

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



October 14, 2017

Treating Every Faction of Society Equally

Aging is an inevitable natural and biological phenomenon. There are many perceptions of the old generation varying from one culture to another. Some people have the positive views like "old is gold", or "old person in the family is a blessing", while some people think that "old is worn out" or "dead wood". In general taking the problem from the point of views of old people themselves and the people around them, it appears that the aged are viewed as a disadvantaged group and present an acute social problem. This points out to the facts that there are negative conditions regarding aging and the aged group which call for some remedial measures for its correction.

The problem apart from its psychological and social components, irrespective of the financial issues, has increased because of improvements in health/medical care and longevity in life. This has kept the aged physically and mentally young. Technology and rapid social changes have, on the other hand, made the aged isolated and worn-out.

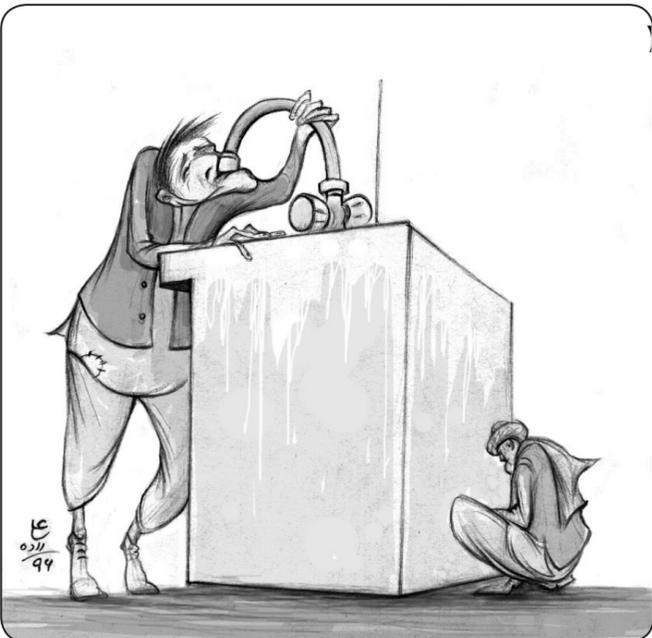
Once the old family members were the symbol of wisdom and experience for the young, and their stay with the families were cherished. However, the growing tensions, pressures and achievement motives before the young and adults, particularly in the urban areas of the country, have made the old people burden on the families. There is a growing need to tackle the issue seriously. There are different sorts of remedies available but more important is to pursue them properly. Both the government authorities and the people must play positive roles in this regard. The main problem is to keep the old people occupied in one way or the other. The projects and schemes could be started by the private enterprises for the re-employment of the old people with light work of short duration, or the opening up of self-employment opportunities at the local level in small communities. This would be equally applicable both in rural and urban areas of the Afghanistan.

There is a need for the creation of voluntary services in the field of primary education like health and family welfare centers and other voluntary or non-governmental organizations at the local, regional, provincial and national levels. In this way, the old people will have a sense of belonging and contributing to the national development apart from having a sense of pride and honor with maintaining their self-respect and dignity. This would save the old persons from many a socio-psychological problems. It would have very important implications on their mental health. It would be certainly better to contribute to the national development rather than simply waiting for the death and complaining against the friends, relatives and time. The revival of friendship ties with friends, relatives and neighborhood would contribute to health past-time and establishing relationships in primary groups. The relationships within the family could be reestablished by participating into the affairs of the sons/daughters and grand-children in a democratic way. This would give the old persons proper psychological satisfaction and emotional contentment, thus, enjoying the retired life in a richer and fuller way instead of total withdrawal and isolation.

Active involvement in the family/community affairs with respect to birth, death, marriage ceremonies and religious festivals would keep the old men and women active and alive and would develop a sense of participation. These social and religious activities are likely to make the old generation happy and contented with a sense of pride and honor - the best way to spending retired life.

The rest and recreational activities are the most suitable means for the old people requiring in active participation. Radio and TV could play an important role in presenting national and international sports events on major and minor games regularly. Same is the case for providing indoor games for the old people. Even participation in local 'meals' would be of much significance to the old people. Such indoor sports and games could be arranged under the shade of a tree, or any other common place. In short, the involvement in community affairs even inter-community affairs would be of much use for the old people where their life-long experiences and wisdom could be utilized by the younger generation on the one hand, and, on the other hand, a source of mental satisfaction for the old people.

