



Afghans
For Progressive
Thinking (APT)

Leadership Development Program 2023

Policy Briefs Pamphlet

Second Edition



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Introduction

In mid-August 2021, a perilous turning point unfolded in Afghanistan, jeopardizing the hard-earned achievements of Afghan women in the fields of education, work, and societal progress. Their substantial contributions had greatly influenced the development of society and the pursuit of a fair, inclusive, and democratic future. Tragically, these gains now faced a dire threat of erosion and reversal.

Since the Taliban regained control, girls have been prohibited from attending secondary, high schools and universities. Desperately, the situation for women and girls has continued to deteriorate under Taliban rule, particularly after the ban on women rights to employment in December 2022.

This pamphlet includes the policy briefs developed by young Afghan girls living in Afghanistan. These young women participated in the APT leadership development program, where they attended ten thought-provoking sessions addressing various topics to enhance their critical thinking skills, leadership capabilities, and broaden their understanding of the current challenges within Afghanistan. The pamphlet contains four policy briefs, each focusing on a specific topic and providing recommendations for the assigned challenge. The main objective of this publication is to amplify the voices of Afghan young women by providing them with the opportunity to write and share their recommendations with a wider audience.

In conclusion, this publication would not have been possible without the generous support and meaningful contributions of our facilitators, Mr. Thomas Valenti, Ms. Lorraine Degruson, and Ms. Meridith Styer, who delivered insightful and life-changing sessions to our participants and assisted us in proofreading the briefs. We would also like to acknowledge the significant contributions of Mr. Ajmal Ramyar, Mr. Nematullah Akbari, and Mr. Abdul Rahman Jalil in coordinating the program and guiding the young participants.

Afghans For Progressive Thinking (APT) Organization

Afghans for Progressive Thinking (APT) is a youth-led nonprofit organization in Afghanistan that actively addresses human rights crises, with a specific focus on women's rights, while simultaneously promoting girls' access to education through creative and impactful initiatives.

APT's initiatives encompass a range of key areas. It connects female university students in Afghanistan with mentors from abroad, forging valuable relationships and providing guidance. APT also facilitates networking opportunities for youth, both within and beyond Afghanistan's borders, to encourage open dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas and experiences. In addition to these endeavors, APT is preparing to equip a team of young women with expertise in the "Internal Family System (IFS)" trauma healing technique. This training will empower them to offer healing sessions to others and create safe spaces for family members in need of support.

Furthermore, APT offers a platform for young women to express themselves by writing and publishing their stories, particularly significant under Taliban rule.

Over the course of its 13-year existence, APT has successfully fostered meaningful engagement among young men and women. Through discussions and dialogues, they have influenced policies prior to the collapse. These conversations center on critical topics and propose solutions for a better Afghanistan and a better world. APT's work has played a pivotal role in shaping policies on both national and global levels, owing to the development of leadership and critical thinking skills among its participants. Since its inception in 2010, APT activities have impacted and inspired over 60,000 youth and children to build a vision for a just and inclusive society.

You may read more about APT at: www.aptyouth.org

The challenges of Girls' education in Afghanistan

Summary:

Afghan girls lack support and there are many restrictions for them. Young girls don't have access to basic rights, especially in educating themselves. Of course, all these burdens cause them mental health problems meanwhile support of United Nations could be helpful by managing online classes for study, providing scholarships, even taking bigger steps like negotiating with Taliban in order to start physical attendance of girls in schools and universities.

Additionally, most of the women and girls are suffering from gender-based discrimination and violence. That happens when there is a lack of knowledge about respecting women and accepting their decision inside a society. It's concerning that our future generations will have illiterate mothers who can't teach their children even basic knowledge. That is where a chain of illiteracy will be created.

Furthermore, child marriage and poverty are two other main challenges young girls and women in Afghanistan encounter. As there is lack of knowledge and money for supporting their daughter's education in most of the families, it leads their daughters to a compulsory marriage which can stop young girls from continuing education.

The education system in Afghanistan has been under attack through decades. Most of the times students were targets of bomb attacks, or other violence that put teachers and students in danger. All of these reasons caused today's backward education system. The United Nations and other organizations can help by training more skillful teachers by organizing online study programs and scholarships.

As a clear example, most of the families prioritize their son's education and needs before their daughter's, and only support them financially to study. This gender-based discrimination, having no support from government and sometimes family can cause mental damage for girls. Let's inform more girls and families about their rights.

