

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



November 14, 2016

On World Diabetes Day

Every year November 14 is celebrated as the World Diabetes Day (WDD) in various countries around the world. The Day was basically created by International Diabetes Federation (IDF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1991 as a response to the growing concerns regarding health threats posed by diabetes. However, it became an official United Nations Day in 2006 after a resolution was passed.

The basic aims of the day include: preparing a platform to promote IDF advocacy efforts throughout the year and be the global driver to promote the importance of taking coordinated and concerted actions to confront diabetes as a critical global health issue.

This year the theme of WDD is 'Eyes on Diabetes', which aims to focus on promoting the importance of screening to ensure early diagnosis of type 2 diabetes and treatment to reduce the risk of serious complications.

Diabetes is a serious disease and is a major cause of blindness, kidney failure, heart attacks, stroke and lower limb amputation. The number of people with diabetes has risen from 108 million in 1980 to 422 million in 2014, and WHO projects that diabetes will be the 7th leading cause of death in 2030.

However, the good news is that it can be treated and its consequences avoided or delayed with diet, physical activity, medication and regular screening and treatment for complications. Unfortunately, due to socio-economic issues there are many people who cannot have proper access to health facilities, therefore, they fail to pursue proper treatment.

The irony is to see human development in the field of health and medicine and yet find that there are millions of people in the world who are not able to benefit from these developments. This simply means that the revolution in the field of health and medicine does not cure the diseases of those people who are most vulnerable to them i.e. the poor. For poor, the health facilities are a luxury that they can only dream about.

If Afghanistan is considered in this regard, it would be clear that there is not enough awareness regarding diabetes; moreover, even those who know about the disease they cannot do much to fight against it as the accessibility to medicines for the common people is really very poor. Same is the situation regarding many other diseases.

The people of Afghanistan, for the last few decades, have not been able to get their rudimentary requirements of life easily. Since the installation of a democratic government, the situation has improved to a certain extent, yet real changes are to be seen.

Most of the matters relevant to the life of poor civilians of Afghanistan have been handled on short-term basis. The donors' money based on the specific projects have only supported the people for a particular period of time; while in most cases these projects only exist on the papers.

No considerable measures have to be taken though it is clear that poor health facilities is causing many deaths each year. Even in the largest cities of the country, the health facilities are not appropriate and most of the diseases that people have remain untreated.

In the last few years the attentions that have been diverted towards the health facilities have only concentrated on the number of hospitals and medical units (even then the number is not enough), while neglecting the quality altogether. In case of public health, it is a very dangerous choice to make as lack of quality services in this case may lead to the worsening of the health and even death.

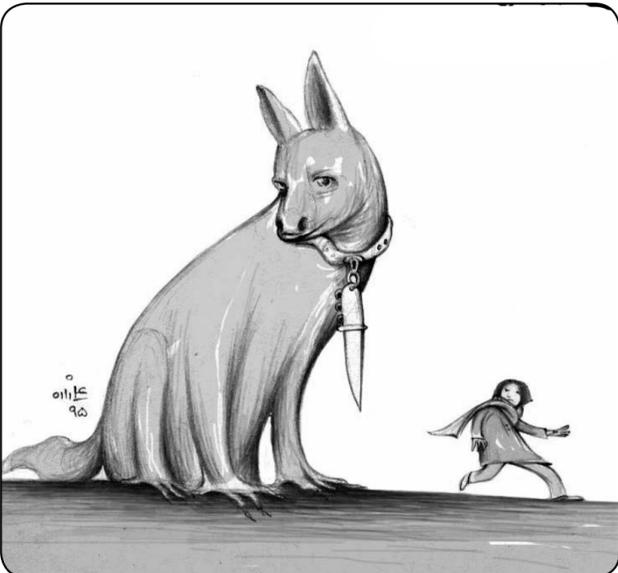
Moreover, the prices of medicines are very high as they are imported from other countries, and in most of the cases, their quality is also very much pathetic. There have been many occasions when the people have lost their lives because of low-quality medicine imported from neighboring countries.

On the other hand 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. Meanwhile, private hospitals have been established that can, in no way, be afforded by the people who do not have enough food to eat.

Even the people who can afford the luxury of availing proper health facilities choose to visit neighboring countries for standard medical facilities.

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.

These strategies should have clear guidelines about the serious diseases like diabetes and the ways to minimize their threats. At the same time, the authorities should take steps to improve the accessibility of the common people to proper medical facilities and medicines.



