

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

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Echoing Our Basic Responsibilities

Our country is going through most fragile and crucial phase of its history. The incidents that have taken place and the ones that are taking place clearly indicate that we are going through a transition phase that might lead us to stability or even chaos - if we do not act wisely. It is very imperative at this juncture that we must not fall the victim of emotions and carelessness and strive to act prudently. The leaders, who have influence over the minds and thinking of the common people, must try to advise the people not to lose their sanity and they need to strive to understand the demands and the challenges of time.

People, at this crucial juncture require thinking above their personal benefits; the groups and the institutions require functioning more than their own profits and most importantly the privileged class of the society must take decision above their self-centered incentives. It is really important to speak the words that make sense instead of uttering the words that are popular and spoken for the sake of earning fame. The objective conditions want us to be more realistic and if we are not able to act in that particular manner are doomed to failure.

The history has taught us so many lessons that by now all of us must have learnt enough lessons and must have acquired sufficient prudence. The world has never given any nations so many opportunities to learn from their past mistakes. But seem not to avail any opportunity and at the moment we are going astray. The traditions and values in our society are really weird and out of understanding. A limited number of people have decided to devour the entire wealth of the nation. Another group is busy only in the false display of wealth and status. Certain old men have shouldered the responsibility of proving the wrongs of the ruling elite right through holy scriptures; while another honorable group is striving tirelessly to earn fame in every possible manner.

They have, in reality, lost their connection with the actual problems of the time. The most unfortunate fact is that the intellectuals have forgotten their responsibilities. Though they claim their rights from the society but they seem to have forgotten that the society which they ignore cannot be expected to understand their rights, as well. Has earning fame ever been a top priority issue for the sane people of the society? Our society has adopted the non-issues and wasting time on them. As a matter of fact, we are far behind our actual social, civil and philosophical problems. Our people are behaving like the immature boys and it seems to be written on our foreheads that we do not have any serious issues at the moment and for the times to come God will keep us away from all the problems.

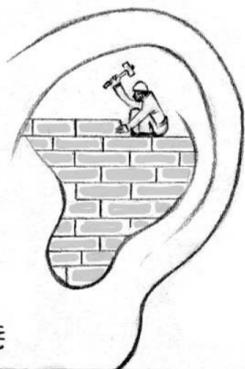
What have the slogans based on extremists sentiments and hatred and division have given us so far? If we still possess the capacity to ponder, we must make use of it and reach to conclusion that our history is one of the most challenging histories in the world and the most tragic fact is that this history has been written with our own blood.

As a matter of fact, we do not seem to have any idea about the gravity of the situation. If we had any idea our reaction would have been very much different from what we are doing now.

Though we are human, we have forgotten the habits of thinking and understanding. The fact is that our people have not been provided the required sanity and boldness to ponder upon the challenges of time and challenge the prevailing values and understandings. We are habitual of saying only those words that seem appropriate to everyone as we are afraid to make others angry. We, from the very beginnings of our lives, are taught to compromise and adjust. Even if there is a place for one person to sit in a car, we can adjust two persons there. We strive to fit ourselves in the mould of traditions and practices even though they may be obsolete and insane.

We have only a single ideal to pursue and that is our 'past'. Unfortunately, the past has not always been glorious and our people seem to follow the same portion of the past that was inglorious. It is difficult to understand why our people do not live their own lives instead of living the lives of their forefathers. If they really want to make difference to themselves and to the world they need to start living their own lives - their present not past.

If we lack a serious consideration to our present and to the life, we would never be able to have a sincere relation with knowledge and even with our beliefs. Though we seem to have inhabited the cities, we have deserted our conscience and our spirits. We seem like alien in our own world. We need to wake up; we need to understand that we are pursuing the wrong directions and the wrong destinations. We must realize that we are not using our humanly attributes in their full capacities and we are not fulfilling the responsibility of being true human beings.



Reflections on Achieving the Global Education Goals

By: Amina J. Mohammed

Throughout my life, I have seen the power of education. I have witnessed how quality education for all can support the creation of dynamic economies and help to sustain peace, prosperity, and stability. I have also observed how education instills in individuals, no matter their circumstances, a strong sense of self, as well as confidence in their place in the world and their future prospects. But I have also seen what happens when young people and their communities are robbed of education - and of the optimism it engenders. In my country, Nigeria, the militant Islamist group Boko Haram purposely removes young people, especially young girls, from education to engineer a lost generation. The consequences are manifold: loss of dignity, exclusion, declining health, poverty and stagnating economic growth, and the denial of rights.

