

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



November 19, 2016

Treating Weaker Strata!

The rights of women and children are supported by International Community, and violating their rights means disobeying one of the international instruments that are Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) adopted in 1989 - which addresses the particular needs of children and to set minimum standards for the protection of their rights.

The CEDAW defines discrimination against women as "...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

By accepting the Convention, States commit themselves to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including: To incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women; to establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and to ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises.

The Convention provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life - including the right to vote and to stand for election - as well as education, health and employment. States parties agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Convention is the only human rights treaty which affirms the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations. It affirms women's rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality and the nationality of their children. States parties also agree to take appropriate measures against all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of women.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most rapidly and widely ratified human rights treaty in history - with 194 countries as "states parties." The only countries that have not ratified the treaty are Somalia, South Sudan, and the United States. Countries that ratify the treaty pledge to protect children from economic and sexual exploitation, violence, and other forms of abuse and to advance the rights of children to education, health care, and a decent standard of living. The convention also addresses children's rights to a name and nationality, to be heard, to be fairly treated when accused of offenses, when deprived of parental care, and other rights. Although many countries have adopted impressive sets of laws protecting women and children, they often fail to enforce them. Millions of children are not in school, particularly girls, children from poor families, children in conflict countries, and children with disabilities. Many children suffer and die from diseases that can be easily prevented, including diarrhea and malaria. In Afghanistan, around 20% of children are expected to work in order to provide for themselves and for their family. Street vendors, water carriers, cardboard collectors, shoe polishers, taxi solicitors, domestic servants, assistants in boutiques, are the kind of odd jobs done by Afghan children.

The child plays an important economic role in the Afghan family structure, mainly because the little money earned by their parents is hardly enough to feed the hungry mouths in the family. Additionally, due to cultural practices, Afghan mothers rarely choose to seek employment outside their homes. In this situation, the family relies upon the economic contribution of the child, even if it means the child is left begging on the streets. The consequences which follow their obligation to work are indeed tragic: absence of education, police violence and disease linked to pollution and to the drastically changing climate.

The situation is really critical for women and children and the graph of violence, including sexual harassments, seems to be on the rise. The wicked individuals do not feel mercy on children and victimize them barbarically. In such a case, the government is supposed to enforce the law with no impunity at all so as to prevent from further violence. If the rights of the most vulnerable parts of the society namely women and children, be violated with no or loose reaction from the government, the graph of crime will go higher with each passing day.

The Afghans need to realize that the ethical values that are obsolete and discriminatory must be discouraged so that they should be able to make developments towards a civilized society. On the other hand the individuals must keep in consideration the welfare and security of others while performing different social actions. The different strata in the society must be dealt with in accordance to their due rights.

The weaker strata like the poor, women, and minorities must be treated appropriately. Moreover, the ethics is not just about doing good to one's own-self, rather it should be based on the principles of humanity and must avoid discriminatory behavior.

Street Harassment in Afghanistan

By Muhammad Zahir Akbari

Street harassment exists almost everywhere in the world but exceptionally it disguised the face of Afghanistan to be the most insecure place for women in the world. It is said that, nine out of ten women and girls in urban communities in Afghanistan face harassment. Every woman's experiences differ depending on the distance she travels or her time on the streets, but she can face up to 20 incidents of verbal or physical harassment or inappropriate stares and disturbances from male pedestrians. According to Women and Children Legal Research Foundation conducted research with 364 women and girls about sexual harassment in public spaces, workplaces, and educational institutions in seven provinces of Afghanistan. 93% said they were harassed in public spaces, 87% said workplaces, and 89% said educational institutions. Additionally, 90% had observed sexual harassment in public places, 79% in educational settings, and 72% in workplaces. However, it is recognized as the least spoken-about form of violence, which is rife in workplaces, at educational institutions, and on the streets.

