

# Analyzing the Human Development Dimensions in Afghanistan through the Lens Human Capital Index

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**Abstract.** People in particular children as next generation plays a critical role in developing of a country, on time and effective investment on today's children can led a country towards advancement and prosperity. Considering the fact that Afghanistan is struggling with various problems including humanitarian crisis and political instability, the current article examines decline in human development mainly children through the lens of Human capital index (HCI) particularly in education component. Afghanistan scored 0.4 in HCI and ranked among the lowest countries in global capacity for future productivity of Afghan teenagers during 2020. Additionally, the recent reports from UNICEF, human rights watch, and world bank revealed that political and economic instability, conflict, poverty, gender discrimination, such as banning girls from education, banning women from work including replacing female qualified teachers with male, have exacerbated the education and overall humanitarian crisis in the country. This article further examines the legal national and international obligation of Taliban as rulers of Afghanistan towards development of human capital in particular providing inclusive, equitable and quality education opportunities for new generation. considering the fact that Taliban is not a legitimized government yet, but it does not mean that they are not responsible towards human development. under the non-state actors (NSA) and human rights concepts, they are bound to follow international regulations including education right and protection of Afghan children. This article contains four parts, introduction, result and discussion, conclusion and reference. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining analytical and descriptive techniques to investigate the issue Secondary data from reliable online sources were collected and utilized in this article. .

**Keywords:** Human Development, Human Capital Index (HCI), Education

## 1 Introduction

Effective and on time investments in human capital are central to development which will result delivering substantial economic benefits in the long term. However, the impacts of these investments takes time and cannot be seen immediately, this is one of the reasons why governments and rulers do not pay attention to it and not giving priority to this section [1]. In fact Development of every country lies in to the hands of

their people, particularly children as they will be the future generation taking the responsibility of advancement and prosperity of a nation. Therefore, on time and effective investment on today's children and providing them the opportunities to fulfill their potential can lead a country towards advancement in different aspects including economy sector.

Afghanistan is experiencing several years of war, conflict, natural disasters, political instability which led the country in to humanitarian crisis. Unfortunately, Human being particularly children are the very first group that negatively impact during emergency situations. As March 2025, 14.8million of people experiencing food insecurity which caused acute malnutrition rate among children as result of this, 7.8 million children under 5 age will require nutrition assistance in 2025. A recent finding from the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) reveals that 58.9% of those living in poverty in Afghanistan are children[2]. Additionally, continuing bans towards girls' education resulted 2.2 million girls remained out of schools and this put millions of children both boys and girls at great risks and protection issues including neglect, abuse, exploitation and violence.

The findings shows that Afghanistan is among the countries paying less attention in human capital section and it was ranked 0.4 during 2020 in HCI by the world bank. Taliban as the current rulers of the country has the responsibility to protect children as well as to provide them their basic rights recognized under international and national laws, including the right of education and let them to fulfill their potential. In the contrast, Taliban's discriminatory policies and lack of investment in human capital part is adding to the current challenges and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the country.

Apart from focusing on lack of investment in human capital part, this article will examine the International and national laws which obliged the Taliban to provide essential support for children including education . Although Taliban has not been officially recognized by any country yet, but it does not mean that they are not responsible towards the human development in Afghanistan. under the non-state actors (NSA) concept they are still bound to apply the international rules and regulations including protecting Afghan children and providing inclusive, equitable and quality education for them. .

## **2 Method**

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining analytical and descriptive techniques to investigate the issue Secondary data from reliable online sources including online books, journals, websites and United Nations reports were collected and utilized in this article.