Introduction:

This policy brief is based on findings from Afghans for Progressive Thinking's (APT) organization leadership program. The 2023 cohort of participants discussed women's rights and specific challenges in their access to education in today's Afghan society. This paper proposes solutions to overcome these challenges and what

should be the role of the United Nation (UN) in helping girls continue their education.

Context of the problem:

In a country where nearly half of the population is under the age of 15, education should be a top priority for the government, the UN and other organizations. For girls, the situation is particularly urgent. It is obvious that education is one of every child's fundamental rights, but the Afghan government does not pay attention to that because The Taliban policy for education was directed through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the existing formal education system was dismantled in favor of madrasas (religious schools). In Afghanistan, women's roles and levels of control over their lives are determined by patriarchal familial traditions. Along with the cultural and social barriers, Taliban issues and insecurity complicates the situation for girls.

Most young girls have been out of school since August 2021 when the hardline Islamist movement seized the country. The Ministry of Education has said that girls above grade 6 - aged about 13 years and up - would not be allowed to attend high school.¹ Several Taliban officials say the secondary education ban is only temporary, but there are plenty of excuses for continued closure, from lack of funds to time needed to remodel the syllabus along Islamic lines. After one year, on 20 December 2022, Taliban banned Afghan girls from attending university too, without any further reason, and as students were giving final exams. On 12 February 2023, Afghanistan Medical Council (AMC) and the National Examination Authority (NEA) have postponed exit exam for female medical graduates while setting the exam date for male graduates on February 18.²

This is the first time that the exam is being taken since the Taliban recaptured Afghanistan, and medical graduates cannot acquire work permits without passing the AMC's exit exam. As a medical student I have lost my hope for my future, I completed 12 years of my high school and 6 years of my medicine faculty with the highest grades in all of my classes but now at the last semester with all of my dreams I'm not allowed to go for further studies.

According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), School attendance increased rapidly when the ban on girl education ended in 2001 after U.S-led forces ousted the previous Taliban regime. More than 3, 6 million girls were enrolled by 2018 - more than 2,5 million in primary school

and over 1 million in secondary.³ The increase in girls in secondary education was particularly significant, with nearly 40% enrolled in 2018 compared with 6% in 2003. The number going to University also increased, with tens of thousands attending. In 2015, Kabul University even launched a master's degree in gender and women's studies. When Taliban again seized the country, all these improvements stopped, and levels of education fell back to those of 2001 Afghanistan. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that more than a million of Afghan people suffer from depressive disorder and violence against women is widespread.⁴ Based on the health official estimates, 80% of suicide attempts in Afghanistan are made by women and it could be even higher especially in the Farah province.

Investing in girls' education transforms communities, countries and the entire world. Girls who receive an education are less likely to marry young and more likely to lead healthy, productive lives. They earn higher incomes, participate in the decisions that most affect them, and build better futures for themselves and their families. Girls' education strengthens economy and reduces inequality. Gender equality in education systems empower girls and boys and promote the development of life skills like self-management, communication, negotiation, and critical thinking that young people need to succeed. Education also helps to close the skills gaps that perpetuate pay gaps, and build prosperity for entire countries. Leaders must fulfill their promises on the Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5, by ensuring all girls can access quality, inclusive education – and achieving gender equality.

There are some alternative policies that would be beneficial for girl's education. The first and the most important is that the United Nations should put pressure on the Taliban government to open doors of schools and universities to girls as soon as possible. If the United Nations threatens to withdraw humanitarian aid and support the Taliban might not have any other choice other than opening the doors of education to girls.

More realistically, online education like hybrid learning is another alternative. The United Nations and other countries who support Afghan girl's education can reinforce education by making available online education spaces and providing scholarships for girls to study abroad.

Recommendations:

1. Political pressure for schools to re-open to girls. Women in Afghanistan are disproportionately impacted by the current conflict and legacy of past conflicts. What

we are witnessing today in Afghanistan is that everyone in the country is affected by the current crises, but the situation for women's and girls' is particularly concerning as their rights and access to opportunities have become increasingly challenged. When the Taliban were last in power in the 1990s, most of the Taliban did not support women's and girls' education and ignored their role in society.