We know that each additional year of schooling raises average annual GDP growth by 0.37%, while increasing an individual's earnings by up to 10%. If every girl worldwide received 12 years of quality education, lifetime earnings for women could double, reaching \$30 trillion. And if all girls and boys completed secondary education, an estimated 420 million people could be lifted out of poverty. According to a 2018 World Bank report, universal secondary education could even eliminate child marriage.

In today's deeply interconnected world, the benefits of strong and inclusive education systems extend even further. Education gives people the knowledge they need to recognize the importance of safeguarding the planet's finite resources, appreciate diversity and resist intolerance, and act as informed global citizens.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals, created in 2000 to guide global development over the subsequent 15 years, gave new impetus to efforts to ensure education for all. From 2000 to 2015, primary-school enrolment in the developing world rose from 83% to 91%, reducing the number of out-of-school primary-school-age children from 100 million to 57 million. Moreover, from 1990 to 2015, the global literacy rate among people aged 15 to 24 increased from 83% to 91%, with the gap between men and women declining substantially. But much remains to be done. Globally, at least 263 million children were out of school in 2016. This includes half of all children with disabilities in developing countries. Furthermore, half of all children of preschool-age - the most crucial years for their cognitive development - are not enrolled in early-childhood education.

The situation deteriorates further in conflict zones, where girls are almost two and a half times as likely to be out of school as their peers in stable countries. And this does not cover the estimated 617 million children and adolescents of primary and lower-secondary-school age - 58% of that age group - who are not achieving minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics.

To help close these gaps, the successor to the MDGs, the Sustainable Development Goals, also emphasizes education. SDG4 commits the

world to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all - essentially to harness the power of education to unlock every person's potential. Despite the scale of the challenge and the diverse barriers that can restrict and disrupt learning, we know what an effective strategy would entail.

First, to be a true force for change, education itself must be transformed in response to the realities of accelerating globalization, climate change and labor market shifts. While advanced technologies - such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and blockchain - raise new challenges, they may be able to play a role in improving educational outcomes. Digital skills must be part of any curriculum, and new alliances with the tech sector - which can provide valuable insights into these topics - should be actively pursued.

Second, an inclusive and lifelong approach, focused on reaching the most marginalized and vulnerable populations, is essential. As UNICEF's Innocenti Report Card 15 shows, this does not mean sacrificing high standards. In fact, as the report points out, children of all backgrounds tend to do better when they are in a more socially integrated school environment. Such an inclusive approach will require sharing best practices and investing in what is proven to work. Meanwhile, development partners must provide long-term support that emphasizes capacity-building and institutions, and balances humanitarian, economic, and security imperatives.

For education systems and services to be truly inclusive, however, they must also leave no one behind, such as refugees. UNESCO's latest Global Monitoring Report estimates that refugees have missed 1.5 billion school days since 2016. While eight of the top ten hosting countries, including several low- and middle-income countries, have shouldered considerable costs despite the strain on education systems to ensure that refugees attend school alongside nationals, most countries either exclude refugees from national education systems or assign them to separate facilities. This entrenches disadvantage and hampers social integration. The two landmark global compacts on migration and refugees adopted by UN member states last December point the way toward addressing this challenge.

Achieving the needed educational transformation will require far more financing than is currently on offer. As it stands, the global annual funding gap for education amounts to nearly \$40 billion. Closing this gap will require not just increased domestic financing, but also a renewed commitment from international donors.

Everyone has the right to an education. Upholding this right - and achieving SDG4 - will require well-designed strategies, coupled with a prolonged commitment to implementation and effective cooperation among all relevant stakeholders. The UN and its agencies will continue to support such actions, as we strive to ensure that no one is left behind.

Amina J. Mohammed is Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and a former Minister of Environment of Nigeria.

