

Leadership Development Program 2025

Policy Briefs Pamphlet

5th Edition



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Introduction

Today, millions of young Afghans face immense challenges under the Taliban regime, including restrictions on education, limited opportunities for employment, and barriers to participation in society. The voices of Afghan youth are being silenced, their perspectives ignored, and their opportunities to contribute to society suppressed. These challenges have disrupted years of progress in youth engagement and development.

In response, Afghans for Progressive Thinking (APT) organized the Advocacy, Writing, and Debate Program, where 40 young participants gained valuable skills in advocacy, policy writing, and debating. The program also provided these youths the opportunity to work in groups to develop impactful policy briefs addressing critical issues in Afghanistan.

In this pamphlet, you will hear directly from young Afghan men and women who have bravely shared their insights despite the challenges they face under the current Taliban regime. These briefs address critical issues that impact their lives, including life under Taliban rule, mental health crisis, education barriers and future of women, storytelling to reshape narratives, and more.

Alongside these challenges, the briefs offer thoughtful recommendations that come directly from the youth themselves. The proposed solutions by the young authors represent the voices of those most impacted to raise awareness and influence policies that impact their lives.

This publication of policy briefs would not have been possible without the leadership of Ajmal Ramyar, Head Executive of APT, and Abdul Rahman Jalil, the Program Manager.

We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to Caitlyn O'Flaherty for facilitating the writing sessions and editing the policy briefs. Her support and expertise helped the participants articulate their ideas and produce impactful briefs.



About Us

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

Three and a Half Years After the Taliban: How Life Has Changed for Afghan Youth

Executive summary:

The Taliban's takeover on August 15, 2021, has severely impacted Afghan youth, restricting their access to education, employment, and basic freedoms. Women have been banned from schools and workplaces, while young men face job shortages and economic instability. These conditions have led to mass migration, extreme poverty, and a growing mental health crisis. To address these challenges, this policy brief recommends international advocacy for Afghan youth's rights, investment in remote learning solutions, support for local vocational programs, and expanded mental health services. Urgent action is needed to prevent further deterioration of opportunities for Afghan youth and to ensure they have a future with dignity and hope.

Introduction:

Afghan youth today are navigating one of the most uncertain periods in their country's recent history. Since the Taliban's return in 2021, their daily realities have been shaped by loss—loss of opportunity, autonomy, and hope. Young women have seen their aspirations cut short by restrictions on education and work, while young men face a fragile economy and a lack of viable options for the future. These shifts are not only limiting personal growth but are also eroding the foundation of an entire generation. Rather than simply surviving, Afghan youth deserve targeted support that enables them to learn, grow, and contribute meaningfully to society. This policy brief delves into their struggles and explores practical solutions for restoring opportunity and dignity.

1. Restricted Access to Education:

One of the most devastating impacts of Taliban rule is the restriction on education, particularly for girls. Approximately 1.4 million Afghan girls have been barred from secondary and higher education, marking Afghanistan as the only country to impose such restrictions on female education (source?). This deliberate deprivation has reversed decades of educational progress, leaving an entire generation of Afghan girls in despair, stripped of their dreams and future opportunities. Prior to these restrictions, Afghanistan had made significant strides in female education. For instance, by 2020, over 3.5 million girls were enrolled in schools across the country, and women accounted for around 30% of the teaching workforce. The Ministry of Education had also launched initiatives to improve girls' access to schools in rural areas and increased the number of female teachers, particularly in provinces where cultural barriers were strong. These gains were the result of years of domestic and international investment in education, now under threat.

2. Lack of Employment Opportunities:

The Taliban's policies have had a profound impact on employment in Afghanistan, particularly affecting women and young male graduates.

Prior to the Taliban's return to power in August 2021, women constituted approximately 22% of the Afghan workforce. However, following the Taliban takeover, the employment rate for Afghan women had fallen by 25%, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO) as measured in March 2023.

3. Economic Collapse and Rising Poverty:

Afghanistan is experiencing unprecedented levels of poverty, forcing many families into desperate measures. Some parents, unable to feed their children, have resorted to selling them for survival (BBC News, 2024). The Taliban takeover led to the freezing of \$9.5 billion in Afghan assets and a sharp decline in international trade (Al Jazeera, 2023). Loss of foreign aid, international sanctions, and banking restrictions have fueled widespread unemployment. According to the UNDP, over 90% of Afghans are now living below the poverty line, and humanitarian needs continue to rise (UNDP, 2023). Severe droughts and food shortages have only deepened the crisis.

