

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



January 14, 2016

## Insufficient Health Facilities

One of the major problems in Afghanistan is the lack of sufficient and proper health facilities. Because of decades of instability and wars, the country has not been able to develop much in this sector. Recently, there have been certain claims by different authorities that the health facilities have improved, but the ground realities show a different picture. A large portion of Afghan population still does not receive convenient and timely medical treatment. No consistent efforts are being made; some of the efforts that are made seem to be based on short-term basis. Project based approach has only given temporary solace to the people, and has spoiled donors money to a large extent. Poor people of Afghanistan, mostly those who live in remote areas, do not get any attention and there are many cases wherein people die of the diseases that can be cured easily.

Even President Ashraf Ghani agrees to fact that the endeavors being made in health sector are not sufficient. Expressing his views in a meeting on Wednesday, Jan 13, with officials of Ministry of Public Health, he said that there were still no proper standards for employing health specialists and contracts for offering health services continued while problems persisted. President Ghani, therefore, advised that the government and foreign health organisations should mainly focus on providing best healthcare services to the people. He also added that there should be accountability and proper standards in employing health specialists and MoPH should strengthen its assessments, evaluation, guidelines and the reward and punishment system. He also suggested that the Afghan government and international partners should jointly seek alternative ways for improving health services in Afghanistan because all Afghans demanded a positive and high healthcare quality services.

It is really tragic to note that the number of people dying because of curable diseases in our country is more than the people who die because of terrorists activities. Minor diseases that could be cured easily become a matter of life and death for the people because of unavailability of proper services. Our media and our concerned authorities mostly highlight the issue of terrorism and extremism but they fail to focus more attention on the issue that is more basic and more urgent.

People mostly choose to go the neighboring countries for serious health problems. There are many people who visit Pakistan and India every year for better medical facilities. This may be convenient for the ones who are financially strong and they can afford, but the ones who cannot afford going other countries remain untreated and mostly neglected. It is really tragic for them as their own country cannot provide them even their basic rights.

Though there are government hospitals as well in the country, the quality of services provided by government hospitals is really very low, their number is not sufficient and they are not established in most of the remote areas; therefore, most of the people do not have access to them. On the other hand private hospitals have been established that can, in no way, be afforded by the people who do not have enough money to pay for their food.

Such a scenario is really dreadful and there should be serious efforts to deal with the situation. Short term projects will never solve the health issues in Afghanistan. Afghan government and the supporting nations must pursue long-term strategies to handle the issue, if they want to help the people of Afghanistan. At the same time, corruption and loose control, regarding the quality of medicine that is sold in the country, is another major issue, which is responsible for further debilitating the health of the people instead of supporting them during their ill health.

Previously an investigation by Independent Media Consortium (IMC) Productions, showed that though millions of dollars had been poured into the health sector, there were many Afghans who had their nearest health center at a distance of three days and unfortunately two-thirds of pharmacies did not have professional staff.

Such a scenario is really dreadful and worth special attention; moreover, only lip service would do no good to change the scenario. Therefore, the authoritative people must take necessary measures and must curb the situation as the issue is very delicate and it is related to the lives of the people. Carelessness in this regard is a type of indirect murder.

# Government's Strategy Towards ISIL

By Hujjatullah Zia

With the emergence of the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the country, Afghan government has determined its strategy towards it. In his recent speech, Afghan President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani ordered the Ministry of Defense (MoD) to keep bombing members of ISIL group - which has gained foothold in restive provinces and clashed with the Taliban insurgents sporadically. His remarks come as the politicians and political pundits predict a dark future for Afghanistan if the influence of ISIL group is undervalued. This militant group created a great sense of fear in the air via involving in horrific practices and cruel acts. According to public beliefs, the ISIL fighters stoked sectarian tension in recent months through abducting members of ethnic minority groups and beheading them, including women and children. Such outrageous acts of violence, which was a slap in the face of humanity, hurt the feelings of Afghan nation.

