

Assessment of Learning Outcomes and Social Effects of Community-Based Education, Afghanistan (ALSE)

Research Brief #4: Prioritizing CBE Resources by Age Groups

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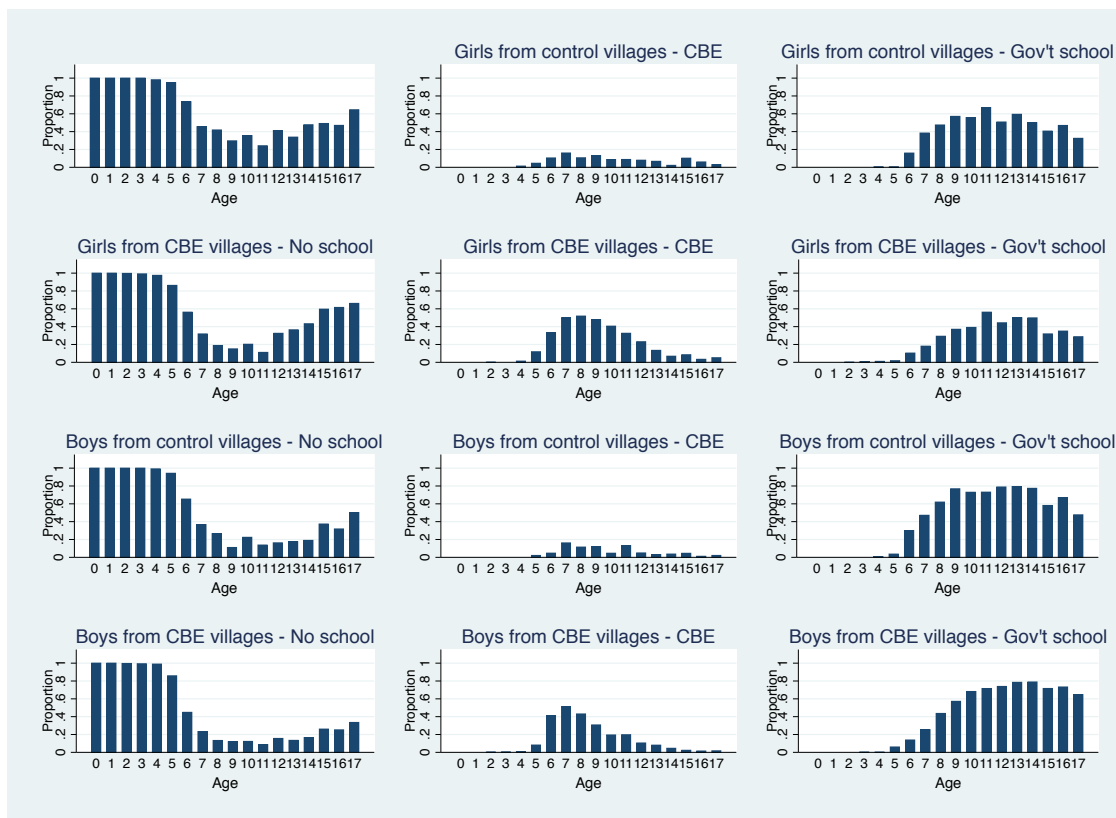
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Background

Community-based education (CBE) classes, like all programs, face resource constraints that require administrators to prioritize investments in some aspects of the program over others. For CBE, implementers debate how to best extend and sustain educational benefits after the first cohort of students has advanced through the curriculum, given limited resources. On one hand, CBE classes may extend instruction to more advanced topics to continue to serve the advancing cohort. On the other hand, CBE classes may restart the original curriculum for a new cohort of younger students. Although it is not feasible to address all tradeoffs inherent in choosing between extending and restarting CBE, knowing how communities currently use CBE may help inform such a choice.

Several questions emerge when considering such a tradeoff. First, how many children constitute the newly age-eligible cohort? Second, is the original CBE cohort moving on to government schools as they advance? Finally, addressing issues of gender equity, do girls and boys demonstrate different attendance patterns as they age?

In this research brief we look at CBE enrollment by age for both boys and girls in the Community-Based Education Enhancement Program (CBEED) areas studied by ALSE researchers. This “utilization data” by age and gender helps us determine how the program is actually being used in order to assess the relative potential for benefits of extending CBE, on the one hand, and restarting it on the other.