4. Mental Health Crisis:

The mental health crisis among Afghan youth has reached alarming levels. A recent study found that nearly 29% of adolescents in Kabul are at substantial risk of psychiatric problems, with approximately half meeting criteria for probable diagnoses of PTSD, depression, or anxiety (source?). Additionally, a 2018 European Union survey revealed that 85% of the Afghan population had experienced or witnessed at least one traumatic event in their lives, contributing to widespread mental health issues (source?). These statistics underscore the urgent need for comprehensive mental health support and interventions for Afghan youth.

Policy Recommendations:

- **International Advocacy and Support:** The global community must continue to advocate for Afghan youth's rights to education and employment. Increased scholarship opportunities and international education programs should be made accessible to Afghan students.
- **Investment in Remote Learning:** Technology-based education solutions, such as mobile learning platforms, can help bridge the gap, particularly for girls who are banned from attending schools. This approach can provide flexible and accessible learning opportunities.
- **Support for Local Initiatives:** Strengthening local organizations that empower youth through vocational training and skill development can help create alternative pathways for economic independence. Investing in these community resilience programs will support young people trying to rebuild their futures.
- **Mental Health Services:** Establishing mental health support systems is critical to addressing the psychological impact of oppression and conflict on Afghan youth. Access to counseling services and support groups can help them cope with trauma and stress.

Conclusion:

Even in their suffering, Afghan youth refuse to be defeated. In their

heartbreak, there is still courage. In their silence, there is still a voice—aching to be heard. The world cannot look away. It cannot allow their dreams to disappear into the shadows of indifference. Because behind every locked school, behind every girl forced to sit at home, behind every boy watching his future slip through his fingers, there is still a heart beating—yearning, aching, fighting for the right to learn, to work, to simply exist with dignity. And as long as they hold on, as long as they refuse to surrender to the darkness, the world must stand beside them. We must listen to them. We must remind them, in every way we can, that they are not alone. That their dreams still matter. That their voices will not fade into silence—not while the world still has the power to hear them. Supporting Afghan youth has far-reaching implications beyond their immediate well-being. Investing in their education, employment, and mental health not only helps prevent a lost generation but also contributes to long-term regional stability, economic growth, and global security. By ensuring Afghan youth have opportunities, the international community fosters a more peaceful and prosperous future, not just for Afghanistan but for the world as a whole.

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Addressing the Mental Health Crisis of Afghan Women Under Taliban Restrictions

Executive Summary:

The ongoing crisis facing Afghan women, marked by severe restrictions on education, employment, and access to public spaces, requires urgent intervention. These limitations not only undermine women's rights but also pose significant challenges to their mental and physical well-being. Studies indicate a sharp rise in depression, anxiety, and suicide rates among Afghan women since the Taliban's return to power in 2021. Addressing this crisis demands immediate action through international and national cooperation, with a focus on alternative education, vocational training, and accessible mental health support.

This policy brief argues that online education platforms and vocational training programs can serve as crucial tools for mitigating the psychological distress caused by these restrictions. Furthermore, mental health support—delivered through virtual counseling and community-based initiatives—must be expanded to help Afghan women cope with the trauma of systemic oppression. Finally, amplifying Afghan women's voices on global platforms is essential to raising awareness and mobilizing international support. By implementing these strategies, we can empower Afghan women to regain a sense of autonomy, contribute to their communities, and improve their overall well-being.

Introduction:

Since the Taliban's return to power in 2021, Afghan women and girls have faced severe psychological challenges due to strict restrictions on education, employment, and social freedoms. Over 3.7 million girls have been banned from school, and 1.5 million women are barred from working, contributing to economic hardship and emotional distress (Human Rights Watch, 2024). As a result, around 65% of Afghan women report symptoms of depression, largely due to the loss of educational and employment opportunities (The Lancet, 2023). Additionally, nearly 70% of women and girls suffer from chronic anxiety, worsened by isolation (WHO, 2024). These mental health issues, including depression and anxiety, have led to a 20% rise in suicides among Afghan women since 2021 (WHO, 2024). This brief examines these psychological consequences and suggests strategies to address the growing crisis.

Problem and Context Analysis:

The Taliban's policies have caused severe psychological challenges for Afghan women, with millions banned from education and work. This has led to feelings of hopelessness, depression, and anxiety, compounded by limited mobility and a rise in suicides since 2021.

