



Leadership Development Program 2023

Policy Briefs Pamphlet

Third Edition



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Introduction

Following the return of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the challenges for youth, particularly young women, have escalated in an unprecedented scale. Today, the channels that provide information and data on the situation in Afghanistan under Taliban rule have been severely restricted; thus, raising awareness of the current situation of women and youth in Afghanistan remains a concern.

We are thrilled to release the third edition of our leadership pamphlet, which includes eight policy briefs written by the young men and women who participated in this series of online sessions delivered by expert international instructors. The overall objective of our leadership program is to provide Afghan youth with the skills and capacity to utilize their potential and reflect on their community's situation. Each of the eight policy briefs focuses on a specific topic, contains an analysis of ground reality context, and provides applicable recommendations to address the problems mentioned in the briefs.

We would like to express our appreciation for the bravery and tireless cooperation of our young participants in writing the policy briefs, the respective instructors for their kind support in delivering the sessions and dedicating their time to assist the youth in Afghanistan, Ms. Cait Hamilton and Ms. Meridith Styer for their time in proofreading the briefs, and the dedicated executive team of APT for the effective management of the program and guidance provided to the participants.



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



Humanitarian Aid and the Escalating Hunger Crisis in Afghanistan

Executive Summary:

Basic necessities such as water, food, and health care are scarce while the population is growing. If resources are not managed properly, poverty and hunger will increase in Afghanistan. Compounding this, Covid-19 has created an economic crisis all over the world, including in Afghanistan. Additionally, following the Taliban takeover, 9 billion USD of the Afghanistan treasury has been frozen by the United States, which has created a challenging job market in Afghanistan. (Holly Young, 2015)

In order to deal with this crisis, there must be coordination and cooperation between aid organizations which provide humanitarian services with the goal of saving lives and alleviating suffering in a manner that respects and restores personal dignity (UNHCR, 2023), like the European Commission Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations Department (ECHO). (Kovess-Masfety V, 2023) Long-term sustainable projects, including those that provide education for young people, are necessary to achieve economic stability and to improve standards of living. (Health Care Women Int, 2006)

Introduction:

Deciding how to allocate limited resources to mitigate a range of humanitarian crises is of both practical and theoretical importance. Twenty years of war in Afghanistan has cost 1.5 million lives. If the current deepening humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is not adequately addressed, more people will lose their lives because of starvation and hunger than in the past 20 years of war. Political instability along with inadequate economic opportunities have severely diminished the purchasing power of ordinary citizens, and recent years have seen a sharp increase in poverty in Afghanistan. (Zainab syyeda rahmat, 2022).

In order to support everyday Afghans, aid organizations must draw from a diverse range of tools used to reduce poverty, including emergency relief, social security coverage, educational and cultural programs, and empowerment programs. (Gisf, 2018) This policy brief addresses the issue of humanitarian aid distribution in Afghanistan post-Taliban takeover. It offers recommendations to aid organizations combating the escalating hunger crisis.

Problem Statement:

There are four key factors that currently make the distribution of humanitarian aid in Afghanistan so challenging:

1. Inadequate humanitarian aid policy: The humanitarian aid policy in Afghanistan is inadequate, and neglects long-term solutions, focusing primarily on short-term relief and food assistance (J Pediatr Nurs, 2022).
2. Lack of meaningful cooperation amongst aid organizations: There are numerous

international aid organizations operating in Afghanistan, but they often work independently and do not coordinate their efforts effectively. This can lead to the duplication of efforts, wasted resources, and gaps in coverage (ACAPS, 2023).

3. Corruption and mismanagement: There have been reports of aid funds being misused or embezzled by local officials or aid workers, which can undermine the effectiveness of aid efforts (Children's Bureau, 2019).

4. Cultural and religious barriers: Some aid organizations may not be familiar with local customs and traditions, which can lead to misunderstandings or resistance from the local population.

Recommendations:

To address the severe humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and effectively reduce poverty and hunger, the following policy measures are recommended:

1. Restructure humanitarian aid distribution: There must be a renewed focus on humanitarian aid that can help people take action to help themselves and provide them with a safe environment. For example, the UN could provide people in rural areas with agricultural supplies and land to cultivate.

2. Enhance aid efforts: A comprehensive assessment should be conducted to determine if a project will be beneficial. Humanitarian aid should be organized and provided to assist displaced individuals in Afghanistan.

