

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



May 08, 2019

Why Diversity Matters in Public Service

Diversity refers to human qualities that are different from our own and those of groups to which we belong; but that are manifested in other individuals and groups. Dimensions of diversity include but are not limited to: age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religious beliefs, work experience, and job classification.

Public Administration experts hold that traditional work arrangements are inadequate to address the challenges organizations encounter today. According to these experts the shifts from an industrial to an information-based society, and from a manufacturing to a service economy, have propelled revolutionary changes on work place arrangements. Thus, these trends have affected work not only in industrialized societies, but in all nations including the developing countries. Organizational arrangements based on those assumptions are not responsive to the organizational problems and organizations cannot organize their tasks properly based on such assumptions. In fact, a paradigmatic shift is taking place in how we think about contemporary organizations and their governance.

According to Ospina, public organizations are not exempt from this reality. From a managerial perspective, the Nation state is a large and complex supra-organization. To effectively accomplish its mission in today's turbulent environment, it must engage in similar challenges as any other large corporation. In the same way, a professional civil service system is just one version of another contemporary personnel system based on the merit principle. Public service, of course, represents a particular type of employment relationship that, by its very nature, is different from private employment. Nevertheless, from the point of view of organizational theory, a national public bureaucracy, its conditions of employment, and its employees, are all equally subject to the tremendous pressures shaping the fate of any complex organization today. It is in this context that the challenge of managing diversity in the civil service becomes an urgent and important agenda.

Workforce diversity has, indeed, become an imperative for organizational competitiveness and effectiveness and diversity management is increasingly becoming a principle of human resources management. However, it is not considered properly in the Afghan government institutions. Diversity is not a value in Afghan public Administrations and even the authorities intentionally make measures to exclude specific ethnic groups from the public administrations. Hazaras presence in Afghan public administration clearly shows that they are systematically excluded from both military and civil service sectors. According to the official statistics, Hazaras form 9 percent of the population of the country, but they are only representing 1 to 2 percent of the total public servants and the situation is even worse in the security and defense institutions.

Lack of diversity, including ethnic diversity has held back Afghan public administration and security sector to remain competitive, and these organizations are not able to adapt to and manage new environmental forces. Afghan public Administrations do not search for different work arrangements, and leaders resist flatter organizational structures designed around teams and networks, and boundaries do not become permeable to facilitate intra and inter-organizational cooperation. While the new complexity of work operations demands more diverse functions and the use of more diverse talents, Afghan public administrations continue pursuing old PA assumptions for ethnic purposes.

Diversity poses tough challenges for managers in both public including security sector and private organizations. These are compounded in the public sector by pressures creating additional dilemmas for the civil service system. Public sector organizations in most countries, rich and poor, experience an environment characterized by greater scarcity of resources. In this context, incentives to invest in human capital to adjust to the new demands will be minimal. Public officials and managers must respond to competing and give equal opportunities to all Afghan citizens. Indeed, Hazaras also want the best person for the job in a department that is diverse and reflects the community it serves. Reasons for the slow progress are no doubt complex, but it's hard to believe that minorities including Hazaras aren't interested in these jobs or lack the intellect and physical ability to serve the nation. We need to stop the self-inflicted wounds we are doing to ourselves in the public sector and security sector by ignoring diversity goals.

The Necessity of the Day: Decisiveness against Terrorism

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

In recent days, a newsletter was released by the defense ministry indicating that nearly 43 ISIL members, including foreign members of the group, were killed in an airstrike in the eastern province of Kunar. The air strike has taken place where the people of this place have completely migrated and this area was fully owned by the ISIL group. According to news sources, this area was being used to train members of the group where Several Pakistani and Uzbek citizens who were members of the ISIL group were also killed. Analysts say both the Taliban and ISIL group are active in eastern Afghanistan, especially in the provinces of Kunar and Nangarhar, which border Pakistan.

Elsewhere, in northern Baghlan province, a top ISIS leader who was in charge of terrorist activities in northern Afghanistan and Central Asia was killed in an operation of the Afghan Special Forces. The Ministry of Interior (MoI) in a statement added that the militant leader identified as Uzbek Mufti that was mainly involved in planning and organizing terrorist attacks in the northern parts of the country. According to MoI, Uzbek Mufti was also in charge of equipping and financing the terror group of Central Asia. At least three other ISIS militants were also killed during the same operation and some weapons and other military kits were confiscated, the MoI added. The anti-government armed militants including ISIS sympathizers have not commented regarding the airstrike so far.

The Taliban militants have also suffered heavy casualties in clashes with the Afghan armed forces in southern Zabul province, according to local security authorities. As reported, the Afghan armed forces clashed with the Taliban militants in Shenkai, Arghandab, and Dai-chupan districts of Zabul province leaving at least 17 militants dead. The statement further added at least 20 Taliban militants also sustained injuries during the same clashes. The Afghan military has not disclosed further information regarding the possible casualties of the armed forces as a result of the clashes.

It seems that such action against terrorists remained the only possible option for the Afghan government and people. Because the terrorists neither have belief in peace and prosperity and nor they have lost their motives which originated from the political terrorist project. For example, some of the neighboring countries are still seeking to achieve its political goals through terrorism as initiated in the very first days of the establishment of the Taliban group. Also, those who chose this part of Asia as a center for the cultivation of terrorists are still behind the scenes of terrorism with the same motives. Those who have so far supported terrorism are not seemed to meet their goals yet and continue to insist on supporting this group. The presence of citizens from other countries

in an ISIS training center in eastern Afghanistan suggests that there is still enough motivation to foster terrorists and strengthen terrorism in the region.

