



کمیته مستقل مشترک نظارت و ارزیابی مبارزه علیه فساد اداری
د اداری فساد پر وړاندې د مبارزې د څارنې او ارزونې خپلواکه کمیته
Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee

Sharing Successes against Corruption in Afghanistan

NOTES from
MEC's high-level forum meetings
November 2016 - November 2017

Executive Summary

MEC has facilitated a series of five brainstorming meetings of senior officials – from 15 to 30 each time – to share individual successes against corruption, and to share lessons for how to make more progress in the coming months and years.

These meetings have been popular, despite the busy schedules of all the participants. They show the energy for reform among a wide range of officials from multiple different ministries and agencies. They show each person in the group that they are not alone, but are part of a larger body of reformers. Collectively, this group and the many others who have not yet participated or may not be able to, are building a foundation of reform on the basis of multiple small gains.

The discussions ranged over a wide variety of subjects. MEC has organized the material under five regular recurring topics:

- The significance of making lots of small but material gains against corruption: 25 examples
- The harder ‘heavy lifting’ - making big, essential changes
- Leadership examples from other countries
- Private sector, less corruption and economic growth
- Thinking about practical anti-corruption approaches
- The importance of family ties
- The most encouraging things that the participants learned at the forums

We will never know whether these forum meetings have had an appreciable impact or not on corruption. Like so many of the examples cited, the forum itself will probably be best described as a ‘small gain.’

But we do know that forums like these are important in building momentum, in building support, and in building a sense of shared endeavor. So MEC hopes that this record of the last five meetings will encourage others in Afghanistan to establish forums such as these: in the provinces, within individual ministries, across like-minded reformers, indeed everywhere.

CONTENTS

Executive summary

1. Introduction
2. The significance of making small but material changes against corruption: 25 examples
3. The harder 'heavy lifting' - making big, essential changes
4. Leadership examples from other countries
5. Private sector, less corruption and economic growth: 30 examples
6. Thinking about practical anti-corruption approaches
7. The importance of family ties
8. The most interesting thing you have learned? 50 comments

1. Introduction

Olympic cycling success may seem a very long way from Afghanistan and the fight against corruption. But consider this quote:

“Think small, not big, and adopt a philosophy of continuous improvement through the aggregation of marginal gains. Forget about perfection, focus on progression and compound the improvements.”

This quote explains the philosophy of the director of the most successful national Olympic cycling team ever. And it read just like the World Bank talking about the way to build success out from endemic corruption.¹ A slow and constant accumulation of small advances, each time being pushed back by the forces of reaction, is a model that has been shown to operate in many countries. We know that there have been other paths to success, such as when strong political groupings are able to lead rapid, radical change, as in Georgia and Estonia, but a large, complex country like Afghanistan cannot build an anti-corruption platform on that basis.

This philosophy is one half of the thinking why MEC convened a forum of high-level government officials: to create a venue where each other’s’ small successes against corruption could be described and discussed in a supportive atmosphere.

The second half of the thinking is that reform does not happen impersonally. It happens because individuals, or more often small groups of committed individuals acting together, choose to make a difference and to work for a better country. In the dry, impersonal words of academic researchers, it happens because of ‘human agency.’ To you and me, that means committed people. Such people are often in lonely positions: they may have nominal power, but their ministries are full of people accustomed to the status quo, and there are many powerful forces supporting that status quo. Bringing reformers together to share small successes is important. Bringing reformers together to show that others are sharing similar difficulties but are also having unexpected success; this is motivating.

As one Minister said at the first of these meetings in November 2016: “I like the way this forum is designed, to discuss actions, things that work in other countries and in Afghanistan. Let’s, specify on the tools that really work. Let’s categorize the sectors and what tools to use to fight corruption.”

The way the forum meetings are designed

The meetings occur once every quarter (which aligns with MEC Committee missions).

Typically, some 40 people are invited, and some 15-30 people are present on the day. They are mostly senior government officials, ranging from Ministers and Deputy Ministers to Director Generals and Directors from a wide range of Ministries and agencies.

¹ World Bank, World Development Report, 2011.

