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Demand growing for independent anti-corruption commission with coordination and external oversight role



Anti-corruption workshop participants from government, donors, and civil society

By Habibullah Muqbel

On 24th November 2015, Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) in collaboration with EUPOL organized a workshop to discuss an institutional arrangement to fight corruption with representatives from government, private sector, civil society and media.

In a presentation, Integrity Watch highlighted the ineffectiveness of existing anti-corruption agencies. According to Integrity Watch, the High Office of Oversight does not have a single successful case in seven years while Supreme Audit Office has one successful case per year. And Independent Joint Anti-Corruption, Monitoring and Evaluation Com-

mittee lacks executive power. This is the reason Afghanistan is the third most corrupt country in the world.

Therefore, a strong and effective Anti-Corruption Commission (the Commission) with educative and preventive powers and oversight authority to detective and investigative activities of the police and prosecutors should be established. The President should appoint its five commissioners for fixed term in office.

While majority of the participants agreed the opponents argued that such a proposal is against the Constitution because investigation is the duty of prosecutors or why not use the existing agencies and finally the

donors are not ready to fund the Commission.

In responses, Integrity Watch explained that the government and donors' existing budgets suffice the Commission and emphasized that the current agencies are corrupt and suffers from weak legal framework. Integrity Watch also argued that the Commission will not engage in investigation but 'oversee' corruption cases by police and prosecutors.

Integrity Watch Anti-Corruption Resource Centers

By Khan Zaman Amarkhail

Integrity Watch has established four Resource Centers in Kabul, Nangarhar, Balkh and Herat provinces. The purpose of these centers is to act as platforms for various stakeholders interested in anti-corruption issues. The centers offer all necessary relevant materials and a convenient environment for social activists, students, and government institutions that are interested in

integrity building and corruption control.

By date, Integrity Watch resource centers have a total number of 1472 copies of reading material, a total number of 1576 visitors and 223 members. The reading material includes books, reports, manuals and research papers on the subjects of Anti-corruption, Good Governance, Social Accountability, laws, and other relevant material.



Photo: Yalda Ramin

Integrity Watch Resource Center

Resource Center assistants are available 8 hours/5 working days a week. Visitors and members can benefit from free Internet facility for their research and studies. by Integrity Watch Afghanistan.

Community Based Monitoring of Trials, a paramount necessity in Afghanistan

By Mukhtar Ahmadi

The Community Based Monitoring of Trial Program (CBM-T) is the first program of its kind in Afghanistan, commenced by Integrity Watch Afghanistan. The program aims to increase citizens' participation in Afghan courts and monitor compliance to Afghan procedural laws. The program promotes transparency in judicial decision-making, increases awareness of the official rule of law system, empowers citizens to monitor trials and generate valuable data that can help promote higher integrity in the judiciary.

Haji Mohammad Abdu, member of Parliament and chairman of Justice and Legal Commission of the parliament on a visit to integrity watch office in Mazar-e-sharif said: "attendance of people in monitoring of trials must increase and I believe that integrity watch can help Afghanistan Parliament



Photo: Sayed Jan Muhsini

Haji Abdu during the on Visit From Integrity Watch Mazar

to improve its legislation to facilitate community monitoring of trials.

Moreover, Mukhtar Ahmady, acting provincial coordinator of integrity watch in Mazar-e-sharif said: "Juries of appeal courts with collaboration of local monitors, play an effective role in the implementation of CBM-T program and in holding open court meetings. He added that 30 local monitors in Balkh have worked actively and cooperatively on the improvement of trails

in accordance to official justice. By date they could record 600 judicial meetings in special forms.

Mr Ahmady also mentioned the impact and the positive influence of this program on the practices and attitudes of juries and role of local monitors in decreasing corruption and promoting fight against corruption in Afghanistan.

Nawin Ulya School in Herat equipped with computers with the help of local monitors



Photo: Edriss Seddiqi

Very few schools have computer labs in Herat while there is an increasing demand for it

By Edriss Seddiqi

One of Integrity watch's local monitors, knowing of a shortage of computer equipment at their local school in Herat, explained this to a friend working at the Herat branch of an NGO called Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (CHA). These local monitors in Herat had originally applied to various government bodies, such as the local and Herat branches of the Education department for assistance in sourcing such computer equipment but without any success. The local monitor's friend working for CHA noted that the CHA office in He-

rat would be closing soon and that they might be willing to assist this school by providing their used computer equipment. The local monitors, therefore, officially applied to CHA for assistance if they could contribute some of their computer equipment. CHA responded that they could contribute to the school four desktop computers, two laptop computers, as well as other equipment such as white boards, five stoves and a pavilion for guards. As a result of the initiative shown by these local monitors, the Nawin Ulya School in Engel District of Herat now has com-

puters and other equipment for the students use. The Community Based Monitoring of School (CBM-S) Program was initiated in July 2014 in order to bring more coordination between communities and government departments, increase transparency and accountability, enhance the quality of education services through community monitoring, collaborative information sharing and problem solving. The aim of this program is to make officials more responsive, encourage communities to support education sector and advocate for policy change at local and national levels.

Local Monitors prevent use of low quality building material at a school and a clinic in Jalalabad

By Haneef Hashimi

Community Based Monitoring-infrastructure program promotes social accountability through community mobilization and social audits. The program empowers communities to monitor infrastructure projects that are implemented in their area. The aim of this program is to empower citizens in holding authorities and aid entities accountable and to create active and responsible citizenship by decreasing the gap between the state, aid actors and civil society. Communities engaged in local monitoring can become more autonomous in solving their problems through dialogue with various government and private sector players.

Local Monitors working with Integrity Watch in Jalalabad identified that SCALE STRUCTURE COMPANY, a construction company involved in the construction of a school and a clinic in Jalalabad, was using low quality bricks for both projects. The local monitors requested that they use a better quality of brick, but they refused. After two



Photo: Abdul Wajed Mohmand

Focal Points during the Monitoring of Clinic wall

days the local monitors observed that that the construction company had not stopped using the low quality bricks and they informed Integrity Watch's staff in Jalalabad of their concern. The local monitors also shared this issue with the provincial development board. The provincial development board then ordered the construction company to stop the work and destroy and then re-

build the 21 meter built wall in accordance with a higher standard of brick.

The names of these projects were Nasir Khan and Haji Hussian Both projects were constructed by Scale Structure Company, were funded by Japan and were monitored by UNOPS.

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