

Study on Inequalities and Social Exclusion: Opportunities in Agenda 2030

Report Compiled by

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Introduction

It is expected that Sustainable Development Goals would transform the world by 2030 only if states remain committed to SDGs implementation in an accountable and transparent manner. CSOs also made space in SDGs implementation sphere by focusing on monitoring as well as establishing coordination mechanisms with states that would enable CSOs to take governments to account and meanwhile provide technical support to them in order to achieve adopted goals.

As one of the largest CSOs global coalition, Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCCAP) has decided to begin its engagement in SDGs by conducting a study at national level on “inequalities and social exclusion in the context of SDGs” that is part of its approved strategic document by its global council and national coalitions.

Sanayee Development Organization – SDO as GCAP Afghanistan also endorsed the strategic document and committed to write a report on aforementioned study at national level on the basis of a secondary data research.

About GCAP

GCAP was launched in 2005 at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, as an open and ambitious call to civil society – including feminist and women's organizations, human rights groups, marginalized and socially-excluded communities, national and international NGOs, trade unions, youth and faith-based groups, among others.

GCAP has 85 national coalitions and constituency groups, including the Feminist Task Force and the Socially Excluded Task Force, have **mobilized hundreds of millions** of women, men, children and youth, including socially excluded groups, to put pressure on governments to deliver on their promises. GCAP constituents have monitored the successes and failures of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as national and regional development commitments and the actions of international institutions and groupings, such as the G20 and UNFCCC. Since 2010, GCAP constituents have also worked to shape the Post-2015 development agenda and helped **shaping the global discourse** on poverty and inequalities, including successfully campaigning for a standalone Sustainable Development Goal (SDG #10) "Reduce Inequality Within and Among Countries."

About Sanayee Development Organization – SDO (GCAP Afghanistan)

Sanayee Development Organization (SDO) is an Afghan development NGO, established in 1990 with the mission to contribute to the emergence of a peaceful, developed and self-sustaining Afghan society through the provision of services to vulnerable and disadvantaged people in remote and underserved rural areas of Afghanistan in the sectors of Education, Peacebuilding, Community Development and Community Health. More on www.sanayee.org.af

Methodology

This research report is based on an analysis of very few research papers, reports and publications on social exclusion in Afghanistan. The overwhelming majority of the analysis data presented in this report is prepared by desk review of other published reports and articles about socially excluded groups in Afghanistan. As there is little consolidated data on the issue of social exclusion in Afghanistan, very few of the literature surveyed applies the term “social exclusion” to the Afghan context and most of the relevant discussion is couched in terms of “vulnerable groups”(Seema Khan, 24.08.07), therefore this report is mainly drawn from a literature review report by “The Revocery and Development Consortium”.¹

Social Exclusion in Afghanistan

Social exclusion is one of the newest concepts in Afghanistan, and is becoming increasingly prevalent both in academic literature supporting development analysis and in emerging policy and strategy notes of development agencies. The terminology of social exclusion has been introduced mainly by Western donors and appears to have limited salience among Afghan policymakers and officials for the time being. (Sippi Azarbaijani-Mogaddam, November 2008)

The report proposed following conceptual framework for viewing social exclusion in Afghanistan based on the primary *source* of the exclusion:

- **Social Identity:** includes race, ethnicity, religion, sect, gender and age;
- **Social Location:** includes remote areas, stigmatized areas and war or conflict areas;
- **Social Status:** includes health (disability and disease), migrant status (refugee or IDP), occupation and educational level.

“Almost every group experiences at least one form of exclusion in Afghanistan” (Sippi Azarbaijani-Mogaddam, November 2008)

¹DFID Understanding Afghanistan – Poverty, Gender, and Social Exclusion Analysis – 4.2 Literature Review

Socially excluded groups in Afghanistan on the basis of social identity:

Women and Girls

Determinants of Exclusion

Patriarchal social structures; fundamentalist religious and cultural interpretations and ideals; culturally and historically shaped beliefs and attitudes about gender roles; women as vulnerable/corruptible bearers of culture and “honor”; lack of education; lack of human rights awareness; lack of protections from the state; lack of access to justice

Characteristics of Exclusion

Violence against women, systemic discrimination in family, community and state institutions, exclusion from local and national political life, economic dependence on male family members, vulnerability to all forms of human insecurity, exclusion from cultural and religious life; lack of/loss of agency, powerlessness, segregation