Strict restrictions on education and employment:

The Taliban's restrictions have banned over 3.7 million girls from attending school and prevented 1.5 million women from working, depriving them of education, career opportunities, and financial independence (Human Rights Watch, 2024; The World Bank, 2024). This has led to economic hardship and a loss of personal fulfillment, trapping many women in cycles of poverty. The bans also erode their psychological well-being, limiting their ability to contribute to society and envision a better future.

Psychological issues:

The loss of education and job opportunities has had a severe psychological impact on Afghan women, with 65% reporting symptoms of depression due to limited personal and economic growth (The Lancet, 2023). The denial of education and the ban on work have left many feeling hopeless, isolated, and purposeless. Additionally, nearly 70% of women and girls suffer from chronic anxiety, worsened by social isolation and the constant fear of punishment (WHO, 2024). These combined factors have created a mental health crisis, deeply affecting the well-being of Afghan women.

Suicide rates:

Since the Taliban's return to power in 2021, suicide rates among Afghan women have risen by 20%, mainly due to the psychological strain of restrictive policies (WHO, 2024). Denied education, employment opportunities, and social isolation have left many feeling trapped and hopeless. The oppressive environment and constant fear of punishment have intensified their mental health struggles. As a result, some women have resorted to suicide to escape their overwhelming emotional pain.

What We Found:

A recent survey of 100 participants across Afghanistan highlighted the mental health crisis among Afghan women under Taliban restrictions (source?). Education was identified as the main factor affecting their mental well-being, with many women feeling anxious and uncertain about their future. The lack of economic opportunities has further stressed women, contributing to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and emotional instability.

Recommendations:

1. Online platforms like AUAF, Azad University of Iran, and Women's University should allow Afghan girls to continue their education from home. Programs like debate and soft skills courses will foster confidence and resilience. Vocational training in skills such as sewing and calligraphy will provide Afghan women with financial independence and restores their self-worth. As women gain these skills, they can empower others, creating a ripple effect within their communities.
2. It is crucial to offer mental health programs tailored to Afghan women's unique

needs. These programs should focus on stress management, coping strategies, and building resilience. Whether through online counseling or community-based workshops, access to psychological support can help Afghan women navigate these difficult times.

3. Afghan women's voices must be heard. By amplifying their stories on social media and through public events and outlets like BBC, Radio Azadi, Afghanistan International, we can raise global awareness about their struggles and foster solidarity. This visibility will also help attract international support and resource for Afghan women.

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What Are the Long-Term Impacts of Educational Barriers on Afghan Women's Future?

Executive Summary:

Since the Taliban takeover in 2021, Afghan women have been systematically denied access to education beyond primary school. This restriction has long-term implications, including financial dependence, social isolation, mental health crises, and national economic decline. A survey conducted among Afghan women aged 17 to 45 revealed Taliban's policies and cultural restrictions the main barriers to education (Haidari & Karimee, 2025). Participants expressed deep concerns about their futures, highlighting the loss of opportunities, personal development, and independence. To prevent the long-term negative consequences of these barriers, the global community must take decisive actions. This includes sustained advocacy, technological and financial support for alternative education programs, and diplomatic pressure to ensure Afghan women's access to education.

Introduction:

Education is a fundamental human right and a key to social and economic development. It empowers women, promotes gender equality, and strengthens national economics. However, Afghan women have been deprived of this right by the Taliban's policies and cultural restrictions. This deep-rooted exclusivity has far-reaching consequences, not only for individual women but also for Afghanistan's future. The findings of a recent survey conducted among Afghan women highlights the urgent need for action. The majority of participants identified the Taliban's restrictions as their primary obstacle to education. Their responses reveal that the long-term consequences of these barriers will include financial instability, mental health deterioration, and the stagnation of Afghanistan's social and economic progress.

Problem Statements:

The Impact of educational restrictions on Cultural and Religious Prejudices

Majority of the population agree that current government and absurd cultural beliefs are the core causes of women being held back in education, career and overall lifestyle, increasing their vulnerability to early marriages, domestic violence, financial collapse, and traumatization. This tyranny and gender-discriminative biases, especially for women, are central to the community's catastrophic withdrawal of the right to education and their biased mentality, hindering gender equality, healthy lifestyles, and opportunities (Bashiri, 2025).

Economic Dependence:

Without education, the majority of women have no employment opportunities, forcing them into financial reliance on male family members. This lack of economic independence reduces their ability to make decisions regarding their own lifestyles

and well-being. (Haidari, 2025)

Social Isolation and Disempowerment:

Education allows women to engage in public life, develop critical thinking, and participate in decision-making processes. Without it, many Afghan women face extreme social isolation, leading to a diminished sense of self-worth, identity, and severe damage in their overall mental health.

