




Community-based education program in Afghanistan: A study of policy and quality of education

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ABSTRACT

Afghanistan continues to grapple with profound challenges in delivering equitable and high-quality education, particularly in marginalized regions, despite concerted efforts to enhance educational access. This qualitative study investigates the policy frameworks and educational quality of community-based education (CBE) programs in two provinces, Nangarhar and Laghman. CBE initiatives are pivotal in mitigating barriers to education in areas beset by enduring sociopolitical adversities. Employing in-depth semi-structured interviews with nine participants—three community leaders, three directors of organizations implementing CBE, and three educators—in conjunction with a rigorous policy analysis, this study evaluates the efficacy and implementation of these programs. The findings emphasize that while CBE initiatives have markedly increased enrollment rates and bolstered community engagement, significant disparities persist in the quality of education and the execution of policy directives. Key determinants such as local governance structures, resource distribution, and cultural attitudes toward education profoundly influence these outcomes. Furthermore, challenges surrounding teacher qualifications, learning environments, and integration with the national education system remain critical concerns. This study culminates in a set of strategic recommendations aimed at refining policy frameworks and enhancing program management to address these deficiencies and advance educational outcomes.

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Introduction

Community-based education (CBE) projects in Afghanistan are initiatives designed to deliver educational services directly to communities, particularly in rural and underserved areas with limited access to conventional schools (Bellino et al., 2016; Utsumi & Muradi, 2024). These programs are predominantly funded by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international agencies, and the Afghan government, aiming to enhance literacy rates and educational outcomes among children (Speakman et

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al., 2014), especially girls, who face substantial barriers to education (Pherali & Sahar, 2018; Trani et al., 2022). CBE projects in Afghanistan operate on the philosophy of bringing education to the doorstep of communities, addressing the logistical and cultural challenges that often hinder access to formal schooling (Hanif et al., 2023). These initiatives emphasize inclusivity and adaptability, tailoring their programs to meet the specific needs of marginalized groups, including girls and children in conflict-affected regions. By fostering community involvement and leveraging local resources, CBE projects aim to create sustainable and culturally sensitive educational opportunities, empowering communities to take ownership of their children's education and future development.

CBE classes are often held in community centers, mosques, or homes, ensuring education is accessible to children who cannot travel long distances to traditional schools (Fu & Zhang, 2024). This approach is particularly vital in Afghanistan, where geographical and security challenges frequently hinder access to education. These programs are structured to be flexible and culturally responsive, accommodating local traditions and socioeconomic conditions (Haruta, 2024). Classes are scheduled to align with students' and families' daily routines, a critical factor in agricultural regions where children often contribute to family labor (Popielarz, 2024). Special emphasis is placed on girls' education to bridge the gender gap in literacy and schooling (Leonard et al., 2024). Female teachers are commonly employed to teach girls, addressing cultural constraints that might otherwise prevent them from attending schools led by male teachers (Eden et al., 2024). While CBE programs adhere to national education standards, they are often tailored to meet the specific needs and circumstances of each community. Teaching resources are provided, and instructors receive training to ensure a high standard of education.

Community engagement is a cornerstone of CBE programs. Local councils, parents, and community leaders collaborate to design and manage these educational initiatives, fostering a supportive learning environment (Green, 2017). The impact of CBE programs in Afghanistan has been overwhelmingly positive, significantly increasing enrollment rates—particularly among girls—and enhancing literacy and numeracy skills. These initiatives have also contributed to a broader cultural shift toward valuing education within communities. Afghanistan's experience with community-based education dates back to the 1970s, when the government established Dehati (village) schools in remote areas with low population density (Arooje & Burrige, 2021). Since then, national and international organizations have stepped in to support vulnerable groups, including girls and nomadic populations, in accessing similar educational opportunities (Ministry of Education, 2018). Following the ousting of the Taliban regime in 2001 and the establishment of an interim government, CBE programs re-emerged as a pivotal strategy to address the growing inaccessibility of education for rural, remote, and neglected communities.

Statistics from the Afghan Ministry of Education (2018) indicate that 4.2 million children are out of school, 60% of whom are girls. Moreover, 68% of teachers fail to meet the minimum qualification standards set by the Ministry of Education, which requires graduation from a teacher training college or equivalent (14th-grade level). Compounding these issues, half of the 12,421 schools nationwide lack proper infrastructure. Faced with challenges related to geography, gender inequities, rural-urban disparities, insecurity, low-quality education, and administrative constraints, the Afghan Ministry of Education has sought alternative approaches to provide education to out-of-school children, including the establishment of CBE programs (Ministry of Education, 2018).