Women comprise the majority of Afghanistan’s poorest and bear a disproportionately high burden of poverty. Discrimination against women, manifested in the imposition of limited social, economic and political roles and entitlements, makes women more susceptible to poverty, exacerbates the way they experience deprivation and weakens their economic productivity. The extreme poverty in Afghanistan places women in a poverty trap that impacts negatively on their health, perpetuates education inequalities, increases deprivation of rights and overall disempowerment. This in turn reproduces and worsens the overall poverty situation in the country as women’s poverty also adversely impacts their family as well as the overall GDP of the country. Afghanistan’s progress on the MDGs also provides interesting information pointing at a challenging picture for the millions of ordinary women and girls living beyond the borders of Kabul and other provincial centers.

- The Government’s ANDS estimates women’s per capita income as \$402, as compared to \$1,182 for men (based on 2002 data) and concludes that ‘women are approximately three times economically worse off than men’ (ANDS, 2008). As mentioned above, NRVA data from 2003 also suggested that women and girls face significant discrimination in terms of lower wages received for the same work undertaken by men and boys.²
- Though major progress was achieved in the past years and in spite of a beneficial policy environment, it will be challenging for Afghanistan to meet its MDG to achieve universal primary education for both girls and boys by 2020. This assessment takes into consideration the combination of one of the world’s lowest participation rates (especially for girls) and the highest proportion of school age population. In spite of the rapid increases in gross enrolment and net attendance rates, in 2003 still almost 2 million children, twice as many girls as boys, were out of school. While girls’ enrolment in schools currently stands at 35% for the primary level, out of 16 countries Afghanistan

²National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment - NRVA

remains “seriously off track” on primary school completion rates for girls and progress towards the MDG. The Afghan Government has launched its National Education Strategy, aiming for all school-age children to be in school by the year 2015 and has a special emphasis on expanding girls’ enrolment rates. It is estimated that to meet the MDG target of eliminating gender disparity in education, Afghanistan will have to ensure that 5 girls are enrolled at the primary stage for every 3 boys and 3 girls for every boy at the secondary stage. This goal will be hampered by insecurity and conservative attitudes in the remote areas, a lack of adequate infrastructure and female teachers across the country. This in turn will have a continued detrimental impact upon women’s access to basic services such as health and education due to a continued shortage of fresh graduates in relevant fields. Afghanistan has the lowest female literacy rate in comparison to neighboring countries at 87.5% illiteracy among women.

- Women’s life expectancy in Afghanistan is only 44 years (at least 20 years lower than that of women in any neighboring country). The health MDG for Afghanistan was a reduction by 50% between 2002 and 2015 the maternal mortality ratio (MMR), and further reduction of the MMR to 25% of the 2002 level by 2020. Fertility rates and proportion of women receiving professional ante-natal care will be addressed as part of this goal. At present the fertility rate is 6.6 children per women. At 1600 deaths per 100,000 live births, the MMR in Afghanistan is equal only to the most poor, conflict-affected countries in the world. Qualified female healthworkers are missing in over one third of all health facilities countrywide, thereby constraining women's access to health care. The lack of available health care providers in addition to factors that constrain women and their families accessing existing facilities, results in almost 90% of deliveries taking place at home and almost 80% being attended by unskilled personnel.
- The infant and under-five mortality rates (U5MR) in Afghanistan are also among the highest in the world. These are targeted to be reduced by 50% of the 2003 levels by 2015 and by two thirds by 2020. Real impact can only come with better immunization, access to clean water and improved nutrition. Immunization coverage of children has increased, but overall it is much higher in urban than in rural areas, especially in major cities. Most deaths among children under-five years of age in Afghanistan result from infectious causes, with diarrhea, acute respiratory infections and vaccine-preventable illnesses accounting for nearly 60% of deaths.

Children and Young People

Determinants of Exclusion

Dependency on adults, deeply entrenched beliefs regarding children’s abilities and rights as citizens resulting in exclusion from decision making processes at all levels, vulnerability to domestic and school based violence, lack of protection from the state and access to systems of justice

Characteristics of Exclusion

High mortality rates, stunting, vulnerability to preventable diseases, the risks posed by conflict and insecurity, lack of access to safe drinking water and the challenges associated with access to education (often engaged in child labor) and health services. Risk of sexual exploitation.

