INTEGRITY
ACTION

Learning Paper
Closing the Loop
Integrity Watch Afghanistan - Community Based Monitoring Programme
Author: Haseebullah Shinwary

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Executive Summary

This research was conducted in five provinces (Nangarhar, Hirat, Balkh, Parwan and Kapisa) of Afghanistan to produce a learning paper on the impact of Integrity Watch Afghanistan's (IWA) Community Based Monitoring programme (CBM), which is implemented in partnership with Integrity Action. The purpose of this paper was to assess the extent to which CBM achieved its goals in 2013-2014. In partnership with Integrity Action, IWA has developed and employs Community Integrity Building (CIB)[1] to improve service delivery in Afghanistan. The research focused on how IWA's CBM programme helped fix identified problems with infrastructure projects, thereby improving overall integrity in service delivery, as part of IWA's 2013-2014 programme with Integrity Action. The research also looked at whether education in integrity empowered communities to improve programmes outcomes as well as taking into consideration which monitoring tools were used to achieve said outcomes.

Notable achievements

In 2013-2014, in partnership with Integrity Action, IWA's CBM programme:

- Monitored a total of 30 infrastructure projects
- Enhanced the capacity of 30 community development councils (CDC)[2] through CBM and education in integrity
- Trained a total of 60 local monitors (8 women and 52 men) in CIB
- A total of 38 problems, identified by the community monitors, were raised during provincial monitoring board (PMB)[3] meetings and consequently 30 were fixed

Lessons learnt

- CIB is an effective way of building strong relations between the local communities and other key stakeholders to improve the integrity and transparency of development

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[1] Community integrity building involves learning about a community's needs and service delivery problems, supporting citizens and local government to make integrity work, then assisting citizens and local government to work in collaboration with each other to formulate and implement practical solutions, and ongoing monitoring of service delivery.

[2] The role of community development councils (CDC) is to identify community development priorities through a local consultation process and to apply for funding for projects from a national development fund.

[3] Provincial monitoring board (PMB) is an initiative set up by IWA composed of line ministry representatives, local monitors, provincial council members, media and aid actors where monitors are able to file complaints. The board triggers the accountability role of local institutions.

- CIB helps local people to increase their understanding about how to monitor and address problems identified
- CIB encourages local communities to participate in the development processes and build a culture of social accountability
- Although access to information is vital for monitoring; stakeholders and more specifically government agencies do not play an effective role in providing information to the community

Recommendations

Although there were notable achievements in the CBM program there are still some areas to be improved:

- Government agencies and implementers should provide access to information for the projects, so that people can understand the actual project plans and can monitor the project based on the proposal and agreement
- Continuous support and communication channels should be established with local communities to improve their role in the social accountability and monitoring of the development process
- Donor agencies should provide information to civil society regarding their projects and establish networks, so that problems addressed by local communities, which are not solved at the provincial level can be shared with donor agencies

Context

After 2001, the international community started funding the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Since 2001, $104 billion has been spent on reconstruction projects. However, the international community and the Afghan government have not able to effectively implement reconstruction projects and efficiently use funds. There is no formal mechanism for monitoring the reconstruction process and communities are not involved in development. The social accountability process is very weak and people are not satisfied with the reconstruction process. The international community has put pressure on the government of Afghanistan to take action against corruption. Although the Afghan government established the High Office of Oversight (HOO) to take action and develop procedures to help reduce corruption, major changes have not been achieved. Furthermore, parliament has not been playing a systematic role in the reduction of corruption, rather certain members of parliament have actually been involved in major corruption cases.

In 2006, IWA started working in the field of accountability and transparency. IWA started its work with communities and focused on decentralising the anti-corruption effort. With the support of international donors,

