

January 24, 2019

Afghanistan: Women and Politics of Marginalization

Most research works on gender inequity in politics have largely been focused on gross under-representation and sometimes lack of representation of women in Afghan politics. In Afghanistan, women marginalization in politics has thus provoked studies aimed at reversing such marginalization given the immense role that can be played in the country's political system by the female gender. Also, several gender related works and explanations have been enunciated and interpreted in a bid to correct certain perceived marginalization of women in politics. However, it calls for more academic attention on marginalization of Afghan women from representing their people in at the national and sub-national level.

Giving priority to Girl or Women

Afghan Education Women who have appetite for politics need to be educated both politically and socially, and be exposed to their rights to participate in politics. The only means through which they can compete in an election with their male counterparts is when they are well informed and possess the necessary skills for the political positions they seek. They should be enlightened on their rights and political process of Afghanistan. This will certainly require the government setting up Civic Education Programs especially for girls and women in the crisis-prone country in order to build up awareness for the equal rights, and responsibilities of women. Afghan women are largely farmers, and highly uneducated, such that they have lost focus on their fundamental human rights to be involved in politics, therefore education is a potential source that can empower women's economic, social and political power in the country.

The Role of Mass Media in Empowering Women

The women can be empowered by what they hear, see and discuss with the pressmen, also, the media should intensify efforts on discussions of issues of women discrimination in politics in the country. They should help to bring to the notice of the public; the need to implement the UN recommendation of 30% of elective and appointive seats to be reserved for women should be aired, published and massively circulated to all parts of Afghanistan. Also television and Continuous radio programs that will create awareness of women's rights in political participation, at the grassroots level for rural women should be intensified.

Afghanistan state, in most part of the history of the country has been devoid of gender equity in politics. The degree of women marginalization in public life, however, varied from one region to another. The discriminatory gender practices have had considerable impact on gender imbalance in the political sphere tilting the pendulum in outrageous disfavor to women. As a result, it is necessary to examine women and politics of marginalization in Afghanistan with a view to suggesting policy measures that can enhance gender equity in politics in the country. It is the contentions of this article that women empowerment via education, the quota system, office of the first lady and affirmative action can be helpful in this direction

Finally, the effective and quick move towards gender equity in politics in the Afghanistan is a multi-pronged approach requiring a combination of factors. To this end, emphasis should be laid on, inter alia, creating in people's mind a favorable attitude to female leadership and discouraging practices that are gender bias against women, particularly those that are antithetical to women participation in public affairs and political process. We should remind that reducing the gender gap in politics in Afghanistan requires concerted and sustained effort. Considerable success within shortest possible time may be impossible and very slow in the country.

**The Racial Discrimination Persists in Afghanistan**By: **Mohammad Zahir Akbari**

About two years ago, a racist plan was divulged from Department of the Presidential Administration that had attempted to deliberately prevent from the entry or recruitment of individuals belonging to other ethnic groups in government administrative positions. This plan or a racist guide was prepared by a presidential officer who accidentally or mistakenly sent the plan to different staff members whom eventually leaked to public and private media. This issue created a lot of controversy throughout the country including social media networks and overall public atmosphere of Afghanistan; after some arguments the mentioned person dismissed from his duty but his legal case remained invisible from the eyes of local press.

Luckily, there was news in recent days that he was sentenced to two years' reprieved imprisonment. However, there can be raised a lot questions about the proportionality of the sentence with the subject matter of the crime. If the case is really true and the person have proposed such a plan to the administration or members of the particular office, then it should not be limited to two years of suspended imprisonment. He should have been seriously punished by the court so that we may not see farther discriminatory behavior at least in the modern Afghanistan. As the amount of punishment depends on intensity of crime and its judgment is the job of judiciary system no one should intervene to it.

But unluckily, the occurrence of such cases show an undeniable fact that still there is ethnic, linguistic, religious, and regional discrimination in various forms at all levels and areas, especially in the administrative contexts of Afghanistan. Although the main infrastructure of discrimination has a long historical background and a large part of it is the legacy of past authoritarian and tribal systems. But the ethnocentric approach which leaked two years ago showed a kind of deliberate discrimination which consciously applied in the heart of country. However, it does not necessarily mean that discrimination is originated from a certain individuals or address. Therefore, no one should be deviated when political rivals label discriminatory behavior against each and other; in fact, discrimination phenomenon has vast structural dimensions in Afghanistan comprising everywhere and every level.

So far, the political culture and administrative norm in the country is in a way when someone takes the incumbency of any public office, he considers it like a windfall profits and instrument for making more wealth. Instead of implementing meritocracy criteria, he tries to apply racial criteria, especially in the hiring process. He does not trust on the people who are not related to their own tribe and even consider others as strangers; therefore, he would attempt to hire the individuals who belong to his own tribe and eliminate the presence of those who are related to other ethnic

groups. Consequently, the public departments would become the ethnic group's debarments not a place for an expert team; on the other hand, the public departments are largely become a ground for ethnic political, and corruption issues.

