



The Government of Japan



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Joint Press Release

The Programme for Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan Phase III (ELA 3)

The Ministry of Education of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
The Embassy of Japan in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

KABUL, 22nd October, 2013

The Government of Japan signed the agreement amounting to USD 20 million (about 1.14 billion AFN) with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the third phase of the Programme for Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan (ELA) today in a ceremony held at the Ministry of Education. Funded by the Government of Japan, and implemented by the Ministry of Education Literacy Department with technical assistance from UNESCO, ELA 3 seeks to build upon the successes of previous phases of the Programme, and further strengthen the provision of literacy in Afghanistan with an emphasis on the development of skills.

The ELA Programme has, since 2008, received a total of USD 50 million grant from Japan and worked to expand access to literacy in 15 provinces¹. During the first two phases of the Programme, over 600,000 adults, more than 60% of whom were women, were provided with nine-month courses in basic literacy and numeracy with life skills training, and further 400,000 adult learners will benefit from the new phrase. Thus, in total, one million Afghan people in 18 provinces will be trained through the ELA Programme, which will substantially contribute to achieving the targets of the Government to increase the level of adult literacy from the current figure of 36% to 59% by 2020.

Through technical assistance from UNESCO, the ELA Programme has also strengthened the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Education. The Literacy Department now has the ability to provide a decentralized approach to monitoring literacy. The Programme further assisted the Literacy Department in building the quality of the literacy curriculum and literacy teacher training programmes.

¹ ELA 1 and 2 have been carried out in 15 provinces such as Badghis, Faryab, Ghazni, Khost, Kunar, Nimroz, Nuristan, Uruzgan, Zabul, Badakhshan, Balkh, Bamiyan, Daikundi, Ghor, Nangarhar. In ELA3, Wardak, Paktika, Samangan are to be included.

Recognizing the importance of developing a skilled and literate workforce, His Excellency Minister Wardak from the Ministry of Education said, “Literacy is the only approach for improvement and growth in the Country and we try the best to achieve it. The Ministry of Education has until now reached close to four million trainees under these programs and presently over 700,000 trainees are learning in our literacy courses throughout the Country”.

H.E. Mr. Hiroshi Takahashi, Ambassador of Japan noted that “we expect that the Government of Afghanistan will exercise full responsibility and strong leadership enabling the ELA programme to be more sustainable, and that UNESCO will ensure quality and steadfast implementation of the Programme. The development of human resources is one of the largest pillars of our assistance towards this country, and literacy is an essential key to social development and inclusion. We will continue supporting Afghanistan’s endeavors for the people of Afghanistan.”

The third phase of ELA will incorporate skills-based literacy, embedding literacy and numeracy within specific vocational contexts, helping to increase the practical application of these skills. This will considerably broaden the impact of the Programme as well as dramatically increase the employability of learners.

The ELA Programme places literacy as a cornerstone of peace and development in Afghanistan. More than simply an education priority, the Programme sees literacy as an investment – in individuals, in communities, societies, and in the future – the reduction of literacy inequality as a foundation of a modern, secure and prosperous Afghanistan.

The Director General of UNESCO, Ms. Irina Bokova, in a video speech from Paris, reiterated the importance of the ELA Programme in increasing literacy. Ms Bokova highlighted the power of literacy as a force for transformation and the immense impact it can have on combating poverty, improving health, advancing gender equality, and promoting democratic participation.

Mr. Paolo Fontani, UNESCO Representative to Afghanistan, thanked the Government of Japan for its significant contribution to ELA, and the Ministry of Education for their valued partnership throughout the Programme.

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