including Integrity Action, IWA started the CBM programme. CBM focuses on Community Development Councils (CDCs) established by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). These councils operate in villages and members of CDCs are citizens elected by their fellow citizens. IWA understood that CDCs can play a vital role in promoting social accountability to improving transparency and help the fight against corruption. CBM has been directly working with local communities to enhance their understanding and awareness regarding education in integrity and also monitoring mechanisms. CBM identifies infrastructure projects in the targeted areas. After the identification of projects, CBM communicates with CDCs and requests every CDC to identify two people as local monitors. The local monitors are trained to monitor projects, then they identify problems and engage with stakeholders including local government, contractors and civil society to address the problems. CBM establishes and facilitates a channel through which all stakeholders can share their findings regarding infrastructure projects. CBM provides support to local communities to increase their understanding about monitoring mechanisms and how to report problems to stakeholders. One of the big challenges in the monitoring of infrastructure projects is the lack of government agencies' support in providing project documents. Access to information is a serious challenge. People often do not have the required information regarding projects such as contracts, project plans, budgets and other documents.
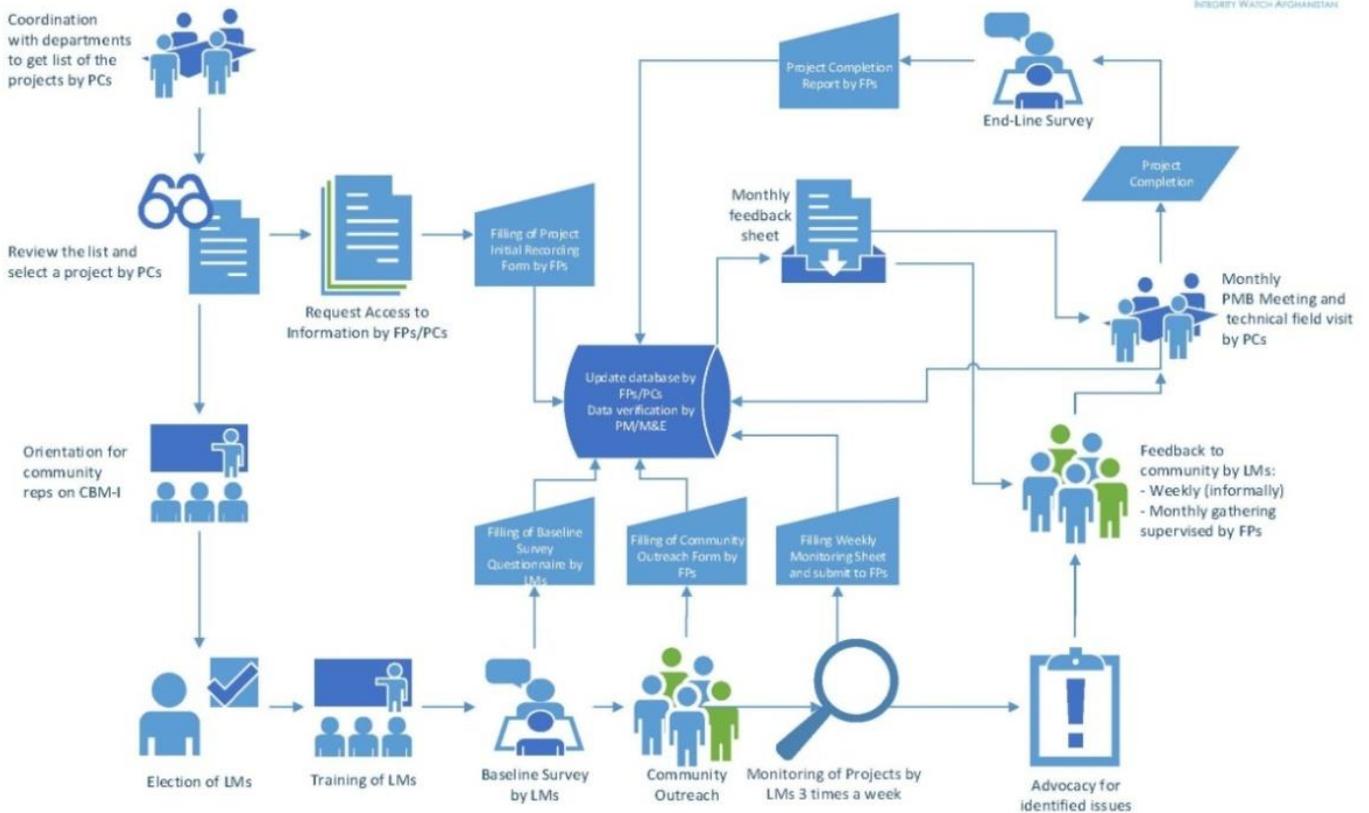
Above chart shows CBM's procedure for working with communities.

Level of Stakeholder Engagement

Community Development Council (CDC)

IWA, through CBM, focuses on CDCs, and involve them in the monitoring processes. CDCs select community monitors from their own members. The local monitors then identify problems with projects, and then engage with key stakeholders to fix problems. IWA provides trainings as well as awareness programmes, to the selected CDCs to enhance their understanding about the monitoring procedures, issues such as accountability and transparency, as well as how to communicate their monitoring findings with the relevant government agencies and other key stakeholders.