There are some provinces where women are not able to go out at all. For instance, in Jalalabad there are almost no women on the streets. Women are afraid to leave their homes without an escort; girls cannot continue their education. People believe that women themselves are to blame for these situations. There is no rule of law to create hopes and there is no active organization in the government to look after the matter. No one listens, because street harassment is becoming a culture in Afghanistan. If the law is not implemented against street harassment it will continue forever. Women cannot feel safe on the streets even during the daylight; at night it is completely impossible or very hard for them to be outside. Students will never learn to respect women and they become the next generation of harassers because they are not well educated even to the extent that learn from their teachers.

Even though girls' access to education and women's employment and participation in public life have improved since 2001, sexual harassment makes it hard for girls and women to take advantage of these opportunities. Many of families stop their female member when education or workplace is not located close to their homes. Most of girls themselves quit university when they frequently experience street violence. If the rule of law continues to be currently weak, if the culture of impunity does not root out, and if expertly proper actions are not taken against street harassment, problem will gravely hold back the inclusion of women in Afghanistan. Street harassment has many factors such as psychological, social, economic, moral, lawlessness and sexual deprivations

due to fiscal inability for timely marriage. From one hand, the Expenses of wedding is the most costly in Afghanistan comparing to other countries; on the other hand, couples are not chosen on the basis of logical suitability but often chosen based on preferences of parents or other family members. As a result they are not satisfied from each other and try to satiate their thirst on the street. It is also believed that women have a role in increase of street harassment; they come out without proper Hijab and enchanting makeup.

In addition, it is also noticed that the majority of women prefer to remain silent when facing street harassment, but is silence an appropriate response? Silence in most cases only strengthens and intensifies violence against women. Harassers wrongfully assume that women, who are silent in the face of street harassment, are consenting to these acts or they are not strong enough to defend themselves. Due to the predominant culture of "shame" and "honor" and high social stigma attached to issues of sexual harassment, Afghan women often do not talk about their experiences of street harassment. The scar remains invisible and women continue to suffer, generation after generation. This, in itself, boosts the harasser's confidence who continues to stalk and abuse women without fear of repercussions. Therefore, single solutions may not lead to essential changes to the issue rather it needs to studies from psychological, social and economical dimensions.

Lastly, the Street harassment in Afghanistan is more than an ignorable issue to be belittled. It makes women nervous and insecure as they go about their daily lives, as they go to work, attend university, do their shopping, and even go out with friends for a picnic. According to studies, it can happen everywhere—even in the place she is born and grew up. It became a part of social culture; men follow female and make rude comments.

There is no respect for women on Kabul streets, let alone in other provinces. If they wait for a taxi even for five minutes, many private cars will stop and offer to take them home. If they take a taxi the driver will start to question them: Are you married? Do you have any children? Where do you live and so on...?

We must all work together to end gender based violence; we should raise our voices, support women groups and give each other a hand to show society how severely street harassment affects women. It could be happening to our sister, mother, aunty, and our children. Finally, men must understand that women rights are human rights and Islamic rights.

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Inclusive Growth Depends on Cities

By Lamia Kamal-Chaoui and Amy Liu

We live in turbulent times, and popular discontent with the status quo is mounting. The reasons for popular frustration vary from country to country, but the common thread everywhere is a growing sense that the economy is rigged in favor of the few.

Indeed, the gains from economic growth are increasingly going to the very highest earners. In OECD countries, people in the top 10% of the income distribution earn around ten times more than people in the bottom 10% - up from seven times more nearly 30 years ago. In 2012, among the 18 OECD countries with comparable data, the top 10% accounted for 50% of total household wealth, while the bottom 40% accounted for only 3%.

We all pay a price when inequality reaches new heights. In a range of OECD countries, rising inequality knocked 6-10 percentage points off overall GDP between 1990 and 2010. When the poorest people are unable to fulfill their potential, economic growth suffers.

As policymakers and political leaders look for ways to make economic growth more inclusive, cities will play a central role in any solution. A survey of OECD countries shows that half the total population lives in cities of more than 500,000 inhabitants, and that cities have accounted for 60% of total growth of employment and GDP since 2001.

However, this growth has not been inclusive: income inequality in cities is higher than the national average in all OECD countries surveyed, except Canada. In the United States, 95 of the 100 largest metropolitan areas added jobs and increased their economic output in the five years following the Great Recession, but only 20 experienced median-wage growth.