Afghanistan: the front rank of Dangerous Conflict Zone for Children

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Despite constant humanitarian supports, Afghanistan persists to be in the top list of Most Dangerous Conflict place for Children in the world. The longstanding conflict and poverty with worsening displacement crises are of key factors which make the country one of the most dangerous places for children to be born. Globally, According to Save the Children International charity, a US Organization, at least 100,000 babies die every year because of armed conflict and related effects, and Afghanistan listed as being among the 10 worst countries to be a child. "Increasingly, the brunt of armed violence and warfare is being borne by children." Generally, Children suffer in conflict in different ways to adults because they are physically weaker and their physical, mental, and psychosocial development are heavily affected by the conditions they experience as children. Thus, a large number of children die in conflict as a result of malnutrition, disease, and lack of health care than from bullets or bombs. In the five years from 2013-17 in the 10 worst-hit areas, an estimated 550,000 infants died as a result of fighting and the "reverberating impact of conflict." The figures "suggest that every year in just 10 conflict-affected countries, at least 100,000 infants die in the absence of conflict would survive." Herein, Afghanistan listed one of the 10 worst countries for children in conflict areas including Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan.

In Afghanistan alone, as UN verified 3,179 child casualties and it quoted referring to data for infants and older children for 2017. "Many of these incidents involved improvised explosive devices and unexploded ordnance, accounting for at least 33% of those casualties." The deaths include "children being used to plant bombs and/or to carry out the attacks themselves," the report quoted. It estimated that nearly 90 percent of children in Yemen, 70 percent of those in Syria, and 60 percent of Somalia's children were living in close proximity to high-intensity conflict in 2017.

The report noted that the UN Security Council has identified six "grave violations" against children in situations of armed conflict: killing and maiming of children, recruitment and use of children as soldiers, sexual violence against children, abduction of children, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access. According to Save the Children, the number of children directly affected by verified cases of grave violations in 2017 was more than 25,000, the highest ever recorded.

"The nature of conflict has changed, putting children in the front line in new and terrible ways," quoted from the Save the Children Officials. "Wars are lasting longer. They are more likely to be fought in urban areas amongst civilian populations leading to deaths and life-changing injuries, and laying waste to the infrastructure needed to guarantee access to food and water," it added.

The Save Children Report come Simultaneous with recent UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) 2019 appeal, which highlighted a total of 6.3 million people in dire need of humanitarian support, including 3.8 million children. UNICEF has appealed for US 50 million to provide much needed lifesaving support to more than 570,000 children with basic health and nutrition packages, water, sanitation and hygiene, education and child protection support.

"Despite efforts being made, children continue to bear the brunt of conflict; adverse climatic conditions; unprecedented levels of food insecurity. Some 3 out of 10 children are experiencing psychosocial distress, and some 600,000 children under the age of five years are suffering from severe acute malnutrition," quoted from Adele Khodr, UNICEF Afghanistan Representative.

Given the various victims that the people are already experiencing, this situation has exacerbated humanitarian needs. In 2018, nearly 289,000 people were verified as newly displaced by conflict, and displacement trends. Up to 39 per cent of the population is poor, 10 million people lack access to essential health services and 3.5 million children (60 per cent of them girls) are out of school. One third of children in Afghanistan have experienced psychological distress related to the loss of family and the constant risk of death or injury due to conflict and attacks on schools. An estimated 2 million children under 5 years are suffering from acute malnutrition, including 600,000 children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM). Persistent conflict has created long-standing socio-economic and development challenges that cannot be addressed through humanitarian assistance alone.

2019 marks 30 years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and 40 years of unrest in Afghanistan. Four decades that has left an ineradicable impact on the country's children. The safety and wellbeing of Afghanistan's children is a collective responsibility government and other stakeholders. In addition, the frequent natural disasters like flooding, avalanches and earthquakes take a devastating toll on the children and families of Afghanistan resulting to a large number of people being displaced in 2018.

In general, the long-lasting conflict continues to threaten the physical safety and health of Afghans, disproportionately so for women and children. A large number of people live in conflict affected districts with extremely constrained access to health services. Rates of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) have breached emergency thresholds in many provinces. Simultaneous exposure to violence as well as high economic vulnerability means most households experience multiple and repetitive shocks which result in food insufficiency and adoption of negative, often harmful coping strategies which plunge families deeper into crisis.

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