3. Strengthen accountability and transparency: A thorough assessment should be undertaken to identify the roots of corruption and begin to formulate solutions. As Deborah Lyons, the UN Secretary-General Special Representative for Afghanistan, said: "Effectively fighting corruption goes hand in hand with increasing State legitimacy, prosperity and stability" (UNAMA, 2021).

4. Cultural sensitivity training for aid workers: There is a need for comprehensive cultural sensitivity training to be provided to aid workers to familiarize them with local customs and traditional practices. They must be aware of the importance of acting in a way that is sensitive to traditions and cultures while working with a diverse community.

Conclusion:

By implementing these policy recommendations, we believe that Afghanistan can move towards a more sustainable approach to poverty reduction and hunger alleviation. This will not only provide immediate relief to those in need but also empower individuals and communities to break the cycle of poverty and achieve a sustainable future.

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Advocacy: A Journey Toward an Inclusive and Diverse Society

Executive Summary:

Since the Taliban's takeover on August 14, 2021, Afghanistan has been going through the darkest days in its history in terms of human rights, especially women's rights. Today, Afghan people are deprived of their most basic and fundamental human rights and women have been completely excluded from political, social and economic life. (Reliefweb. int, 2023) In contrast to the world's push for gender equality, the Taliban has responded to women's protests with intimidation and threats, severe repression, arbitrary arrests and imprisonment, murder and torture. Access to healthcare, employment and education has also been impacted.

We believe that advocacy is needed to create an inclusive and diverse society, where everyone, regardless of their gender and beliefs, has access to their basic rights and is included.

Introduction:

Afghanistan has a number of economic and political problems and is experiencing inflation due to sanctions and restrictions from international and neighboring countries, meaning that people are living in poverty like never before. Currently, Afghan citizens are facing severe limitations imposed by the Taliban regime, and these restrictions are nothing short of brutality. With the formation of a new government and cabinet, the Taliban controls the whole of Afghanistan and has created a class gap between the ethnic groups in Afghanistan. As a result, a lot of residents of Afghanistan left the country and became asylum seekers in foreign countries, with most of them having lost their assets to the ruthless Taliban.

Afghanistan has become a dark place, where human rights and women's rights are not the policy of the government. After the fall of the previous government, human rights organizations left Afghanistan, and education and women's rights were left behind. Afghanistan is currently the first place in the world for gender inequality. Since the Taliban seized Afghanistan, they have prevented women and girls from attending schools and universities, and have banned women from working in governmental and non-governmental organizations. This policy brief will offer recommendations for a better future for Afghanistan. With Afghanistan experiencing profound social crisis and deep inflation, the only way to end the crisis is with sustained advocacy.

Problem Statement:

The Taliban's first purge was the Ministry of Women Affairs shutting down social and human rights activism; the women who gathered to protest and stand for their rights received extremely hard punishments, with many arrested for no reason. Girls were denied access to secondary education, and women also barred from higher education and denied working permits. Due to the freezing of Afghanistan's assets held in Swiss and US bank accounts, the afghani currency experienced sudden inflation and poverty increased massively. The current challenges standing in the way of an inclusive society in Afghanistan can be summarized as follows:

1. Extreme and worsening limitations on women's rights, the media and freedom of speech.
2. Organizations that support human rights (like the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) and the Afghanistan Independent Human Right Commission (AIHRC)) were severely restricted and some were even closed completely.
3. Peaceful demonstrators who were fighting for their rights and job permits were

arrested, tortured and forcibly disappeared.

4. Extreme poverty and massive inflation plague Afghanistan residents. Compounding this, the afghani currency experienced horrific fluctuation, and natural disasters, drought and flooding made the situation worse.

Recommendations:

UN Member States:

a. In any bilateral or multilateral discussions with the Taliban, promote the full range of women's rights and develop a coordinated strategy to ensure consistency in the messaging surrounding women's rights.

b. The United Nations, member states, and international women's rights organisations should put pressure on the Taliban regime for equal rights (UN Women Asia and the Pacific, 2022).

c. Protesting and petitioning is the inalienable right of every citizen of Afghanistan. To prevent the arbitrary arrest and investigation of human rights activists, the petition program must be mediated by UNAMA so that the Taliban cannot arrest protesters without reasonable grounds.

d. Humanitarian aid organizations need to implement long-term strategies to reduce the level of poverty in Afghanistan by taking steps to prevent sudden inflation, and creating jobs and organizing courses for women to learn various skills to meet their daily needs.

