

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

# Daily Outlook

## AFGHANISTAN

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### Standing for Elimination of Violence Against Women

November 25 is celebrated in different countries of the world as International Day for the Elimination of Violence against women. The basic objective of the day is to raise awareness regarding the issues that pertain to violence against women and make efforts to discourage the practices that promote violence against women.

The date came after the brutal assassination of the three Dominican political activists, known as Mirabal sisters, in 1960, on the orders of Dominican ruler, Rafael Trujillo. On 20 December 1993, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), by resolution 48/104, adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. In this context, in 1999 the UNGA designated 25 November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and invited governments, international organizations and NGOs to organize on that day activities designed to raise public awareness of the problem.

This year the theme of the day is "Leave no one behind: end violence against women and girls" which encourages all the countries to commit to a world free from violence for all women and girls around the world, while reaching the most underserved and marginalized, including refugees, migrants, minorities, indigenous peoples, and populations affected by conflict and natural disasters. It is really vital to note that violence against women is the most extreme form of discrimination. According to the aforementioned report, on the basis of data from 2005 to 2016 for 87 countries, 19 per cent of women between 15 and 49 years of age said they had experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in the 12 months prior to the survey. In the most extreme cases, such violence can lead to death. In 2012, almost half of all women who were victims of intentional homicide worldwide were killed by an intimate partner or family member, compared to 6 per cent of male victims.

Afghanistan is also one of the countries where violence against women is very frequent. It can be easily observed that the incidents violating women rights in Afghanistan have not been stopped though there have been many claims of developments. In fact, the changes are prevalent only on the exterior while from within, the Afghan society still lacks the development it needs in order to reach to a respectable position. The support and assistance of the international community has only been able to provide clean and beautiful attire not a praiseworthy soul to Afghan society. The Afghan social structure has been vehemently dominated by religious extremism and tribal nepotism.

Most of the self-designed religious doctrines and tribal norms are against the women and discriminate their basic rights. Unfortunately, these norms and doctrines have even gone to the extent of violence and have tortured women physically - mostly in the public. They, in the name of dignity of women, have in fact degraded them. The concept of so-called tribal honor and dignity has not been able to provide safety and respect to Afghan women.

There have been worst incidents of violence in Afghanistan. These incidents include even the rape of a three years old girl. This shows the example of the most heinous brutality against females in a society that considers women as the honor and dignity of a family.

Violence against women can only be reduced in Afghanistan when the policies and perceptions regarding women start changing. The authorities can play a key role in this regard. Nonetheless, it is unfortunate to note that Afghan authorities and many important personalities themselves have favored the recommendations and suggestions to limit the participation of women in social and political lives. As most of these authorities are themselves nourished in an extremist patriarchal society and do not have much consideration regarding the role and empowerment of women and consider it against their tribal values that they come out of their houses. It is difficult for them to follow a movement to save women from violence and make them achieve their due place in Afghan society. The pursuit of Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law is one of the most evident examples. Most of the authorities have shown reluctance to pursue it in its true spirit. The reason is that they do not agree with the law as a whole and have certain objections. Most of them have their self-centered motives. Unfortunately, they use the name of Islam but it should be clarified that Islam does not tolerate violence against women and urge for social and political participation of women.

There should be a movement that must use different forums to discuss and consider the overall issue of violence against women in Afghanistan seriously along with raising awareness and sensitization regarding EVAW law. The movement can involve the political and religious leaders, especially the ones who have some interest in this regard. They can also involve the authorities that have important positions in the policy-making arena and make them realize their responsibilities. Ultimately, they, along with the people as a whole, should continue their efforts in this regard and show that they have respect for women and their human rights.



## Women - Prone to Social and Political Ills

By Hujjatullah Zia

Women are left at the mercy of social, political, and economic pain and sufferings around the globe. Their rights and freedoms are violated in some ways by many groups. Their social and cultural role is restricted, mainly in traditional societies, where cultural taboos hold strong sway. The view of women's inferiority, cultural restriction, and misogynistic mindset inflict indescribable agony upon women and they are discriminated on the basis of their gender.

