

## Balancing Environmental Stewardship: Examining the Rights and Obligations of the Afghan Government and Citizens in Environmental Protection

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### ABSTRACT

This research examines the environmental rights and obligations of the Afghan government and citizens, emphasizing collaborative approaches. It investigates government rights, including legislative authority and regulatory oversight, with corresponding obligations such as enacting and enforcing environmental laws. Citizen rights encompass environmental participation and access to information, with obligations like responsible consumption and conservation support. Data was collected through a qualitative-methods approach, from open sources, and systematically analyzed with interpretation within the context of existing literature. The study highlights collaborative rights involving public-private partnerships and international cooperation, emphasizing joint decision-making and resource sharing. The findings stress collective action, utilizing case studies and examples, and recommend strategic focus areas for both government and citizens, including monitoring and evaluation, public-private collaboration, regulatory oversight improvement, and legislative framework strengthening. The research contributes to environmental governance understanding in Afghanistan, guiding sustainable development and conservation strategies.

**Keywords:** Government policies, legal frameworks, sustainable development, conservation, public awareness

### INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan, a country endowed with a wealth of natural resources, faces the difficult task of promoting economic development while preserving its distinctive biological diversity (Godfrey, 2007). At the same time, as they balance their twin responsibilities as environmental stewards and beneficiaries, Afghans are crucial in determining and implementing environmental policy (Lei, Haitao, and Jinfan, 2018). This study is important because it adds to our understanding of Afghanistan's environmental issues and has wider implications for the global conversation on sustainable development (Rahmani, Abi, and Azizi, 2022). In the global setting, environmental stewardship more specifically, striking a balance between citizen rights and government responsibility in environmental protection, is becoming more and more important (Chapin et al., 2011). Although the relationship between sustainable development and environmental conservation has been the subject of many studies, an in-depth analysis of the Afghan experience offers important insights into the opportunities and problems involved in striking this delicate balance (Hidayat and Kajita, 2020; Kurian and Ardakanian, 2015; Sharifzai et al., 2016). The government's role in developing and enforcing laws that address environmental issues is a crucial component of environmental governance (Zhou, 2008). Scholars such as Altham and Guerin (1999) pointed out that strong legal and regulatory frameworks are essential for directing government actions toward environmental protection. Parallel to this, literature has emphasized the importance of citizens in environmental protection. The work of Middlemiss and Parrish (2010) emphasizes the value of community engagement and grassroots actions in ensuring environmental sustainability. In Afghanistan, where communities frequently have a tight relationship with the environment, it is critical to comprehend the views and responsibilities of individuals (Gritzner, 2010). Studies on Afghan citizens' rights and obligations to safeguard the environment may highlight the level of public awareness, engagement, and advocacy, which can help shape plans to increase community involvement in sustainable practices (Sharifzai et al., 2016). Studies by Ali-Khan and Mulvihill (2008) draw attention to the necessity of joint efforts between communities and governments to successfully solve environmental concerns. Furthermore, the interdependence of environmental

issues emphasizes the worldwide significance of studying the environmental stewardship experience of Afghanistan (Hidayat and Kajita, 2020). Scholars such as Fazey et al. (2013) emphasize how crucial it is to share knowledge and work together internationally to solve environmental challenges. The literature analysis concludes by highlighting the complexity of environmental stewardship and the necessity of a thorough investigation of the responsibilities and rights of Afghan government and people with regard to environmental protection (Ghaffari and Tonkaboni, 2020). This research aims to explore the Afghan Government's rights and obligations toward the environment, to understand the Afghan civilian rights and obligations toward the environment and, to scrutinize the combined rights and obligations of the Afghan government and civilians toward the environment.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The Study design was using qualitative methods approach, and the data analysis was with a systematic review of laws, regulations, policy documents, and reports related to environmental protection in Afghanistan. Similarly, data was analyzed by studying the qualitative data methodically, coding and categorization are used. By triangulating the results, document analysis improves the validity and dependability of the conclusions. The data was interpreted with findings evaluated in the context of existing research, contributing to the aims of the study that is about environmental stewardship. Above all, this research had some limitation with the efforts taken to reduce biases and improve the findings' generalizability are among the possible drawbacks.

### ***The Afghan Government's Rights and Obligations toward the Environment***

The legislative power to create and modify environmental laws and regulations is vested in the Afghan government. With the goal of protecting the environment, the Afghan government has passed a comprehensive set of rules and regulations. The Environmental Law, rules pertaining to noise pollution, ozone, water quality, air pollution, medical waste, environmental and social impact assessments, and the Law of Access to Information are a few of these. The creation and regular modification of legislation, preservation and enhancement of forests and the surrounding environment, and the application of certain rules are among the duties of the government.