Establishing old age houses and even small villages and centers for the mentally and physically handicapped is another solution for problems of old people in urban areas. The poor, unwanted and rejected old people could live there and spend the remaining days of their lives at these places in a meaningful way rather than having an empty life in isolation with a deep sense of inferiority complex. Last but not the least, regular visits to old family friends and relatives, coupled with frequent travel to various parts of the country in groups would be yet another means of spending old-days in a fruitful way. These frequent visits and traveling with change in environment would certainly help in decreasing their tensions and frustration for some time. It would be better if these visits and travels are made every season or year with close old age friends and relatives.



Strategies for Combating Terrorism

By Hujjatullah Zia

The issue of terrorism has challenged not only Afghanistan but the entire world. Despite the counter insurgency, a large number of individuals were affected by terrorism from Kabul to Spain and London. However, the counter-insurgency is simply based on fighting militants without regarding the hotbed of terrorism.

Warring parties seek to reconcile their conflicting ideologies with one another so as to strengthen their factions. For instance, the Taliban and the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) associated with each other to intensify their attacks.

Further, following the revelation of Mullah Omar's death, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) - which was formed in 1998 by the Islamic ideologue Tahir Yuldashev and former Soviet paratrooper Juma Namangan and supported the Taliban in late 1990s - allied with ISIL group in 2014. Establishing the "Khorasan Province", a number of IMU's members, with Usman Ghazi at the helm, pledged loyalty to ISIL and changed the Taliban's white flag into the ISIL's black one. Members of IMU got high political position within the ISIL outfit so that the Uzbek ethnic groups both from Afghanistan and Uzbekistan notice and pledge allegiance to them. Now a member of IMU Mowayyeh is said to be the head of Khorasan Province.

Afghan nation is affected by horror and terror in some ways. The counterinsurgency is moving at a snail's pace, whereas warring parties are changing their tactics swiftly for inflicting heavier casualties upon Afghan and foreign troops and innocent civilians.

Warring parties claim to fight for reviving religious tenets. In other words, they wage ideological war against moral turpitude or infidelity, according to them. However, it is no more a mystery that their own practices, mainly spilling the blood of innocent men, women and children, are against Islamic sharia and Prophet's Sunnah. It is explicitly stated in the Holy Koran that whoever kills a person it is as though he has killed all mankind. And whoever saves a life, it is as though he had saved all mankind.

Hence, the radical ideology and cruel practices of warring parties, including the Taliban, ISIL and IMU, are against the soul of Islam and ethical code. To put an end to this ideological war, Afghanistan needs to take the initiative for establishing an Ulema Council. All muftis and mullahs from around the world, particularly from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, etc. need to form a religious council and issue fatwa (religious decree) against radicalism and all warring parties. Moreover, they have to enlighten the true soul of

Islam, condemn radicalism and spread it around the world through taking role in the media and publishing magazines. That is to say, all muftis and mullahs will have to write articles in different languages against the cruel practices of Islamic fundamentalists. They should hold regular meetings in different countries to revive their commitment and adopt fresh mechanism for combating radicalism and terrorism.

The second issue the religious council needs to campaign against is cultivating narcotic drug which is one of the deciding factors behind the continuation of war and insurgency. The Taliban that claim to fight for religious reasons are supported strongly by cultivating and trafficking narcotic drug which is illegal in Islam. It is most likely that if Islamic scholars from around the world launch a campaign against cultivating narcotic drug, the backbone of terrorist networks will be broken. Moreover, the state should dismiss those scholars who spread radicalism.

Reportedly, there are some seminaries with radical instructors that implant their views in the minds of their students. I have constantly pointed out that seminaries should be under the strict control of the government and the content of their textbooks needs to be checked. The negotiation of peace came to a stalemate since the Taliban's radical leader Mullah Haibatullah refused to give Afghanistan the green light and allied his men with other warring parties. Besides associating with ISIL, the head of Haqqani network Sirajuddin Haqqani is his deputy which reflects the fact that Haqqani network is also fighting alongside the Taliban.