Mental Affections:

Although the absence of education has already limited personal growth and aspiration, Afghan women are determined to fight for their dreams and against their psychological distress such as depression. Ultimately, the oppressive governance under the Taliban is the root cause of the profound adversities and injustices in education and equality faced by Afghan women today.

Policy Recommendations:

1. In order to remove restrictions on women's education, governments and international organizations must continue pressing the Taliban; and to make this happen, sanctions, aid conditions, and diplomatic negotiations should be used to push for policy changes. Platforms like the United Nations have amplified Afghan women's voices in the past and made their struggle visible in global discussions. Repeating this action is likely to have positive impacts again for the betterment of education rights for Afghan women.
2. Universities and governments should offer scholarships and special education programs for Afghan women to initiate or continue their studies abroad. Investing in educational training programs and scholarships will help women gain practical skills in fields such as healthcare, technology, and entrepreneurship. With these skills, they will be able to cultivate independence (Nadim & Haidari, 2025).
3. Secure, anonymous systems must be established as support networks for women to share knowledge, and learn essential or interest-based skills. For instance, drawing females to learning skills and knowledge such as designing, content creation, English language, MS Windows, and video editing can help prepare and qualify women for their future career goals (Karimee, 2025).
4. While solving education constraints, mental health should not be taken for granted, as it is one of the greatest harms resulting from educational barriers on women. Facilitating therapeutic programs and seminars for women can highly impact their mental well-being, giving them tools to cope with their serious traumas. Afghans for Progressive Thinking (APT) for instance, had such helpful seminars for women in the past which has resulted in the participants' improved moods and healthier mindsets.

Conclusion:

The Taliban's takeover has reinforced religious, financial, and mental struggles, which are severely impacting Afghan women's education, careers, and well-being. The absence of women in society has lowered Afghanistan's progress in every section. These challenges are caused by educational barriers and structured discrimination on Afghan women. To initiate change, coordinated international pressure, expanded scholarship opportunities, and secure learning networks are crucial, with decisive solutions such as professional training programs, UN advocacy initiatives, and mental health support through effective seminars.

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How Afghan Youth Are Using Storytelling and Media to Reshape Narratives about Their Country.

Executive summary:

Afghan youth are using storytelling and media to shape perceptions of their homeland. Through various platforms, they share personal narratives and creative expressions that challenge prevailing stereotypes and highlight the complexities of Afghan society. Initiatives such as creative writing and storytelling programs empower young Afghans, particularly women, to articulate their experiences and aspirations. These programs not only provide a medium for self-expression but also serve as tools for social change, enabling participants to address and confront oppressive social norms.

Myriad policy briefs and pamphlets authored by Afghan youth further show their active engagement in societal discourse. By documenting challenges and proposing solutions, these young authors utilize storytelling to influence policy and advocate for a more inclusive and peaceful society. Overall, storytelling and media have become pivotal in the hands of Afghan youth, fostering a reimaged narrative of Afghanistan that emphasizes resilience, diversity, and hope.

Introduction:

In the face of decades of conflict and socioeconomic challenges, Afghan youth have emerged as key agents of change. They are using storytelling, literature, media, blogs and films to reshape global perceptions of their country, which often focus on conflict and instability, and instead of resilience and innovative communities. Young people are sharing personal stories of hope, education, survival, resilience, creativity and daily life in Afghanistan. However, limited resources, censorship and security threats hinder their efforts, underscoring the need for targeted support.

Details about the Problem:

Afghan youth face many challenges in storytelling and media production, including lack of access to resources, censorship, and safety concerns. Limited tools, funding, and training hinder their storytelling capabilities, while restricted access to publishing platforms affects their ability to share stories. Censorship, traditional norms, and political pressures limit media freedom, especially for female storytellers. The unstable security situation poses risks for young storytellers addressing sensitive topics such as women's empowerment and human rights, leading to fear of consequences including threats and violence. Language and educational barriers, particularly in English, further restrict the ability of Afghan youth to reach a global audience. Additionally, gender discrimination restricts mobility, education, and safe spaces for female storytellers.

Policy Recommendations

- Raising educational standards, promoting literacy, and expanding educational possibilities for youth depend on the establishment of educational institutions and

the fortification of the educational system. (So what is your action item here? See how every other rec starts with a verb? What are you suggesting be done here in order to fortify the educational system?)

