

Important Priorities for Youth in the Ongoing Peace Process in Afghanistan: A Review of Literature

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Abstract

Young people are the strongest part of any society, this stratum has the ability and energy to work, most countries in the world have reached the highest levels of development through youth and these are a source of talent, excellence, having great potential, capacity to work in the right direction and professional place is conducive to development. Young people today often constitute the majority population in countries with ongoing peace processes. Engaging with young people is not only a demographic necessity but a democratic imperative and an important avenue for accountability of institutions to their mandates, to legal norms and the people they strive to serve. Despite the barriers, young people actively influence peace processes through diverse roles and initiatives. The first priority is given to education in the ongoing peace process that guides young people towards peace and development. Young people should use education as a tool to strengthen and deepen the ongoing peace process, so that they can emerge as good and true citizens of the country. They need to learn a variety of skills in addition to education, skills that are economically needed by the country and its people. Afghan youth are aware of their responsibilities and they are awakened to the undeniable reality of embracing a new era in Afghanistan's history; therefore, they are determined to collectively call for their voices to be heard and their meaningful participation to be recognized in all peace building efforts. All the achievement of a country depends on the success of the youth, so it is the duty of the government to provide the youth with the first facilities so that they can get modern education, and compete with their competitors. At present, the main priorities of the youth in ongoing peace process are: getting modern education, national unity, professional empowerment, proper and necessary socialization, peace, security and stability.

Key words: Peace, youth, youth priorities, the role of youth in peace, youth responsibilities.

Introduction

Although there are more young people living on the planet today than ever before; it is quite inappropriate as history shows that the burden of violence and war rest on the shoulders of the younger generation in every society. It calls for a deep reflection seeing the role youths play in the nature of crisis observed all around the world, even with their greater number and population.

(Abubakar, A. ,2021).The role of the youth in the formation and development of any society is important and significant as it determines the direction of prosperity for the better future of nations and societies. The youth can play a significant role in bringing stability, security and peace to the society due to their youthful energy and all-round strength. It is important to note that young people, with their enthusiasm and courage, can handle any substantial and responsible work in the society.

The youth can be better than anyone else in rebuilding the country, strengthening the economy, bringing about effective changes in society, and bringing about extreme changes in social, political, economic, cultural and technological affairs.

In Afghanistan youth is considered main and pivotal source of economy and tomorrow is in the hands of the youth, so the future of Afghanistan is depending upon on youth and the youth is the most important supporting force for the government of this country. Bringing young people together and coordinating them in political, cultural, social and economic affairs is essential for the development, economic empowerment and ongoing peace of any country.

Peace and security is the aspiration of Afghans and of humanity as a whole, which arises in the veins of every citizen when they hear its name, and each of them seeks to sacrifice, prosper and achieve it. Every human being defends the peace process as a value and always hopes to live under it. Since peace and security in the society is more important and valuable than anything else and everyone has a special responsibility to achieve it, then the youth should play a greater role in this regard than others.

Therefore, the main purpose is to strengthen the participation of social stakeholders, especially the youth, in reducing the level chaos among the people and institutions of the society. (safi,2019)

Throughout history, some of the world's most famous kings have used young people in peace talks to advance their country, and based on peace and stability, they have paved the way for economic prosperity and better living in their country. Peace has been shown to be the only means of eliminating violence and unrest among young people in society. The influential history of the world revealed, that youth have been called the revolutionaries of the countries and the youth have been called the stratum that is changing the world from misery to peace and prosperity.

Literature review

War is an obstacle to every action of life, but peace, as a result, removes all obstacles to life and opens the way to it to the last. (Wahid,2016)

The fact that decades of war and violence in Afghanistan have affected every segment of society and every institution and foundation of the society has faced many problems but in this regard the new youth have suffered the most. Because this stratum is the most vulnerable part of society, in the current situation, the youth are considered as the means of economic and development, which more than half of the society plays an economic role.

Unfortunately, for four decades, a number of political unrest and political groups in our country have used the youth of Afghanistan as tools against each other in wars.

If the power and energy of the youth is not used effectively, the younger generation will resort to evil deeds out of frustration and unemployment, which will be a headache for both themselves and the society.

It is a well-known fact that not only has the power, talent, thinking and skills of the youth in Afghanistan not been effectively utilized, but the government has so far not included the young generation in any political, cultural, social and economic movements. Unemployment, poverty, frustration and despair have led many young people to engage in various crimes such as human trafficking, joining opposition groups and drug addiction that have even threatened the lives of many young people.

