

Teach For Afghanistan engaging at the family level to support continued school enrolment for older girls

Snapshot

Teach For Afghanistan (TAO) engages at the family and community level to support continued school enrolment for older girls. By seeking to understand existing reservations around educating girls from sociocultural and religious perspectives, fellows can challenge elders' norms and persuade them to allow girls to progress to higher education levels.

Context

In Afghanistan, educating girls has historically been challenging due to existing traditional beliefs around the extent to which girls should be educated, as well as the availability of female teachers in the system. Moreover, in communal societies such as Afghanistan, family elders often make decisions on girls' education. School dropout rates are particularly pervasive for girls over the age of 13 compared to boys.

Placing its first cohort in 2017, TAO currently has 60 fellows and 340 alumni. Based on fellows' qualifications and to reduce dropout rates in secondary schools TAO has placed fellows mostly in higher grade level classrooms.

Choice

TFA made a number of choices to support continued school enrolment for older girls. The organization proactively recruits female Fellows and prioritizes the training and development of Fellows of both genders in the importance of girls' education. Moreover, fellows are encouraged and trained to work with family and community elders to change prevalent mindsets about educating girls. Once every month after Friday prayers, fellows meet with elders and local community stakeholders in Hujra (local place of gatherings).

In these spaces, fellows sit with family elders to understand their perspectives on why girls are prevented from accessing higher levels of education. Subsequently, fellows respectfully challenge emergent thoughts by probing them on what longer term outcomes their communities may experience should there be a lack of qualified professional women such as female doctors and teachers to attend to the communities' health or educational needs. This gradually opens the door for more conversations and a gradual openness which results in girls being allowed to undertake higher level schooling or learn anywhere despite continued secondary school closure.

Collective leadership

By having fellows engage directly with family elders and communities, fellows are able to understand the elders' prevalent mindsets and intergenerational norms preventing girls from continuing on to higher levels of education. Seeking to understand so they can be understood enables fellows to better advocate for girls' education and bridge required mindset gaps.



Community impact

TAO is seeing a gradual shift in attitudes toward education and women's empowerment through their community engagement approach. Despite existing political challenges and school closures, families remain open to having their daughters educated through means such as Easy Chapters, an initiative created by fellows.

Further resources

- [Teach For Afghanistan website](#)