Before the formalization of CBE policies, the Partnership for Advancing Community-Based Education in Afghanistan (PACE-A) initiated these programs. Raza et al. (2023) describes this partnership as a collaboration among international NGOs to offer educational access to populations, particularly girls and women, in areas where Ministry of Education schools were unavailable. In 2008, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with international allies, introduced a new CBE policy to address educational challenges

nationwide. This policy was designed to fulfill Afghanistan's commitment to education for all, as articulated in Article 43 of the 2004 Constitution and Article 4 of the 2008 Education Law. The policy became part of the National Education Strategic Plan III (2017-2021) (Ministry of Education, 2018), targeting the significant challenge of educational access in rural areas. The vast distances between villages often make it impossible for children to attend formal schools, leaving CBE as the only viable alternative for learners in remote regions.

CBE enhances educational access through outreach classes established in remote areas in partnership with communities, facilitating organizations, or the Ministry of Education. The policy has three primary objectives: (a) to serve sparsely populated villages without gender-appropriate public schools, (b) to provide education for children living more than three kilometers from a public school, and (c) to offer accelerated learning opportunities for children who have missed formal schooling and require a condensed curriculum to catch up (Ministry of Education, 2018). The policy also introduces an Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) for children and youth up to 15 years old who have missed the opportunity to attend conventional schools.

Community-Based Education is now integrated into Afghanistan's formal education system, with outreach programs developed in collaboration with UNICEF, the Ministry of Education, and international organizations such as USAID. Initially supported by international NGOs like the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, CARE, and others (Arooje & Burrige, 2021), these programs have been institutionalized through partnerships with the Afghan government. The curriculum mirrors that of official Afghan schools, ensuring consistency in educational standards nationwide. Barlas et al. (2024) report a 42% improvement in overall school enrollment rates, demonstrating the effectiveness of CBE in increasing educational access for boys and girls in rural and remote areas. However, challenges persist, including poor teaching quality, inadequate monitoring and evaluation of CBE programs, and cultural barriers that limit women's access to education (UNICEF, 2020; Kayen, 2022).

Existing literature on CBE is limited (Arooje & Burrige, 2021; Barlas et al., 2024; Kheang, 2024; Ministry of Education, 2018; UNICEF, 2020), consisting mainly of reports by international NGOs that strongly advocate for and implement CBE policies across Afghanistan. However, there is insufficient evidence of successful policy implementation or the reintegration of marginalized boys and girls into education systems in underserved areas. Moreover, little is known about the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of CBE programs and their impact on educational quality.

This study seeks to bridge these gaps by examining the implementation and outcomes of CBE programs, with a focus on their ability to provide quality education and improve access for learners, particularly girls, in remote Afghan communities. The findings are expected to inform policymakers and educators about effective strategies for addressing educational disparities and to offer actionable recommendations for enhancing the sustainability and efficacy of community-based education in Afghanistan.

Method

Qualitative research is interpreted as documenting details regarding daily events from the viewpoints of people who are part of these events and those who witness them but are outside of them. Given this definition, the present study adopts a qualitative inquiry approach to investigate the implementation of Community-Based Education (CBE) policy in terms of providing access to and quality education. The study aims to create a holistic understanding by incorporating participants' perspectives on the CBE program. This methodology enables the exploration of ground realities and their alignment with the policy's vision and its actual implementation. The research was conducted in two eastern provinces of Afghanistan, selected for their significant number

of CBE classes and lack of access to formal education in rural and remote areas. These provinces provided a suitable setting to examine the nuances of CBE implementation.

The study involved nine participants, categorized into three groups: three community leaders, three representatives from organizations implementing CBE, and three CBE teachers. Community leaders were chosen for their active role in monitoring the program and providing learning spaces, while the implementing organizations were responsible for supporting and facilitating CBE classes. Teachers, primarily high school graduates and local residents, were selected to represent the educational background and teaching practices in these programs. Ministry of Education officials were also contacted to discuss their role in integrating CBE classes into the general education system; however, they did not respond to the interview requests. This selection of participants ensured a comprehensive understanding of the CBE program from multiple stakeholder perspectives.

