



The Situation of Education for Girls in Afghanistan

General Assembly 3



Shattered Vows: Tracing the Devastation Caused by
Violating Human Rights



Forum: General Assembly 3 (GA3)

Issue: The situation of education for girls in Afghanistan

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Introduction

Afghanistan, a nation ridden with numerous ongoing issues as a result of natural disasters, wars and changes in power, find themselves in a major humanitarian crisis. This nation has been in a four-decade-long period of instability which has resulted in its fragile and volatile nature. Despite the Afghanistan War ending in August 2021, violence continues to undermine the country's development with almost two-thirds of the population living in areas directly affected by conflict. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, there were approximately 111,000 civilian casualties in Afghanistan between 2009 and 2022. These casualties include people that lost their lives or got severely injured/ill during the conflict which shows the numerous ways in which these casualties could have been prevented if humanitarian aid had been maintained. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) now estimates that over 28 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan alone which accounts for roughly 70% of the entire population.

Not only have the Afghani citizens had a lack of resources like food and water, but hundreds of thousands of girls and women in this country have had their rights to education stripped from them. It is estimated that since March 2022, 1.1 million girls in secondary education, have been prevented from attending their secondary schools until further notice. This abrupt halt to their education violates their human rights. These girls and women who will no longer be able to acquire their high school diplomas face lifelong consequences in terms of their cognitive capabilities as well as their future job opportunities. Without this necessary education, these girls and women are essentially forced into limited futures where their aspirations and potential for success is constrained. The situation of education for girls in Afghanistan has become so severe that 'secret schools' for women have developed implying that there is fear around as to what might happen if women are caught learning. This makes Afghanistan the only country in the world today that has suspended access to education for girls and women. To make the situation even worse, Taliban militants have even expanded their oppression of women and girls in Afghanistan by increasing their crackdown on female education. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), nearly 30% of girls in Afghanistan have never entered primary education. This means that 30% of girls have not even had access to the first level of basic education. UNESCO, along with other international organizations, have been heavily involved in supporting the education of girls in Afghanistan by running a successful literacy program that reached over 600,000 youth and adults. With the help of international organizations as well as other, new methods, it could one day be possible to have women and girls educated to the same level and have the same opportunities as men and boys in Afghanistan.



Definition of Key Terms

Pashto

Pashto is an Eastern Iranian language that is natively spoken in north-western Pakistan, southern and eastern Afghanistan and so isolated areas in Iran. This language has now become the official language of Afghanistan following the Taliban take over.

Sunni Islam

Sunni Islam is the largest branch of Islam, followed by 85-90% of the world's Muslims whilst simultaneously being the largest religious domination in the world.

The Taliban

The Taliban is a fundamentalist Muslim movement which in 1994 set up an Islamic state in Afghanistan. The Taliban were overthrown in 2001 by US-led forces and Afghan groups after the tragic terrorist attacks of the 11th of September 2001. The name 'Taliban' comes from Pashto meaning 'students' or 'seekers of knowledge'. The Taliban recently regained control of Afghanistan in August, 2021 after having gradually seized more and more provinces throughout Afghanistan and the eventual collapse of the Afghan Military.

UNESCO

The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization set up in November, 1945.

Gender Equality

Gender Equality refers to a situation in which access to rights and opportunities is unaffected by gender meaning that no matter your identity you are granted the same freedoms. Gender equality as is one of the UN sustainable development goals highlighting its importance and the international efforts to make this a reality.

Educational Barriers

A barrier to learning is anything that prevents a learner from being fully engaged in the learning process. In Afghanistan educational barriers exist for women and girls as the Taliban have made it illegal for them to be educated.

Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian aid is assistance that is used to relieve suffering during emergency situations. This aid is often provided to refugees, victims of natural disasters/wars, as well as the homeless.



General Overview

The recent resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan has had a huge impact in the educational landscape of Afghanistan. With the rise of the Taliban to power, following the removal of US troops from Afghanistan, women and girls have had their rights to education stripped away. Female education is not in accordance with the Taliban's interpretation of Islamic law or Sharia, meaning that hundreds of thousands of girls now no longer have access to education. The Taliban officially stopped education for girls beyond primary school (age 11-12) in September 2021 meaning that women and girls have been living without secondary education now for at least two years. In the case of boys and men however, education has not been constrained to any limits which shows the gender disparity within Afghanistan. The Taliban leadership is arguably the most significant factor affecting the situation of education for girls in Afghanistan and therefore it is believed that if the issue is to be resolved, a wide range of diplomatic negotiations with the Taliban are required. Removal of the Taliban would not be possible through debating in the General Assembly and so other solutions must be found in order to improve the situation of education for girls in Afghanistan. As the Taliban Government has not been recognized by the United Nations, the situation is difficult to resolve and one that has the potential for great multitudes of violence.

