

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



May 13, 2018

## Guarding the Rights of Women

**S**ocial and political circumstances have to change within a society, since such changes are inevitable and are bound to occur. And those who are really interested to achieve something positive from these changes have to understand the nature of these changes and try to divert them towards better destinations instead of trying to block their ways. However, an important fact about the changes that occur within a society is that they influence the weaker strata of society to a large extent.

Afghan society is also one of the societies in the world and it has to go through the process of change. Though mostly the changes have been negative in Afghan society and these changes have made Afghan people suffer to a large extent, the changes have been there and they will be there as long as Afghan society exists and the people live in it. Though these changes have influenced everyone, the weaker strata of society, especially women, have been largely influenced by them.

The changes in Afghan society must be analyzed from two perspectives. The first one must be analyzed from within Afghan society, keeping in consideration the social changes that occur with the interactions and development within the social institutions and other actors. Such a perspective depicts that Afghanistan is a tribal society with a slow pace of changes. The traditional culture and norms and values are strict and slow to change. Moreover, education, that can be a source of change, has not been able to penetrate Afghan society properly. Most of the rural areas still do not have schools and proper education. In addition, the education that is being provided contains obsolete curriculum that does not help much in changing the mentality of the people and thus the society as a whole. This slow pace of changes within Afghan society does not help much in changing the position of women. They, to a large extent, are still suffering from the discriminatory rules and regulations and social behaviour.

Extremist and strict religious beliefs and practices have also made the changes less frequent. Strengthened by extremist religious institutions, these beliefs and practices have no positive approach towards changes and consider them evil. They also support the patriarchal setup and keep the discrimination against women intact and even invigorate it.

The political changes are also very slow as the political setups, in most of the areas, are non-existent. The democracy has not been able to reach to grass root level as local bodies are not chosen through any sort of election. The setup, therefore, is authoritative and dominated by tribal lords and extremist religious leaders, who do not welcome the positive changes at all.

The other perspective of changes in Afghan society must be understood in its relations with regional and international community and actors. The involvement of international community has strived to impose liberal and democratic changes in Afghan society. Though, it has been successful to a certain extent, the real changes are yet to be seen. Afghanistan is now recognized as a democratic country. There are considerations and emphasize on the rights of minority, women and other weaker strata of the society in the constitution and many other developments have been made as well; however, they are prevalent only in the major cities while the rural areas have not yet seen their impacts.

The regional countries on the other hand have always strived to promote and gain their interests in Afghanistan. They have not been supportive enough in bringing about long-lasting changes in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the capability of Afghan administrative structure has not been able to take full advantage from the external support and change the lives of the people of Afghanistan.

Another important factor to consider regarding the nature of changes that may occur in the times to come in Afghanistan's socio-political scenario is the ongoing transition period. There are concerns that the security situation may further deteriorate and there may be many compromises in the peace deal with Taliban that may lead the society towards further religious extremism and backwardness.

The changes so far made and occurred and the ones that may follow do not seem to have much consideration regarding the rights of women and gender balance. Women have been discriminated and they may further be influenced by the future changes to a large extent as they are one of the weaker strata and weaker strata are influenced by transitions and instabilities to a large extent.

Moreover, women fear the return of Taliban-like era and fear that all the developments made for improvement of the status of women may be lost unless wise decisions are made. In the political bargain with Taliban for the peace process, it is possible that government may make certain compromises among which the law regarding the rights of women may suffer further. Therefore, it is really necessary to understand the nature of mentioned changes and try to direct the efforts towards better destinations so that the rights of all the people of Afghanistan, including women must be guaranteed.



## Lack of Relevant Training & Skills Renders Afghan Police Force Irrelevant to Match Existing Challenges

By Mohammed Gul Sahibzada

**A** well trained, skillful and strong police force is pre-requisite for a stable, secure, law-abiding and flourishing society. Afghanistan has more than one-hundred-and-forty-thousand strong police force, but due to lack of appropriate training, skill, accountability, problems in check and balance on performance, dysfunctional command and control and lack of defined roles and duty-structure has turned this potent force a liability rather than asset and arm of Government to service society, people and legal institutions of the country - liability in a sense that hundreds of millions of US dollars are spent every year to keep this large force in place. Factors that contribute to, and exacerbate the present status of Afghan police force include meddling by members of parliament, local chieftains, warlords, campaign contributors and political groups and parties in the process of recruitment of officers and service members to fill positions in various geographical locations in the country to suit personal interests. This phenomenon has become accepted trend since efforts by United States and other international donors to set up a standing, professional police force began one and a half decade ago. In addition, lack of a viable, multipronged and inclusive strategy for formation of police force has rendered the process susceptible to conflicting strategies of donor nations, which has resulted in spending hundreds of millions of US dollars on so called training and education without tangible impact on the force. His Excellency, Mr. Wais Ahmad Barmak, Minister of Interior Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has said that police force did not have necessary training and skills to conduct duties.