Since the new takeover of Taliban in August 2022, policies towards women are much the same. They banned school for girls over class six and suspended university education for women in December 2022, which affected more than 100,000 women who were attending government and private institutions.

Educating women and girls is a need of every society to develop. We call on international organizations and United nation to support and stand by Afghan women and put pressure on Taliban for providing immediate access of women's education and opening of schools, doing diplomatic negotiation by (prepare them for discussion, clarify the goals for ad great outcome, having and agreement and implement a course of action), doing advocacy complain through social media, work for freedom of voice and media, leveraging international aid because "everyone has the right to education".

2. Addressing and raising awareness of gender based discrimination and violence. Women and girls are Important parts of a society, they should have active and equal participation like men in all public and private decision making, work opportunities, education, politics, and economics.

According to the World Health Organization, one third of women globally experience violence at least once in their lifetime, which is a huge amount and violence can seriously inhibit women's ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men. For Afghan women and girls, it's been more than 3 decades of gender inequality and violence, especially under the Taliban government. As violence prevents women's and girls from attending school, university and work, the percentage of women's who work is dropping, with concerning impact not just on their families but also on the country's economy.

The United Nations should work with Afghans to make policies which are against discrimination and violence in Afghan and help Afghan women's and girls' by providing accessible information about gender based violence: this might include providing websites, working on social media campaigns, creating TV spots or making information available in youth centers and schools, training professionals to be able

to identify, address and respond to gender based violence, provide empowerment programs which helps to strength those section of the population which are more likely to be at risk of violence.

3. Stop child marriage for Afghan girls To ensure access to quality education for girls in Afghanistan, it is essential to enact and eforce laws and policies while implementing targeted initiatives. Strengthening the enforcement of laws that prohibit child marriage and upholding the legal age for marriage will protect girls from early unions and allow them to pursue education.

However, the Taliban's policies on girls' education in Afghanistan have posed significant challenges. Restrictions on access, including the closure of schools in certain areas, have disrupted the education system and limited girls' ability to attend school and continue their studies. Gender segregation enforced by the Taliban further hampers the quality of education for girls. Additionally, the shortage of female teachers, influenced by the Taliban's cross discouragement or prohibition of teaching, creates an obstacle to girls' education.

Despite these challenges, it is crucial to address the barriers faced by girls in accessing education. Developing inclusive policies that prioritize girls' education, allocating resources for schools, and enhancing teacher training programs are essential steps. Adequate school infrastructure and partnerships with local communities and organizations can help promote support for girls' education. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established to assess progress and identify areas for improvement.

By enacting and enforcing supportive laws, implementing targeted initiatives, and addressing the specific challenges posed by the Taliban's policies, Afghanistan can make significant strides in ensuring that every girl has the opportunity to receive a quality education and unlock her full potential.

4. Increase the number of people who have capacity and relevant skills to create a standard education system. The education system in Afghanistan has undergone significant changes in recent years, particularly since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001. Prior to this, the education system in Afghanistan was severely damaged by years of devastated conflict and had a low enrollment rate, especially for girls.

Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, the Afghan government has made efforts

to rebuild and improve the education system in the country. As a result, the enrollment rate in Afghanistan has significantly increased, with over 9 million children were enrolled in schools. However, after the return of the Taliban, challenges still remain as well as ongoing security issues and policies of Taliban about girl's education.

The country is facing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis with a big risk of systemic collapse, especially the education system has hit hard and the right to education for Afghan children and youth is at risk.

A strong education system is the key to get more children in school, and help them to have healthy relationships and to be responsible citizens. In this conflict situation we want the United Nations and national organizations to support the education system in Afghanistan, working with the Ministry of Education to build a better system compliant with international standards, increase teacher's capacities and provide training on online schooling, professional standards in teaching, improved learning methods and adaptability to conflict. Importantly, the education offer needs to be available in rural areas all across the territory.

Conclusion:

We observed that security and economic problems that our country encountered for several years affected today's education system. International organizations and the UN system's help can have a lot of impact on making the situation tolerable.

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Freedom of Media and Speech in Afghanistan

Summary:

For a long time, freedom of media and expression has suffocated in Afghanistan. Since the Taliban seized power again over the country, they further limited these freedoms.

