

PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM WAR AND ENSURING THEIR PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

PILOT STUDY 2005 – 2006: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS



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Map No. 3958. Rev. 5. UNITED NATIONS
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A lesson begins for boys at a Qur'anic school in Panjshir.

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this project is to explore and assess educational services delivered to civilian populations affected by war. Specifically it examines the effects of nongovernmental organization (NGO)–supported education on adolescent welfare, especially regarding protection from violence and improved life chances—the two outcomes that NGOs emphasize most frequently in their work. The pilot study was carried out in 2005–2006 to develop and evaluate field procedures and research instruments for the full-scale study.¹ The Principal Investigator (PI), research assistant, and Afghan research team with critical support and collaboration from the US–based NGO Catholic Relief

Services (CRS), completed the data collection successfully in July 2006 in the Panjshir Valley, Afghanistan.²

This report provides a summary of the full-scale research study and a detailed account of the pilot study. The pilot study was intended to test the field procedures (logistics) and research instruments, as well as collect data. It consisted of the “main” study, recording children’s attitudes, behaviors, experiences, and educational achievement, and the “uptake study,” surveying households regarding their interest in schools for their children. The following pages describe the results of the field test and present the preliminary findings.

¹ Funding for this pilot study was provided by the Spencer Foundation, the US Institute of Peace, and the Weikart Family Foundation, and the Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy.

² The Panjshir Valley (also spelled “Panjsher”) is located about a four-hour drive northeast of Kabul.

FOCUS OF THE RESEARCH

Full-Scale Study

Providing education services during humanitarian crises and early reconstruction is emerging as a key element in humanitarian action. Humanitarian agencies view education as a way to protect children from violence, promote child welfare, and enhance stability in communities recovering from conflict and crisis. This increased attention to education in relief work is reflected in the rising numbers of programs, the greater funding available for this



A young boy taking the Dari achievement exam.

purpose, and the expanded role for education policies in post-conflict state building. Although these programs seem promising, empirical studies of the impact of foreign-supported education programs on child welfare are scarce.

Beyond anecdotal and descriptive examples such studies are limited, in part, because there are many difficulties inherent in carrying them out. Working conditions are often dangerous and unpredictable, organizational cultures value “action over

analysis,” and the scant consensus on the objectives of humanitarian aid complicates evaluation (Hofmann et al., 2004, pp. 2–3).

Under the circumstances, there is an understandable tendency to prioritize delivering aid over studying it. With the increased allocation of resources for education within humanitarian action, and the increased emphasis on results among international aid agencies, it is increasingly important to measure and understand the impact of these programs.

The full-scale study investigates the impact of community-based education services delivered to civilian populations affected by war. The central research questions for the full-scale study are:

- (1) Do children who live in villages that receive an NGO-supported school have better outcomes than those living in villages that do not receive an NGO-supported school?
- (2) Do these outcomes differ depending on variations in program components—specifically those intended to promote girls’ education and discourage corporal punishment?
- (3) How do these programs impact the lives of children?
- (4) Do the outcomes differ depending on the type of school children would have otherwise attended?

The researchers arrived at these questions after conducting the pilot study, described below.

Pilot Study

For the purposes of this report, it is important to note the original hypotheses for the pilot study. The first hypothesis was that, although students in government and NGO schools may have similar cognitive outcomes, students in NGO schools would experience greater autonomy and less violence in their lives because of the emphasis these programs place on child-centered learning, parental involvement, and protection. The pilot study also hypothesized that although students in Qur'anic schools—also called madrassas—may score lower than their counterparts on achievement tests (Singer, 2001), they may have a stronger sense of identity and stronger social networks than students enrolled in other schools. Unenrolled rural students were expected to score lowest on all measures. Although the sample size for the pilot study was too small to test these hypotheses rigorously, the researchers observed interesting patterns among the data that are important to explore further and were essential to generating the revised hypotheses for the full study, noted above.

In addition to providing insights into these hypotheses, the pilot study was intended to test the research instruments and develop field procedures for collecting data under the difficult conditions found in Afghanistan. The pilot research consisted of two sections: the “main” study and the “uptake” study. The main study used the same instruments intended for the full-scale study, but administered them to a much smaller, non-representative sample.

