

Case Study Series

**HOUSEHOLD DECISION-MAKING
AND SCHOOL ENROLMENT
IN AFGHANISTAN**

**CASE STUDY 4:
District 2
Kandahar City**

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About the Author

Pamela Hunte, an anthropologist who has experience working in Afghanistan over the past three decades, is primarily interested in sociocultural change in the areas of health and education. In recent years, she has worked as a consultant for AREU on livelihoods issues.

About the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit

The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) is an independent research organisation that conducts and facilitates action-oriented research and learning that informs and influences policy and practice. AREU also actively promotes a culture of research and learning by strengthening analytical capacity in Afghanistan and by creating opportunities for analysis and debate. Fundamental to AREU's vision is that its work should improve Afghan lives.

AREU was established by the assistance community working in Afghanistan and has a board of directors with representation from donors, UN and multilateral organisations agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

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Glossary

<i>chadri</i>	an all-covering pleated garment which covers a woman from head to toe; a small netted area around the eyes allows her to see
<i>charce</i>	hashish
<i>tawiz</i>	a religious amulet often containing verses from the Quran
<i>wakil-i-nahya</i>	district leader (also <i>wakil</i>)
<i>walwar</i> (Pashto)	bride price
<i>ziarat</i>	a religious shrine; a saint's tomb
<i>zakat</i>	charity; tithing

Acronyms

AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
IDP	internally displaced person
MAAHF	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NGO	non-government organisation
NRVA	National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
NSS	National Surveillance System
SDF	Sanayee Development Foundation
TISA	Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme

Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Methodology	2
3.	The Research Setting	4
3.1	Location	4
3.2	The urban community	4
3.3	The urban residents and their backgrounds	5
3.4	Household composition	6
3.5	Economic activities	6
3.6	Debts	8
3.7	Female mobility	9
3.8	Some options for education: the supply side	10
3.9	The cost of education in the context of the household economy	11
3.10	The schools and the community	12
4.	Who Goes to School, Who Doesn't, and Why	14
4.1	Household decision-making	14
4.2	Household decision-making and school enrolment	15
4.3	Respondents' opinions about education: why children go to school	16
4.4	Respondents' opinions about education: why children don't go to school	20
5.	Recommendations	24
	References	26

1. Introduction

This report presents findings from a qualitative study on education conducted by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) in four sites in Afghanistan: two urban and two rural. This is a case study of District 2, Kandahar City.¹ The key questions the study sought to answer were:

- Why do some households decide to send their children to school, while others do not?
- Why do some children in a household go to school, while others in the same household do not?
- Why do some children stay in school, while others drop out?

The household, defined here as a group of people living and eating together, was the basic unit of analysis for the enquiry. In-depth focus on the household allowed for careful examination of its complex internal dynamics, including decision-making processes and resource allocation, which may be either cooperative or conflicting in nature. Decisions about children's school enrolment (both sons and daughters) and other important topics were explored in detail. In addition to intra-household relationships, the unit within the context of the community was also considered through the study of inter-household social networks and community decision-making, with emphasis upon the role of education, available schooling options and perceived needs.

The primary focus was on demand-related issues in education (e.g. desire for girls' education), while also looking at some important supply-side issues (e.g. school location). This approach generated valuable insights in which typical Afghan city-dwellers in District 2 of Kandahar City – men, women and children – presented their own detailed analyses of their life situations.

A study concerning education in Afghanistan today must also deal with specific strategies of households as they attempt to cope with the many recent changes in their lives. In the sample group from Kandahar were households of both returned refugees (largely from Balochistan, Pakistan) and returned internally displaced persons (IDPs), along with those who never left their homes during the many years of conflict. Currently their strategies may or may not include seeking education for their children (of differing gender and age). Indeed, as Afghanistan struggles to rebuild, a successful Back-to-School campaign in 2002 (1381) has resulted in a striking total of 4.3 million children now enrolled in grades 1–12. However, some 2.5 million school-aged boys and girls are still not enrolled.² What are the reasons, often complex and multiple, for these differences?

¹ The three other research sites for this study included both urban and rural settings: two neighbouring villages in Chahar Asyab District of Kabul Province; a village in Belcheragh District of Faryab Province; and Pul-i-Khushk (District 13) in Kabul City. Case studies are available for each of these sites.

² *Securing Afghanistan's Future: Accomplishments and the Strategic Path Forward* (Technical Annex/Education), Kabul: TISA and International Agencies, 2004. Education is compulsory to grade 9 (*The Constitution of Afghanistan*, Article 43, 2003/1382).

2. Methodology

The study undertaken was qualitative, and its purpose was to gain in-depth understanding of household decision-making and school enrolment in District 2, Kandahar City. A small sample of households was chosen, not a large random sample as would be used in quantitative research. Rather than using an interview form with coded responses, this research used open-ended questions and answers. And rather than undergoing statistical analysis, the resulting data were examined for common themes or qualities, and a descriptive report was prepared.

A number of recent quantitative studies have collected data with which to examine the topic of enrolment of Afghan children in school. These include the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA).³ Data presented in this series of case studies provide in-depth insights which complement these quantitative analyses.

In carrying out this study in District 2, Kandahar City, the AREU education team⁴ worked closely with Oxfam/GB, which is currently active in urban development in the district.⁵ A training workshop in qualitative research methodology was initially conducted by the AREU education team leaders for participating staff and partner NGOs for all four study sites.⁶ A more intensive training workshop specifically for Oxfam staff was held in Kandahar City just prior to fieldwork in June 2005.⁷ Local Oxfam staff members assisted the AREU team throughout the fieldwork in Kandahar.⁸

The AREU education team and Oxfam staff made initial contact with the *wakil-i-nahya* (leader of the neighbourhood who coordinates with the government) of two communities within District 2 in which Oxfam works: Kocha-i-Wazira and Kocha-i-Zargari. The objectives of the research were explained by the team in detail, and permission was obtained to conduct fieldwork. This was carried out during June and July 2005. According to the research design, a purposive sample of 12 households was sought out in District 2 containing the following:

- Four households in which *all* children of school age⁹ were enrolled in school;

³ *Moving Beyond Two Decades of War: Progress of Provinces* (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2003 Afghanistan), CSO and UNICEF: Kabul, 2003; *Results and Discussion of Education Data Collected in the Afghanistan National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2003*, WFP, APEP/USAID, Save the Children USA: Kabul, 2005.

⁴ The AREU education team leaders were Saghar Wafa and Baser Nader. Other members of the AREU field research team were Fauzia Rahimi and Hadi Akbari. Overall management of the project was by Gulbadan Habibi and Pamela Hunte. Jeaniene Spink compiled the training manual for this work and made initial contacts with the Ministry of Education and partner NGOs.

⁵ Oxfam/GB has a regional office in Kandahar City, and it is undertaking extensive work in water and sanitation in Districts 1 and 2, which primarily includes provision of potable water, waste collection/removal, street drainage, and latrine construction, along with community organizing and health education.

⁶ Partner NGOs were: Sanayee Development Foundation (SDF) in Chahar Asyab; Save the Children USA in Belcheragh; and Oxfam GB in Kandahar City.

⁷ Special thanks to Sadiquillah Fahim (Programme Coordinator), Mohammad Sharif Azami (Finance and Administrative Officer) and the whole team for facilitating AREU's work by providing excellent guidance and hospitality.

⁸ Belquis Rahimi (Health Promoter), Zarghona Hamidi (Health Promoter), Rahmuddin Resha (Social Organiser) and Saleh Mohammad (Engineer) joined the AREU education team from Oxfam for this study. Their hard work and dedication was greatly appreciated.