Afghan Religious Scholars and Community Leaders:

a. Engage the Taliban and local community leaders on the rights and freedoms afforded to women and girls under Islam. Consider acting as a mediator between civil society organizations and the Taliban in order to foster trust and enable secure dialogue on community issues such as women's rights and gender mainstreaming.

b. The Ministry of Women's Affairs should be re-established and women activist councils should create communities to implement human rights law, which will allow women to access universities again and guarantee women's right to employment.

Overall, all actors must work towards establishing an inclusive government with all ethnic groups represented and able to participate in decision-making.

Conclusion:

The use of economic, political, and diplomatic pressures on the Taliban are key instruments in reversing restrictions on women's rights. The only solution to the

current situation is to uphold the laws, by litigation if necessary, and for the world to join hands with the people of Afghanistan. Human rights institutions need to return to Afghanistan, so people can organize demonstrations and be protected from arbitrary arrest. This advocacy would allow Afghan men and women to participate so that Afghan women can get their work and education rights back and create a government in which all ethnic groups are included and play an important role in decision-making. Advocacy is the only option for a prosperous Afghanistan.

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The Future of Afghanistan's Youth in Light of Afghanistan's Political Instability

Executive Summary:

Afghanistan's youth are facing tremendous challenges due to the country's political instability. The most common and important issues are youth unemployment, migration, and illiteracy. Wars, political instability, and economic difficulties are the main reasons for these problems. The Afghan government can help to address these challenges by encouraging entrepreneurship, enhancing education, and providing job opportunities. By doing so, Afghan youth can have a bright and successful future and can become positive change-makers in Afghanistan.

Introduction:

Afghanistan's political instability has cast a shadow over the progress of its youth, who represent the country's future. This policy brief aims to shed light on three of the most significant challenges Afghan youth face: unemployment, migration, and illiteracy. This report identifies the causes and effects of these challenges, and offers recommendations to help to eliminate these obstacles and contribute to a brighter future for Afghanistan's young people.

Problem Statement:



The high rate of youth unemployment in Afghanistan is a major problem, and one that has devastating consequences. The lack of job opportunities for young people leads to poverty, crime, and migration. Furthermore, it contributes to mental health problems such as depression and anxiety, increasing the risk of self-harm and suicide among Afghan youth. Half a million people in Afghanistan have lost their jobs since the Taliban took over (International Labour Organization 2022). The tragic loss of a child to freezing temperatures highlights how unemployment leads to poverty, leaving families unable to afford heating (CNN 2023). The problems caused by youth unemployment include economic struggles, with young people unable to support their families, resulting in poverty and hunger. Additionally, job scarcity can result in social problems like crime and drug abuse, as unemployed youth may turn to these activities out of hopelessness and as a way to handle their situation and support their families. Similarly, they may also join criminal gangs or terrorist organizations. Moreover, many educated and talented young people leave Afghanistan for better job opportunities abroad.

Afghans have suffered more than 40 years of conflict, natural disasters, chronic poverty, food insecurity, the COVID-19 pandemic and, most recently, a change in government authorities, all of which have led to major issues like youth migration. Today, more than 8 million Afghans have been driven out of their homes or their country by conflict, violence, and poverty. Afghan refugees are the third-largest displaced population in the world after Syrian and Ukrainian refugees. In 2023, there were at least 8.2 million Afghans hosted across 103 different countries. "Afghanistan's displacement crisis is one of the largest and most protracted in UNHCR's seven-decade history. We're now seeing a third generation of Afghan children born in exile," says the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi (see USA for UNHCR 2023).

An additional challenge that many Afghans face is illiteracy, especially among young people. Around 12 million adults in the country can't read or write, with women disproportionately affected. This issue is worsened by conflicts, poverty, and gender biases that keep children, especially girls, from school. Lack of proper education creates significant problems for both individuals and the nation as a whole; it causes limited access to employment options, and illiterate youth often struggle to find stable and well-paying jobs, making them ineligible for many positions and leaving them with only low-skilled and low-income employment options.

Recommendations:

- 1. Global engagement:** International agencies such as UNHCR should provide Afghan refugees who live in exile with urgent support.
- 2. Education:** The government should provide high-quality education for the younger generation to help and encourage them to grow in every field of study. This will assist Afghan youth in advancing their skills and competencies.
- 3. Creating job opportunities:** The government must provide job opportunities that young people can pursue after completing their education. This will allow Afghan youth to become educated citizens who

can contribute to a prosperous future for both themselves and the country.

4. Promote and encourage entrepreneurship: The government should promote entrepreneurship among Afghan youth by providing loans and other financial assistance to young entrepreneurs. This will help and motivate them to create their own jobs.