Most of the trainers hired for high salaries are assigned to advise, develop police institution and police training are people with military background, lawyers and white color civilians. They have seldom undertaken policing tasks of a police station. They apply sophisticated management processes which do not align with the core aspects of operational policing. They do not know tits and bits of police processes and only give general framework. Teaching discipline and loyalty to institutions, enameing it to police culture should be parts and parcels of all training sessions and education system of Afghan police force. Trainers with civilian background cannot understand police culture, institutional pride, institutional loyalty and discipline hence they are not fully relevant for the job. It is important to bring about doctrinal changes as part of the process to reform Afghan police force.

The recently released SIGAR report in 2017, which include narrations about Afghan police force, has concluded that police was converted to paramilitary as it was trained by military as support force with the core mission to hold the territory and it lacks anti crime capacity. Almost all police development efforts were modeled on military rather than civilian police institutions. (<http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-17-62-LL.pdf>).

Police should be trained by police - NOT military! Military has evolved Afghan police force around military doctrine. No one has expressed as clearly as SIGAR report that, 'developing and training a national police is best accomplished by law enforcement professionals'. To go a bit more in details, police maintains the safety and security and so, every police officer is considered to be always on duty but in Afghanistan some of the basic principles of police institution, which is a soft arm of the state, a visible symbol of the state and whose personnel are always on duty, have not been adhered. Afghan police model should be adapted to its culture, socio economic status and the region. An unending demand for more money, resources and facilities persists throughout the institution. The present leadership of the Ministry of Interior has diagnosed many of these fundamental problems and want to restructure police training programs, but lack of skilled police practitioners who understand police functioning and are able to manage large organizations comprising of hundred thousands of people. Ministry of Interior is an important State institution consisting of hundreds of thousands of police personnel spread all over the country. Hence, ad-hoc approaches and managerial practices adopted in non-government organizations and private sectors may not be suited.

Ministry of Interior is one of the highest budget Ministry and a large portion of it is supported by international donors through financial, technical, and logistics supports and institutional development and professionalization. In spite of these, police is not able to perform as people of Afghanistan expects. Outside funding and Afghan funding both amounting to billions of dollars

have been spent. As per SIGAR report and UNDP data, UNDP itself spent almost 5 billion dollars in the last 15 years on police. Whether this money was spent wisely or landed in corruption and mismanagement malice? It needs serious introspection into funds management and utilization.

We keep hearing fatalities in police ranks. We are under war like situation and the police which is supposed to provide safety, suffers with casualty and attrition. Police is the only state institution, which can use force in times of peace. Its police personnel are to be trained in defending themselves and protecting us. A paramilitary type police force does not have soft policing skills and so, in operational situations it uses excess force alienating communities. Also, human rights organizations start to cry foul about it and make big issue of it. This situation triggers international criticisms, which in turn sap police morale to the lowest ebb. Police seems to be at the crossroad: confused and perplexed. Use of force by police is not unlawful per se, but it ought to be proportionate and it has to be lawfully used. Police is to be trained for this and also to be trained in soft policing skills and police processes.

At this point in time, many centers of gravity are pulling Afghan police force in multiple directions. There isn't a single, inclusive strategy with multiple moving parts to direct training programs and reform process in Afghan police force. In order to break free from this awkward situation, Afghan Government should charter its own path leading others and start to plan for economic independence, and this is possible only when Afghan Government war strategy and policing efforts are paralleled with development of a viable economic development strategy. Afghanistan has large mineral, petroleum and copper and iron ore riches. There is potential for agro based activities and small and medium scale manufacturing. Under an inclusive, multi-pronged strategy, Afghan economy can develop speedily. Afghanistan and Iraq were two nations on the path to rebuilding State institutions. The reasons why Iraq got her institutions built up and functional is because of her economic independence. Export of large quantity of oil has generated huge amount of fortune for Iraq. But Afghanistan continues to depend on foreign aid, thus does not have the independence and free will to design structure and future for her institutions. His Excellency Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan should take heed of this Achilles heel of his country and take drastic steps towards sailing the country on the path of economic development and financial independence as soon as possible.

With the onset of so called spring fighting session since last three weeks, insurgents and terrorist groups ratcheted up their attacks on civilians, foreign and government organizations. There is a clear change in tactics and targets of these attacks in a sense that civilians and unarmed individuals and organizations are frequently targeted in cities and residential areas in recent months. Insurgents' main military targets before included military bases, units and police contingents engaged in war with insurgents in the fields. The purpose of attacking soft targets that comprises unarmed civilians, individuals and organizations is to create chaos and build pressure on government for its failures to protect civilians, hence destabilize social order, commerce and market activities and to instill a sense of insecurity among general public. This change clearly originates from weaknesses and defeat of terrorists' and insurgents' war efforts in the fields in countryside. This senseless pursuit of cruelty and mercilessness on the part of insurgents and terrorists groups that inflict harm and death on children, women and men - who are not players in this war - is a clear sign of their defeat, thus the war on terror is passing through its critical stage. At this point in time, National Unity Government (NUG) and its security apparatus that include Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense, office of National Security Advisor and National Directorate of Security (NDS) should re-visit the war agenda and amend it in accordance to changes occurring in style and tactics adopted by terrorists and insurgents. Afghan police training program should also be oriented and built around these new realities on the ground in order to ward off changing terrorist war tactics and to tighten circle around them with a view to completely defeat them. Police should protect civilians, provide security and establish rule of law in communities.