We have found that all media in Afghanistan are not allowed to broadcast news and reports without the permission of the Taliban. This is censorship and often accompanied by harassment of journalists. Many journalists were arrested because of talking negatively about the current government, and these arrests were sometimes violent. Additionally, women journalists must cover their faces in TV programs, they are not allowed to interview a man, and vice versa, and cannot be invited as guests in shows.

The correct, complete, and right information is not provided to the media, the reason is the lack of access to information. Additionally, pro-music (Performing Rights Organization), entertainment programs, and foreign series are banned in Afghanistan.

Introduction:

Prior to the Taliban takeover, Afghanistan had made significant progress in

terms of media freedom and freedom of expression. In the two decades following the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, Afghanistan saw a proliferation of independent media outlets, including newspapers, radio stations, and television channels. This was a significant change from the previous regime's strict control over all forms of media.

The Afghan government also took steps to protect freedom of expression by enshrining it in the country's constitution. Article 34 of the Afghan Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and prohibits censorship. The government also established an independent media commission to regulate media outlets and ensure their independence.¹

Despite these efforts, however, journalists in Afghanistan still faced significant challenges and risks. According to Reporters Without Borders, Afghanistan was ranked 122nd out of 180 countries in its 2021 World Press Freedom Index. Journalists faced threats from both state actors and non-state actors such as the Taliban.²

In addition to threats to journalists' safety, media outlets also faced financial challenges due to limited advertising revenue and lack of government support. Many outlets relied on foreign aid or international organizations for funding.

After the Taliban conquered all over Afghanistan in August 2021; media was the first field affected by the strict rules of the Taliban. However, every Afghan has the right to express his thoughts in various ways and it is one of the human basic rights. Without this freedom it will be difficult to have a strong relationship between the local government and the people. Therefore, by stopping media outlets, a huge number of Afghan people have lost their jobs, did not have access to real data, and faced budget challenges.

Context:

Political changes in Afghanistan have directly affected freedom of media and speech and especially when the current government is not recognized officially by the United Nations. Additionally, the Taliban's engagement with the international community and their ideology and strategies against media and freedom of expression are the main factors for the limitation of this space. For example, the Taliban have a history of targeting journalists and media outlets that do not align with their ideology.

In 2021, after taking control of Afghanistan, they issued a statement saying that media outlets should not broadcast "anti-jihad propaganda" and that journalists

should only report on events “within the limits of Sharia law.” This has led to self-censorship among journalists and media outlets, as they fear reprisals from the Taliban.

Furthermore, the Taliban have also shut down several media outlets since taking control of Afghanistan. For instance, in September 2021, they shut down Tolo News, one of the country’s largest news networks. The reason given was that Tolo News had been critical of the Taliban’s actions since taking control.

The Taliban have also restricted access to information by shutting down internet services in some parts of the country. This has made it difficult for journalists to report on events as they unfold and for citizens to access information about what is happening in their country.

In conclusion, political changes in Afghanistan have had a significant impact on freedom of media and speech. The Taliban’s engagement with the international community and their ideology and strategies against media and freedom of expression are major factors contributing to this limitation. It is essential for the international community to continue advocating for press freedom in Afghanistan and supporting independent journalism in the country.

Policy Alternatives:

The evidence and library-based research method were used to find the main issues related to the topic. The team has used online resources like online journals and reports as their main sources.

Article 19th of International Declaration of Human Rights says that, “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression”. In contrast to the declaration, since the Taliban took over Afghanistan on 15 August 2021, they drew a line for the media and journalists. The officials and security forces of this group started torturing, beating, and arresting the journalists.

Many journalists have been arrested by the Taliban and tortured. As of 8 September 2021, two journalists of Atleast Rooz were arrested and tortured in a way that traces of whips and cables could be seen on the head, face, and body of these two reporters. These two are just an example of many journalists who are in danger under the Taliban regime.³

Journalists lack access to information, which means that correct, complete, and right information is not provided to the media. One media reported that the Taliban have prevented journalists in Takhar province from accessing information. Again, this is just one example.

Women are not permitted, by Taliban to have their freedom of opinion. For instance, women are also not allowed to choose journalism for their university entrance exam.

Against the International Declaration of Human's Rights, the Taliban have made the working space for journalists and media narrow and scary. Gone are the pro-music, entertainment, and political media programs, and female TV anchors now appear in front of the camera wearing masks, and facts are not published in the media.

