

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



August 17, 2015

## Child Enslavement Persist Undeterred

The hands that are meant to hold firm pen, at the earliest stages of their lives and carve line that determine their destiny, are shun in negation and laxity. Large number of children is passing through the worst of physical work – their childhood is categorically snatched amidst the silence of humanitarian organizations. The contemporary society could eliminate the ills of slavery but not enslavement of children. The world over is beating the trumpet about improving condition of children lives being facilitated with preliminary requisites is deniably false claim. Nonetheless, hitherto dramatic change is yet to be witnessed. The children in most part of the world particularly in underdeveloped countries are bearing the brunt of hardship, labor work. Child labor includes working children who are below a certain minimum age. This practice has been going on since long and is one of the worst forms of child exploitation. The decision to send children to work is influenced by a combination of factors. Poverty is an obvious contextual factor that dominates the decision-making of all households in the study.

Child labor is an issue of growing concern in Afghanistan. Child labor includes working children who are below a certain minimum age. This practice is going on since long and is one of the worst forms of child exploitation. According to recent estimates, one in four Afghan children aged seven to 14 is engaged in some form of work. The data explores the factors that influence decision-making at the household level. The decision to send children to work is influenced by a combination of factors. Poverty is an obvious contextual factor that dominates the decision-making of all households in the study. In addition, household composition and gender norms affect the availability of labour resources, which can result in the need to send children to work.

Following through statistics of child labor is found to be at its peak. According to Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), up to 40,000 children in the southern provinces of Kandahar and Helmand are said to be involved in harsh physical labor. According to experts and local residents, the economic struggles and the worsening security situation are behind the new trend. Afghanistan is a harsh place to grow up for many children. In addition to the uncertainty and upheavals resulting from insecurity a political instability, the underdeveloped economy means many are deprived of schooling and forced to work low-wage jobs at an early age.

Previously the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSMD) reported that human struggles transfer Afghan children abroad through illegal means and many of these children are abused by the mafia and smugglers on the route toward the foreign countries. According to the Ministry of labor and social affairs, last year 259 cases of smuggling were registered during the last years, which said that the trend is growing and is strongly threatened the Afghan children.

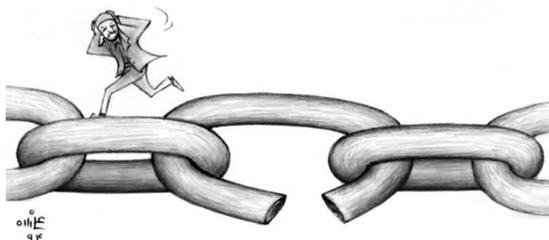
Eliminating child labor is one of the biggest challenges from the upcoming government that needs immediate attention. Child labor not only causes damage to a child's physical and mental health, but also keep him deprive of his basic rights to education, development and freedom. Keeping the gravity of problems in consideration the government of Afghanistan must take immediate steps for alleviating the child labor on war footing.

Child labor victims in Afghanistan mostly work in illegal remote mines and other sources for at least 12 hours a day since mining a major source of income for poor families, they then force their children into it for money, food and other basic commodities. Child labor is most concentrated in Asia and Africa, which together account for more than 90 percent of total child employment. Though there are more child workers in Asia than anywhere else, a higher percentage of African children participate in the labor force.

According to statistics provided by UNICEF, there are an estimated 250 million children aged 5 to 14 years employed in child labor worldwide and this figure is continuously increasing. Child labor in Asia accounts for the highest percentage (61%) followed by Africa (32%). According to International Labor Organization (ILO), if child labor will be banned and all children get proper education, world's total income would be raised by nearly 22% over 20 years, which accounts for more than \$4 trillion. Banning child labor will help in boosting the economy of a country.

The findings were drawn from interviews with 33 poor households in both urban and rural settings Kabul province, including Kabul city and a urban community in Paghman; Herat province, including Herat city and a community near the Islam Qala border with Iran; and a rural village in Badakhshan province. In addition, researchers consulted stakeholders from the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD), national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and United Nations agencies in developing policy and program recommendations.

Child labor not only causes damage to a child's physical and mental health but also keep him deprive of his basic rights to education, development and freedom. Learning the aforementioned statistics, the government of Afghanistan must take immediate steps for alleviating the child labor on war footing. It can be done only when a state inclines to welfare of its citizens making freedom, education and basic health at door step of masses.



