

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



March 08, 2017

'Planet 50-50 by 2030'

Today (8th March) is celebrated as International Women's Day in many countries around the globe. The basic objective of the day is to recognize women for their achievements in different walks of life without any regard to division, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political. The day has its roots in the labor movements in early 20th century in North America and Europe. However, it has turned into a formal movement supported by United Nations' conferences and many other commemorations. This year the theme of the day is "Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030".

The theme pertains to the efforts for accelerating the 2030 Agenda, and gaining support and practical implementation of goals number 4, and 5 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), which aim to achieve gender equality, empower all women and girls, ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. Moreover, it also considers the changing nature of work i.e. different professions and works that the people do for livelihood and the implications for women. As globalization and technological and digital revolutions have brought opportunities, there are also serious challenges, like informality of labor, unstable livelihoods and incomes, new fiscal and trade policies and environmental impacts; and all these issues must be addressed in the contexts of women's economic empowerment.

For Afghanistan the rights and empowerment of women have always remained an issue. As the country has suffered from instability and wars, many other sectors and issues have been neglected by the authorities. The issue of weak or no governance has been the most dominant one. There are many parts of the country that remain unattended even today.

Though a so-called democratic government has been formed, it has failed to carry out a democratic governance system. The power still remains with the powerful warlords and selfish leaders and they have failed to make the system work for the poor masses. In fact, the lives of the common people have remained unchanged to a certain extent. Meanwhile, the weaker strata particularly women have paid a very high price as a repercussion.

Afghan authorities need to make serious commitments about women as women in this country have not been empowered as much as they should be. Women in Afghanistan have been undergoing discriminatory behavior for decades now. The religious extremism and obsolete tribal values have been vehemently responsible for violation and violence against them. Even though, they have been echoing their concerns, they do not seem to get as much attention as possible in the patriarchal Afghan society.

As a matter of fact, the male-chauvinistic ears are not ready to hear them though they feel their vibrations clearly. Nevertheless, the efforts in this regard must never be given up and they should continue in every possible way. One of the ways to rise up and be counted in the social and political life is to strive participating in the social and political institutions and processes. And, this is not the responsibility of a particular faction of society, not a particular stratum, not even a particular gender but of all those human beings have some concern and some love for human rights, the ones who believe in dignity of human beings and their existence without any differentiation of gender.

Particularly, men can play an imperative role. Though they have been mostly responsible for the discrimination, modern men can now change their attitude and commit themselves to make the difference. Fighting the discrimination and violence does not necessarily mean that women alone should shoulder the responsibility. There should be efforts to bring about changes in the attitude of men towards women; otherwise, fighting for the rights of women would be very difficult.

In similar fashion, the different institutions, functioning in the society must also fulfill their responsibilities and they must ensure that there should not be biased policies and attitude against the women. Their policies and practices must never be inclined towards discrimination and injustice on the basis of gender. Not only the women rights organization but different other social, political and administrative organizations can have a part in making sure that women are properly compensated within the system and are not neglected on the basis of prejudice.

In the countries like Afghanistan, the religious and tribal institutions can also play tremendous role in uplifting the position of women and giving them the status they deserve. As most of the people are religious and tribal, they can easily be motivated by such institutions for better and higher purposes.

It is important that the efforts regarding women rights do not end only in conferences and celebrations by certain organizations and individuals but in resolute commitments and most importantly practical efforts for the rights and empowerment of women. In this regard, the International Women's Day can be used to encourage efforts to make this really happen.



Women can Play A Greater Role in Realizing South Asia's Potential

By Annette Dixon

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

Roqia Ali is proud to be attending the Daricha-e-Noor or 'Window of Knowledge' school in Kabul. She aspires to be a doctor and is proud that she is learning to read and write with her classmates. "My mother can't read or write. When we were trying to find a tailor's shop, I had to find the sign for her." Her schoolmate Masouda is equally delighted. "There should be no difference between boys and girls. I want to be an engineer."

Girls were once forbidden to attend school in Afghanistan. Today, while the education system continues to face many challenges, girls' enrollment in schools have increased to over 3 million from less than 200,000 in 2002, while boys' attendance jumped to about 4.5 million from less than one million. These children will have a much stronger foundation to contribute to Afghanistan's development potential. As we mark International Women's Day today, we celebrate the progress made in improving women's inclusion and empowerment in the lives of women and girls like Roqia, Rahnoor and millions of others. At the same time, we seek to better address continuing challenges, which are estimated to cost South Asian economies \$888 billion, through devising and implementing solutions that will bridge remaining gaps.

Much to be proud of — a lot more remains to be done

South Asian countries have seen encouraging increases in greater access and gender parity in education. At the same time, the region has achieved substantial decreases in maternal and child mortality. Countries have made great strides in healthcare access through training more female healthcare workers while providing affordable care for mothers and children. The region also boasts many inspiring female leaders and role models, as well as the countless individuals positively contributing to their communities and societies against difficult odds.

However, much more needs to be done in order to nurture all women and men to realize their potential. As South Asian countries become more prosperous, their growth trajectory will be less assured if hundreds of millions of women remain excluded from education and employment opportunities. South Asian countries will need to substantially expand their workforce in order to meet their macroeconomic growth goals and, at the same time, adequately support their increasingly large populations. Studies show that only around 1 out of 4 women in South Asia participate in the labor force, about half of what is typical in middle-income countries in other regions.

Too many women face restrictions in decision-making, mobility, public safety; and far too many experience gender-based violence — the most egregious cases making headlines around the world. What can help bridge these gaps?

Investing intelligently in health and education

Countries have an opportunity to invest more in health and education, as underinvestment puts a disproportionate burden on women and girls, whose lifelong learning and productive abilities can be stymied by receiving inadequate, reduced opportunities to complete their studies, and underutilization of their education. Programs could include helping girls successfully transition from primary to secondary school, coupled with providing greater adolescent sexual and reproductive health knowledge.