Recommendations:

1. International organizations and civil society can provide training and resources to journalists on how to report safely in conflict zones, including digital security measures and emergency response protocols.
2. Afghan stakeholders, including media outlets and journalists' associations, can work together to establish a code of ethics for reporting during times of conflict, which can help ensure that journalists are reporting accurately and responsibly while also protecting their safety.
3. The international community can provide financial support to independent media outlets in Afghanistan, which can help ensure that they have the resources they need to continue reporting on important issues without fear of retribution from the Taliban or other groups.
4. The United Nations can establish a mechanism for monitoring media freedom in Afghanistan, which can help ensure that violations are documented and addressed in a timely manner.
5. Other countries and stakeholders must put pressure on the Taliban so that journalists are not under threat for sharing the truth, and instead put under protection.
6. Finally, it is important for the international community to continue advocating

for media freedom in Afghanistan, both through public statements and diplomatic pressure on the Taliban and other actors who may seek to restrict press freedom.

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Educational Barriers Facing Afghan students amidst an Unknown Future.

Summary:

Educational barriers in Afghanistan are causing significant problems. Some key issues include: First, Uncertain future for students waiting for bachelor's degree studies, leading to migration: Due to limited admission capacity in public universities, students with low grades are forced to migrate to neighboring countries and give up on their education. This leads to illegal immigration and a loss of young talent, which Afghanistan desperately needs. Second, neglect of important subjects: If subjects like English, Computer Science, Mathematics, and other contemporary subjects are not given attention, the overall education level of the Afghan population will gradually decline. Third, outdated curriculum: The current educational curriculum is ineffective and does not align with modern science and technology. This lack of knowledge about the contemporary world may contribute to youth turning towards terrorism and war.

To address these barriers, we recommend the following solutions:

1. Government investment in the educational system: The government should allocate more resources to improve the quality and accessibility of education in Afghanistan.
2. Replacing unnecessary subjects: Extra subjects should be replaced with subjects that are more beneficial and relevant to the needs of students and the society.
3. Hiring qualified teachers: Unqualified teachers should be replaced with well-trained and knowledgeable educators who can provide quality education to students.
4. Updating the curriculum: The educational curriculum should be revised to align with the current needs and level of students, ensuring they receive a well-rounded education. By implementing these solutions, we can work towards eliminating the educational barriers and improving the overall education system in Afghanistan.

Introduction:

The education situation in Afghanistan needs supervision and change. Education in Afghanistan is facing many problems and these problems have an impact on the

behavior, speech, action, talent and future of most of the students of this country.¹

Students in primary, secondary, and high school lack opportunities to use their talents and improve it and they are almost unfamiliar with international competitions. Like, Teen Eagle (1) and Kangaroo (2). Moreover, very few students are able to move on to undergraduate studies once they finish high school. This policy brief shows the importance of these challenges to the current government and international community and provides possible recommendations to help eliminate these barriers in future.

Deprivation of school students from international competition:

International competitions of public-school students are one of the ways to discover and flourish hidden talents in students. These competitions are held every year by different countries and pioneers in the field of science and knowledge. The purpose of holding these competitions is to find talent in younger generations and encourage them to work more in the field they are talented in, so that society and the contemporary world can use these hidden talents of students. Therefore, in these competitions, countries like Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, India, are invited to present their students in these competitions in various fields such as mathematics, art, and sports, music, recitation of the Holy Qur'an so they are used to make them aware and facilitate the sharing of their students.

It should be said that Afghan students participated in these competitions in previous years, such as the Kangaroo Mathematics Olympiad and (Teen Eagle), but the number of public-school students was very small or zero; though the largest number of participants were from private schools. That is, because private schools pay more attention to their students, as the students of these schools pay high fees to learn and have more expectations, that is why the students of private schools participate in these competitions through their school, but the students of public schools due to the neglect of the Ministry of Education, they are not aware of these competitions at all, or they are not provided with the opportunity to participate in these competitions.

Therefore, the Ministry of Education is obliged to inform about the lunch of such competition and provide the basis for its participation, and also the Ministry of Education can communicate with international institutions that are responsible

for organizing such competitions and request cooperation and assistance from international institutions to organize international competitions between public schools in order to find a solution for these obstacles. (3),(4),(5)

What are the problems?