# China's Commitment to Afghanistan

By Dilawar Sherzai

In post withdrawal Afghanistan, one of the countries that can play the most important and supportive role is People's Republic of China. China, being the strongest of the countries in Asia, can lead Afghanistan to reconstruction, development and peace. And, China at the moment seems ready to take up this role.

It has been more than 60 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Afghanistan and China. China formally established diplomatic relations with Afghanistan on January 20, 1955, which was then followed by Premier Zhou Enlai and Vice Premier He Long's visit to Afghanistan, wherein they met King Zahir Shah and the foundations for mutual understanding between the two countries were laid.

The year 2015 is being celebrated as the year of Friendship and Cooperation between China and Afghanistan and both the countries have already celebrated the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. There are hopes that both the countries would keep their cordial relations continue and the China would not forget Afghanistan through tough times.

There is no doubt in the fact that Sino-Afghan relations are at a historical point as China could be in the leading role in the post withdrawal Afghanistan. It can definitely play a constructive role in the peace process in Afghanistan and China has already given the indication that it is ready to support Afghanistan in this regard. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani also believes that China could be really supportive for Afghanistan in the upcoming challenges. He, on many occasions, has expressed hope that Beijing could play proactive role in Afghan peace process, and also emphasized that lasting peace in Afghanistan would benefit Afghanistan, China and the whole region.

On the other hand, China can also have an immense role to play in the economic stability of Afghanistan and promoting the business and financial self sufficiency of the country. China is not the largest donor country to Afghanistan, but China's aid is sincere and without any political conditions. In the 1950s and 1960s, although China was not better off at that time, it still built some aid projects such as Parwan Irrigation System and Kandahar Hospital for Afghanistan, which still function well in promoting the livelihood and welfare of local people. In recent years, China has been actively supporting the Afghan peaceful reconstruction. By the end of October 2014, China had provided 1.52 billion yuan of grants, trained nearly one thousand professionals in all fields through bilateral and multilateral channels, provided over 10 batches of goods and materials, built important projects such as Jumhoriye Hospital, Teaching Building of Chinese Language Department and Guest House

of Kabul University, National Center of Science and Technology Education, and Multi-functional Center in the Presidential Palace for Afghanistan. All of these have played effective role in promoting the development and people's livelihood of Afghanistan, and gained praises from all walks of life of Afghanistan. During President Ashraf Ghani's state visit to China last October, China committed to provide 2 billion yuan of grants to Afghanistan from 2014 to 2017, and train 3000 professionals in various fields in the next five years. Not long ago, a working group from the Ministry of Commence of China held in-depth talks with the Afghan side in Kabul on how to make good use of the 2 billion yuan of grants.

China has clearly shown the willingness that it will not leave Afghanistan's hand at this crucial juncture, wherein it is in dire need of both political stability and economic support.

At the same time it is important to note that the announcement of around USD 3.5 billion by Metallurgic Corporation of China for the development of Aynak Copper mines is another important contribution that can have a lasting impact on the overall economy of Afghanistan.

Another important factor that can uplift the economic position of Afghanistan is the initiation of the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road commonly known as 'One Road - One Belt'. It is gaining support and acceptance in the Eurasian and Southeast Asian nations and it is believed that it can be a vital route for growing businesses in the region. As Afghanistan is a conduit connecting Central Asia and South Asia, it has a vital role in the project and at the same time can benefit to a great extent from it.

Apart from economic and political support, China has always continued support for Afghanistan in different other sectors as well. Education and capacity building have been among the most important ones. China, during President Ghani's visit, also promised to provide 500 scholarships to students in the next five years. President Ashraf Ghani had said earlier, "Afghanistan views China as a reliable strategic partner and believes that China can help it speed up its development and is ready for a long-term strategic cooperative partnership with China." And, currently it seems very evident that China foresees the same kind of role in Afghanistan.

In addition, the peace process with Taliban is being supported by China and China has given clear indication that its role would be assistive regarding the process. Currently Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson talking about the reconciliation process in Afghanistan has said, "The Chinese side is ready to cooperate with all parties and play a constructive role in the extensive and inclusive peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan as always." And, China seems determined to put it to practice, as well.

*Dilawar Sherzai is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at email.urya@gmail.com*

## Afghan-Pak Tension Resurfaces

By Hujjatullah Zia

A sense of mistrust has resurfaced between Kabul and Islamabad following the heavy attacks in Shah Shaheed on Friday, August 07, 2015. Addressing a press conference on Monday, President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani said that Shah Shaheed bombing in Kabul, which led to the deaths of dozens and injuries of hundreds, was unacceptable and that it was a game changer for the country. "Pakistan still remains the venue and ground for gatherings from which mercenaries send us a message of war," Ghani declared. He further said that at the time that Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said the enemies of Afghanistan are the enemies of Pakistan, "now the time has come for him to prove it."