⁹ For this study the term "school age" is defined liberally and includes children and youth from 7–18 years of age. Due to the years of conflict and the fact that many individuals have missed years of schooling in the past, students' ages do not always correspond to their grades.

- Four households in which *some* children of school age were enrolled in school; and
- Four households in which *no* children of school age were enrolled in school.

With the assistance of the *wakil-i-nahya*, heads of household in the neighbourhoods were contacted and introductions made. After considerable searching, the final sample did include the sample requirements listed above.

Each participating household's male and female members were visited by a team of two men and two women field researchers (respectively), facilitating the collection of necessarily detailed qualitative data. While one researcher asked open-ended questions and kept the conversation going smoothly, his or her team member took extensive field notes. Following each conversation, lengthy field reports were prepared from each in-depth discussion which contained information concerning complex household social dynamics and decision-making, along with important economic data, the unit's migratory history during recent decades of war, degree of female mobility, hopes for the future and other information. Repeat visits were made to a selected sub-sample of six households to follow up on specific topics and explore additional topics. In summary, the research explored the livelihoods of these urban households, specifically the degree to which education plays a role in their complex survival strategies. Interviews focused on the local population's demand issues in education, while also looking at important supply-side issues.

To guide the conversations, a series of discussion topic outlines was used. Unfortunately, because it was summer vacation, public schools were closed and no visits to these educational institutions were possible. In addition to daily participant observation and numerous walks through the district, individual discussions were held with:

- The *wakil-i-nahya* of Kocha-i-Wazira and Kocha-i-Zargari
- 12 households (six from each neighbourhood)
 - discussions with men, women and children
 - six households with repeated visits
- Mullahs from both neighbourhoods

The study's findings and concluding recommendations will help to guide current plans by the Ministry of Education (MoE) to make improvements to teacher training, curricula, outreach/media messages and other undertakings in the area of education.

3. The Research Setting

3.1 Location

In Kandahar, Afghanistan's fast-growing southern urban hub of commerce,¹⁰ District 2 forms the southwest quadrant of the central Old City and has been densely populated for centuries. The area has been devastated through heavy fighting – not only during the Soviet period but also when the Americans attacked the Taliban in 2001 – and many walls and homes are presently in ruins. This has not inhibited the return of many refugees and IDPs originally from District 2, however, who are living in their small compounds throughout the area along with other newly arrived squatters who seek shelter in the many destroyed structures and bunkers.¹¹ The area is now a combination of old and new, as some households are also building new homes. It is estimated by Oxfam that the district contains approximately 2,000 households, the great majority of which are Pashtun. Compared with other parts of the Old City which house traders, businessmen and skilled workers, District 2 is not as economically successful: as a recent National Surveillance System (NSS) report on Kandahar City notes, District 2 “hosts a worse off population: smaller business, street sellers”.¹²

3.2 The urban community

Numerous thoroughfares wind their way through District 2, some of which are wide enough to allow cars to pass and host bustling bazaars, while others are narrow and winding footpaths in primarily residential areas. The area is divided into smaller neighbourhoods or lanes, such as the sites for this research, Kocha-i-Wazira and Kocha-i-Zargari. Each neighbourhood is located around a mosque, of which there are a total of 125 in the district. The local mosque is an important focal point for the community. In addition to being the centre for religious activity, including daily teaching of the Quran to scores of children (mostly boys) by the local mullah, it is also a meeting place for community members in the event of any problem. For households located nearby, the mosque also serves as a guesthouse where visiting men can drink tea and talk. In addition, as it is usually equipped with a water pump (sometimes electric), the mosque is often the source of water for many compounds in the lane.

There are numerous public baths and one government clinic located in District 2, along with four secondary schools (grades 7–9) and five high schools (grades 10–12: three for boys and two for girls).

Concerning leadership, there is a traditional leader of the whole of District 2 (*wakil-i-nahya*) who at 80 years old is an ex-mujahed and has served in this position for 30–35 years. He appoints individual *wakils* for each smaller neighbourhood, and problems (especially about inheritance) are referred to him if necessary. The *wakil-i-nahya* noted that many refugees and new arrivals had recently arrived in the district, and “live in tents and ruins”. He also related the following, which implies strikingly negative repercussions for school enrolment – not only in the district but also throughout Kandahar City and Afghanistan in general:

¹⁰ The number of registered voters in Kandahar City is 745,307.

¹¹ As a location of employment opportunities, Kandahar City has attracted many villagers from nearby rural regions in recent years, especially during the recent drought. It has also received many Pashtun IDPs from northern Afghanistan following the fall of the Taliban in 2001.

¹² National Surveillance System (NSS), Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan (MRRD, MAAHF and MoH), *Kandahar City*, 2003, p. 6.

If the people face any problem in the district, I help them, and if any bad persons come here, we catch them. For example, we caught a thief who was a commander from Pakistan. And then one day a person was caught here from the group that kidnaps children and then sells their body parts. He had a handkerchief with candy wrapped in it. This incident had a very bad effect on families with children, and many people then withdrew their children from school...

In coordination with the *wakil-i-nahya* of both the entire district and individual neighbourhoods, the local mullahs also provide guidance and leadership for the residents. The religious leader of one of the neighbourhoods related the following about community participation, which indicates the weakness of government services in the area of sanitation:

We try to create an environment of unity, brotherhood and peace among the people. If there is any conflict between people in the neighbourhood, we make them sit together and discuss things. Together with the elders, we even go to their houses. If there is any quarrel about the division of inheritance, we judge this according to religious decrees.

And, if something happens that affects the whole community, we call people to the mosque to discuss things. For instance, our lane was full of garbage and the open sewer was even blocked by garbage. We wrote a letter to the municipality about it, but they did nothing. Finally we decided to collect money and have some labourers clean the lane. Or, for instance, the electric water pump of the mosque broke down and so we decided to fix the pump and have the people share the expenses.¹³

Two extremely serious problems in District 2 are the poor drainage of waste water and the accumulation of garbage in the lanes. Throughout this densely populated district, the thoroughfares are cluttered with refuse and sewage, which is a dangerous health hazard. As noted above, Oxfam is currently active in the areas of water, sanitation and health education in the district.

There is some other assistance from international donors in the district: UNICEF has provided water pumps on public streets and in mosques, and Habitat has been active in house construction and community organisation. In addition, in the past World Food Programme (WFP) gave cards to vulnerable households entitling them to bread from their local bakeries, but this project has recently ceased.

3.3 The urban residents and their backgrounds

All of the 12 households in the sample were Pashtun, most of whose families have been residents of District 2 for generations. During the long decades of war, seven of these households took refuge in Balochistan, Pakistan,¹⁴ and had returned in recent years to rebuild their homes. In addition, two units were IDPs in southern Afghanistan, and three had never left Kandahar City at all. The majority owned their own homes, with other sample households renting (N=1), living in relatives' homes for free (N=2), or squatting (N=1).

¹³ However, one woman whose household takes its water from the mosque and has contributed 500 Afghans for the pump repair, angrily stated that nothing has been done to repair it yet.

¹⁴ Six units lived in Quetta, while one lived in Sorkhab.

There appeared to be few links between these urban households and the surrounding rural areas: only one household owned farmland outside of Kandahar City (10 *jeribs* in Anderab). With the exception of a few chickens, partridges and fighting birds, no household owned any livestock.

Fifty percent of fathers in the sample households had either attended school (most to fifth or sixth grade; one to twelfth grade) or studied privately. However, no adult female in the sample units had attended school – all were non-literate.