For this part of the study, data were collected on the cognitive skills, individual attributes, and experiences of adolescents aged 12–14³ who were either enrolled in (1) an NGO school, (2) a government school, (3) a Qur'anic school, or who were

(4) unenrolled. It is important to note, first, that although children were selected randomly within their classes, the sample of schools and villages included in the pilot study was not selected randomly. Second the sample size, 49, is too small to reveal statistically significant conclusions.

Four instruments were used to measure the differences among children in the four settings: (1) an attitude and behavior survey included basic demographics and indicators measuring life chances and protection; (2) classroom observation forms examined teachers' methods, students' learning, student-teacher interaction, and learning environment; (3) Math and Dari achievement tests developed specifically for this study assessed the cognitive skills of the enrolled children; and (4) a qualitative interview protocol form administered to a gender-balanced subsample of adolescents selected from among the surveyed group was intended to provide a more nuanced understanding of adolescents' lives.

The math and Dari achievement tests consisted of ten multiple choice questions on each exam. The researchers created special training sessions to explain how to answer multiple choice questions; the children demonstrated their understanding of the process before the tests began. Test questions ranged from easy, to moderate, to difficult for the 5th grade level. CRS education staff advised on the level of difficulty for the exams and consulted government 5th grade textbooks to provide additional guidelines.

Forty-nine adolescents (24 girls, 25 boys) were given the attitude and behavior survey, five classrooms were observed, approximately 90 students in these classrooms were administered

³ For this report, the terms “adolescents” and “children” are used interchangeably.

Pilot Study [cont.]

achievement tests, and six adolescents were interviewed using the qualitative interview protocol. The schools included in the sample consisted of one co-educational 5th grade government class, a girls' NGO class (5th grade), a boys' NGO class (4th grade), a girls' Qur'anic class, and a boys' Qur'anic class (no grade level).⁴ Classes ranged in size between 10 and 20 students.

Uptake Study

The uptake study was intended to collect baseline information in villages in Panjshir without schools to determine: (1) how many school-age children (6–11 year-olds) lived in the selected villages; and (2) whether families would send their school-age children to school, if schools were available. After gathering this information, CRS and its partner organization, Youth and Children Development Program (YCDP), planned to start home-based schools in the villages. After establishing the schools, the research team would return to learn how many children actually attended school, of those who had pledged to go. Thus, the household survey aimed to determine whether the number of students enrolled in home-based schools would be representative of the children living in those villages. Assuming similarity among villages, this would set the stage for a randomized trial to compare educational outcomes between children enrolled in home-based schools and unenrolled children from similar villages without any schools. Eight Afghan surveyors were trained in standardized interviewing techniques, and the team

launched a door-to-door survey with the 20-question questionnaire. A total of 181 households in three villages in Panjshir province were surveyed for the uptake study.



22 of the 49 adolescents interviewed said they herded animals as unpaid labor.

PROCESS

Planning, organizing, and preparing for the pilot study was labor intensive but critical to (1) test research instruments, (2) develop and evaluate field procedures, and (3) shed light on the strength of hypotheses for the full-scale study. With so many logistical details to attend to and cultural sensitivities to understand and respect, one small misstep could have derailed the whole project. In brief, the PI laid the groundwork for the data collection, revised the research design, and returned to Afghanistan in late spring-summer 2006 to revise the instruments, build relationships, train local staff, select sites, organize logistics, and collect the data.⁵ The section below describes this process.

⁴ The religious lessons were held in the same location with the same instructor for both boys and girls, but classes met at different hours.

⁵ The PI traveled to Afghanistan in March 2005 and July 2005. Funding for these trips was provided by the Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy at Columbia University and the Weikart Family Foundation.