More than half of Afghans are under 18, making efforts on behalf of children vital to the country's future. Child labor is widespread and seems to be rising, (UNICEF estimates 20% of all primary school age children undertake some form of work) as a result of the pressure on households to meet costs exceeding combined adult incomes. This results in the reproduction of poverty as a result of inadequate investment in a child's education and potential for economic/political and social empowerment. More than half of all children are stunted.

- Because immunization coverage is still very low, preventable diseases kill thousands of children annually. Malaria (which afflicts approximately 2 million people per year), measles, and respiratory infections are the leading causes of childhood death.
- The great majority of Afghanistan's population lacks access to safe water or sanitation. Diarrheal diseases and tuberculosis are chronic threats to public health.
- Two million children of primary school age do not attend classes. Literacy rates are low.
- The gender gap in education is narrowing, but girls still lag far behind boys in school enrolment.
- Landmines and unexploded ordnance pose a serious risk to children's safety.

Older People

Determinants of Exclusion

Population movements lead to fragmentation of traditional family structures and support networks, high prevalence of physical disabilities and reduced mobility among older people reduces opportunities available for earning income, public absence of effective social protection systems to support older people, lack of visibility and voice for older people. Older people can be left to guard property and look after children.

Characteristics of Exclusion

Less able to move out of difficult situations, personal safety can be compromised in areas of insecurity by revenge attacks and looting, relatively less able to access adequate food and other essentials. Poor living conditions can exacerbate health problems and lead to further debilitation.

Widespread poverty, the absence of effective targeted public assistance and in certain contexts, the breakdown of informal support strategies leads to increasing levels of vulnerability among the elderly. Older people are among the poorest and most marginalized in many countries. Older people are particularly vulnerable in the face of shocks and crises, yet tend to be the most disadvantaged when it comes to receiving external support. Where there is chronic political instability and social upheaval due to conflict, drought, or impoverishment, older people can be left to guard property, take care of young children and look after the sick. As a result of their reduced mobility and income earning potential, the ability of older people to

meet both their own essential needs, and those for whom they are caring, can be severely compromised.

Religious minorities

Determinants of Exclusion

Legacy of conflicts, political manipulation, sectarian discrimination

Characteristics of Exclusion

Human insecurity and vulnerability, fuelling of ethnic tensions, political instability, violent conflict, systemic inequalities

Afghanistan has a 12% Shiite population, as well as a small population of Ismaili Muslims (90% of whom are Hazara; and 2% of whom are Tajik). Ismailis are generally regarded with suspicion in Afghanistan and are often discriminated against. Afghan Ismailis tend to be poor and under-represented in political institutions. It is estimated that there are approximately 1,200 Sikh and Hindu families in Kabul, most of whom reside in Kabul and have their own temples, and some of whom recently returned back from exile in Pakistan fleeing the Taliban regime. There is a small Afghan Bahai community that operates totally clandestinely, in fear of persecution and prosecution for apostasy. Overall, religious tolerance towards minorities has improved since the fall of the Taliban, though few if any agencies offer service provision to non-Muslim minorities and no local human rights groups currently focus on minority rights

Minority Ethnic Groups

Determinants of Exclusion

Ethnicity-based discrimination and persecution, constructs of difference, legacy of conflicts, political manipulation, sectarian discrimination, resentment of dominance in governance by one group

Characteristics of Exclusion

Unofficial discrimination in employment and educational opportunities; in cities, human insecurity and vulnerability, fuelling of ethnic tensions, violent conflict, systemic inequalities

Afghanistan is extremely ethnically diverse and the persecution of different ethnic groups has varied in the turbulent periods of the recent past. While the situation of Hazaras has improved significantly since the Taliban years and overt discrimination is reduced. Hazaras remain one of the most poverty-stricken ethnic groups. In addition, reluctance to address atrocities committed by militias of any ethnicity has not allowed tensions and discrimination to abate. Indeed, ethnicity in Afghanistan is highly vulnerable to political manipulation and could easily lead to worsening state fragmentation. However, has warned against nurturing ethnicity

as prominent factors in political representation, claiming that Afghans still have the potential for unity and noting that ethnic identities (and by extension, divisions) are largely a twentieth-century creation. A number of common proverbs used in Afghanistan reflect discrimination between ethnic groups and suggest that these divisions have been culturally internalized to some degree.

Gypsies (including Ghorbat, Barbers, Cheghelbaf and Churiwal, among others)

Determinants of Exclusion

Discrimination, unwelcome in communities due to popular beliefs about “uncleanliness” and thievery

Characteristics of Exclusion

Segregation from mainstream Afghan society, lack of access to services (education, healthcare, etc.)