Each meeting lasts about four hours, from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. The timing is chosen to allow busy people to finish their day in the office. Dinner is then served from 8:15 p.m. until 9 p.m.

The meeting is structured as a free-flowing 'brainstorming' discussion. This means that participants agree the following three ground rules:

Because this is a sharing/brainstorming meeting, the focus will be 100 percent on actions/ideas that do work, did once work, or could work in relation to corruption. There is agreement not to discuss the (many!) things that do not work

No-one will speak for more than two minutes. The facilitator (Dr. Pyman) is permitted to ask a speaker to stop if they exceed the two-minute limitation.

The meeting is held under the 'Chatham House Rule', which means that participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant may be revealed.

The MEC facilitator of the meetings brings in experiences from other countries to stimulate thinking and discussions. These examples are also listed in this report.

After each meeting, the notes are sent to the participants describing the topics and the specific initiatives presented. This document is an abbreviated synthesis of those notes.

Why this report now?

MEC is producing this report of the results of the five forums because we firmly believe that such gatherings of reform-minded people are one of the keys to successfully curbing corruption. People need encouragement and tackling corruption can be a lonely business. People like to share their successes with peers, and anti-corruption successes can sometimes be hard to discuss. And, most importantly, because it is up to Afghans to solve this problem, together. To quote His Excellency the President, in the opening to the Afghanistan National Strategy for combatting corruption:

"We cannot blame others for not solving this corruption problem that eats our countries alive from within."

MEC hopes that we have created a good example with this forum that will encourage Ministries to create their own forums and reformer networks.

2. Small changes can lead to real impact: 25 examples

When a reform effort is underway, changing people at the top is important and essential. But it is also about a much longer-term process of change, as individuals and groups in mid-level positions gradually make up their minds whether or not to take steps towards improvement. This is quite a personal process, and we in MEC sense it when we interview mid-level people in Ministry organizations: almost all of them would like to support improvements, however small, but they are also waiting for some hints that such actions would not be negative for their position. When many of these individuals are taking actions like this, outsiders will hardly be aware that there are lots and lots of changes taking place – potentially hundreds of them – almost all unnoticed.



Here is one example, from another difficult environment, Ukraine. Before the Maidan revolution in 2014 in Kiev, there was very little momentum for change, especially in the military. But several of the senior leaders in the military quietly recognized that their officers would welcome some move towards improvement and less corruption. They set up a very low-profile initiative to train mid-level officers – Majors to Colonels – in ways of tackling and reducing corruption in the military. This course was substantial – one week long – but it was hugely well subscribed. They trained some 1,200 officers over 2-3 years. Now, when the environment for change is much better, the politics have changed, and much more openness about reform is possible. The Ministry of Defense and the military are now one of the fastest reforming groups in Ukraine.

This is a bigger human change process than something specific to do with corruption. You saw the example in the introduction from the world of competitive cycling, and how big changes come from hundreds of small improvements. Here is another example, from the world of art. In 1930, the art world was seen to change dramatically at the time of Picasso, but there were hundreds of artists over the ten years before him that gradually built the style that became cubism. Call it the Theory of Small Gains.

If this small change process is happening – which of course may not be the case - then one day, people – or sometimes the politicians or the media - just feel that ‘things have gotten better.’ And the person who happens to have just made the most recent change probably they get called the hero. Or the moment gets called a ‘tipping point.’ But both interpretations are a wrong reading of the evolution, because such a lot went before that.

At MEC we have been seeing hundreds of small positive changes like this, across many Ministries. We are thinking – wondering – if this could indeed be such a foundation being built that will one day ‘tip over.’ There are probably 200 things like this going on now across government that fight corruption. But no one is listing them.

At these forums, we have encouraged participants to tell us their stories of small gains that have been achieved in their Ministries. There have been dozens of them. Here below we have recorded twenty-five of them.

Example 1 – Major increase in transport revenue by changing one easily corrupted form

This is the three-part form used by Transport Ministry officers to levy the required charge on trucks leaving city gates, crossing provinces, and crossing national borders. The first third of the form is for the MoT officer, the second third is for the truck driver, and the last third is for the control agency. Officials fill in the first and third parts with a small figure, e.g., AFN 100, and the second part with a higher figure, e.g., AFN 1000, which is then what the truck driver is required to pay.