Government Agencies

IWA works closely with the relevant government agencies at the central and provincial level and shares the monitor's findings with officials and other stakeholders. CBM engages with the Directorate of Economy (DOE) which is responsible for all provincial infrastructure projects. DOE is also responsible for providing the important project documents as well as also facilitating the monthly PMB meetings, where stakeholders participate and discuss their findings.

Notable Achievements

Community Monitoring

IWA supports local communities and provides training to build the capacity of local people so that they can monitor the infrastructure projects which matter to them. CBM focuses on empowering local people, in order to increase their understanding and knowledge about monitoring and social accountability. IWA, through CBM, has established a cadre of local monitors, who are trained on monitoring mechanisms, as well as how to report identified problems to the stakeholders. These local monitors are an asset for CDCs and anti-corruption efforts because they can maintain the sustainability of development programmes. Based on a beneficiary survey from IWA, a total of 285,250 male and 209,340 female of local people benefited from IWA's engagement.

Community Monitoring and Women

From a total of 30 Integrity Action supported projects, 4 projects were directly related to women, including the construction of a girls school which was monitored by 8 local female monitors. An example of the impact of the monitoring is demonstrated by the achievements of female monitors in Hirat province. The monitors monitored the construction of Tajrabawi girls school. There are more than 3,500 female students who study at the school. The female local community monitors found that the width of the stairs in one of the buildings was only 90cm instead of the required 140cm. This would have created problems for students because the staircase would have been too narrow for more than one student to use at once. The female monitors reported the problem to the Education Directorate and also raised the problem during a PMB meeting. The Education Directorate agreed that the

problem needed to be fixed. They ordered the contractor to expand the width of the stairs from 90cm to 140cm. The contractor complied and widened the staircase to the required length.

Establishing Networks

IWA, through CBM, has created a network of different stakeholders, which can help to decentralise the anti-corruption effort, as well as encourage CDCs and civil society to participate in the development process, and share their findings with government administrations. PMBs in the provinces covered by CBM programmes are chaired by the provincial Director of Economy. Other stakeholders who attend PMBs include representatives from the Education Directorate, Health Directorate, Municipality, Provincial Council, contractors, Provincial Governor's office, IWA provincial coordinators and local monitors. The PMBs are responsible for supervising monitored projects throughout their implementation. They provide a valuable forum for key stakeholders to share project documents, discuss strengths and weakness of projects, and for resolving identified problems. Twice a month PMB members visit projects where problems have been reported to evaluate the situation. In addition, on a monthly basis PMBs meet to discuss identified problems and find solutions.

Awareness Rising

IWA conducts various activities to increase local people's understanding regarding anti-corruption, monitoring and integrity education, these activities included public gathering, cinema show and community mobilisation. Through public gathering IWA field staff provide information to the local community regarding the work in progress and monitoring reports done by the local monitors which helps to improve accountability and create trust. IWA has produced a movie named ERADA (Decision). The message of the movie is to encourage local people to participate in the decision making process and how local people monitoring can be effective in the development processes. IWA conducted a total of 60 mobile cinema shows in different areas. Before monitoring begins, IWA conducts community mobilisation sessions, where IWA field staff explain the process of monitoring and its advantages to the local community. During this community mobilisation phase, IWA explains the process of electing local monitors and sharing access to information, as well as the importance of the role that the CDC can play in the accountability and anti-corruption efforts.

Lessons Learnt

The following was learnt during the 2013-2014 CBM programme:

- When communities are involved in the management of development interventions, communities themselves become mobilised behind the issue at hand (in this case improved quality of infrastructure) and demand greater allocation of resources, coupled with increased transparency and accountability.

- Weather and security are the major constraints for construction work. Before implementing a project, both the donor and the implementer should consider the project's location and bear in mind the relevant seasonal and security situation in the area so that they can adjust their plans accordingly.

- Access to project documents is a significant problem during monitoring of infrastructure projects. Provincial coordinators and advocacy teams have been trying to find solutions. They have accessed project documents through PMB meetings. IWA's provincial coordinators are also communicating and coordinating with provincial Directorates of Economy to secure access to projects documents.

Recommendations

- Local communities must be educated about their roles and responsibilities to monitor the development process.

- Government should provide support to enable monitors to access important project documents.

- Coordination and cooperation between government departments, local communities and civil society should be enhanced to ensure transparency and accountability.

- More awareness raising and training programmes on education in integrity and monitoring should be implemented to local communities, in order to increase their understanding about the advantages of participating in monitoring activities.