Beyond Brussels: Fix the blueprint and deliver.

Sayed Ikram Afzali, Executive Director

On October 5, 2016, at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, international community pledged 15.2 billion dollars for the next few years to assist the Afghan government to implement its peace and development agenda. However, apart from one indicator on extractives, and one very weak indicator on anti-corruption, the conference failed to put strong benchmarks to ensure mutual accountability to make effective use of aid. Although civil society organization including Integrity Watch, came up with strong recommendations, they were completely ignored despite praises from donors.

President Ghani said that the real job starts with delivering the reform he has promised Afghans and international community. Secretary Kerry said that the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF), the National Priority Plans (NPPs), and the “renewed” mutual accountability benchmarks “...will serve as the blueprint for all of our assistance going forward.” However, the blueprint is weak and will not serve to bring the much needed reform if the benchmarks are not improved seriously.

The ANPDF is a strong economic policy document but falls short on rule of law and governance. There is no overarching strategy to fight corruption. Although the only one agreed upon deliverables during the Brussels conference requires the Afghan government to come up with an anti-corruption strategy by mid-2017, it fails to spell out the detailed targets it has to achieve. The government has already lost

IN THIS ISSUE

Integrity Watch sets up provincial integrity networks to promote a culture of integrity.
Page 3

Local monitors completely alter school condition in Kapisa province.
Page 4

Local volunteers prevent use of low quality bricks in construction of a school in Balkh province.
Page 6

Mock trial to raise public awareness in Bamyan on how a fair judicial trial takes place.
Page 7

Who is more responsible in increasing corruption in Afghanistan: The government or the people?
Page 8
two years and giving it another nine months to come up with a strategy to fight corruption is unbelievable. In addition, an anti-corruption strategy can mean anything or nothing. With the not so SMART indicators, the government would tend towards a box-ticking approach by just putting a document together to meet the indicator. This was evident recently with the five ministerial anti-corruption plans. The plans were never publically consulted and are very weak in terms of problem analysis and the proposed solutions. It is clear that the plans were quickly put together just to meet the indicators that were set earlier.

However, failure to commit at the Brussels conference to fight corruption does not mean nothing can be done now. The Afghan government and the international community can still fix the blueprint by setting really SMART indicator for anticorruption. These could include, among others, clarifying roles between agencies that have a role in the fight against corruption, dissolving the High Office of Oversight, and establishing an independent anti-corruption commission based on Jakarta Principles and UNCAC standards with a three pronged approach of: (1) a strong oversight role on the Anti-Corruption Justice Center, (2) coordination of prevention efforts, and (3) public education and engagement. Financial and political support to the Oversight Commission on Access to Information, joining the Open Government Partnership, and enacting a strong anticorruption law in addition to other enabling laws such as the whistleblower protection law would be other key measures. Overall, the civil society anti-corruption recommendations could be used a starting point for setting new benchmarks for the Afghan government and international community to fight corruption in Afghanistan.

Brussels Conference on Afghanistan took place on October 5, 2016 and international donors pledged a donation of $15.5 Billion for development and reconstruction of Afghanistan for the next five years.
Integrity Watch sets up provincial integrity networks to promote a culture of integrity.

*Ahmad Bilal Popalzai, training expert*

Integrity Watch began introducing provincial integrity networks at the beginning of 2016 to encourage the efforts of people from various sectors in the fight against corruption. These are voluntary networks and their membership is also voluntary. Its members include government representatives, civil society organizations, provincial councils, educational institutions, the media, and women’s and youth networks. These provincial integrity networks are now leading the integrity and accountability efforts in their concerned provinces.

The core objectives of the provincial integrity networks are the promotion of transparency, accountability and community-based monitoring for good governance and the fight against corruption. Meeting these core objectives involves a number of activities, including: raising awareness about the right of access to information; demonstrating the importance of participation and public involvement in important national issues and decisions; sharing knowledge and experiences within the networks; and encouraging people to undertake joint efforts against corruption.

The provincial integrity networks utilize training materials which highlight how integrity should be reflected in the implementation of good governance. They also seek, through evaluation of plans, budgets and service delivery, to make government authorities accountable to the public.

Integrity Watch has been able to introduce these networks in Herat, Kapisa, Nangarhar, Bamyan, Kundoz, Balkh and Paktia provinces where they facilitate regular meetings of these networks.

Corruption has become a huge problem in Afghanistan to the point that it has almost become ingrained in the culture in many respects. Integrity Watch is seeking to change this situation by reviving the culture of integrity – a value deeply rooted in Afghan society, but one which has been largely forgotten over the past 15 years.
Local monitors completely alter school condition in Kapisa province.
Ali Ahmad Mashal Afroz, provincial coordinator of Integrity Watch in Kapisa.

I remember when my friends and I saw the Sher Khan School in Kohistan-e-Awal for the first time in 2015; there were no walls except the one where a door had once been and several yellowing plants in need of water. A school without walls was clearly not a proper environment for academic study.

When we arrived at that ruined school the authorities welcomed us warmly and after we introduced Integrity Watch and the Community Based Monitoring of Schools (CBM-S) program, they led us around some of the classrooms. At first all we saw were classrooms in ruins and without students. A few steps further there were some students studying in an open area who complained to us about the school’s condition.

Seeing this situation and knowing the value of education, we got to work. Our first priority was to gain the support of the local community and to build their capacity to monitor all aspects relating to the schooling of their children. During social gatherings and talks with community members we were able to make them aware of how they could make a difference. We encouraged them to identify the specific problems with their school and encouraged them to engage with the Education Department. It is worth mentioning that the local people had already complained to the Education Department authorities but without success. Over time and with an organized effort, however, my colleagues and I were able with the support of the local people and the local Shura to Gain the cooperation of the Education Department. This made all the difference.

