has high insurgency and high poppy yields)...”. In 2006, the number of female teachers were 64%, which was higher than other provinces such as Oruzgan province that had only 1% (MOE, 2006; cited in (Jones, 2008: 287). There has also been much improvement in terms of women’s status. The presence of women in public spaces and women without burqas is more common in Kabul than in rural areas.

Figure 7: City Center of Kabul



Nevertheless, the Taliban’s recent attacks such as suicide bombings, car bombs, and poisonings of schoolgirls have become major impediments to women’s

education in Kabul. After the fall of the Taliban regime, the Karzai government has showed some efforts in reconciliation with the Taliban. However, there has been little improvement. On the contrary, there has been an increase of insurgencies, especially in Kabul. Although there are more insurgencies in the southern provinces like Kandahar, the frequent of attacks in Kabul has been increasing since 2013, which is the year that the U.S. starts to handover security to the Afghan government. As a result of this insecurity, Afghan citizens residing in Kabul, especially in the city center, have limitations to their participation in social and political activities. Moreover, more policemen and military men are present at checkpoints around the city and at government areas and business areas. Even though it is for people's security, at the same time it creates an atmosphere of fear and inconvenience for the people. The situation of women's education is also affected, since parents are afraid to send their children to go to schools and to outside. An analysis of school activities affected by recent attacks is also presented based on participant observation and filed notes as follows.

There are many schools and universities in Kabul. Both female and male students are seen on the streets. Female students wear a scarf and a school uniform, which is black and white. There are public buses that students take, and some school buses are also provided. However, the presence of female students could only be seen a few hours before the school starts and a few hours after the school finishes, because they were traveling to and from school. On the street during business hours and in the evening there are few women. At night there was almost no female presence on the street. One of the reasons could be a recent Taliban attack. Schools and universities have to be closed after attacks occurred. After the attacks, there was normally no

activity in public areas and the economic activity of the city was almost completely shut down.

Figure 8: Female students on a street of Kabul



While keeping in mind that the concentration of schools and better infrastructure are in the city center, it is also important not to overlook the situation in the suburbs of Kabul, which is much worse than in the central part of the city. Considering the difference in demography that is present in Kabul, there are many internally displaced persons and internal migrants who came to the city to look for employment. Many could not cope with the high cost of living and they were forced to move to suburban areas. Many are living under poor conditions. The suburban areas also include houses on mountains without proper roads, infrastructure, or sanitation. Moreover, it is also important to consider the motivations of the internal displaced persons and the migrants in Kabul. Many were forced to leave their villages because of poverty and violence. The situation in the city and the suburbs also shows different problems and impediments to women's education.

Figure 9: Living environment on a mountain in Kabul



Furthermore, many children who are enrolled in school are also working on the street to beg for money. Some live in suburban areas and travel to the city to beg. Because of the high cost of living in Kabul, parents force their children to work to increase the family's income. Many children have dropped out of school and work many hours a day on the street. In 2008, there were more than 60,000 children on the street of Kabul. These children are facing dangers on the street such as car accidents and bombings, which causes physical harm and also causes them to develop psychological stress (Takyi-Amoako, 2008). Also, there are many female beggars wearing burqas on the street. They risk their lives by standing in the middle of the road to get attention from the cars. Moreover, many women who could not cope with high cost of living became sex workers.

Although the situation in Kabul is better for these people than the rural areas in terms of economic opportunities and access to education, there are other problems and impediments that people in Kabul face. Therefore, it is important for policy-makers

and people involved in providing women's education to use multiple perspectives when analyzing situations in different societies and areas. In the case of Kabul, demographic difference is playing an important role. It is vital to consider the complexity of social structure that each society or area has, so that I can find alternatives that truly solve the problems.

### **2.3.3 In Search of Alternatives through the Struggle**

Given the unjust society where there are great disparities between the powerful and the powerless (most of whom are oppressed), women in Afghanistan have been challenging the powerful for equality and justice. The unjust uses of power, which can be seen in the form of military force, reinforcement of patriarchy, or corruption to control and oppress women have caused great destruction to the life of both men and women. The long history of civil war in Afghanistan, the poverty, fundamentalism, and terrorist acts are evidence of the struggles of Afghan women. Nevertheless, through these struggles, they have found ways to challenge the powers structures in their society. The government of Afghanistan, the international community, Afghan civil society, and the local people have all devoted effort to improving women's education.

There have been many strategies to improve women's education. Lessons were learnt and data were collected to make new policies. Although those policies are important, local initiatives are also powerful and empowering. These initiatives coming from the local people are transformative and can impact the society in the long run to be more sustainable. Therefore, in this light, transformative ways that derived

from women who struggled through oppression and difficult times are analyzed in this chapter. With such limitations and hardships, how were these women able to access education? What networks have they formed to challenge the obstacles? What could be the lessons learnt or recommendations to improve women's education?

Hence, this chapter firstly explores the government's recent effort in removing the obstacles identified in chapter 2.3.1. Second, local initiatives are highlighted focusing on the strengths and alternatives that women found through the struggle and oppression. Last, this chapter concludes with some recommendations.

There are quite a number of government attempts to decrease the obstacles to women's education. Some of these are highlighted below. According to Jones (2008: 283), many studies suggest that hiring female teachers will increase female enrolment. The fact that female teacher has an effect on the decrease of gender inequality in education was stated in chapter 1.2.2. The MOE has established Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs)<sup>29</sup> in 2010 to train all teachers. In 2010, approximately 1,600 teachers from five different northern provinces of Afghanistan completed the program (GIZ, 2013). The program also includes female teachers aiming to increase the number of Afghan girls in school (Kissane, 2012: 19). Moreover, due to the problem of the many languages of different ethnic groups, the MOE plans to use minority languages in formal education (Jones, 2008: 281). Lastly, due to the danger that girls face during the travel to and from school, the government and some NGOs have implemented a project called Advancing Community Education in Afghanistan, which aims to support girls' education through home-based schools (Jones, 2008: 280).

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<sup>29</sup> The MOE established Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) in every province trying to address teacher quality with curricula reform, establishing, and conducting emergency short training for all teachers (Jones, 2008: 278).

Survival strategies and techniques that Afghan women use can be traced back to the period of Taliban. From those experiences, women have transmitted knowledge and skills from generation to generation. Up through the present day, Afghan women have created strong networks throughout Afghanistan. “Under Taliban rule, these networks and forms of solidarity became mechanisms for women’s empowerment” (Rostami-Povey, 2007: 29). The activities under these networks concentrated on providing education to women. Since the Taliban did not allow girls and women to be educated, secret underground schools were created. According to Rostami-Povey (2007: 32), these secret organizations and networks are the only functional organizations during the time of conflict. Literacy classes and handcraft classes were offered under these organizations. Women hid their books and their pens under their burqas and took risks to go these secret schools (Rostami-Povey, 2007: 33). It was the only way for women to receive education. Many NGOs were involved in establishing women’s education during the wartime who form the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), Afghan Women’s Council (AWC), and the Women’s Association for Peace and Human Rights in Afghanistan (WAPHA). These NGOs are a few of many that work closely with the communities in provision of education and justice to impoverished women in Afghanistan.

Malalai Joya, a social activist, a teacher at an underground school during the Taliban, and a former parliament member, is an example of a female activist who has lived through the Taliban time. She has raised her voice against the oppression of fundamentalist and terrorist groups. In an interview Malala states the importance of women’s education and how NGOs are playing an important role in providing education to women during the oppressive times.

When women learn to read and write, many of them become extraordinary activists, and these brave women are running projects and organizations that are really working on behalf of women's and human rights, like RAWA, like OPAWC, like the Social Association of Afghan Justice Seekers, and a few others that I know who are also justice-seekers. And now women are even coming onto the streets and demonstrating, wearing the burka, in resistance against the U.S. and NATO and also against the Islamic fundamentalists. This is a positive example and a source of hope. In the history of Afghanistan, we have never before seen this kind of activism by women (Rassbach, 2013).

I met Malala Joya in person during my research in Afghanistan at a conference titled “Fundamentalism and Terrorism: Main Threats towards Women’s Progress”. She stressed the importance of women’s networks that provide education and survival methods to women living in the oppressive regime. Moreover, she emphasized the need of the government in promoting real democracy and in making gender-sensitive policies that includes women’s participation in the process. She stressed that education is important in this case, because it empowers women to raise their voices and to fight for theirs rights.

Figure 10: Malalai Joya at the conference





Although Afghan women have been disadvantaged in their society, many have become stronger. The struggle that they have been through helps them to find alternatives in the form of a women's network and an underground school that provides support among women. When the environment cannot provide a suitable place for women to be educated, alternative spaces are created. These spaces mostly refer to underground schools or secret gatherings where women can learn how to read and write. Although it is not formal education, it is a tool of women's empowerment. Moreover, it is vital that this alternative derive from local communities and from women themselves. Thus, NGOs that provides support for women should be accepted and supported by the communities, the government and the international community.

#### **2.4 An Approach to Alternative Spaces for Women's Education**

According to Brodeky and others (2012: 160), "during the past 30 years of war and civil unrest, countless Afghan women and men, individuals and organizations, have been active in providing alternative education to girls and women". This alternative education in this thesis refers to alternative methods or alternative spaces that derive from experiences, critical thinking processes, struggles through oppressive regime, or even "aha" moments. In Afghanistan, these alternative spaces referred to as non-formal education or informal learning, and from these resources disadvantaged women can access and gain when they cannot access in formal education. Because there are many impediments (chapter 2.3) to women's education in the formal sector, non-formal education serves as an alternative in this context. Therefore, this raises some questions for consideration. Compared to formal education, how is alternative

women's education perceived? What is the role of NGOs and their significance in providing alternative spaces for women's education in Afghanistan?

Moreover, the concept of alternative can be related to the capability approach (chapter 1.2.3). Through the lens of the capability approach, it helps to understand and identify real causes of conflicts and impediments to women's education so as to find transformative methods in providing real, effective opportunities and making a difference. Furthermore, the capability approach emphasizes the importance of self-realization through empowerment and education. As a result, women are able to find alternatives in order to fulfill their needs and to achieving what they value being and doing.

In addition, alternative spaces also refer to involvement of individuals and community participation. The spaces in this case do not only bring people together, but they also reflect the hardship, the contribution, and the struggle of the people. This is why the spaces will not become alternative without community participation. Therefore, many women's networks and NGOs are formed by local people and community. Moreover, these NGOs and women's networks are actively providing alternative spaces in terms of trainings and classes for disadvantaged women.

#### **2.4.1 Non-Formal Education and Informal Learning**

“Education can be offered on a railway platform in Rajasthan, India, and in a private school in the United States; it can be grasped by an eager child, in a war-torn building in Kabul or in the mobile schools of Sudan” (Murray, 2008: 33). From this statement, I posit that education should not be only described in relation to the formal

form, but also in relation to the non-formal form. Each form of education provides different methods and experiences to the people who have access to it. Although this thesis has been referring to women's education as formal education, the recent findings suggest something different. According to the analysis of the situation in Afghanistan, non-formal education and informal learning are playing important role in women's education throughout the history of Afghanistan. These take place in the form of underground schools, handcraft classes, and literacy classes that are offered by NGOs or women's networks. Even though the Taliban regime has collapsed and women are allowed to go to school, the impacts of the long period of war, the oppression, and the continuing practice of patriarchy are still a deep part of Afghan society. Moreover, the instability of the current government and the insecurity issues are recently increasing threats to women's education. Women have to become self-reliant and empowered from within. Therefore, women's networks and NGOs have become significant actors in supporting the non-formal education and the informal learning of Afghan women. This chapter, thus, examines the role of non-formal education and of informal learning in relation to Afghanistan. Moreover, some practical examples are provided to support the argument. However, this chapter does not completely neglect the importance of formal education as some NGO projects provide supports for both formal and non-formal education.