- Improve young people's involvement in education by providing funding and capacity-building initiatives, enabling them to make significant contributions to storytelling on a local and international level.
- Introduce and implement policies that uphold freedom of expression and safeguard media freedom, enabling all young people to freely tell their tales.
- Amplify and promote narratives by providing storytellers a secure environment free from security threats.
- Support digital platforms, Afghan youth can use social media and online applications to tell their stories to audiences around the world, providing an affordable and time-efficient means of reaching a large audience.
- Facilitate international collaborations with institutions such as UNESCO that will give Afghan storytellers visibility, elevating their voices and changing perspectives around the world.

In conclusion, Afghan youth are rapidly reshaping the narrative about their nation through the use of media and storytelling. They continue to tell tales of tenacity, optimism, and inventiveness that dispel prejudices and encourage societal change in spite of major obstacles like scarce resources, censorship, and security risks. We can help magnify their voices and make sure that their experiences are seen by people throughout the world by promoting international collaborations, education, media freedom, and accessible digital platforms. In addition to helping to change how others view Afghanistan, empowering Afghan youth through these avenues will help create a society that is more resilient, inclusive, and peaceful.

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Afghanistan's youth hold the key to its development potential?

Executive Summary:

Afghanistan's youth hold the key to its development potential. Youth are a creative and innovative force in any society and country and can play an important and fundamental role in various social, political, cultural and economic fields. It is necessary that their role not be ignored. Young people can be a tool for the transformation and progress of the country. Afghanistan's youth must have more opportunities to contribute so that they can use their abilities and do valuable work and address the pressing issues of today.

Introduction:

Afghanistan faces significant challenges, including poverty and unemployment, but its youth—over 63% of the population is under 25 (United Nations Development Program, 2024)—represent a key opportunity for development. Afghan youth are already driving change by launching businesses and embracing new technologies, especially in sectors like education and agriculture (World Bank, 2021). To unlock their full potential, Afghanistan must invest in education, skills, and job creation. This paper argues that empowering youth is crucial for Afghanistan's long-term prosperity.

Problem statement and context analysis:

Afghan youth face systemic barriers to economic, social, cultural, and political participation. Despite their significant presence in the population, they lack access to opportunities in decision-making, employment, and skills development. The absence of coordinated governmental and non-governmental initiatives has hindered their ability to contribute meaningfully to the country's progress. Addressing this gap requires inclusive strategies that empower youth and integrate them into key sectors of society.

High youth unemployment rate in Afghanistan:

One of the unfortunate realities of Afghanistan is that the youth unemployment rate is extremely high, which impacts the social economy of the country and its long-term development. Although more than 63% of the Afghan population is under the age of 25, a large proportion of Afghan youth are employable (United Nations Development Program, 2024). However, there are various challenges to quality education, vocational training, and economic opportunities. Even worse, Afghanistan has no infrastructure for youth entrepreneurship or any form of skills development, which leaves the youth unequipped to try and participate in the hardened job market.

Lack of access to education:

In Afghanistan, a significant portion of the youth, especially girls, lack access to quality education. According to a UNICEF survey conducted in 2022, nearly 4.2 million children are out of school, with the majority being girls (UNICEF, 2022). This lack of educational opportunities stifles the potential of the youth, limiting their ability to contribute to economic development and social progress.

Mental health and wellbeing challenges among youth:

The ongoing conflict and economic instability in Afghanistan have seriously impacted the mental health of young people, leading to increasing rates of depression and anxiety. Approximately 25% of youth suffer from mental health disorders, but support services are scarce (National Library of Medicine, 2017). This lack of care makes it difficult for them to pursue education and jobs, hindering their overall potential.

Recommendations:

1. Encourage partnership with local businesses and international organizations for hands-on training and opportunities. Youth are 46% more likely to secure decent jobs than their peers without engagement in structured training programs (International Labour Organization, 2022).
2. Establish nationwide digital education initiatives by leveraging mobile technology and low-cost internet access to bridge the education gap for Afghan youth. Studies show that mobile-based learning programs in crisis-affected regions have significantly improved literacy rates and skill development.
3. Training more people in healthcare skills and community leadership. Studies show that training non-specialists can enhance access to mental health care, especially in resource-limited settings.

Conclusion:

Afghanistan's youth, constituting over 63% of the population, hold immense potential to drive the country's development. However, high unemployment rates, limited access to quality education, and mental health challenges hinder their contributions. To unlock this potential, Afghanistan must prioritize investments in education and vocational training, foster partnerships with businesses and international organizations, and implement digital initiatives to bridge educational gaps. Additionally, addressing mental health needs is essential for empowering youth to thrive. By embracing and supporting its young population, Afghanistan can

harness their creativity and resilience, paving the way for a prosperous and stable future.