Stage 1

In fall 2005, research began on two accelerated learning programs in the provinces of Kapisa and Parwan managed by CRS and a local, Afghan NGO. Progress was hampered by lack of trained staff, timing that corresponded with the celebration of the month of Ramadan, the end of the school year (November), poor weather conditions, and deteriorating security. Still, the PI built and strengthened relationships with the Ministry of Education, international organizations, and potential research partners working in Afghanistan, observed classes, and consulted Afghan educators on revisions to the research instruments. Collecting the data for the pilot study, however, as had been intended on this trip, was not possible.

Stage 2

In part because the security situation had deteriorated so badly by May 2006 (riots, increased suicide attacks, on-going kidnapping threats), and in part because the revised research design called for closer collaboration with an NGO, the PI arranged to work directly with CRS when she returned to Afghanistan in May 2006. CRS provided the researchers with housing, vehicles, drivers, program staff, office space, office infrastructure, and security tracking (satellite phones and a call-in system). This was the only way it was possible to carry out the study.

Stage 3

In June 2006, the PI trained six Afghan staff⁶ for three days in basic research methods, randomized trials, informed consent, and standardized interviewing

techniques. Reviewing the attitude and behavior survey line by line with CRS local Afghan education staff increased the survey's relevance and meaning. Staff discussed, for example, which measures would provide the best indication of economic status and debated questions that some believed were too sensitive to ask children. Several questions were revised and eliminated in this way. We were ultimately satisfied with the survey, but noted that for the future, it is essential to do “back translations”—translating into Dari from English and then back to English.⁷

The achievement tests for math and Dari were also critical instruments designed for the study. No national achievement tests existed at the time in Afghanistan. Teachers created their own handwritten exams that the head teacher approved and the teacher administered. Scores were sometimes compiled for the school, but there was no central database where nationwide scores were maintained. The PI and research assistant worked with the CRS education staff to design the math and Dari exams.

Two boys wash cars with water from the open drainage system in Charikar, just north of Kabul.



⁶ Four staff were full-time employees of CRS on “loan” to the project; two were hired specifically for the project.

In the Field

After training in interview techniques and revising instruments, the research team left Kabul for Panjshir where the data collection was carried out during the last two weeks of June 2006. Panjshir was selected because of the programs available to include in the study and because of decreased security in Kapisa and Parwan. Each school selected was meant to be representative of the average school of that type, although this was a rough calculation and is not possible to verify. The NGO (CRS/YCDP sponsored⁸) schools included in the study provide accelerated learning classes for students who missed out during the years of war. One year is compressed into six months, classes (one grade level) are typically held in the home of a parent who lives in the village, and the teacher is also from the village. In the case of the two NGO schools included here, both classes met in the village mosque, rather than in a home. Afghan government schools are roughly similar to schools in the West in their basic physical and administrative structure. Madrassa classes are usually held in mosques, as was true in this study.

Rumor, suspicion of Western secular ideas and values, and nationalism were possible security risks and potential barriers to research. The research team was advised to scrap informed consent forms.⁹ We did not, but the concept of “confidentiality” raised suspicions among parents and teachers in Panjshir. In a society where behavior is strictly regulated,

references to keeping conversations private may raise suspicions about inappropriate behavior (otherwise why would confidentiality be necessary). Study supporters (teachers, mullahs, government administrators) commented on Western attempts to brainwash Afghans, to convert Muslims to Christianity,¹⁰ or to weaken madrassas by cutting off funds and replacing them with NGO schools. Some asked who was behind the study, and if the PI was “sympathetic to the Afghan nation.”



The village of Onaba in the Panjshir Valley where the pilot study and uptake study were conducted.

⁷ Panjshir is a Tajik region, therefore only Dari translations are required, not Pashto which is the other major language in Afghanistan.

⁸ CRS administers these schools through YCDP, its Afghan partner NGO in Panjshir. This particular program was coming to an end and had experienced recent staff turnover among managers and teachers.

⁹ US researchers at US universities are required to receive “informed consent” from study subjects before they can be enrolled in a research study. This is meant to safeguard the rights of study participants.

¹⁰ CRS is a humanitarian agency working with all people regardless of race or creed and is in no way involved in religious conversion.