According to Freire, both formal and non-formal educations are equally valuable. He noted that, "whereas formal systematic education can only be changed by political powers, oppressed peoples themselves can organize educational projects, which are often outside the formal education system" (Freire, 1994; cited in Brodeky and others, 2012: 162). As I have learned from the case of Afghanistan, Afghan

women have learnt and found their own ways to form networks that organize different educational projects. Despite the hardships and oppressions from war and from society, they have gained strengths and come up with alternatives for non-formal education. Furthermore, Deyo (2007:1) states that, “in Afghanistan, *nonformal education* is most often used interchangeably with the term *functional literacy*. Topics related to life skills and productive or livelihoods activities are integrated into functional literacy programs”. Hence, many NGOs offer basic literacy class that includes other life skills coupled with sewing or handcraft class. These life skills can be referred to skills and knowledge that are related to health, literacy and numeracy, peace and tolerance, and child development (Deyo, 2007: 2).

Figure 11: A literacy class that integrates human rights and women’s health by Organization of Promoting Afghan Women's Capabilities (OPAWC)



Figure 12: A sewing class at a women's shelter by Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan (HAWCA)



The Afghan government's policies are mostly made for formal education as stated in chapter 1.3.3 and 2.3.2. Therefore, it is limited by financial supports, government's stability, and pressure from the international agenda. Moreover, it limits women who are aged out of school. Because they did not have an opportunity to be educated during the Taliban rule, they are too old to attend formal education after the fall of the regime. Thus, informal education is the only opportunity for these women to be educated.

Brodeky and others (2012: 165) argue that, "informal education is gained through lived experiences, activities taken on by choice and necessity, and often with a primary, or at least simultaneous, focus on contributing to others rather than promoting the advancement of the individual alone". This is what many Afghan women have developed. The underground school and educational activities are being organized by women who contribute to help other women and to their own communities. RAWA, an Afghan NGO that has been helping women since the wartime and established many

underground schools, believes that children can learn from other graduated students who have taught by RAWA (Brodeky and others, 2012: 166). Moreover, this kind of education also has a positive impact on men and on the society as a whole. For example, because the classes are organized secretly or in a closed community, men who live in a society that denies women's education can choose to participate in the non-formal educational activities without pressure from the rest of society. A father of a girl who realizes the importance of education can secretly teach his daughter at home or send her to the underground school.

Similarly, informal learning helps to transform women's perception and knowledge in terms of self-awareness, social realities, and critical thinking (Brodeky and others, 2012: 162). The informal learning can be described in a form of educational radio or taking part in organizing an event. For example, several years ago there was "a dually entertaining and educational radio soap opera in India that influenced young women to engage in discursive, educational practices in public spaces about social practices and power" (Pant, 2008; cited in Brodeky and others, 2012: 162). In addition, a popular education strategy that was designed to promote critical consciousness has successfully reduced health disparities within African American and Latino communities in the United States (Wiggins et al., 2009; cited in Brodeky and others, 2012: 162-163). Moreover, it can be seen as life experience. RAWA promotes that life experience is a form of education and that an environment where women and men live should promote equality and encourage women from diverse backgrounds (Brodeky and others, 2012: 167).

Both formal and non-formal education can be promoted by NGOs. In the case of Afghanistan, official schools do not provide knowledge and skill associated with

human rights, life skills, or extracurricular activities such as sports and music. Besides attending official schools, some NGOs thus support impoverished children in providing extra classes that include those elements. Moreover, formal education also comes in the form of boarding schools that are established by NGOs such as RAWA and School of Leadership Afghanistan (SOLA).

In conclusion, non-formal education and informal learning provide alternative methods for women's education. In Afghanistan, these forms of education provide better opportunities for women who do not have access to formal education. Also, they provide necessary skills and experiences that formal schools do not usually offer. NGOs provide spaces for this alternative education by organizing different classes and training events for Afghan women. Although these spaces are not as sophisticated, not equipped with good equipment, nor providing certificates or degrees as formal education does, they are starting points and they are empowering women to seek improvements in their lives. Thus, the following chapter explores the activities and the progress of women's alternative education organized by Afghan NGOs.

#### **2.4.2 NGOs and Educational Programs for Women**

With many limitations for Afghan women who want to be educated, there has been an emergence of alternative spaces for women's education. These alternative spaces are mostly offered and organized by NGOs. According to Kissane (2012: 11), "to strengthen and expand educational access for girls ...alternative educational providers such as nongovernmental organizations become even more critical". Especially in Afghanistan, many NGOs have been actively providing these alternative spaces for women throughout its history. In 2001, there was a sudden increase of

NGOs working with the MOE to invest in improving educational opportunities for girls (Kissane, 2012: 14). There are many NGOs that directly and indirectly provide educational programs including developing infrastructure in places where the education system does not function (Hayat, 2008: 172). Hence, this chapter firstly provides an overview of Afghan NGOs that provide the alternative spaces for women's education. Second, it provides an overview of a selected NGO that has played a very important role in women's education since the time of the Taliban rule. Finally, it examines some limitations and criticisms that those NGOs are facing.

In Afghanistan, there are many active NGOs both local and international working for women's education; for example Afghan Women's Education Center (AWEC), Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL), Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan (HAWCA), Afghan Women's Resource Center (AWRC), Organization of Promoting Afghan Women's Capabilities (OPAWC), Afghan Child Education and Care Organization (AFCECO), Social Association of Afghan Justice Seekers (SAAJS), Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), Norwegian Church Aid, Delta Kappa Gamma Society (DKG), and Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (W4WAfghan). These NGOs provide different programs for women such as adult literacy class, human rights class, teacher training, basic health service training, sewing classes, knitting and handicraft classes, language classes, and computer classes. Most of the NGOs offer basic literacy, sewing, knitting and handicraft classes. Besides learning how to read and write, some literacy class also integrates knowledge about human rights, health, and hygiene into teaching. Furthermore, RAWA is selected in this chapter to provide more details on its perspectives on women's education.



RAWA is an NGO that has “remained steadfastly committed to helping the post-war reconstruction process, and particularly women, in Afghanistan and in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region” (Hayat, 2008: 173). It provides supports for both formal and non-formal education. During the Taliban rule, it established underground home-based schools and literacy courses around the country to provide education for women (Hayat, 2008: 173). Until the present day, RAWA still organizes some underground classes. These classes are underground even to this day because they integrate political views into the teaching, and these political views are seen as a threat to Afghan government. In RAWA’s literacy classes, it also provides alternative perspectives on socio-political and cultural issues, which aim to developing critical thinking skills and self-awareness (Brodeky and others, 2012: 172).

NGOs often rely on external funding support, because they are not involved in any commercial or governmental activities. Some funding comes from domestic and international donors and some come from grant supports. However, the effect of the global economic downturn of 2008-2012 has also decreased funding to many NGOs worldwide including many in Afghanistan. According to the interview with AFCECO and OPAWC’s staff (chapter 3.3.1 and 3.4.1), their NGOs have less funding which has led to a decrease of projects. AFCECO, which is an NGO that provides support to orphans was forced to close down an orphanage because of insufficient funds. Furthermore, many Afghan NGOs are facing challenges with the government. According to Hayat (2008: 171), the NGOs are “often pressured to comply with government policies in relation to the reporting of progress on the ground”. From an interview with an OPAWC’s staff (chapter 3.4.1), the organization has to submit progress report and many supporting documents to the Afghan Ministry of Finance

every year for legal purposes. However, the process usually takes very long time and every time they are forced to pay money to a government officer. Moreover, there are many cases of women NGO workers who are not protected and who are killed. Women who work in remote areas face danger and threats from criminal warlords. Still, there is no practical legal protection to these women.

Criticisms towards Afghan NGOs have grown. One reason is that many are operated by foreigners. Some are accused of introducing Western hyper-capitalism and consumption into Afghan society (Hayat, 2008: 172). Many NGOs, both local and international are being accused of only promoting their own images rather than really working to help the people. (Hayat, 2008: 172).

In summary, there are many Afghan NGOs that are working to promote women's education. Some have been operating underground since the time of the Taliban rule. Many are actively providing classes and trainings, and involving women in their activities. Some of these NGOs are working closely with local people. Many have included local women in program planning and implementation. It is also important to involve men in the programs and work with these NGOs. Although many are facing challenges and criticisms, good NGOs who truly create changes to the society should be supported. Many Afghan women still have no access to education. Thus, NGOs are seen as an important actor in providing women's education, and they challenge negative traditions that limit women's participation in Afghan society.

### **2.4.3 Interview with a RAWA Staff**

An interview was conducted with a RAWA staff. It aims to reflect a perspective of an NGO worker in relation to women's education in Afghanistan. Since RAWA has been actively working in the area for many years, it is expected to provide some insight information and opinions that support this thesis's argument. Moreover, as RAWA is an underground organization, the name of the interviewee is protected for her own safety. The interview is as follows.

#### *1) How has education impacted your life?*

Education has had high impacts on my life since I was young. When I was 6 years old, it was the time of the Taliban rule. I could not go to school. Mujahideen were fighting with the Taliban. In my village, the Mujahideen came and raped many women and girls. They raped even young girls who were the same age as me. So, my mother was afraid and she hid my sisters and me in the basement. Our father was an educated man and he saw the importance of education and taught us in the basement until we decided to go to Pakistan in the end of 1994, because the situation did not get better. We stayed at a refugee camp. At the refugee camp, there was a school for girls. So I continued my education there. Later I decided to give a literacy class to some women who do not have access to education. There was a lack of education in the refugee camp. So, I started by teaching 6 girls using my own room for 2 hours every day. Besides teaching reading and writing, I also taught awareness of women's rights. I hoped that when they are educated, they would also help other women. Now I'm very happy, because I'm still in touch with them. One of them has become a teacher and another has become a nurse. I'm very happy, because they are doing good things

for society. And the important thing is that they realize the importance of education. They also send their own children to school.

*2) How has RAWA been working to support women's education?*

RAWA is a political organization and at the same time a social organization. Our focus is to provide educational programs for women. RAWA have started literacy courses for women, especially for women in remote areas. We also have awareness courses. The women who go to official schools or who have already graduated from school, they still need to know about human rights and about women's rights. In schools or universities, there is no information on human rights, especially and no information on women's rights. RAWA feels that we need to raise awareness for women to achieve the basic rights and the right to education.

*3) How does RAWA organize those classes?*

The classes are organized underground, because it could be dangerous for us if the government or secret agents know about it. In each class, there are only 3 girls and one teacher. The teachers teach about political and other social problems in Afghanistan. Sometimes the teachers have the students write political statements.

At present, our literacy courses are not run underground like during the Taliban rule. Only awareness courses that are arranged underground, because they are related to politics. The literacy courses we have are not run under the name of RAWA, because RAWA is not an official organization. So, it wouldn't be good for the security of both the teachers and the students if we were to organize under RAWA's name.

To register as an official organization in Afghanistan, there are a lot of procedures. So, we found a more simple way. The teachers who teach at the classes for RAWA went to talk with the Ministry of Education and gave a reason that the classes are their own initiatives and they are just private classes. They do not belong to any NGO. Sometimes they also said that the classes are supported by individual donor from Europe who financially supports us to organize the class.