Two primary methods of data collection were employed: semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews offered an open and flexible format, allowing participants to share their insights on the quality, access, and implementation of CBE programs. Document analysis involved a systematic review of CBE policies and related governmental documents to explore issues such as access to education, quality standards, and equity. This combination of methods provided both depth and breadth in understanding the research phenomenon. The interviews and documents were integral to capturing the interplay between policy and practice.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the collected data systematically. Following [Terry and Hayfield's \(2021\)](#) six-phase framework, the process began with familiarizing oneself with the raw data, which included notes and interview transcripts. Initial codes were identified, enabling the researcher to detect recurring patterns and themes. Data reduction was applied to refine these codes into categories, resulting in five final themes. This iterative process ensured a thorough examination of the data and alignment with the study's objectives. The findings highlight the interplay between participants' perspectives and the broader policy goals of CBE programs, offering actionable insights into their implementation and challenges.

Results

Three key aspects of the Community-Based Education (CBE) policy are examined in this findings section. These aspects include the policy's overarching goal, the conceptualization of CBE as a standardized package, and access to education through CBE classes. Each of these components will be elaborated upon in the subsequent discussion. The CBE policy aims to provide access to "quality education" by employing strategies that emphasize cost-effectiveness, equity, sustainability, and scalability. Despite multiple revisions to the policy document (introduced in 2008, and subsequently revised in 2012 and 2018) to address gaps and incorporate best practices, the most recent iteration of the policy emphasizes quality education as its cornerstone ([Ministry of Education, 2018](#)). The shortcomings identified in the policy documents can be categorized into four areas: (1) misalignment of the CBE strategy with the overarching Ministry of Education strategies, (2) lack of sustainability, equity, cost-effectiveness, and scalability in CBE services, (3) coordination issues in service delivery, and (4) insufficient evidence-based best practices. These categories are intrinsically linked to the broader vision of quality education envisioned for CBE.

The policy document explicitly states that "uniform standards are required in CBE delivery models, both in terms of quality and cost, which are aligned with what the Ministry of Education can deliver." The Ministry of Education is tasked with prioritizing the sustainability and quality standards of CBE delivery models as part of its supervisory functions. Numerous community-based classes have been established with the dual

objectives of efficiency and delivering high-quality education in rural areas (Ministry of Education, 2018). Although the policy outlines significant gaps in achieving quality education, its primary objective remains the delivery of high-quality education to rural and remote areas. In essence, the policy document underscores the importance of equitable access to quality education, aligning its goals with the unique challenges faced by underserved communities.

Community-based education as a standard package

The policy and general management of community-based education (CBE) aim to establish a standardized package that includes clearly defined cost ranges, resources, and operational guidelines. The focus remains on three core areas: access, quality, and management. According to the policy statement, an ideal CBE class is characterized by comprehensive teacher training and development, a conducive learning environment, adequate teaching and learning materials, and robust classroom management through consistent monitoring and assessment (Ministry of Education, 2018). These elements collectively serve as the foundation for achieving equitable, high-quality education, delivered in a cost-effective and sustainable manner.

Participants highlighted the significance of maintaining these standards to ensure the effectiveness of CBE classes. One community leader emphasized the need for a suitable learning environment as a critical factor in delivering quality education. He stated:

“Creating a proper space for children to learn is our top priority. Without a comfortable and safe environment, students cannot focus on their studies.” (Community Leader-1)

Another participant, a teacher, pointed to the importance of having sufficient teaching and learning materials to support classroom activities. He explained:

“Materials like textbooks, pencils, and charts are essential for us to teach effectively. Sometimes, we face delays in receiving these, which affects the quality of education we provide.” (Teacher-1)

Quality, access, and equity in educational services through CBE remain a focal point of the policy. One organizational head involved in implementing CBE programs elaborated on the necessity of proper training and development for teachers:

“Teachers are at the heart of the CBE system. We ensure they receive continuous training so they can adapt to challenges and deliver the best education to students in these remote areas.” (Head of Organization-1)

Additionally, the management aspect of CBE programs emphasizes the importance of monitoring and assessment. A teacher reflected on how regular evaluations contribute to better classroom management:

“Monitoring visits are important because they help us identify issues early. When the officials come to observe, we get feedback on improving our teaching methods and the overall setup of our classrooms.” (Teacher-3)

The policy underscores a vision for education that includes quality in teaching, learning materials, the learning environment, and program management. Ensuring these components are robust and aligned with policy goals allows CBE programs to fulfill their potential in delivering high-quality education to underserved communities. The findings suggest that while significant progress has been made, challenges in material availability and monitoring persist and require sustained effort for resolution.