3.4 Household composition

The household units in this urban sample were large – an average of 10 members with a variety of family structures. Only one third (N=4) of the units were nuclear in structure (containing only parents and children), while the remainder were extended (containing three generations, and often more than one married sibling with children).¹⁵ Most households also had close family members either living in District 2 (frequently within the neighbourhood) or in other sections of Kandahar City.

3.5 Economic activities

In general, the neighbourhoods in which the research was conducted were poor. A total of three of the sample households were above average in economic standing with respect to other units in the area; three were average; five were below average; and one was very poor. All of the economic activities of heads of household and other family members were in the informal sector. For example, the heads of household in the (comparatively) above average units were shopkeepers in the cloth market, while in the (comparatively) average households males either had a small biscuit shop, or worked in a pharmacy or a telephone shop. Those in below average units were day labourers (two), a tailor/motorcycle salesman, a carpenter, and a wheelbarrow/candy merchant, while the very poor household survived largely on charity.¹⁶

Physical assets found in a typical urban compound in District 2 include the following: glasses, dishes, teapot, mattresses, plastic floor covering, rug, radio, tape recorder, bicycle and fan. Better-off units also possess such trappings as a sewing machine, washing machine, motorcycle, iron, clock and television. Only three out of 12 households had water pumps in their compounds; the majority collected water in plastic containers from the nearby mosque pump, with one obtaining it from a neighbour and another from a public pump in the lane. This is a time-consuming process for children and/or old women, which may need to be done numerous times during the day.

As far as remittances from abroad were concerned, women from only two households (of average or above average economic standing) mentioned that their families received any assistance. The brother of one woman, who is in Iran, sends 10–15,000

¹⁵ More specifically, in the sample of 12 units: four are nuclear; one is generational extended (containing three generations); two are collateral extended (containing two or more married siblings and children); and five are generational and collateral extended (containing three generations, along with more than one married sibling with children).

¹⁶ In this urban context, neighbours and relatives often provide assistance in cash and/or kind to the poor. For example, the 12-year-old son in the sample's poorest household relates the following: "The people in our neighbourhood are very kind to us. They always tell us that if our father is not at home and we need anything, we can ask them and they'll help us."

Afghanis¹⁷ per year, which they have used for medical expenses. In the other case, the woman's brother, who is in Holland, has sent them money with which they have purchased a washing machine and medicines.

Particularly in the poorer households, adult females were also active in home-based income generation, which included sewing (four women)¹⁸ and embroidering (three women)¹⁹ for cash, along with selling eggs (one old woman). A few young boys in the sample were also engaged in labour outside the household: in one family they worked in their family's biscuit shop, and in a poorer unit a 13-year-old worked at an ice cream shop for 100 Afghanis per week while his 10-year-old brother worked as a painter's assistant for 50 Afghanis per week.

Monthly household expenditures were estimated by heads of household at 4,500–11,000 Afghanis, generally varying according to the number of members in the unit and their types of economic activities.²⁰ Major expenses cited by respondents included electricity,²¹ gas and basic foodstuffs,²² along with costly health care and medicines²³ which sometimes required thousands of Afghanis for treatment per illness episode. Most respondents preferred the more expensive private clinics over the government hospital – especially when their children were sick. Some voiced their frustration (because of their economic limitations) at not being able to take their ill family members to either Pakistan (Quetta) or Kabul for better treatment than that available in Kandahar City.

Under-nutrition is especially common among women and children in the poorer households and, in the case of infants, this is often accompanied by chronic diarrhoea. Considering the poor sanitation of the district, this is not surprising.²⁴ The health of breastfeeding infants and, correspondingly, their mothers was a definite concern of the respondents. With an extremely limited budget in one poor household, which is generationally extended in structure, the stress of caring for elderly relatives along with providing for a growing family was apparent in this young mother's frank comment:

My old parents are living with us. My father has had three surgical operations, and my mother is sick too. Now my baby is sick because I don't have enough milk...It's all because of my parents that I'm facing all these problems. If I had enough money to eat better myself, I'd be able to feed my son.

¹⁷ Approximately 50 Afghanis = US\$1.

¹⁸ 80–100 Afghanis is earned for one suit of women's clothes.

¹⁹ Kandahar is famous for its intricate *ghada* embroidery on shirtfronts and shawls; this is extremely time-consuming and it may take more than a month to complete one piece.

²⁰ Members from very poor units did not provide any figures here.

²¹ Most households have electricity every second night; only one unit has no connection.

²² Households use a combination of electricity and wood or gas and wood for their cooking, which enables the task to be done inside and/or outside.

²³ Health-related complaints are numerous and varied, including malaria, tuberculosis, diarrhoea, heart problems, accident/injury etc. Three sample households contained elderly individuals who were paralysed; two units had disabled children (one physical, one mental). Adult males in two households had "mental problems" that limited their employment prospects, and two females in other units were similarly afflicted. One head of household was a hashish (*charce*) addict.

²⁴ The National Surveillance System (NSS) report for Kandahar City notes that District 2 has a much higher incidence of watery diarrhoea among children under five compared to other sites. (MRRD, MAAHF and MoH, 2003, p. 13.)

However, the situation in another generationally extended household which was also extremely poor was dramatically different. In this case an elderly mother-in-law made light of her physical ailments and considered others in her family:

It's been nine years that I have felt pains in my legs. I have bad headaches too, and my eyesight has become weak because of them. But I'd rather give the money I'd spend on treatment to my daughter-in-law. She's just given birth to a baby boy, who's now 40 days old. She can buy something to eat so both she and her son will become strong. May he not be hungry...

Drug addiction was a problem in some households, sometimes resulting in domestic violence. The following complicated example from a poor nuclear unit illustrates the links between economic problems, stress, conflict between spouses, costly health care and selling of household assets. This young mother of four provided details of her difficult relations with her husband, who is addicted to hashish:

One day I told my husband that we didn't have enough oil to cook the dinner meal, and he became very angry. He hit me. And he hit me so hard he broke his finger, which caused him a lot of pain. When it didn't recover, he finally sold the fan and went to Pakistan to have his finger treated...

Costs related to bride price (*walwar* in Pashto) were not specifically mentioned by respondents as causing severe economic problems for their households, although considerable expenditures for wedding celebrations were noted by a few individuals. Although some heads of household mentioned that a common bride price in Kandahar is 300,000 Afghanis,²⁵ it was also noted that the tradition is not always practised these days – especially by units which are economically secure – and the mullah from one of the neighbourhood mosques stated that he advises people there is no obligation in Islam to pay a bride price.

Expenditures relating to education, including crucial opportunity costs, are covered in detail later in this report.

3.6 Debts

All but one of the 12 sample households were in considerable debt, with amounts of 50,000–200,000 Afghanis. The majority of funds had been loaned from relatives, except in three cases in which a shopkeeper, a friend or a neighbour had provided the loan. Borrowed funds were used primarily for house construction or repair, the purchase of household effects by returned refugees after leaving theirs behind in Pakistan, and health care and medicines. In the following example, an elderly woman described debts incurred by her sons for her husband's costly (traditional) health treatment:

My husband, Haji Sahib, has been sick for ten years. He has problems breathing, his bladder is weak, and two months ago he was in an accident and injured his leg. We've spent thousands of Afghanis on him, but he's not recovering. We finally borrowed 2,000 Afghanis from our relatives and took him to Imam Khalifa Sahib ziarat (shrine) which is in Reg. We got a tawiz (amulet) for him there. We also took him to the tomb of Baba Sahib. We've spent 6,000 Afghanis on him in this way...

