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Poverty and Unemployment and the Afghan's economic migration



In a report published last week, the World Bank said that due to the lack of employment opportunities in Afghanistan, most of the Afghan youth will be willing to migrate to the other countries. Based on this report, due to the worst economic situation in Afghanistan in 2015, 2.25 million Afghans were registered as economic migrants in other countries. The report adds that 400 thousand people are added to the Afghan work force annually, something that will increase the number of Afghan economic migrants in the other countries.

In addition, about one month ago, the Afghan Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Faizullah Zaki had also expressed concern saying if the Afghan government and the private sector did not work together to reduce the unemployment rate, Afghanistan will have 4 million unemployed population after five years.

The waste migration of Afghans to other countries in the past several decades is an issue that, besides war and insecurity, is linked with unemployment and poor economic situation.

What is the unemployment situation in Afghanistan? What is the condition of the Afghan economic migrants in the other countries? What should the government do in this regard? These are the questions that are analyzed here.

Unemployment and poverty in Afghanistan

Insecurity, instability, corruption, poor governance, plurality of population, and the return of Afghans migrants from other countries are factors that have enhanced the number of unemployed people in the country.

After Soviet Attack on Afghanistan and during the civil war, the poverty rate in the country begun to rise in the country. At that time many Afghans took refuge in neighboring countries and lost their business and assets.

After 2001, with the presence of international force in Afghanistan, despite the injection of millions of dollar by the international community, the unemployment rate in the country remained high.

In 2007 and 2008, 36.3% of Afghanistan's population was living beneath the poverty line. However, based on a joint report of the World Bank and the Afghan government, the poverty rate rose to 39.1% in 2013 and 2014¹. In this report, unemployment and the decreased international aids to the country are listed to be the main factors behind the poverty in Afghanistan.

¹ The world bank, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/05/08/poverty-afghanistan-rose-amidst-troop-withdrawal-poverty-update-2017>

After 2014, although there exist no exact report in this regard, but one can say that the unemployment rate was rising. Moreover, unemployment, which is assumed on of the fundamental reasons behind poverty, is escalating on a daily basis. Based on the report of the World Bank, only 4.6% of the Afghan work force was unemployed in 2001, in 2002 and 2003 this percentage was 4.9%, in 2005 8.5% and after that the unemployment rate begun to rise.² Based on this report, 2 million Afghans were unemployed in 2013 and 2014.

Economic migrants

Economic migrants are migrants that there are economic reasons behind their migration and have migrated to other countries seeking employment opportunities.

In international levels, countries with less economic development that cannot create enough work opportunities for their fellow citizens provides these opportunities in other countries through legal ways.

Currently, many Asian countries have paved the way for their citizens to legally migrate to other countries for work, something that the Afghan government has not undertaken tangible efforts to achieve.

Most of the Afghan migrants are in Iran and Pakistan and mostly Afghans head toward Iran go to this country through illegal ways. On the other hand, statistics show that in 2007 there existed more than 100 thousand economic migrants in the industrialized countries and after 2008, this number was rising. However, during the National Unity Government this number increased more than ever.

² "Afghanistan in the past one and half decade", CSRS's publication, page: 229, published in 1395 [solar year].

The condition of the Afghan migrants

Based on a recent report of the World Bank, during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the civil war, 95% of the Afghan migration was registered to be due to the war and insecurity; however, after 2015, 50% of the Afghan migrants are registered as economic migrants.

According to this report, in 1990, 380000 Afghan migrants were registered to have left their countries due to economic reasons. In 2000, this number had risen to approximately one million. In 2015, this number rose to 2.25 million. This statistics show that in the past 15 years, 85000 Afghan economic migrants are added to the previous economic migrants every year.³

Afghanistan is a country that have hundred thousands of economic migrants in various countries, most of which are forced to do hard and unprofessional labors. Although these migrants have a good impact on the economic situation of the country, as they sent remittance to their families, they are faced with many challenges in the other countries some of which are listed below:

- Overall, the Afghan government lacks a sound system for its economic migrants in other countries and that is why the Afghan people head to other countries for work through illegal ways.
- On the one hand, the migrant passing through illegal ways risk their lives and on the other hand, they face a harsh reaction on behalf of the host countries; they get imprisoned without a trial and sometimes, they are executed.
- Some countries use them, against money, as military force for their own wars.
- Denial of giving visas for workers with Afghan passport, which are most the case in Arabic countries is another challenge of the Afghan migrants. In this regard, after the Afghan Chief Executive's visit to Riaz, Saudi Arabia promised to give visas to Afghan workers; however, no action is undertaken in this regard yet.

³ The world bank: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/afghanistan/publication/labor-migration-can-help-boost-afghanistans-growth>

- Moreover, Afghans in the other countries undertake heavy works and do not profit the international legal rights of the workers.

What can the Afghan Government do?

Considering the insecurities and instabilities in Afghanistan, low economic growth, plurality of population, and the return of the Afghan Refugees from the other countries, it seems that the unemployment rate in the country will further increase.

The Afghan's migration to other countries for work opportunities is one of the ways to reduced unemployment in the country. Afghanistan is one of the countries that 16% of its economic growth is due to these economic migrants; however in order to improve the current situation, the Afghan Government must undertake some actions some of which are listed below:

First; the Afghan Government must examine the world markets to evaluate the work opportunities for its workers.

Second; the government must sign agreements in this regard with other countries so that the way would be paved for Afghans to go to other countries for work.

Third; the government should develop an orderly and effective system to manage the economic migration so that the people's economic condition develops and the rate of unemployment in the country decrease.

The End

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