

**Written Declaration of the Big Read Campaign
In support of literacy extension in Afghanistan
Kabul, April 22, 2009**

A quick glance at the data of adults' illiteracy all over the world is shocking and unexpected. At present, around ten percent of global population can't read and write. Based on statistical data of UNESCO, there are 774 millions illiterate adults in the world, out of which 64 % are females. Afghanistan is one of the countries that the number of illiterate population is extremely shocking. According to estimated statistics 11 million Afghans over the age of 15 can not read and write. The MDG report prepared by Government of Afghanistan shows that 90 % females and 63 % males in the rural areas of Afghanistan are illiterate.

However, there are several factors involved in creating the high level of illiteracy in Afghanistan in the past years, but reviewing the budgetary documents of Ministry of Education of Government of Afghanistan (GoA) indicates that the ministry had not been able to allocate even a single Afghani for literacy program of adults in its government managed development budget for the budgetary year 1387 and no expenditure was reported for this important issue as well, while the expenditure on military sector throughout the country sums up to more than 40 million US dollars per day.

So who will answer the question "what is the bases for budgetary priorities and allocation of resources and what are the effective factors on it?"

Unfortunately, less attention of the GoA and international donors to adults' literacy problem in Afghanistan, on one hand, could be an indicator of giving less importance to the issue and on the other hand, it seems that the potential risks and damage of the widespread illiteracy are highly under estimated by the GoA and international partners. It is clear that developing of economics, culture, freedom and democracy has strong relation to literacy of the citizens. When most of a country's population is not able to read and write, economical and cultural developments, freedom and strengthening the civil society will face major challenges and difficulties; as participation and awareness of citizens are the key to all aspects of social development.

Therefore, *Movement for Support of Quality Education in Afghanistan (MSQEA)* appeals for attention of the GoA and global donors to the following:

1. We demand an increase in development budget of the Ministry of Education in order to build infrastructures for extension of literacy for all the Afghans and we request the GoA to grant special attention to generalization of literacy in cooperation with civil society organizations and use of the best practices from other countries' experiences in this field.
2. All the illiterate Afghans including men and women have the right to become literate and the GoA and MoE are responsible to pave the way for literacy of all the interested citizens.
3. We believe that literacy of Afghan citizens will widely assist the stabilization and prosperity of Afghanistan, and therefore, the international partners of Afghanistan should focus on literacy of Afghans as the main priority instead of paying the most attention to other sectors at the expense of literacy for Afghans.
4. While the MoE has requested more than 5 million US dollars for literacy, just 29 % of it has been financed. We request international donor community to fund the entire needed amount to the GoA or Afghan Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in order to enable Afghan Education Sector to implement their plans for extension of literacy.
5. *Movement for Support of Quality Education in Afghanistan (MSQEA)* believes that without training of professional teachers and a quality teaching curricula for generalization of literacy; it is not possible to reduce the illiteracy figures in Afghanistan. Therefore, we demand increased attention to training of professional teachers and compilation of a quality curriculum for generalization of literacy in Afghanistan.

At last, the *Movement for Support of Quality Education in Afghanistan (MSQEA)* requests His Excellency Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary General, the United Nations and Mr. Ayogai, country director of UNESCO in Afghanistan to obtain the membership of the movement and support the movement's objectives in international events and conferences for attracting the attention of international community to the Education Sector of Afghanistan.