Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC)
Human Rights Studies and Research Unit

Summary Report
On the

Freedom from Hunger and Poverty

Research Report No (1) of the series of Reports on the SDGs, (Goals 1 and 2)
Mizan 1398
Report Description:

Title: Freedom from Hunger and Poverty
Researcher and Authors: Mohammad Azim Besharat and Mohammad Ayub Yusufzai
Publisher: Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
Date of Publication: Mizan, 1398
Address: Headquarters of the AIHRC, Adjacent to the Supreme Audit Office, Faiz Mohammad Kateb Road, District 6th, Kabul
Contact Numbers: 0202500676 & 0202500677
Email Address: aihrc@aihrc.org.af
Website: www.aihrc.org.af
Message from the AIHRC Chairperson

Poverty and hunger have always been one of Afghanistan's most serious challenges. The majority of people in this country are suffering from unemployment and low incomes, the main causes of poverty and hunger. Freedom from poverty and hunger, or access to sustainable livelihoods that can meet basic human needs – including food, clothing, and housing – are among citizens' fundamental rights, and everyone has the right to access them.

AIHRC studies show that 56.2% of the population currently live below the poverty line, and 36.3% of families have only bread and tea with their meals (lunch, dinner) more than seven times a week, and they cannot afford even a simple meal of whole grain. Statistics and figures show that, unfortunately, the situation has deteriorated day by day since 1385. Thus stressing the significant harms and negative impacts of poverty and hunger in addition to their other negative consequences, AIHRC calls on the Afghan government and other related organizations to fulfill their national and international obligations in this regard and pave the way for the implementation of SDGs through the development of successful and effective programs.

AIHRC appreciates the government of Afghanistan and the international community for continuously supporting the people of Afghanistan, and hopes that the recommendations of this research will be taken into consideration in the future policies. The AIHRC plans to monitor and report precisely on the progress of the government's efforts for the successful implementation of the recommendations of this research.

I acknowledge that conducting research, in particular those requiring field studies, is not an easy task in the current situation, taking into account security and structural challenges at the national level. It needs continued efforts and risk-taking, especially when traveling to villages and remote areas. Therefore, I would like to thank all my colleagues who took the risks in this project and traveled to the provinces, remote districts, and insecure villages to collect the information and data needed for this study, and I wish them more success in carrying out their duties.

In addition, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the good people of Afghanistan who kindly contributed to this research process and answered questions from our colleagues and completed the questionnaires. Special thanks go to our country's security and defense forces who made serious efforts for our colleagues' protection, and last but not least to the honorable local government officials, governors, district governors and security commanders, and thank you for your sincere cooperation in conducting this study. I hope for poverty and hunger-free Afghanistan.

Shaharzad Akbar
Chairperson of the AIHRC
Report Summary
The report on Freedom from Poverty and Hunger is the first of a series of reports produced by the AIHRC to study the human rights situation in relation to 14 goals of the SDGs that are most relevant to with human rights principles and values.1 Throughout this research, efforts have been made to identify fundamental human rights challenges and provide specific recommendations to the government and international community to address the challenges, and provide a baseline or information for SDGs indicators for further study and assessment of the progress of each of the fourteen goals.

The Freedom from Poverty and Hunger report therefore serve two main purposes, which are to assess citizens' access to the right to freedom from poverty and hunger and to provide basic information for indicators of the first and second goals of the SDGs (poverty and hunger). All the findings and information for this report are obtained from field research and library studies. Field research was conducted in cooperation with 2610 people, 38% women and 62% men who completed the questionnaires.

According to findings by this research, freedom from poverty and hunger is one of human and civil rights of the citizens, protected by the national laws and international human rights instruments, and the government of Afghanistan in addition to its international obligation under Articles 6, 13, 14, 48, 53, and 54 of the Constitution, provisions of the Law on Social Protection and the national agenda for the SDGs, has the task of creating legal capacities and supporting mechanisms to fight poverty and reduce hunger in the country.

A: Poverty in Afghanistan

Research findings have shown that poverty is one of the most significant challenges in the development process in Afghanistan, which has not been successfully addressed since 2007. As a result, poverty has become more severe over time, rising from 33.7% in 2007 to 54.5% in 2017. The poverty line is defined as $1.25/day (roughly 97.5 Afghani) according to the SDGs’ national and international agenda. This means that if a person earns less than 97.5 Afs a day, he or she is below the poverty line.

Average Household Size
The findings of the study show that the average household size in Afghanistan is 6.5 people, although, this figure is reported as 7 people, according to reports by the Ministry of Economy and the Central Statistics Office of Afghanistan.

Number of Breadwinners in a Family
Based on the findings of this study, 1108 people representing 42.5% of the total sample population reported that there was only one breadwinner in their households, while 609 people (23.3%) reported of two breadwinners, 375 people (14.4%) reported of three breadwinners, 173 people (6.6%) reported 4 breadwinners, 345 people (13.2%) reported 5 or more than 5 breadwinners in their household.

