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Preface

At earlier days of its formation, the Afghan National Unity Government (NUG) took some rapid anti-corruption measures; but gradually fight against corruption slowed down and due to various reasons, the NUG's leaders did not fulfill its promises regarding fight against corruption. In its recent report, Transparency International has evaluated the Afghan government's anti-corruption efforts as uncoordinated and ineffective.

Since the past one and half decade, corruption is a major challenge in the country and has also negatively affected international aids to Afghanistan. In the first part of the analysis you would read about the Afghan government's anti-corruption efforts and the reasons behind the failure of these efforts.

In the second part of the analysis, you would read about the high rate of illiteracy in Afghanistan. In a joint press conference, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Afghan Ministry of Education stated that there are 11 million illiterate people in Afghanistan. Tens of millions of dollars were spent by Enhancement of Literacy program in the past years and officials have always spoken about its achievements; but the level of illiteracy is yet to be reduced. Statistics of illiterate people and Enhancement of Literacy Program are "to a greater extent" in contradiction to each other and in this regard, the Afghan Ministry of Education has not presented accurate statistics.

In this issue of the Weekly Analysis of the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies you would read analysis about the above two issues.

Evaluation of NUG's fight against Corruption



Transparency International released a report on anti-corruption struggle in Afghanistan last week. The report states that the Afghan government's efforts to fight corruption were solely limited to pledges and not only the current struggle against corruption is not effective, it is also uncoordinated. The Organization, therefore, suggests that the parallel anti-corruption institutions must be revoked and one or few independent and powerful administrations ought to be created to tackle corruption.

Based on the report, Afghanistan's National Unity Government (NUG) had made 50 anti-corruption commitments, but has delivered just a few of these commitments resulting in wasting one out of every eight dollars aided for Afghanistan. It comes at a time that the NUG believes the fight against corruption as its priority and has stressed so at several international conferences.

The NUG's anti-corruption fight and the factors behind the NUG's failure in this fight are issues that are analyzed here.

Corruption in Afghanistan

Since the formation of the Afghan government under Hamid Karzai, a number of domestic and international research centers have conducted many surveys to evaluate the corruption rate in this country. For instance since 2005, Transparency International has conducted surveys every years; Asia Foundation has collected people's opinions in this regard since 2006; and in years after 2007, Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) has also conducted surveys and researches to evaluate the corruption rate in Afghanistan.

A review of the corruption-related surveys and researches in the past 15 years signify that not only the level of corruption in the country is not reduced; it has also reached new heights in 2015.

Based on the surveys of Transparency International, from 2005 to 2009, corruption increased; but from 2009 to 2011, it reduced and in 2012 and 2013, it reached its heights. In 2014, due to some anti-corruption efforts by the NUG, corruption decreased in Afghan administrations but in 2015 it augmented again.

The surveys by Asia Foundations, on the other hand, show that in peoples believe, after 2005, the level of corruption in their daily lives, their neighborhood, in local administrations in provinces and in all over Afghanistan has increased.

IWA has also released its four surveys on corruption in Afghanistan. These surveys show that in 2007, 2010, 2012 and 2014, the total value of bribe and the adults who have bribed officials are increased.

Some other administrations such as the United Nation's Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) and Organization of Budget Transparency have also published researches and surveys concerning corruption which overall indicates the increased level of corruption in post-2009 years.

The NUG's anti-corruption struggle

During the 2014 Presidential Elections, candidates for Afghan Presidency had vowed to eradicate corruption. In his electoral charter, President Ghani had also a particular argument on corruption. After the formation of the NUG, the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani declared his anti-corruption policy in London Conference in 2014. The President renewed his anti-corruption commitments to European Union's delegation in Anti-corruption Conference in May 2016. The Afghan President, later in London conference, presented his essay about the fight against corruption. Promises to tackle corruption were also made in Afghanistan's National Peace and Development Framework prepared for Brussels Conference.

Although, at first, the NUG held some rapid and serious anti-corruption steps, which resulted in falling in the ranks from the second to the fourth most corrupted country in the world. But then the anti-corruption fight was not pursued with such seriousness and rapidity.

Overall, most steps to tackle corruption were held at the verge of international conferences. For instance, before London Conference (2014), the Kabul Bank case was opened; before Warsaw Conference (2016), government authorities' assets were recorded and at the verge of Brussels Conference (2016), the Afghan government inaugurated the Judicial Anti-corruption Center.¹ Therefore, in its recent report, Transparency International stated that there is a weak willingness in the Afghan government to fight against corruption and the Afghan government's deeds are "symbolic and political".²

The Afghan government has not yet fully received the Kabul Bank loans neither it has tried the corruption culprits in court (although some people were tried in courts but overall these prosecutions were not cohesive) nor has it brought comprehensive reforms in anti-corruption institutions (for instance, judiciary, prosecution and security sectors).