The major problems are below:

1. Lack of international competition for students of public schools hinders the growth and flourishing of their talents and prevents them from reaching a bright and better future and suppresses their hidden talents.
2. Lack of international competition causes them to lag behind in the contemporary world and makes them not familiar with the way of taking modern exams.
3. Lack of international competition hinders students from being aware of their natural abilities and using these talents for the development of society.

Recommendations:

1. The Ministry of Education should create a committee to inform schools about international competitions and have a specific board to monitor the transparency of the process of informing and registering all public-school students.
2. The Ministry of Education should launch talent competitions between the public and private schools of the cities, and then among the schools of the provinces, and conduct them in the manner to prepare international competitions.
3. The Ministry of Education should use the capabilities and talents of students in the field of development and progress of society and value their ideas. (6)
4. Finally, the Ministry of Education should take a better and accurate way of informing all students about these exams, helping further a prosperous and progressive Afghanistan.

Thousands of Youth Desire Undergraduate Studies amidst an Unknown Future:

According to the United Nations report, 47 percent of the population in Afghanistan is under 15 years old, giving Afghanistan one of the highest youth populations in the world. This report shows that every year

we are faced with a large number of youths graduating from schools.²

There is a National Entrance Exam (Kankor Exam) to public universities for high school graduates, therefore every year many students enroll to take the exam. Unfortunately, due to the limited capacity of public universities, many of them don't have the chance to be accepted in universities. A small number of them find their way to higher education and rest of them defer to private institutes without considering their choice and interest for the field. According to the NEXA report, 160,000 students participated in the exam, 60,000 got admission to public universities, 12,000 entered into semi higher education institutions, and the rest are faced with unclear future.³ The wealthy students who fail this entrance exam can choose a private institute and pay the fee or can study abroad through scholarships. But this includes only a small number of students.

So, what is going to happen to the thousand's youth with an unclear and dark future? What is the solution for those who cannot afford to study in private universities or get scholarships? The government does not have any plans for our youths' future, leading to their immigration or their unemployment.

Recommendations:

In order to invest for our youth's future, current government should do following:

1. To increase the capacity of public universities: Current public universities were made almost 50 years ago. Due to the increasing youth population, government should build new universities in cities to increase the capacity of accepting students.
2. To promote vocational training options: There are mechanic institutions in the country but with small capacity of accepting students. The government should attract international NGOs to invest in this area and increase their capacity.
3. To improve scholarship programs: There are many scholarships that get offer every year for undergraduate students but due to corruption in country, they are given to students who pay them money. Government should give the scholarships for students who are most deserving.

Curriculum Challenges Facing Students:

According to the <https://csrskabul.com/?p=6360>, there are several challenges in our education system in our country. However, praises have been made by the authorities in the cases of arrangements have been made. However, the ministry of education has a long way forward until the full challenge.

Therefore, according to the https://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2016/02/160119_zs_afghan_education_system_problem, Ministry of Education said, "our text books has a problem from the beginning to the great in spelling and essay. Also, they said, " we have plan to reviewing this book of the next two or three months." But reviewing the contents of books requires capital and expertise. <https://m.facebook.com/8am.af/posts/3959005140810008/>. But unfortunately, two years after the Ministry of Education's review began, but the textbooks have not yet been modified.

In these following statements you read the challenges which students are facing with curriculum:

1. School subjects are difficult for students to comprehend, leading to disappointment and confusion. Some students take personal courses, while others cannot afford private tuition. These students have to rely on notes and formulas for subjects like analytic geometry, mathematics, alchemy, and physics. Lack of skilled instructors exacerbates the problem, resulting in negative emotions and a tendency to quit school.
2. Many subjects are not relevant to students' career goals, and simply revising school books is not enough. The compilation and teaching of these books need to be improved, and there is a lack of inclusion of real-world sciences. Students need to learn about sociology, psychology, philosophy, art, and other fields to stay informed about the world.
3. The books designed by educational officials contain a large volume of text without helpful summaries. This forces students to read extensive amounts of material without grasping the main points. The excessive volume of books hinders instructors from completing them within the academic year and prevents students from having time for external reading or research. This method of education leads to a low-level understanding.

Recommendation:

To improve the educational system, the government should: First, invest in education, as it has been a key factor in the growth of developed countries. Second, replace unnecessary subjects with ones that are beneficial and relevant to students' lives. Finally, hire competent instructors and tailor the curriculum to students' abilities and review all subjects, providing clear and concise summaries.