*4) How is RAWA's relationship with other NGOs?*

We also work with other NGOs as well. However, it's difficult for us, because we are a political organization and we have our own way to implement our projects. For example, our literacy classes are not only teaching reading and writing. We also give some information for human rights awareness raising to women. And, some NGOs do not agree with us. They only want to teach reading and writing. This is because it is dangerous for them to raise awareness of human rights. In Afghanistan, providing awareness classes is dangerous.

*5) In which areas has RAWA provided the classes?*

We have more literacy classes in remotes areas. In Kabul, there are not many, because we see that many NGOs have been providing many literacy classes already. Also, there are more schools for women in Kabul than in remote areas. However, we have around 10 literacy classes in Kabul.

In Kabul, we give more opportunity to women who are aged out of school such as housewives, because they did not have a chance to learn when they were young. In remote areas, we give more chances to younger girls, because there is a lack of girls' school in those areas.

*6) Why does RAWA do not also provide awareness classes for boys and men?*

I think it is important to raise the awareness among men. But to run the underground course is very difficult in terms of security. Men have more opportunity to get information from anywhere. But women have less opportunity. Also, it is because we focus on empowering women. To arrange these classes, we have to find trustable people who really contribute to our work. It is more difficult to organize a class for men.

*7) What have been major impediments to women's education?*

Patriarchy is a big problem in Afghan society. The Afghan family is based on patriarchal system. Male members of the family usually don't think about educating women. It is very rare for them to think about it. So, in many cases, they don't allow women to go to school. To send children to school, they need to invest some money. They see that girls are not the future of the family. They prefer to prioritize boys over girls.

The lack of security is another issue. The lack of security outside the family has negative impacts on the security inside the family. Especially in remote areas like the North of Afghanistan, there are a lot of insecurity issues such as kidnap and rape. Girls are raped and kidnapped on their way to school. So, the family fears sending their daughters to go outside or to go to school. In Afghan society, girls mean honor to the family, and nobody wants to lose their honor.

*8) What is your opinion on women's education in relation to sexual violence?*

There are many differences between the situation during the war and the post-war. During the war, the soldiers came and raped all women. There was no difference between educated and uneducated women. The soldiers raped them all. But in the post-war society it is different. The majority of girls who face sexual violence such as forced marriage, forced prostitution, gang rape, and underage marriage, are illiterate or don't go to school. So, there is a very strong relationship between education and sexual violence. Also, most of the girls who are the victims of sexual violence are not from the city. They mostly live in remote areas where there is lack of education.

When women are educated, they look at their lives differently. For example, in the case of forced prostitution, it is easier to force a girl who is not educated, because she has no choices and no other means to make a living. If the girl is educated, she has other opportunities available to her such as becoming a teacher or a doctor. In the case of forced marriage, the majority of the girls who are forced are uneducated.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter found that many Afghan women have been facing many impediments to access education. The major impediments have been identified for the oppression and violence during the Taliban time, the insurgency after the fall of the Taliban, violence against women, and patriarchy. During the civil war, many schools and university were closed down. Students were unable to attend school because of insecurity. When the Taliban took power, the situation of women's education was even worse. This study found that the obstacles to women's education were more severe during the Taliban rule. After the fall of the Taliban, the international

community has given many supports to improve education. Although there are some improvements of education provision in post-Taliban Afghanistan, the damage that it left behind is so great that it will take many more years to restore Afghan society. Afghan government has put in effort to establish a new policy for education, the National Education Strategic Plan for Afghanistan. However, the government's efforts in improving and providing education have been challenged by many issues that have persisted in the country for many decades. The MOE and the government are facing many problems, such as corruption, insecurity, low quality education, insufficient numbers of teachers, and high dropout rates. Furthermore, the ongoing conflicts with the Taliban and other fundamentalist groups have not yet been resolved.

Moreover, violence against women such as rape as a weapon of war has had a severe effect since the time of the civil war. This form of violence is used systematically to oppress women and to manipulate routes of power within the society. In addition, this study found that patriarchal system has been a major root cause of many social injustices that affect women's education.

Although the situation of women's education in Kabul is better than in the remote areas in terms of economic opportunities and access to education, there are other problems and impediments that women in Kabul face. The Taliban's recent attacks such as suicide bombings, car bombs, and poisonings of schoolgirls have become major impediments to women's education. More importantly, this study found that the situation in the city and in the suburban parts of Kabul shows different problems and impediments to women's education. In the suburban area, there are more people living in poor condition with less access to education. The children in the city



have better access, but they are facing the problems of low quality in education and insecurity.

Furthermore, this study found that the struggle to access women's education helps Afghan women to find alternatives in the form of a women's network and an underground school that provides support among women. This type of form refers to non-formal education and is identified as an alternative space provided by NGOs and women's networks. In Afghanistan, these alternative spaces provide better opportunities for women who do not have access to formal education. Although these spaces do not provide good equipment nor degrees as formal education does, they are starting points and they are empowering women to seek improvements in their lives. Furthermore, there are many active NGOs working to promote women's education. These NGOs are seen as important actors in providing women's education, and they challenge negative traditions that limit women's participation in Afghan society. From the interview with a RAWA staff, it confirms the significance of alternative spaces and of women's strengths that derive from within. Finally, from this finding, I also posit that it is important that this alternative derive from local communities and from women themselves. This statement, therefore, will be argued in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 3 RESEARCHING LOCAL NGOs IN KABUL: IMPACT OF ALTERNATIVE WOMEN'S EDUCATION**

### **3.1 Chapter Introduction**

This chapter offers a summary of the field research conducted in Afghanistan in the four-week period starting from June and finishing in July of 2013. The research was conducted based on an ethnographic method consisting of two different approaches: participant observation and informal interview. In general, the purpose of this study is to determine to what extent the NGOs and what they offer (classes, work experience, study abroad opportunities etc.) effect the women. Furthermore, the specific criterion we look at in the interview process is challenges and lessons learned from the creating of alternative spaces for women's education provided by NGOs in Kabul. The alternative spaces include several educational and vocational classes and training opportunities such as, literacy classes, human rights awareness classes, and handicraft classes. In addition, from the finding in chapter two, I posit that it is important that this alternative derive from local communities and from women themselves.

I conducted field research based on direct participant observation and 12 interviews consisting of students, teachers and staff from two Afghan NGOs that focus on women's education and empowerment. The context and literal transcriptions of those interviews are presented in this chapter 3. The first organization is Afghan Child Education and Care Organization (AFCECO). The second organization is Organization of Promoting Afghan Women's Capabilities (OPAWC).

The interviews were designed based on open-ended questions and are divided into several sections: 1) general views about the program, 2) experiences, 3) general views about education, 4) views about women's education, 5) perceptions and perspectives on women's status, 6) challenges, and 7) impacts. The interviews were

conducted with two AFCECO staff, four students, the director of OPAWC, a teacher and four students.

After presenting the transcriptions, I present an analysis and the findings related to my research questions as well as, the findings from chapter 1 and chapter 2, which will lead to the final conclusion of my thesis.

### **3.2 Research Methodology and Limitations**

The research methodology of this chapter is designed based on the main research question of the thesis: How do NGOs in Kabul provide alternative spaces for women's education and what are their impacts? Moreover, based on the findings in chapter 2.3.2, other important questions are raised. How is the situation of women's education in the urban area different from the suburban area of Kabul? How do these two NGOs which are located in two different areas impact the women's lives differently? To answer these questions, a field research based on ethnography was conducted. The research was conducted in a four-week period in Kabul aiming to learn and understand the situation of women's education in Afghanistan, especially in Kabul. Most importantly, it aims to conduct interviews with women who participate in the NGOs' educational programs. The research uses informal interviews as the main methodology. The selection of participants is based on available resources. There are many NGOs that work on women's education however, there are few NGOs that were available for the research. Moreover, based on the findings in chapter 2.3.2, two different NGOs were selected. One is located in the urban area of Kabul. The other one is located in the suburban area of Kabul.

To understand and to effectively analyze perception and perspective of the interviewees, the interview questions are designed to be open-ended and informal. According to Fetterman (1989: 41-46), the technique of using open-ended questions helps to “discover and confirm the participant’s experiences and perceptions” and “allow participants to interpret”. The open-ended questions are used to limit the impact of the interviewer and leave more room for them to talk freely and allow the interviewer to focus on the analysis of their answers. Furthermore, the interviews were carried on using informal style with series of questions and waited for the appropriate moment to ask during the interview. This “offers the most natural situations or formats for data collection and analysis” (Fetterman, 1989: 41). Moreover, the interviews with the staff and students of the NGOs used different sets of questions for each of them. The questions designed for the NGO staff are designed differently from the questions for students and visa-versa. However, both sets of questions are divided into several series: 1) general views about the program, 2) experiences, 3) general views about education, 4) views about women’s education, 5) perceptions and perspectives on women’s status, 6) challenges, and 7) impacts. Moreover, I have conducted participant observations that will be added in the analysis of the interviews.

There are several limitations to this study. The first limitation is the issue of insecurity in Afghanistan. During the time of the research, there were many attacks from the Taliban and other fundamentalist groups. They targeted the current government, the U.S. military and foreigners. Therefore, it was difficult to go outside and travel to different places of interest. There were several days with in the time frame of this study that I was unable to go outside. Moreover, each time that I travelled to different places it was necessary to have a private car with a driver, since it

was too dangerous to take a taxi and it was rare for women to drive. Previously there were many accounts where foreigners were kidnapped or killed. Moreover, due to the issue of insecurity, I was unable to do research in more remote areas such as, the southern or northern provinces. Therefore, I have narrowed my focus to NGOs in Kabul. The second limitation is the language barrier. Out of the individuals of whom I have had contact with during this study, most did not speak English. Approximately 50% of Afghans speak Dari (official language that is always used for business and government transactions) and 35% speaks Pashto (another official language) (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013). Of the two official languages in Afghanistan, some speak one or the other. In addition, local and regional dialects often complicated the translation process. Thus, I had to have an interpreter while I conducted the interviews or when I participated in any related activities. This could also skew the results of the interview, due to the influence of the interpreter's choice of words.

### **3.3 Overview of AFCECO and OPAWC**

This chapter provides an overview of the two selected NGOs in Kabul. It aims to establish a context of the interview that will be presented in the following subchapters. The first organization is the Afghan Child Education and Care Organization (AFCECO). The second organization is the Organization of Promoting Afghan Women's Capabilities (OPAWC). Both organizations are located in Kabul, but also have different programs and suboffices in different provinces in Afghanistan. Within the different provinces in Afghanistan different programs are offered. In Kabul, most of their beneficiaries are not originally from Kabul. The first organization

is located near the city center. The second organization is located in suburban area. The information that is provided in this chapter is based on two resources: on information informally received from the organizations during the time of research in Kabul and on participant observation.

### **3.3.1 AFCECO**

AFCECO is a non-governmental organization that was first initiated in a refugee camp in Pakistan in 2004. Later, it was relocated to Kabul and registered as an NGO in 2008. They have established three orphanages and one office in Kabul. One orphanage has recently closed down, because of the lack of funding. The orphanages support both boys and girls. They support not only orphans, but also children who are in poor living conditions and were affected by war. Therefore, there are many children who have mothers and/or fathers, but are living at the orphanages. Their ages range from 5 to 20 years old. Some of the older children are now still living with the orphanage, because they are helping in the office. Some are also giving classes for children at the orphanages. The organization provides different support to the children such as, accommodation, food, transportation to and from formal school, and classes such as English, art and music.