¹ For further information:

<http://pa.azadiradio.com/a/27832045.html>

² Read more here:

<http://www.bbc.com/pashto/afghanistan-37975957>

Why did the government fail in its fight against corruption?

In the past 15 years, the Afghan government has held some steps to tackle corruption, such as creating anti-corruption administrations, making anti-corruption laws and some anti-corruption efforts coincide with the formation of the NUG; but after its formation why did the NUG failed in its anti-corruption efforts, the followings are the main reasons:

- **Security and political uncertainty:** generally, strong and powerful central governments, which are confronted with lesser security and political instabilities, undertake serious measures against corruption. If a government was unstable in terms of security and political situation, it cannot hold serious steps against corruption because such deeds could challenge the very survival of these governments.
- **Lack of strong political will:** due to security and political instability, the NUG lacks strong political willingness to fight against corruption.
- **Uncoordinated policies:** another reason behind the NUG's failure in its fight against corruption is lack of a coordinated anti-corruption policy. For instance, the government had arrested the culprits of Kabul Bank case, imprisoned them and seriously pursued the case, but then it released the main culprit of this case (Khalilullah Ferozi) and signed a construction contract "Smart City" with him at a ceremony where some senior government officials including Special Representative of the president in political reforms Ahmad Zia Masood and some ministers were also present. Thus, government's determination in fight against corruption was questioned. One reason behind the uncoordinated policy of the government is creation of 17 various anti-corruption institutions which according to Transparency International have very fewer achievements. In addition, Afghanistan "lacks a comprehensive judiciary system in order to prevent, detect and prosecute corruption cases"³.

³ Read the full report of Transparency International here:
http://files.transparency.org/content/download/2034/13148/file/2016_AfghanistanPromisesToAction_EN.pdf

- **The NUG's coalition-like structure:** in this government both the winner and the loser of electoral teams of 2014 Presidential elections are gathered and therefore differences between the leaders of the two teams, over officials' appointment and bringing reforms, has resulted in ineffectiveness of the NUG's to fight against corruption.

The ELA program; shortcomings and contradictory statistics



Afghanistan is one of the three countries where the illiteracy rate has vastly challenged the society. After two African countries, Afghanistan is still the third country where the rate of illiteracy is very high and only 30% of Afghans are literate.

According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) director and representative in Afghanistan, Patricia McPhillips, adult literacy was one of the areas that have been vastly neglected in the past one and a half decade.

In the past 15 years, despite millions of dollars of international community's aids in Afghanistan, progress in some areas were very slow including Ministry of Education's program of Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan (ELA). ELA was always criticized that it is a "symbolic" program and in practice, as statistics show, no fundamental work has been done.

Here you would read about the ELA program, factors behind its failure, and the contradiction of statistics provided by the government.

Literacy rate in Afghanistan

UNESCO defines literacy as the “ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society”. An illiterate individual can be defined as he who cannot read and write.

Afghanistan is one of the countries with the lowest literacy rate in the world. Based on the UNESCO statistics, 70% of Afghans are illiterate and illiteracy is a major challenge in Afghanistan. Only an average 31% of people more than 15 years of age are literate. The average literacy rate among women is 17% and the highest rate of literacy among women is in Kabul where 35% of women are literate and the lowest rate of literacy is in southern provinces of the country where less than 2% of women are literate. The average literacy rate of men is 45% and the highest literacy of men is in Kabul (68%) and the lowest in Helmand (41%)⁴.

ELA program

The literacy program was founded during Amanullah’s rule in Afghanistan and after the overthrow of the Taliban regime and with the beginning of infusion of foreign aids in Afghanistan, the adult literacy program also started and since 2008, United Nations Human Settlement Program (UN-Habitat), UNESCO and various institution in the Afghan government including Ministry of Education have joined efforts to enhance literacy in Afghanistan. The first stage of Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan (ELA) was started in 2008 with \$38m aid by Japan which still continues, but still there is a high rate of illiteracy in the country.

Based on government statistics, from 1388 (2009-2010) to 1393 (2014-2015), 3514535 people were registered in ELA program. (See chart-1). But as the statistics in other

⁴UNESCO statistics:

www.unesco.org/new/en/kabul/education/enhancement-of-literacy-in-afghanistan-ela-program/

fields, the statistics of ELA is also questionable and according to education experts are unreliable, because these statistics suggests landmark progress in education while it is not the case in reality.

One issue in these statistics is that it presumes all those who have registered in ELA program as literate while there is no exact survey in hand that is conducted after examinations from the graduates of this program.