Conclusion:

In addition to the inadequate teaching methods for school students, there is a significant presence of unskilled teachers, particularly in public schools. Students require teachers who can effectively and compassionately demonstrate the fundamental principles of education. Furthermore, private schools possess superior resources compared to public schools, but not all children have the means to attend private schools due to financial constraints. Private schools also offer opportunities for students to participate in international programs and competitions. However, there is still hope for an enhanced educational system, with the government focusing on improving all levels of schooling. Let us collectively address the educational challenges to foster the development of our country, as schools serve as a platform for government investment in national progress. In Afghanistan, students are currently following a traditional educational system, which may hinder the country's progress towards modernization. This backwardness can be attributed to the insufficient attention given to primary level education methods.

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Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Promoting Basic education and Poverty Alleviation

Summary:

Universal basic education is crucial for social justice and should be culturally sensitive. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have a significant role to play in the education sector in developing countries. Researchers propose strategies to support NGOs who operate in developing countries, and for educators in the public and private sectors too, to ensure that all children receive quality primary and secondary education. Policymakers, Non-Governmental Organizations, and

school administrations might be able to leverage the findings of this paper to better advocate for universal access to quality education in their home countries. After the Taliban takeover in August 2021, girls were banned from secondary education. In December 2022, the Taliban extended the ban to university and primary education for all women in Afghanistan, leading to protests and international condemnation.¹

In this policy brief we'll focus on the following issues and recommendations:

- NGO's involvement in education sectors;
- Teachers training courses and workshops locally and internationally;
- Providing scholarships for students;
- Role of NGOs in the current situation of Afghanistan;

Introduction:

This policy brief focuses on the role of NGOs in promoting education and welfare in Afghanistan, based on a comprehensive report conducted by NGOs working in the sector. The report examines the engagement between NGOs and the government, analyzing their whole of government approach, achievements, obstacles, and overall effectiveness. The objective of this brief is to summarize the report's findings and provide insights into the current state of education in Afghanistan.

Education in Afghanistan includes K-12 (from Kindergarten to 12 grade) or (primary and secondary education) and higher education, overseen by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education. In 2021, despite having nearly 10 million students and 220,000 teachers in 2021, the country still faces a significant need for more schools and teachers.² Several NGOs have been actively involved in the education sector and fundraising for education in Afghanistan including UNESCO, Swedish committee for Afghanistan (SCA), Malala fund, UK Entity, Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC), International Assistance Mission(IAM) and local NGOs like Hadaaf, Parsa, etc. A couple of highlights can be mentioned from these activities:

- UNESCO has been supporting education in Afghanistan since the organization's inception and has witnessed many significant gains particularly over the

last twenty years, as evidenced in the UNESCO report. Huge progress has been made in enrolment for all education levels from around 1 million students in 2001 to around 10 million in 2018 with the number of girls in primary schools increasing from almost zero in 2001 to 2.5 million in 2018.³

- Since 2017, the Malala Fund has invested close to \$1.9 million in local organizations to improve Afghan girls' access to free, safe, quality education. Education Champions in Afghanistan helped addressing a nationwide shortage of female teachers by investing in teacher training development and recruitment. Currently, the Malala Fund supports Afghan education advocates who offer alternative education programs for girls while schools remain closed. NGOs also continue to partner with Education Champions on global and regional advocacy efforts to keep pressure on the Taliban government to reopen girls' schools.⁴

Training courses:

One of the main issues that current students in Afghanistan face is lack of experienced and hardworking teachers, since most of the teachers immigrated to other countries and women teachers cannot continue to their jobs due to current governmental law. Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL) is among the NGOs that currently remains active. It aims to provide women and children with education, health care, health education, teacher training, workshops in peace and leadership and legal aid, to create a healthier and better educated population with greater capacity to build a self-sustaining, self-reliant Afghanistan. Currently, across 11 provinces, AIL runs 44 Learning Centers, 6 health clinics with 14 village-based Community Health Worker posts. It offers hundreds of workshops each year on reproductive health, peace, love and forgiveness, human rights, democracy, leadership, teacher training and conducts conferences on peace, forgiveness and good governance. AIL promotes Afghan culture with classes in traditional arts and crafts such as carpet weaving, miniature painting and glass work. AIL employs five female lawyers to assist women with free legal aid, food aid, and access to a research center. It also runs several other programs such as women's empowerment groups, environmental education and youth clubs.⁵

Recommendation:

There is an urgent need for NGOs to provide training courses for inexperienced teachers who have bachelor's degrees but don't have teaching background. They

can be a key player in growing the number of experienced teachers, through providing online teaching classes. Furthermore, NGOs can make the environment favorable for those who can study abroad both women and men. And since women are not able to continue to do jobs and studies, NGOs can furnish online training classes for women so they could develop their knowledge and skills.