Similarly, Afghan Chief Executive of the National Unity Government (NUG), Abdullah Abdullah pointed out the same issue claimed by Pakistani officials. He doubted the Pakistan's sincerity in furthering to stabilize Afghanistan – since the practices go against the preaching. Moreover, NDS spokesman Haseeb Sediqi alleged that the armed militants are trained in Pakistan and they are as pawns used in Pakistan's proxy war against Afghanistan. "Pakistan promised us that it will not allow Taliban to hold gatherings in their country but we see these gatherings are actually happening," he maintained.

As terrorists take responsibility after broad daylight attacks on Afghan soil, no limitations have been imposed on their activities and they continue their shameless attacks, CEO Dr. Abdullah said, calling for a review of peace talks with the Taliban following the attacks in Kabul.

The Taliban are stepping up their summer offensive, launched in late April, amid a bitter leadership dispute following the announcement of the death of longtime supreme Mullah Omar. A wave of bombings since the deadly Friday's attack in the capital Kabul has prompted fury from President Ashraf Ghani who blamed Pakistan for failing to rein in the Taliban.

The footprints of the Pakistani Taliban – who are widely involved in terrorist acts – are frequently seen in Afghanistan. As a result, it was reported earlier that a series of US drone strikes in Afghanistan have killed large groups of militants belong to the self-styled Islamic State, some high-ranking Pakistani fighters formerly associated with the banned TTP were among the casualties. Reports quoted NDS, the Afghan intelligence agency, that Hafiz Saeed Khan, the head of IS in "Khorasan", as the Pakistan-Afghanistan region has been dubbed by the so-called caliphate, was among 30 fighters killed in Nangarhar province.

Moreover, the Taliban officials hold meeting in Pakistan freely to settle their conflict over the succession of Mullah Omar. Afghan officials blame Pakistan for brokering agreement between the Taliban's warring parties rather than combating and dislodging

them. The Taliban, who organize attack against the Afghanistan from across the border, Afghan politicians believe, should not be brought to a single point by Pakistan.

Pakistan's indirect involvement in terrorist acts especially in Friday's bombing, as declared by Afghan officials and NDS, has raised public concerns. Afghan Ulama Council also gave acrimonious speeches against Pakistan and warned that if she persists in her support to the Taliban militants to target Afghan civilians, they will declare jihad as the last resort and react violently against violence and vice versa.

In spite of the growing mistrust, Pakistan vowed to continue joint efforts to combat terrorism on Thursday meeting – which was held between the visiting Afghan peace delegation and adviser to the Pakistani Prime Minister on National Security and Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz in Islamabad on the revival of suspended talks with the Taliban.

Aziz is said to reiterate Pakistan's condemnation of recent terror attacks in Kabul. He said that Pakistan was committed to building a constructive and forward-looking relationship with Afghanistan, adding that they were ready to work with Afghanistan in overcoming all challenges. He further said that the two countries should have trust and faith in each other and discourage spoilers and detractors who have been trying to create mistrust between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani also reaffirmed Afghanistan's desire to work closely with Pakistan to enhance mutual cooperation in all areas of common interest. He concurred with the imperative of common endeavors for countering terrorism and for enduring peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region.

Notwithstanding the revised commitments, political pundits are not much hopeful about the conclusion – reasoning that Pakistan has not acted upon their vows in the past. According to them, former President Hamid Karzai failed to obtain Islamabad's support in counter-terrorism within the last decade in the face of frequent visits to Pakistan. Yet there is doubt whether the Afghan National Unity Government's leaders achieve Islamabad's sincere cooperation.

It is believed that political tension and mistrust between Afghanistan and Pakistan is detrimental to security situation within both the countries. Therefore, Afghan-Pak officials have to bury the hatchet and bridge the gap as soon as possible. It must be noted that the thick smoke of fire and explosion in Afghanistan will harm Pakistan's eye too – neighbors do have common pros and cons. Hence, it is hoped that Pakistan officials will fulfill their commitments and prove their sincere intention regarding the war-weary Afghans. Indeed, "now the time has come ... to prove it." The passage of time will reveal the outcome of Thursday's meeting and Islamabad's commitment.

*Hujjatullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at zia\_hujjat@yahoo.com*



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



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