Taliban Leadership

Prior to the recent resurgence of the Taliban, was another period in which this organisation ruled in Afghanistan. In 1994 the Taliban moved through the south, capturing several provinces from various armed factions who had been fighting a civil war after the Soviet-backed Afghan government fell in 1992. By September 1996, the Taliban had captured Kabul, killed the nation's leader, and laid out the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The Taliban's first move was to establish a thorough understanding of the Sharia law. In practice, this meant policies that frequently treated women, political opponents of any kind, and religious minorities with brutality. The Taliban provided Al-Qaeda with a safe haven in the years leading up to the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. This gave Al-Qaeda a base in which it could uninhibitedly select and train militants. The Taliban held influence in Afghanistan until October 2001, when they were removed from power due to an invasion of a coalition led by the US against Al-Qaeda. Following this was the death of Al-Qaeda organizer Osama Bin Ladin. Following the death of Bin Laden in May 2011, the Taliban uncovered in July 2015 that its isolated chief, Mullah Mohammed Omar, had also died in 2013. Omar's second-in-command, Mullah Akhtar Mohammed Mansur, was chosen as the new Taliban leader in early August 2015. Later on in 2016 he was then killed by a US drone strike in Baluchistan, Pakistan. Since this death, Mawlawi Haibatullah Akhundzada has been at the forefront of the Taliban. As seen in Figure 1, Mawlawi Haibatullah Akhundzada holds the position of the Leader of the Taliban, whilst there is an intricate framework of leadership below him. This intricate framework cooperate in order to maintain their rule in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future.