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The Impacts of Brain Drain on Afghanistan's Future

Executive Summary:

Afghanistan has been experiencing a severe brain drain, with thousands of highly skilled professionals, academics, and young talents leaving the country due to insecurity, political instability, and economic hardships. This mass emigration threatens Afghanistan's development prospects by weakening essential sectors such as healthcare, education, and governance. Without urgent intervention, the country risks long-term stagnation and dependency on external aid. This policy

brief highlights the key challenges posed by brain drain and provides strategic recommendations to mitigate its negative consequences and create an environment conducive to retaining and attracting skilled professionals.

Introduction:

Brain drain—the large-scale emigration of educated and skilled individuals—has become one of the most critical challenges for Afghanistan. We surveyed ten Afghan girls living in Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan, who represent one of the most affected social groups. Our quests showed that 60% of them were familiar with the concept of brain drain and expressed deep concern about its long-term consequences. All participants had experienced the hardships of restricted access to education, and the majority identified the lack of job opportunities as the most pressing crisis they have faced in recent years. Each individual surveyed pointed to brain drain as a severe and growing challenge in their society. As Afghanistan struggles with economic decline, political uncertainty, and limited opportunities, professionals, especially in medicine, engineering, education, and technology, continue to seek better prospects abroad. This exodus has far-reaching implications for Afghanistan's socio-economic and political future.

Problem Statement:

The departure of educated individuals creates a severe gap in human capital, affecting Afghanistan in multiple ways:

Weakening of Essential Sectors:

The loss of doctors and medical professionals has put immense pressure on Afghanistan's fragile healthcare system, reducing access to quality medical services. According to CGTN America, 50 professional and skilled doctors and nurses have left Rabia Balkhi Hospital-Afghanistan largest women hospital in Kabul- since the Taliban took control of the country. This concern may lead to life-or-death consequences (Muse, 2023). A shrinking pool of educators and university professors weakens the education system, limiting knowledge transfer to future generations. CBC news' Obaidullah Baheer, lecturer at American university of Afghanistan, is concerned that "if everyone leaves, the country would become a Taliban echo chamber and, youth, who can save the country are leaving the country, this can lead the most challenging chaos" (2021, Baheer).

Economic Decline and Reduced Productivity:

The departure of skilled workers reduces Afghanistan's productive workforce,

slowing economic growth and creativity.

Governance and Institutional Instability

The absence of experienced administrators and policymakers weakens governance and decision-making processes, leading to inefficiency and corruption.

The lack of intellectuals and analysts results in limited policy innovation and decreased strategic planning, hindering national progress.

Security and Political Instability:

The emigration of educated youth limits Afghanistan's potential for a strong civil society and democratic institutions, increasing vulnerability to extremist ideologies. The absence of technical experts weakens Afghanistan's ability to rebuild critical infrastructure and improve public services.

Recommendations:

To prevent damaging effects of brain drain, Afghanistan must wisely decide on strategies focusing on maintenance, reintegration, and investment in local opportunities:

- **Creating Economic and Professional motives**
Establish competitive salaries and career growth opportunities for professionals, especially in healthcare, education, and technology. Provide financial incentives, grants, and tax benefits for Afghan entrepreneurs and skilled workers willing to stay or return.
- **Enhancing Security and Political Stability**
Strengthen governance structures to build public trust and ensure safety for professionals working in key sectors. Implement policies that encourage freedom of expression and protect intellectuals, researchers, and academics.
- **Investment in Education and Research**
Develop strong university-industry linkages to create opportunities for skilled graduates within the country and allow females to be involve in this sector. Increase funding for research and development to attract and retain Afghan scholars and scientists.
- **Engagement with the Afghan Diaspora**
Launch programs that encourage skilled Afghans abroad to contribute to national

development through remote work, knowledge-sharing, and short-term service. Facilitate return programs with guaranteed employment and reintegration support.

Conclusion:

Afghanistan's future depends on its ability to retain and utilize its human capital effectively. Brain drain, if left unaddressed, will further weaken the country's economy, governance, and social institutions. A strategic approach that includes economic incentives, security improvements, and diaspora engagement is essential to reversing this trend. By prioritizing human capital development, Afghanistan can lay the foundation for sustainable growth, self-reliance, and long-term stability.

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