Stop Terrorism by Stopping Aid

By Muhammad Zahir Akbari

The recent terrorists attack on German Consulate in Mazar-e-Sharaf, killed six civilians and injured 128, including 19 women, 38 children and damaged 100 homes and shops. This indicates that terrorist groups believe in nothing they kill children, man and women equally. In fact, they seem more likely to a blazing fire which burn Muslim and Non-Muslim eastern and western, sinful and sinless equally. According to some reports, from 1970 to 2016, there are around 150,000 terrorist incidents happened worldwide. Just over 23,000 occurred in North America and Europe. In 2014 alone, 13,463 terrorist attacks occurred around the world, causing at least 32,700 deaths and more than 34,700 injuries. As of November 16, 2015, 658 detainees from Guantanamo Bay have been transferred: 532 detainees pre-January 22, 2009 and 126 detainees post-January 22, 2009. Of those transfers, at least 117 (17.8 percent) have been confirmed as re-engaging in terrorist activity, and 79 (12 percent) have been suspected of re-engaging in terrorist activity. Nearly 60 percent targeted private, infrastructural, educational, media, or religious individuals and institutions.

Deeper look at issue indicate that there are far more than a flaming fire. For example the destructive explosives passing hundreds of security filters, from east to west, north to south, why no one gets to know them? We live in the age of facilities, why it is not possible to install a few detective gates in order to control the explosive-loads? How can they find ground in a community if internal people do not support them? And finally is there any National consensus against terrorist in Afghanistan? The silence and Hypothetism against deliberately frequent targets of innocent children, men and women proves that there is no consensus in the matter of terrorism in this country. Why there is no positive development in security situation within past 15 years? Insecurity and insurgent activities have taken an upward trend.

There are daily reports of clashes, explosions and deaths nearly all over the country: from the east to the west, the north and to the south. The escalation of fighting has sent the casualties of civilians as well as of both sides to the conflict worryingly high. Over the recent months, Helmand, Kunduz, Faryab and other provinces have taken the brunt of the fighting. Hundreds of civilians victimized and nearly 500,000 people displaced. In addition, poverty and unemployment has reached its unprecedented levels. Since the beginning of the new democratic system, the expectation has been that the Afghan leadership and international humanitarian supporters would pave the way for the economic growth and changes. Instead, they caused flight of human and fiscal capital from the country; they finally face

trust deficit far more than ever. Lack of economic perspective and a government stuck in insecurity means Kabul is a failed system. The business community in Afghanistan was hoping that the government would work and coordinate with them closely. It is two years since inauguration of the national unity government, and it looks as if the government distrusts the private sector. The shrinking business environment is not in the interest of the government.

The great part of failure seasons relates to the will of National Unity Government and international stakeholders; due to lack of strong political will against terrorism, unemployment and weakness of government have led to growing insecurity, and the collapse of districts and even provincial capitals to the Taliban.

The fall of districts has become a routine matter. Every week, there are reports about districts falling to the insurgents, and then retaken by government forces. The Taliban's capture of districts and government checkpoints has become a tool for them to seize military vehicles and large cache of weapons, which are then used against Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).

So in some instances, covert deals are blamed for the fall of regions and districts to the Taliban, with some reports suggesting that some military officials leave checkpoints to the Taliban in exchange for money, but yet leaders of the government not only do not question them, but also send them elsewhere, and even recognize their performance sometimes. This unfavourable practice has led to the incapability of ANSF to repel insurgent offensives despite spending billions of dollars on them.

To successfully combat against international threats, first we should stop terrorist by stopping aid at community level, consensus at national level and convention at international level. If the people stop supporting terrorists in the communities, neither it is possible to establish their shelter there and not possible to continue recruiting. Beside there are also needed for religious agreements and people conformity on the issue for the best counterinsurgency strategies.

Some stakeholders better know what the ground realities in world or in Afghanistan are and what the real solutions are.

The top political players, the self-interested power-seeking groups and warring factions with conflicting agendas tend to ignore facts and never touched the root causes. Given the high human and material costs of the several cycles of the Afghan conflict, only fools from either side will expect to win this endless war. In reality, Afghanistan's wars have produced no winners in the past and will never do so in the future.

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What America's Economy Needs from Trump

By Joseph E. Stiglitz

Donald Trump's astonishing victory in the United States presidential election has made one thing abundantly clear: too many Americans – particularly white male Americans – feel left behind. It is not just a feeling; many Americans really have been left behind. It can be seen in the data no less clearly than in their anger. And, as I have argued repeatedly, an economic system that doesn't "deliver" for large parts of the population is a failed economic system. So what should President-elect Trump do about it?

Over the last third of a century, the rules of America's economic system have been rewritten in ways that serve a few at the top, while harming the economy as a whole, and especially the bottom 80%. The irony of Trump's victory is that it was the Republican Party he now leads that pushed for extreme globalization and against the policy frameworks that would have mitigated the trauma associated it. But history matters: China and India are now integrated into the global economy. Besides, technology has been advancing so fast that the number of jobs globally in manufacturing is declining.