AFCECO emphasizes on quality education and building leadership. They see that children need alternative education that formal education is unable to provide. Their alternative education refers to classes and spaces that open children up to to discussions and help them to build greater leadership skills. They believe that the official school does not provide good quality education, because many students who

go to school are still illiterate. Furthermore, they believe creativity is a valuable asset that should be cultivated and therefore children should have the opportunity to learn music and sport. At the orphanages there are music rooms, musical instruments, computer rooms, and a library. They also provide support for the children to go to a gymnasium to participate in sports. Soccer has become one of the sports that is helping children to build leadership skills and teamwork. They have also setup their own soccer team.

Figure 13: Girls' soccer team of AFCECO



Their major funding comes from international donors, especially from the United States and Italy. There are many programs that specifically sponsored by the donors that give the children to study abroad. Some volunteer teachers have come and sponsored many children for a short exchange program in the States. Others are sponsored to study in Italy. The students who came back from studying abroad continue to stay with AFCEO and help with work at the office. As many students are supported by the organization, they come to work for AFCECO voluntarily. At the office, most of the staff is from the orphanages.

### 3.3.2 OPAWC

OPAWC was established in 2003 and initially it was formed by an Afghan women's network in Pakistan. It is registered as an NGO in Afghanistan and provides much educational support for women across the country. In Kabul, there is one main office and two separate centers that provide literacy classes and vocational training for women. They are located in a suburban area of Kabul.

Figure 14: Office of OPAWC



They provide literacy classes and income-generation classes that help teach them valuable skills such as, handicraft and sewing classes. The literacy class also integrates human rights awareness, health, and hygiene. Women who participate in the classes come in the morning and return in the afternoon. Most of them are uneducated housewives.

Figure 15: A teacher giving literacy class at one of OPAWC's centers





The training centers are located in Kabul's suburbs and provide educational opportunities to an area that offers very little in the way of education. Therefore, their centers aim at providing access to girls and women who do not have access to education. The problem of insecurity has limited girls from traveling to school, because parents are afraid of their safety.

### **3.4 Interviews with AFCECO**

This chapter provides the results of the interview with two AFCECO staff and four students. The results presented in this chapter were divided into different sets of answers. This is because the questions are open-ended and informal. The interviewees were not specifically asked to answer narrowly defined questions. Some have given more answers that can be used in the analysis. Therefore, the answers were grouped as follows. For the NGO staff, they are 1) short biography, 2) motivation for work, 3) perspectives on the program, 4) perspectives on women's situation, 5) perspectives on women's education, 6) perspectives on the current government, and 7) challenges. For

the students, they are 1) short biography, 2) perspectives on the program, 3) attitude of the family towards the program, 4) perspectives on education in general, 5) experiences and perspectives on formal education, 6) perspectives on women's situation, and 7) future plan.

### **3.4.1 Jamshid (Staff)**

#### *1) Short Biography*

I was living in a refugee camp in Pakistan. I always moved from place to place and changed schools many times. At the refugee camp I finished secondary school. Then, I went to a very high quality high school in Pakistan. I received a full scholarship to study at a college. After I finished my college I studied at a university in Islamabad. At the same time, I was working to earn money for my tuition. I worked with many NGOs as an interpreter. In 2001 when the U.S. invaded Afghanistan, there were many journalists who wanted interpreters. I got a job working as an interpreter and because of that I was able to save a lot of money. While I was working with different NGOs, I performed many tasks such as conducting interviews, writing reports and taking photos. Through these life experiences, I have gained many insights. I started to work with AFCECO in Pakistan where the organization was first established. Later it was moved to Afghanistan and registered as an NGO.

#### *2) Motivation for work*

My father has always motivated me to study hard and it was through my relationship with that my passion for helping others is what it is today.

### *3) Perspectives on the program*

AFCCO realizes the importance of leadership. In Afghanistan where the rate of illiteracy is very high, the role of the leader is very important. We aim to build young, new leaders by investing in children to become the next community leaders. Also, we focus on quality of education. We make sure that all our children receive quality education. We expect them to go back to their own community to make a great impact on their communities.

### *4) Perspectives on women's situation*

Afghanistan is a male dominant society. Men always dominate and control women in every day life. Because of this it is important to provide real opportunities to women, so that they can be self-reliant. Although Afghanistan is a conservative society, I believe that women can play a great role and be respected, but it is not easy due to the high social pressure of conservative community. This is why it is so important the women are empowered.

### *5) Perspectives on women's education*

In general, education is a basic part of society. When it comes to women and women's rights, education becomes a strong tool that can empower women to stand up for their rights. Through education, women are able to gain knowledge that will help them look at society more critically. I believe that women can gain their rights by empowerment.

Through education, women become powerful and even religion cannot oppress them. They can lead men if they are educated and other people will respect them if they are educated. We can see many examples in society.

There are some Islamic subjects such as Sharia Law taught at formal schools. There are no rights for women in these teachings. Women and men are manipulated through this kind of teaching. They are influenced by the kind of environment that oppresses women. It is very difficult to change the mind-set and the teaching that has been taught for a long time.

#### *6) Perspectives on the current government*

The policy from the current government is only a paper policy. And is rarely put into practice. The quality of education is only better in Kabul. The number of student enrollment and women in parliament show positive progress or improvement of gender equality and education in Afghanistan. But, those numbers are not enough to represent the real situation. In reality, even in Kabul, many students are still illiterate.

After the Taliban, some women feel much more secured than before. But in reality, there are more problems such as sexual violence and corruption. The government consists of warlords. Women in the parliament are only their puppets. Now we have the problems that are continuing since the Taliban time and the new problems with the current government.

#### *7) Challenges*

There is a limited funding. The funding from international donors is now decreasing due to the economic crisis.

We are facing so many problems with the government. They do not like us to have orphanages. Often, their secret agents come to our orphanages and threaten us. We had to pay money under the table to some government officers. This just demonstrates how corrupt the society is here. Now, we cannot receive any international volunteers because the government does not allow them to stay with us. If they come and see any volunteers at our orphanages, they would immediately arrest them.

### **3.4.2 Narsin (Staff)**

#### *1) Short Biography*

I am 27 years old. I come from Heart. I have one older sister and three brothers. My father is a doctor and my mother is a housewife. I was living in a refugee camp in Pakistan during the Taliban where I received a scholarship to go to school. In 2004, I returned to Afghanistan and went to a college. Later, I went to Heart University to study economics. I graduated in 2009 and started to work with an AFCECO's orphanage in Heart. In 2010, I relocated to Kabul where I continued to work for AFCECO.

#### *2) Motivation for work*

My father has always been my great motivation. My family is well educated. My father always wants his children to get an education. He always says that an education is the key to success, especially for women. Education makes people independent. During the three decades of war, women and children were mostly the

victims. They were not allowed to go to school. So, he always invests in the education of children.

### *3) Perspectives on the program*

I believe that AFCECO is an NGO that really works for the children. I can see that the organization is producing good outcomes. I believe that AFCECO is making a better future for Afghanistan. I see that the organization is an agent to provide opportunity for children to become better leaders in the future.

The organization is facing some challenges from the government. The government does not support NGOs nor any NGO-based orphanage. They only promote the government's orphanages, which are low in quality and have bad health care services. AFCEO believes in providing quality education to children. We expect our children to come back and work for us.

### *4) Perspectives on women's situation*

After the Taliban rule ended, the media says that girls are allowed to go to school. There is a return to democracy. Women are now in parliament and in reality, it is different. Seventy-five percent of population lives in rural areas. The situation in rural villages is much worse than in the city. There are many problems such as poverty and drug.

After the Taliban rule ended, there seems to be change. It is true that women are not forced to wear the burqa and they now can go outside and go to school. But, it is still not a completely free school. There are still many problems such as insecurity, sexual violence and kidnapping.

### *5) Perspectives on women's education*

Afghan government is corrupted and does not want to support education in reality. The government does not provide good quality education. Many women who attend schools for their formal education are still illiterate. This is because of insufficient teachers, low quality programs and out-dated materials. When we do have new materials the teachers are not familiar with them and sufficient training is not available.

#### **3.4.3 Pashtana (Student)**

##### *1) Short Biography*

I am 20 years old. I grew up in Jalalabad, which is about 2 hours away from Kabul by car. I am now living and studying in Kabul. My father was killed by the Taliban because he was a teacher. The Taliban banned teachers and women's education. I have one brother who is 17 years old and one sister who is 16 years old. My sister is also living with the orphanage. My brother lives with our mom and our uncle whom she married after our father died. He has to study and work to support the family at the same time, because my uncle is very poor.

After my father died, the rest of the family moved to a refugee camp in Pakistan. That was when I was 7 years old. My life before going to Pakistan was good, because my father was a respectable teacher in our village. When the Taliban took over and killed my father, my life became miserable. My mom had to marry my uncle who already had 4 children as a second wife.

During my time in the refugee camp, I was really young and didn't know about my father's death. When my mother finally told me the truth, I became really sad. It was after I went to AFCECO that my life has began to change.

When I was in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, I had a chance to go to America for 3 months for a leadership program. It was funded by an American teacher who taught at AFCECO. During the program in America, I was surprised to see women working, walking outside freely, not being beaten by men, and are mixing with men. I also had a chance to visit American schools where I learned that their schools are more fun, because they have extracurricular activities, which is different from formal school in Kabul.

I am currently living at the orphanage and help do different tasks at the office of AFCECO. In return AFCECO also supports me to attend university. Now I'm studying at management at the National Institute of Management and Administration (NIMA). I think that Afghanistan needs good managers to manage the country.

## *2) Perspectives on the program*

In 2009, I moved back to Kabul to stay with AFCECO. My mother took a literacy class at the refugee camp where she also heard about AFCECO. She learned that they offered good facilities with different activities such as art, music and sports. I have become very interested in these programs offered.

AFCECO supports us with clothes, food, and funds to take various extra courses. They provide good facilities for children. I like to learn how to use computer and Internet. Most of the children are from remote areas and from different ethnic groups and we would not have a chance to receive this kind of education back in our villages. AFCECO taught us to understand ethnic differences. So, there is no



discrimination inside the orphanage, unlike at the university. The program also sends the children to go abroad depending on their sponsors.

At AFCECO, I like to teach English and tell stories about Afghanistan. I have no difficulty living at the orphanage. I have been living there since I was young. I feel like it is my home. Everyone is like a sister to me.

### *3) Attitude of the family towards the program*

My mom and my uncle are very happy to see that I am doing well. Children in AFCECO can decide what we want to do when we grow up. My mom is happy that I am staying at AFCECO.

### *4) Perspectives on education in general*

Education is very important for every human being, especially for women in Afghanistan. We need to learn about our lives to help develop the country. Our government is poor and there is no future with them. There are no good doctors, engineers nor politicians. We need to be educated so we can depend on ourselves, not on our husbands. Women should work. Women need to be educated so that they can raise their children and teach them. Women can teach other women in the village about health related issues such as how to use medicine. Women need to be literate so that they can read and know how to use the medicine properly. But, it is more difficult for the women to go to school than for men. It is safer for men to go outside than women. When women walk outside alone, they are usually harassed by men who think that women should stay home.