The rights and dignity of women are hotly debated in democratic societies and both men and women are deemed equal in all cases. Women are not supposed to be the victim of discrimination. In addition to saying that all human beings are born free and equal, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states in article 2, "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status..." Many states have signed the UDHR and are committed to observe it. However, the cycle of discrimination and violence against women does not stop and they continue suffering.

Besides bearing discrimination and violence at home and in public places, women have no peace of mind in social media, either. For example, they are blackmailed and receive threatening messages and insulting videos.

According to research by Amnesty International surveying more than 4,000 women, more than one in five women have experienced online harassment or abuse.

The vast majority of this harassment happens on social media sites. Almost half of the victims said the abuse or harassment was sexist or misogynistic in nature, and a quarter had received physical or sexual threats. The poll showed that a majority of the harassment, almost 60 percent, was racist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic in nature.

Azmina Dhrodia, Amnesty's researcher on technology and human rights, as cited as saying, "The internet can be a frightening and toxic place for women. It's no secret that misogyny and abuse are thriving on social media platforms, but this poll shows just how damaging the consequences of online abuse are for the women who are targeted."

Of those who had been victims of harassment, 41 percent felt less secure in their daily lives because of the abuse they had experienced, and one in four feared for the safety of their families. A vast majority of women also said they were apprehensive about

using the internet after being targeted. Besides sexist, racist or homophobic abuse, 17 percent of the victims said they had identifying personal details or private photos shared online, according to the survey. Many Afghan women do not use their real names in social media or never post their real photos for two reasons: First, using social media is not deemed appropriate for women by traditional customs and they will be considered brazen. Hence, they fear to be labelled by their neighbors or prevented by their families. Second, there are people who seek to have contact with them despite their reluctance, which is a flagrant violation of their freedom. In case of refusal, they will be threatened or inappropriate video or pictures will be post through their timeline which will degrade them. In such a case, they will be besmirched for the rest of their life among the people.

Worst of all, some militant parties who cherish a misogynistic mindset spread propaganda to trap women into taking part in "Jihad". About months ago, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) came out with its women's magazine titled Sunnat-i-Khula attempting to appeal to Muslim women, offering first-person stories of a female doctor who gave it all up to travel to 'Khorasan', an interview with the wife of a commander, and even a supposedly inspirational portrait of a child soldier.

"The objective was simple: brand extremism as heroic, joining up as a duty of faith possible for all sorts of women; they could go themselves, or send their husband and even their baby sons." The self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) was also in the game of recruiting women. A magazine issued by ISIL in Arabic and titled 'Wajib un-Nisa' called women to join war and deemed it a duty for them. On social media, the group's female recruits, particularly those from the West, took on the task of wheedling others to join, talking about how lovely life was in daula (the ISIL-controlled 'state') and what a grand time was to be had in living in such a pure place.

Women, who are deemed inferior to men and simply created for satiating the desire of men, according to many militant fighters and dogmatic beliefs, in one time, are called duty-bound to carry out "Jihad" alongside men when the militants are losing.

Even in battlefields, women had to satiate men's desire - those women recruited by ISIL were supposed to do so in Iraq and Syria. On the other hand, they were raped and killed on the grounds of their race and religion, this was the case with many Yazidi women in Iraq. Hence, women are highly prone to social and political ills.

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## Natural Solutions to Climate Change

By Justin Adams

In response to climate change, land is key. Today, agriculture, forestry, and other land uses account for roughly a quarter of global greenhouse-gas emissions. But adopting sustainable land management strategies could provide more than one-third of the near-term emission reductions needed to keep warming well below the target - 2°C above pre-industrial levels - set by the Paris climate agreement.

Conservation organizations like mine have long been working to balance the interaction between people and nature. But only recently have we fully grasped just how important land-use management is in addressing climate change. With the development of remote sensing, artificial intelligence, and biogeochemical modeling, we can better forecast outcomes, and develop strategies to manage and minimize adverse consequences.

Some of the most promising ways to mitigate climate change are what we call "natural climate solutions": the conservation, restoration, and improved management of land, in order to increase carbon storage or avoid greenhouse-gas emissions in landscapes worldwide. The full potential of these solutions is detailed in a new study produced by my organization, the Nature Conservancy, and 15 other leading institutions.

