



**Independent Joint Anti-Corruption
Monitoring & Evaluation Committee**

PRESS RELEASE: MEC marks Anti-Corruption Day with Series of Events

KABUL, Afghanistan, December 9, 2015 – In recognition of International Anti-Corruption Day, MEC conducted two outreach events earlier this week, and today is releasing its Conflicts of Interest paper.

On December 6, MEC staff inaugurated its first provincial anti-corruption working group, established in conjunction with a network of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Herat, following a series of meetings with the groups and representatives of the government. The ceremony was opened by Mohammad Asif Rahimi, the Herat Provincial Governor, and included speeches by Khalil Parsa, the elected Director of the newly-established Herat Anti-Corruption Working Group, and Dr. Ahmad Rashed Behroz, the MEC Secretariat Executive Director. The goal of establishing such groups is to support sub-national efforts to fight corruption by strengthening ties with, and providing support to, provincial-based CSOs.

On December 8, MEC staff traveled to Kandahar to hold its second university outreach session, introducing MEC and its activities to students and faculty of Kandahar University. A member of MEC's Vulnerability to Corruption Assessment (VCA) Team also presented MEC's findings related to the VCA on Pharmaceutical Importation, given the importance of the issue to the region. The goal of MEC's university outreach program is to engage more with the youth of Afghanistan throughout the country in addressing anti-corruption efforts.

Released today, MEC's paper on conflicts of interest focuses on high-ranking officials and the vulnerabilities of the procurement system. Numerous sources have reported that extensive embezzlement of state funds took place under the previous administration, with the procurement system serving as one of the main avenues for siphoning off state funds. In perhaps the clearest example of a conflict of interest, large numbers of government officials controlled companies that did business with the state. These officials used their influence to secure contracts for their firms and the firms controlled by their political allies.

When researching this paper, MEC staff uncovered numerous challenges, including the use of complex corporate arrangements (e.g., shell companies, subsidiaries, and so forth) to disguise ownership of companies; concerns about well-connected mafias who operate within many ministries and wish to limit the transparency of procurement operations; and the chaotic system of business registration that is prevalent (involving several different ministries), with no centrally accessible, reliable database available.

To address the aforementioned problems, the paper includes recommendations to establish an effective and transparent electronic procurement system; to recruit procurement employees in a transparent process; to subject all new hires and existing personnel to a thorough background and vetting process; and to publish the identification of the contractors and owners of the mentioned companies.

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