Often confused for Kuchis, Afghanistan has a large population of gypsies (or “peripatetic”) made up of various groups including the Ghorbat, barbers, musicians, Cheghelbaf and Churiwal, and believed to be, far back, of Indian origin. Many speak distinct languages of Indian dialects, such as Hindko. They are often universally referred to as **“jat” in a pejorative way by other Afghans**. It is estimated that they number around 7,000. These communities are found throughout the country, but rarely integrated within their (temporary or permanent) host communities and routinely treated with contempt by other Afghans.

Discrimination is frequently on the basis of the profession into which these groups are born, as in the case of travelling saleswomen, female musicians, etc. There is a dearth of any kind of research within any discipline on Afghanistan’s gypsy communities. Many of the women and children begging on the streets in urban areas, as well as imprisoned women are from this group. For the most part, they are unacknowledged by the Government, the UN agencies, and other elements of the international community working in Afghanistan.

Socially excluded groups in Afghanistan on the basis of social location:

Residents of insecure areas

Causes of Exclusion

Residing in areas of insurgent presence and activity

Conditions of Exclusion

Vulnerable to insurgent recruitment; exposed to violence, death, displacement, lack of services, general insecurity

2007 saw the highest levels of violence in Afghanistan since 2001, with thousands of civilian deaths, a significantly heightened level of attacks carried out by Taliban insurgents, a growing number of suicide bombings in ever diverse locations, and an increasing trend of kidnappings of

Afghans for ransom, as well as several more publicized kidnappings of foreigners. The southern region of Afghanistan faces particularly prominent security challenges which render the populations residing in some districts highly susceptible to social exclusion, denying them access to state resources and social services from independent agencies. Insecurity in the Southern provinces is resulting not only from fighting between insurgents and NATO forces, but also from factional leaders, corrupt police and those associated with narcotics trafficking. In other regions, local level disputes bring a climate of insecurity to bear. NATO action is pushing many families into poverty through collateral damage, for instance, increasing the losses of male breadwinners, disability, and incurring medical costs. A theme across all of the literature is that the region stands out as presenting key challenges to achieving development the goals as a result of insecurity, and warrants special attention in seeking to find constructive responses for protecting socially excluded groups in remote parts of the South.

Extreme Urban Poverty and Vulnerability

Causes of Exclusion

Rapid urbanization exceeds public capacities, growth particularly concentrated in unofficially recognized and legalized peri-urban slums, breakdown of traditional social support networks amidst uncertainties and motilities of urban context. Tenure insecurity a key cause of exclusion.

Conditions of Exclusion

Majority of poor urban households excluded from basic services, and depend on highly unreliable livelihood strategies leading to chronic insecurity and vulnerability to shocks. Interconnections between poor access to services, poor health, low incomes and inability to support children through school, prevents household members from moving out of poverty

Many urban centers in Afghanistan have not yet recovered from prolonged conflict. While data on poverty incidence and access to basic services appear to be more encouraging in urban areas as compared to rural areas, the overall picture masks the heightened degree of inequality in among urban communities – particularly with regard to peri-urban slums settled by those migrating into cities as a result of severe hardship. Inflationary pressure makes the cost of living especially difficult for the urban poor with the seasonal impact of harsh winters exacerbating stress as a result of reduced opportunities for income and soaring expenditure related to fuel and ill health. In particular, small and stagnant labor markets appear to reinforce inequality. They also illustrate crucial cyclical interconnections between the insecurity of urban livelihoods and low employment levels (casual wage labor and home based work), lack of basic services and inability to afford costs of drinking water and fuel, chronic ill health, and low levels of access to education among the urban poor.

Socially excluded groups in Afghanistan on the basis of social status:

Kuchi Nomads

Causes of Exclusion

Displacement caused by conflict; drought; reduced mobility due to insecurity/conflict; forced repatriation; refugee status; lack of capital

Conditions of Exclusion

Food insecurity; loss of livestock; lack of education; lack of livelihood opportunity; landlessness; lack of housing; vulnerability to landmines

The estimated population of nomadic pastoralists (known as Kuchis), of Pushtun and Baluch ethnicity, is around 1.5 million. As reinforced by the data from NRVA 2005, illiteracy and lack of access to public services is highest among Kuchis as compared to other vulnerable groups – they have been referred to as “probably the most destitute, least regarded, and least attended group in the Afghan population. The poorest Kuchi are those who have been forced to settle as a result of livestock and traditional pasture losses arising from drought, crime or the disruption of migration routes resulting from insecurity. It is widely acknowledged that this situation, if not addressed, constitutes a major blocker of change with regard to both efforts to end conflict, support economic growth and reduce poverty.