Young people can play a very effective role in maintaining peace and security, if the government provides them with facilities, responds positively to their demands and expectations and uses their strength and energy effectively for the security and peace of the country. There will be positive changes and the ongoing misery of the country will end. The youth should be the representatives of peace, the youth should be encouraged in social, cultural, political and economic empowerment and a series of incentive programs should be set up for them so that the people can enjoy lasting peace.

In many hadiths, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) commanded his Ummah to live a peaceful life and to avoid conflicts and disputes, so that our prosperity may be achieved through peace and affluence, not through strife. That is why the Prophet (Peace and blessings of Allah Be Upon Him) chose the path of peace and gave it great importance. (Aziz,2018)

Peace is an important need not only of Afghans but of the entire human world, because the main goal of human life is to achieve all-inclusive happiness and prosperity in order to address human needs in an atmosphere of cooperation and sympathy from the available resources of nature and the goal is to take advantage. (Safi,2019)

On a positive note for peacebuilding, schools and universities in particular have become hotspots for youth seeking to become peacebuilders. Members from the U.S. Institute for Peace noted new curricula for peace studies at a growing number of Afghan universities.¹⁶ Peace activists, often recruited from among students, are increasingly visible throughout the country. (Alokozay, 2020)

Importance of the study

As young people composed the majority of the population and have the energy and strength to carry out any substantial responsibility within the community, they have a greater role to play in the development of the community. Due to the energy of youth, their efforts are invaluable in all areas, including peace, so the work and efforts of the youth play an important role in spreading, propagating and cultivating peaceful thinking. The government and the authorities should use the energy of the youth to ensure the security and stability of the society.

Research methodology

It is library research that has made extensive use of authentic books, articles and internet Pashto websites have also been used, which have been incorporated into various areas of research.

Essential priorities of youth in the ongoing peace process

What is meant by youth and why youth is important?

It should be noted that our purpose in this article is to refer to both male and female strata from the word (youth). Although in our folk culture the word youth is used only for boys; But in reality it is a common word, which includes both strata, boys and girls. (Zaki,2017)

Modern culture categorizes “youths” in contradictory ways— sometimes representing local perceptions of what it means to be young and at other times embracing global ideas of youth, youth socialization, and milestones in the life of a young person. There still is confusion over who counts as “youth.” (Alokozay, 2020)

Definition of Youth:

The core challenge for the youth and peacebuilding programming is that the concept of youth it itself debated and it is difficult to define the term “youth”. “Some favor biological markers, in which youth is the period between puberty and parenthood, while other define youth in terms of cultural makers- a distinct social status with specific roles, rituals, and relationships” (USAID/CMM 2005). Definition of youth by age vary drastically across different institutions; the UN has defined youth as person from 15 to 24 years of age, whereas the National Youth of Nepal defines youth as persons from 16 to 40 years of age. Donors and INGOs often bring in their own definitions of youth which are not always adapted to the country they work in. It is argued that the age based definition of the youth is a Western product and writers such as Durham state that youth is a social construct and has more to do on when an individual becomes youth and a generally accepted concept is that youth is transitional phase from childhood. (Bennett, R., & Karki, S. 2012)

Why is there emphasis on youth in the peace process?

Peace is one of the blessings bestowed by the Almighty Allah on human beings and all living beings to live in peace, freedom and prosperity, and to create an atmosphere of happiness and prosperity among the people in the society.

Throughout history, some of the world's most famous kings have also made effective use of peace talks for the development of their country, and based on peace and stability, they have paved the way for economic prosperity and a better life for their country.

Peace has been shown to be the only means of eliminating violence and unrest among young people in society. And in the influential histories of the world, the youth have been called the revolutionaries of the countries and the young people have been called the layer that is changing the world from misery to peace and prosperity. (Azizi, A. R. 2018)

The role of the youth in the formation and development of any society is essential and significant to determine the direction of prosperity for the better future of nations. The youth can play a significant role in bringing stability, security and peace to the society due to their youthful energy and all-round strength. It is important to note that young people can handle any heavy and responsible work due to their enthusiasm and courage. The young generation can shine better than anyone else in rebuilding the country, strengthening the economy, bringing about effective changes in society, and bringing about drastic changes in political and cultural affairs (Safi, 1398).

Aristotle, in his book *The Peace*, page # 113, says, "Young men, you are full of strength and a great heart. If you have anything to do with reality, do it."

