



Abuse in Afghanistan: An Analysis of Labor Issues

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Introduction

Afghanistan is a landlocked nation located in the Middle East. Much of the terrain is taken up by mountains. Along with an arid climate, little of the land is actually arable. It is home to around 36 million individuals, the majority of whom are under the age of 54 and identify as Muslim.

Historical and Political Context

Afghanistan has been home to outright war and armed conflict since its foundation in 1747.

- Originally a monarchy and has seen multiple military coups and political assassinations
- A power vacuum resulted in the development of two terrorist organizations: al-Qaeda and the Taliban
- Rocky relations with the U.S. exist due to the long and violent war between them
- Government is currently a presidential Islamic republic - Ashraf Ghani has been in power for decades

Economic and Social Issues

Afghanistan is an extremely poor country with limited civil liberties for its citizens and weak infrastructure. Over half the population exists below the poverty line. The unemployment rate for adults hovers around 25%. Less than half the population is literate, and children receive insufficient education, especially girls. Quality of life is lacking. Afghanistan relies heavily on foreign aid. Its own economy is supported by small-scale production and exports.



Labor Laws

- ❖ 60th member of the ILO
 - ❖ Has ratified 13 out of 178 conventions
- ❖ Afghan Labor Law was passed in 2007
 - ❖ “enforced” by the Labor Ministry
- ❖ Several organizations serve to protect children in the workforce
 - ❖ Has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- ❖ Several laws in place to protect women have been repealed



Labor Issues for Women

Following Taliban rule, women saw many of their previous rights revoked. The current state of affairs is not significantly better. Women face domestic violence, a lack of education, and unequal pay. Working outside the home is still frowned upon. Women are discouraged from running their own businesses and are often not in control of their own earnings. The type of career opportunities available to them are limited too.

Labor Issues for Children

Despite the laws laid out, children often work dangerous jobs instead of receiving an education or proper career training. Many are very young and work an excessive number of hours per week. Some of the worst forms of abuse they suffer include being sexually exploited, recruited for armed conflict, trafficked for domestic labor, coerced into drug production/trafficking, and forced to work in various sectors like carpet weaving and brick production.

Suggestions for Improvements

- ❖ Ratify the three other core conventions to establish an intent to improve labor issues
- ❖ Grant the Labor Ministry authority, through legislation, to uphold Afghan labor laws
- ❖ Endorse international aid agencies who can offer who employment opportunities to women
- ❖ Increase funds to CPAN to expand resources for victimized children

Conclusion

Labor issues in Afghanistan are severe. It is necessary to ensure children, especially girls, get a proper education and that people’s rights and freedoms are restored and protected.

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Human Capital Index, for Girls and Boys in South Asia



Note. HCI refers to the capital a child born today can achieve by her 18th birthday, with the state of her nation’s education and health services in mind. 1 represents maximum productivity. Courtesy of The World Bank, n.d.