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



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Afghan Children Suffer Great Challenges

The vulnerability of children to social ills, violence and terror is an undeniable fact. Their rights are widely trampled upon and their blood is spilt in terrorist attacks and suicide bombings in every nook and cranny. Children – who are supposed to attend school with a peace of mind and high hopes – bear the brunt of challenges in Afghanistan. They are recruited by the Taliban fighters with the barrel of gun or simply to survive financial pressure. Social and economic deprivations fill them with a strong sense of vengeance and hatred. Therefore, some join terrorist groups to vent their anger and hatred via killing their human fellows.

In a recent report, the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) said by 2030, as many as 69 million children could die from "preventable causes" before the age of five if political leaders fail to address global inequality. The report - State of the World's Children 2016 - said children are affected "disproportionately" by violent conflicts, humanitarian emergencies, natural disasters, as well as health crises. It added that 167 million children face poverty and 750 million could become child brides globally unless action is stepped up. Denying hundreds of millions of children a fair chance in life does more than threaten their futures. By fuelling inter-generational cycles of disadvantage, it imperils the future of their societies," Anthony Lake, UNICEF's executive director, is cited as saying. "We have a choice: Invest in these children now, or allow our world to become still more unequal and divided."

While millions of Afghan children have returned to school following the collapse of the Taliban regime in late 2001, tens of thousands of schoolage youngsters, restricted by economic hardship, must still work on the streets of the Afghan capital, Kabul, to sustain their families. In another item, a large number of Afghan children abandon the idea of going to school and their childhood ambitions for an ideal future turn to ash. Falling into deep disappointment, they see a pitch dark future ahead. Scores of Afghan kids take their wish for literacy to the grave with them. Children are forced to support their families by working long hours and are often subject to exploitation and abuse. Conflict as well as the effects of poverty caused widespread displacement. Six million school-age children are engaged in labor. About 60,000 are begging in the streets of Kabul alone, mostly forced to deliver their day's earnings to petty urban gangs. Abject poverty compels many parents to consent. After all, each year, hundreds of children die in armed hostilities, air strikes, suicide attacks, car bombs, or land mines.

Afghan children suffer not only from terror and poverty – which make them labor from dawn to dusk – but also from discrimination and social ills. In other words, it is not only their rights which are violated but their honor and dignity are also outraged in some ways. To one's unmitigated chagrin, some children fall victim to rape and sexual harassments and their physical weakness is considered a weak point in our society.

To view it historically, it was during the Soviet occupation in the 1980s that children began to fall at the mercy of war and its multidimensional miseries. The indiscriminate bombing of villages, disappearance of children from high schools for suspicion of ties with the resistance movement and forced conscriptions on both sides of the war were common. It is generally believed that about 50,000 children, mostly orphans, were sent to the Soviet Union in the 1980s to be indoctrinated in Marxism.

The ordeals that Afghan children endured in refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran during the Afghan-Soviet war are well documented in various human rights and humanitarian assistance organizations' reports. Conflict in the past decade has caused about 28,000 civilian deaths and more than 100,000 injuries. Considering that nearly 70 percent of the Afghan population is under the age of 25, this demographic has been affected significantly. Based on Human Rights Watch research, the Taliban have been training and deploying children for a range of military operations including the production and planting of improvised explosive devices (IED). In Kunduz province, the Taliban have used madrasahs as hotbed of terror and to provide military training to teenagers many of whom have been deployed in combat. It is said that there are now 1,300 unregistered madrasahs in Afghanistan, where children are given only religious teaching. This is increasing fears among those involved in mainstream education. The great motive behind the children's willingness to join armed militants is the radical indoctrination. They are bred and trained in the hotbed of fundamentalism and, therefore, radical ideas are deeply embedded in their minds. For combating terrorism, the world needs to launch an emergency global education effort now, said US Secretary of State John Kerry who was speaking at the Aspen Ideas Festival in Aspen, Colorado, on Tuesday. "We have to invest in education. I can't emphasize this enough ... 120 million children and adolescents are out of school ... they need to go to school now." He added, "We have to ensure that kids everywhere actually have schools to go, that schools do not preach hate and radical views, but they offer and prepare them for a better life." The government has to facilitate the children to continue their education in a healthy environment and alleviate their financial problems so that they could get rid of the pain and sufferings.



