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Integrity Watch-ACBAR partnership to build integrity of NGOs in Afghanistan kick starts with a 5-day pilot workshop "AMANATDARI"



Photo: Naseer Aiseen

AMANATDARI joint workshop by Integrity Watch and ACBAR

By Khan Zaman Amarkhial

Amanatdari means integrity – something that NGOs need as much as anybody else in Afghanistan. With growing mistrust of the Afghan public and increasing demands by donors, NGOs face a double challenge of drying up resources and an increasing need for building their capacities to deliver with more integrity. However, Integrity Watch Afghanistan – a specialized Afghan institution in integrity and anti-corruption issues, and Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) – an NGO-umbrella organization pioneering in self-regulation of NGOs in Afghanistan for aid effectiveness have joined forces to turn their double challenge of NGOs into a desirable opportunity. Both Integrity Watch and ACBAR bring over a decade of experience and unique expertise that are required to lay the foundation of a creditable NGO integrity certification process.

After signing a MoU, ACBAR and Integrity Watch Afghanistan launched a series of

training workshops for members of ACBAR with an aim to build integrity (Amanatdari) and fight corruption within the organizations through internal risk assessment in governance, finance, human resources and procurement processes and on overall integrity policies of the organization. Amanatdari workshops will start with the NGOs based in Kabul and will spread to NGOs in the provinces.

The first Amanatdari workshop with 14 representatives of NGOs started on December 21 and was completed on December 29, 2015 in Kabul. In order to make the session practical, a number of specialized and experienced Integrity Watch staff shared their experiences with the participants. With regards to the effectiveness of the workshop, Mr. Sarwary a participant says "these kinds of courses are very useful for maintaining transparency and internal corruption control in the organizations. It should be expanded to a wide range of NGOs". Learning from this pilot phase,

Integrity Watch will improve the training materials further and will organize future trainings in provinces as well.

For improved governance and effective anti-corruption measures within NGOs, a system of granting integrity certificates for NGOs have been discussed with ACBAR and will be developed. This system will create a benchmark for NGOs which are willing to achieve improved integrity and to build integrity-based organizations. The certification process will also create peer-pressure and will encourage NGOs that are not willing to comply with the self-regulatory system for ensuring integrity of NGOs. Overall, the system is intended to create a "race to the top" among NGOs in Afghanistan to achieve integrity compliance. This would hopefully build trust between NGOs and relevant stakeholders including the Afghan public and donor community.

The draft of the national budget-2016 is deficient

On December 05, 2015 Integrity Watch Afghanistan shared the draft of the National Budget-2016 with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and authorities in a press conference. The panel included Shinkai Karokhail (Member of Parliament), Edress Omarzad (Executive director of EPD) and Sayed Mohamad Hashimi (Member of Provincial Assembly).

The draft of the national budget-2016 which is still at the Parliament for approval is very weak in terms of planning, budgeting, and transparency. The draft lacks international standards, good practices and transparency in terms of revenue generation and allocation. The budget draft does not present sources of revenue estimates by individuals or categories for 2016 to ensure the reliability of the budget. Additionally, the budget allocated some of the government's unspecified programs in which details about projects and programs' budgeting are missing.

Sayed Ikram Afzali, Executive Director of Integrity Watch said: "findings show that the draft of the National Budget 2016 is deficient" and hence, asks the Parliament to suggest to the government essential recommendations in consultation with CSOs. He added: "Until the budget does not respond to citizens' priorities, its execution could not change citizens' lives. So, the government should follow the short-term and long-term recommendations in order to im-



Press conference on National budget-2016

prove the planning, budgeting, execution and transparency in the budget processes in Afghanistan".

Some of the short-term recommendations that were suggested by Samirullah Popalzai, Budget Consultant of Integrity Watch Afghanistan were, budget allocation should include details for projects and programs which should be based on the economic and development outcome measures and specific sources of the budget revenues by categories should be specified.