²⁵ Amounts quoted ranged from 100,000–600,000 Afghanis.

Strategies which are coping, adaptive and/or accumulative were exhibited by the sample studied. For example, a number of households had sold some of their physical assets – both productive and non-productive – in recent years. One unit had sold its embroidery machine, dishes and jewellery in order to rebuild its war-destroyed house; another family sold its wooden wheelbarrow (from which it used to sell things) and its dishes in order to pay off an old outstanding debt.

The line between borrowing and charity is sometimes blurred, especially among very poor households. There were many examples from the study that illustrated the importance of helping the poor, and the giving of *zakat* (charity, tithing) was extremely important in this urban sociocultural context. To follow are two examples – the first involving relatives and the second involving neighbours:

[The household had returned to their home in Kandahar after the Taliban fell, and the mother of seven recalled their return.]

When we came back from Quetta we had nothing, and everything you see here in my house my mother, brothers and sister have given me to use. One of my sisters is living in District 5, and she gave me zakat – she helped me with clothes for the children. They've been so good to us...

In this second illustration, it was not clear if the neighbours really wanted or expected to be repaid by this desperately poor family, which had six children under the age of 12 and lived in a relative's empty ruined compound at no cost:

[The head of household's mother led the researchers to a small room; later her daughter-in-law with a baby in her arms arrived.]

...When my daughter-in-law was pregnant I borrowed 4,000 Pakistani rupees from the neighbour next to us, and 2,000 Afghanis from another neighbour who's called "the wife of the lieutenant colonel". She gave me the money, and she said, "You may return the money whenever you can afford it." Then when my grandson was born in the Haqani Hospital the fees for the hospital were 1,000 Afghanis. I also gave the female cleaners and the male guards 1,000 Afghanis for the good news.

3.7 Female mobility

Kandahar City is well known in Afghanistan for its extremely conservative environment and, in this context, the mobility of females in the public sphere is often severely restricted.²⁶ This has direct relevance to this study's later discussion of factors inhibiting girls' school enrolment. Concerning their mobility in general, this father of four daughters and three sons²⁷ commented on the topic, and finally noted that things had improved somewhat in recent years:

When a girl grows up, she should have good behaviour, which means that she shouldn't walk in the lanes or climb up on the roof for no reason...These days women do have some freedom in the city, but my wife still doesn't go any place without my permission. What if she was hit by a car or something like that? No one could touch her. So whenever she goes somewhere – to the

²⁶ For example, on the second visit to one of the sample households, a mother and her eldest son were extremely worried that the research team had taken a film of the females of the family which "may be broadcast on television". AREU's colleague from Oxfam reassured them that what they had mistaken for a camera was simply her radio/telephone for communication with the office.

²⁷ Two sons were enrolled in school. None of the daughters had ever been in school (three were married and one was at home). His wife said, "my husband really loves his daughters..."

house of relatives, for instance – I go with her or I send her with one of my sons. And if there's anything urgent, she asks me and then she goes out to the bazaar. Women couldn't even go to the bazaar ten years ago. They were hit with whips, and there were important things that just remained undone. And before that time, they were also unable to go out because of the risks of war.

Common legitimate reasons for adult females to leave their compounds (usually wearing a *chadri* or *burqa*)²⁸ included visiting relatives, attending marriages and funerals, and going to the doctor. In general, the older a woman gets, the more mobility she has. This mother of three daughters and three sons (of which one son and one daughter were enrolled in school) stated that she is quite free in her movement, within reason:

I can go anywhere I wish, but I don't go out unless I have to. For example, if anything is needed to be purchased for the household, I go out for shopping.

Just as decision-making processes within households differed, female mobility varied between units – depending on the type of relationship between husband, wife and other household members, as well as distribution of power within the unit. These are key aspects of the later discussion on decision-making with respect to school enrolment.

3.8 Some options for education: the supply side

To follow are the major educational facilities currently available in District 2, as mentioned by the *wakil-i-nahya* and the sample households.²⁹ Many options exist in this densely populated urban area.

Neighbourhood mosque schools/madrassas: In the Zargarano mosque the mullah teaches religious studies to 30–40 boys in the mornings and afternoons at no cost, and also teaches girls in their homes. In addition to teaching the Quran, lessons stress good morals and proper relations with parents, neighbours and community, along with urging students to stay away from drugs. The mullah also tutors children with their primary (government) school studies. Satisfied with “whatever they give me,” this mullah receives 100–200 Afghanis per month from some parents, along with a daily loaf of bread. In the Wazirano madrassa in the other neighbourhood, the mullah teaches around 100 young boys and girls under a large tent each afternoon. Most boys attend government schools in the mornings. The mullah noted that most families do not allow their girls to attend the madrassa after the age of ten:

This is the culture of the Kandahari people, and, in addition, the security is not good here either.

Zarghona Primary School: Boys and girls from two of the 12 sample households were enrolled in this school.

Zarghona Ana High School: A boy and a girl from one of the 12 sample households were enrolled in this school.

²⁸ The mullah from one of the neighbourhood mosques said: “It is not a must for a woman to put on a burqa. She only has to veil herself as much as needed – the face and hands do not need to be covered.”

²⁹ During fieldwork in District 2 in June–July 2005, government schools were not in session and visits to these educational institutions were not possible. Neighbourhood mosque schools were visited.

Zainab High School: A girl from one of the 12 sample households was enrolled in this school.

Sardar Mohammad Khan School: Boys from two of the 12 sample households were enrolled in this school.

Mir Wais High School: No children from the sample were enrolled here.

Mashriqi High School: No children from the sample were enrolled here.

Nau Roz Shah Borj School: Two boys from one household were enrolled here in seventh and eighth grades.

Ahmad Shah Baba High School: Two boys from one household were enrolled here in sixth and seventh grades.

Afghan-Turk High School: This is a private school sponsored by the Turkish government. No children from the sample were enrolled here.

Zaher Shahi School: A 19-year-old boy from one household attended this private school after work in the evenings; he was in tenth grade.

Private English classes: One boy and one girl had attended these classes from two households; classes cost up to 200 Afghanis per month.

3.9 The cost of education in the context of the household economy

The majority of residents in District 2 are poor urban dwellers struggling to make ends meet, with income used primarily for food, house reconstruction and costly medical care. Sending children to school calls for additional direct costs for school supplies (notebooks, pens, pencils, books), uniforms and, in some cases, transportation (e.g. rickshaws utilised especially for girls) – an ongoing commitment on the part of parents and the household in general. The amount spent on these direct costs varied considerably according to the number of children in the household enrolled in school, the level of schooling, and whether the classes were public or private. The examples to follow serve as illustration.

Household A is average in economic standing. Although the head of household had recently been injured in a motorcycle accident and was not working, the eldest son of 19 was employed in a telephone shop with a salary of 2,500 Afghanis per month. His wife and daughter also did tailoring and embroidery for cash. Two sons were enrolled in Nau Roz Shah Borj School: one in eighth grade and one in seventh grade. The eldest son who was working took evening classes at the private Zaher Shahi School, where he was in the tenth grade. The boys also occasionally attended English classes. For his three sons, the father estimated that they expend about 1,000 Afghanis per month.³⁰ His wife related that they lack sufficient finances:

We had a teacher help the children with their school lessons last year. He was coming home and helping them, but he's not coming anymore because we can't afford to pay his salary.