## **3 Result and Discussion**

### **3.1 Human Capital Index**

The Human Capital Index is a “measurement tool developed by the World Bank to check how much human capital a child born today can expect to achieve till the age of eighteen, based on their country’s education and health conditions. The HCI measure three factors including Survival, Education and Health. The survival part with the consideration of the context measures the rate of mortality and the Probability that a child will survive up to age five. The education part[3] focus mainly in to the Number of years of school a child expects to complete as well as quality of learning they get. Additionally, Health in particular focuses How healthy children are, including rates of malnutrition and adult survival in a context”. The rating of HCI starts from 0 to 1. 1 is the maximum potential productivity if a country scores 1, it indicates that children within the country can achieve 100% of their potential productivity due to having access to perfect health and education conditions. However, the scores lesser than one for instance 0.0 indicates that there is no potential realized due to not having access to good health and education or their access is limited due to the poor conditions of education and health[1].

### **3.2 The Human Capital Index in Afghanistan**

Children are considered the national capital of a country however; in Afghanistan the case is totally different, children are the most affected groups which get the less attention in all aspects of Afghan society. The data from 2019/20 showed that Afghanistan only spent 4% of it’s Gross domestic product (GDP) in to the education sector. As it’s clear this is a quite low investment in such an important main sectors. considering the fact that knowledge is a crucial tool for developing and Advancement of a country[4] However, based on the World bank data, Afghanistan human capital index scored 0.4 in 2020 which means that “A child born today will be only 40% as productive as they could be if they had full access to quality health and education services. The findings shows a warning facts indicating that child born in Afghanistan will not reach to fulfill their potential by 60% due to the lack of investment on their today’s needs including education[5]. since Taliban came to power although there is no data available on how much they are investing into education sector but it appears from humanitarian reports, their discriminatory policies towards education and depriving millions of Afghan girls from education that the rate of investment in HCI is even much lower than before.

### **3.3 Children’s are Facing Multi Crisis in Afghanistan**

Due to the years of conflict, political and economical instability, increasing rate of poverty and Taliban’s various restrictions, children are experiencing very tough condition in the country. The multidimensional data shows that, in Afghanistan 15.5 million children are suffering from multidimensional poverty which includes lack of access in key areas such as education, healthcare services, housing, nutrition and electricity[2].

By starting the Academic year in Afghanistan, 2.2 million girls are deprived of

learning[5]. The education barriers for children goes beyond this, lack of having access to education caused many other negative impacts on girls and boys, it led the families to use many negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage particularly for the girls as 28.7% of them get married before age of 18 and 9.6 marry before age of 15[6], additionally, there is a shocking reports by UNICEF, One in five children aged 5–17 is engaged in child labour in Afghanistan.

Afghan girls and boys are at the risk of many forms challenges including abuse, exploitation, violence and neglect, according to the UNICEF, Over 24% of “children aged 5–17 experience anxiety – a rate 10 times greater compare to the universal average. Additionally, UNICEF revealed that the average rate of violent discipline among Afghan children ages 1–4 is 87.6%[7]. Corporal punishment became very common in the country, lots of families due to the lack of knowledge and knowing the consequences of the punishment, use this as a tool to discipline their children. Meanwhile, the child punishment is not limited within the home, An interview with the parents and school children by human rights watch shows that, corporal punishment has been increasing at the schools as well, and children are being punished and beaten by the teachers occasionally[8].

### **3.4 Afghanistan and Education Crisis**

“Education is the socially organized and regulated process of continues transference of socially significant experience from the previous generations to the followings. The main way to receive an education is to take a course of training in the system of educational institutions”[9].

After the Taliban came to power in August 2021, they imposed various restrictions on girls' education, resulting in 2.2 million girls being deprived of educational opportunities. Additionally, they altered the curricula of schools and universities. For instance, Taliban added more religious subjects while removing subjects such as English, art, women's rights, and drawing from the school curriculum. A similar approach was taken at the university level, where many scientific and language courses were replaced with religious studies[10].

Moreover, the consequences of bans on female employment in the country does not only negatively impacted the girls but boys as well, Taliban have terminated female school teachers including Kabul and Logar provinces without any specific reasons whom teach in boys classes and replaced them often with unqualified male teachers, as result of this often boy's classes are taught by non-professional teachers even some time there is no teacher available in those class at all. the imposed bans towards women employment, impacted the quality of teaching at the boys classes[11].