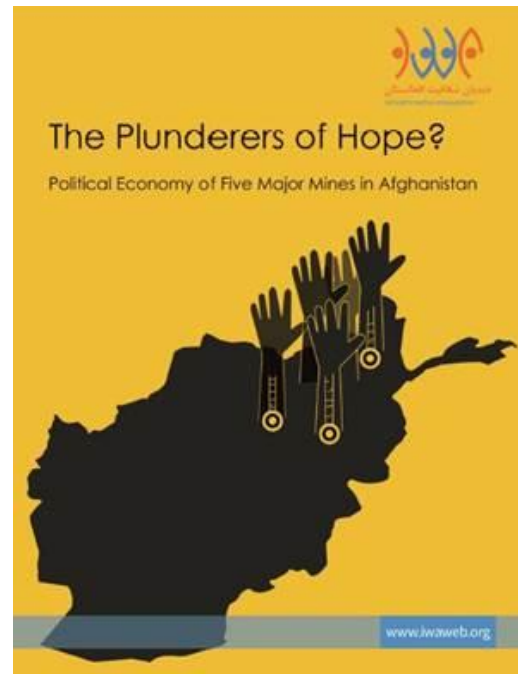
Among the long-term recommendations were 1) the Government should establish a measurable National Development Strategy Plan, implement international standard mechanisms and should conduct research about citizens' priorities on a timely basis to ensure the budget allocation re-

sponds to the need to reduce poverty and to provide employment opportunities. 2) Roles of the stakeholders should be specified and the provincial councils should have full authority and responsibility for planning, budgeting and implementation 3) CSOs, media, and citizens should have roles in the consultation and oversight of budget processes. In addition, CSOs should be invited to the Parliament for budget consultation and approval

Afghan Mines at high risk of political capture

On December 15, 2015, Integrity Watch published a research report under the name of Plunderers of Hope in a press conference. The research conducted by Integrity Watch Afghanistan on five major mining operations contracted to various Afghan companies by the Government of Afghanistan, through the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum. It has highlighted a number of major concerns regarding the process by which such contracts are awarded, the manner in which such concessions are monitored and the probable loss of a substantial amount of revenue which should have, but has not, accrued to the Government.

Sayed Ikram Afzali, Executive Director of Integrity Watch said: “The report shows the mining sector is at risk; being captured by a small, politically-influential elite who control a significant proportion of the mining activities in the country, both so-called “legal” mining operations (concessions awarded by the Ministry of Mining and Petroleum) and illegal mining operations. Legal and illegal mining operations costs the Afghan people billions of Afghanis of revenue every year. While the vast majority of mining operations in the country are illegal, with no control being exercised over such operations by the Afghan Government, even those mines which are awarded concessions by the Afghan Government (so-called “legal mining” operations) are providing little revenue due to inadequate oversight or regulatory supervision by the Ministry of Mining and Petroleum”. He also added: “The exploita-



tion of such resources represents an opportunity for the Government to generate substantial revenue to fund the country’s annual budget and to enhance the development of the country’s infrastructure. Development of the mining sector also represents an opportunity to provide employment opportunities and skills training for a large number of people in the country.

Ghulam Sakhi Dehlawi, a member of Mining Watch Afghanistan added, suggesting integrity in the mining sector: “The MoMP needs to amend the Mineral Law which is weak and does not have the provisions necessary to guard against corruption. Civil society should be consulted and their recommendations should be taken into consideration”. He also stated: “It should be mandatory for bidders to disclose the beneficial ownership of each company tendering for a concession, as well as all of its share-

holders. This is essential to avoid hidden owners, shareholders or beneficiaries, including senior government officials and members holding political leadership positions”. The short-listing process, bid evaluation process and negotiations should be carried out by a team of experts with clear benchmarks and accountability, immune to political interference.

The MoMP should, in consultation with international experts and representative of civil society, prepare model contracts which should be applied on a consistent and uniform basis to all new concession awards. Moreover, the MoF and MoMP should work on developing a mechanism to project the revenue expected from each mine (according to the contract provisions) and monitor actual collection of revenue.

Local Monitors succeeded in raising the wall and installing a gate in Abdul Raqeb High school of Kapisa!

By Mashal Afrooz

Students of Abdul Raqib High School in Kohestan district of Kapisa province were concerned about the low height of their school wall and absence of a school gate.

The school department many times, requested Head of Education in Kapisa to assist the school in this regard but they couldn't get any response due to lack of budget.

Haji Shersha, one of the local monitors in the school held a session with all board members for raising the wall and installation of the gate. Consequently, all board members agreed that they must have a meeting with



Photo: Mukhtar ahmady

The school wall and Gate after rehabilitation

Pamlarna that had good background in coordinating with schools.

Following the session of the board members, four members of the board along with local monitors had a meeting with Pamlarana Or-

ganization in which they received their agreement for solving this problem.

As a result, representatives of Shura and representatives of Pamlarana got the agreement of Head of Education in Kapsia and thus, it was decided to start the work of raising the wall and installation of the school gate. Overall, the implementation of the work took one month and ended successfully.

