

Rampant Corruption ignites conflict and hampers state legitimacy

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Integrity Watch Afghanistan, an anti-corruption watchdog, launches its National Corruption Survey 2010 and calls all policy makers before the Kabul Conference to increase citizens' role and participation in fighting corruption in the police, justice, health and education sectors. The findings from the survey show that bribery has doubled since 2007 and puts the financial burden on the GDP close to one billion USD. Approximately 1,677,000 adults, or one in seven adults, experience direct bribery in Afghanistan. The survey shows that the exclusion of citizens from public services, creation of conflict and erosion of state legitimacy, are the main consequences of corruption.

72% of Afghans consider the public sphere to be the most corrupt sector and two thirds of respondents stated that their household was deprived of at least one public service due to corruption. 72% of people who paid bribes indicated that they were certain of receiving the public service they had 'paid' for, indicating that corruption is institutionalised.

Although the police, courts and administrative services demand the highest number of bribes, the sectors which require the biggest bribes, with an average bribe size of 180 USD, are education and health. Moreover, the survey shows that the highest corruption burden is carried by the poorest, mainly in rural areas, indicating a threat to the poverty reduction efforts.

Corruption is a source of conflict. 50% of survey respondents consider that corruption fosters the expansion of the Taliban and one third reported it to cause conflict at local level, mainly related to land issues. Moreover, 31% use ethnic polarisation in order to access public services, thus generating social exclusion. Respondents' experiences show that state's legitimacy is further threatened by empowered non-state actors who are frequently consulted in dispute resolutions as state institutions are unable to address grievances due to corruption.

Policy makers are therefore called to address the below recommendation in order to increase transparency, integrity and accountability in the Afghan State:

- To pass an Access of Information Act to grant citizens their constitutional right to information and to ensure that each department displays and makes accessible to public service users the procedures and timeliness needed for obtaining services.
- To encourage citizens' participation in fighting corruption through community monitoring of the decision-making processes and monitoring the quality of public services.
- For the High Office of Oversight to extend its simplification procedures to services which have great impact on the vulnerable population, such as land and electricity.

- To establish more administrative sanctions, such as demotion, in the judiciary and in particular at the district attorney's offices and courts. Additionally to permit civil society and the general public to attend at court hearings.

Survey Background:

This is the second corruption survey produced by IWA. The first survey was published in 2007 and covered 13 provinces. The National Corruption Survey 2010 has been refined both in geographical coverage and methodology. The survey was conducted in 32 provinces and covered 6,500 respondents, a representative sample of the overall Afghan population and it is truly the first national corruption survey. Previous surveys, both by IWA and other agencies, have covered only parts of Afghanistan's populations and geography. The survey assesses the impact of corruption on the relationship between Afghan citizens and the state, the trust in the state and non-state institutions, the perceived support of the international community on anti-corruption efforts and the links and perceptions of corruption with insurgency and conflict.

About IWA

IWA's mission is to increase transparency, integrity and accountability in Afghanistan's reconstruction process. IWA considers that high integrity standards must be applied in the public and private sectors. To achieve this goal, IWA provides policy-oriented research, and develops monitoring tools for local communities in order to empower them in ensuring a positive impact from reconstruction efforts.

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