

In this issue...

- **Volunteers in Bamyan prevent low-quality Construction... page 2**
- **Efshagar.af: A Step to Fight Corruption.... Page 3**
- **Local Monitors in Herat stop handover of low quality Canal project.... Page 4**

Religious leaders urge all stakeholders to fight against corruption in Afghanistan



On Sep 01, 2015, more than 400 religious leaders attended the National Anti-Corruption Conference in Kabul organized by Integrity Watch Afghanistan. In the conference H.E President Ghani said “Afghan people are not corrupt; only a small number of officials and smugglers have damaged the image of the whole nation.” He called on religious leaders to declare Jihad against corruption and assist the government in its anti-corruption efforts. At the end of the conference, the religious scholars issued a declaration urging the government to take concrete steps against corrupt individuals and to implement government-wide reforms to prevent corrupt practices. They also urged the civil society and religious leaders to mobilize people against this endemic disease.

Corruption is a widespread phenomenon in Afghanistan. It is important that all segments of the society play their role in the fight against corruption. As religious leaders are very influential in shaping people’s attitudes, their role in the fight against corruption has largely been neglected. Therefore, Integrity Watch Afghanistan with support of Haraakat-Investment Climate Facility Organization and with cooperation of Ministry of Hajj and Religious affairs, launched a nationwide anti-corruption campaign (Haraakat Towards Transparency) engaging religious leaders and the general public in this campaign. Around 2500 religious leaders were trained on anti-corruption concepts including concepts of integrity in the Islamic tradition, Afghan laws which

address corruption, and ways to fight corruption. more than 5000 copies book entitled “Islam and anti-corruption” in two languages were distributed to Ulama. The book has already received wide recognition from anti-corruption experts and prominent religious leaders. To continue the campaign against corruption and to facilitate the public fight against corruption, Integrity Watch has established a website www.efshagar.af and a call center (+93 786 106 106) to receive reports on corruption and to pass them on to the relevant authorities to take action.

Volunteers in Bamyan prevent low- quality construction

A community monitoring team in Dar e Zardak village of Bamyan province identified some serious problems in construction of a canal that is planned to benefit Dara Zardak people in their village. The problems included no compaction of foundation, low quality construction material and no professional supervision.

The local monitoring team reported this incident to the provincial council and requested them to review the project. While the irrigation department refused to review the project, the economy department and Bamyan provincial council sent a delegation to monitor the project. Beside other problems, the delegation found that sand being used for the construction included 5% mud and therefore asked the construction work to be stopped. The Irrigation department refused to stop the work, but the local community insisted and stopped the work process.



After 3 days the construction company finally agreed to recommence the work and to proceed again using quality materials and a compaction machine.

Dar e Zardak village is located 40 kilometers from center of Bamyan province in central Afghanistan.

This village is one of the deprived villages. Since 2001 when millions of dollars of assistance flowed into Afghanistan, not much has changed in this village. The social monitoring pro-

gram of Integrity Watch Afghanistan mobilized local residents and built their capacity for monitoring and finally for bringing about a positive change in the quality of the construction work for this canal.



Efshagar.af: A step to fight corruption



Integrity Watch Afghanistan has taken another step to fight corruption in Afghanistan by establishing a call center eight months ago including efshagar.af website and social media where reports about corruption are collected from every part of the country. This has been warmly welcomed all over the country and the public is assisting Integrity Watch Afghanistan by reporting instances of corruption using a variety of mechanisms such as SMS, call, emails and submitting reports in efshagar.af

website.

Integrity Watch is working with the government to establish a mechanism to share the reports with the relevant government authorities and to provide feedback to citizens on the actions taken by the authorities.

So far over 7500 SMS, calls, social media and emails have been received of which around 600 are verifiable corruption reports. The verifiable reports are made available to public through efshagar.af website. Media outlets have

shown great interest to promote efshagar.af and to use the reports to start their own investigative reporting. For instance, BBC persian and pash-to has reported efshagar.af here:

[youtube.com/watch?v=nYyd9-2v4zw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYyd9-2v4zw)

Local Monitors in Herat stop handover of low -quality canal project

The entire community took a stand against the low quality work of a canal infrastructure construction company in Sarwistan village of Injil district Herat province. There has been no formal project handover and acceptance of project has effectively been stopped.

The Karta canal project, funded by USAID (\$125,560), facilitated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and by Syana Group Construction Company, was undertaken in Sarwistan village of Injil district. Following construction of this project, Local Monitors supported by Integrity Watch Afghanistan and Quality Control engineers identified many shortcomings in the quality of the construction work. These issues were raised with both IOM and the construction company but neither of these organizations were willing to address the identified problems.

All members of Provincial Monitoring Board and Provincial Council who visited the site confirmed the issues which local monitors had



identified and asked the construction company to resolve them but neither the construction company nor IOM considered these issues.

Following many attempts to rectify the canal construction defects, members of the community came to the conclusion that the low quality of construction would not last for a year and would, in the end, be of no benefit to the community.

The construction company, without fixing the problem, planned a formal handover of the project in a

ceremony at which the Governor of Herat Province was expected to be present. The local community, however, prevented this handover by raising their concerns directly with the Governor. As a result they were able to stop the handover of the project which was essentially a failure for the company to betray the people and success for the community to create hopes for fixing the problems in the project.

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