To sum up, there are two main reasons behind the protracted war in Afghanistan: First the financial resources of the militant fighters, mainly narcotic drug, are not combated strongly. Second, terrorist networks seek to find common ground for joining forces against states. To view the defeat of ISIL group in Iraq and Syria, it encountered shortage of financial resources and their tankers were targeted while smuggling oil. Moreover, there were no safe havens for ISIL in a particular country. The world needs to share the effective strategy for combating terrorism. It goes without saying that the current traditional mechanism for combating terrorism will not mitigate the insurgency. In addition to military deal, eradicating the financial resources of terrorist networks and campaigning against their radical ideology will reduce violence to a great extent and bring them to their knees. Indeed, preaching against their ideology by religious elements will prevent the public to fall for the bogus claim of militants who are operating under the mask of sanctity.

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Closing the Education Gender Gap

By Julia Gillard

Completing primary school in Niger was never a certainty for Aishetu Mahmoudou Hama, given all the obstacles that stood in her way. "It was hard to study," she recalls. "We sat on the ground - sometimes on a mat, sometimes just in the dirt." But Aishetu persevered, and she is now a 23-year-old university student. Aishetu knows that without school, her life chances would likely be confined to herding, farming, getting married, and having a lot of children. There simply would be no other opportunities for her to pursue.

Like the female teachers who inspired her to learn, Aishetu wants to be a role model to younger girls and her own siblings. She hopes that her story will motivate them to complete their education, too. On this International Day of the Girl, Aishetu stands as proof of the difference that education can make for girls and the people around them. But the struggles that Aishetu overcame also remind us that education remains beyond reach for far too many girls.

Consider one appalling statistic: The number of girls not attending school, despite having fallen by 40% since 2000, still stands at 130 million. This helps to explain why women struggle more than men to find meaningful, well-paying work, and why the share of women in the global workforce persistently lags behind that of men.

Making matters worse, even where girls' educational attainment has grown rapidly, commensurate improvements for women in the workforce have remained elusive. According to a 2015 study by the World Economic Forum, "while more women than men are enrolling at university in 97 countries, women make up the majority of skilled workers in only 68 countries and the majority of leaders in only four."

These gender gaps represent a major generational challenge for large and small businesses alike. Worldwide, companies are already struggling to find enough qualified workers for their increasingly automated work processes. The International Commission for Financing Global Education Opportunity reported last year that nearly 40% of employers are having difficulties recruiting workers with the right skills.

Businesses investing in lower-income countries also need their workers to be healthy. This is more likely when mothers are educated: they and their families tend to be healthier than in the case of less educated mothers. In fact, research shows that if all childbearing-

age women were to complete secondary education, the number of children dying before age five would drop by about 350,000 each year.

The businesses investing in developing- and emerging-market countries that are home to most out-of-school girls thus have an interest in helping girls get the education they deserve. If educational outcomes improve, we will likely see far more women pursuing the higher-level technical training that today's workplaces are demanding.

To put 130 million additional girls into school, we will have to overcome an array of stubborn barriers. In many countries, educating girls is not considered important, owing to expectations that they will work exclusively at home or on the family farm. Early marriage, sexual assault, a lack of sanitary facilities for menstruating girls, and humanitarian crises are just some of the factors that make completing an education more difficult for girls than for boys. And in remote areas in particular, school fees and arduous commutes pose further challenges.

Even if these cultural, political, and geographic hurdles can be cleared, wealthier countries will need to commit far more resources to educating girls in developing economies than they have in the past. Shockingly, the share of donor countries' overseas development aid that is allocated for education has shrunk over the last six years, and is now smaller than it was in 2010. Donor countries urgently need to reverse that trend.

The Global Partnership for Education has been one of the leading catalysts in educating girls over the past decade and a half. Thanks to GPE funding, an additional 38 million girls in developing countries were enrolled in primary school from 2002 to 2014.

To build on that progress, GPE will hold a financing conference, co-hosted by the Senegalese and French governments, on February 8, 2018, in Dakar. We are appealing to donors around the world to help us reach \$2 billion in annual funds by 2020.

With sufficient funding, GPE can support the education needs of 870 million children in more than 80 countries. And it can help developing countries build education systems that will give girls like Aishetu the chance to realize their potential.

When girls and women are empowered through education, they can and do transform the world for the better. Investment in their potential is a bet that can't lose. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

Julia Gillard, a former prime minister of Australia, is Board Chair of the Global Partnership for Education.

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