

UKLA

OPEN LETTER FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM LITERACY ASSOCIATION

UPHOLDING UNIVERSAL RIGHTS TO LITERACY EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN ON INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY

8th September 2021 marks 55 years of International Literacy Day, set up in 1966 by UNESCO to remind the international community of the importance of literacy for individuals, communities and societies, and the need for intensified efforts towards more literate societies.

Literacy saves lives. Even in the UK, people with low levels of literacy tend to have shorter life expectancies; across the world, being literate enables people to access health and economic support. And the literacy of girls and women is particularly crucial because low levels of literacy are directly linked with high infant mortality rates. More than this, literacy enables people to participate fully in their communities, to take ownership of their own lives, and to build better futures. So it is no surprise that the United Nations has made ensuring that all young people achieve literacy one of its Sustainable Development goals - it is a fundamental human right. But in Afghanistan today, literacy could cost you your life. Educated girls and women in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan face a frightening and uncertain future. The United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA) stands in solidarity with all girls and women in Afghanistan, asserting their right to safety and fear from violence, and their right to continued access to literacy education.

UKLA calls upon the UK government to sustain and extend its responsibilities to girls and women in Afghanistan. Specifically, the government must :

- seek to secure commitment to girls' literacy education from the Taliban leadership;
- continue to press the Taliban leadership to guarantee safety and full human rights to educated women in Afghanistan;
- maintain its commitment to agencies in Afghanistan, such as the Girls' Education Challenge, which support educational access and provision.

In the words of Malala Yousafzai, herself a victim of Taliban violence:

Let us wage a global struggle against illiteracy, poverty and terrorism and let us pick up our books and pens. They are our most powerful weapons. One child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world.



Dr Roger Macdonald

President of the United Kingdom Literacy Association