Access to education with help of community-based education

The policy guidelines for community-based education (CBE) specify two primary criteria for establishing a CBE class in rural and remote regions: the community's demand for educational services and the challenges posed by distance. The policy encourages communities to submit written requests to the Ministry of Education, expressing their need for a CBE class. Furthermore, communities are tasked with maintaining the learning space where the class will be held. However, as one community leader observed, the process lacks detailed guidance:

"There is no clear roadmap for how or when our request will be approved. We submit the request, but sometimes it takes months to get a response, and we are left waiting without any updates." (Community Leader-2)

Distance constraints are another significant factor, with the policy mandating that a CBE class should be established if a school is more than three kilometers from a child's home, especially for girls. Recognizing cultural and safety concerns, the policy prioritizes removing barriers such as harassment and restrictive local customs that hinder girls' education. As a teacher explained:

"For many girls, traveling even two kilometers can be dangerous due to harassment or community restrictions. Establishing nearby CBE classes is not just convenient—it is essential for their safety and education." (Teacher-2)

The policy's dual focus on community involvement and overcoming barriers reflects its intent to foster sustainability and inclusivity. By involving communities, the policy aims to create a sense of responsibility and ownership over educational facilities. One head of an implementing organization described the importance of community support in sustaining CBE programs:

"When the community actively participates, they help maintain the learning space, support the teachers, and ensure the class continues in the long term. Their involvement is crucial for the success of these programs." (Head of Organization-3)

Special attention to female education remains a cornerstone of the policy. Despite these efforts, challenges persist in implementation. A teacher highlighted the difficulty of providing consistent quality education while addressing gender-specific barriers:

"We are constantly balancing the need for quality education with the cultural restrictions on girls. While the policy emphasizes girls' education, more resources and support are needed to address the unique challenges they face." (Teacher-3)

The policy aspires to expand access to education through flexible and cost-effective CBE arrangements, ensuring that quality is not compromised. However, interviews with participants reveal gaps in implementation and the need for continuous monitoring and adaptation. As one community leader aptly summarized:

"The policy promises access and quality, but the reality is more complicated. We need more transparency and better collaboration to truly meet the needs of our children." (Community Leader-2)

The findings underscore the critical role of community engagement, gender-sensitive approaches, and adaptive policy implementation in achieving the CBE program's objectives. While progress has been made, ongoing efforts are necessary to address the challenges and fully realize the policy's vision for inclusive and equitable education.

Monitoring and evaluation of the CBE program

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of community-based education (CBE) programs is a crucial aspect of ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of the program. The findings from the interviews highlight the collaborative effort between the Ministry of Education and the community in the M&E process, but it also emphasizes that the implementing organization does not play a direct role in this oversight.

The Ministry of Education has established a dedicated unit for community-based education, which conducts regular monitoring visits. Teachers and community leaders from the study sites in Laghman and Nangarhar shared their experiences with the monitoring process. According to one teacher, the monitoring visits from the Directorate of Education are frequent and thorough, ensuring the program's activities are being carried out as planned.

“The Ministry sends a team twice a month. They observe how the classes are conducted, the attendance of students, and sometimes they engage with us and the students to understand any challenges we are facing in teaching and learning.” (Teacher-3)

These visits are not only for assessment purposes but also serve as an opportunity for teachers to discuss any obstacles that hinder the smooth operation of the CBE classes. However, the frequency of these visits and the limited interaction with teachers and students suggest that the monitoring is more focused on observing the logistics rather than addressing specific educational needs or challenges.

In addition to the Ministry's efforts, the community plays a vital role in the oversight and upkeep of the program. Community leaders, supported by school councils, are responsible for ensuring the study spaces are maintained and that any local challenges are promptly addressed. A community leader from Nangarhar explained their role in overseeing the infrastructure and resolving issues that could potentially disrupt the learning process.

“We, the community leaders, are tasked with ensuring that the study spaces are functional. If there is any issue, such as a shortage of materials or something else, we try to resolve it through the school council, which includes teachers and headteachers.” (Community Leader-3)

The community's involvement is crucial because it directly impacts the effectiveness of the learning environment. These councils, consisting of teachers, head teachers, and community leaders, ensure that local challenges are dealt with promptly, contributing to the overall success of the CBE program.

