



APFSD Youth Call to Action 2021: Afghanistan¹



INTRODUCTION

The education system has become incredibly vulnerable in Afghanistan during the COVID-19 pandemic as most students do not have access to the internet to attend online classes, and the online system of learning did not go well. Although students were not able to attend the majority of their academic year (2019-2020), their exams have started and they are still required to pass them. COVID-19 has not only adversely impacted the education system but the employment sector as well. Many restaurants, markets, entertainment places, courses, and gyms were closed, and a lot of projects were canceled and their staff were fired. This critical situation was intensified by the increasing price of goods in the market. Additionally, most people are mentally suffering from this pandemic as they are afraid of losing their family members as the rate of people affected by COVID-19 in Afghanistan has been increasing day by day. Even the rate of violence between couples has increased and numbers of early marriages have also risen in some areas. Due to financial problems and psychological distress some parents have forced their daughters to get married earlier than the age of 18. Being witness to such events has been a heart-wrenching experience for youth. Due to the low level of education and lack of awareness among young women in remote areas or low-income families, young girls and women did not have access to their medicines and vaccinations on time, and sometimes they could not access them at all, which put their health and wellbeing in hardship and danger. In remote areas of the country, they did not even have access to very basic hygienic

goods and essential health services. This causes a rise in diseases and deaths among young women and girls. It should be mentioned that there are many other obstacles as well which women face in Afghanistan. For example, most young women are not allowed to work or do not have freedom of choice in selecting their future careers. This decreases the country's workforce and adversely affects the development of it. Considering the issues from an environmental side, currently, climate change and global warming have become one of the most acute problems in the global context. Although each country suffers from the negative side effect of this global challenge, third-world countries are most affected. Since the economics of the most underdeveloped countries are based on agriculture, they have a less negative impact on climate change. In Afghanistan for instance, decreased snowfall and rain, scarcity of freshwater, and increased infectious diseases have been some of the negative effects of climate change. Climate change is a global change, and hence it requires global consensus to deal with it.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- The government should develop plans for avoiding problems in pandemic situations. For example, the government should prepare offline packages as most people do not have access to the internet.
- The government should create and implement programmes for young people to involve them in decision-making processes, and include their opinions in international, regional, national, and local plans.
- The government should increase people's accessibility to information communication technology especially in rural areas by lowering the price of ICT services.
- The government should create mental health workshops and involve volunteers and active young people in the building of these practices.
- The government should improve the overall quality of health services.
- Fighting against corruption and discrimination play a significant role in the development of Afghanistan. The government should provide equal opportunities for both men and women.
- New companies and factories should be assessed and monitored to make sure their work does not affect the environment badly.
- Mobilise young people to have surveys of venerable youths to involve them in their activities such as education, job, health and so on.
- The media should provide true and factual data and distribute it among people to raise awareness on how to follow COVID-19 precautions.
- Solar energy is a suitable alternative to produce power and energy and should replace fossil fuel consumption.
- The government should enhance people's awareness regarding the negative impact of climate change through social media and hold programmes such as conferences, and workshops.
- Since each unit of technological production requires a level of emission, the government should find an optimal point between production and pollution.

1. The APFSD country and sub-regional briefs were developed through collective discussions and engagements between youth advocates at the APFSD Youth Forum on March 14-16, 2021. The Afghanistan drafting team consists of Fayege Ibrahim, Sayed Nasratullah Mussawy, and Fariba Aslami. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW team.