Household B was the poorest of the units in the sample. The head of household made 80–100 Afghanis per day as a labourer, but he was often unable to find work, and

³⁰ These figures provided by respondents are approximations, and may be inflated.

the family largely survived through charity. It sent all of its school-aged children to school, which included a boy in fifth grade and a girl in fourth grade at Zarghona Ana Secondary School. Their grandmother estimated that a total of 450 Afghanis was spent per month on the children's school-related costs. They walked to and from school, which "took almost an hour one way".³¹ In addition, the household paid 20 Afghanis per week to a mullah who gave four children of the family religious lessons (at 5 Afghanis per child).

3.10 The schools and the community

Research in District 2 was carried out during the government schools' summer vacation in Kandahar (June–July 2005), so no schools were visited by the research team and no specific comments about the institutions can be made here. In general, however, they were large, established schools that had been functioning, on and off, for decades.

In a few households with literate members, fathers helped their children with their homework in the evenings. No mothers were able to do this because they were all non-literate, however male cousins and neighbours from nearby households were sometimes asked to help with this activity. This was problematic, however, as a concerned mother of a 13-year-old boy related:

There's no one to help my children with their lessons. My son was going to an English course, and he studied the book half-way through. Then he started to have problems and I asked a boy in our neighbourhood to help him – but he didn't. My son had to finally just drop the course.

No mention was made about parents' attendance at any school functions, but sometimes they did contact their children's teachers concerning their progress. As a mother of three sons and two daughters who all attended school said:

Their father has met their teachers many times, and has asked them why they don't pay more attention to the students, why they don't give them more homework, why they don't instruct them in being neat and thing like that. I've never been to their schools because there are a lot of restrictions on women here. Anyway, there's never been any function to attend – so I've never had any opportunity to be able to tell the teachers what I think.

Another mother, with one son and one daughter in school, had similar ideas about homework and, since she herself took her third-grade daughter to and from school, had made contact with the teachers:

I've met the teachers many times, and I've asked them why they're not giving more homework to the students. When my daughter comes home from school she's just drawing pictures. Why don't they make the children study more? And they've never invited parents to school for any functions. Actually they've never held anything like that around here...But my children do say that things at school are getting a bit better lately. They've fixed a swing for them in the school compound, and the teachers are teaching alright these days.

³¹ In comparison, the wife of a well-to-do shopkeeper said they sometimes paid 100 Afghanis per day for auto-rickshaw transportation to and from school for their daughters who were in third and fifth grades at two separate schools.

And, in this case of a young boy in the seventh grade who is deaf and partially blind due to typhoid, his mother related that a visit to the boy's teachers by a close relative solved the problem:

My son was not learning his lessons very well, and it was because he was sitting in the last chair in the class. Since he can't hear very well, he was unable to hear the lessons. Then the cousin of my husband talked to his teachers about the problem and now the teachers ask him to sit in the first row of the class. My son is very happy and he's learned a lot recently.

4. Who Goes to School, Who Doesn't, and Why

Table 1 shows some basic information about the children in the 12 sample households in District 2. There was a total of 65 children (39 boys and 26 girls) aged 18 and under in these units.³² The greater number of boys in the category of school-aged children was partly, but not totally, explained by the early marriage of a number of girls in their teens and their departure from the households.³³ Comparing the second and third columns in Table 1, about 77 percent of the boys of school age in the sample were enrolled in school, while approximately 35 percent of the girls of school age were enrolled in school.

Table 1. Children in and out of school in District 2 (12 sample households)

Number of children aged 18 years and under		Number of school-aged children (7–18 yrs)		Number of school-aged children in school now	
Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
39	26	22	14	17	5

A total of eight households had enrolled at least one child in school. Of these, four had enrolled both boys and girls, and four had enrolled only boys in school.

Boys enrolled in school (N=17) ranged from: first to fifth grades at Zarghona/Zarghona Ana School; from second to fifth grades at Sardar Mohammad Khan; from sixth to seventh grades at Ahmad Shah Baba High School; and from seventh to eighth grades at Nau Roz Shah Borj School. Girls enrolled in school (N=5) included third graders at Zainab Primary School, and fourth and fifth graders at Zarghona Ana School.

Of those children who were not enrolled in school, including five boys and nine girls, none of them had ever attended school. There were no cases of dropouts from government schools in the sample of 12 households, although one boy and one girl from two households had dropped out of private classes.

4.1 Household decision-making

Before dealing more specifically with decision-making and school enrolment, the general process of making decisions within the urban household in District 2 will be briefly examined. Closely linked with this is the quality of relationships between various household members, including the distribution of power within the unit. The dynamics of the interaction within these families, which contain many members of differing ages and genders and, correspondingly, different statuses and roles, are exceedingly complex and require a considerable amount of time to understand. Important clues emerged during in-depth conversations, however, and some of these are summarised here.

Discussions with both male and female respondents indicated that although decision-making power may be primarily possessed by the male head of household, as is often stereotypically thought, women are often active participants in the decision-making

³² This yields an average of more than five children aged 18 and under per household – a large dependency ratio regardless of household structure.

³³ The Afghan Minister of Women's Affairs, Masouda Jalal, has recently been quoted as saying that early marriage results in "...an incomplete education, limited opportunities, and serious health risks" (IRIN, 13 July 2005). However, even in the category of pre-school children of six years and younger, there are considerably more boys than girls: 17 boys and 12 girls. Indeed, in each of the four field site samples, there are more boys than girls in all categories. This complex subject requires more research – of both a qualitative and quantitative nature.

process and, in some cases, wield considerable power within the household themselves. This varies considerably between units, however. Family structure is sometimes an important variable here, but individual personality and negotiation skills also play a crucial role. A few examples taken from the sample households illustrate some of this diversity in quality of relationships.

In Household A, a large extended unit of 12 members including seven children under the age of 12, relations between husband (a cloth shopkeeper) and wife appeared to be quite egalitarian, as the woman related:

My husband and I both take responsibilities for keeping the household budget. He takes my advice about everything, and he doesn't make any decision without my advice...And as far as things in the home are concerned, I'm the one to make those decisions – like cooking, clothing, etc.

In the next two examples, wives of the heads of household make many of the major decisions within the units, in part due to the fact that their husbands are unable to do so themselves. Indeed, they are heads of household in name only. In Household B, a nuclear unit, two young children were killed during the war and their father suffered extensive beatings; he is now mentally ill and spends his time supervising the reconstruction of their house. His wife told this about her present role:

My eldest son, he's 19 and he works as a plumber. He and I now make decisions about everything in the household. We discuss and then take a decision...I keep the budget. When my son makes money, he now gives it to me to keep.

In Household C, an extremely poor nuclear unit in which the head of household is a hashish addict, his wife has primary responsibility:

I do all the work at home and I take care of everything in the household. My husband tells me, "You are a wise woman and you can take good care of everything. There is no need for me to do anything..."

4.2 Household decision-making and school enrolment

From the previous examples of respondents' opinions about education, it is evident that many of these city-dwellers in District 32 clearly perceive the value of education, and enrol their children in school accordingly. In some cases respondents clearly stated that both father and mother took part in these decisions, as this father (a literate shopkeeper) of five school-aged children (both boys and girls), all of whom are enrolled, noted:

My wife and I make decisions about enrolling the children in school together. We discuss things. After all, they're her children too...

In other cases, it was the children's father who was the primary decision-maker, as this elderly woman in an extremely poor household which sends all of its school-aged children (a boy and a girl) to school related:

My son has studied to the fifth grade. When the Russians came to Afghanistan we were displaced and after that he was deprived of school. Then when we came to Kandahar my son was saying that it would be good to send our children to school so that we could have a good future...