Economic gains in recent years have not made the typical worker better off, and as wealthy individuals have reaped the benefits of growth, poverty has become more concentrated. According to research by the Brookings Institution, the number of extremely poor neighborhoods in the US has more than doubled since 2000.

This has far-reaching costs. Growing up in a poor neighborhood has been shown to reduce a person's life prospects dramatically, even when earnings remain constant. And in metropolitan areas such as London and Baltimore, the difference in life expectancy between poor and wealthy neighborhoods just a few miles apart can be more than 20 years.

As the site of both economic opportunity and disparity, cities are where we must look to tackle inequality. In March, the OECD, the Ford Foundation, Brookings, and other institutions launched the Inclusive Growth in Cities Initiative, in partnership with New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and 20 other mayors from around the world. By bringing together "Champion Mayors" to define a shared inclusive-growth agenda, the Initiative acknowledges the crucial role mayors play in creat-

ing economic opportunity and boosting the productive capacity of individuals and firms.

At a recent Brookings event, OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría discussed four key areas where cities can work to reduce inequality. These ideas will be developed further at a meeting in Paris on November 21, hosted by Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo.

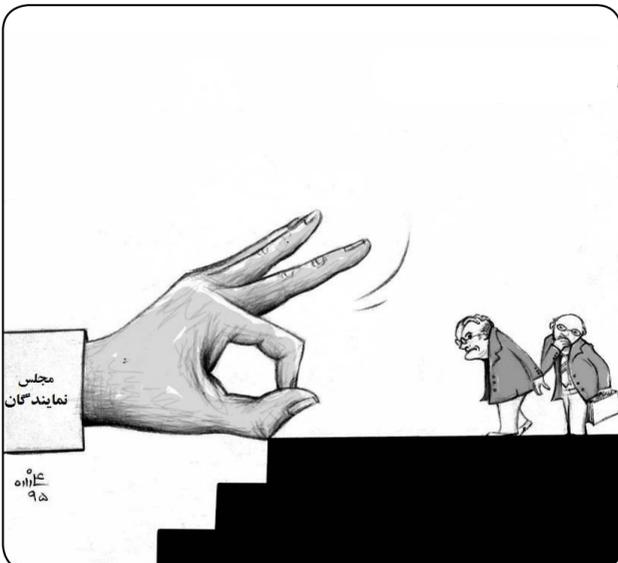
First, cities should make education systems more inclusive by investing in vocational schools where people of all ages and backgrounds can learn marketable skills. For example, in Atlanta, Mayor Kasim Reed has launched a partnership between a local startup incubator, the city's workforce development agency, and a coding school to provide young people with mentorship networks, through which they can develop financial literacy and critical thinking skills, while also learning how to write code.

Second, cities should ensure that employment and entrepreneurship opportunities are available to all people, including women, young adults, immigrants, and disadvantaged populations. In Stockholm, which took in 8,000 asylum-seekers between fall 2015 and spring 2016, Mayor Karin Wanngård is developing a new type of school for adults. As part of a comprehensive integration strategy, the new schools will teach the language, cultural, and technical proficiencies necessary to participate in Stockholm's job market. In Seoul, Mayor Park Won-soon is leveling the playing field for small and medium-size enterprises with targeted financial support, fairer transaction and subcontracting rules, and informal-work regularization.

Third, cities must ensure high-quality, affordable housing for all in safe, healthy neighborhoods. In Paris, Hidalgo's "right of first refusal" plan allows the municipal government to acquire residences that come on the market in selected neighborhoods so that it can provide them to poorer residents at risk of being displaced.

Finally, cities should ensure that public infrastructure and services - including public transportation, water, energy, waste management, and broadband - are easily accessible for all. In New York, de Blasio's IDNYC initiative is providing free government-issued identification cards for all residents - including the homeless, undocumented immigrants, and former convicts - so that marginalized groups can make use of the city's resources. Efforts such as the Inclusive Growth in Cities Initiative and the United Nation's Habitat III conference are helping to turn the tide against rising inequality one city at a time. The more we can capitalize on local solutions for common global problems, the more progress all of us will make. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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