Making Connections

To facilitate the research (and ease security concerns), a network of contacts was developed throughout the country among those with regional, national, and international interests in the study results. Data from the pilot study were entered into a preliminary database and researchers gave briefings to the Ministry of Education, UNICEF, CRS, CARE, the Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), and USAID. Responses were overwhelmingly positive. The Minister of Education was also interested in the future of the study and is amenable to research-based approaches toward policy design and implementation.

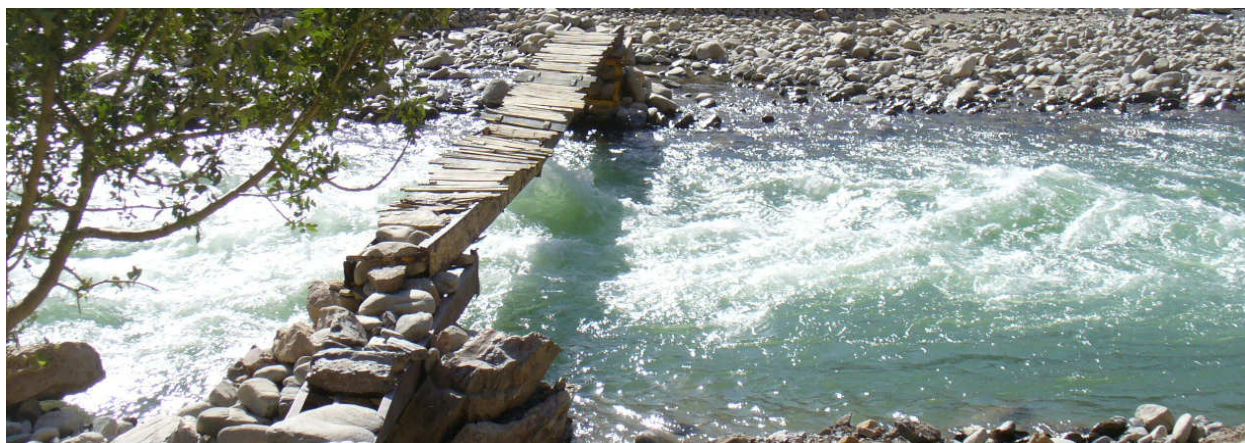
PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The study examines the impact of education on adolescents' protection and life chances. The preliminary findings presented in this section are interesting primarily because of the basic information they reveal about schools, society, and children's lives in Panjshir, rather than because of the generalizations we are able

to make about the population. It is important to reiterate here that this small study does not reflect general differences among NGO, government, Qur'anic schools but it provides useful descriptive information to enhance the study design.

Attitude and Behavior Survey

Several points emerge regarding protection. First, violence seems prevalent in Afghan society and in children's lives. Local leaders spoke of it, Afghan staff reported it, and the children participating in the study described the violence in their lives in a matter-of-fact way.¹¹ On the questions regarding feelings of safety, 31 of 49 adolescents report that they "feel afraid of getting hurt by someone" in their home either "always" or "sometimes." Thirty-one of 49 report fear of kidnapping "always" or "sometimes." And 40 of 47 report that they are "always" or "sometimes" afraid that they will do something that their families will not like. Eighteen said that if they did something their family did not like, they would be beaten. See table 1. for simple tabulations.



Children in Panjshir are often required to cross unsafe bridges such as this one in order to attend school; a deterrent for some younger children.

¹¹ This is common knowledge among those who live and work in Afghanistan.

Attitude and Behavior Survey [cont.]

Table 1: Questions # 101–109

Let me know how often you feel these things:	Always	Sometimes	Once or twice	Never
Do you feel afraid walking in your neighborhood?	10	3	1	35
Do you feel afraid walking to school?	5	2	2	32
Do you feel afraid of getting hurt by someone in your neighborhood?	7	3	1	37
Do you feel afraid of getting hurt by someone at school?	7	3	0	29
Do you feel afraid of getting hurt by someone in your home?	22	9	0	18
Do you feel afraid that people will say bad things about you?	15	9	2	23
Are you afraid that you will be kidnapped?	23	8	2	16
Are you afraid you will do something that your family won't like?	27	13	1	6