5. Financial assistance from the international community: The government should engage with the international community to seek financial assistance from international donors and organizations.

6. Eliminating gender disparity: As mentioned above, the illiteracy rate for women is much higher than the illiteracy rate for men. This is due to a number of reasons, including cultural practices that prevent girls from attending school, lack of access to education for girls, and poverty. Hence, the government should make sure that everyone has equal access to their fundamental rights.

Conclusion:

In Afghanistan, young people are vulnerable but also full of potential. This policy brief talks about their struggles with not finding work, moving to new countries, and lack of access to education. The government must take immediate action by creating job opportunities, encouraging entrepreneurship among youth, providing quality education, and training teachers. Addressing these obstacles is crucial not only for Afghan youth's personal development, but also for the overall progress and stability of the country. Finally, Afghanistan's young people face big problems, but we can fix them together. By working with the government, organizations, and each other, we can make sure they have a better future.

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What Does the Future Hold for Women in Afghanistan?

Executive Summary:

Women in Afghanistan face various obstacles that impede their progress and development. The primary objective of this policy brief is to present the precarious and uncertain future that Afghan women and girls face, as they are subjected to various restraints and governmental policies, have lost many freedoms, and have been denied their basic human rights. Presently, women face explicit limitations on their ability to pursue higher education and encounter restricted employment opportunities, leading to a significant decline in financial independence among women.

Introduction:

This policy brief explores the prospects of Afghan women, who have long faced significant challenges that hinder their rights and overall welfare. The situation for women in Afghanistan involves various challenges, such as restricted access to work and higher education, lack of freedom of expression, exclusion from government positions, and gender inequality. From our perspective, the restrictions on women in Afghanistan have escalated, with minimal progress achieved, and their future appears bleak. It is disheartening to witness the regression of women's rights after the advancements made over the past two decades (United Nations/ Human Rights).

Problem Statement:

The following are some of the key problems this policy brief will address:

1. Women can't continue their education because they are no longer allowed to attend secondary school and higher education.
2. Women can't work in governmental departments.
3. Women don't have freedom of speech, so they can't talk about their problems to the media.

4. Women face high levels of gender-based inequality and are expected to uphold stereotypical gender roles.

Recommendations:

Overall, this policy brief underscores the multitude of challenges that Afghan women and girls encounter, encompassing gender inequality, restricted access to education, gender-based violence, and limited freedom of movement. To effectively tackle these pressing issues, we propose the following recommendations:

1. Reopen higher education: To address the lack of higher education opportunities for women, we suggest that non-governmental organizations offer free online classes for Afghan women. This will provide them with access to education and valuable skills that can empower them.

2. Create equal employment opportunities: Gender equality in employment necessitates action within governmental and non-governmental sectors. Foreign entities must provide Afghan women with training, internships, and mentorship to empower them with essential skills. Confronting traditional norms, promoting flexible work arrangements, and addressing workplace discrimination are crucial steps to remove barriers to women's labor market participation.

3. End gender-based discrimination: The Taliban needs to actively work towards eliminating gender-based discrimination. This includes taking steps to address cultural biases and societal expectations that hinder women's freedom and opportunities for participation in education, and political environments.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the future of Afghan women remains uncertain, with significant challenges and barriers hindering their rights and empowerment. This policy brief underscores the importance of reopening higher education, providing equal employment opportunities, and eliminating gender-based discrimination. Policymakers, stakeholders, and practitioners must give serious consideration to these recommendations, to empower Afghan women to lead independent and meaningful lives and contribute to the overall development of their country.

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Diversity and Youth Inclusion Under the Taliban Rule

Executive Summary:

The lack of diversity and inclusion under the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan is causing many problems for the country and young people who live here. Diversity refers to the variety of traits and characteristics of the people within a system, while inclusion refers to the behaviors and social factors that ensure people feel welcome within a system ¹. Taliban policy forbids most kinds of diversity and enforces exclusion instead of inclusion. Young people represent the future of Afghanistan as they bring new ideas and energy to add to the pool of knowledge and talent. Taliban policy of exclusion is irrational; it limits the power of youths and their capabilities to make the country better. The Taliban's policy of limiting education and improvement is especially bad for the country because it excludes most youth from education and improvement. This exclusion will keep young people from contributing to making our country a better place to live.

Due to the exclusionary policies of the Taliban, Afghan youth are facing challenges, including widespread poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunities for higher education.