In conclusion, the monitoring and evaluation of the CBE program are collaborative efforts between the Ministry of Education and the local community. While the Ministry plays a central role through regular visits, community leaders and school councils are key in addressing local needs and ensuring the smooth functioning of the program. This collaborative approach ensures that both educational quality and logistical concerns are monitored, though there is room for more engagement between the monitoring bodies and the teaching staff to tackle more specific issues.

Discussion

The goal of community-based education (CBE) policy is to provide equitable access to education through cost-effective, fair, sustainable, and scalable strategies, as detailed in the Ministry of Education's policy document. This initiative seeks to address education disparities in rural and remote areas, which have long been underserved by the formal education system (Baldrige, 2017). Bøyum (2014) suggests that fairness is a fundamental assumption of every educational policy, even if not explicitly stated. In the

case of CBE, fairness is clearly articulated as a central goal, aiming to ensure that educational opportunities are accessible to marginalized populations (Westoby & Shevellar, 2016). This policy's emphasis on fairness is crucial, particularly in areas where traditional schooling systems have failed to reach (Claramita et al., 2019). The findings of the current study, which focused on Nangarhar and Laghman provinces, show that while CBE programs have been successful in enhancing educational access, significant challenges in ensuring equitable quality persist. Disparities in educational resources and local governance affect the consistency and effectiveness of these programs, revealing the complexities of achieving fairness in a region beset by sociopolitical challenges.

Cost-effectiveness is another essential component of the CBE policy. Levin (1988) defines cost-effectiveness analysis as the process of evaluating both the costs and outcomes of different educational alternatives. In the case of CBE programs, the policy has been largely supported by international NGOs, which have helped mitigate the financial barriers to implementing education in these regions (Atuyambe et al., 2016). However, the findings indicate that these organizations are facing budget cuts, complicating the sustainability of their support. Despite these financial challenges, CBE has continued to function with relatively few disruptions, suggesting that the program's cost-effectiveness has been largely upheld (Edwards Jr, 2019). This outcome, however, is fragile, as the fluctuations in funding highlight the vulnerability of CBE programs to broader economic and political factors (Waswa et al., 2015). The research findings also emphasize that while funding has not yet significantly impaired access or educational quality, the long-term sustainability of these programs may be jeopardized if financial support continues to decrease. The interviewees, including teachers and community leaders, voiced concerns about the lack of secure funding, which could hinder the program's ability to maintain its current level of service.

Sustainability is a key strength of the CBE initiative. Since its inception in 2008, the program has managed to provide ongoing educational opportunities, even in the face of significant challenges. Abdul Aziz et al. (2023) argue that community-based education is not only effective but also sustainable, serving as an essential tool for addressing educational access in remote and conflict-affected regions. This study's findings align with Abdul Aziz et al.'s conclusions, as the CBE programs in Nangarhar and Laghman continue to function smoothly, providing education where the formal system has struggled to reach. However, the integration of CBE programs into the broader educational system remains a challenge. Students in CBE programs transition to formal education only after completing sixth grade, and the potential to integrate them into elementary or secondary schools has been a longstanding request from the community (Haruta, 2024). Lac and Diaz (2023) found that many students, particularly girls, abandon their education when CBE classes are relocated to schools that are more than three kilometers away from their villages. This suggests that distance continues to be a significant barrier, limiting the effectiveness of CBE in ensuring long-term educational continuity. The research findings emphasize that while CBE has successfully increased access to education, its integration with the national education system remains fragmented, making it difficult to achieve a seamless transition for students.

The policy document outlines that high-quality education within CBE programs should encompass teacher development, a suitable learning environment, adequate teaching materials, and proper class management with ongoing supervision. However, the study's findings highlight significant gaps in two of these areas—teacher development and the learning environment. Despite receiving training from implementing organizations, CBE teachers often have low levels of formal educational qualification (Sharkey et al., 2016). Local residency is often prioritized over academic credentials when selecting teachers, leading to concerns about the quality of instruction (Guillen & Zeichner, 2018). Furthermore, the research identified that the learning environments in CBE programs frequently fail to meet the standards set by the policy. Both students and teachers reported inadequate school facilities, with some classrooms lacking proper infrastructure.

Hopkins and Dymond (2020) assert that uncomfortable learning spaces negatively impact student motivation and engagement. The findings from this study support these claims, as extreme weather conditions such as heavy rain and extreme heat were found to cause class closures, further exacerbating the challenges students face in receiving consistent education.

