



Left: A PEACE participant carrying out an experiment at Shimane University. Right: Experiential class for PEACE participants in September 2019.

Fostering Early Career Development to Boost Nation-Building

“Bridge to the Future” is a human resources development project carried out between Japan and Afghanistan. The project’s name in English, Project for the Promotion and Enhancement of the Afghan Capacity for Effective Development, spells out “PEACE.”

A bridge between Japan and Afghanistan

Afghanistan has been wracked by civil wars for many years. The Project for the Promotion and Enhancement of the Afghan Capacity for Effective Development, or “PEACE,” came about to address the lack of human resources in the government organs at the heart of the country’s efforts to restore itself. At the Kabul Conference in 2010, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan announced a plan to host a maximum of 500 Afghan civil servants in the fields of agriculture and engineering at graduate schools in Japan. PEACE started in 2011.

ETO Miki from JICA’s South Asia Department (at the time) explained PEACE as follows: “The goal is to foster human resources who could mainly contribute in the fields of infrastructure, agriculture and rural village development in Afghanistan. In Phase 1, administration officials from ministries or agencies, as well as university faculty members in the fields of engineering and agriculture, studied at 46 departments in 34 universities in Japan, obtaining Master’s degrees or Doctorates.”

Ex-PEACE Participants play active roles back home

In Phase 1, a total of 488 people had obtained their degrees by the end of June 2019. After returning home, many of them are playing active roles in the recovery and development of Afghanistan.

One graduate, Sahar Hamdard, studied at Toyohashi University of Technology in 2012 as part of the second intake, learning about urban development and infrastructure maintenance. After returning to Afghanistan and resuming her work, she became the first female deputy mayor of Kabul, responsible for all urban development projects in the city. Later, she was appointed Head of the Engineering and Architectural System Development Authority under the Afghanistan Ministry of Urban Development and Land. Today, her scope of activity encompasses the entire country.

In agriculture, too, many graduates have returned to positions in the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock. These graduates take part in agricultural projects supported by JICA, and are striving to rebuild Afghanistan’s agriculture sector.

Thanks to results like this, the hosting fields were expanded to encompass pedagogy and nursing, and Phase 2 started in 2016. As ETO noted, the system was enhanced: “We added a short-term follow-up training system, where the plan is to accept a maximum of 250 people from 18 ministries, who will further deepen the knowledge and techniques they learned in Japan once they get back home.”

The PEACE participants, having studied in Japan and developed an affinity for the country, will be responsible for Afghanistan’s future, and should help forge friendly relations between their country and Japan.

*This article is based on information current as of June 2020.



In 2019, participants visited Hiroshima on a joint PEACE program to learn about recovery. They also visited the Atomic Bomb Dome.

Learning Cultivates the Power to Live

There are many children and adults in Pakistan who, for various reasons, do not have access to basic education and, as a result, cannot read, write, or calculate. While many of these are girls and women, there are now changes underway around the country to rectify this situation.



Do you understand this bit?

I'm so glad I can go to school!

Both the teachers and the students frequently come from the same local community.

Teachers at non-formal schools are admired as symbols of working women.

Literacy is a pathway to a better life

The literacy rate for people aged 15 or over in Pakistan is 60 percent for the general population. This drops even lower, to 20 percent, among women in rural villages. There are several determining factors, such as geographical reasons with many homes located far from schools, household poverty, social and cultural norms that women do not need to be educated, and a lack of coherent quality school education. Everyone has the right to access education, and basic education is vital in order to live with dignity. Accordingly, attention is being paid recently to “non-formal education,” which provides places to learn outside schools.

Working with the government of Pakistan, JICA has provided cooperation to improve the quality of education through creating a system to promote non-formal education, as well as developing curriculums and teaching materials, and training teachers. Many of the participants are girls or women, and women make up nearly 80 percent of the adult literacy classes aimed at people 16 or older. In addition to reading and writing,

classrooms using teaching materials to teach animal husbandry or dressmaking to improve incomes, or health and nutrition to improve the quality of life, have been opened around the country. “A questionnaire informed us that about 90% of people in this non-formal education gained confidence in themselves through being able to read and write,” noted the JICA Expert who was in charge of this project. “However, learning here is just a step on the way to a better life. We hope that these learners will gain the power to forge their own paths after graduation. Also, by involving local men in the community learning experience of non-formal education, their awareness will also change.”

As a result of this initiative, non-formal education has been incorporated into government policy, with students being able to get officially-recognized graduation certificates. The government is pushing people to exercise their right to learn through such non-formal education. The joy of learning is empowering people to live better lives.