A Quick Look At History of Tomorrow

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

It is proven that the honors of tomorrow will be to the extents that invest on new generation of today, and the new generation will be the capital and mirror to the history of tomorrow. Today our country is considered to be among the most dangerous places for children to be born! They are subjected to extreme poverty, violence, health and poor education. Half the country's estimated 30 million populations are below 15. Over a quarter of Afghan children die before their fifth birthday mostly from preventable diseases such as pneumonia and diarrhea. Afghanistan has some of the worst child malnourishment, stunting, underweight and vitamin deficiency figures in the world. According to the World Food Program, 39% of children under the age of five are underweight. 78% of Afghan children lack access to safe water. Only 6% of children are registered at birth, leaving the vast majority without legal identity and protection.

According some findigs, 1 in 8 Afghan women die in childbirth. Girls are sometimes forced to marry at a very young age and they are most at risk from complication during pregnancy and labour. Many women do not get the help they need because of few health facilities and lack of female health workers (in many areas only women are allowed to treat women, and few women have the opportunity or permission to get trained). Poor roads and lack of transport in rural areas can also make it difficult for women to access help. Only 24% of births are attended by a professional health worker.

People in Afghanistan are using opium to block pain; the pain of hunger, sickness, physical and mental trauma. There are more than one million addicts in this nation of about 30 million people, including 60,000 children under age 15, and about 13 percent are women and 7 percent are children, Afghan government officials say. Most of the women are opium addicts desperate to blunt the trauma of endless war. Many are illiterate mothers with unemployed husbands. Most have a little in the way of job skills, and some became addicts while picking opium poppies to earn a living and support their families...

Although access to education has improved significantly since the time of the Taliban, but still Progress is hampered by a shortage of qualified teachers, poor facilities and threats posed by insurgents. Even so, over two-thirds of school-age children attend school. Girls, banned from school under the Taliban regime, are gradually returning to the classroom, but 70 percent are still not enrolled. The majority of girls still do not attend primary school. Only 11% of secondary-school-age girls are enrolled in grades 7-9 and 4% enroll in grades 10-12. Adult literacy rates remain low, at

43 percent for men and 14 percent for women.

Physical and mental Security is the most destructive and growing factors to make them leave schools and country for the purpose of reaching better abode. Educations target such as damaging or destruction of schools by arson, poisoning, grenades, mines and rockets; threats to teachers and officials are common practice; students, teachers and other educational staffs have been killed and there has been looting. Hence, Thousands of girls and boys are leaving education and country due to stable security concerns and unknown future.

Children in Afghanistan work in all manner of jobs. They work as street vendors, shop assistants, as blacksmiths, carpenters, tailors, domestics, auto mechanics, carpet weavers, and in brick factories. Some of them are as young as 5 or 6 years old. In the cities, children collect paper and scrap metal, shine shoes, and beg. In rural areas, many children work in agriculture. Because of low family incomes, parents encourage their children to beg or work. Years of conflict have left many families parentless and with child-headed households.

In first years of Mr. Karzai government, there was a major flow of refugees returning to their home country but the flow has gradually decreased as a consequence of increasing social and political challenges. In 2015 with sixty-eight thousand refugees Afghanistan got the third place in the world! Most of these asylum seekers are young teenagers making the difficult and dangerous journey to Europe, unaccompanied by adults. These children are very susceptible and often encounter dreadful conditions in the way of illegal human trafficking and after they reach the destinations. Thus, it is reported that Children from Afghanistan are trafficked they are subjected to forced labor, child soldiers, forced begging, commercial sexual exploitation, or debt bondage.

Millions of Afghan children are acutely vulnerable and they are not attending school or are provided extremely poor education. They are searching for work on urban streets and in fields. And they are at risk of exploitation, poor health, severe injury, and needless death. Mentally, they are regarded as a result of acute malnutrition. They are the tragic victims of war in a society whose institutional support systems had been weak or nonexistent prior to the outbreak of conflict 30 or 40 years, and which have been nearly impossible to rebuild since. These poor investments and various indicators show that the history of tomorrow is not bright and Afghanistan will go on to be the most dangerous place for the children to be born.

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The Limits to Green Growth

By Lili Fuhr, Thomas Fatheuer, and Barbara Unmüßig

In recent years, the push to build a "green economy" that can deliver the world from continual environmental and economic crisis and usher in a new era of sustainable growth has been gathering force. But the push has been a source of unexpected controversy, with many predicting little more than business as usual with a coat of green paint. Will reconciling environmental and economic imperatives be harder than we think?