Over the past four decades, the aspirations of a number of educated and eloquent young people have been shattered by their ingenuity in trying to revive this dead monster through their

experiences in various parts of the country. Has launched a massive campaign against war and extremism to awaken the people and spread its voice to all corners of the world under the slogan of stability and brotherhood in the society for the sake of peace.

If the power and energy of the youth is not utilized effectively, the younger generation will fall into despair and unemployment, which will be a headache for both themselves and the society. It is a well-known fact that the strength, ability, thinking and skills of the youth in Afghanistan have not been used effectively and the government has not included the young generation in any political, cultural, social and economic movements. And the Afghan government still has no strategic plan to keep young people engaged and involved. Many young people are involved in various crimes due to unemployment, poverty, frustration and despair, such as human trafficking, joining opposition groups and drug addiction, which have threatened the lives of many young people.

Young people can play a very effective role in maintaining peace and security, if the government provides them with facilities, responds positively to their demands and expectations, and uses their strength and energy effectively for the security and peace of the country. There will be positive changes and the ongoing misery of the country will end. The youth should be the representatives of peace, the youth should be encouraged in social, cultural, political and economic empowerment and a series of incentive programs should be set up for them so that the people can enjoy lasting peace. (<https://afghanistantoday.net>)

Peace and security as a healthy environment of life is the aspiration of every young person and once it is achieved, the young person should start achieving, adjusting and doing the following things, because the same aspirations from a young person as an active member of society. Here are some of the key priorities:

Priority 1 - Efforts to achieve sound education

Education builds the foundations for good citizenship, respect for self and others, democratic values and tolerance of opinions. Educational research indicates that when young people are trained in civics, mediation, ethnic tolerance and conflict resolution, the likelihood that they will resort to violence later in life is diminished. History tells us that education is no guarantee against hatred and war, but it enlarges people's horizons and breaks down stereotypes and prejudices. (Balanandan, E 1998)

Young people must get a healthy education first and foremost to be a good citizen of the country. They need to learn a variety of contemporary modern education and technical skills, and flourish that skills, which country needs economically. They need to know how to read, say, understand, distinguish and discuss the issues facing the country. (<https://www.spogmairadio.com/1212/>)

Priority 2 - Promoting Peace Education

The most significant way of promoting a culture of peace education is through peace education. Peace education needs to be accepted in all parts of the world, in all societies and countries as an essential element in creating culture of peace. To meet effectively the challenges posed by the present complexity of our time, the young of the today deserves a radically different education- "one that does not glorify war but educates for peace, nonviolence and international cooperation." The need the skills and knowledge to create and nurture peace for their individual selves as well as for the world they belong. (Navarro.C.L &J asmin N.G, 2010)

As Nelson Mandela says, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Education is the key to eliminating gender inequality, reducing poverty, creating a sustainable planet, preventing needless deaths and illness, and fostering peace. And in a knowledge economy, education is the new currency by which nations maintain economic competitiveness and global prosperity. (<https://blog.usaid.gov/2013/04/education-the-most-powerful-weapon/>)

Peace education plays an important role in the development of peaceful mindsets. Peaceful education emphasizes that people living in a community can live together peacefully. Peace education leads to people who truly represent peace. Because they will understand how to develop peaceful relations? And how to encourage parties to work honestly with each other to find ways to end violence and conflict. (Samim, M. Kawa,. A. A et al. 2017).

Peaceful culture is a set of human and Islamic values and healthy peaceful practices that come together in human relationships, to grow and develop an environment, and as a result of human beings free from fear and harm.

Peaceful culture stems from peaceful education, socio-economic development, respect for human rights, human equality, professional and honest participation, tolerance and support, and the strengthening of human and social security. (<http://www.ariaye.com/dari12/ejtemai/walid27.html>)

Education should create a conducive environment to meeting the emotional, social, and intellectual needs of diverse groups of individuals interested in empowering themselves. The emphasis on education and peace is based on the fact that peace and education are inseparable aspects of civilization. No civilization is truly progressive without education and no education system is truly civilizing unless it is based on the universal principles of peace. (Chepkuto, P., Ombongi, J., & Kipsang, S., 2014).

The issue underscores the need for education to be used as an important tool, and the need for peaceful education in all communities.

It is a well-known fact that the formal education sector alone cannot achieve this goal. (Dimkpa, E. E. 2014).