Of the adolescents surveyed, girls are more likely than boys to express that they are “always” or “sometimes” afraid of the situations listed above in all four settings, except the government school class, where boys expressed slightly more fear than girls. Thirteen of 24 girls reported that they were “always” afraid of being hurt at home, and two reported “sometimes”; these responses were evenly distributed across types of educational settings. Nine boys reported “always” in response to this question, and seven reported “sometimes,” of the 25 boys asked. Although boys reported being beaten at school in side conversations and in qualitative interviews, it did not seem to factor into their fear of being hurt at school. Eighteen of 19 boys enrolled in the three types of schools responded that they were “never” afraid of being hurt at school. Ten of 18 girls interviewed responded “never” to the same question, five said “always,” with equal distribution across the three school settings.



The playground of a government school visited for this study.

To understand more about children’s economic activities, the survey asked questions regarding children’s paid and unpaid work. Surprisingly, only seven of 49 children indicated that they engage in paid labor. On the other hand, 44 of 49 children indicated that they engage in unpaid labor. See table 2 below.

Table 2: Questions #61/63

What kind of work do you do that is <i>paid</i> ?		What kind of work do you do that is <i>unpaid</i> ?	
Construction	2	Fetch water	34
Fetch water	2	Blacksmith	3
Herd Animals	2	Herd animals	22
Pick fruit	2	Gather fuel	17
Work in a shop	2	Construction	12
Corrugate burqas	1	Other (housework)	12
Fish	1	Care for children	5
		Other (teach in Madrassa)	1
		Other (farming)	5
		Pick fruit	0

Attitude and Behavior Survey [cont.]

Regarding the influence of these education programs on children’s life chances, questions explored the children’s educational opportunities, attitudes toward education, attitudes toward the future, and perceptions of identity. In relation to educational opportunities, the research design assumed that each child would only attend one type of school, and therefore, the educational impact of different types of schools could be isolated, measured, and compared across children. This was not, in fact, the case. All but seven of the 37 enrolled children attended at least two types of schools—a mosque school and a government or NGO school, or a madrassa and a government school. Table 3 shows these responses.

Table 3: Question #37

What classes/types of schools do you attend?						
Mosque	Government	Madrassa	NGO	None	English Classes	At Home w/Brother
27	24	12	12	7	3	2

All 49 children in the survey and 181 adults in the uptake study believe that education is important. They were asked why education is important; surveyors read a list of seven options, and instructed the children to select the two most important reasons. “Islam says Muslims should be educated”; “People who go to school are better socialized (have better *tarbia*)”; and “People who go to school earn more money (than those who don’t)” were the top three responses among both children and adults included in the two surveys.¹²

Although these children live in villages without electricity (for the most part), and attend bare schools with poorly trained teachers, they have the same kinds of aspirations for the future that an average group of children in far more prosperous places has. When they were asked what they wanted to do in their adult lives, “doctor” was the most common response, “teacher” was number two, and “engineer” was ranked number three.

Table 4: Question #118

What would you like to do when you are older?							
(No options were read: children gave short answers to this question.)							
Doctor	12	Islamic Studies/Mullah	3	Football [soccer] player	1	Tailor	1
Teacher	10	Pilot	3	Go to school	1	Writer	1
Engineer	8	Business	1	Governor	1		
Marry/have children	7	Correspondent	1	I want a job	1		

The civil war in Afghanistan had both ideological and ethnic dimensions at different times. The three main ethnic groups—Tajiks, Pashtuns, and Hazaras—were at various times pitted against each other. The Panjshir Valley is a Tajik stronghold. It was Massoud’s base (the commander of the “Northern Alliance”) when he was alive, and it remains ethnically homogenous (Tajik). Some analysts believe that ethnic conflict in Afghanistan may be on the rise again, as the riots in Kabul in May 2006 seem to have demonstrated.

One question asked children “How do you describe yourself?” and listed options that included ethnic, language, and citizenship identities. The Afghan surveyors expected all

¹² Children listed Islam first, and adults listed socialization first by a fraction.