And, in a third case, it was a strong mother (whose husband is a drug addict) who had taken it upon herself to enrol all of her children of school age (a boy and a girl) in school:

My husband has given me the responsibility to raise the children, and I'm making a lot of effort to get them educated – so that they can become a doctor or an engineer and help people in the future. It's the responsibility of a father to take his children to school and enrol them, but I myself did this...

4.3 Respondents' opinions about education: why children go to school

When adults in the sample were asked what they thought about education, both men and women voiced their support, and noted its importance in present-day Afghanistan. These opinions heavily influenced their decisions to send their children to school.

This response from a comparatively well-to-do cloth merchant who has enrolled one son (fourth grade) and one daughter (third grade) in school illustrates the point:

We value education very much. Even when I was a migrant in Karachi, Pakistan, I did not deprive my children from school. Now that I'm in my own country, I send them to school too. I want them to be educated. I'm illiterate and I've suffered a lot in my life because of that...My children are going to courses and studying during the vacations too.

His wife echoed this interest in education:

I think a good mother should rear children with good morals, and should encourage them to become educated. Send them to school, make them study. Schools are off for three months here, and I try to make my children study during their vacations too. Then they will become something in the future. When I gave birth to my children, I hoped that they would become a doctor, a pilot, a teacher – to serve me and their father, to make a good future for themselves. I have the same wishes for both my boys and girls.

The reason that people have remained illiterate is the war. Because of the war people have become illiterate and unsophisticated, and that's why they destroy each other. Now today every Afghan should get an education. That's the right of all the people...

Indeed, many respondents recalled the turmoil of the past and regretted their lack of any formal education. In the next example, the head of household grew up in a refugee camp in Sorkhab (Balochistan, Pakistan), returned to Kandahar two years ago, and is now a trader in motorcycles. A young father of an infant daughter, he lives in a large extended household with his wife, elderly mother and five other brothers. This is why they now send his youngest brothers to first and second grade:

We send them to school to be literate and to serve people. We're illiterate, and we've been reared in the era of guns. There was no school then. In Pakistan we were working in a rug weaving firm, and also participating in the jihad now and then too. I now want to send my brothers – and my

children too – to school so that they may learn something and not be illiterate like me...

Respondents often noted that the right to education for all is mentioned in the Holy Quran. For example, in a poor household an elderly mother of two sons who are day labourers believes the following about education, and plans for when her six grandchildren, who are all under the age of 7, will go to school:

Education is the right of all children, and Almighty Allah said that education is incumbent upon both males and females. Educated people have good attitudes and good morals. I pray that my grandson, who is six months old, will be religious and educated – and become a doctor, not a heroin smoker, a murderer or a thief. Not hurt people, but rather build his country, and make a good reputation for his country...

In another poor home, a young mother (of four young children – with three sons in school) whose husband is a drug addict, also had high hopes for her children – both boys and girls:

My life is full of pain and troubles these days. I don't want my children to have the same kind of life as I've had, and that's why I send them to school – to gain knowledge and good morals. I want them to become good doctors or engineers.³⁴ What will they learn from wandering about in the lanes? Thank God that there are schools once again in Afghanistan. The poor boys and girls will learn something and will become bright minded and good people.

If my parents had have sent me to school, I would have been educated by now and I could have helped my husband. I would have had a job, and with the help of God, we would have had a comfortable life.

I have a three-year-old daughter. When she grows a bit, I'll send her to school and let her study until the end. I won't get her married very soon, because I want her to study a nursing course and become a midwife. It's good that women can help others and teach others. There's much honour in that. Prophet Mohammad has said good words about teachers, and Almighty Allah has glorified the honour of teachers.

Although about half of the respondents (both men and women) believed in the importance of education for males and females, some stressed how crucial it was for boys in particular to be educated – as in the case of this father:

I think that education is important for a boy. If he's educated then he knows the rights of parents and knows that he must respect them. If he's illiterate, he just causes trouble for people. Even in the neighbourhood he will be committing evil – like stealing, gambling, smoking hashish and things like that. If he's educated, he will be good, and even the neighbours will be able to take advantage of his knowledge. Through education, he can understand the rights of people and he can work for society and his country. ...Education works in life like a candle works in the dark.

³⁴ “To become a doctor or an engineer” is a phrase used so frequently in Afghanistan that it appears to be just another way to say “to become educated”.

Box 1. Interview with Mawlawi Omar Khan

[The researchers entered the mosque and saw a number of young boys studying there. The mullah asked one of the students to bring a rug, and the conversation began with him in the shade near a wall. After introductions, he began his story.]

My father and grandfather were mullahs too, as was my maternal uncle. My family members have been mullahs for a long time. We still have not joined any party, and the people of Kandahar respect such scholars very much. About five years ago the people of this neighbourhood asked me to become the mullah of this mosque. Since then I'm giving the prayer here and also teaching the children. I teach them about good morals, the rights of parents, the importance of home and education, and that they should stay away from drugs. I teach 30–40 boys in the mornings and afternoons for free, and I teach the girls at their homes. I teach the children the books of primary school too. That is, I help them with their school lessons. Whatever the people give me in return, I rely on that. I live in a rented house and my economic situation is poor because the people here are not rich enough to help me more than they do now.

Education is a must for every male and female in Islam. Education started from the time of Adam (Allai-Salaam), and all of the messengers have accepted its importance. Almighty Allah and his prophet Mohammad (PBUH³⁵) are positive about education.

One of the most important things in the world is to learn. A smart and professional teacher can have a great positive effect on children. He should know a lot and be able to persuade the students. I also want to teach religious subjects in the schools someday. We have to stress education in the next few years so that the younger generation will be able to improve our community in the future.

On the other hand, the *wakil-i-nahya* himself called attention to recent changes in District 2 which have positively affected girls' education:

In recent years there have been big changes in the lives of women here. Before the girls were not going to school at all. Now the number of girl students has increased greatly. It's because of the improvement in security.

The mullahs from both neighbourhoods were very positive about education, regardless of gender. Because of the central role of these religious scholars in the sample communities, short summaries of conversations with these two individuals at their respective neighbourhood mosques are included in Boxes 1 and 2.

However, despite the majority of respondents voicing extremely positive opinions of education in general, many parents whose children were enrolled in government schools voiced criticism of the school environment itself. To date, these supply side-related issues have not led to their children being withdrawn, but they deserve mention nonetheless.

By far the most common complaint had to do with the quality of teaching.³⁶ Both fathers and mothers related that the teachers did not work with enough enthusiasm, did not assign enough homework, were absent frequently – in general, they were thought to be lazy. One woman said she thought that they were “mentally ill and very old”. The local *wakil-i-nahya* also called attention to this problem, but at least gave them the benefit of the doubt by noting that teachers have “a lack of salary”

³⁵ “Peace Be Upon Him”.

³⁶ The researchers did not encounter any case in which it was related that a child had been physically abused by a teacher in a government school, although one mother related that the mullah hit her son on the arm and he couldn't use it for a few days; since then she had not sent him to the mosque for religious study.

and because many had left their jobs, there was a lack of teachers too. In a disgusted tone, another mother from a poor household had this to say:

I enrolled my sons in school last year. They're very intelligent, and they got good grades. Then when the exams came their teacher asked them to buy shampoo for him or else he would fail them in the exams. When my children came home they were crying, and saying, "Our teacher wants shampoo and soap! We're unable to buy shampoo and things like that for ourselves, so how could we do that for their teacher?"