Unemployed and underemployed youth

Causes of Exclusion

Conflict, poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, lack of education and training opportunities, orphaned, smuggled

Conditions of Exclusion

Political instability, poverty, disenchantment, possible vulnerability to insurgent recruitment, powerlessness, insecurity

Unemployment presents a major source of instability for the fledgling Afghan state. The Government has made addressing the needs of unemployed youth and demobilized soldiers one of its five main program areas in its social protection policy (President’s Office website – Social Protection), but outside observers are critical that too little has been accomplished and most Afghans remain outside the purview of any kind of state-provided welfare system. A majority of Afghan families do not have regular jobs or a single regular source of income on which to rely, translating into livelihood insecurity for a dangerously high proportion of the population. Informal employment means unreliable income forecasts, seasonal variance and high competition. Urban growth is also contributing to increasing poverty in light of inadequate infrastructure and management planning from overwhelmed central and municipal state institutions. Labor migration is an important strategy for over 25% of all households. Iran is the main recipient country of migrant workers; Pakistan is the second, and then Europe, where most migrants end up settling permanently. Migrant workers in many cases allow a family to move away from vulnerability and even in some cases, out of poverty altogether, due to the higher wages that a worker can earn in Iran, Pakistan, the Middle East or elsewhere.

Development researchers have, however, warned against depending on remittances as a reliable funding source for development, pointing out that structural inequalities which lead to poverty remain intact.

IDPs and returnees

Causes of Exclusion

Displacement; unemployment; violent conflict; discrimination, persecution; lack of opportunity; conflict over land, housing, water rights

Conditions of Exclusion

Poverty, lack of access to government services including education and healthcare; vulnerability to insurgent recruitment

Afghanistan still has a record number of refugees, the second highest number in the world after Palestinians, with an estimated 3.5 million remaining in Iran and Pakistan (2.46 million in Pakistan and around 900,000 in Iran⁴²). Despite this, as of 2007, the UNHCR has assisted at least 3.69 million refugees to return since March 2002, marking it the largest assisted return operation in the agency's history. An additional 1.11 million refugees returned without UNHCR assistance, totaling 4.8 million returnees. The period of 2006-2008 has seen a record number of refugees return to Afghanistan from neighboring countries, though the infrastructure and resources to effectively settle and reintegrate them into the economy and society are largely absent. Returnees continue to face a lack of shelter, no access to safe drinking water, and minimal access to already strained health and education services. Securing employment remains the predominant concern of most returnees while land disputes and acquisition are the foremost challenges which remain inadequately addressed. There is an abundance of literature available on the refugee and returnee situation of Afghanistan which includes annual statistics of remaining refugee estimates and the number of returnees, assessments of current assistance programs, lessons learned proposed approaches to reintegration, and a myriad of recommendations for how to achieve successful reintegration and rehabilitation.

People with disability

Mentally disabled

Causes of Exclusion Trauma, violence, abuse, destitution, genetic defects, substance abuse, deterioration of indigenous coping mechanisms and social support networks, grieving and loss

Conditions of Exclusion

Lack of treatment, support and prevention services, abuse of mentally disabled persons, insensitivity and stigma from communities, unemployment, destitution

The impact of decades of war, widespread and unpunished human rights abuses, restrictions in freedoms, uncertainty about the future and poverty have taken an extraordinary toll on the mental health of Afghans. In Afghanistan the prevalence of depression is 73% among women and 59% among men; anxiety in 84% of women and 59% of men, and of post-traumatic stress disorder at 48% in women and 32% in men, indicating excessively high levels of poor mental health among the whole population, but particularly among women. Stressors affecting women's psycho-social well-being generally fell into two categories: trauma caused by war (such as violence and loss), and daily stressors (such as malnutrition, poor living conditions, unemployment, etc). Post-traumatic stress disorder is extremely common among children studied in Kabul. Mental health has been given extremely low priority in Afghanistan's reconstruction agenda, despite the manifold effects it has on the population's capacity to rehabilitate and take meaningful part in the country's rebuilding process. Waldman & Hanif (2002) have pointed out that a return to normal life, with increased security and stability, together with strong social support networks would help reduce mental ill-health for many Afghans.