### *5) Experiences and perspectives on formal education*

When I went to a public school in Kabul, I thought it was really boring, because there was no extra curricular activities such as sport, art or music. Also, the main difficulty was that the image of being an orphan is not socially looked as a good thing. My teachers and my classmates thought I am bad and couldn't accept the fact that I was living with other strangers (other kids at the orphanage). When I was at the university, I didn't tell either my friends or my teachers that I am living at the orphanage. So, there was no problem of being hated or bullied at the university. However, because the university still maintains a negative view of orphans it still has a negative effect on me.

#### *6) Perspectives on women's situation*

At the university, there is a class on Islamic studies. It teaches us how women should live, for example, how to cover ourselves and how to wear the burqa when we have to go outside. We are supposed to stay at home with the family and never talk to men. Previously I asked the teacher of the class why women have to follow these rules and her response was because it's written in the Quran.

#### *7) Future plan*

In the future, I want to continue helping with AFCECO. I have promised AFCECO I would work with other children at the orphanage. If I have a chance, I want to continue studying. I also want to find a job with a company. I don't think it will be difficult for me to get a job because of my experience working with AFCECO. Moreover I am not afraid to work outside the country.

### **3.4.4 Sitiza (Student)**

#### *1) Short Biography*

I am 19 years old. I grew up in Bagrami Village in Kabul. I have 4 brothers (2 younger and 2 older) and 3 sisters (1 younger and 2 older). One of my brothers and one of my sisters also live in the orphanage. Our family struggled during the Mujahideen and the Taliban were in power. When I was only 25 days old, my house was destroyed by a bomb during the war. My grandma was killed. My father was sent to jail for 5 years, because he fought for his daughter when the Mujahideen tried to take her for a bride.

My mother is only 47 years old, but she looks much older than her age, like 90 years old. I think it is because she has had a hard life. Now my father is too old to work, so my brother is supporting the family. The other older sister is now in 11<sup>th</sup> grade but our father doesn't want her to continue to study at the university, because the people from her village disagree that women should be entitled to an education. Moreover they say that girls should stay home.

When I was 10 years old, my mom heard about AFCECO from someone. I started to join AFCECO when I was 12 years old with my brother and my sister. My other sister did not join, because the people from our village was against the idea of going to the orphanage. They said that it is a bad place and they didn't want us to stay with other strangers but I refused and came to AFCECO.

Now I help out at AFCECO and go to the university in the afternoon. My university is the National Institute of Management and Administration (NIMA). It is

taught in English, except in Islamic culture that is taught in Arabic and Dari. My major is accounting.

### *2) Perspectives on the program*

My life before joining the program was very different from now. Before I knew nothing about computers and didn't even know how to sit on a chair. I came from a very different culture. Now, I see much improvement in myself. I see that I'm different from my sister. I know more about the world and computers whereas my sister only stays home and cooks.

At the orphanage, I enjoyed learning about computers. They offered some computer classes. Now I know how to use 6 computer programs. I also joined a sport and language class. There are differences between the orphanage and the official school. At the orphanage, I can speak and discuss freely what I think but not at the university.

### *3) Attitude of the family towards the program*

My parents feel proud of us for going to the university. They said they're lucky to have us as their daughters.

### *4) Perspectives on education in general*

I think that education is important for every human being. It differentiates humans from animals. It improves life and teaches us how to better get to know ourselves. Education is not only acquired in schools or universities, rather education is something that happens everywhere. I think that learning about history is very

important, especially the history of Afghanistan. I also study science, history and about the world by myself using the Internet and books available at the orphanage.

Education is necessary for women, but it's not possible in reality. Husbands don't let wives and daughters to go to school. There are only a few families that send girls to school. But, men can go to school very easy.

#### *5) Experiences and perspectives on formal education*

At the university, there are Islamic rules concerning the use of the scarf and long sleeves. I have to wear a uniform that consists of a scarf and clothes that cover every part of my body.

I don't like the government's work in the area of education reform. I think that the government is very western in its methods. A lot of people don't like President Karzai and his government. My favorite president is Amanullah Khan, because during his term the access to education was better.

#### *6) Perspectives on women's situation*

There is a class on Islamic Studies that teaches women how to cover themselves and obey their husband. I agree with some of the teaching, but I disagree with others. Women have no freedom in Afghanistan. The government is from the Mujahideen group. NATO is here. There's no freedom for us here. Also, it is difficult for women to hold positions in the parliament. Some women who are in the parliament don't do anything. They are just puppets. I think Malalai Joya is the best parliamentary woman.

#### *7) Future plan*

In the future, I want to become a financial officer at a company or a bank. I also want to continue my studies and earn a Master's degree, if funding is available. My family wants me to work at the Ministry of Finance because they think it's more sustainable. I don't think it is difficult for me to find a job. There are fewer women with university degrees compared to men, so there is less competition. However, there discrimination in the workplace is prevalent makes working more of a challenge.

### **3.4.5 Sosan (Student)**

#### *1) Short Biography*

I am 20 years old. I was 9 years old when the Taliban killed my father. In my village, there were many criminals who had connections with the Taliban. They killed all the men in my village, including my father. Later, I went to Pakistan and stayed with an orphanage with my sister and my brother. I was very happy at the orphanage.

In 2006, I came back to Kabul and stayed with AFCECO's orphanage. I have 2 sisters and 2 brothers. One of my sisters and one of my brothers are now living in the orphanage. While, my other sister and brother are studying at a university. As for me, I am studying at Manlama University and my major is midwife studies.

#### *2) Perspectives on the program*

I've learned a lot from AFCECO such as how to do office work, home economics and the proper protocol for when I go outside. I like sports, especially football, and it is offered by the AFCECO. Before joining the program I was very helpless and AFCECO played an integral part in helping me reverse this. Because of

their help I became more empowered and now I want to help other women too. I want to become a midwife. I feel that my life has changed. Now I feel that I know more about social and political issues in Afghanistan. I can also speak English because I took classes at the orphanage. There is a library here and people have donated English books that I can use.

### *3) Attitude of the family towards the program*

My mother does not care about me. I have not contacted her for a long time. When my father died, she remarried to someone else and left us.

### *4) Perspectives on education in general*

Education is important for both women and men. But, it is more difficult for women to go to school. The women's role in Afghan society is to give birth to children and stay only in the house. The current government does poorly when it come to providing education. There are still many incidences and bombings that make it difficult for us to go to school. Moreover, the Taliban wants to kill girls that attend school. There was an incident two weeks ago where the Taliban went to a secondary school and killed many of the female students.

### *5) Experiences and perspectives on formal education*

I am happy to go to the university. I feel that it fulfills my dream. I also have many friends that are like family to me.

### *6) Perspectives on women's situation*

I think women have no freedom these days. The women in parliament are only symbolic and do not really represent us.

#### *7) Future plan*

In the future, I want to work at a hospital and help AFCECO. I want to continue to study medicine.

### **3.4.6 Mahbooba (Student)**

#### *1) Short Biography*

I am 19 years old. I grew up in Nuristan, a small village in the northeastern part of Kabul. In 2004, I moved to Pakistan and stay with AFCECO's orphanage. Here I was supported to attend a private school starting from grade one. At age 9, in 7th grade, I was funded to study at a high school in Italy. After finishing the high school, I came back to Kabul and received a scholarship to study at the American University of Afghanistan. My major is political science. In the morning I work in the office at AFCECO and go to the university in the afternoon.

#### *2) Perspectives on the program*

AFCECO has given me many opportunities. Before, I wasn't able to go to school. My family and old friends are all illiterate. It was also difficult for me to get an education. However, now I can study and work in the office. I go to work at AFCECO before attending my classes at the university. If I don't have class, I usually spend the full day at the office. I really like the music program the orphanage offers. Music is



quite new for Afghan girls where as it wasn't previously good for girls to learn music. I think music is very important because it helps children to be creative.

### *3) Attitude of the family towards the program*

My parents are very happy that I stay with AFCECO. They want me to get an education. My mother wants me to go back to our village and help others. My older sister also encourages me to study and build for my future. My sister feels sorry for herself because she did not have a chance to go to school.

### *4) Perspectives on education in general*

Education is a form of power. It helps us to build for our future, to get good jobs, to get to know the world better, to have a better worldview, and to think more critically. Education helps us to not be so easily manipulated by government. The education situation in Afghanistan at the moment does not allow many girls to go to school. The warlord government does not want women to be educated.

### *5) Experiences and perspectives on formal education*

Because I go to an American university we do not have a class on Sharia Law, where as in many official schools this subject is taught. It teaches women how to wear the scarf and obey men. I think that men are taught at school how to oppress women. There are also many ethnic issues in schools.

### *6) Perspectives on women's situation*

Afghanistan women should have rights, but war and fundamentalism are big obstacles that stand in the way of achieving this goal for women. Women have no

freedom here. If women try to raise their voice they will often get in trouble. There are two types of women in the parliament: 1) women who really do their job and 2) women who are just puppets of the government. The government uses the façade of women working in parliament in order to show the world that gender equality exists, but in reality this is not the case.

### *7) Future plan*

In the future, I want to work for AFCECO. I also want to go back to my village and build a small orphanage. If I have the opportunity I will earn a Master's degree. Another dream of mine is to become a politician.

## **3.5 Interviews with OPAWC**

This chapter presents the results of the interview with the director of OPAWC, a teacher, and four students. The results presented in this chapter were divided into different sets of answers. Because the questions were open-ended and the interviewees are different set of people, there are more sets of answers than the result of the interviews with AFCECO. I have decided to include them in this chapter, since they reflect interesting perspectives that can be used in the analysis. However, the interview with the teacher was interrupted in the middle, because of unexpected arrival of a government official.

The answers were grouped as follows. For the NGO staff, they are 1) short biography, 2) motivation for work, 3) perspectives on the program, 4) perspectives on women's education, 5) perspectives on the current government, and 6) challenges. For

the teacher, they are 1) short biography, 2) experience with women's education and the program, 3) perspectives on women's education, 4) perspectives on formal education, 5) perspectives on the current government, and 6) challenges. Finally, for the students, they are 1) short biography, 2) daily activities, 3) perspectives on the program, 4) attitude of the family towards the program and challenges, 5) perspectives on education in general, 6) perspectives on the current government, 7) perception on freedom, and 8) future plan.

Moreover, due to privacy and security issues of the students, their names presented here are not their real names.

### **3.5.1 Latifah (Director)**

#### *1) Short biography*

I was born in a middle-class family during the Russian occupation in 1982. When I was about 3 years old my father was one of the good Mujahideen fighting against the South. Most of my life was in wartime. I moved to Iran and stayed at a refugee camp for eight years. Later I moved to Pakistan where I lived for about 12 years. Here I finished my primary education and went to college. In 2004, I returned to Afghanistan and to attend Kabul University. I studied English literature there.

#### *2) Motivation for work*

My experience during the time in Pakistan has motivated me to work on behalf of women. I gave literacy classes to women in Pakistan and that led me to the idea to

form a women's group, which is named OPAWC. I worked in an office in Pakistan until 2003 when I moved to Kabul.

### *2) Perspectives on the program*

OPAWC is a very small organization, but strong and offers support to disadvantaged women. We provide them with classes in literacy and handicrafts. We believe that when women can read and write, they become more self-reliant, which is what we lack in this area. Due to the fact there are many illiterate women around this area and most of them are housewives, we also provide handicraft classes. After they finish our classes, they can go back and make something to sell for their living.

It is important that our organization is established here, because the warlords deceive many of the people in this area. We go to each house and to explain to them what our program is about. Besides Kabul, we also have a health care center for women in the Fahren province that provides free health services.