Attitude and Behavior Survey [cont.]

of the children to identify themselves as “Tajiks,” but were surprised at the children’s responses. Twenty of the 49 children identified themselves as “Dari-speaking” (this is clearly not an ethnic identity, since Hazaras also speak Dari), 14 identified as “Tajik,” and 12 identified as “Afghan.” The results are not necessarily linked directly to questions of protection or life chances, but they may be an encouraging sign of positive social progress, considering the history of the conflict in Afghanistan.

Table 5: Question #13

How do you describe yourself?								
Dari-speaking	Tajik	Afghan	Don't know	Hazara	Other (Panjshiri)	Pashtun	Turkmen	Uzbek
20	14	12	1	1	1	0	0	0

Uptake Study

The uptake study demonstrated, first, that the questions relating to access to school are more complicated than the researchers anticipated. Most of the households (78%) surveyed reported that their school-age children (6–11) do attend some form of school (or have attended at some point), often a mosque school, if no other school exists in the village. Second, the majority, 91%, of households would send their girls to an NGO school if one were available in their villages; 98% would send their boys.

Table 6: Questions #15/17

When the school for girls is open, will you send your girls?	When the school for boys is open, will you send your boys?	Are you willing to support the school?
91% Yes	98% Yes	93% Yes

Achievement Tests

The achievement test results were perhaps, on the surface, the most counterintuitive preliminary findings in the study. The madrassa students scored higher than either the NGO students or the government students.¹³ The mean score on the Dari exam for the boys enrolled in the madrassa was 66% (of a possible score of 100%); the girls’ mean score was 49%.

Although these findings seem surprising at first glance, in fact, on closer inspection, it turned out that most of the madrassa students were enrolled in higher grades than their NGO or government counterparts in the study, and their families paid a small monthly fee for them to attend the madrassa classes. These differences distort the findings and prevent accurate measurement of achievement across educational settings.

The researchers also administered the exam to the unenrolled children. About half of the unenrolled children had attended mosque schools for a short period of time, or had received tutoring at home. These children were able to recognize letters and numbers, but were not able to answer any questions on either test. The mean scores for the enrolled children are listed below.

¹³ The boys’ NGO class was at the 4th grade level.

Table 7: Achievement Test Scores¹⁴ (listed in % of correct responses of a possible 100%)

Dari exam: Mean Scores (N= 88)									Math exam: Mean Scores (N=93)								
Madrassa*			Government			NGO			Madrassa*			Government			NGO		
(N = 41)			(N = 19)			(N = 28)			(N = 49)			(N = 20)			(N = 24)		
M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
66	49	58	29	20	22	18	26	21	44.5	28.4	37	16	14	15	20.7	16.7	19

*Most of the madrassa students were enrolled in higher grades than their NGO or government counterparts in the study, and their families paid a small monthly fee for them to attend the madrassa classes. These differences distort the findings and prevent accurate measurement of achievement across educational settings.

Classroom Observations

Teaching methods were similarly basic in the three government and NGO classrooms that we observed. Teachers relied on call and response methods, recitation, and memorization. Corporal punishment seemed more prevalent in the government school. Madrassa lessons are structured differently from the more conventional styles found in NGO and government schools. The mullah (or *maulana*—a religious teacher with more training than a mullah) lectures the students in readings and verses from the Qur'an, and also meets with students individually (more of a go-at-your-own-pace style of learning).

Qualitative Interviews

Qualitative interviews were more complicated to carry out than the researchers anticipated. Societal limitations on Afghan girls, especially those living in rural areas, mean they usually cannot be tape recorded. Adolescents are not accustomed to speaking to strangers, nor are they accustomed to sharing their views or opinions. Responses tended to be short and circumspect. Still, these interviews were useful for gaining a more detailed view of children's daily activities (work, how time is spent with family members and/or friends), children's fears, hopes, and the level of violence at home, or in school.



The main, and only, road that traverses the Panjshir Valley.

¹⁴ Dari and math exams were administered on different days, therefore, N sizes vary slightly. Unfortunately, four of the 30 enrolled children surveyed did not take the Dari test, and five missed the math test.