Congenitally disabled

Causes of Exclusion

Consanguineous marriage, lack of health knowledge, untreated pregnancy complications, infectious viruses (e.g. polio); unhygienic living conditions, lack of vaccines, malnutrition, genetic defects, lack of prevention systems in place

Conditions of Exclusion

Debilitating physical and mental disabilities, poverty, ostracization, decreased life span and quality, depression, self-consciousness, unemployment, dependence on other family members, lack of healthcare infrastructure

Physically disabled or maimed

Causes of Exclusion

Landmines, conflict, genetic disabilities, accidents, infectious viruses (e.g. polio); lack of vaccines, unhygienic living conditions, malnutrition, genetic defects, lack of prevention systems in place

Conditions of Exclusion

Lack of adequate/appropriate healthcare infrastructure and knowledge, unemployment, poverty, ostracisation, decreased life span and quality, depression, dependence on other family members, traditional practice sometimes exacerbates the problems.

As might be expected after a period of prolonged conflict, coupled with the chronic absence of a public health care system, Afghanistan has an extremely high prevalence of disabled people. Estimates have suggested 800,000 people but data presents a challenge and it is likely that on

the basis of comparative regional analysis (and an expanded definition of disability on the basis of the widely accepted social model) this could be a significant underestimate. The result of Handicap International's National Disability Survey in Afghanistan (2005) led to the development of a National Policy Framework for Action for Persons with Disability, currently under implementation. Afghanistan's lack of healthcare infrastructure and official support institutions for people with disabilities adds numerous layers to the burden of a disability in a context of war and poverty. Livelihoods are affected by the link between physical and mental health: the CDCP survey found that disabled people had significantly lower social functioning and poorer mental health status than those who were non-disabled. Disability in Afghanistan also means experiencing multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion. All intervention approaches should address challenges sourced in Afghan culture and traditions, gender issues, religious factors, an authoritative society, a medical approach in treatment, and isolation and limitations in access to information.

Opium and heroin addicts

Causes of Exclusion

Traumas, violence, abuse, destitution, frustration, ease of access to and affordability of opium, no rule of law

Conditions of Exclusion

Unemployment, poor health, instability and violence in families and communities, lack of treatment facilities, isolation

The UN estimates that Afghanistan, which produces the world's largest supply of opium and heroin, has at least one million addicts with an estimated 19,000 intravenous drug users in Kabul alone. The highest opium addiction rates are found in Badakhshan (estimated at 20-30%) with high rates also reported in Farah and Herat. There is a lack of research on opium addiction in Afghanistan and on substance abuse in general, though it is believed that addiction is increasing. Addiction creates conflicts in families and communities and often leads to financial hardship, where addicts will sell land and assets to feed their habit. Addicts face social ostracization and discrimination (derogatory terms such as *puderi* (heroin addict) and *charsi* (hashish addict)). A decree against drug abuse was introduced by Karzai in 2002, and convictions for drug use are punished by three months' prison terms. There is no official drug user registry in Afghanistan. Treatment facilities exist but are rare and most have long waiting lists for beds. The lack of female health workers at treatment facilities prevents women addicts from accessing treatment services.

Recommended/Required Actions

Certainly, states' commitment towards SDGs implementation is the key to tackle many social challenges and social exclusion is no exception. Focusing on social exclusion following Sustainable Development Goals should be addressed by Government of Afghanistan:

Goal No. 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal No. 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal No. 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal No. 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goal No. 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal No. 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Goal No. 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Goal No. 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goal No. 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal No. 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Goal No. 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

According to overall context in Afghanistan, Goal No. 16 is a must otherwise every step towards development will be challenging and infeasible in the country.

Further, we encourage GoA to develop ANDS in a participatory manner and implement it on the basis of its commitments for SDGs.

Afghanistan National Development Strategy – ANDS

The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) is a Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)-based plan that serves as Afghanistan's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). It is underpinned by the principles, pillars and benchmarks of the Afghanistan Compact. The pillars and goals of the ANDS are:

1. Security: Achieve nationwide stabilization, strengthen law enforcement, and improve personal security for every Afghan.
2. Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights: Strengthen democratic practice and institutions, human rights, the rule of law, delivery of public services and government accountability.
3. Economic and Social Development: Reduce poverty, ensure sustainable development through a private sector-led market economy, improve human development indicators, and make significant progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

The preparation of the ANDS was one of the conditions for debt relief under the HIPC (Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries) initiative of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) - and World Bank supported adjustment and reform programs. Its approval has taken Afghanistan to the “decision point” on debt relief thus triggering interim relief on its debt service. Full and irreversible debt relief will be given at “completion point,” which requires, among other things, the implementation of the ANDS for at least one year.

