Kapisa Appellate Court has recently started to hold regular open sessions in its public courtroom. Until recently most of sessions, however, were held in the judges’ offices because the courtroom facilities were not equipped and therefore citizens could not attend court sessions. The root of the issue was that the design of the construction of the courtroom involved only a hall. The court officials explained that although the courtroom had been constructed, it lacked a private room for judges to make a decision upon hearing the trial parties.

Since citizen volunteers monitor primary courts in the same province, the issues were raised with the chief of the appeal court. Following requests by the citizen volunteers, the appeal court officials raised the issue with the Supreme Court officials and as a result received the necessary resources to construct a room for judges adjacent to the courtroom. Now, citizens volunteers including university students can attend and observe these open court sessions.
The Constitution of Afghanistan obliges all courts to make their proceedings open and accessible to citizens. Community-Based Monitoring of Trials (CBM-T) program of Integrity Watch has been working with local communities and courts in Kapisa province to promote holding open trials in public courtrooms since 2011. The program has covered 117 cases in Kapisa in 2018.

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Communities hold health service providers accountable in Kabul

*Pashtoon Nahzatyar, Integrity Watch Afghanistan*

On August 8\(^{th}\) 2019, representatives of several communities met with officials from Kabul public health department, Sanayee Development Organization as the implementing agency, and representatives of civil society at Kabul public health department and presented health care-related problems found during Community Based Monitoring of Health Centers (CBM-H).

Speaking on the performance regarding health care, head of Kabul public health, Dr. Abdul Wakeel Ahmadi acknowledged the department's failure to fix construction problems in Kamari, Bagrami, Dekow and a number of other health centers and to repair and paint other health centers due to lack of O&M budget.
Another problem raised was lack of payment for transportation of professional and non-professional staff members of health centers. Mr. Ahmadi mentioned that the payments have been finalized and AFN 23 million (around US$300K) have been allotted. He promised that the payment of personnel shall be made soon.

Mr. Ahmadi also reported other actions taken to address issues such as timely distribution of hygiene material to health centers and filling the position of head of a clinic that was vacant for a long time. He responded to community representatives request to facilitate monitoring of health centers and promised that Sanayee Development Organization will prepare and distribute ID cards to all members of health centers’ councils to ensure their smooth monitoring of health centers.

The CBM-H program of Integrity Watch was initiated in 2018 and has so far covered 30 health centers in Kabul. The program was expanded to 3 more provinces (Kapisa, Herat, and Nangarhar) this year. The program now covers 51 health centers in total.

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Students and communities fix School issues after years of failure by the Government

Pashtoon Nahzatyar, Integrity Watch Afghanistan
In April 2019, the Integrity Committee, a platform of a dozen of volunteer students and teachers organized by Integrity Watch in Oryakhel High School reached out to the Hope Foundation and started to fix some of the basic problems in the school. The Hope Foundation purchased a water storage tank, a water pump, and a 140-meter water pipe to help provide a water supply. The Committee also reached out to the communities in the school neighborhood to donate old school books which were distributed to the students. Furthermore, the Committee collected donations out of which three classrooms were painted and one classroom got curtains to prevent sunshine. In addition, sockets and switchboards for some classrooms were fitted.

*Integrity Watch Afghanistan’s Executive Director visited the school in 2019*
Oryakhel High School in Paghman District is adjacent to Kabul City. The school has 1200 students and was established in March 2006. In spite of its being a few kilometers from the Ministry of Education, the school lacks all the basic necessities of an educational center. It faces several issues including a lack of female teachers, a shortage of student books, classrooms with basic facilities as well as a lack of water supply and adequate space for sports. The Integrity Committee of the school mobilized resources on its own to address some of the mentioned problems. The Committee also includes a dozen female students who have started to work on green space for the school.

Civil society volunteers to carry out social audit of schools in Bamyan

Rasool Ehsany, Integrity Watch Afghanistan

The Provincial Integrity Network (PIN) members of Bamyan province conducted its monthly meeting in the Civil Society and Human Rights Network to discussed holding government performant accountable performance of education service delivery. As a result, it was decided to carry out a social audit of Bamyan High school since the PIN members received many public complaints about the school services. The challenges included absenteeism and shortage of teachers, absenteeism of students and general lack of quality of teaching in the school.

Social audit is a method to measure and verify performance by reviewing official records such as contract documents and actual performance on the ground. Results and findings are used to advocate for improving the
government’s performance. The social audit process also involves engaging with a number of stakeholders to promote accountability to the public. Integrity Watch has held trainings on social audit for the PINs in several provinces and has organized social audit educational visits for the networks to Sri Lanka and the Philippines in August 2017 and June 2018 respectively.

Provincial Integrity Networks are voluntary platforms of civil society activists to promote transparency, accountability, and integrity at local level. Integrity Watch organized the creation of these platforms in Nangarhar, Herat, Balkh, Parwan, Kapisa, Bamyan, and Kabul in early 2015 as knowledge sharing platforms. The networks have grown significantly in strength and mandate and have independently taken initiatives such as conducting social audits, and where needed, Integrity Watch has facilitated their operations. The networks comprise of 20-30 advocates divided into several specialized committees including access to information, public complaints, and social audit.

Lack of O&M budget cause low quality of education despite community contribution

The Integrity Committee in Ferdawsi High School within a short period of time from setting themselves up, was able to collect donations from students and teachers in this school and repair the broken chairs and desks. The Club was also able to renovate two classrooms. The Integrity Committee’s priority this summer was to purchase ceiling fans for the classrooms.

Students in Ferdawsi High School, have great ambitions, like many other
schools covered by Community-Based Monitoring of Schools (CBM-S) program of Integrity watch, to improve their school but available resources do not match the needs. On August 27, 2019 Integrity Watch Executive Director, Sayed Ikram Afzali, met with the Dr. Mohammad Mirwais Balkhi, Minister of Education to discuss the O&M budget for schools. Minister Balkhi promised to do joint advocacy with Integrity Watch to include O&M budget for schools in the National Budget in the coming years.

Integrity Watch Afghanistan works with the stakeholders in the education sector including the Ministry of Education to allocate minimum operation and maintenance resources for the schools. Integrity Watch facilitates creation and development of the Integrity Committees to help find solutions to the school’s problems. The Integrity Committee of Ferdawsi High School is one of 30 such Integrity Committees which have been organized by Integrity Watch in Balkh province. The Committees try to resolve the problems through resources available at school and their communities.