Spotlight

Taking Afghanistan out of the ruins: Building trust in states institutions

Civil society activists and journalists conducting social audit of Kapisa Provincial Hospital

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Marathon efforts were made after the 2001 US invasion of Afghanistan to rebuild the Afghan state. However, most of these efforts, even though well-intentioned, did not go very far in rebuilding the state and citizens’ trust in state institutions in the war-torn country. In fact, many of the efforts were counterproductive and this in turn led to the prevalence of conflict, corruption and a culture of impunity. The 2018 National Corruption Survey findings showed that 73% of the people do not trust local public services and that “there is a strong sense [among citizens] that people in government, NGOs and international organizations are only out to benefit themselves.” A low turn-out in the recent elections is another indication of the trust deficit. Therefore, it is critical to understand rebuilding state intuitions from a trust-building perspective.
What is trust? Trust, at an interpersonal level, is a belief in the intentions or skills of someone in your personal network. Social trust is a belief in strangers, in the reliability and integrity of another person that we do not know – a “faith in people.” Political trust is trust in political institutions. Lack of or low level of trust can have many negative consequences for a society, such as decreasing human happiness, degradation of stability and the breaking out of conflict. It can also lead to a prevalence of corruption and injustice.

One of the underlying causes of conflict breaking out in a society is where there is a low level of trust– stability. Prosperity cannot be realized in a society where people feel they are being cheated or treated unfairly. In contrast, states which have been able to preserve stability for a long time, such as Sweden, have a high level of trust.

Integrity Watch Commemorates International Anti-Corruption Day in Kabul

 Integrity Watch organized a Conference on “The Role of Independent Institution in the Fight against Corruption” on the occasion of International Anti-Corruption Day at Government Media & Information Center (GMIC), Kabul on December 9th, 2019.
More than two hundred representatives from civil society, government, media, international community, and members of academia attended the event.

Mr. Sayed Ikram Afzali, Executive Director of Integrity Watch in his opening remarks, emphasized the need for the establishment of an Independent Anti-Corruption Commission to fight the widespread corruption much more effectively, he said, “In the last 18 years, despite the International Community providing hundreds of billions of financial assistance to Afghanistan, poverty levels are still climbing, economic growth is at a standstill, the security situation is deteriorating and the illicit drugs’ business is growing. In general, the stability of Afghanistan is seriously threatened by corruption.” Mr. Afzali concluded that, “The Anti-Corruption Law and Strategy still remains on paper only. Lack of implementation is largely due either to a lack of independent institutions or the weakness of the existing institutions.”

His Excellency Sarwar Danish, Vice President of Afghanistan thanked Integrity Watch and Mr. Afzali for their efforts in the fight against corruption. He emphasized that to succeed in the struggle against corruption, there is the need for the registering and monitoring of the assets of government dignitaries and officials prior to and after they take office. He said that the culture of controlling the assets of government officials was an important part of the Islamic governance culture which we should revive. He also emphasized that an independent agency is important part of the fight against corruption. Read more...

Integrity Watch Afghanistan Conducts Access to Information and Social Audit Trainings in Five Provinces
Integrity Watch facilitated access to information and social audit trainings in Kapisa, Kandahar, Nangarhar, Balkh and Herat provinces in November and December 2019. The purpose of the trainings was to build demand for access to information and to raise the awareness of the participants about the Access to Information Law and its application. Participants were also trained on how to use the information obtained for conducting social audit and community-based monitoring, for investigative journalism and for examining the public expenditure. Access to information can also be used as a data collection tool in research. The participants in these trainings included more than two hundred journalists, government employees and civil society activists—half of them female.

The training sessions included a role play which illustrated the different stages of the access to information process, such as how to file a complaint with the Access to Information Commission and how these complaints are addressed by the Commission, how the information sought is provided by the information officer and how advocacy for implementation of the provisions of the access to information law by an applicant is being conducted by Integrity Watch. After the conclusion of the access to information training, Integrity Watch organized a practical session to conduct social audit of a local hospital’s administration units, surgery rooms, X Ray Labs, Pharmacies, Patients’ beds, etc., in accordance with the checklist and questionnaires which were prepared in advance based on the Ministry of the Health’s policy and procedures.

Initial findings of the social audit sessions found that there was lack of facilities for female staff and a lack of filing system. It was also found that medicines were not provided to the patients and as a result they had to purchase the medicine themselves. The participants also discovered there was no policy for the fair distribution of medicines to patients, there was a lack of beds for patients as in some cases two or three patients shared a single bed and there was a lack of an information officer for referrals. In addition, the newly trained social auditors found that patients were treated inappropriately and the hospital reception and cleanliness were poorly managed.

The Provincial Integrity Networks in Kapisa, Nangarhar, Kabul, Herat and Balkh are currently working on the social audit findings report. They will share their findings with the relevant authorities formally and will follow this by holding advocacy meetings to monitor the progress of fixing the highlighted issues in the hospitals.
Anti-Corruption Day in Balkh

By: Wahidullah Azizi, Integrity Watch Afghanistan

Integrity Watch celebrated the International Anti-corruption Day in Mazar-e-Sharif on Monday 9th December with a conference involving representatives of civil society organizations, journalists, teachers, integrity volunteers and government officials.

Mr. Aziz Mubariz, Provincial Coordinator of Integrity Watch welcomed the guests and called on all citizens to take a stand against corruption. Mr. Ahmad Bashir Tawhidi, Deputy Governor of Balkh Province, termed the conference an opportunity to hear from the people about the issues of corruption. He said that participation of citizens in the fight against corruption was essential to bring about good governance.

Abdul Hamid Safwat, Head of the Civil Society Organizations Union in Balkh Province highlighted the importance of recommendations proposed by civil society in order to reduce corruption. Representative of the Independent Administrative Reforms and Civil Services Commission (IARCSC), Mr Ahmad Zaki thanked Integrity Watch for organizing the conference. He said that the recommendations of the participants of the conference would help his office to fight corruption and ensure integrity in the exams processes for appointments of government employees.

Integrity Watch Organizes an International Anti-Corruption Day Conference in Nangarhar
Integrity Watch organized a conference of people and government officials in Nangarhar on 11 December 2019 to celebrate International Anti-Corruption Day.

Mr. Mohammad Salihi, Integrity Watch Provincial Coordinator for Nangarhar stated that the United Nations has celebrated International Anti-Corruption Day every year since 2003. Referring to this event, he said, “The fight against corruption was an obligation of all Afghans. I invite everyone to join forces to fight corruption and play their part to allow us wipe out the existing evil culture of corruption.” He added that Integrity Watch has been facilitating community monitoring of public services in Nangarhar to prevent corruption for the last decade.

Mr. Shahmahmood Miakhel, Governor of Nangarhar, thanked Integrity Watch for celebrating the International Anti-Corruption Day. He said, “Corruption leaves negative effects on security, governance and development. Therefore, all sections of society should fulfill their obligations in the fight against corruption.” Addressing government departments, he said, “For the purpose of achieving transparency, government departments should inform the public about their activities on a regular and timely basis.”

Mr. Abaseen, Member of Nangarhar Integrity Network, said, “We are committed to raise public awareness about corruption and to help them first recognize what they can do themselves and then work to prevent corruption”. Mr. Asadullah Khaliz, another member of the Nangarhar Integrity Network demanded promise from the participants never to pay a bribe.