Introduction

In Afghanistan, most of the young people are dealing with being denied education and opportunities by the government because youth inclusion and diversity have not been valued under Taliban rule. The Taliban currently only provides opportunities to those who have been part of their group in the past twenty years of their conflict with the previous Afghan government and the United States of America. To address the challenges facing Afghan youth and harming the country, the Taliban must pave the way for more opportunities that include diverse youth groups. Youth should be able to work and study in the country rather than to go abroad for work and higher education.

This policy brief identifies three key groups that face challenges with

diversity and youth inclusion in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. We also suggest the solutions that can be taken by international communities and the Afghanistan government to help solve the problems of widespread poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunities for higher education by improving inclusion and diversity in Afghanistan.

Problem Statement

Under the Taliban rule in Afghanistan, diversity and youth inclusion face significant challenges and restrictions. The Taliban, known for their strict interpretation of Islamic law, has implemented policies that disproportionately target certain groups, limit freedom of expression, and severely restrict social participation. Lack of opportunities and restriction on equal access to education are the main reasons of poverty as educational opportunities not only enable the Afghan youth with tools to enhance their capability but also create employment opportunities. Same as, lack of employment opportunity causes the people to be left without any income resources. We argue that there are three key groups whose exclusion from Afghan society is causing many of the current problems.

1: Religious Diversity: The Taliban strictly adheres to a specific interpretation of Sunni Islam, resulting in limited tolerance for religious minorities, such as Shiites, Hindus, and Sikhs. Minority religious groups face discrimination, restrictions on religious practices, and an increased risk of violence. These exclusions have resulted in the unfortunate departure of numerous educated and skilled workers from the workforce, causing harm to families and hindering educational progress for many young individuals who are eager to contribute to the growth and development of their country.

2: Gender Diversity and Women's Rights: The Taliban's approach to gender roles perpetuated a highly patriarchal society. Women and girls face restrictions in many aspects of their lives and the Taliban always ignore females as a part of community. This exclusion limits opportunities and development for all young Afghan women and prevents them from helping to solve the problem our country is facing.²

3. Youth Inclusion: The Taliban's strict social and cultural restrictions hinder the active participation and inclusion of youth in Afghan society. Young people face limitations on their access to education, cultural activities, and employment opportunities. Their voices are marginalized, limiting their ability to contribute to societal development and the decision-making processes for the country.

Recommendations:

Considering the context and problems mentioned, we believe an inclusive society would help solve some of the major problems facing Afghanistan. We suggest the following recommendations to help build a better Afghan society for everyone:



- To lead the situation towards a sustainable future, the Taliban should work with young talent, shoulder to shoulder. They must value diversity and include youth to policy making and decision making regardless of their ethnicity and religious background.
- The Taliban should recognize that Afghan women are half of this society, and they cannot close their eyes on them or show themselves blind. The Taliban must find acceptable ways to cooperate with women for growth and development and include women's presence in the community. Women must be given the right to education and employment in order to address problems like poverty.
- The Taliban must pave the way for the youth to enhance employment opportunities and encourage entrepreneurship.
- International communities can support efforts to advocate for the youth and women's inclusion in the decision-making regarding their basic rights.

Conclusion:

Overall, this policy brief points out the challenges and issues with youth inclusion and diversity in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. Religious restriction, prohibiting women from using their rights to education and employment, the lack of gender diversity and youth pushback are the problems the brief point out. To address these issues, we recommend the current Afghan government and international communities provide opportunities for all, regardless of their gender, age or religious background. In addition, to make sure that youth and women are included in decision-making and have access to their basic rights, comprehensive and consistent advocacy is required from the international community.

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Youth Illegal Immigration; Causes and Effects

Executive Summary:

Immigration is the action of a person changing his/her place of residence to live permanently in a foreign country. Both legal and illegal immigration are options for individuals all over the world. However, in poor and underdeveloped countries like Afghanistan, illegal immigration to foreign countries is something many people, especially youth, show interest in.

Current data from the United Nations shows that Afghanistan has a large share in immigration leaving the country and going all over the world, an amount that has increased since the Taliban takeover. This paper examines the context and problems of youth out-migration and provides recommendations on how to solve the problem.

