



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, 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2013**

The next phase of the Programme for Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan (ELA 3) was launched today at a joint signing ceremony held at the Ministry of Education (MoE) with UNESCO, MoE and the Government of Japan. ELA is implemented by the MoE Literacy Department with technical assistance from UNESCO and would not be possible without continued funding from the Government of Japan of US\$ 20 million for ELA 3 amounting to a total of US\$ 54 million.

Building upon the success of the previous phases of the programme, and further strengthening the provision of literacy in Afghanistan, ELA 3 will also focus on the development of skills. The ELA programme has expanded access to literacy in 18 provinces<sup>1</sup>. 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; a further 400,000 adult learners will benefit from the new phase. In total, approximately one million Afghan people across 18 provinces will be trained through the ELA Programme. This 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 capacity 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Badghis, Faryab, Ghazni, Khost, Kunar, Nimroz, Nuristan, Uruzgan, Zabul, Badakhshan, Balkh, Bamiyan, Daikundi, Ghor, Nangarhar, Wardak, Paktika, and Samangan.

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 are trying our best to achieve it. The Ministry of Education has trained 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 for the country, and literacy is an essential key to social development and inclusion. We will continue to support 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 to 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 leadership and commitment. He echoed the importance of the new component of skills and literacy in the transition from education to the labour market, adding that “this will help Afghanistan build the human resources it requires for its own development”.

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