Unfortunately, with the acceleration of peace talks between the United States and the Taliban in Qatar, there is a kind of dispersion among the political factions within the system in the country. Some of the political elites and even those who fought against the Taliban have been implicitly and indirectly showed willingness towards Taliban and unwontedly transformed into hidden supporters of the Taliban. They even prepared to negotiate the Taliban over the constitution and achievements of the Afghan people and mentally accepted to return to the dark era of the Taliban. This fantasy was strengthened when the extreme tiredness of the Afghan people was linked to the war. There is no doubt that the war has destroyed the lives of people of Afghanistan, and every day witnessing the deaths of Afghan youths is hard and intolerable but this situation cannot justify to go back to the dark period of the Taliban and to resume another endless conflict in the country.

Despite the numerous victims and calamity in the past years, the people of Afghanistan feel that they have gained some achievements which are very hard to lose it freely. Many people ask if the Taliban were to come to dominate the country, then there was no need to fight and sacrifice. We had a system nearly two decades ago, which the Taliban still demand the same system. When talking about the constitution, the political system, civil liberties, human rights, and civil values, the Taliban reject everything unconditionally. Representatives of the Taliban at the Moscow conference have explicitly rejected all these values and emphasized the establishment of Islamic rule and the implementation of the Shari'a according to their own interpretation.

Now, when the cease-fire tabled as a prerequisite for peace talks, the Taliban reject it and emphasize on war and bloodshed. But on the other hand, the people of Afghanistan are never ready to lose their important achievements such as constitution, political system human rights and so on which has hardly attained in the past two decades. This public demand was clearly expressed by the Peace Consultative Jirga, where all the various groups of the Afghan people were present. The peace talks in recent days, the final resolution of the Peace Consultative Meeting, the successive defeats of terrorists on the battlefields and the potential danger of changing terrorism requires the Afghan government to be actively present in the peace process, and On the other hand, it should not overlook a moment of decisiveness against terrorism. This is the only possible way for Afghanistan.

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How Social Protection Can Empower Women

By: Phakama Ntshongwana, Nicola Ansell, and Keetie Roelen

To live in dignity, free from want, is a fundamental human right. Social protection is key to upholding that right, ensuring that people can escape poverty and insecurity. That is why social protection is at the center of strategies for ending global poverty by 2030, the first of 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. But, if those strategies are to work, they must go further – especially with regard to women.

In recent years, many countries – particularly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean – have made great strides toward improving social protection. But most policies and initiatives are inadequate, and nearly four billion people still lack any social protection at all. Because women are the leading providers of unpaid labor, they are the most likely to suffer from this failure.

The issue of social protection was at the top of the agenda at the UN's 63rd Commission for the Status of Women, held last month. NGOs, activists, policymakers, and academics called for increased support for women in the labor market, including initiatives to encourage employment and the provision of social support, such as childcare services. Pointing to successful countries like Iceland and Norway, participants agreed that only on a level playing field, with no gender pay gap, can the full potential of girls and women be realized.

The first step toward designing effective strategies is to gain a more nuanced understanding of the struggles many women endure as they attempt to juggle vast responsibilities. Beyond the "invisible" work of household maintenance and caregiving, women in low-income households often are expected to contribute financially. Women constitute the majority of frontline workers in public-service sectors, for example. The pressure on single mothers is particularly intense. Being a single parent is challenging in any context. But it is all the more difficult for a poor woman with limited education or training and little or no access to social protection or support. Add to that the pejorative discourse about single motherhood and "dependency culture," and the situation can be overwhelming.

Yet that is the reality women face in many countries. In South Africa, for example, working-age adults receive no social assistance unless they are disabled. While there is a means-tested benefit program for children's primary caregivers, the Child Support Grant, the funds dispensed are insufficient to meet children's needs. In any case, those who accept social support are often looked down upon by their communities.

In Haiti, women seeking employment do receive some support, through initiatives by the local organization Fonkoze. But little attention is paid to the specific challenges faced by women, who are also expected to continue to act as primary caregivers for their families.

With no social support, poor mothers are often left with an impossible choice: either leave their children without sufficient quality care or

forego an income that they badly need.

When social security provision for impoverished caregivers is linked to an obligation to seek work, even that choice is taken away.

Addressing these challenges will require governments to expand and rethink social-protection programs. For starters, it is important to recognize that women are not simply seeking "free money." While young men may tend to feel greater shame about receiving "unearned" income, owing to cultural expectations that men must be providers, young women also tend to view themselves as providers, not simply nurturers.

Evidence from poverty-targeted cash-transfer programs in rural Malawi and Lesotho reinforces this conclusion. While poor women appreciate much-needed cash, they are often uncomfortable with their status as recipients of state benefits, and are keen to make productive contributions to their families and communities. That is why it is vital to deliver to women genuine income-generating opportunities, rather than simply distributing small cash payments that keep them close to the poverty line.

Moreover, it is not every woman's goal solely to act as a caregiver. Women have ambitions of their own. Those ambitions may focus on providing for their families, whether as a caregiver or a breadwinner, but that is not always the case. They need support that enables them to choose the contributions they want to make, and access to relevant, meaningful work.

Involving men and other caregivers is vital to build effective social protection systems that work for women, though this must be accompanied by good and affordable health services, schools, and other facilities. Programs focused on boosting social protection and expanding employment opportunities for women must adjust the language they use, in order to challenge assumptions about women as the main providers of unpaid labor. Finally, efforts should be made to strengthen community relationships, in order to cultivate the trust needed to revive the type of childcare that predominated before the ideal of self-contained households, with one male provider and one female caregiver, took hold.

Evidence from around the world demonstrates the urgent need for social-protection policies and initiatives that enable women not just to survive, but to thrive. This means giving women the support they need to participate in the labor force – including education and training – while taking into account the true extent of their responsibilities. Above all, it means empowering women to choose the balance between employment and caregiving that works best for them.

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