Chart-1: ELA program statistics (1388-1394)

| Year | Number of literacy centers | Number of students | | Teachers | |
|-------------|----------------------------|--------------------|--------|----------|--------|
| | | male | Female | male | Female |
| 1388 | 31278 | 287124 | 395555 | 1645 | 886 |
| 1389 | 27087 | 251850 | 355819 | 1689 | 1218 |
| 1390 | 22660 | 278801 | 295632 | 1904 | 1325 |
| 1391 | 26486 | 245912 | 317548 | 3347 | 1320 |
| 1392 | 23952 | 311063 | 256850 | 7369 | 4780 |
| 1393 | 20825 | 236036 | 282345 | 5576 | 4682 |
| 1394 | 17404 | 187475 | 216962 | 5844 | 4246 |

Source: Central Statistic Organization of Afghanistan

Imprecise and contradictory statistics

Statistics provided by the Afghan Ministry of Education in the past one decade were always inexact and in contradiction to each other and there were vast differences among these statistics.

Based on the statistics of UNESCO, currently the number of illiterates with more than 15 years of age is more than 11 million in the country. These statistics show that in rural areas 90% of women and 63% of men are illiterate⁵. While the statistics provided around 7 or 8 years ago showed the same rate of illiteracy as well. In 1388 (2009-2010), the statistics of Ministry of Education showed that there were 11 million illiterate in Afghanistan and the statistics of the United

⁵ For further information read, 'UNESCO: 11 million afghans above 15 years are illiterate', 3 Aqrab 1395, see it online: <http://madanyatonline.com/reports/over-news/4026>

Nations in the same year also showed that 90% of women and 63% of men in rural areas were illiterate⁶.

On the other hand, the Afghan Ministry of Education states that currently there are 15 thousand literacy training centers in all over the country where 500 thousand students are receiving literacy trainings and these centers graduate 300 to 350 thousand people annually.⁷ Seven years ago, however, Ministry of Education had said that it will give literacy training to 500 thousand people every year and until 1399 it will reduce the illiteracy to its lowest rates in the country; but still Afghanistan is among the countries with the highest rate of illiteracy in the world.

In 1391, Ministry of Education had said that the number of illiterate people in the country was 10 million people. In 1393, the Afghan Minister of Education had said that 5 million people are added to literate people and had said that there were 7 million illiterate people in the country and that 500 thousand people are added annually to the literates. According to his speech now (1395) 6 million people were supposed to be added to the literate people in Afghanistan⁸. In 1394, the Afghan Ministry of Education had said that there were 10 million illiterate people in the country and now in 1395, the number of illiterates is announced to be 11 million⁹.

About the literacy training centers, officials in the Afghan Ministry of Education had also said in 1392 that there were 30 thousand centers with overall 770 thousand students in the country¹⁰; but now the Ministry of Education say that 500 thousand people are receiving literacy trainings in 15 thousand literacy training centers. However, statistics of the Central Statistic Organization of Afghanistan is far different than these statistics and the number of illiterate people is also increasing annually.

⁶ AVA Press, 'Afghanistan is one of the most illiterate country in the world' 17 Sunbula 1388, see it online:

<http://www.avapress.com/vdchiznz.23niidfft2.html>

⁷ BBC, New governmental policy to curb down illiteracy, 30 Aqrab 1395, see it online:

<http://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan-38043984>

⁸ further info in this report: <http://da.azadiradio.com/a/26572133.html>

⁹ click here for more info: <http://da.azadiradio.com/a/27966324.html>

¹⁰ for details click on the link below: <http://da.azadiradio.com/a/25099285.html>

Factors behind the failure of ELA program

Substandard Curriculum: the education experts have repeatedly criticized the substandard curriculum but this issue has never been fully addressed by respective officials; now the Deputy Ministry of Education accepts that the current curriculum does not meet the needs of those who receive literacy trainings.

Negligence and weak administrations: Literacy Deputy Ministry of Education speaks about achievements and issues of literacy program only in the days of celebration of literacy day, but in practice even the webpage of this organ has nothing to say except for the introduction of Literacy deputy minister and there is no statistics of literacy on it. Spending \$20m every year, this organ, due to weak administrations, have not had tangible achievements.

Corruption: research reports show that the Afghan Ministry of Education has not properly used international aids in the past fourteen years and most of these aids are gone in personal accounts. CSRS has documents in hand that indicate that in some insecure regions of the country, teacher and education related employees receive salaries without the existence of an actual literacy training center.

Lack of budget: the total ordinary and development budget of the Ministry of Education in 1394 was 476557120000 Afghanis and from this amount only 1 to 1.5% is dedicated to literacy program which indicates the little attention of the government in this aspect.

Insecurity: insecurities in the country have also resulted in implementation of literacy program solely in cities while often remote areas suffer from illiteracy.

The end

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Note: Please let us know your feedback and suggestions for the improvement of Weekly analysis.