Among the most important natural climate solutions is protecting "frontier forests" - pristine woodlands that serve as natural carbon sinks. Intact tropical and northern forests, as well as savannas and coastal ecosystems, store huge amounts of carbon accumulated over centuries. When these areas are disturbed, carbon is released. Preservation of frontier habitats also helps regulate water flows, reduces the risk of flooding, and maintains biodiversity.

Reforestation is another important natural solution. Globally, an estimated two billion hectares (4.9 billion acres) of land has been deforested or degraded. Because trees are the best carbon-capture-and-storage technology the world has, reversing these numbers would bring a significant reduction in global carbon levels. We estimate that the world could capture three gigatons of CO2 annually - equivalent to taking more than 600 million cars off the roads - simply by planting more trees.

A third category of natural solution is agricultural reform. From field to fork, the food sector is a major contributor to climate change through direct and indirect emissions, and by its often-negative effects on soil health and deforestation. Recognizing these risks, 23 global companies - including Nestlé, McDonald's, Tesco, and Unilever - recently signed a commitment to halt deforestation in Brazil's Cerrado savanna. The region, which covers a quarter of the country, has come under growing pressure from production of beef, soy, and other commodities, together with the associated infrastructure.

As the Cerrado pledge demonstrates, when governments and businesses come together to address land-use challenges, the impact is potent. Natural climate solutions have the potential to reduce CO2 emissions by an estimated 11.3 billion tons a year - equal to a complete halt in burning oil, according to our study. One recent study calculated that if Brazil reached zero deforestation by 2030, it would add 0.6% of GDP, or about \$15 billion, to

its economy. Communities also reap secondary benefits - such as rural regeneration, improved food and water security, and coastal resilience - when natural climate solutions are implemented.

Yet, despite the data supporting better land-use decision-making, something isn't adding up. In 2016, the world witnessed a dramatic 51% increase in forest loss, equivalent to an area about the size of New Zealand. We need to buck this trend now, and help the world realize that land-use planning is not simply a conservation story.

Some countries are moving in the right direction. The Indian government, for example, has set aside \$6 billion for states to invest in forest restoration. In Indonesia, the government created a dedicated agency to protect and restore peatlands, bogs, and swamp-like ecosystems that have immense CO2 storage capabilities. But they are the exceptions. Of the 160 countries that committed to implementing the Paris climate agreement, only 36 have specified land-use management in their emissions-reduction strategies.

Overcoming inertia will not be easy. Forests, farms, and coasts vary in size, type, and accessibility. Moreover, the lives of hundreds of millions of people are tied to these ecosystems, and projects that restore forest cover or improve soil health require focused planning, a massive undertaking for many governments. One way to get things moving, especially in the agricultural sector, would be to remove or redirect subsidies that encourage excessive consumption of fertilizers, water, or energy in food production. As Indian government officials reminded their peers during a World Trade Organization meeting earlier this year, meaningful agricultural reforms can begin only when rich countries reduce the "disproportionately large" subsidies they give their own farmers.

Supporting innovation and entrepreneurship can also help power change. New processes and technologies in landscape planning, soil analysis, irrigation, and even alternative proteins such as plant-based meat are making agriculture and land use more sustainable. Similarly, changes in the construction industry, which is turning to more efficiently produced products like cross-laminated timber (CLT), can help reduce carbon pollution. Finally, financing options for natural climate solutions must be dramatically increased. While payments to conserve forests are starting to flow under the UN's REDD+ program, and the Green Climate Fund has committed \$500 million for forest protection payments, total public investment in sustainable land use remains inadequate. According to the Climate Policy Initiative, public financing for agriculture, forestry, and land-use mitigation attracted just \$3 billion in 2014, compared to \$49 billion for renewable energy generation and \$26 billion for energy efficiency. At the UN climate change meeting that just concluded in Bonn, Germany, global leaders reaffirmed that the world cannot respond adequately to rising temperatures if governments continue ignoring how forests, farms, and coasts are managed. Now that there is a firm consensus, governments must act on it. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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