Box 2. Interview with Mullah Shah Wali Khan

[The researchers walked down a narrow lane and entered the madrassa, where, under a large cloth tent, about 100 small students (both boys and girls) were studying. They sat and chatted with the students and the young mullah, who had lost both of his legs in the war.]

After I lost my legs in a rocket attack, I went to Pakistan and studied the religious books there. Then when the situation in Kandahar got better, I returned. Now I teach religious lessons to about 100–120 boys and girls here in the lane. Parents provide the children with their books, and each student pays me 5 Afghanis at the end of each week, and I cover my household expenses with that amount. It's not a very good income, but I have no alternative. In addition, I have a disabled card from the government, and I receive 300 Afghanis per month. Often they do not pay me, though.

I'm happy with my work – at least it is a service for the country. The boys go to school in the morning and then they come to me in the afternoon. The families of all of the students appreciate my work.

First of all, educated children must respect their parents. Then when they grow up they can serve their own children and their country. No matter if it is religious or scientific, education is obligatory for every man and woman. The community develops from education.

Girls are not allowed to come to the madrassa after the age of ten. Then their families do not allow them to walk in the lanes anymore or continue their formal education. This is the culture of the Kandahari people – and the security is not good here either. However, some of the households who are ready culturally and economically do send their daughters to school until they complete their education. I myself have a good opinion about school. I have two sons and a daughter, and I want them all to continue their studies.

Others, both adults and children, called attention to the lack of supplies and books at school. When discussing their school experiences with a brother and sister in one household who are in the fifth grade and fourth grade, respectively, at Zarghona Ana Secondary School, the boy of 12 years of age related the following, which makes learning difficult:

Neither my sister nor I have any books. They didn't give us any at school – they only give books to seven students in each class, and not to the others.

Two mothers mentioned the lack of drinking water at their daughters' schools, which is especially important during Kandahar City's hot summer. In addition, it was believed by a few fathers and mothers that their children's schools were "too far"³⁷ and there was a lack of transport for children in the district. This last issue is closely related to the perceived lack of security in Kandahar City, which is discussed in the next section dealing with why children are not enrolled in school.

³⁷ Concerning what is meant by the term "too far", in these cases the time taken for children to walk to school varies from 20 minutes to one hour.

4.4 Respondents' opinions about education: why children don't go to school

Table 2 shows some basic information about the school-aged boys and girls who had never been to school (five boys and nine girls from seven households). Listed in the table are the household members primarily responsible for each decision and the major reason(s) involved in each decision. Table 3 shows similar information about two children who had dropped out of private courses. There were no cases of children who had dropped out of government schools in the sample.

Table 2. Children who had never been enrolled in school (five boys and nine girls from seven households)

<i>Household</i>	<i>Child</i>	<i>Who decided</i>	<i>Reason(s)</i>
#1	8-year-old girl	mother, brother	takes care of grandmother
	18-year-old girl	mother, father, brother	war (in past) female seclusion too old does all chores mental problems
#3	8-year-old girl	grandfather (a mullah in Quetta)	religious (grandfather "hates school")
	12-year-old girl	"	"
	18-year-old boy	"	poverty (works in biscuit shop)
#5	17-year-old girl	father, mother	no school before female seclusion too old bad security ³⁸
#8	17-year-old girl	father	female seclusion too old
#9	pre-teen girl	brothers	female seclusion bad security poverty
	teenaged girl	"	"
#10	pre-teen girl	father, mother, grandmother	bad security poverty
	pre-teen boys (3)	"	"
#11	teenaged boy	brother	poverty (works selling sesame candy in bazaar)

The children who had never been to school were both boys and girls (more girls), and they were both pre-teens and teenagers. They were from a total of seven of the 12 sample households. Concerning the decision-makers in these cases, a mixture of relatives participated, with both fathers and mothers playing the most significant roles. Brothers also took part in a number of cases, a grandmother took part in one unit, and in another household it was the distant grandfather, a mullah who lived in

³⁸ "Bad security" refers to a fear of children being kidnapped, rather than fear of conflict or fighting.

Quetta, Pakistan, who made the decision that his grandchildren (both male and female) were not enrolled in school.

Table 3. Children who had dropped out of private courses³⁹ (one boy and one girl from two households)

<i>Household</i>	<i>Dropout</i>	<i>Education history</i>	<i>Who decided</i>	<i>Reason(s)</i>
#1	10-year-old girl	3rd grader in government school	mother, brother	could no longer afford fee (200 Afghanis per month)
#2	13-year-old boy	5th grader in government school	mother	could not keep up with English class; no one to help him

The various reasons involved in these decisions are shown in the last column of Table 2, and are also graphically illustrated in degree of importance in Figure 1. On the supply side, no specific reason was mentioned as being directly related to why a child was not enrolled in school.⁴⁰ For these 16 children who had never been to school, all reasons involved in these decisions were demand-related, and in almost all cases more than one reason was involved.

In more than half of the households, poverty was a related reason that limited both boys' and girls' school enrolment. This especially impacted on boys – with the high opportunity costs associated with schooling, boys were rather compelled to work (e.g. in the family biscuit shop or selling sesame candy from a wheelbarrow). Also in more than half of the households, it was the norms of female seclusion in the conservative context of Kandahar City that inhibited girls' enrolment in school. For the teenaged girls in the sample households their younger years were spent during times of war, with lack of girls' schools, and they are now considered “too old” for enrolment.

Also extremely prominent in discussions about the non-enrolment of both boys and girls was the issue of bad security which, in the context of Kandahar City, pertains to the fear of a child being kidnapped on his or her way to/from school. This concern is closely related to the perception of a school's distant location from home and, correspondingly, lack of transport for the children. Parents, especially mothers, related that they were worried as soon as a child left home, until he or she returned. Some parents took things into their own hands and walked with their young children to and from school daily, as this concerned mother of boy in fourth grade and a girl in third grade said:

A son and daughter of mine are going to school, and I'm really afraid. I take them to school and back each day because last year in Sarpoza (an area of Kandahar City) two girls, one seven years old and one eight years old, and a boy who was 12 years old, were killed. They were all students. It was because they were going to school and getting educated.⁴¹ They cut the girls into pieces with a knife and hid them in a stream under some garbage. They cut off the finger of the boy and sent it to his parents saying, “We have kidnapped your son and we want \$10,000. If you do not give the money to us,

³⁹ There were no cases in the sample of 12 households in District 2, Kandahar City, of children who had dropped out of government schools.