### *3) Perspectives on women's situation*

Women have never been considered as human beings since the Taliban time. Now the situation is still the same.

### *4) Perspectives on women's education*

Education is very important for women, especially for Afghan women. I believe that education changes women's lives. Many educated women go back to their own communities and teach their people. It is important to build women leaders by educating them.

### *5) Perspectives on the current government*

The current government is corrupt. I never expect anything from them. I have seen nothing change. Seventy-five percent of Afghans are illiterate. There are six million children who cannot attend school. There are many NGOs that secretly belong to the government and are run by warlords. These NGOs are run and operated for their own benefit.

The government says that men and women are equal. There are women in the parliament, but it is only a facade. In reality, they it is only symbolic and they cannot make decisions that effect policy.

### *6) Challenges*

OPAWC is facing many problems in our surrounding community. The insecurity issue is a very big problem. There are still warlords in the area and they sometimes question the students and their families in the area. They do not allow this kind of NGO to work with the people and they have even told some people not to join us.

We also have some problems with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance. We often have to pay a bribe in order to have our NGO officially legalized which, is difficult because we don't have a lot of money.

We have never received any support from the international community. They do not support our kind of projects.

### **3.5.2 Adela (Teacher)**

#### *1) Short Biography*

I am 43 years old. I was born into a very open minded middle class family. They are all well educated. Before the war my father had a very good job in the government, but has since passed away. I have one brother and seven sisters. My brother is also working with the government. They are all educated. Some work as doctors and others as teachers. Some are not permitted to work because after they got married their husbands did not allow it where as some of them live in other countries.

I have three daughters and two sons. Two of them are married and one is not. One went to school to study management. The others studied engineering and business. The last one is still attending school.

I went to high school and attended one year of university until the war started in 1992 when I stopped attending. After the Taliban arrived, I started arranging underground classes in my house in Kabul. I had 25 students, but I faced many difficulties.

#### *2) Experience with women's education and the program*

Initially the NGO, HAWCA provided funding for underground schools during the time the Taliban was in power. It was not easy during these times and it made a lot of problems. The Taliban sometimes came to my house because they wanted to know what the women were doing there. One time I wanted to go out of the house just to buy something and eight Taliban soldiers followed me and beat me. I tried to run but they grabbed me and put me in a car with other women and then took us to a

governmental building. The Taliban also arrested my husband and all my sons and held them for three days.

Other members from the community went to government to tell them that we are very good people and to promise them that we would not continue conducting the classes. After that, the Taliban left, but I continued the classes anyway. I currently have a lot of students.

Before coming here, I lived in an area where there were a lot of Azhaara people. I opened a center for them. At the beginning I had 500 students who were only women. After I finished the other projects that were supported by HAWCA, I moved to Kabul. Since HAWCA is supporting OPAWC, I was able to work there.

### *3) Perspectives on women's education*

Education is very important for women, especially in Afghanistan because there is a patriarchal society and men have the power. Women should be considered as important in society as well. Through education, women become aware of their rights. Education is really the only way to get women to start asking for their rights.

### *4) Perspectives on formal education*

There are a lot of differences between formal and non-formal education. In formal education, the subjects never talk about women rights or human rights. Also, at the formal schools, there is a lot of discrimination towards some minorities. But, we don't have that here. We try not to discriminate regarding ethnic group or gender. We try to stop this and we strive to be equal.

### *5) Perspectives on the current government*

The current government and the Ministry of Education want to say that they are doing a good job in promoting education, but they never think about the quality of the school. There is no quality concerning the teachers. There is no training for teachers, they offer an old curriculum, many places don't have classrooms, and there is a lot of corruption. The students do not have freedom of speech.

The teacher's salary is very low and it forces many to seek a second job, which affects the quality of their classes due to exhaustion. The level of education is very low. Some students who go to formal schools come to our informal classes because of the poor quality of their own classes.

#### *6) Challenges*

I do not see a big difference between the situation during and after the Taliban rule. Of course there are some differences like the fact that women can go to school, but there are still a lot of problems. I cannot see any difference between the Taliban and the current government and the people who are in the power. There are still so many obstacles to overcome including violence against women.

### **3.5.3 Washmah (Student)**

#### *1) Short Biography*

I am 35 years old. I am married and I'm very happy with my life. I have three daughters and my husband, who is also my cousin, is very nice. He is the one who encourages and supports me to go to class.



I live near the centre. My classes start at 8:50am and end at 11:50 am. I have going to class for two months. I take 1 1/2 hours of literacy class and another 1 1/2 for handicraft class. I also take the sewing class.

## *2) Daily activities*

I wake up at 4:30am to clean the house before I make breakfast for husband and children. Finally I get my oldest daughter ready for school. My oldest daughter is 7 years old and in first grade. I also have a daughter of five years old another is one year and 4 months old.

After breakfast I go to class. Next, I go home to prepare food for my daughters to take to school. I then drop her off at school at 11:50. I prefer to walk her as there are a lot of cars on the road and I'm afraid she could be hit.

## *3) Perspectives on the program*

One of the teachers from the school came to my house with an advertisement and information about the class. I see some growth in my life, not a lot, but I can now read some things, such as, the labels on boxes and help my daughter learn to read as well. At home, it is important to know mathematics and as there is a math class at the centre I can now calculate some things. I'm able to solve small problems in the house. I'm also able to get more information about vaccines, the importance of drinking water and eating vegetables. I have gathered a lot of information from the class.

## *4) Attitude of the family towards the program, Challenges*

My whole extended family is very open-minded, they believe in education for women and many of them are educated. My husband is also open-minded and believes it is important for women to be educated.

*5) Perspectives on education in general*

Education is very important, it allows one to be a part of society and work with other people. It is also useful in the house, to raise children who are healthy and well informed.

*6) Experiences and perspectives on formal education*

I hope my daughter goes to an official school, can graduate successfully and continue on to study in the university. She can then get married if she chooses to. I'm happy because school for girls is free but is not enough. For instance, I still have to buy books and stationery supplies for her.

*7) Challenges in access to education*

I was born in Kabul, but when I was one year old my family went back to live in a village in Northern Afghanistan –up to when I was 9 years old. Unfortunately, there was no school available for me to attend. When we moved back to Kabul, the second war started and during this time no schools were open. Afterwards, the Taliban came into power and attending school was no longer an option. At this time I was ready to get married.

It is challenging to balance my other social roles with school. I still have to be a good daughter, mother, and sister. For instance, this morning I had to take my

mother-in-law to the hospital before rushing to class. Balancing all these roles is definitely a challenge for me.

#### *8) Perception on freedom*

I think freedom means to be free in society and also in the house. To be able to go outside, to hospital, or to wherever one wishes without fear. It also means the ability to be able to study.

#### *9) Future plan*

After nine months, I want to be able to read and write. I also want to improve my sewing skills. The center does not have many opportunities. There are a lot of women who want to come and learn, but the resources are limited. I am Confused about life, however I have hope for the future, although it is continually challenged, I hope for peace. For example, I hope there are no more explosions and my children can attend school.

### **3.5.4 Basima (Student)**

#### *1) Short Biography*

I am originally from the Southern part of Afghanistan. I am 38 years old. I am married with seven children, including five boys and two daughters. I am also a mother-in-law. My oldest son, who is 23 years old, is married. He graduated from school and works as a driver. I have a 16 and 15 yr old daughter who studied up until

7th grade, but their father stopped them from going to school. The other boys are in the 3rd grade and the 2nd grade, while the last-born is three years old

## *2) Daily activities*

I am a housewife. I wake up at around 5am with my daughter and we clean house. We then prepare breakfast for the family. Afterward we get ready for class. After class we go back home and make lunch. We then take an afternoon nap before starting dinner. Finally, we go to sleep.

## *3) Perspectives on the program*

The teachers came to house and explained about the center. I love the teacher. She is a wonderful woman. I hope they would get better chairs, as these are not ideal for studying. We also are lacking desks. I also hope they would provide stationery supplies and books. There is also not enough space in the class.

## *4) Attitude of the family towards the program, Challenges*

My husband does not allow girls to go to school. He is afraid because the school is far away and kidnappings along this route are not uncommon. It is a safety issue. The center however, is near our house and because I accompany my daughters there he allows it.

## *5) Perspectives on education in general*

Education is very important. Through it you are able to better assess your life. You can better understand your life conditions. One of the major reasons I come to

class is because I want to read Islamic books. I want to know what they say about the rights of women. I want to be educated and be able to read it for myself.

*6) Perspectives on women's education*

It is important because they get to know rights, they can change their way of life and they are able to raise good families.

*7) Challenges in access to education*

I could not go to school before. My father didn't allow me because he doesn't believe that education is for women.

*8) Perception on freedom*

Freedom for me means peace and all people are able to work. Currently, this is not the situation, but at least my sons can go school. This may change their minds as they learn something new and when they grow up they can allow their daughters to attend school. If however, there is no peace, then freedom for women is limited, now and in the future.

*9) Future plan*

I am not optimistic my husband will allow me to study, but he does permit it I will certainly attend classes. However, I'm doubtful and worried I will not be able to finish. It all depends on my husband. I talk with him a lot trying to convince him by emphasizing the fact that I want to be able to read religious books, but I'm still not sure. I want to fulfill the duties I have as a housewife, but I also want to be more independent and not be accompanied everywhere I go.

### **3.5.5 Camila (Student)**

#### *1) Short Biography*

I am 15 years old. I am not married. I have six sisters and two brothers. My father is disabled. He was injured during the war and so he stays in the house. To earn income for our household my sisters and I do bead work. Our neighbor teaches us this skill.

My brothers are still very young. They are seven and four years old. My oldest sister is 20 years old. In the family I am the 4th born and the youngest is 11/2 years old. When I'm not in class I'm busy making handicrafts.

My family and I migrated because of the Taliban. We were displaced and moved to Kabul. If peace and security return to the area then we would go back. Kabul is much more expensive compared to where we're originally from. For example, the cost of houses is much more.

#### *2) Daily activities*

Everyday I wake up at 4:30am to pray, make tea for the family and then go to school.

#### *3) Perspectives on the program*

I have been attending classes for one and a half months now. I attended to school for two years, but my father put an end to it. I had only learned a little. I am very happy for the center. The teacher is very nice and I've learned a lot of things. I attend the handicraft and literacy classes. I also want to learn professional skills. I hope they

would provide stationery supplies for the students because it is difficult to buy them due to financial difficulties. The handicraft center does not have enough machines and materials for the students.

#### *4) Attitude of the family towards the program, Challenges*

I have numerous challenges with my father because he doesn't want me to go to school, but my mother talks to him and convinces him it's a good idea. Sometimes he is not in the mood to allow me to attend class, it all depends on how he is feeling that day. He is afraid something will happen to us due to his experience during the war. It makes him scared that something bad could take place. He also believes that education is not good for women as they become hard headed, start to argue and talking back. In other words they become bad. He believes that women should be quiet and humble.

#### *5) Perspectives on education in general*

Education is very important for society and for literacy. It is especially important and has a direct impact on the development of society.

#### *6) Perspectives on the current government*

I am not very happy with the government. They do not provide security for the population and this is one of the reasons why my father won't allow me to attend school. On top of his conservative thoughts about women he is also afraid for us. Insecurity has made our lives more difficult causing us to migrate. My father's injuries are also a result of the insecurity.

#### *7) Perception on freedom*

Freedom is very important especially for the women's education. Women should have rights and freedom like everyone in society. I disagree with my father that independent and educated women are hard headed.