Members of ISIL insurgents are widely involved in violation of human rights not only in Afghanistan but wherever they hold sway. According to a recent report, an ISIL's loyalist killed his mother in a public square in the Syrian city of Raqa. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that Ali Saqr, a 20-year-old man, reported his mother, Lina, to ISIL authorities in Raqa "because she tried to persuade him to leave IS and flee the city". The authorities subsequently arrested the woman and accused her of apostasy. She was shot to death by her son "in front of hundreds of people close to the mail service building in Raqa city", the Observatory added. Among the crimes that warrant a death sentence in IS territories are homosexuality and adultery, according to the Observatory. The extremist group has been accused of carrying out mass killings, torture, rape and sexual slavery.

Since the ISIL militant group violates the rights and dignity of mankind on the grounds of their caste, color and creed regardless of religious prohibition, humanity and ethical code, nothing is sacred to it. Members of ISIL are engaged not only in violence and bloodshed but also in moral turpitude. Thousands of Yazidi girls and women were sold and dishonored in Iraq. In other words, on August 03, 2014, when ISIL fighters invaded the villages on the southern flank of Mount Sinjar, a craggy mass of dun-colored rock in northern Iraq, a large number of Yazidi women fell victim to them.

ISIL believes that Yazidi women could be enslaved under their ideological beliefs that one-fifth of the women should be transferred to the ISIL leadership and the remainder divided among the fighters who participated in the conquest of Mount

Sinjar. "Many well-known rulings are observed, including the prohibition of separating a mother from her young children." The November 13 Paris attacks that claimed at least 130 lives and left hundreds more injured, the bloody attack in Bamako and the horrific acts of violence in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan carried out by members of ISIL revealed its ugly face to the entire world.

Therefore, the presence of ISIL group in Afghanistan will lead the country to a political turbulence and sterilize the germ of democracy in our land. Similarly, it will spew forth venom across the country and create a national gap that will never be bridged. It is feared that with gaining firm foothold, the ISIL will stage heavy attacks - the same as the Taliban's spring offensive - soon after creating a connection with its central leadership in Iraq and Syria.

With the withdrawal of US-led NATO forces and unsuccessful war on terror, Afghanistan's political structure turned highly fragile and militancy escalated on a large scale. As a result, total civilian deaths and injuries in the first quarter of 2015 followed the record high levels of 2014. Between 1 January and 31 March, UNAMA documented 1,810 civilian casualties, a two per cent decrease from the same period in 2014. Moreover, US officials said earlier that at least 7,000 Afghan security force members have been killed between January 2015 and the beginning of December.

The emergence of ISIL is the product of political turmoil which was created with the vacuum of equipped soldiers and existence of political negligence. For instance, some key posts in government, including the Ministry of Defense, are being run by acting heads. Likewise, the official period of the parliament was over months ago and, constitutionally, new election had to be held but it wasn't. After all, the presence of members of ISIL group was underestimated and seemed imaginary for the officials. Therefore, they were not combated in the beginning and could hold somewhat firm foothold and ushered in militancy.

Since the ISIL group talks with the barrel of gun and logic and political discourse bear no meaning for it, military deal is the only way left to combat this terrorist network. Alike many Afghan citizens, I do appreciate Ghani's decision as he said that "we want them killed" and there is no room for ISIL in Afghan territory and ordered Ministry of Defense to keep bombing it. Afghan officials have emphasized constantly that the door to negotiation is open to any anti-government groups however terror would be the second option. Now, it is time to combat this group with strong force and prevent from its sinister ploy.

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## Leave No Refugee Behind

By Helen Clark and Filippo Grandi

The world has entered an era in which people are being displaced at an unprecedented rate. In 2014, conflict and persecution forced 42,500 people a day to flee their homes, nearly quadruple the number from 2010. Almost 60 million people are now forcibly displaced - a crisis unmatched since World War II.

This is unacceptable, but it is not inevitable. In 1945, the world responded to the deadliest conflict in human history by establishing the United Nations. Today, as heads of UN refugee and development agencies, we call for the world to respond to this monumental upheaval by giving people the tools they need to rebuild their lives. We believe that the path forward begins with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, which the UN, affirming a pledge to "leave no one behind" in the fight against poverty and inequality, adopted unanimously last September.

The international community's current approach to displacement relies mainly on humanitarian aid, which provides rapid, lifesaving relief while the search for a permanent solution is underway. But solutions are proving more elusive than ever. Just 1% of refugees were able to return home in 2014. The vast majority of those displaced spend not days or months in exile, but years or decades, even entire lifetimes. They risk being left behind.