Introduction:

Immigration, especially youth illegal immigration, is a big problem in Afghanistan. The United Nations Higher Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) states that “after nearly four decades of protracted displacement, Afghan refugees still constitute just over 13 percent of the global refugee population and one-fifth of the world’s protracted caseload, accounting for more than half of the 4.1 million refugees in protracted displacement of 20 years or longer. With almost 2.6 million registered refugees, Afghanistan remains the third largest country of origin in the world”.¹

Though there are variety of factors that cause this illegal immigration such as economic challenges, security concerns, social and political instability and lack of socialization opportunities, this brief would particularly address border security and lack of socioeconomic opportunities. Factors like high unemployment rates, poverty, limited access to education and healthcare, ongoing conflict, and incomplete human rights protection make youth to seek a better opportunity for living in abroad. The United Nations World Youth Report states that “youth who have access to information about better opportunities elsewhere are more likely to take advantage of them in today’s world”.²

Youth are the future of Afghanistan and for development of country, we must find solution to address youth illegal immigration. We recommend enhancing border management and promoting socioeconomic opportunities to decrease the rate of illegal youth immigrants and make a brighter future for Afghan youth in Afghanistan.

Problem Statement:

There are several reasons behind youth illegal migration, which increases brain drain from Afghanistan. Economic factors such as the high unemployment rate, poverty, limited access to basic services, lack of social and political rights, security concerns and the ongoing conflict, can all trigger individual youth who live in Afghanistan to consider immigrating.

Afghanistan faces significant challenges in generating sufficient employment opportunities for its growing youth population. Additionally, the lack of social and political rights in Afghanistan, especially for ethnic and religious minorities, can also force people to consider immigrating. And the limited protection of human rights and unequal access to opportunities prompt youth to seek a better life abroad. Besides, high price of legal immigration platforms and operational facilities for human smugglers inside and outside the countries due to lack of border management are other reasons that youth choose illegal immigration.

Recommendations:

1. It is recommended that policymakers, international communities, the government of Afghanistan and other foreign countries focus on two overarching but multifaceted approaches to solve the issues of brain drain and illegal youth immigration out of Afghanistan.
2. Firstly, improve the economic opportunity in Afghanistan and create jobs for the youth through investment in sectors such as education, vocational training and entrepreneurship. Ensure youth are prepared for opportunity by emphasizing the provision of quality education and skills training programs to support Afghan youth with the necessary skills and knowledge for better employment perspective within Afghanistan.
3. Secondly, improving border control measures to prevent illegal migration is crucial. This includes increasing border security and ensuring effective law enforcement to deter smuggling networks. However, establishing legal pathways for migration, such as liberal migration programs or educational exchange initiatives, can also provide Afghan youth with alternatives to illegal migration.

Conclusion:

Based on findings and research in the policy brief on youth illegal migration from Afghanistan, policymakers, international communities, and the government of Afghanistan must focus on a multi-faceted approach to address this complex issue. By focusing on the problems mentioned in this policy brief and considering policy brief measures proposed and implementing targeted policies and interventions, Afghanistan can overcome youth illegal migration and put an end to this and provide Afghan youth a brighter future.

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Education Ban and Young Girls' Future

Executive Summary:

Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, restrictions on young girls' access to education have been reestablished, severely restricting their possibilities for social and personal growth. Through this policy brief, we hope to increase public awareness of the harm that education restrictions have on young girls and to emphasize the value of educating girls and giving them the tools, they require to succeed. Additionally, we show that education plays a significant role in advancing societal advancement and gender equality. By bringing this issue to light, we hope to motivate people to take action and bring about significant change that will assure a better future for young girls in Afghanistan and around the world.

Introduction:

Afghanistan has a long history of education bans for girls, but when girls have been allowed an education in the last 20 years, the country has seen better social and economic growth and quality of life for many people.

The Taliban have already announced an education ban for girls over the age of 12 (NEWS, 2021), stating that they will only be allowed to attend school with female teachers and in separate classrooms from boys. Decades of research conducted by the United Nations have consistently demonstrated that educating young girls has a profound impact on various aspects of society. It has been shown to contribute to faster poverty reduction, improved maternal health, reduced child mortality rates, decreased disease prevalence, and a decline in violence.

Since education is an important human right and an essential step in creating a future that provides opportunities for Afghan girls, this brief will focus on two key issues regarding the present state of girls' education in Afghanistan: How will the Taliban's prohibition on education impact the country's and young girls' future? And what can be done to encourage young girls' study and guarantee the country's success in the future?