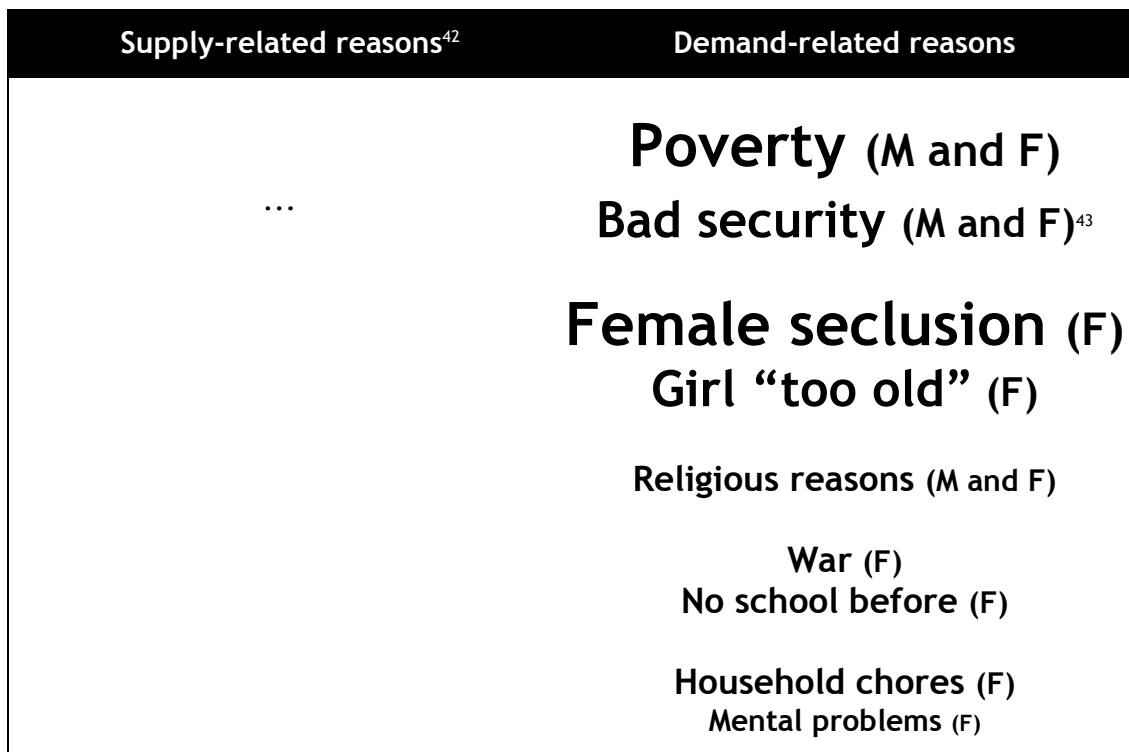
⁴⁰ However, as mentioned previously, poor teaching quality, lack of teachers/supplies/books/drinking water, and the school's distant location/lack of transport have all been noted by parents as negatively affecting the school experience of their enrolled children.

⁴¹ In the local *wakil's* assessment, however, the kidnappers are part of a business that sells children's body parts internationally.

we will kill your son.” The poor family found the money and gave it to the kidnappers, but they had cut the boy into pieces and had put the corpse in a bag which was tied to the carrier of a bicycle. The government caught the criminals; one of the kidnappers is a butcher, and he was released after some time. There is no active government here to punish criminals...

These tragic events have undoubtedly had an impact on school enrolment in the Kandahar region. Indeed, in another site for this research (Chahar Asyab, Kabul Province), respondents reported hearing about these kidnappings in Kandahar City on both the radio and television. Some households subsequently withdrew their sons from the local school. When the school formed a special committee of teachers and students to guard the boys on their way to and from school, however, the children returned to school. The fear of kidnapping remains with many parents, however.

Figure 1. Reasons associated with decisions to not enrol children in school



In one household of returned refugees, none of the three school-aged children were in government school due to the wishes of their powerful grandfather who lives far away in Quetta, Pakistan, although religious education was encouraged. The whole family had previously lived together for eight years in Quetta. Reasons for not going to government school were largely religious, combined with the respect given to a father, as the mother of the children related:

We’re eager to send our children to school, but my father-in-law hates the idea. He’s a mullah in Quetta, where he writes tawiz (religious amulets) for

⁴² No supply-related reason was mentioned as being part of any decision to not send a child to school, although poor teaching quality, lack of teachers/supplies/books/drinking water, and the school’s distant location/lack of transport were all noted by parents as negatively affecting the school experience of their enrolled children.

⁴³ “Bad security” refers to the fear of children being kidnapped, rather than any fear of conflict or war.

people. My husband says, "If I send my children to school, then my father will become unhappy with me. He's my father..." That's why my children are deprived of school.

My daughter is 11 years old. Her father and grandfather send her to a house nearby where they teach the Quran. It's the third time that she's reading the Holy Quran from beginning to end.

Another reason for individuals not being enrolled in school pertains to girls who are involved in doing chores at home. In one of these cases, an 18-year-old female also had a mental problem which, along with the fact that when she was younger there was war and no schools for girls, the limitations of female seclusion, and her age, also figured into her mothers' detailed explanation as to why she had not been enrolled in school. In conclusion, reasons involved in the individual decisions about enrolment in school were multiple and complex.

5. Recommendations

This research has yielded insights into the complex livelihoods and decision-making processes around school enrolment of the residents of District 2 in Kandahar City. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made.

1. Increase knowledge and understanding of communities and households

- Teachers should know the local community and individual households, and they should use this knowledge not only to improve relations with those households which enrol their children, but also to reach out to those which do not.
- Educators should increase their knowledge of local households' decision-making behaviour about school enrolment and should understand the interplay of supply and demand issues in their community.
- Outreach activities should be planned which bear in mind the fact that in many households both mothers and fathers play active roles in enrolment decisions. Supportive parents should be encouraged to become local advocates for education.
- To achieve these goals, teachers should receive basic training in community analysis, rapid appraisal and related participatory techniques.

2. Improve gender relations within and between households

- Male and female teachers should receive basic training in gender relations so that they can positively influence their students and families to enrol both boys and girls.
- A specific curriculum should be developed which stresses positive gender relations in the home and society.
- Both male and female educators should discuss local perceptions of social risk related to enrolling girls in school openly with students, parents and the community, and work with the community to change these perceptions.
- Teachers should identify supportive households and parents, and encourage them to become local advocates in this area.

3. Improve communication between households and schools

- Teachers (male and female) should build upon parents' interest in and concern about their children's education by encouraging their constructive participation in the local school.
- To foster trust and ownership, school visits by parents should be encouraged. Small-scale class functions and awards events, along with parent-teacher conferences, should be held. For secluded mothers, meetings and events could be held in local homes.
- Teachers should identify interested fathers and mothers and encourage them to become local advocates in fostering positive relations between all households and the local school.

4. Improve communication between communities and schools

- Appropriate aspects of school management should be decentralised, and educators should encourage communities to become more involved in their

local schools (e.g. monitoring and management). With the overall guidance of the Ministry of Education (MoE), the head teacher and local leadership should coordinate this and all interested parents should be involved. Roles of all participants should be clearly defined.

- Fostering feelings of community ownership and commitment are critical, as is the accountability of the school to the community.
- Local and district educators should initiate public awareness campaigns to make parents and communities aware of their new school-related opportunities and responsibilities.

5. Target outreach to children not enrolled in school

- Outreach is crucial for those children not enrolled in school, and for this to be successful educators must know the community and its households well. There is a pressing demand for non-formal activities such as home-based schooling, accelerated learning opportunities, literacy training etc.
- Home-based literacy training should be targeted at specific groups (e.g. teenaged girls in conservative settings, working children and youth).
- With the MoE focused on formal education, the involvement of experienced NGOs in these targeted programmes is necessary.

6. Develop government policies for private schools and courses

- In urban areas, the enrolment of students in private schools and courses is increasing rapidly, and explicit government policies (including formal registration) for these institutions are necessary.

7. Address the broader issue of poverty

- Poverty is one of the major factors inhibiting the enrolment of both boys and girls in urban and rural contexts. With parents unemployed, children and young people must often work in lieu of schooling. The creation of employment opportunities for adults is a necessity.

8. Develop supplementary reading for students

- A series of short, regionally specific, gender-sensitive stories of individual boys' and girls' lives should be developed, featuring children who are enrolled in school as well as those who are not, along with those who work and those who do not.

9. Conduct longitudinal research on household dynamics and education outcomes

- Longitudinal research on the ever-changing dynamics of households, school-related decision-making and education outcomes should be undertaken, utilising the sample households from this study.

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