#### *8) Future plan*

I hope to finish classes here and then find a way to attend an official school. Afterwards I want to go to the university to study finance.

### **3.5.6 Tahmina (Student)**

#### *1) Short Biography*

I am 35 years old and originally from Kabul. However, I moved from where I was born to near the center when I got married. I have five children. They attend the official school. My husband is a driver.

#### *2) Daily activities*

I wake up at 4am to pray and then clean the house. I make breakfast, see my husband off to work, then, I go to school. When my husband is not at work I cannot attend the class.

#### *3) Perspectives on the program*

My neighbors from where I live were talking about the classes. When I heard they were free I just joined without asking for permission from my husband. I'm very happy about it and I'm learning a lot. The teachers are very nice and understand my health condition, as well as the difficulties I encounter when coming to class.



I am happy about the educational classe, but they need to improve the handicraft section because they don't have enough materials for everyone.

*4) Attitude of the family towards the program, Challenge*

My husband doesn't know I attend school, as he does not support women's education. He allows our daughters to go to school because the girls are still very young, but he doesn't want me to attend. However, he has no problem with the boys going to school. My daughter is in 2nd grade now, but it is unlikely that in the future she will attend school.

I walk about one hour to and from the center. Then I go home, cook, and send the children to school. Walking is very difficult and painful because I have kidney stones, but I am currently in treatment. So far I have had two surgeries one in Kabul and one in Pakistan. Sometimes my husband is suspicious especially when chores like washing clothes are not done. When he asks I tell him it's because I feel sick.

When I was young, I didn't attend school for two reasons. One is because of the war and the second reason is because my father did not allow me to go.

*5) Perspectives on education in general*

I really like education, but I'm not hopeful for myself. I'm hopeful about the new generation. It's too late for me, but the new generation can become doctors and engineers. They have the opportunity to build a brighter future of Afghanistan

*6) Perspectives on the current government*

The government doesn't do anything for us. It has a role to push people like my husband to allow women to be free, but it doesn't do anything for us. I am however happy the NGO provides these services.

#### *7) Perception on freedom*

Freedom is very good, especially for women. During the time of the Taliban women were not allowed to go outside or school. It is Important for women to be able to go out and work.

#### *8) Future plan*

My husband is a driver and is much older than me. Because of our age difference we are very different. He lost his first wife during the war and I'm the second wife. I want to be a good provider when my husband can no longer provide. I would like to be a tailor.

### **3.6 Analysis and Conclusions**

This chapter presents a summary of an analysis and findings of the field research that are based on the participant observation and the interviews with students, teachers, and staff of the two NGOs in Kabul. The summary answers the main research questions and other questions raised during the process of the research concerning:

- The roles and impacts of the two NGOs in Kabul in relation to women's education and empowerment; and

- The differences of situation of women's education and impacts on the women's lives between the urban and suburban areas of Kabul concerning the differences in geography and demography. Noting that this concern is raised after the research and the findings of chapter 2, this study in chapter 3 explores and presents the findings of the case study using comparative analysis method.

Therefore, I divided the analysis and the findings into two sections: 1) the analysis and findings of both NGOs in general, and 2) the comparative analysis of the two NGOs. The first section presents the main findings as follows:

- The NGOs that provide such environment that liberates women to think critically and make their own choices help women to be self-reliant and develop critical thinking skills through. Many women from the interviews show strong opinions that criticize the government and challenge negative traditions in Afghan society.
- The NGOs involve women in their program's planning and implementation. Many women who have joined the programs are volunteering at the same NGOs. Some also intend to go back to their own villages to teach or help other people in their communities. This confirms the significance of women's participation and shows that the programs have positive influence on these women that will also positively affect the society in general.
- The passion and the motivation of the NGOs' staff are as important as the programs. From analyzing the background of the staff and the teacher, they have lived through difficult times and have experiences related to women's education. They have struggled through the oppressive and difficult situation, which they have found strengths and inspiration for work.

- The interviews reflect the women's status in Afghan society. They reflect that women are seen as second-class citizens. One reason could be related to the curriculum in the formal education that portrays women as subordinates to men.
- The programs that integrate human rights awareness and health are useful in a practical sense. Many women from the interviewed mentioned that they have realized their own rights after joining the programs. Moreover, many said that being literate help them to be more confidence and to raise their voice against their oppressive husband or family.
- The NGOs are facing challenges with Afghan government's rules and regulations. Moreover, the interviews reveal that some government officials are corrupted by asking for money under the table from the NGOs.
- Many of the interviewees have been affected by the Taliban. The Taliban has been their major impediment both during and after the Taliban rule. Many fled to Pakistan during the Taliban time and stayed in a refugee camp in Pakistan. At present, they still feel insecure because the increasing of the Taliban's attacks.
- The interviews show that many are satisfied with the programs. Some who are secretly joining the programs fear that their family will find out and prohibit them from continuing.
- This study shows that the attitude of some families towards the program has changed after seeing the positive result of the women. However, many still disagree and do not see the importance of women's education. Many of them who disagree are being influenced by their own communities that has negative

image towards women's education. This also reflects that the society has great influenced on individuals and vice versa.

- The interviews identify some challenges when attending formal school. There is discrimination against ethnic minorities that discourage them to participate in classes and discussions.
- All the interviewees realize the significance of education and especially education for women. They compare to themselves that they are able to receive the opportunities to study and to choose their own future.

The second section presents the findings based on comparative analysis as follows:

- The situation of women's education in the suburban part is more severe than in the city part. The women living in the suburban part face threats from local warlords. Many are fear to travel to both formal school and to the programs provided by the NGO. The women living in the city part do not have problem with traveling to school, since there is availability of public transportation and transportation provided by the NGO.
- The programs and their targets of the two NGOs are different. The one in the city part provide more activities and more funding. They target on building leaders and creating an environment for women to develop creativity. These women go to formal school and at the same time join the programs. The NGOs in the suburban part provide only basic literacy class integrated with human rights awareness and vocational training. They target on illiterate women. Most of these women are housewives and did not have an opportunity to learn how to read and write. This reflects the differences in demography and differences of living condition in different parts of Kabul.

- Although the NGO in the suburban part only provide basic illiteracy class and vocational training, it is more pragmatically efficient for the women living in the area. This is also seen as a starting point and an empowerment to seek improvements in their lives.
- The impediments to the women living in the city part are different from the women living in the suburban part. In the city part, they are more concerned about the quality of education taught in formal school. Furthermore, they are concerned about the insecurity issues caused by the Taliban. In the suburban part, women are more concerned about their oppressive husband or father, poor living condition, and fear of hopeless future.
- Both reflect the impediments caused by the patriarchal system in Afghan society.
- The women in the city part tend to think more critically than the women in the suburban part. This could be because of the differences in quality of education, living condition, personal experiences, and programs provided.
- The women in both areas realize the importance of education and education for their children and other women.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In chapter one, I posit that women's education is an important key to eliminate gender inequality and to achieve human's well-being. This study probes that many women are still marginalized and are denied of their right to education in many parts of the world. Moreover, it is important that women's education be addressed in the international agenda and in the context of Afghanistan. However, the thesis does not

intend to claim that only women's issues should be solved and addressed, rather it intends to raise the voice of the unheard and to spread the untold story. Therefore, in chapter one, it proposes to conceptualize the concept of women's education and its significance both in the area of academia and in the international agenda. The study also explains the significance of education in achieving gender equality and human's well-being. Furthermore, it investigates the concept of women's education in relation to the international development agenda in terms of policy-making and implementation. Moreover, It examines the approach and the progress of human development in relation o women's education based on the capability approach. Finally, it examines the progress and the challenges of human development and women's education in Afghanistan.

This thesis found as shown in chapter one that women's education plays an important role in achieving gender equality and other development goals and that it is important to address women's issues in both international and local levels. In academic world, the concepts of gender equality, women's empowerment, and women's education are recognized by many scholars such as Nussbaum, Kabeer, and Sen as important elements in development area. For example, the capability approach mainly developed by Sen and Nussbaum emphasizes the approach of human development and centering on human being instead of economic growth. The approach that focuses on real opportunity that women should have in order to make choices has provided different aspects in policy-making. This has shifted attention of both the academia and the policy-making to consider the gender aspect. This study found that many development agendas such as UNDP's Human Development and the Millennium Development Goals have adopted the approach and emphasized more on

gender issues. Furthermore, the gender aspect has also been used to assess other development goals such as poverty, education and health.

Through the study in both the academia and the policy-making, it found that there are strong relations between gender equality, women's empowerment, and women's education. Women's empowerment through education contributes to the decrease of gender inequality. By eliminating gender inequality and women's marginalization, the impacts positively contribute to development in terms of economy and society. This thesis found that there is a link between women and development in the context of poverty. According to UNDP (1995a: 4), "poverty has a woman's face. Out of 1.3 billion people in poverty, 70% are women". Nevertheless, this study found that many women are still marginalized in many parts of the world and especially in Afghanistan. They still live in poor conditions and are discriminated against. Moreover, women's experiences are different and understudied. Therefore, this study found that women's empowerment through education provides positive outcomes in terms of health and education. For example, the study found that poorer women who are empowered are likely to seek out contraception and maternal health services. They are also likely to ensure the survival and health of their children and other family members and to promote the education of their children.

In Afghanistan, since the fall of the Taliban, the country has been working on improving education and on getting children back to school. With regards to the international agenda, it has led to a series of changes in the policy-making of Afghanistan. Although there have been many improvements and contributions to provide education for women, the persistence of impediments to access women's education are still great. This is due to the long history of war and the transitional



period of nation building. Moreover, the lack of data due to unstable social and political conditions has made it more difficult for policy-makers to measure the progress and to make policies. Therefore, Afghanistan still has a long way to achieve their target in providing women's education. Finally, this study found that it is crucial to give equal opportunity to women to make choices and include women's aspects onto the policies. This can be seen in the effort of the international agenda to address the issue of women's participation in the parliament.

In chapter two, I posit that alternative spaces that refer to non-formal education and informal learning provided by NGOs and women's networks are necessary in such limited and difficult situations like in Afghanistan. Therefore, this study presents an overview of alternative and non-formal education in Afghanistan. At the same time, it examines the situation of education in Afghanistan in general and questions the effectiveness of the efforts and quality of education provided by the government. Moreover, this study investigates the struggle and the impediments to education for Afghan women and probes a more specific case of women's education in Kabul. Furthermore, it proposes alternative methods for women's education by first focusing on the concept of non-formal education, informal learning, and alternative learning. In addition, it investigates NGOs and their educational programs for Afghan women. Finally, to support the importance of alternative women's education in Afghanistan, this chapter presents an interview with a RAWA staff.

This chapter found that the alternative spaces provided by NGOs and women's networks contribute to positive outcomes of women living in such limited and difficult situations. The alternative spaces are necessary for Afghan women who are unable to access formal education due to many impediments. This study has identified some

major impediments, which are the oppression and violence during the Taliban time, the insurgency after the fall of the Taliban, violence against women, and patriarchy. Afghan women were facing more severe situation during the Taliban rule, because women's education was completely banned during that period. After the fall of the Taliban, there have been some improvements of education provision with some supports from the international community. Furthermore, there has been a pressure from the international agendas to provide women's education in terms of policy-making and implementation. Although at present more Afghan women have been receiving education, many are still uneducated and live in poor conditions. The progress of nation building is slow, because the damage that it left behind is so great that it will take many more years to restore Afghan society. This is also because the government is facing many problems, such as corruption, insecurity, low quality education, insufficient numbers of teachers, and high dropout rates. Moreover, the ongoing conflicts with the Taliban and other fundamentalist groups have not yet been resolved.