Problems Statement:

There are several challenges that young girls in Afghanistan face in accessing education. These include poverty, cultural norms and traditions, lack of access to schools due to the education ban, and security concerns.¹ The education ban poses a significant problem as it hinders access to education for many individuals, particularly girls. Poverty exacerbates the challenges faced in girls' education, as limited resources and financial constraints make it difficult for families to prioritize education expenses. Cultural norms and traditions also play a role in restricting girls' access to education, as societal expectations and gender roles often prioritize other responsibilities over schooling. Additionally, security concerns create barriers that prevent many girls from accessing education, as the volatile environment and

threats of violence pose risks to their safety and well-being. The education ban imposed by the Taliban will only exacerbate these challenges, and it limits the further opportunities available to young girls. However, with the Taliban's recent rise to power, there are concerns that the progress made in women's education will be lost. This ban is likely to have a significant impact on the education of young girls in Afghanistan.

There are a number of options and suggestions that can be taken into account in order to address these issues and encourage the education of young girls in Afghanistan. First, increasing access to schools in rural areas. Second, supporting female teachers and role models. Third, promoting policies that stress gender equality in education. They also include giving families' financial assistance so that they could send their daughters to school.

Recommendations:

- 1. Education Ban:** Advocate for the right to education for all girls, regardless of their background or religion. Work with international organizations to provide funding and support for underground schools and education programs that can operate safely.
- 2. Poverty:** Provide financial support to families to cover the cost of education, including school supplies, uniforms, and transportation. Partner with microfinance institutions to provide loans to families who want to invest in their daughters' education.
- 3. Cultural Norms and Traditions:**
 - Work with religious leaders and community elders to promote the importance of girls' education and challenge harmful cultural norms.
 - Develop culturally sensitive curricula that incorporate local traditions and values while promoting gender equality.
- 4. Security Concerns:**
 - Provide safe transportation services for girls traveling to and from school.
 - Work with local law enforcement agencies to provide protection for schools and students, especially in areas where security threats are high.
- 5. Advocacy for Gender Equality in Education:**
 - Advocate for policies that prioritize gender equality in education at the national level.
 - Work with international organizations to provide funding and support for programs that promote girls' education in Afghanistan.

Conclusion:

The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan has once again brought attention to the urgency of taking immediate steps to guarantee that young Afghan girls have access to school. The Taliban banned education for girls, which puts the future of thousands of young girls at risk. However, there are ways that can assist in resolving this problem.

We can fight to ensure that all girls, regardless of their origin or religion, have access to school by supporting them, providing financial support, and forming relationships with neighborhood organizations. Young Afghan girls can have a better future if we advocate for gender equality in education and combat negative cultural practices.

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The Problem of Afghan Youth Joining Extremist Groups

Executive Summary:

As we have witnessed in recent years, the actions of extremist groups in Afghanistan are increasing more than at other times. Their territory and population of extremist groups are increasing day by day in our country, and it is this that will hurt all Afghans news for all Afghans.

In this policy brief, we aim to address the factors that contribute to youth involvement in extremist groups and provide recommendations to the government, concerned individuals in Afghanistan, and global stakeholders who are committed to mitigating the influence of extremist organizations. The most wisely way is to upgrade people's knowledge If we want to reach peace.

Introduction:

Afghanistan is a country with several ethnicities and different languages,

and there are people who use the Afghan youth as their intellectual and political tools and stoke the fire of ethnic and linguistic bigotry to burn brighter every day. Extremism has its roots in various political, social, economic, religious and cultural factors, the interference of foreign countries and the work of spy organizations in the region with different goals and interests.

Numerous factors play a role in influencing Afghan youth to join extremist groups, and we firmly believe that several measures can be implemented to prevent these young individuals from wasting their lives in association with such organizations.

Problem Statement:

Extremist groups in Afghanistan employ various tactics to recruit youth, exploiting vulnerabilities and grievances to entice them into their ranks. These groups often target marginalized communities, offering a sense of purpose, belonging, and empowerment to disillusioned individuals. They manipulate social, economic, and political factors to create an environment conducive to recruitment. (UN, 2022)

1. Lack of knowledge: According to Afghan government statistics, 61% of Afghan people are illiterate.¹ An illiterate population with a high degree of religious belief is more ready to accept an extreme reading of religion than an educated population. For this reason, extremist groups target the rural population that are mostly illiterate. A young, devout and illiterate population is ready to be aroused to deviate from the usual norms in society and join an extremist faction.

2. Socioeconomic Factors (poverty, unemployment): Unemployment is one of the reasons why poor youth are forced to join the ranks of the extremists. Extremist groups often allow members to earn some money or provide for them in other ways.

3. Growing Social Injustice: Growing social injustice in Afghan society regarding participation in authority, employment, provision of civil and social rights resulting from various discrimination is one of the factors that strengthen extremism among young people. When thousands of young people with similar knowledge and education are excluded but see a small group of their peers enjoying political and social privileges based on blood, ethnic, tribal and other relationships, they are drawn to extremism and militancy due to the confusion and frustration at this injustice.

