

ENHANCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN THROUGH DISTANCE EDUCATION BY THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION COLLEGE (NAEC) AFGHANISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture dominates the Afghan economy, providing an income to 61% of the households. 44% of the labour force is engaged in agriculture and women make up to 65% of this labour force. One of the priorities of the Afghan government is to develop agricultural high-school education, vocational education and training and agricultural extension services. In line with these efforts, the National Agriculture Education College (NAEC) was established in 2011, which provides a two-year teacher training course, targeted at prospective teachers for agricultural high schools (AHS).

Even though women participate actively in the agricultural sector, they are underrepresented in agricultural education and extension in Afghanistan. This is also seen at NAEC, where the number of female students remains very low and as a consequence limited female teachers are available for the AHS. This paper analyses the situation at NAEC and explores the alternatives that are currently deployed by NAEC to increase access to agricultural education for women and girls:

- ✓ Targeted recruitment policies to increase the number of girls enrolling at NAEC. This will contribute to more female teachers at the agricultural high schools, thereby setting an example and creating role models for other women and girls.
- ✓ Gender sensitive curricula to prevent gender stereotyping to be reproduced in the schooling system.
- ✓ Distance education for rural girls and women to overcome social and cultural barriers they face in pursuing education.

It is realized that the specific needs of girls and women have to be taken into account when designing gender sensitive curricula. Even more in distance education the specific needs of women in agriculture requires consideration. Generally it can be said that developing and designing distance education is a challenge, which is worthwhile to investigate further.



Keywords: Afghanistan, agriculture, gender, women, distance education, innovation