This study found that violence against women has had a severe effect on women's education since the time of the civil war. This form of violence is used systematically to oppress women and to manipulate routes of power within the society. Finally, the impediment caused by patriarchy has been a major root cause of many social injustices that affect women's education. These two impediments are identified as structural violence because they are systematically used and inherently institutionalized over generations by men and women for power control reason.

The situation of women's education seems to be better in Kabul where is the heart of the economy of Afghanistan than in rural provinces. However, there are still

many problems and impediments that Kabul women face. The Taliban's recent attacks such as suicide bombings, car bombs, and poisonings of schoolgirls have become major impediments to women's education. This chapter found that the situation in the city and in the suburban parts of Kabul present different problems and impediments to women's education. Women in the city have better access to education, but they are facing the problems of low quality in education and insecurity. In the suburban area, there are more people living in poor condition with less access to education.

More importantly, this chapter found that through the struggle to access women's education, Afghan women are able to find alternatives. Many NGOs and women's networks are actively providing education in the form of non-formal education and informal learning such as underground school, human rights awareness class, literacy class, and handicraft class. In Afghanistan, these alternative spaces are important, because they provide better opportunities for women who do not have access to formal education. Moreover, these NGOs challenge negative traditions that limit women's participation in Afghan society.

In chapter three, I investigate two NGOs in Kabul as a case study of alternative spaces for women's education. Furthermore, I posit that it is important that these alternatives derive from local communities and from women themselves. The purpose of this investigation is to determine to what extent the NGOs and what they offer affect women in Afghanistan. Moreover, the interviews specifically look at challenges and lessons learned from creating alternative spaces for women's education. In addition, the finding in chapter two has pointed out the importance to compare the difference of women's education between the urban and the suburban part. Therefore, this study also investigates the two NGOs based on comparative analysis.

This research found that the programs or the alternative spaces provided by the two NGOs have positive impacts on Afghan women. Many of the women have become self-reliant and have developed critical thinking skills. For example, they show strong opinions in criticizing the government and challenging negative traditions. Many women have realized their own rights and their right to education. They have become more confident and are able to raise their voice against oppressive husbands or family. All the women realize the importance of education and especially education for women. They relate its importance to their future career and that they intend to contribute to the betterment of their society. Moreover, the programs also have positive impacts on the attitude of the women's families. Some families have changed their negative attitude towards the programs after seeing the result. However, some still disagree with the programs.

This research confirms the significance of women's participation and shows that the programs have positive influence on these women that will also positively affect the society in general. The NGOs involve the women in their program's planning and implementation. Many of them who have finished the programs have come back to volunteer at the NGOs. Some intend to go back to their own villages to teach or to help other people in their communities.

In addition, some challenges are identified in this research. Both NGOs are having some difficulties in dealing with the government. The research reveals that some government officials are corrupted. Moreover, the major challenge to the organizations and to the women are caused by the Taliban. During the Taliban rule, the women were forced to flee to Pakistan and to stay at a refugee camp. After the Taliban rule, they are still facing threats from the Taliban's attacks. The other

challenges are identified the patriarchy and for the influence of the community that has a negative image towards women's education. Some women have to secretly join the programs because their husbands think that women should not be educated and only to stay in the house.

Finally, this research found some differences of impacts between the NGOs in the urban and in the suburban areas of Kabul. Moreover, it reflects the differences in demography and of living condition in different parts of Kabul. The situation of women's education in terms of access and quality in the suburban area is more severe than in the urban area. The women living in different areas face some different impediments to access education. The women in the suburban area face threats from local warlords that prohibit girls and women from going to school. Many fear to travel to the center that provides the programs. Nevertheless, the women in the urban area have less difficulty in traveling to school. This is because there is availability of public transportation and transportation provided by the NGO. Furthermore, the research found that the women in the urban area tend to think more critically than the women in the suburban area. This could be because of the differences in quality of education, living condition, personal experiences, and programs provided. Moreover, each of the two NGOs provides different programs. The NGO in the urban area provides activities aiming in building leadership and in creating an environment for women to develop creativity. The other NGO provides only basic literacy class integrated with human rights awareness and vocational training. Although this NGO seems to provide fewer activities than the NGO in the urban area, it is more pragmatically efficient for the women living in the area. More importantly, they aim to provide basic classes as a starting point and as an empowerment for women to seek improvements in their lives.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

I see the significance to provide alternative spaces for women's education in Afghanistan. Due to the insecurity and unstable situation in the country, there is a need to support NGOs and women's networks that provide education for women.

Therefore, for future research I propose to further investigate the progress of women's education provided by NGOs and focus more specifically in remote areas. Moreover, the impacts from the Taliban's attacks are important to be discussed and analyzed especially in the year 2014. Because in 2014 the U.S. will fully handover security to Afghan government, it is important to keep an eye on the security and the political situations. Considering the increasing of frequency of the Taliban's attacks, the security situation and its impacts on women's education are unpredictable.

Moreover, since Afghanistan has recently committed to the Millennium Development Goals, its progress in achieving the goals should also be further studied. The study should focus on the future milestone of the post-2015 development agenda. At the same time, this study should also highlight the progress and outcomes of Afghanistan's MDGs target by 2020.

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## **Appendix 1: Interview Guiding Questions (NGO Staff)**

### **Introduction**

- Introducing the purpose of the interview
- What is your name?
- How are you?
- Where are you from? Where did you grow up?

### **Questions:**

#### 1. Background

- I would like to ask you about your family. Can you please tell me about your family? About your father, mother, brothers and sisters.
- What is your education background?
- How was your school/university?
- What was your major?

#### 2. Views on Education

- What do you think about education?
- How important education is to you?
- How do you think the official school teaches about gender and women status?
- How is the current government doing in providing education?

#### 3. Views on Women Situation

- What is the situation of women (before and now)?
- What are the limitations for women to go to school?

#### 4. Views on History of War in Afghanistan and its impact on women

- How is the war in Afghanistan effect women?
- What are the difficulties for women to receive education that war has effected upon?
- Views on the Taliban and women

#### 5. Work Experience

- What is your work experience?
- How was your previous work?

#### 6. The Organization.

- Why did you decide to work with this organization?
- How did you get to know about this organization?
- Tell me about your organization? Its main goals and works?
- How do you see the role of your organization in Afghan society?
- Who are partners with your organization? (other NGOs, governmental organization, university...)
- How is the relationship with your partner organization?

#### 7. The Program(s) for Women

- How do you promote your program or organization?
- How do you select the students (beneficiaries)? What are the criteria?
- How important do you think the program provided by your organization is to women?
- What is the program offering to women that is different from the official school/university?
- What do you think about the number of the students in the program?
- How are the program achieving?

- What are the challenges?
- What are the impacts to women and Afghan society?
- What is the organization's future plan?

#### 8. Lesson Learnt

- What have been lesson learnt from the program?

## **Appendix: 2 Interview Guiding Questions (Students)**

### **Introduction:**

- Introducing the purpose of the interview
- What is your name?
- How are you?
- Where are you from? Where did you grow up?

### **Questions:**

#### **1. Background, Personal Life**

##### **Objectives:**

- To understand their backgrounds and their lives in general before and after joining the program.
- To identify problems related to limitation of lives and to study. This will also help to identify limitation such as, poverty and patriarchal system.
- To argue about poverty and other forms of limitation limit accessibility and real possibility to receive education.

##### **Questions:**

- Tell me about your life.
- What do you do everyday?
- What do you do during your free time?
- What did you usually do before you joined this program? How was your life before you entered the program?
- What were the problems before?

- How do you compare life before and after you participate in the program?  
(Guiding question)

## **2. Family Background**

### **Objectives:**

- To analyze from family background and status of the beneficiaries in the family and how the patriarchal system impact them
- To analyze perspectives on education of the family members and if they think that boys should go to school and girls should not
- To identify how family has impact on their chances of being educated (how difficult or if the family is a significant factor of limiting access to education)?
- To prove if the father is an important force that support their daughter to be educated

### **Questions:**

- Now I would like to ask you about your family. Can you please tell me about your family? About your father, mother, brothers and sisters.
- How many members in your family? What do they do?
- Do your brothers or sisters also go to school/university?
- What kind of school/university or program do they attend?
- What do your family members think about the program? Father?, mother?, elder brother? etc....

## **3. Education Background**

### **Objectives:**

- To identify limitations and challenges to access to education of women
- To analyze women's experience and perspective on official education
- To identify limitations to access official school for women
- To prove the failure of the state in providing universal education (practically)

**Questions:**

- Tell me about your education background.
- Do you go to official school/university? Tell me about it. How is the school/university?
- What is your major?
- Since when do you start to go to the official school/university? When did you stop?
- What do you think about your official school/university?
- Do you have any difficulties or challenges at the official school/university? What are they?

**4. Views about Education**

**Objectives:**

- To analyze their perspectives on education: how important education is for them?
- To analyze their perspectives on women and education: why and how education is important for women?
- To analyze how they perceive education as real opportunity to achieve what they want to do or value
- To support an evident that men have more opportunity to go school

**Questions:**



- What do you think about education?
- How important education is to you?
- What do you think about women going to school/university? How important?
- What do you think about men going to school/university? How important?
- How is the current government doing in providing education?

### **5. Gender Aspect (Capability Approach)**

- What do the official school/universities teach you about women status (gender)?
- What do you think about freedom?
- What do you think about women's empowerment?
- What do you think about women in workplace and parliament?

### **6. Program**

#### **Objectives:**

- To analyze the effectiveness of the program: easy to access and real possibility for women?
- To identify strengths and weaknesses of the program from the beneficiaries' perspective
- To analyze perception of the beneficiaries and their family towards the program

#### **Questions:**

- When do you start to join the program at the organization? What do you think about the program?
- How did you know about the program?

- How did you apply for the program? (What is the process and qualification to join the program?)
- Are there only women in the program? If yes, why do you think so?
- What do you learn from here?
- What is your favorite subject? Why?
- Who support you to join the program? What does that person think about the program?
- What does your family or husband say about you study here?
- What do they teach here that they don't teach at the official school?
- Can you think of any differences from the official school?
- What are the difficulties or challenges in this program?
- Tell me about your friends in the same program. Who are your friends? What are they doing and learning? Tell me what they want to do or plan to do.
- How do you come here?
- Do you sleep here? Why don't you stay at home?
- What kind of transportation do you take to get here?

## **7. Impacts**

### **Objectives:**

- To analyze the impacts of the program on their lives and future
- To analyze how they perceive the impact of the program and how the program help them to achieve what they want to become or do
- To analyze how their families perceive the beneficiaries

### **Questions:**

- What is your future plan?
- What do you want to do after you graduate or finish the training? (Get a job? Get married?)
- What do you want to be in the future?
- Have you planned how and what you are going to do after you graduate or finish the training?
- How will you use your knowledge from the training that you receive for your life and your future plan?
- Do you think it is difficult to find a job? Do you think the program help you to find better job?
- What does your family or your husband say about you getting a job?
- Will your family or your husband let you work?

## **8. Recommendation**

### **Objectives:**

- To find recommendation and possibility to improve the program from student perspective

### **Questions:**

- Do you have any recommendation for the program?
- What classes or skills do you think should be included in the program?
- What do you think about the number of (female) students in your class or program?
- What do you want more from the program?