INTRODUCTION

Education systems of Afghanistan and Pakistan face similar key challenges, with two-thirds of their population residing in rural areas and a young and rapidly growing population facing insufficient investment in education. In this context, the National Rural Support Program (NRSP) in Pakistan, Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) and Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) has been promoting access to quality education through the support of government schools or the creation of Community Based Schools (CBSs) embedded within education systems. Taking an interdisciplinary perspective, our study proposes an innovative framework for defining and improving quality of -and equity in education for disadvantaged children in rural Pakistan and Afghanistan. As well as members of school management committees (SMCs) in Afghanistan or village education committees (VECs) in Pakistan will participate in separate GMB sessions to elaborate their vision of factors that influence inclusion in the classroom.

METHODS

Using an innovative participatory approach to improve learning outcomes based on System Dynamics (SD) and mixed method cluster randomized control trial (RCT) for its evaluation, the present study aims at identifying ways of improving these mechanisms through participatory Community Based System Dynamics (CBSD) methods and evaluating their impact on the quality of the learning experience for children in rural Afghanistan and Pakistan. The overall study aims at carrying Group Model Building (GMB) sessions in 108 randomly selected rural primary schools in order to improve the school experience. Teachers, parents and children as well as members of school management committees (SMCs) in Afghanistan or village education committees (VECs) in Pakistan will participate in separate GMB sessions to elaborate their vision of factors that influence inclusion in the classroom.

RESULTS

The feedback loops are as follows:

**R1.** Increased corruption decreases the state of security, decreasing the inclusion of students in education, increasing the number of illiterate families in the next generation, increasing corruption.

**R2.** As security decreases, the amount of economic problems community face increases, increasing illiterate families.

**R3.** As economic problems increase, the access to school buildings and classroom resources decreases, decreasing good learning environments for students, decreasing encouragement of students, decreasing inclusion of students, increasing illiterate families in the next generation, increasing corruption, decreasing security, and ultimately increasing economic problems.

**R4.** As corruption increases security will decrease, increasing poverty, increasing more corruption.

**R5.** As poverty increases so will corruption, decreasing student inclusion in education, increasing poverty in the next generation, increasing corruption.

**R6.** As poverty increases, the need for students to help provide for their families increases, decreasing inclusion in schools, increasing poverty.

REFLECTIONS

Teachers in Pakistan highlighted factors that played upon the relationships between students, teachers, parents, and external support structures. Almost every single factor was incorporated into a loop, showcasing not only the strong recognition teachers had of feedback within their system, but also how all these factors are connected within their realities. In Afghanistan however, highlighted factors had less to do with the interactions between people in the community, but rather more in regards to the current, volatile situation that many Afghans face: the interplay of poverty, security, and corruption. Every loop went through at least one of these variables, as teachers had consensus that these were the most important and present issues in their realities.

Initial findings show that teachers were willing to engage in the discussion, have a good understanding of the wicked problem of inclusion, and resonate with the system thinking skills. During these preliminary GMB sessions, we have already seen how the sessions themselves can be used as a small intervention in order to engage community stakeholders thinking in systems, identifying the relationships between the factors they experience within their lives.