Role of NGOs in supporting of child laborers in educational sector Afghanistan has always been one of countries with the largest number of child laborers. Children between the ages of 5-14 forms a large part of the nation's workforce and are not capable to seek education because they are a source of income for the family. Around 41.8% of Afghan children aged between 5 to 14 attend school, 7.5% do not, and 6.6% combine working with going to school according to the report of youth Department of Labor. More than one million children are either engaged in child labor or are working and studying at the same time according to UNICEF. Many improvements in the education sector for children are credited to NGOs that are working directly or indirectly in educational sector through different programs such as providing basic needs for children. A good example is the Afghan Mobile Mini-Circus for Children (MMCC), a programs that successfully supports education for child laborers in Afghanistan through their "Circus in Education". This program establishes temporary circus schools in communities with high rates of child labor, providing basic education, life skills training, and psychosocial support. The curriculum integrates literacy, numeracy, arts, music, and physical education with circus techniques. By empowering child laborers, building their confidence, and fostering creativity, MMCC has made a significant impact on promoting education and improving the lives of vulnerable children in Afghanistan.

Recommendations

To end child labor and promote children's basic right to education, NGOs should offer intervention both on the demand and supply side.

I. Demand: NGOs reach out to business owners, donations charities, international donors through educating them about the educational difficulty that children are facing and ask them for donations. Collected donations should be used specifically in educational areas for children and NGOs should be allowed to work together with the government on tracking reports and analysis data.

II. Supply: NGO's develop relationships with locals and families and advise them

to push their child towards higher education with the support of NGOs scholarships.

Role of NGOs in Current Situation under Taliban's regime
Since the Taliban regained power in August 2021, a dire humanitarian emergency has gripped Afghanistan. Men, women and children across the country have endured the unfolding of catastrophic, simultaneous crises. In December 2022, the Taliban authorities announced that Afghan women were banned from attending universities, 16 months on from an initial ban on secondary school aged girls attending school. Then, following this announcement, on the 24th December, the authorities issued another edict banning women from working for national and international NGOs in Afghanistan. These decrees infringe upon the most basic rights of women. We know that female-headed households are disproportionately impacted by crises, and in Afghanistan they make up almost a quarter of all families. By preventing women and girls from accessing humanitarian and development programming, or seeking employment through an NGO, millions of these families - already in crisis - may face even greater difficulty in accessing their most basic needs, and many more women will be unable to learn new skills and contribute to household income. This will put untold pressure on male family members acting as the sole providers for their family during Afghanistan's biggest economic and food crisis on record. These decisions therefore threaten to push the entire Afghan population into a deeper crisis, not only hugely limiting women's lives, but costing lives.

Recommendations:

- Push for aid money and donation to be given to poor people directly, not relying on the regime. This will put the Taliban under economic pressure.
- NGOs should provide free scholarships and free online classes for afghan girls like Afghanistan Open University Organization (AOUO) that provides free international online classes with certificate.
- Together with UN organizations, they can play a persuasive role in convincing the Taliban to reopen the educational areas and allow for women to work in NGOs.
- Provide online workshops and remote jobs for women to have an income.

- International organizations must strengthen their policy on approaching with Taliban regarding the problem and encourage them to let NGOs work in the education sector as before.

Conclusion:

NGOs have been the main ally in developing educational support for child laborers through their different approaches, while donors have always been supporting of child right to education. Nowadays, in the current situation we are in, with the closing of education gates on girls, girls have been deprived of their right to education and work, and the NGOs who helped the education sector can no longer continue their assistance. We urge policymakers, NGOs, and international organizations to collaborate effectively, leveraging their resources, expertise, and influence to resolve the education challenges in Afghanistan. By working together, we can bring an end to this crisis and secure a brighter future for Afghan children. Time is of the essence, and immediate action is needed to ensure that every child has the opportunity to receive quality education.

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