



# REFORMS IN URBAN GOVERNANCE IN AFGHANISTAN

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**Abstract:** The method of preparing a strategic and long-term vision of a city based on which a short-term executive plan is prepared is very important and fundamental. In recent decades, various schools and paradigms have emerged in the field of urban literature, some of which have a great impact on They had urban spaces. Among these, the approach of the urban development strategy is one of the most important of these issues. Strategic management is very important in urban planning. This Management program is different from other types of past urban planning patterns, emphasizing the constant participation of the people and drawing a vision for the city. The abundance of urban problems and challenges, on the one hand, and the new conditions of cities for globalization, on the other hand, require a change in the approach to urban planning. Using this new approach in urban planning in Afghanistan can save cities from the current situation that faces many problems and issues. A special feature of the urban development strategy is the emphasis on solving urban problems within the framework of a clear picture of the current situation and the future of the city and the participation of more and more citizens in the affairs of the city. The current trend of cities being created one after another is only reminiscent of urbanism, not urbanism. The Urban Development Strategy has so far been implemented in more than 300 cities around the world. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the feasibility of implementing urban development strategy projects in Afghanistan with the approach of strategic management based on the current situation in the Afghan urban management system in cooperation with the Ministry of Urban Development of Afghanistan.

**Keywords:** *Strategy, City, Development Planning, Strategic Management, Sustainable Development, Urban Development STRATEGY.*

## Introduction

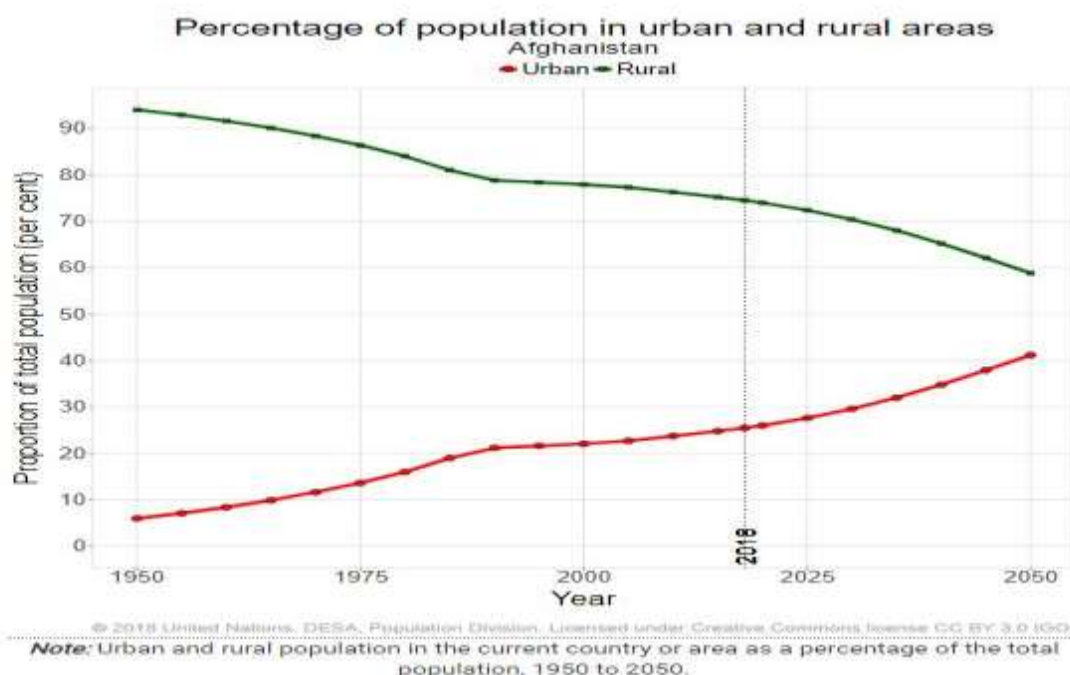
The spread of urbanism in the world, especially in developing countries, has led to an increase in the excessive use of nature in cities and, consequently, an increase in the production of environmental pollutants. As both resources are limited and the quality of the environment in cities has declined. The part-time and short-term programs that are prepared and implemented for cities are only able to temporarily solve urban problems (Hosseini, 2015). One of the major drawbacks of these plans is the lack of coordination with each other and the limited scope of their vision in terms of time and urban problematic, as well as the lack of a visionary approach. These issues and the efforts of urban planners in recent decades to integrate urban programs with increasing urban change have led to the emergence of a model of urban strategic planning, which includes strategic urban development plans Idem. The Urban Development Strategy, aimed at reducing poverty and sustainable development and promoting participation and creating good urban governance, is a tool for balanced growth in cities and surrounding areas and is the best option for the future of the city. The developing world is facing a crisis, not because there is no solution to the problems, but because politicians and government officials, both in developed and developing countries, are seriously challenged. They have not examined their work. Due to the political, social, and economic situation in Afghanistan, there is a strong migration from rural to urban areas, and if the current trends continue, new residents of cities will be accommodated in crowded slums with no standards and urban services. In such settlements, the lack of access to safe drinking water and the contamination of the children's environment due to the lack of garbage collection will be part of their daily routine (El-Arnaout, 2017).

## Urbanization in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is in a phase of a rapid transition to urbanization. According to the World Bank, the country's urbanization rate is highest in the region. The World Bank report shows that urban population growth in Afghanistan is growing at an annual rate of 5 percent, which is about twice the average level in the region.