DISCUSSION

Although they are not statistically significant, four preliminary findings are important in relation to the original hypothesis in the study, and to help formulate new hypotheses: (1) attitudes toward education, (2) level of fear in children's lives, (3) educational outcomes, and (4) influence of communitarian values on children's attitudes and behaviors. First, in rural Panjshir, both children and adults give overwhelming importance to education. This propels them toward multiple strategies to get education. In the eyes of parents and children, religious education and formal school do not compete, but rather complement each other. "Education for the soul" (religious education) is considered equally important as "education for the world" (science education). Parents who have more economic resources are often more motivated to pay for religious education. (In the madrassa in this study, parents pay approximately 20 cents per child, per month.)

The level of fear in children's lives, and the violent incidents reported by NGO staff workers and government administrators in Afghanistan, indicate that violence and abuse at home and in school are

commonplace. It is not clear from the findings in this pilot study how this violence affects children in the short or long term, or whether, as was hypothesized in this study, children enrolled in NGO schools experience less violence. When this was discussed in interviews with international and Afghan educators, some hypothesized that children enrolled in NGO schools may experience less violence because classes are held in an intimate setting with a teacher who is also a member of the community.

As noted, it is unclear how to interpret the higher scores among madrassa students on the achievement tests since we were unable to control for socio-economic status or years in school. For example, the madrassa students included in this study likely performed better on the exams because, although they were in the same age group as the other students, some were enrolled in higher grades (sixth and seventh) than the fourth and fifth grade students in the other schools. It is important to reiterate that although the results are suggestive, they remain inconclusive because of the small sample size and the absence of controls.

Autonomy among individuals, especially children, in Afghan society is not stressed the way it is in many western countries. The researchers were continually faced with surprise when children's opinions are sought. This did not vary significantly across educational settings. If anything, the students attending the madrassa seemed to have the most composure and confidence in speaking, but this could be related to their (likely) higher socio-economic status, and their greater number of years in school.



Remnants of past conflict litter Panjshir and offer a constant reminder of the valley's history.

Next Steps

The PI is returning to Afghanistan in November 2006 to meet with colleagues who participated in the study, to share findings with the Minister of Education, and to hold a public seminar for interested educators from international and local organizations, from the Ministry of Education, and from research institutes. In addition to these meetings in Kabul, one of the surveyors who worked on the study will travel to Panjshir (security permitting) and share the preliminary findings with teachers, government administrators, study participants, and supporters. During these meetings, the surveyor will gather any outstanding data, answer questions, and discuss comments with the study population.

Future Research

This pilot study has laid the groundwork for the large-scale study to be carried out. The following paragraphs outline what the larger study would accomplish and why it is important.

The large-scale study would examine the relationship between education and outcomes including protection from violence and life chances in a conflict situation. It would take advantage of an unusual opportunity to implement a rigorous research design in such a context. CRS is planning to work with Columbia University researchers to modify the program design in order to randomize provision of educational services as well as key school characteristics. Working with CRS program managers, security permitting, the Columbia researchers will select a random sample of schools and gather extensive data across multiple provinces where NGOs work in Afghanistan.

The randomized design will allow researchers to identify the effects of educational programs on students' well-being and life chances, and to evaluate the impact of key features of educational programs. The research would have significant policy implications for Afghanistan, allowing both foreign aid organizations and the Afghan Ministry of Education to make the best use of their limited resources. More generally, as NGOs increasingly emphasize education as part of their mission in war-torn areas, this research would inform the design of such programs. Building on a highly unusual opportunity for systematic research in a context of conflict, this project would employ the randomized trial design that researchers such as those at the Poverty Action Lab have used to great effect in other developing countries.

The pilot study has generated great interest among educators, representatives of international agencies, and members of the government. The Columbia researchers and CRS hope to use this momentum to continue to support the education system in Afghanistan.



A boys class at a madrassa in Panjshir.