The issue of educational quality in CBE programs is multifaceted. While the policy defines quality as a central goal, there is a noticeable discrepancy between policy expectations and actual educational outcomes. Kusumaningrum et al. (2017) argues that the concept of quality is inherently ambiguous, shaped by the values and goals underlying the educational framework. Sarah et al. (2023) similarly emphasizes that quality is determined by the educational values that guide a program. The study's findings suggest that, despite challenges such as unsuitable learning environments and underqualified teachers, there is general satisfaction with the quality of education in CBE programs. Monthly supervision by the Ministry of Education and local community leaders is cited as a key factor in ensuring educational quality. However, the implementing organizations stress that improving cooperation and coordination, as well as providing regular teacher training (Kaplani & Zafirooulos, 2022) are crucial to enhancing the quality of education in these programs. The research indicates that while the quality of education is perceived as good, there is still room for improvement, particularly in addressing the discrepancies between policy expectations and the realities of implementation.

Access to education remains the central issue in CBE programs, and the findings emphasize the importance of both community engagement and continued educational availability in rural areas. Community involvement is crucial in ensuring the sustainability of education initiatives (Berhanu & Naidoo, 2024; Sopko, 2020). International organizations running Adult Reading Groups (ARGs) provide parents with resources to support their children's learning at home, while also raising awareness about the importance of education in Islam and the Quran (Fossey et al., 2024). These initiatives have proven particularly effective in rural areas where educational access has traditionally been limited. However, integrating CBE graduates into the formal education system remains a significant challenge, particularly due to distance, as identified by Lac and Diaz (2023). The research findings suggest that while CBE has successfully enhanced educational access in rural communities, the challenges of integrating students into the formal education system persist, undermining the program's overall effectiveness.

Although CBE has significantly improved access to education in Afghanistan, several obstacles continue to hinder its effectiveness. One of the major barriers is family restrictions, often driven by poverty. Many children, particularly girls, are kept out of school to assist with household duties or engage in labor (Easar et al. 2023). Despite these challenges, CBE has proven to be a viable alternative to formal schooling, particularly for rural communities (Brehm, 2019; Suryanti et al., 2024). However, the findings suggest that issues related to the quality of education persist. As CBE programs continue to evolve, it is essential to address these challenges to ensure that they provide not only accessible but also high-quality education. The study's findings indicate that increasing coordination, improving teacher qualifications, and enhancing learning environments are critical steps toward ensuring the success and sustainability of CBE initiatives.

The implications of these findings are significant, both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the research contributes to the growing body of literature on education policy in conflict-affected and remote regions, particularly in terms of the challenges and opportunities associated with community-based education. The findings highlight the importance of integrating local governance structures and community involvement into educational policy frameworks to ensure both access and quality. Practically, the study provides valuable insights for policymakers and educational practitioners working in similar contexts. The findings suggest that a more coordinated approach to teacher training, resource allocation, and school infrastructure is essential for improving the quality and sustainability of CBE programs. Furthermore, addressing the integration of

CBE graduates into the formal education system is critical for ensuring the long-term success of these initiatives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has highlighted the effectiveness of community-based education (CBE) in providing access to education for children in rural Afghanistan. CBE programs have successfully increased enrollment and engaged communities, offering a vital alternative to formal schooling in conflict-affected regions. However, several challenges persist, particularly in ensuring the quality of education. Issues such as inadequate teacher qualifications, unsuitable learning environments, and the lack of integration with the broader education system remain significant barriers. CBE has been a successful model for rural Afghanistan, even though cultural barriers, especially for girls, continue to impede its full potential in some areas. While the program has succeeded in increasing access, it has yet to meet the high-quality standards outlined in its policy, particularly in terms of teacher development and learning environments, which are crucial for improving student outcomes.

Despite the promising outcomes, the study's limitations suggest several areas for improvement and future research. The research primarily relied on interviews with a small sample of participants, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future studies should expand the sample size and consider a longitudinal approach to evaluate the long-term impacts of CBE on both student outcomes and community development. Practical suggestions for improving CBE include enhancing teacher training programs, investing in better learning environments, and exploring ways to integrate CBE programs into the formal education system. A potential solution for the Ministry of Education could involve transforming community-based education classes into public schools, ensuring that rural areas receive the same quality of education available in urban settings. However, such changes would require substantial support from international non-governmental organizations, which continue to play a critical role in maintaining CBE programs. While community-based education has proven to be an effective emergency response to educational access, it is essential that these programs evolve to meet the evolving needs of rural Afghan communities and align more closely with the national education system.

Authors' Declaration

The authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data analysis, interpretation and discussion of results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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