Consider Somaya, a third-generation refugee in Kenya. Decades ago, her grandmother fled to the Hagadera refugee camp to escape the brutal conflict in Somalia. Her mother was born there, and so was she. Neither of them has set foot outside the five-square-mile (13 square kilometers) camp. They still live out of her grandmother's suitcases, waiting for a chance to move on.

Like Somaya, most refugees live in the developing world. And yet, too often, development organizations that could provide refugees with a hand up face insufficient funding and stiff regulations that prevent them from addressing refugees' needs.

Long-term displacement inflicts profound burdens on people like Somaya. Refugees too often face limits on their ability to work and move freely, making it all but impossible to provide for their families or to contribute to their host communities. They live in limbo, with no choice but to rely on humanitarian aid.

Or they are obliged to seek a living in the informal economy, where they risk falling victim to arrest, sexual exploitation, child labor, or other abuses.

Consider another example: Anas, a 13-year-old Syrian refugee in Lebanon. His family cannot survive without the \$5 he earns every day. So, instead of going to school, he sorts lumps of coal for sale as fuel. Refugees like Anas struggle to exercise precisely those rights - to education, health care, freedom of movement, and access to work, land, and housing - that are essential to escaping poverty.

Fixing this will require political and economic changes that allow the development community to provide more support. The relationship between development and displacement is clear, and we need to begin to consider these challenges as areas of joint responsibility.

Large-scale displacement strains public resources, even in middle-income countries; without sufficient outside help, it can undo years of progress. Until the world gives more and better support to host countries and the refugees living there, we can expect to pay ever-larger sums for humanitarian programs that never end.

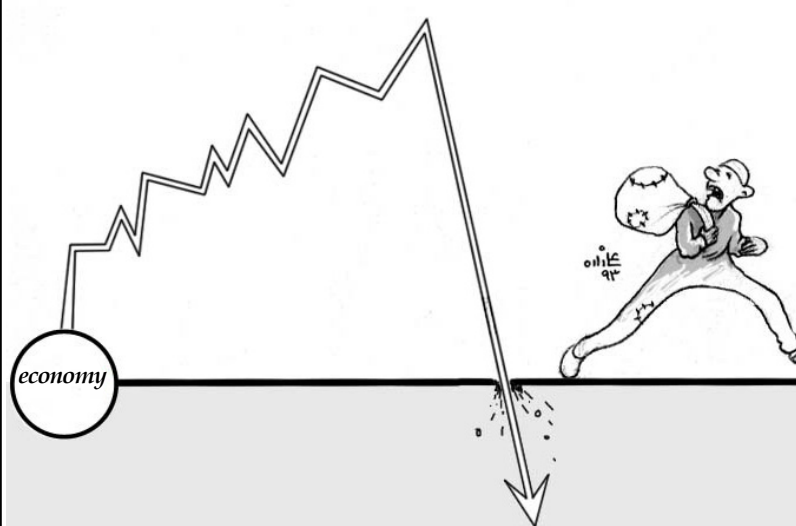
But there is another side to the coin. When displaced people are allowed to develop their skills and pursue their aspirations, they create new opportunities for growth. This is why development agencies must have more flexibility to address new cycles of poverty and fragility - wherever they appear - before they spiral out of control.

The time has come to discard the clichéd image of refugees as passive recipients of aid, sitting idly with outstretched hands. If anything, that image reflects circumstances that have been imposed upon refugees and reinforced by the world's incomplete response. Refugees are entrepreneurs. They are artists. They are teachers, engineers, and workers of all types. They are a rich source of human capital that we are failing to cultivate.

The international community can no longer afford to ignore so much potential or to sit by while the most vulnerable are pushed to the margins of society. As news headlines call attention to the human costs of these tragedies, we must remember that we have the choice to respond with more than just shock.

We can reject the economic exclusion of those who live among us but were born somewhere else. We can redouble our efforts to seek political solutions to conflict and persecution. We can empower humanitarian and development partners to work together from the moment a crisis erupts. In short, we can honor our pledge to "leave no one behind." (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

Helen Clark, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, is a former prime minister of New Zealand. Filippo Grandi is United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.



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