ATTACHMENT A: REFERENCES

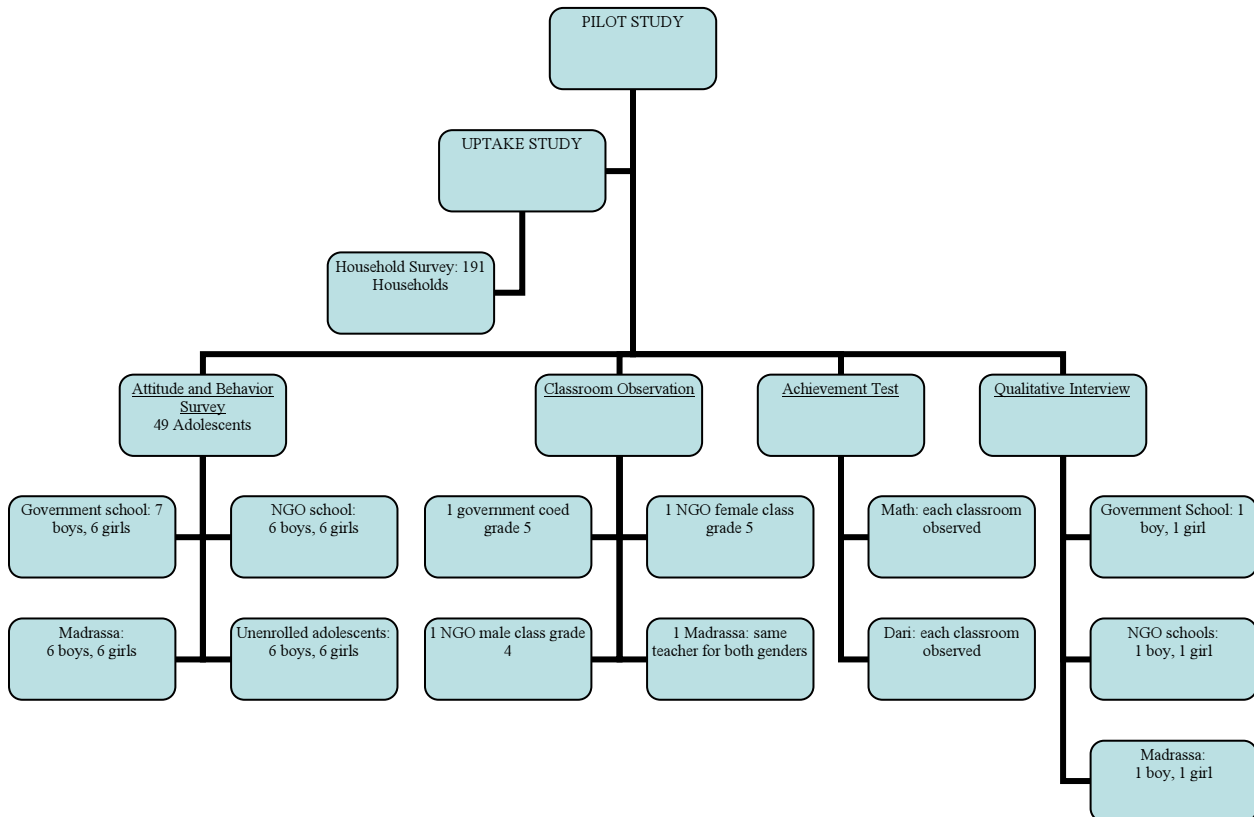
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One of the villages in Panjshir Valley visited by the research team.

ATTACHMENT B: PILOT STUDY

Uptake Study	Main Pilot Study			
Household Survey 181 Households	Attitude and Behavior Survey 49 Adolescents	Classroom Observation 1 GOV coed class grade 5	Achievement Test Math test: test administered to all students in each classroom observed Dari test: test administered to all students in each classroom observed	Qualitative Interview GOV: 1 boy, 1 girl NGO: 1 boy, 1 girl Madrassa: 1 boy, 1 girl
	GOV School (13 adolescents)	1 NGO female class grade 5		
	NGO School (12 adolescents) Madrassa (12 adolescents)	1 NGO male class grade 4 1 Madrassa class no grade, gender segregated, same teacher		
	Unenrolled Adolescents (12 adolescents)			







Panjshir Valley, Afghanistan

