

Integrity Watch Afghanistan's March Newsletter



He Roza Otunbayeva, President of the Kyrgyz Republic together with Peter Eigen, the Chair of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, in Paris.

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Highlights:

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EITI Global Conference in Paris

The Global Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) Conference was held this year in Paris. The conference brought heads of states, government leaders, private companies and civil society together to discuss the improvements that need to take place in each country to shape the future of EITI.

As each country accounted for their efforts, it was clear that African countries are at the forefront of this

initiative. Afghanistan was represented by the Minister of Mines and the Minister of Finance who highlighted Afghanistan's commitment to EITI and their effort in bringing more transparency on national revenues.

Integrity Watch Afghanistan suggested at the conference to expand adherence to the Equator Principles and to the Natural Resource Charter in order to improve Afghanistan's accountability.

"The government needs to provide better schools rather than force people to private schools"

Community Member,
Jalalabad City, Nangahar
Province

Strengthening Sub-national Accountability

In Herat, IWA's Provincial Monitoring Board that consists of government officials, community members, implementers and media, had their first year visit to IWA's monitored projects. Government officials at the board come from various departments, including economy, education, public health, rural rehabilitation and development, and public works.

Through this board, the government has agreed to provide all information

available on the projects monitored by the local communities. It has also agreed to try to solve identified problems together with the communities.

The increased empowerment of local communities and the Herat governor's interest in creating space for civil interaction is reducing the gap between citizens and government, and builds bridges to strengthen the government's accountability.



Empowerment of Local monitors



Corruption and Security in Monterey



Building Integrity Conference in Monterey, US

IWA participated in the Building Integrity Conference that was organized by NATO and the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. The focus of the conference was on Afghanistan and signals some elements of hope for the work of integrity we do in the country.

Within NATO there is now a clear understanding that the promotion of integrity is essential to battle corruption. Moreover, the defence sector, traditionally one of the least open and accessible sectors, is now becoming more transparent. Many civil society organisations, including the UK chapter of Transparency International, are working to

improve the defence sector's transparency. NATO is currently also promoting integrity amongst the Afghan ministries of Defence and Interior.

Transparency International has a promising Building Integrity Initiative in Afghanistan that provides training on integrity issues to high officials from security institutions. It also has an integrity self-assessment survey which increases the participation and input from government officials and allows frank discussions challenging the defence sector. This initiative will particularly open some windows of opportunity for Afghan civil society to work closely with security institutions.



Transparency in Reintegration

The government of Afghanistan presented its Peace and Reintegration Plan to the Afghan Civil Society this month. It was the first time the Afghan civil society has been consulted and had the opportunity to discuss a joint future with former members of the armed groups. Several issues regarding justice and amnesty were at the heart of many people, however Integrity Watch Afghanistan is advocating to also focus on the transparency of the process in order to assure civil understanding and appease mistrust.

IWA feels that it is essential to assure social understanding of the process in order to avoid feelings of discrimination, unfairness, and abuse of power and resources. It is important that the hosting and surrounding communities are aware and can contribute to the implementation of the plan in order to assure that the allocated resources are contributing optimally to community development.

IWA will be writing a White Paper on Transparency Recommendation for the implementation of the Peace and Reintegration Plan in May.



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Transparency in PRTs?

Integrity Watch Afghanistan has been discussing community access to PRT development projects in Balkh, Herat, Nangahar and Parwan. Although progress has been seen in the north and west of the country, transparency levels in the centre and east remain a challenge.

IWA is advocating to the US Embassy and the PRTs to collaborate with local communities to increase implementer's accountability and assure sustainable development projects.

Capacity Building of Communities

IWA's Community Based Monitoring pillar continues its expansion and will be covering fifty communities towards the end of March. Integrity Watch Afghanistan will be training approximately 100 community members in basic engineering standards that will help them monitor and assess whether reconstruction projects are built responsibly and of good quality.

The training will also entail integrity promotion, anti-corruption and active citizenship in order to encourage local communities to fight corruption in their everyday life.

Anti-Corruption in Afghan Schools

Afghanistan is considered one of the most corrupt countries in the world and although the Afghan government has shown some initial steps in fighting corruption, the responsibility does not only lie with the state but also with the people.

Integrity Watch Afghanistan strongly feels that awareness on anti-corruption should be strengthened amongst the new generation in order to give them a voice to fight for a better Afghanistan. IWA is therefore working with Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission to include anti-corruption elements in the national educational curriculum for year 1 to 12.

Voices from the Field: Nangahar Province

Integrity Watch Afghanistan works with local communities in Nangahar province to monitor reconstruction projects. Amongst these communities, Area Development Council (ADC) 4 told IWA how they felt about implementing NSP and UN-Habitat projects. They said that because they were capable of having access to all documents, proposal included, that they were able to have a better oversight. As the head of the council

expressed "The government doesn't listen to our problems. Even PRT projects go through the government and after all these years we still do not have electricity, road or water drainage".

ADC 4 wants to be more active in taking ownership of developing their own communities but feel it is difficult with the resources they have. "We need to develop the capacities of the shuras. If we can have the documentation for the development projects, we could make sure that the company delivers what is promised. If

the donors dealt more directly with the communities we could make sure that the projects were delivered on time and reduce corruption".

Community empowerment is important to keep powerbrokers in check and assure that resources are distributed fairly, timely and equally amongst those that need it the most.