To overcome this apparent discrimination, the president ordered the Ministry of Justice to establish a non-discrimination law under the authority of the second vice president. Accordingly, non-discrimination law was drafted and sent to the relevant institutions for process but so far, there is no news of its implementation. As a result, frequent hidden and unhidden cases are repeated in the country. Few days ago, we witnessed a fresh case happened in Helmand province. Rasooli, who won the post of director general of women affairs through free competition, but a group of people, launched demonstration for why their new director is Hazara. Rasooli said, she could not succeed to start her job due to the mentioned reason though she had a formal decree from president to be introduced in that position. She added that protestors are backed by certain powerbrokers as they pick and drop protestors up to women department in Helmand province.

Thus, the conviction case of the person who produced the nationalist guidelines in the country's offices by the judicial authorities once again sparked injustice and discrimination in Afghan offices. Now, it is the duty of the government to think for a fundamental solution to end the injustice and inequality at least in the Afghan administrative contexts. Deliberate discrimination is not only a kind of betray to the nation but also a betray to their own tribe. Many of youths during school and university programs do not work hard because they are sure of having supporters to be hired. This way, they get used to grow lazy and low qualified uneducated.

By and large, the persistence of discrimination has caused a lot of hatreds and social unrest in the country. If we put a glance at the social media networks we can easily come to realize the level of distrust and dissatisfaction amongst the young generation which is extremely bad for integration of our people as nation. The benevolent leaders and thinkers of this land should accept that temporary political tricks cannot work as a solution for such national issues. Social justice and ethical equality are the underlying principles for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations. We uphold the principles of social justice and equality when we promote rights of minority groups, gender equality, children and other vulnerable people. In fact, we will never achieve national unity by slogans unless truly remove all barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or disability in the country.

Mohammad Zahir Akbari is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at mohammadzahirakbari@gmail.com

The Right Investments to Address the Human Capital CrisisBy: **Kristalina Georgieva**

For 75 years, the World Bank has been at the forefront of development, helping countries make smart investments to prepare their citizens for the future. It has been particularly focused on the poorest and most vulnerable – their access to infrastructure, health, education, assets, jobs, and markets. In recent years, it has embraced policies and investment in areas critical for the world's future, such as combating climate change and making technology work for the poor.

Everywhere I travel – from Rwanda to Zambia, or from Indonesia to my home country, Bulgaria – I see the difference that technology can make in people's lives. The impact is apparent in a multitude of ways, such as digital payment systems or the emerging gig economy, leading to remarkable success stories. But just as technology is improving the lives of millions around the world, it is also changing the nature of work. Our 2019 World Development Report focused on how innovation is changing or doing away with existing jobs and launching entirely new fields of employment that didn't exist a few years ago.

This raises some difficult questions: What jobs are people going to do? How will they support their families? How will they fulfill their potential in an increasingly complex world? We have powerful new tools to help developing countries answer those questions. At the World Bank Group-IMF Annual Meetings in Bali in October, we launched the Human Capital Index. Initially covering 157 countries, the Index is a summary measure of the human capital that a child born today can expect to attain by age 18, given the risks of poor health and education where he or she lives.

The Index focuses on outcomes in three key areas. First, survival: What is the probability that a child born today will survive to age five? Second, health: Will children be stunted before age five? Will they be healthy into adulthood, ready for work, with a foundation for lifelong learning? And third, education: How much schooling will children complete, and more importantly, how much will they learn?

The Human Capital Index is unique because it focuses on productivity-linked indicators such as child survival, stunting, learning-adjusted years of school, and adult survival, and it draws a direct line between future economic growth and better health and education outcomes. Above all, it paints a clear picture for leaders of how much more productive their work-

ers could be when they are healthy, educated, and equipped with the skills needed for a rapidly changing labor market.

A country can score between 0 and 1 on the index, with 1 representing the best possible frontier of complete education and full health. In our first index, the average value for the world was just 0.56. This means that, across the 157 countries covered, children born today will grow up to be roughly half as productive as they could be.

The implications for growth – and therefore poverty reduction – are enormous. If a country has a score of 0.50, its future GDP per worker could be twice as high if that country reached the frontier. Over a half-century, this works out to 1.4 percentage points of GDP growth every year.

Investing in people is even more urgent because of two challenging global trends. First, global growth is slowing. Our Global Economic Prospects report, released earlier this month, is appropriately titled Darkening Skies. Global growth has moderated – in 2019, it is expected to slow to 2.9%, from 3% in 2018. And growth in emerging markets and developing economies is expected to stall at 4.2%, the same pace as in 2018.

Second, the pace of poverty reduction is slowing. Our Poverty and Shared Prosperity report found that in 2015, the most recent year with robust data, extreme poverty reached 10%, the lowest level in recorded history. But the 736 million people still living in extreme poverty will be harder to reach. The poverty rate in areas suffering from fragility, conflict, and violence climbed to 36% in 2015, up from a low of 34.4% in 2011, and that share will likely increase.

Investment in human capital can help drive inclusive, sustainable economic growth. But this is not just the domain of health and education ministers. Heads of state, finance ministers, CEOs, and investors need to make these investments an urgent priority.

If we act now, we can create a world where all children arrive at school well-nourished and ready to learn; where they can grow up to be healthy, skilled, productive adults; and where they have a chance to fulfil their potential.

The children of today deserve this future. The employers of tomorrow will demand it. The leaders of the world owe it to them to act now.

Kristalina Georgieva is Chief Executive Officer of the World Bank.

Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: **Moh. Reza Huwaida**
Vice Chairman / Exec. Editor: **Moh. Sakhi Rezaie**
Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com
Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019
www.outlookafghanistan.net