Building on these foundations, education programs should enhance linkages between what students learn and the skills that employers seek.

Fostering greater economic empowerment opportunities for women

More women in the workplace would help realize the potential to accelerate South Asia's growth and development. To achieve this goal, countries should foster more conducive conditions for women to seek and grow in their employment. Measures could include improving skills training and reducing occupational segregation to open up more jobs to girls and women; investing in the care economy to help women with their disproportionate share of household responsibilities, and overcoming barriers to women's land and asset ownership.

Other policies should seek to enhance greater access to finance by more female account holders and also ensure that rural laborers receive compensation.

Providing women greater voice and agency in their lives

Increasing the share of women in local leadership positions can ensure that women's and girls' perspectives are better taken into account in community investments and decision-making. Authorities have the responsibility to enact and implement laws that allow greater decision-making for women, such as through enforcing laws to prevent child marriage, increasing attention to the prevention and response of gender-based violence, and ensuring safe access to public transportation and spaces by, for example, providing women-only spaces on buses and trains, requiring gender-sensitivity training of all transport personnel, recruiting more women police officers, and actively addressing male gender and masculinity issues.

To turn these ideas into reality, our South Asia Regional Gender Action Plan is guiding our work with the people and governments of each country in South Asia to help integrate sound gender practices into their economic, social, health, and education policies and programs, based on current and proven evidence-based data and recommendations.

For South Asian countries to reach their development potential, it will require everyone — both women and men — to contribute to their full capabilities.

This is the only way that South Asia will realize its promise as a part of the Asian Century.

The author is Vice President for South Asia for the World Bank.

Is Liberal Internationalism Dead?

By Tony Smith

One hundred years ago this month, US President Woodrow Wilson was agonizing over whether to enter World War I. Just a few months earlier, Wilson had won re-election partly by campaigning on a policy of neutrality, which he was now preparing to abandon, along with the slogan "America first." But now, for the first time in more than 80 years, a US president has taken it up again, to promote a foreign-policy stance that directly controverts the doctrine Wilson embraced.

It was not until 1919, after the war was over, that Wilson defined his foreign-policy vision of "liberal internationalism": support for collective security and promotion of open markets among democracies, regulated by a system of multinational institutions ultimately dependent on the United States. Though the US Senate initially rejected Wilson's vision, particularly his support for joining the League of Nations, Franklin D. Roosevelt revived liberal internationalism after 1933. It has helped to shape the foreign policies of most US presidents ever since — until Trump.

The "America first" approach that Trump advocates comprises disdain for NATO, contempt for the European Union, and mockery of Germany's leadership role in Europe. It also includes rejection of economic openness, reflected in Trump's withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement and call to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement. Trump has also pledged to back out of the Paris climate agreement.

Unlike Wilson, Trump seems to see no value in maintaining and deepening ties with other democracies. Instead, he seems drawn to authoritarian leaders — in particular, Russian President Vladimir Putin — and often leaves democratic leaders watching from the wings.

To be sure, if Wilson were alive today, he might agree with Trump on some issues, though his proposed solutions would be very different. For example, Wilson would probably concur with Trump that the level of openness in global markets today is excessive. It is indeed problematic that US banks and businesses can export capital, technology, and jobs as they please, with little or no regard for the domestic costs. But Wilson's solution would likely focus on developing and implementing improved regulations through a multilateral process dominated by democracies.

Likewise, he would probably advocate a fiscal policy aimed at advancing the common good, with higher taxes on the wealthiest companies and households funding, say, infrastructure development, quality education, and universal health care.

In short, Wilson would endorse a program more like that of

Democratic US Senator Elizabeth Warren or Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz, featuring an advanced social-welfare system that enables broad-based prosperity. By contrast, Trump advocates lower taxes for the wealthy, and seems willing to embrace some form of state capitalism — if not crony capitalism — via protectionist policies and special incentives for companies to manufacture in the US.

Wilson might agree with Trump on another point: we cannot assume that democracy is a universal value with universal appeal. Like Trump, Wilson would probably eschew the idealistic nation- and state-building formulas that animated US foreign policy under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

But here, too, the differences overwhelm the similarities. Trump has decided that the US simply shouldn't bother with the rest of the world, unless it gets something concrete in return. Wilson, by contrast, wanted to spread democracy for the sake of world peace, but in an indirect manner, working through the League of Nations. He believed that international institutions, the rule of law, common values, and an elite possessed of a democratic vision could ensure collective security and peaceful conflict resolution. What would begin as Pax Americana, he believed, would ultimately become a Pax Democratica.

This vision lies at the root of American "exceptionalism." The claim is not simply that the US is, as Bill Clinton put it, the "indispensable nation," whose global power makes it a party to all major international issues. It is also that the US can expect deference from other states, because it looks beyond its narrow self-interest to sustain an international order that supports peace, cooperation, and prosperity, particularly among the world's democracies.

Not every US president has followed Wilson's lead. The promise of liberal internationalism was snuffed out for three presidential administrations, from the election of Warren G. Harding in 1920 until FDR took office in 1933. With Trump, it is being snuffed out again. "From this day forward, a new vision will govern our land," Trump declared at his inauguration. "From this day forward, it's going to be only America first."

But Wilson's vision may not prove so easy to quash. Back in the twentieth century, the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War impelled US policymakers to embrace liberal internationalism. Today, too, a tumultuous world is likely to vindicate its deep and enduring appeal. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

Tony Smith is Professor Emeritus of political science at Tufts University. His most recent book is *Why Wilson Matters: The Origins of American Liberal Internationalism and Its Crisis Today*.



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