---

1 Objectives 12, 14 and 17 are not included in this research.
The Main Sources of Household Income
Field studies in this research show that out of 2610 interviewees, 710 people (27.2 %) referred to agriculture and peasantry as the main source of income for their families, 601 people (23 %) to trade and business, 550 people (21.1 %) to working in the government and non-governmental organizations, 219 people (8.4 %) listed animal husbandry, 192 people (7.4 %) reported working in security and defense institutions, 195 people (6.1 %) stated working in construction projects as the main sources of income for their families, while 100 people (3.8 %) of the interviewees said they received cash from their family members abroad as their main source of income. The remaining 79 people (3%) did not answer this question.

Household Income Per Capita
The results of this research show that 320 people (12.3 %) out of the 2610 interviewees reported that their household income per capita was less than 5000 Afs per month. Likewise, 467 people (17.9 %) reported their income from 5,000 to 10,000 Afs per month, 351 people (13.4 %) reported from 10,000 to 15,000 Afs per month, and 329 people (12.6%) reported 15,000 to 20,000 Afs as their household income in a month. Similarly, 126 people (4.8%) reported 20,000 to 25,000 Afs, 276 people (10.6%) reported 25,000 to 30,000 Afs, 289 people (11.1%) reported 30,000 to 35,000 Afs, 177 people (6.8%) reported 35,000 to 40,000 Afs, 129 people (4.9%) reported 40,000 to 45,000 Afs, 81 people (3.1%) said 45,000 to 50,000 Afs, 17 people (0.7%) said 50,000 to 100,000 Afs, and ultimately, 12 people (0.5%) reported more than 100,000 Afs as their household income per month. The remaining 34 people, (1.4%) of the interviewees did not answer this question.
Studies in this part of the research show that 56.2% of families have monthly incomes of less than 20,000 Afs. It shows that they live below the poverty line, compared to 19,012 Afs as a benchmark for a family with an average of 6.5 members.

B: Hunger in Afghanistan
Research in Afghanistan has shown that 41% of children under 5 years of age are suffering from hunger. Likewise, the SDGs' national agenda has also confirmed that 44.6 % of people in Afghanistan suffered chronic food insecurity in 1397 and 13 % suffered severe food insecurity. According to the findings of this study, which focuses on three indicators of agricultural development, family food pattern, and child malnutrition, hunger is one of the most serious challenges faced by the Afghan people.

Agricultural Development
One of the most important indicators of freedom from hunger and healthy nutrition is the development and expansion of agricultural products discussed in this section. The data in this part of the research show that out of 2610 people in the sample population, 724 people (27.7%) said they had benefited from agricultural development programs in their areas, but 1833 people (70.2%) confirmed that there were no agricultural development programs or projects implemented in their areas. The remaining 53 people (2%) did not answer this question.
**Food Pattern**
What seems to be an important dietary pattern is that it must contain elements that meet the nutritional requirements of the human body and provide all the nutrients that it needs, such as vitamins, protein, iron, sodium, fats, etc. Meat, grains, milk, eggs, vegetables, fruits, bread and rice are among the most common foods on the table of the Afghan people; however, the question in this section is how many people have easy access to these foods and can enjoy a proper dietary pattern.

**Meat**
Studies in this research show that 79.5% of the 2610 interviewees have meat twice or less in a week, while 17.7% are unable to have meat every week; they may only have meat once in a couple of weeks.

**Grains**
Based on the findings of this study, 46.8% of the 2610 interviewees use grains less than twice a week, while 7.5% are unable to get grains every week, although they may be able to have grains once in a couple of weeks.

**Vegetables**
Studies on the amount of vegetables in household diets of the people covered by this study show that 34.1% of people have vegetables less than twice a week.

**Fruits**
This section of the study shows that 62.2% of the 2610 interviewees have fruit twice a week or less than twice a week, while 13.5% have not been unable to get fruit once a week. They can have fruit once every couple of weeks.

**Bread and Tea**
Statistics in this research show that most people in Afghanistan are unable to afford a full meal at all times of the day, so they can simply have their lunches and dinners with bread and tea. In this study, as many as 36.3% of the interviewees reported that they only have bread and tea five or more days a week as their lunches and dinners.

**Breastfeeding of Infants**
Research findings indicate that out of 2610 interviewees, 2010 (77%) reported that their infants were breastfed, but 20.1% (524 people) said that their infants were not breastfed. The remaining 76 people (2.9%) did not answer this question.

**Short Stature in Children**
The findings of this research show that 728 people (27.9%) of the 2610 interviewees confirmed that their children were suffering from short stature, yet, on the contrary, 1735 people (66.5%) responded that they had children of normal height. And finally, 5.6% (147 people) didn’t answer this question.