

Basic Education and Gender Equality in Afghanistan

September, 2009

Despite the many challenges facing Afghanistan, progress in girls' education continues, and the dream of achieving universal education becomes closer to reality. Community-based schools are vital in this effort, helping to ensure children in the most remote regions can go to school. With initiatives that strengthen community-based schools, generously supported by the *60 million girls* Foundation, and large-scale infrastructure projects to build new classrooms across the country, much momentum is underway for girls and boys.

Today, enrolment in school is believed to be higher than it has ever been in Afghanistan, and one third of students in school are girls. "The tremendous achievement of increasing enrolment rates from under 1 million pupils in 2001 to over 6 million this year has been possible due to strong partnership between the Government of Afghanistan and its national and international partners," says UNICEF Representative in Afghanistan Catherine Mbengue. The *60 million girls* Foundation has been an important partner of UNICEF, helping to advance educational opportunities for children in Afghanistan through community-based schools.

Just 13 years old, Sonia (pictured above) has already decided on a career. "When I will be grown up, I will be a teacher," says Sonia. With ongoing investments in education by the Government of Afghanistan, UNICEF, valued donors, and Afghan communities, Sonia may well realize her goal.

Thank you *60 million girls* Foundation for your continued commitment to girls' education in Afghanistan.



© UNICEF 2009/Walther
Sonia, 13, is in seventh grade and dreams of becoming a teacher.



© UNICEF/NYHQ2007-1109/Shehzad Noorani
Children attend class at a community-based tent school in the village of Borghason in the central Bamyán Province. As there are no official schools nearby, 134 girls and boys from nearby villages attend informal classes here. UNICEF supports the school with teacher training, textbooks and other supplies.



© UNICEF/NYHQ2007-1120/Shehzad Noorani
Girls study together during class in the village of Bam Serai in the central Bamyán Province.



© UNICEF/NYHQ2007-1124/Shehzad Noorani
A girl sits on a rock, studying for her final examinations in the village of Bam Sarai.



© UNICEF/NYHQ2007-1088/Shehzad Noorani
A teacher points to a passage in a book, during a class for girls.



© UNICEF/NYHQ2007-1087/Shehzad Noorani
Girls studying during class.