This manual form is the most-corruptible possible sort – it has no carbon copy, it is not sequentially numbered, it requires no details of the truck, driver or the company, and the form has been unchanged for 15 years. It is ‘designed for corruption.’

The image shows three identical copies of a transport levy form, each divided into three sections for different parties: MoT officer, truck driver, and control agency. The forms are handwritten in Dari and Pashto, showing fields for date, location, and amount. The forms are identical, suggesting they are used interchangeably without tracking.

However, it took just two months to:

- design better manual forms, with carbon copies, truck details, truck driver phone number, and
- print 18,000 new form booklets and distribute them to crossing points in nine provinces.

In the meantime, longer-term solutions (purchased IT system) will be installed, after which this short-term solution may no longer be needed.

And, this is not a ‘small change.’ The revenue that is generated for the Transport Ministry is about AFN 1 billion per annum. The estimated amount that the loss to corruption – through

these tolls – is AFN 4-5 billion. So even a small change in the effectiveness of this new form will bring in a major increase in revenue.

Example 2 – Checklist for payments by Treasury

The Ministry of Finance has effectuated a small but impactful reform in the Afghan Treasury. This has had a very good impact for budget execution, and the reform is simple. The Treasury is always rejecting payments brought to them for processing. But now they have a checklist, and each entity is signing the document, and the controller needs to go through the list and make sure everything is in good order. They also stamp the checklist with the date when they are accepting (processing) or rejecting. So now the process shows how much time the payment documentation is held by the controllers. Now controllers have a two-day limit to accept or reject the payment. There is now very much less rejection of payments from the Treasury.

Example 3 – Building confidence in the Attorney General's Office

It used to be very hard for citizens to meet some of the deputies of the AGO. Now they have started an open session every Monday. Any citizen, or lawyer, or official, can come and take a number and then get in the queue. They can then tell of the problems they have, and also now make direct contact with the AGO senior officials. The Attorney General himself attends every Monday, and rearranges his schedule and any international travel around Mondays. The only reason he is absent is if the President requires to see him. This cuts out the third-party people. The Monday session starts at 8:00 a.m., and usually goes on until 8:00 p.m. except for prayer breaks. Now citizens can come themselves and get their petitions signed. People are coming from the far districts of Afghanistan.

The small changes really do matter. If a person is arrested and someone wishes to bail them out, then a petition comes to the AGO. So to bail someone out it was required to find an Member of Parliament, to take the position inside, and of course to bribe him. Now anyone can bring the petition, and then when it is signed, the relative needs only to bring the Taskera, the proof. And now we can ask if they had to pay money to someone in order to bring the petition, then in that case they can get released.

Example 4 – Inspections of the military regions, reporting to the President

The military Inspectors General have been working closely with the Presidential Palace to fight corruption in the armed forces. The team has already completed detailed reviews of five of the eight zones, checking with battle commanders, and given regular reports to the President.

Example 5 – Removing the two nodes of the department corruption network

One Director General, with a unit of one hundred people, had determined that an HR manager and the internal audit director were leading the corruption in the unit. He found a way to get these people removed. Then the other 98 people come to his office very thankful that these people were removed, expressing their gratification. Now that these two are gone, all sorts of good things are happening.

Has this been too hopeful? In any government area of 100 people, are there really just a few that are leading the corruption and once they are gone, then there is improvement, or not?

One other participant added that you cannot generalize this. In one government agency that he supervised, they assessed their system and found one central place and one senior person that was the problem. But that person is still there. This person himself uses the nebulous title of 'director of systems' to describe his duties. They were unable to remove him, so they put emphasis on others and try to sideline him.

Example 6 – daily tax revenue collection

Afghanistan is now collecting tax revenue on a daily basis, very timely. This has sped up the revenue collection and the budget execution process. In the past, many of the provinces Finance Departments were overdrawn, since they were forced by people in the provinces to pay the money out. So there is now a dedicated budget with money for each budget line.