Forms of peace education channels and its dissemination tools

In order to achieve the stated goals of peace education, various propaganda channels and sources must be used and prioritized.

There are three main channels of peace education broadcasting through which peace education and peace activities can be disseminated:

- A. Informal channels
- B. Official/Formal channels
- C. Distance channels

Informal channels of peace education include home and family, which deal with the development and promotion of peaceful behavior.

The official/formal channel of peace education propaganda is the use of educational schools for peace. This includes the school and university curriculum and the values of peace education in it, so people need to be taught how to live peacefully with themselves and others in the environment.

The Peace Education Distance Channel also includes training people through workshops, seminars and conferences to help them learn how to live peacefully and harmoniously with others. These channels are essential tools to promote peace education and promote peace. (Alimba, N. C. 2013).

Priority 3- National Unity

Unity is the strength and power by which one group can form an unbreakable and comprehensive bond with one another, or in other words: Unity refers to the force of thought and action of a society to create a goal and to achieve it.

Types of unity

There are two types of unity within a community or group, the existence of which is also very important:

A. Working unity: Working unity is the kind of unity that creates good opportunities for the betterment of affairs.

B. Social unity: This is the level of aspirations and hopes of the members of a community or group who want to remain in that community and group. (Malikzai, A. R. 2019)

The youth are the greatest human force of our country and if they are adorned with knowledge and the national spirit is strengthened, not only will they not be a burden on the society, but they will be the ones to find ways to change and solve problems.

They can play a constructive role in national unity through their speech, pen, religious, scientific, social, cultural, literary, artistic knowledge and other activities across the country. (Fazili,2018)

Priority 4- Creating a sense of national patriotic feelings

The youth of our society must be educated in such a national and patriotic spirit that their unity of thought and unity will bridge any existing gaps between the people within the country, with love in their hearts. In any case, be ready to defend the country and do not sacrifice in any way to achieve the conspiracies and ulterior motives of foreigners.(Aziz,2018)

Priority 5- Familiarity with innovations and global achievements

The youth of our society should not have any fear of technology and innovation like the youth of the past centuries and should not be considered as the cause of the disorientation of the society like the people of the past.

On the contrary, they should be able to compete with international and competitors in every field, which is achieved after their familiarity with all kinds of innovations and achievements, so

they should be able to compete with others. And communities benefit from prosperity and development and thus compete and coordinate with the world. (Samim, M. Kawa,. A. A et al. 2017)

Priority 6- Sociality

It is a well-known fact that human beings are social beings and cannot manage all the affairs of their lives on their own. Man's connection with society is of course important and it helps him to live happily and comfortably. (Mohseni, M. 2017)

There is a famous Pashto proverb that says: "Mountains do not go to the mountains, but human beings go to the human beings".

In fact, helping others is self-help, meaning that if one wants to help and reach out, one must be helpful and cooperative with others.

Isolation from society is a psychologically bad mental condition in which a person enjoys being away from all people, even from his family and his loneliness. Eventually, the person becomes tired of life and work and suffers from other serious mental conditions. (<https://yaraan.com/social-life%DB%B2/>)

The role of youth in peace

That has not stopped other researchers in the peacebuilding sector from trying to define and understand the role of youth during the last three decades of peacebuilding missions. According to Renato Cursi's 2017 study based on UN missions and research (The Role of Youth in Peace Building), "youth" can be defined through formal, functional, or social- psychological criteria. In other words, it can be based on arbitrary age brackets, by social milestones like achieving voting age, or by criteria based on socio-psychological development, particularly development of social relationships. Cursi demonstrates how all of these categories are affected by periods of conflict and how the social-psychological development of youth in particular can be harmed by the stresses and traumas of conflict situations to the point where becoming a healthy adult is a real challenge. UN experience on the ground was valuable to gaining these insights. (Alokozay,2020) (Cursi, D. ,2017).

The young generation is considered to be a significant and influential group in every aspect of life with its youthful energy. Given this importance, it should play an active role in every field. They can lead the peace process in addition to improving other aspects of life, so it is important to pay attention to their role.