4. Lack of Control over Religious Schools: According to statements of Afghan security officials, the absence of government monitoring programs on religious schools and their teaching materials has made it easier for Afghan youths to learn about and join extremist groups. In many cases, extremist groups recruit young people from local schools in the provinces, then transfer them to neighboring countries and use them as suicide bombers.

Recommendations:

1. Provide opportunities for the seek literacy increase: Stakeholders including



civil societies must take step to provide sources and opportunities for the youth, specifically girls, with the aim to increase the literacy rate amongst young girls in the country.

2. Employment and nondiscrimination: Job security and reducing job vacancy rates are effective factors for reducing youth interest in joining extremist groups. When people have nothing to each and nothing to do to fix it, are willing to do whatever will provide money. Unemployed people are more susceptible to joining extremist groups than employed youth, so improving employment will be an important step in improving this issue.

3. Preventing foreign countries intervention: The current Afghan government and the international community must adopt applicable policy measures to make sure that Afghanistan neighboring countries respect the Afghanistan roles and regulation and are not able to interfere to the internal matters.

4. All religious schools must be registered and overviewed regularly: The Ministry of Education must register all the religious schools and evaluate their activities on regular basis to avoid the misuse of these schools.

Conclusion:

As a consequence of economic, educational, international and equity issues in Afghanistan, radical religious groups are penetrating among the Afghan people. It is a case where the absence of good governance breeds despair in the society. Although some analyses are willing to look for the roots of religious extremism in the religious teachings and beliefs of a group, the main factors pushing young people to join extremist groups are not the attraction to the extreme beliefs, but anger, despair, and intellectual and social gap that makes young people seek to belong to extremist groups.

Literacy is the root of most problems in our community and its obviation can change our people a lot. People need more cultivation and mediatization to think and know what is better for them.

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Qualitative Impact of the APT Leadership Program:

The primary goal of APT is to enhance the capacity, critical thinking, and future growth of Afghan youth, particularly girls. Our programs serve as a valuable source of knowledge in a society where access to education is limited, acting as a bridge for youth across the country to connect, exchange ideas, and discuss challenges. In our two leadership development programs 2023, 48 youth, majority of them young women, developed their leadership capabilities to challenge the currently restricted rule enforced by the Taliban regime. In addition, the youth participants from different provinces of Afghanistan were brought together to be exposed to each other's ideas and opinions in order to initiate their own unique programs and contribute to social progress and development collectively.

Impact Story:

Zoha Sherzoy:

My name is Zoha Sherzoy. I was introduced to the APT leadership program by a friend of mine who had participated in it herself. She encouraged me to take advantage of this impactful program. Being a part of the APT leadership program was both exciting and challenging. Initially, I struggled to express myself and often found myself influenced by the ideas of my team members, which was a fear I had before joining. However, after attending a few sessions, I overcame this problem and became more confident in expressing my ideas, asking the instructors questions, and becoming a better speaker.

Participating in the APT leadership program allowed me to acquire numerous new skills. Throughout my journey, I have developed valuable skills in socializing with people, effective communication as a speaker and listener, and understanding the qualities of a good and responsible leader. It was truly one of the best opportunities I could have had. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the APT team and all the facilitators for organizing this valuable program for Afghan girls who are deprived of the right to education and employment.

Impact Story:

Parwana Jafari:

My name is Parwana Jafari, and I am currently a first-year student at the American University of Afghanistan (AUAF). I have achieved significant milestones along my journey, including graduating from high school with honors and receiving a scholarship to pursue my undergraduate degree at AUAF.

In late July, I came across APT's call for leadership and mentorship programs on their social media platforms. Intrigued, I researched the organization and its programs online and found them to be exceptional. I am delighted to share that I have been accepted into the leadership program. While my primary goal in joining the program was to develop fundamental leadership skills, I have gained much more than I initially anticipated. Reflecting on the past two months since I started this program, I have witnessed significant improvements in my leadership abilities. The program covered a wide range of topics related to becoming a successful leader, with each session featuring guest speakers and subject-matter specialists. Each session was unique and helped us develop effective communication and leadership skills. Despite occasional internet issues, the APT staff and organizers demonstrated their expertise in seamlessly managing such challenges.

I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this program. The knowledge and skills I have gained so far have been invaluable, and I am confident that this program will continue to have a positive impact on my personal and professional growth.



The End