Thus, In May 2008, Afghanistan’s Government approved the country’s poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP), entitled the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). In response to this, the International Conference in Support of Afghanistan, held in June 2008, agreed to fund the implementation of the approved strategy. Although AREU’s reading of the ANDS identified four constraints on implementation which limit the ANDS’ potential to reduce poverty. These constraints are:

1. An overly-descriptive poverty profile which fails to assess the causes of poverty and fails to define clear poverty reduction targets to which the sector strategies can be held accountable;
2. An over-reliance on vision statements without detail on how to achieve them. The document seems to presume that desired outcomes will simply emerge and they do not need to be actively planned for;
3. A lack of sequencing and prioritization; and
4. An overly-technical analysis of the existing problems and possible solutions, ignoring the deeply political nature of the development process. (Pain, 2009)³

Afghanistan Civil Society Global Consortium urges on development of ANDS for SDGs implication in the country while Government of Afghanistan must consider errors and deficits the previous strategy had along with critics to it. However, ANDS could be quite helpful in terms of giving a specific picture of Afghan government commitments towards SDGs. Meanwhile, ANDS could be a good and comprehensive document to measure Government’s achievements of SDGs and take them to account to ensure accountability and transparency.

Furthermore, CSOs consultation, participation and contribution to development of ANDS are insisted by ACSGC members. Accountability, transparency and inclusivity are main requirements of ACSGC members from Government of Afghanistan and they suggest that besides poverty reduction, provision of social protection should be considered in ANDS as well as it was one of the eight pillars of previous ANDS for MDGs. However, while many people *assume* social protection can contribute to tackling inequality and marginalization, yet there is little evidence to say it does (Hagen-Zanker, 2014).

Strategy of engagement in Agenda 2030

³The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) is an independent research organization based in Kabul. AREU’s mission is to conduct high-quality research that informs and influences policy and practice.

The broad strategy will be based on the following: "**Localizing SDGs - Supporting Local Communities Fighting for Justice**". This includes working with coalitions, constituencies and partners at national, regional and global levels based on local mobilizations.

Year 1 (2016): Research and ownership; awareness building and fixing monitoring mechanism at national regional and UN level and coalition building.

Year 2 (2017): Monitoring: Review reports on specific themes

Year 3 (2018): Mass action to mount pressure for delivering on Agenda 2030

Year 4 (2019): "Quadrennial review of Agenda 2030" and engagement with UN HLPF and UNGA

Year 1 (2016): Research and ownership; awareness building and fixing monitoring mechanism at national regional and UN level

a. Research and ownership

Past experience in engagement with implementation of MDGs suggest that the national governments, despite being signatory to the UN goals, hardly own it in its totality. Therefore some research is needed to identify the national policies and laws, which are in line of the SDGs and establish clear links. It will be helpful for the ownership of the new agenda by the government, CSOs and the private players alike. It will also be helpful for partnering in implementation, advocacy, accountability and monitoring. Research will also bring out the grey areas where new laws are to be enacted or the existing laws needs amendment.

Activities:

1. Study on "Social Exclusion and Inequality: Opportunities in Agenda 2030"

b. Awareness building:

Awareness building among the citizenry, the government, CSOs and the private holds key to the success of implementation of Agenda 2030. The process will generate knowledge about the SDGs and open doors of participation and involvement of different actors in realization of the new agenda. Awareness building has to be taken place at local, state, national, sub-regional and regional levels.

Communication material, traditional ways of communications, engagement with mass media and community media, social media and new ways of communications like use of mobiles etc could be used for spreading awareness.

- Workshops with village people and communities: How to implement SDGs in their village/community
- Workshops with local governments (elected and administrative)

Activities:

1. Development of ICT material (Power points, booklets, flipcharts, posters banners etc) for wider circulation.
2. Organizing training and strategy building workshops at different levels including the sub-national and national levels.
3. Special attentions will be given to include excluded people (e.g. indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, Dalits, migrants and with women's organizations).

c. Defining monitoring mechanism

Though Agenda 2030 has been adopted by the member nations, its provisions are not legally binding. Therefore, for its proper implementations, placing the monitoring mechanism and fixing responsibility is important. The mechanism will define the accountability of government, private actors, the UN system and other such entities including the civil society organizations which are into implementation of the agenda.