Example 7 – Ministry of Public Health regional exams

Another example is from MoPH, where people were coming from the provinces and waiting days in order to take the entry exam. This year the Ministry created an electronic database, then schedules for an exam. Now the person taking the exam registers in advance by email, sends their background information to Ministry, and then a time is provided for them to take the exam. This is much more effective.

Example 8 – Being cautious with sharing sensitive data because of corruption

If a government agency were planning to conduct a raid, they would assemble a team, but when they arrived to raid the premises, there would be no evidence. Insiders had forewarned the targeted people. Now, the leader of the raid not tell the assembled team where they are going, he will ask for a team but will only tell them where they are going when they are leaving. So now the raids can be successful – it may not be a permanent solution, but it works for now.

Example 9 – Issuing Work Permits

For issuing work permits, new measures have been taken, simplifying the procedures. We have created a reception desk which will take the application and take care of the whole process. And, I am looking forward to the implementation of Asan Khedmat which will benefit us a lot.

Example 10 A few years ago, my wife came to Afghanistan and wanted to take the national ID. We had to bribe USD 100 and we were still not issued an ID. But the process has changed very much now. The person who gives the ID never sees the person who is going to receive it. It is a good system in place. I think it should be copied in other organizations as well.

Example 11 Issuing Business License used to take almost one month and this process is very long, we have shortened the process. We have created a document that shows the process and the even the minutes each stage should take. From 18 to 6 hours and from 5 hours to 8 minutes

only it takes to register a license and for the renewal of the license. So it takes much less time in the new computerized process.

Example 12 - Tackling fake banking documents

In the past there were many fake banking documents, but now the private sector and banks work together, and now deposits need to be kept in Afghanistan. This is real progress.

Example 13 - Recruitment to avoid patronage

X was getting all these orders for recruitment. He has 247 positions, and 40 of them are vacant. Hard for him to recruit people in the Tashkiel. He can give short-term contracts. So his minister would write him and say who should be recruited. If not into the Tashkiel, then on a part-time basis, which means a full year. So instead of recruiting someone for one year, he would only recruit for three months. Then at the end of the three months, he was told that he needed to recruit that same person again. So eventually the minister got tired of doing it so he just lowered the number and said “OK, only recruit for these six positions.” It needs a lot of resilience. Tactics are important. Two, political support is very important.

Example 14 – Effective training workshops

Training workshops would organize workshops for rural development, for 80-90 people. X was a new director; he kept signing it, thinking that the same number of people were participating. But if you conduct a training program for 80-90 people, the training is never effective. If it's for five consecutive days, it's just not effective for that many people. So he conducted a post-training impact assessment, he developed the questionnaire. Then when there was a training, and he conducted the assessment, he realized that none of them have really benefitted. Later, when they conducted the trainings themselves, the cost dropped from USD 18-19,000 to USD 4,000.

Example 15 – Senior individual intervention has a huge impact

Another participant spoke of when he was interviewed for the job; he said to the President he wanted to build his own team. He told President that if he is pressured to hire someone, he will quit. And to this day has not received pressure for this. Another useful tactic is to recruit on a short-term basis, see if they have potential. Another instrument for recruitment, looked at the Canadian procurement agency – and they only recruited the top graduates of institutions. So he sent and asked for a list of all the top graduates. The first reply they received had nine people. Then colleagues called these nine, and turns out four had not even graduated. So then sent another list of over 100 people. Then they called them to take the exam – they came from different provinces. Then they found 26 – they are so intelligent and are now some of the best staff. So now they have these top graduates. The success goes back to individual intervention. Another participant gave the example of beneficial ownership of companies and making this transparent. Beneficial ownership is important to the international donors, and working with the banking sector. The ministry has identified accounts in the name of their driver or guards.

But, soon anyone can go online and see who is the owner of a company or a stakeholder. If someone wants to start a company, then the applicant needs to declare all the owners.

Example 16 – Senior individual writes the recruitment exam questions

Another senior participant promotes the idea of writing the recruitment questions himself, so it shows that the top person has been involved.