Taliban leadership structure

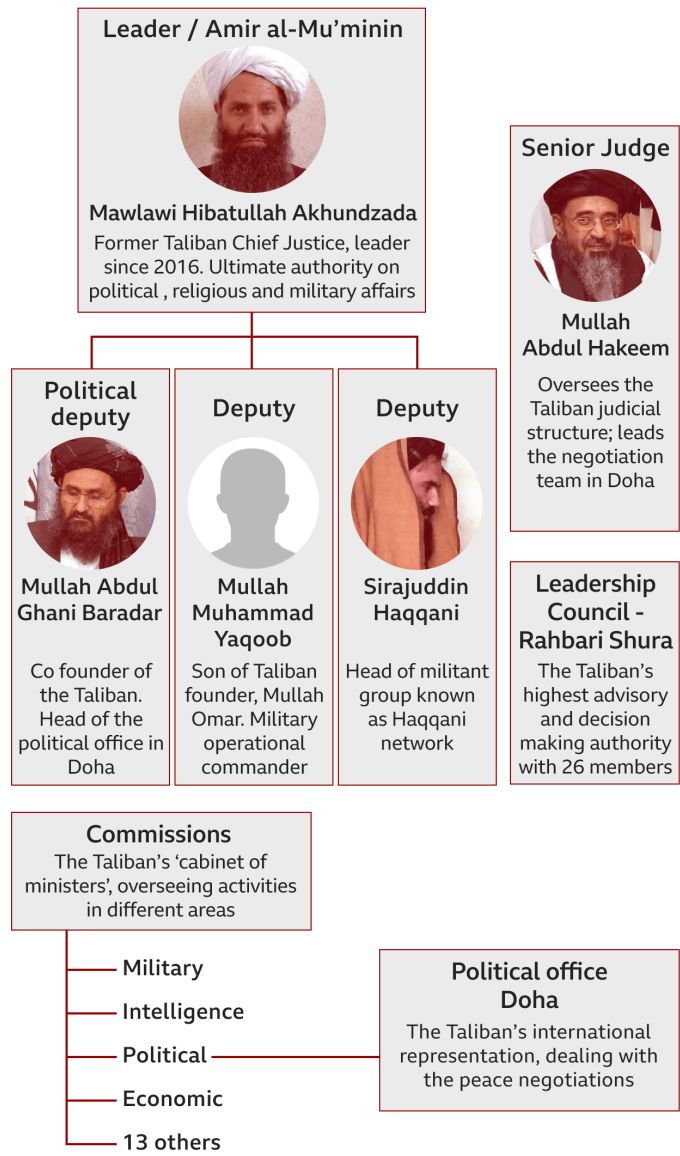


Figure 1 - Taliban Leadership



Major Parties Involved

UNESCO

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization have been strongly involved in supporting the education system in Afghanistan during the last 20 years, including running a successful literacy programme that reached over 600,000 youth and adults. 60% of the people helped by this aid were women. Since August 2021, UNESCO has shifted its interventions to ensure the continuity of education through community-based literacy and skills development classes for over 25,000 youth and adults, including 60% women and adolescent girls in 20 provinces. Its advocacy campaign “Literacy for a Brighter Future” reached out to over 20 million Afghans to increase public awareness of the right to education for youth and adults, especially women and adolescent girls. UNESCO is also working on an education data monitoring initiative to ensure reliable data so that education partners channel funding to the most critical and unmet education needs.

USAID

Since 2008, USAID helped increase access to education for three million Afghan girls, many for the first time in their lives. Thanks to USAID, student enrolment grew from 900,000 male students in 2001 to more than 9.5 million students, 39 percent of whom are girls, in 2020. Through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, USAID helped make education more accessible to students by improving school infrastructure in rural areas in 17 provinces, rehabilitating existing schools, and strengthening community-based education. To increase the pool of female teachers and extend learning opportunities to girls in rural areas, USAID provided two-year scholarships to nearly 11,500 women, giving them the opportunity to attend teacher training colleges. Extending access to schooling, our 8,440 community-based education classes give 171,000 students, more than half of whom are girls, a place to learn.

Timeline of Events

1996	Taliban seize Kabul claiming control of Afghanistan
9 th November 2001	9/11 terror attack in United States
7 th October 2001 – 17 th December 2001	United States invasion of Afghanistan leading to Taliban removal
2001 - 2004	Period of reconstruction for Afghanistan with a new government



29 th October 2004	Osama Bin Laden surfaces with a videotape after being in hiding since the removal of Taliban leadership
May 2007	Mullah Dadullah, a notorious Taliban military commander is killed in a joint operation by US, NATO, and Afghanistan
1 st May 2011	Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden is killed by U.S forces in Pakistan
17 th November 2020	U.S. announce troop withdrawal from Afghanistan
15 th August 2021	Afghan government collapses as the Taliban take Kabul
2021-Present	Taliban in control of Afghanistan reinstating previous regulations they had in their prior rule

Previous attempts to solve the issue

Seeing as this issue has become once again apparent just recently in 2021 there are not many previous attempts to solve this current version of the issue as of yet. When the Taliban initially took control back in 1996 many international organisations, NGOs, and other nations provided humanitarian aid as well as programmes that would improve education within the nation for both men and women. After the Taliban were overthrown there was a period of rehabilitation for education in Afghanistan with the economy developing simultaneously. Girl's access to education was seemingly improving until the US soldiers withdrew from the nation. Once this occurred the Taliban rose up again and defeated the Afghan authorities to claim power once more. After seizing power the Taliban imposed similar laws as they had done in 1996, with one of the most significant ones being the banning of secondary education for women and girls. To solve this issue once again organisations like UNESCO and USAID are working diligently to provide the hundreds of thousands of girls in Afghanistan with basic education which is essential for their futures.

Possible solutions

Seeing as this issue is a current and ongoing one, there are many possible solutions to this ever-changing issue. Conflicts and changes in leadership will always cause disruptions to the different sectors of an economy and with the strong religious faith that is practiced by the Taliban education is one of the areas that has been affected the most. In previous years many international organisations offered aid to Afghanistan as well as other nations. In addition to this some nations took different approaches like trying to rid the root cause of the problems surrounding education for women and girls in Afghanistan. Despite these interventions, even if some were successful on a smaller scale, the issue still looms large, making it difficult to identify the most effective solution to this problem. Some of the solutions can be inspired by other nations that had their education limited however this specific example is arguably much



more challenging as it is matter of faith that is the cause of women and girls not having access to education. Some ideas for some possible solutions to this issue though include:

- Diplomatic Engagement
- International Advocacy to mobilize international organization to advocate for the rights of women and girls to education in Afghanistan
- Humanitarian Aid and Support
- Support for refugees
- Conditional diplomacy by using channels to engage in negotiations with the Taliban

There are many more potential ways of solving this issue however due to the fact that this problem is ongoing and has been for decades within Afghanistan, there is no definitive idea and answer for which direction to focus on with regards to the situation of education for girls in Afghanistan.

Useful documents

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