In terms of the infrastructures, Over 41% of governmental schools in Afghanistan does not have a building, even if they have a building in some areas, it's often overpopulated Half of the schools lacking washing facilities including toilet. Additionally, lack of many essential facilities such as chairs, desks and text books and stationaries are is still a big gap in education sector and it resulted many parents could not support their children with the associated costs and stop sending them to

schools[12] as 48% of Afghan population are not able to afford goods and services which they need in their daily basis[13] that caused them not to prioritize education

### **3.5 International Legal Obligation of Taliban towards Rights of Protection and Education**

The right to education for Afghan children, both boys and girls, is explicitly recognized under the Afghan constitution as well as international declarations and treaties. As the current ruling authority, the Taliban has the responsibility to protect and provide adequate support for the development of new generation in the country, starting with the right to education and beyond. According to the concept of the Human Capital Index, the progress of a society and a nation relies on knowledge, skills, and performance of its children. Therefore, investing in today's children can lead a country toward development and prosperity in the future. And Failing to address this critical issue could result a disaster and catastrophe for the country in the long run.

### **3.6 National Legal Obligation of the Taliban towards Rights of Education**

Article 43 of constitution laws indicates “Education is the right of all citizens of Afghanistan, which shall be provided up to the level of B.A. (Bachelor’s) degree, free of charge by the state.” Additionally, Article 44 also states that “The state shall devise and implement effective programs for balancing and promoting of education for women, nomads (Kuchis), and disabled persons, as well as for elimination of illiteracy in the country[14]”.

Both highlighted articles of the constitution law recognize and emphasis the education right for children and manly indicates that, firstly education must be provided free of cost for children from primary up to Bachelor degree. Secondly, inclusive education must be provided for women, Kuchis and people with the disabilities. Additionally, Taliban is not only bound under national but under international law as well. According to Article 7 of the Afghanistan 2004 Constitution, Afghanistan adheres to international laws, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international treaties of which it is a member.

### **3.7 International Legal Obligation of Taliban towards International Human Rights**

Taliban came to power through a non-democratic process, seizing control of Afghanistan by force in August 2021. Since then, no countries have officially recognized them. except, a few nations, including Pakistan, Iran, Qatar, Uzbekistan, Russia, China, Turkmenistan, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates, have established varying levels of political and economic relationships with them. These interactions include opening embassies in Afghanistan and allowing the Taliban to establish embassies in their countries, as well as initiating some treaties and starting some business with one another. Despite these relationships, no country has formally recognized the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan yet[15]. This

raises a question that If Taliban is not recognized as a state yet, do they have to adhere to international laws and regulations, including Universal Human rights declaration (UHRD) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), among others?

Taliban falls under the non-state concept. Based on the UN Security Council, nonstate is “as an individual or entity, not acting under the lawful authority of any State”. There are some criteria for recognizing non-state actors, including: Effectiveness, A non-state actor must have control over a defined territory and a group of people to engage with international roles and regulations. Secondly, there needs to be an organizational structure that resembles governmental arrangements. This includes the existence of institutions, a decision-making process, and mechanisms to ensure compliance with rules and responsibilities. Having an organized structure allows non-state actors to implement rules and maintain control over the people within a given territory. As a result, if a non-state actor meets these criteria, it is considered to possess legal personality. Consequently, it would be subject to applying the international rules and obligations[16].

Since 2021, the Taliban has been ruling Afghanistan and meets the highlighted above criteria of a non-state actor. They currently control the territory of Afghanistan and govern a population of over 42 million people. Additionally, they have established a governmental structure that includes a supreme leader, religious enforcement, administrative bureaucracy, and a military command hierarchy at the national, provincial, and district levels.