Local Monitors, prevented usage of low quality construction material in Mashe village of Mazar Sharif

By Sayed Mukhtar Ahmady

Dehdade district is one of the secure districts in Balkh province and is located few Kilometers from Mazar Sharif city.

The Advocacy of local monitors in Mashi village of Dehdade district resulted in finding out about a road in Mashi village of Dehdade district. The road is 6 meters width in which a bridge has been constructed. The construction material had big and rough stones and was of a very low quality. The awareness of the people and their role in the monitoring process has been very effective in the control of quality and corruption of the projects that are implemented in their village.

The stone-pavement of the mentioned road of Mashe village was started in July 2015 and Integrity Watch Afghanistan took the responsibility of the monitoring process of the project with the agreement of the of the village's Shura council. The width of the road which was not standard, presence of big stones instead of



Photo: Mukhtar Ahmady

Road reconstruction of Mashi village in Mazar Sharif

small stones, the poor quality of filling, the use of low quality of stones with mud and absence of a bridge were some of the major issues in the construction.

The local monitors were able to share the problems that existed with the Monitoring Board and thus they were able to take measures and

replace the poor quality material with high quality ones. Furthermore, Integrity Watch has provided technical trainings to the local monitors and took active and effective lead in the monitoring and reporting process of the project.

Integrity Watch Employees won the 2015 Integrity Prize

By **Aliahmad Mashal Afrooz**

The Anti-Corruption Network that is a member of the Coordination Center of Civil Society appreciated provincial members of Integrity Watch in Kapisa by giving them certificates in an event that was chaired by the Ministry of Information and Culture hall on 9th December, Anti-Corruption Day. The event was held to acknowledge the progress in the fields of legal trainings, legal outreach for council members in regards to implementation of civil and penal law and standard justice trials. At the same time, it was believed that this will increase people's trust in official justice, transparency of trials, attendance in public sessions and sharing of Local monitors' observations with related

offices.

The participants of the program were, inter alia, Executive Director of Integrity Watch Afghanistan, Government officials, Members of Parliament, Civil Society and Media.



Certificate given to Integrity Watch team in Kapisa

Local Monitors, succeeded in installing a stone-pavement in Herawi High school of Herat with the coordination of the residents of that area.

By **Aziza Rahimi**

All pavements of Herawi School that were concreted in past years were destroyed and many students had a hard time walking around the school premises. The problem was identified by a local monitor, the Principal of the school and members of the Development Board.

After the identification of the problem, a meeting was held with students' parents, Development Board members, local monitors and the Head of the school in which problems were shared with all the attendees. Sayed Nematullah, Deputy of the Development Board proposed stone-pavement at the school and all attendees welcomed the proposition. As a result of negotiations, many residents volunteered and contacted students offering participation and cooperation in the paving process.

Thus, there was no need for any other donor.

Fortunately, with everyone's cooperation and under the supervision of Sayed Nematullah, the work successfully came to an end after 4 months with a total cost of 500,000 Afghani.

Now, the students enjoy a good view of their school and are comfortable walking around the premises. They are also more interested in attending school than previously.

Akbare, one of the residents said: "Previously, when the school court was in poor condition, students used to face a lot of troubles especially in winter season, they used to get fractures on their legs and hands. Due to the same reason, the school used to be off on rainy days".



Photo: Aziza Rahimi

Stone-Pavement of Herawi high school in Herat

Community Based Monitoring of Trials played a major role in increasing legal awareness of women in remote villages of Bamyan.

By Mohammad Hakim Jawid

Community Monitoring of Trials and attendance of people in the judicial sessions is a good practice for preventing corruption and for increasing legal awareness of women in villages.

Najiba resident of Gawhargen village said: "I had inheritance and land case. I filed my case on my own and I did not have a defense lawyer. I knew I could legally hire a defense lawyer had I had the affordability. I had no one from my near relatives who had enough knowledge and capability to help me with my case. I took with me all my witnesses to the court and proved my claim. On the final day of verdict, there were other visitors from the public present as well. Upon asking who they were, I was told that it was an open court hearing day and that's why they were present. The attendees were from the general public who were brought into the open trial by Integrity Watch to ensure corruption free trials. The verdict was made in my favor and thus I was able to get my right.

Nafisa another women from the same village said: "People of villages are deprived of facilities and they did not have any legal awareness previously. Integrity Watch has played a major role in this regard. It was through their trainings and their newsletters that we could get a great deal of information about the government and trials. We are grateful to Integrity Watch for its Community Based Monitoring of Trials".