***Legislative Obligations:*** The government is responsible for enacting and periodically amending comprehensive environmental laws, forming the foundation for regulating activities impacting the environment.

***Regulatory Oversight:*** The government has the right to establish regulatory bodies dedicated to overseeing environmental compliance. Obligations include the establishment of regulatory bodies, active monitoring, and enforcement of regulations, public awareness, periodic review, and collaboration with stakeholders.

***Land Use Planning:*** In order to prevent environmental degradation, the government is required to plan and regulate land use. This includes creating land use policies, controlling development, identifying ecologically sensitive areas, enforcing zoning laws, carrying out environmental impact assessments, encouraging sustainable practices, involving the public, and reviewing and adapting policies on a regular basis.

To summarize, land use planning, legislation, and regulation are all areas of focus for the Afghan government's environmental protection initiatives. By carrying out these duties, the government hopes to fortify the legal and regulatory system, encourage environmentally friendly activities, and protect the country's natural resources.

### ***The Rights and Obligations of Afghan Civilians toward the Environment***

***Environmental Participation:*** Right: The ability to actively participate in the formulation of environmental policy decisions is a fundamental right of citizens.

***Obligation:*** It is the responsibility of citizens to volunteer, follow environmental laws, support conservation efforts, actively participate in environmental activities, promote sustainable practices, engage in community interaction, and keep educated.

***Access to Information:*** Right: Information about environmental issues and government acts that affect the environment is inherently accessible to citizens.

**Obligation:** Citizens have an obligation to actively seek out information, support openness, assess information critically, take part in public consultations, educate others and themselves, work with environmental organizations, and properly distribute knowledge.

**Environmental Conservation:** Right: Everyone has the fundamental right to live in a sustainable and healthy environment.

Obligation: It is the responsibility of citizens to embrace environmentally friendly behaviors, lessen their impact on the environment, take part in recycling and waste reduction activities, support conservation efforts, protect biodiversity, promote sustainable practices, raise public awareness, take part in community initiatives, and engage in responsible consumption.

To sum up, citizens are essential because they exercise their rights to information access, environmental conservation, and engagement in environmental issues. Completing related tasks guarantees proactive participation, conscientious conduct, and group endeavors towards eco-friendly methods, ecological preservation, and the welfare of present and future generations.

### **The Combined Rights and Obligations of the Afghan Government and Civilians Toward the Environment**

**Public-Private Collaboration:** Right: Recognizing the value of cooperative efforts, the Afghan government and people have the right to work together in public-private partnerships for environmental initiatives.

**Obligation:** It is described in the following three sections.

**Government:** It is necessary to develop policies, foster an atmosphere that is supportive, and offer incentives to the private sector to participate.

**Private Sector:** required to follow rules, take part in cooperative initiatives, make decisions together, exchange resources openly, and engage in sustainable behaviors.

iii. **Public:** In addition to having the right to participate, citizens also have a duty to keep themselves informed, offer suggestions, encourage teamwork, and evaluate the effects on the community.

### **International Cooperation**

**Right:** Afghanistan acknowledges the interconnection of the world and has the sovereign right to participate in international cooperation for environmental protection.

**Obligation:** It is elaborated in two parts as below.

**Government:** It is mandatory to interact with international organizations, take part in forums, conduct diplomatic relations with other countries, synchronize policies with international norms, exchange resources and technology, and support catastrophe readiness.

**Public:** It is the responsibility of citizens to be informed, encourage global participation, support international involvement, take part in global environmental projects, and support preparedness for disasters.

In conclusion, Afghanistan must respect the right to cooperate and uphold its commitments in public-private partnerships and international collaboration. By addressing difficult issues and promoting inclusive, holistic environmental governance, this strategy promotes global sustainability.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Afghan government and citizens share rights and obligations for environmental protection. It is also declared by Godfrey (2007) and Lei et al. (2018) that for environmental protection to be more successful, the government and the people must combine rights and obligations. The power to enact and amend laws, monitor their observance, and direct land use belongs to the government. People are entitled to information access and participation. It is both parties' right to work together as well as with foreign partners. The goals of these rights and responsibilities are sustainability and well-being, both in Afghanistan and around the world. Furthermore, sustainable development is important for Afghanistan. It is also clarified by many authors (Hidayat & Kajita, 2020; Kurian & Ardakanian, 2015; and Sharifzai et al., 2016).

## **CONCLUSION**

To put it simply, cooperation between the public and government, as well as joint efforts on the national and international levels, create a strong basis for environmental conservation in Afghanistan. This all-encompassing strategy emphasizes the shared accountability of all stakeholders in protecting the country's natural resources for both the present and future generations while acknowledging the interconnectivity of environmental concerns.

The Afghan government and people can work together to create a resilient and sustainable environmental future by upholding their rights and responsibilities.

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