Moreover, the responsibility for protecting and upholding human rights is primarily assigned to states. However, in theory, these responsibilities extend beyond just the states. Every article and statement under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasizes the term "everyone." According to the Oxford Dictionary, "everyone" refers to all people, not just a specific individual or group. This implies that the obligation to protect human rights does not rest solely with governments or states; rather, it encompasses all entities, including both state and non-state actors, who are accountable for safeguarding these rights[17]

As a result of this, under the non-state and human rights concepts Taliban, is responsible for protecting human capital in Afghanistan and providing inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all Afghan children without any discrimination. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights primarily discusses the right to education and states that education should be free of charge at the fundamental and elementary levels. Furthermore, it specifies that elementary education must be compulsory for everyone.

“Art. 26 of Universal declaration of human rights, Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory”.

### **3.8 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

Education is the heart of SDG, Goal number Four of the SDGs focuses on education for all and indicates that “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”[18]This article focus on two domains firstly, Education is a basic human being right and secondly it must be provided

inclusively and equitably for all including boys and girls Since Afghanistan is part of the world and under the non-state concept, it has a responsibility to comply all human rights in general as well as SDG's which totally aligned with the human right principles and focusing on dignity, justice and equality for all mankind. And as a result, Taliban must protect children from any potential harm and provide education and the other essential facilities for them.

### **3.9 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

Article 28, of CRC States “Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and shall, in particular, make primary education compulsory and available free to all”. Additionally, Article 29 of CRC states that” Education should be directed to the development of the child’s personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential”. Both articles 28 and 29 recognize right of education for children as a fundamental right that must be provided by states within their countries. Afghanistan ratified the CRC in 1994, as member of this convention, the country is obliged to apply the articles of this convention and provide education opportunities for all children irrespective of race, gender, language, religion, ethnic, disabilities and so on.[4]

Despite recognition and emphasis of both national and international laws on children’s education, Taliban as the current rulers in Afghanistan does not only support the inclusive, equitable and quality education of boys and girls but they added very various restrictions towards girls learning. Ass result of this, Millions of children are deprived of their fundamental rights including education, protection, right of survival, health and so on. There is no effective investment for children in Afghanistan. The consequences of not investing in human development today will not be immediately appeared, They will emerge in the future as the new generation takes responsibility of managing the country, affecting the development and prosperity of the whole country in a very negative way.

## **4 Conclusion**

People in particular children plays a critical role in developing a country, effective investment and providing necessary facilities and opportunities for the fulfillment of their potential will led a country towards advancement and prosperity. The Human Capital Index which is a “measurement tool developed by the World Bank to check how much human capital a child born today can expect to achieve by the age of 18” shows that Despite the importance of investment in protecting and educating of next generation, less attention has been given to children even during the previous government where Afghanistan had a stable democratic government. The data from 2019/20 reveled that Afghanistan only spent 4% of it’s Gross domestic product (GDP) in to the education sector. As it’s clear this is a quite low investment in such an important main sector, considering the fact that knowledge is a crucial tool for developing and progressing of a country[4] Due to the lack of effective investment in HCI, World bank data shows that Afghanistan human capital index scored 0.4 in 2020 which means that “A child born today will be only 40% as productive as they could be

if they had full access to quality health and education services”.

As result of lack of investment in human capital and applying discriminatory policies, the reports shows that Afghanistan is in the middle of humanitarian crisis. Millions of children are at risk of poverty, early marriage, child labor and not having access to inclusive and equitable education. many schools are lack of wash including drinking water facilities, all these data shows that how HCI’s education component is broken in Afghanistan. Despite of importance and necessity of general support particularly education for children which has been recognized in both national and international laws, Taliban still directly deprived 2.2 million girls from their very basic right and they are showing no attention to save today’s children.

Although the Taliban has not been officially recognized by any country yet, this does not mean they are not responsible for human development in Afghanistan. According to the concepts of non-state and human rights (NSA), they are still obligated to uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant regulations. As a result, Taliban must provide inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all Afghan children.

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