Gawhargen Village of Yakawlang district in



Participants during the legal training in Bamyan

Photo: Amin Alipoor

Bamyan is under coverage of Integrity Watch's Community Based Monitoring of Trials program. Books of Islam and Anti-corruption and Monthly Newsletters of Integrity Watch has been distributed to the people of Bamyan district along with conducting legal trainings for men and women. This program has played an effective role in the corruption control in courts and reduced corruption to a considerable amount.

Mining Watch Afghanistan Network calls for serious amendments in the mineral law to ensure transparency in the sector



Photo: Naseer Aileen

Mining Watch Afghanistan meeting with MoMP regarding mine sector in Afghanistan

On December 29, members of the Mining Watch Afghanistan network met with Minister of Mines and Petroleum and presented him a set of recommendations for amendment of the mining law. Member of the network urged Minister Saba to consider recommendations made by the civil society while amending the mineral law. The set of recommendations include:

- Make contract publication a condition for validity
- Require publication of project-level production and payment data
- Require publication of beneficial ownership
- Strengthen rules for a transparent and fair bidding process
- Create a single and transparent account for all natural resource payments
- Require the use of model contracts
- Enable community monitoring and require fair mechanisms for dispute resolution
- Ensure communities receive an equitable ben-

efit from mining and their rights are respected

In response to a request from civil society by President Ghani, Mining Watch Afghanistan as an active network of civil society working on mining issues, proposed a set of specific amendments that could address some of the most serious flaws in the existing mining law. In collaboration with a broad group of high-level Afghan and international experts, including Columbia University and Radon Law, the network has developed legal language which it believes will greatly strengthen the Law, increase the attractiveness of the mining sector to legitimate investors, and boost government revenues. The network has aimed to make these proposals as simple as possible to implement, and to avoid complex mechanisms that would require major increases

in the capacity of relevant ministries.

Instead of bringing benefit to the country, right now Afghanistan's mines are a major source of conflict and corruption, and a benefit to armed groups who carry out horrific violence on the Afghan people rather than supporting development and contributing to government's income. In these circumstances the members of Mining Watch Afghanistan network are extremely concerned that the Mining Law is missing the basic protections which should be Afghanistan's first line of defense. The network believes that addressing civil society concerns in the mineral law would help the government translate the commitments it has made to fight corruption and safeguard the natural resources which are the birth right of all Afghans.

I am committed to Transparency + Accountability – Corruption = Integrity

By Nesar Ahmad Anwari

This year Integrity watch Afghanistan celebrated the International Anti-Corruption day on December 9th 2015 by posting banners and asking people to sign a pledge to fight corruption and express their commitment to transparency, accountability and integrity for the forthcoming year 2016 in Kabul, Balkh, Jalalabad, Kapisa, Kunduz and Herat Provinces. Taking its campaign message and mission to the streets and among ordinary passersby, Integrity Watch aimed to create an opportunity for people to discuss the problem that has dominated the lives of Afghan citizens. The event was well received in all the spots the banners had been set up and people got engaged in conversations about corruption and its impact on their daily lives.

“Transparency is the core value of honesty and humanity!”, “Corruption denies peoples access to social services, let’s eradicate it! All of us have a



Photo: Mukhtar Ahmady

Female participant writing her pledge against corruption in Mazar sharif

role to PLAY”, “فساد د اسلام او قانون خلاف عمل دی”, “ما به شفافیت و حسابدهی Every individual is accountable towards this country” and “Elimination of corruption - the only way we can secure Afghanistan’s stability and prosperity” were among the hundreds of the messages people wrote when they signed the pledges. The initiative was warmly welcomed in all the mentioned

provinces by youths, scholars, university students, public and particularly women, who participated in the signing process in large numbers.

Contact us: info@iwaweb.org | www.iwaweb.org | +93(0)780942942

Follow



Main Office

House 942 , District 4
Street, Traffic Square
Kolola Poshta,
Kabul, Afghanistan
+93(0)780942942

Herat Office

Ibnaseena Road,
Street 18
Herat City,
Afghanistan
+93(0)700285401

Mazar Office

Moheb Square, Behind
Merza Hashem mosque,
Mazar-e-Sharif,
Afghanistan
+93(0)790530366

Bamyan Office

Center of Bamyan, Main
Bazaar, Opp. Pakiza Ho-
tel, Bamyan,
Afghanistan
+93(0)799440327

Jalalabad Office

District 2, Sayed Kaihan
shops, nearby 39th pow-
er station , Jalalabad
Afghanistan
+93 (0) 782069644