The "Report of the Secretary-General on critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level", which was released on January 19, 2016 has discussed at length at the review and monitoring mechanism at global, regional and national levels. It has defined the organizational arrangement for state led reviews at the HLPF and reporting guidelines for voluntary reviews. The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) will meet every year and take stock of the progress on Agenda 2030.

Activities:

1. Workshops/consultations at national and sub-national levels on discussing the monitoring mechanism on agenda 2030.

2. Advocacy with the national governments on the monitoring mechanism and engagement with HLPF on regular basis

d. Coalition building of CSOs

Alone the government or the private players cannot achieve the ambitious goals and targets by 2030. A broad-based civil society engagement is called for more than ever before for doing research, building awareness, doing advocacy, information sharing and monitoring in this area.

Such coalitions are visualized in the national, sub-regional and regional levels.

GCAP has played a key role globally, in Asia and in Afghanistan.

Activities:

1. Two-days strategy building workshop in Kabul 2016.
2. Creation of a group to facilitate interaction among different civil societies
3. National level workshops to engage larger civil society e.g. trade unions, forest rights groups, feminist groups, unorganized workers group, youth groups, children groups, LGBT groups, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) right to food and right to work groups, farmers groups, human rights groups so on and so forth right at the stage of coalition and strategy building exercise.

Year 2 (2017): Implementation and Monitoring: Review reports on some specific themes

The SG report on follow up and review, 2016 has come out with the themes of engagement for ensuing four years.

2016: Ensuring that no one is left behind

2017: Ensuring food security on a safe planet by 2030

2018: Making cities sustainable and building productive capacities

2019: Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness: peaceful and inclusive societies, human capital development, and gender equality

The review of Agenda 2030 in 2017 should focus on two aspects; 1) On the structure and process of operationalization of the agenda and 2) On the implementations. The first part will focus on if structure of implementation and monitoring is put in place. If necessary policies and

laws have been brought in for operationalization of agenda 2030. If adequate resources have been made available as promised under the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) for its implementation etc. At the second level, the first two themes i.e. on leaving no one behind and the food security along with inequality could be taken up for review.

Activities:

1. Awareness building
2. Advocacy with the national and provincial governments.
3. National reviews on Agenda 2030 primarily on three aspects: Leave no one behind, Food security and Inequality. It will also see if structures, laws and resources are in place.
4. Engagement with the private actors on their responsibilities of engagement in Agenda 2030 and accountability.

Year 3 (2018): Mass action to mount pressure for delivering on Agenda 2030

Awareness building, advocacy and monitoring will continue in the year one and year two. The third year should prioritize on two aspects. One, on the monitoring and coming up with review reports and two, on the mass mobilisation or peaceful mass actions.

Based on the review reports in third year of engagement the CSOs ought to facilitate the process of mobilizing the people at large to show strength and mount pressure on the national governments to deliver on the promises made on Agenda 2030. The mass demonstration will bring in gathering of people in thousands and millions including the most vulnerable groups like the trade unions, forest rights groups, feminist groups, unorganized workers group, youth groups, children groups, LGBT groups, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) right to food and right to work groups, farmers groups, and human rights groups.

Activities:

1. Review report on inequality, climate change, sustainable cities
2. Interface with the national and provincial governments.

Year 4 (2019): “Quadrennial review of Agenda 2030” and engagement with UN HLPF and UNGA

A quadrennial meeting under the auspices of the UNGA is proposed by the Secretary General to take stock of the comprehensive review of all the goals, targets and indicators of Agenda 2030.

The CSOs should take this opportunity to make a thorough review of the stated goals and provide feedback to the national government and the HLPF and the UNGA. This will be the CSOs' input for early-term course correction. It will see the transfer of technology from developed to developing countries; if ODA commitments were fulfilled; if ownership and equal access to natural and other resources by the community at large has been achieved etc. It will see the improvement of the condition of the vulnerable groups like the children, women, indigenous communities and people discriminated on basis of descent, LGBT, person with disabilities (PWDs) etc.

Activities:

1. Comprehensive review of all goals and impact on different groups of excluded people, if inequality is reduced if actions for reducing climate change has been taken and if promises made under AAAA and the Paris climate deal are adhered upon.
2. This will be done at the sub-national, national levels.

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