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Corruption in Afghanistan puts Population and State at Risk

Kabul, Afghanistan, 20 March 2007 — The level of corruption in Afghanistan has risen to the point where it is increasingly posing a threat to the stability of the state, according to a survey of Afghan perceptions of corruption launched today by Integrity Watch Afghanistan, a local Afghan NGO committed to promoting transparency, integrity, and accountability. This corruption survey is one of the largest conducted in Afghanistan to date.

The survey, conducted across a diverse range of provinces (13 out of 36), reports that corruption has embedded in almost every aspect of the government, and that Afghans perceive corruption to be most severe in the very sectors which are often supposed to defend them, such as the judicial system and the interior ministry. While it is widely acknowledged that corruption is a large problem facing Afghanistan, IWA's new survey addresses this problem in facts and figures, highlighting its mechanisms and impacts.

When asked directly about the impact of corruption on security, respondents widely believed corruption contributes to un-security. Interestingly this is felt most strongly in the war-torn southern provinces, suggesting corruption is an integral factor in the Taliban threat. Other institutions closely linked to security also fared badly when Afghans were asked about which sector was the most corrupt. In terms of institutions, Afghanistan's court system is believed to house the most corruption, followed by the ministry of the interior.

Civil servants are enabled to demand and take bribes because there is little or no accountability for doing so. In fact, almost the same number of people (about 35%) went so far as to say civil servants are protected. This amounts to the belief that not only does the government not do enough to tackle the phenomenon, but that it tacitly encourages corruption.

Also alarming is that Afghans believe that corruption is much higher now than under previous regimes. With 60 percent of the population perceiving it as the most corrupt regime, the current administration ranked almost 50 percentage points above any previous regime. Many Afghans now think that the nature of corruption has changed with money playing the most significant role for the first time in the country's history.

Over half of Afghans feel that corruption contributes to disaffection towards the state and increases the sense of injustice and inequality. Most also think that this spills over into decreased state legitimacy and also reflects badly on the state's international backers. Additionally, half of all public services are thought to require bribes. Corruption impacts the majority of Afghan households.

When coupled with the frequency and the average amount that respondents said they usually pay for bribes, IWA estimated that petty corruption absorbs between \$180 and \$460 million in 2006.

Notes to Editors

About the project

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The survey was conducted because of the lack of empirical data regarding corruption in order to:

- Build an anti-corruption strategy for donors and the state.
- Understand the extent of the phenomenon.
- Define new solutions to fight corruption.
- Constitute a baseline to measure the impact of the implemented policies

The survey was conducted across 13 provinces and comprised 1,250 persons.

The sample took it account:

- The ethnic balance
- The gender balance
- Age (respondent had to be over 18 years in age).
- The urban-rural divide, with respondent being asked whether their living environment was urban, semi-urban, or rural.
- The occupation of the respondent, with a significant number of civil servants included therein.

The survey took place in August and September of 2006.

The Questionnaire was composed of 90 questions which looked at both the corruption perceptions and experiences of respondents.

About IWA

IWA strives to increase transparency, integrity, and accountability in Afghanistan through policy-oriented research, the development of training tools, and the facilitation of policy dialogue. IWA consists of a highly talented team consisting mostly of Afghan researchers with the addition of culturally literate internationals. In addition to promoting transparency, integrity, and accountability, IWA strives to lead by example and enact these same virtues within its own organisation. For more details and information, please see our internet site at www.iwaweb.org.

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