Here, I would like to briefly mention the few talents and needs of the youth that the youth should play as their key role in the peace process:

- Build social cohesion and trust across different groups;
- Open channels and spaces for youth from across diverse backgrounds to work together and build a shared vision of a peaceful world;
- Advocate for human rights and against violence in any form;
- Support reintegration of young ex-combatants and the healing of multiple traumas of affected communities;
- Strengthen capacities and skills of their peers; and

- Advocate for youth and gender-inclusive peace negotiations and processes.
- Since the majority of the society is made up of young people, it is difficult for the youth to represent peace in view of their youthful energy and strength and to spread peace and reconciliation in the society.
- Universities are the best place to spread the idea and practice of peace and reconciliation, because all the young people in the universities, between the ages of 18 and 25, should exchange their views in the universities. Discuss the benefits of peace and the disadvantages of war. (Sediqi,2014) (<https://impakter.com/youth-role-peace-processes/>)

The responsibilities of the youth in the community

Young people are the most important and advanced stratum in a society, which can play a greater role in building a society than anyone else. When there is a young generation in a society and they are aware of their responsibilities, they will soon be an innovator in your own area and neighborhood.

Young people need to always start and end their daily activities according to a schedule. Serve their country, countrymen and their religion. It has benefited the country, itself and the people to a great extent.

The example of young people in a society is like a bunch of flowers in a garden where gardener has spent most of his days and nights physical activity in the hope of flourishing and with which his highest hopes are attached.

When the buds bloom, then everyone comes and enjoys the beauty and the breeze, touches it, smells it, feels a sense of calm and enjoys it. (<https://rohi.af/news/6153>)

Also, young people should always:

- Be able to serve the region and the country.
- Fulfill the assigned responsibilities with utmost honesty and integrity.
- Turn on the light of knowledge and turns people's thoughts towards knowledge.
- Working for national reconciliation and unity.
- Take serious steps to spread Islamic and social ethics and prevent the spread of immorality.

(Qarzawi,2008)

The hopes of our society today from the young

- 1- Young people should use their energy to spread peace and reconciliation in the society.
2. Young people should get their peers off the battlefield and advise them to return to normalcy.
- 3- Young people should explain the benefits of peace and the disadvantages of war, raise public awareness and spread peaceful thinking in the society.
4. The youth should inform the people about the existing war and mention that it is all foreign plans and programs that have caused enmity between the peoples.

5. Young people should use the scientific resources to create and put into practice the ideas of spreading peaceful thought and action.

6- Involving the youth in all issues related to peace and security:

7. Gender discrimination, which is one of the main obstacles to peace, must be eliminated and both strata must be given equal participation in affairs and gender equality must be guaranteed.

8. Young people of Afghanistan suffer from lack of access to economic and social opportunities, jobs are not created and this causes them to move away from the economic, political, cultural and social spheres, and to peace. (Safi,2019)

Conclusion

In every society, youth is a vital force that bear and tolerate any difficulty than other strata of society. Young people in Afghanistan have strong physical and mental strength and make up according to some statistics about 67% percent of the population, including both men and women.

Young Afghan are innovative, optimistic, and resourceful. With the right tools and space, they whom again, from the vast majority of the would have the ability to transform the country by affecting positive change into their communities, and by extension in Afghanistan as whole. Afghan youth have many talents, that should be used to create peace and security in the society.

In spite of the challenges, young people are continuing to make a positive difference. They are active part and raising their voices, caring for their country and their future, supporting their peers and reaching out to help their country and they have more to offer.

Afghan youths are an essential source of creativity and an engine of forward-looking social change. Recognizing and including their perspective and needs should not be neglected, as it is now, but made a central piece of the ongoing peace process and the country's future. The lack of involvement and negligence of Afghan youth in local, regional and international level, government and international community different sectors official and non-official should focus on it, to involve these youths in their peace and other educational programs to enrich their mentality through different skills and knowledge. The government of Afghanistan and international community must support, recognize and respect their contribution in ongoing peace process.

Suggestions

- Comprehensive peaceful education should be provided to the Afghan youth, so that their skills can be further strengthened.
- Young people living in Afghanistan should be given a greater role in peace programs because they are well competent in peace studies.
- A comprehensive and astonish book was written in Nangarhar University in the name of Peace and Conflict Resolution by the support of USIP peace education program, this should be taught in all university faculties in Afghanistan.
- If both gender is included in allpeace education programs, the impact will be twofold.
- The experiences of Afghan youth should be used in the process of promoting and building peace.

- Continuing to recognize the importance of focusing on education in view of Afghanistan's future development and providing students with scholarships for local universities and abroad.
- Spending more on promoting existing economic opportunities and promoting ways for youth to become active agents in the community so to build and improve their social life and cohesion to the community.
- Create enabling spaces for youth to engage in leadership and decision making roles in national and regional spheres.

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