Today, after two years, there have been huge changes at Sher Khan High School. 750 meters of school walls have been constructed with a USD 60,000 grant from Education Department’s budget.
and an Afs 228,000 (about $3500) contribution from the community. Construction of these walls now provides protection to both students and the school’s staff.

In addition to this, another important task was accomplished by the active intervention of the local people and the local Shura: providing the school with potable water. This project cost approximately Afs 41,000 (about $600). About 1.5 Km to the north of the school there was a deep well and the people connected it with school with the use of pipes. Now students have access to potable water in the school. The water also helps to maintain the plants around the school. It is planned that the School Management Shura (SMS) will invite representatives of the governmental for the inauguration of this project in the near future and a large participation is expected.

Besides these changes, a number of other things have changed at the school. There are now regular monthly meetings of the School Management Shuras (SMS), hygiene has improved, security has improved, teachers all have teaching plans, student discipline is good and the interaction between the school administrators and the students’ parents is now far beyond what had existed previously.

It is worth mentioning that all the problems which have been solved have been due to the combined efforts of the School Management Shura (SMS), the local development council, the school’s administration and teachers as well as the students themselves. Nothing better demonstrates the beauty of the Community Based Monitoring approach than the success which was realized at the Sher Khan School.
Local volunteers prevent use of low quality bricks in construction of a school in Balkh province.

Community Based Monitoring – Infrastructure (CBM-I) program in Balkh

The building of Ghazi Amanullah Khan School had been completely destroyed and there was a need for its reconstruction. Therefore, a German organization called WASF allocated USD 516,000 for its reconstruction with the intention that the reconstruction work would be completed by the end of 2016.

During the monitoring process, local monitors found that the hired contractor had used low quality bricks for the school’s reconstruction. After obtaining proof, the local monitors raised this issue with the people responsible for the program at Integrity Watch in Balkh province. Together IWA and the local monitors raised this issue of low quality bricks with the contractor company’s managers noting the obvious concern this caused within the local community of the schools.

The result was that the company replaced the low quality bricks with high quality bricks.

Besides the issue of low quality bricks, the local monitors also found problems with the school’s concrete pillars and the building frame and shared these problems with the implementing company as well. Because of the persistent efforts of these local monitors the quality of construction of this 24-classroom building for the Ghazi Amanullah Khan School has been ensured and will serve more than 3,100 students for years to come.

Before this, in a similar case in 2015, Local Monitors in cooperation with Integrity Watch Afghanistan staff, prevented use of low quality bricks in construction of a school and a medical clinic. Construction of Naasir Khan High School and Haji Hassan Medical Clinic were two projects funded by government of Japan and were implemented in Chahar Bagh Safa by Scale Structure Construction Company.
Mock trial to raise public awareness in Bamyan on how a fair judicial trial takes place.

Although there are organizations in Bamyan which focus on raising public awareness of proper court procedures, Integrity Watch recently organized the first demonstration of proper court procedures by way of “a mock trial”. The mock trial session involved the participation of various government and non-governmental organizations, as well as local community members. More than 250 people from the offices of the Attorney General, from police headquarters, from the National Directorate of Security, from civil society, from IDLO and a variety of other people including court clerks, elders, university instructors, students, local monitors, and local citizens, participated in this mock trial about a bribe case. In total 11 different people performed roles in this mock trial.

This mock trial displayed to people how a fair and proper judicial trail should be conducted. Different people played different roles. For instance, people acted the part of: the accused persons (a prosecutor who was a bribe taker and another person who was the bribe giver), 3 court staff members, 2 persons played the roles of advocates, 1 person acted as the court clerk, 1 person as a defense attorney and 2 persons acted as witnesses. The mock trial took place just like a real court.

Integrity Watch has been conducting mock trials in order to demonstrate proper judicial practice. The expectation is that both the actor participants and the audience will learn what they should expect from a court of law should either they or someone they know find themselves in a court proceeding. Such demonstrations make it easier for the public to know what their rights are in a court of law and when and how they should expect justice to be served.

Integrity Watch Afghanistan believes that effectiveness of its Community Based Monitoring of Trials (CBM-T) program is directly related to the amount of individual responsibility which local participants take in the process. Only when there is a change in local commitment can there will be a change in the provision of local services.

This mock court session was held on the 4th of September 2016 in the courtyard of Bamika Higher Studies Institute with the assistance of Integrity Watch and Bamika Institute.
Who is more responsible in increasing corruption in Afghanistan: The government or the people?

Integrity Watch spoke to Mr. Habib Wardak, Senior Technical Manager of Business Integrity Network of Afghanistan to discuss the question

Corruption in Afghanistan has become widely recognized as a major challenge for the Afghan people and the Afghan government. If there is a demand side to corruption there has to be a supply side to corruption as well. While the government and its system are blamed in a majority of cases for being the only contributor to the demand side of corruption, it is evident that the private sector, in addition to the public, contribute significantly to the supply side of corruption as well. A public sector which indulges corruption thwarts the process of reconstruction, of good governance and the delivery of services by the government to the general public. Businesses and companies involved in corruption distort the market and make doing business by the rest of the sector more difficult and less profitable. There is no doubt that both, those in the government and the general public, take an active part in corruption, though generally the scale might vary. Corruption that happens on the part of the government is most often grand corruption of a systematic nature. However, corruption on the part of the general public generally consists of petty corruption.