The author is the emerging writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at [mg.sahibzada.ceo@kainaatgroup.af](mailto:mg.sahibzada.ceo@kainaatgroup.af)

## Fighting inequality in Asia and the Pacific

By Shamsad Akhtar

**I**nequality is increasing in Asia and the Pacific. Our region's remarkable economic success story belies a widening gap between rich and poor. A gap that's trapping people in poverty and, if not tackled urgently, could thwart our ambition to achieve sustainable development. This is the central challenge heads of state and government will be considering this week at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). A strengthened regional approach to more sustainable, inclusive growth must be this Commission's outcome.

It's imperative, because ESCAP's Sustainable Development Goal Progress Report shows that at the current rate of progress, Asia and the Pacific will fall short of achieving the UN's 2030 Agenda. There has been some welcome progress, including in some of the least developed countries of our region. Healthier lives are being led and wellbeing has increased. Poverty levels are declining, albeit too slowly. But only one SDG, focused on achieving quality education and lifelong learning, is on track to be met.

In several critical areas, the region's heading in the wrong direction. Environmental stewardship has fallen seriously short. The health of our oceans has deteriorated since 2015. On land, our ecosystems' biodiversity is threatened. Forest conservation and the protection of natural habitats has weakened. Greenhouse gas emissions are still too high. But it's the widening inequalities during a period of robust growth that are particularly striking. Wealth has become increasingly concentrated. Inequalities have increased both within and between countries. Over thirty years, the Gini coefficient increased in four of our most populous countries, home to over 70 per cent of the region's population. Human, societal and economic costs are real. Had income inequality not increased over the past decade, close to 140 million more people could have been lifted out of poverty. More women would have had the opportunity to attend school and complete their secondary education. Access to healthcare, to basic sanitation or even bank accounts would have been denied to fewer citizens. Fewer people would have died from diseases caused by the fuels they cook with. Natural disasters would have wrought less havoc on the most vulnerable.

The uncomfortable truth is that inequality runs deep in many parts of Asia and the Pacific. There's no silver bullet, no handy lever we can reach for to reduce it overnight. But an integrated, coordinated approach can over time return our economies and our societies to a sustainable footing. Recent ESCAP analysis provides recommendations on how to do just that.

At their heart is a call to invest in our people: to improve access to healthcare and education.

Only a healthy population can study, work and become more prosperous. The universal basic healthcare schemes established by Bhutan and Thailand are success stories to build on. Expanding social protection to low income families through cash transfers can also help underpin a healthy society.

Increasing investment in education is fundamental to both development and equality. Here the key to success is making secondary education genuinely accessible and affordable, including for those living in rural areas. Where universal access has been achieved, the focus must be on improving quality. This means upskilling teachers and improving curricula, and tailoring education to future labour markets and new technologies.

Equipping people to exploit frontier technologies is becoming more important by the minute. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a rapidly expanding sector. It can quicken the pace of development. But it is also creating a digital divide which must be bridged. So investment in ICT infrastructure is key, to support innovative technologies and ensure no one is left behind. Put simply, we need better broadband access across our region. Geography can't determine opportunity.

This is also true when it comes to tackling climate change, disasters and environmental degradation. We know these hazards are pushing people back into poverty and can entrench inequality. In response, we need investment to help people to adapt in the region's disaster hotspots: targeted policies to mitigate the impacts of environmental degradation on those most vulnerable, particularly air pollution. Better urban planning, regular school health check-ups in poorer neighborhoods, and legislation guaranteeing the right to a clean, safe and healthy environment into constitutions should be part of our response.

The robust growth Asia and the Pacific continues to enjoy, gives us an opportunity to take decisive action across all these areas. But for this to happen, fiscal policy needs to be adjusted. More effective taxations systems would increase the tax take, and better governance would increase people's willingness to contribute. Public expenditure could then be made more efficient and progressive, the proceeds of growth shared more widely, and inequalities reduced.

My hope is that leaders will seize the moment, strengthen our commitment to fighting inequality on all fronts and put us back on track to sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.

Shamsad Akhtar is the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida

Editor: Moh. Sakhi Rezaie

Email: [outlookafghanistan@gmail.com](mailto:outlookafghanistan@gmail.com)

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

[www.outlookafghanistan.net](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net)

The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.