The implication is that there is no way Trump can bring a significant number of well-paying manufacturing jobs back to the US. He can bring manufacturing back, through advanced manufacturing, but there will be few jobs. And he can bring jobs back, but they will be low-wage jobs, not the high-paying jobs of the 1950's.

If Trump is serious about tackling inequality, he must rewrite the rules yet again, in a way that serves all of society, not just people like him. The first order of business is to boost investment, thereby restoring robust long-term growth. Specifically, Trump should emphasize spending on infrastructure and research. Shockingly for a country whose economic success is based on technological innovation, the GDP share of investment in basic research is lower today than it was a half-century ago.

Improved infrastructure would enhance the returns from private investment, which has been lagging as well. Ensuring greater financial access for small and medium-size enterprises, including those headed by women, would also stimulate private investment. A carbon tax would provide a welfare trifecta: higher growth as firms retrofit to reflect the increased costs of carbon dioxide emissions; a cleaner environment; and revenue that could be used to finance infrastructure and direct efforts to narrow America's economic divide. But, given Trump's position as a climate change denier, he is unlikely to take advantage of this (which could also induce the world to start imposing tariffs against US products made in ways that violate global climate-change rules).

A comprehensive approach is also needed to improve America's income distribution, which is one of the worst among advanced economies. While Trump has promised to raise the minimum wage, he is unlikely to undertake other critical changes, like strengthening workers' collective-bargaining rights and negotiating power, and restraining CEO compensation and financialization.

Regulatory reform must move beyond limiting the damage that the financial sector can do and ensure that the sector genuinely serves society. In April, President Barack Obama's Council of Economic Advisers released a brief showing increasing market concentration in many sectors. That means less competition and higher prices – as sure a way to lower real incomes as lowering wages directly. The US needs to tackle these concentrations of market power, including the newest manifestations in the so-called sharing economy.

America's regressive tax system – which fuels inequality by helping the rich (but no one else) get richer – must also be reformed. An obvi-

ous target should be to eliminate the special treatment of capital gains and dividends. Another is to ensure that companies pay taxes – perhaps by lowering the corporate-tax rate for companies that invest and create jobs in America, and raising it for those that do not. As a major beneficiary of this system, however, Trump's pledges to pursue reforms that benefit ordinary Americans are not credible; as usual with Republicans, tax changes will largely benefit the rich.

Trump will probably also fall short on enhancing equality of opportunity. Ensuring preschool education for all and investing more in public schools is essential if the US is to avoid becoming a neo-feudal country where advantages and disadvantages are passed on from one generation to the next. But Trump has been virtually silent on this topic.

Restoring shared prosperity would require policies that expand access to affordable housing and medical care, secure retirement with a modicum of dignity, and allow every American, regardless of family wealth, to afford a post-secondary education commensurate with his or her abilities and interests. But while I could see Trump, a real-estate magnate, supporting a massive housing program (with most of the benefits going to developers like himself), his promised repeal of the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) would leave millions of Americans without health insurance. (Soon after the election, he suggested he may move cautiously in this area.)

The problems posed by the disaffected Americans – resulting from decades of neglect – will not be solved quickly or by conventional tools. An effective strategy will need to consider more unconventional solutions, which Republican corporate interests are unlikely to favor. For example, individuals could be allowed to increase their retirement security by putting more money into their Social Security accounts, with commensurate increases in pension benefits. And comprehensive family and sick leave policies would help Americans achieve a less stressful work/life balance.

Likewise, a public option for housing finance could entitle anyone who has paid taxes regularly to a 20% down-payment mortgage, commensurate with their ability to service the debt, at an interest rate slightly higher than that at which the government can borrow and service its own debt. Payments would be channeled through the income-tax system.

Much has changed since President Ronald Reagan began hollowing out the middle class and skewing the benefits of growth to those at the top, and US policies and institutions have not kept pace. From the role of women in the workforce to the rise of the Internet to increasing cultural diversity, twenty-first century America is fundamentally different from the America of the 1980s.

If Trump actually wants to help those who have been left behind, he must go beyond the ideological battles of the past. The agenda I have just sketched is not only about the economy: it is about nurturing a dynamic, open, and just society that fulfills the promise of Americans' most cherished values. But while it is, in some ways, somewhat consistent with Trump's campaign promises, in many other ways, it is the antithesis of them.

My very cloudy crystal ball shows a rewriting of the rules, but not to correct the grave mistakes of the Reagan revolution, a milestone on the sordid journey that left so many behind. Rather, the new rules will make the situation worse, excluding even more people from the American dream. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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