In a word, yes. The mainstream perception is that the green economy will enable us to break free from our dependence on fossil fuels, without sacrificing growth. Many argue that the shift to a green economy can even spur new growth. But, as appealing as this idea is, it is not realistic, as we show in our new book Inside the Green Economy.

To be sure, it is possible for a genuinely "green" economy to be prosperous. But the model that prevails today focuses on quick and easy solutions. Moreover, it reasserts the primacy of economics, thereby failing to recognize the depth of the transformation that is required. Instead of rethinking our economies with a view to adapting their functioning to environmental limits and imperatives, today's green economy seeks to redefine nature, in order to adapt it to existing economic systems. We now attach a monetary value to nature and add it to our balance sheets, with the protection of "natural capital," such as ecosystem services, offsetting environmental degradation, gauged by the global abstract currency of carbon metrics. New market-based mechanisms, such as the trading of biodiversity credits, exemplify this approach. None of this prevents the destruction of nature; it simply reorganizes that destruction along market lines.

As a result of this narrow approach, current conceptions of the green economy have so many blind spots that the entire enterprise should be regarded as largely a matter of faith. The most powerful talisman is technological innovation, which justifies simply waiting for a cureall invention to come along. But, though new ideas and innovations are obviously vital to address complex challenges, environmental or otherwise, they are neither automatic nor inevitable.

Innovation, particularly technological innovation, is always shaped by its protagonists' interests and activities, so it must be judged in its social, cultural, and environmental context. If the relevant actors are not working to champion transformative technologies, the results of innovation can reinforce the status quo, often by extending the life of products and systems that are not fit to address society's needs.

Consider the automotive industry. Though it produces increasingly fuel-efficient engines, it puts them in larger, more powerful, and heavier vehicles than ever before, eating up efficiency gains through the so-called "rebound effect." And it faces the temptation to spend more energy learning to manipulate emissions readings, as Volkswagen did, than on developing genuinely "green" vehicles.

Biofuels are not the answer, either. In fact, the use of biomass wreaks ecological and social havoc in developing economies, while de facto extending the lifetime of an obsolete combustion technology. Clearly, the automotive industry cannot be blindly trusted to spear-

needed in the transport sector. And that is exactly the point. If we are to decouple economic growth from energy consumption and achieve real resource efficiency in a world of nine billion, much less ensure justice for all, we cannot let the economy lead the way. Instead, we must view the green transformation as a political task.

head the radical reorganization, away from private vehicles, that is

Instead, we must view the green transformation as a political task. Only a political approach can manage, through genuinely representative institutions, differences of opinion and interest, guided by the kind of open debate, engaging civil society, that is vital to a pluralistic democracy

Of course, not all countries are pluralistic democracies. In many that aren't (and even in some that claim to be), those who campaign for a more socially, economically, and ecologically equitable world face severe repression. If they are to fulfill their indispensable role in driving forward the transformation that is needed, democratic countries must put respect for basic human rights, such as freedom of speech and peaceful assembly, at the top of their foreign-policy agendas. These basic rights are the normative foundation upon which transformative strategies will have to be negotiated.

After all, the biggest obstacle to the socio-ecological transformation that the world needs is not, in the end, technological; much of what is required, from organic farming to networked mobility systems that don't rely on private vehicles, is already within reach. The real problem is the lack of political will to implement and scale up those innovations opposed by vested economic interests. The challenge is thus to overcome these minority interests and ensure the protection of the broader public good – a task that is often left to civil society. Some might argue that calling for radical transformation, rather than incremental change, is inappropriate. At a time when the world faces so many pressing challenges, from economic stagnation to political upheaval to massive refugee flows, any progress toward sustainability should be viewed as a victory. Pragmatic, politically feasible solutions to the environmental crisis should be celebrated, not criticized. But this view implicitly underestimates the seriousness of the environmental crisis that the world faces, and assumes linear change when the needed transformation will be non-linear. While some features of the green economy - resource conservation, the transition to renewable energies, specific technological innovations, and effective economic incentives, such as taxes - are undeniably important, they do not add up to the large-scale change needed to protect the interests of present and future generations.

The task that the world's democracies face today is to continue the project of modernity, embracing the latest knowledge about planetary boundaries, while advancing broad democratic participation and reducing poverty and social injustice. This is no small undertaking, and requires passion and tenacity. But it is not beyond our capacity. The first step is to recognize the constraints that the "green economy" places on thought and action. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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