Analysis

The series of graphs on the previous page present the proportions of children of each age attending each school type (government school, community school, or no school) as of Fall 2015 in CBE areas (i.e. 184 villages in Bamiyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Herat, Kapisa and Parwan). The data are disaggregated by gender and by whether the children had access to CBE services at the time of the data collection. The first row represents girls from villages that had no CBE in 2015 but began to receive it starting in 2016 (control villages), and the second row, girls from villages that began to receive CBE as of 2014 (treatment villages). The third and fourth rows represent boys from control and treatment villages, respectively. Across each row, bars for a given age sum to 100%. For example, in the last row (boys from treatment villages), we see that about 25 percent of 7 year-olds attend no school, about 50 percent attend CBE school, and about 25 percent attend government school. We also note that CBE attendance in control villages is not zero, which suggests that children in control villages may be attending CBE classes organized by other implementing agencies, or that they are travelling to attend CBE in CBE treatment villages. We will explore this in future analyses.

The graphs show several trends. First, we note the uptick in girls attending no school at age 12. This is apparent in both treatment and control villages. Relatedly, at this age gender disparities in baseline school attendance are relatively pronounced. While nearly 80% of boys in control villages attend government school at age 12 only 50% of girls at age 12 attend government school. We do see a higher proportion of 12+ girls remaining in the CBE class if it is available, however, CBE attendance also appears to trail off at this age, possibly because the CBE is targeted to younger students. These gender disparities may underscore the importance of extending CBE courses to cover more difficult material to serve the advancing cohort as a means to address the gender gap in education.

Second, these data answer an important question regarding the way CBE incorporates children as they age into the qualifying age range. Previously, we were uncertain whether families were waiting for the next first grade CBE class to begin, or enrolling their children in the existing CBE class as they reached eligibility age. CBE classes began two years before these data were collected. If parents were waiting for the next CBE class to begin, we would expect no children under age 8 to be enrolled in existing CBE classes. The fact that 6 and 7 year-olds (and even some 5 year-olds) are present in CBE classes in the second year of the program suggests that some are absorbed into existing classes as they reach eligibility age.

Third, these graphs suggest that—for both boys and girls—CBE classes may be used as a gateway to education, with children attending CBE and then—after aging out—moving on to formal government schools. In CBE communities, the proportion of children enrolled in CBE classes begins decreasing around age 9, with a corresponding increase in the proportion of children attending government school.

Fourth, comparing rows two and four, we see that in the 6-7 age range similar proportions of boys and girls attend CBE

classes. However, starting around age 8, boys appear to use government schools at a higher rate than girls, whereas girls appear to use CBE at a higher rate than boys. Again, this may speak to the importance of extending CBE classes to cover higher grade levels in order to support access to education for girls as they age.

Research Questions and Implications

These findings bring additional research questions to light.

- 1) More information is needed regarding the relationship between CBE and formal government schools. For example, we do not yet know whether children who were 6-11 years old when CBE classes began switched from government school to enroll in CBE, or if they only started attending CBE classes if they were not already enrolled in government school. Knowing more about whether children deviate from the path they originally start on will help answer questions related to resource prioritization by helping to determine how long education for each cohort should last.
- 2) These graphs show whether children are folded into the current CBE class as they age into the 6-11 years-old range. However, we do not yet know how they are being incorporated. Are CBE teachers adjusting the material they cover for new students? Are they maintaining multiple streams of instruction for younger and older students?
- 3) A relatively small but still important proportion of 5 year-old children were enrolled in CBE when these data were collected. This indicates a demand for early childhood education. Research shows significant positive effects for each year earlier that children start school, and CBE could be an effective way to deliver these effects to children in Afghanistan.

ALSE Looking Forward

In the next brief, we will examine how communities supported the provision of education in the villages where the Community-Based Education Enhancement Program was implemented as well as implications of this support for sustainable community based education models. Our analysis will be based on the interviews conducted in 2016 with Provincial Education Directorates (PEDs), District Education Directorates (DED), and CBE implementers CARE and CRS conducted.