Newly arrived families and individuals in the city include internally displaced persons, returning migrants, and those who have abandoned agricultural activities in rural areas and are looking for service jobs in urban areas. The World Bank predicts that the increase in urbanization in the country will continue for another generation, and as this trend continues, by 2060, another 15 million people will be added to Afghanistan's urban population. However, in the next 40 years, half of Afghanistan's population will be relocated. At the same time, the World Bank predicts that Afghanistan will see a significant increase in employment demand. More than half of Afghanistan's current population is teenagers aged 15 and under, the bank said (Shahir, 2017).

They will also enter the job market in the coming years. Given this perspective, Afghanistan will need to manage urban transit in a way that provides job opportunities, housing, and better living conditions for its citizens.



Source: United Nations Economic and Social Affairs Department

## Challenges of urbanization in Afghanistan

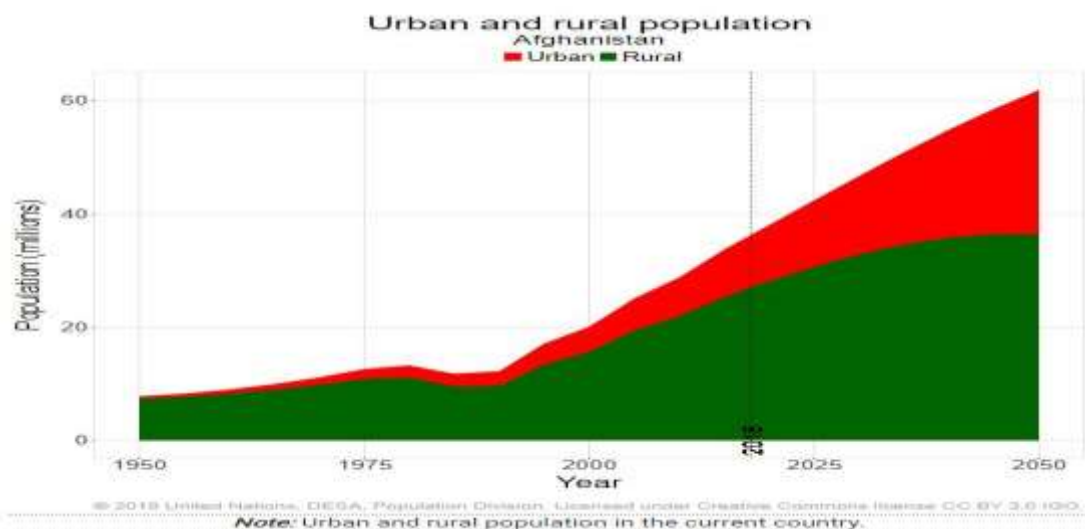
- ✚ Challenge of water supply (Afghanistan cities have a major problem with water supply)
- ✚ The problem of lack of land for construction (currently in the cities of Afghanistan due to lack of suitable space, many hills, green spaces, and even government lands have been usurped or built against the master plan)
- ✚ Where will the new residents of these cities live?
- ✚ The challenge of providing and equipping new schools and the appropriate distance from their place of residence;
- ✚ The main problem is the collection and disposal of waste produced (in Kabul, more than 4,700 tons of waste is extracted daily).
- ✚ How will city security be ensured? And thousands of other challenges (Hosseini, 2015).

## Reasons for urbanization in Afghanistan

"The relocation of the urbanization process in Afghanistan has always been affected by the ongoing conflict, insecurity, and fragility of the security situation, which has posed additional challenges for urban areas."

According to the Afghan Disaster Management Agency, about one million people were displaced inside Afghanistan last year alone. Most of them have left their homes and villages due to the war and insecurity. On the other hand, according to the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations of Afghanistan, in addition to these internally displaced persons, 930,000 Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan and Iran last solar year (Etemadi, 2014).

Source: United Nations Economic and Social Affairs Department



## REFORMS IN URBAN GOVERNANCE

With the increase in urban population, employment and housing are major challenges in Afghanistan. Although the Afghan government is considering "urban priority" theoretical programs and important financial assistance from international organizations this year due to important urban challenges, Afghanistan needs more urban programs due to the significant growth of urban life (Development, 2015).

## REFORMATIVE ACTIONS

- ✚ National Urban Priority Program: In 2016, the Afghan government introduced the National Urban Priority Plan. The program includes policy and investment guidance in support of municipal management, improving access to basic services and urban economic conditions for the next 10 years (Ahmadi, 2019).
- ✚ Planning, approval and initial implementation of the National Urban Policy,
- ✚ Urban and regional plans for major urban areas,
- ✚ Preparing development strategic plans for the region for all zones of the country,
- ✚ Strengthening the capacity of municipalities,
- ✚ Creating programs to improve revenues and improve capacity in 34 provinces of the country or major cities,
- ✚ Urban development plans, including investment plans prepared for infrastructure in 25 major cities,
- ✚ Institutional capacity supported by scientific plans, institutional reforms for effective urban management in 34 provinces or major cities (Gharjestani, 2017).

## CONCLUSION:

Finally, as a conclusion from the discussion, it can be stated that the issue of good governance, prioritization of urban needs, attention to economics, welfare, access to educational and health centers are very important and vital issues and at the same time are new in development literature, especially in the urban development. In the cities of developing and less developed countries, there are dozens of social, political, cultural problems, lack of regular, and comprehensive law and, most importantly, lack of necessary infrastructure such as standard roads, safe drinking water, sustainable electricity, equal access. There are educational facilities, health and the lack of suitable places and parks for recreation in times of unemployment. The welfare governments, usually focus on the institutionalization of these components, which require poverty reduction, job creation, and sustainable welfare, environmental protection and resilience, growth and development in the women's sector, to achieve sustainable human development. In Afghanistan, in addition to the leadership of the government, two important institutions: the Ministry of Urban Development and Municipalities, are responsible for organizing urban issues, urbanization, urban services, and urban welfare and citizenship.

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