Example 17 Connecting Databases – scope for quick progress

Connecting to different databases has been a major area for success. A related example is financial intelligence activities, which mostly target the banking sector. They do exchange information with law enforcement agencies, showing red flags for terrorism financing. So they started a secure electronic channel, so no one could access the data. With the Ministry of Finance and Customs Directorate and others, they can exchange data. It is working well.

Example 18 I wanted to verify my degree in the Ministry of Higher Education, in the past there were many, many people in a long line. But now there is this policy of open office which has brought a lot of efficiency to the system. People can easily find the officials and get the required signatures quickly. This has also been possible with the help of technology.

Example 19 We have installed a monitoring system on the drivers and supervisor will monitor fuel for cars used for transport in our ministry. It helped us to have 30 percent savings on car fuel expenses within the ministry.

Example 20 We have built the capacity of the Internal Audit Department of the Ministry of Finance. Audit has a very poor reputation across government, but we have had success with a strong focus. They have received more capacity building and are now much more effective.

Example 21 There has been complete reform of the Passport Agency. Among the many changes, there is now a large open room, with all decisions made by the management group in the center, in full hearing of many people. We have created this committee that controls and oversees the process as well in the Passport Directorate, so as to make sure everything to happen transparently and with no corruption. I take around 20 minutes each morning and gather people, applying for passport, and talk to them and through the processes to make sure every applicant knows where to go and what to do.

Examples using behavioral economics

To explain the concept. Behavioral economics is about making small changes in the policy that brings about large change in people's behavior. To give an example, in the Passport Directorate of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, a small committee controls the process and oversees the activities. This committee does not meet in a private room, but rather right in the center of a large, open plan office, right in the middle of people. It brings a totally different dynamic from a 'closed' meeting, and gains trust through the increased transparency. It is also a cheap improvement measure. Responses: Participants shared many similar experiences:

Example 22 There are 900 money service companies in Afghanistan, they are providing a lot of money services. We need them to report properly so we have an AFN 3,000 penalty for each delayed day of reporting but we now also have a promotional system to encourage them as well. This works well.

Example 23 We have two major problems with the taxpayer that leads to complaints. First one is to address challenges and second one is receipt. Tax payers do not receive a proper receipt and this creates trust issues. We could create a reward/penalty system, so if the tax payer pays the tax on time and does not receive a receipt, government should be charged for some penalties.

Example 24 My example is we have created award recognitions for the people who pay their taxes on time.

Example 25 We have a call center that connects people directly to the ministers, it takes messages directly to the minister. People are surprised by this and happy that it is happening.

3. Heavy lifting through making big, necessary changes

Much of the discussion of the forum has been about the multiple smaller improvements that have been taking place across government in the last two years. These are vital, but cannot replace some of the 'heavy lifting' that has to be done on major pieces of the political and institutional landscape. Here are some of the examples that were discussed.

Getting to a critical mass of reform-minded Ministers

In Afghanistan, and perhaps elsewhere, the character of the top person - the Minister - is hugely significant for how the whole Ministry behaves. It is commonly thought that some 50 percent of the ability to progress on the issue of corruption was with the top one or two people.

Making an informal count across the Ministries, one participant calculated that there are currently 50-60 percent reformers in the top government positions (across the Ministries and the senior positions like AG, NSA, Vice Presidents, etc.). This is a much bigger percentage than has been seen for a long time. Is this significant? Comments:

- It is significant; we are visiting a lot of government agencies, a lot of reform-minded people everywhere. You see the pressure from above
- I think in Afghanistan, why we are having the corruption, the top leadership in a ministry, if there is a strong person, there will not be corruption. If the minister is not corrupt, then from top to bottom, it will be better.
- Yes and no. it is important that the leadership be a reformer, to execute more elements. There are a lot of ideas, but not as widespread as it should be. Our institutions do not have clear mandates, there may be some, but not across the whole structure. You need to have teams of reformers, not just individuals. You can send someone to a ministry, but if there is not a team, then you are setting them up for failure. There may be a lot of people at the top of a ministry, but if they don't have a shared vision, then there is not as much reform.
- Even with a good Minister, a lot of people feel that they cannot manage someone out. Need to also change people's perception of government, puts a lot of pressure on them.

Public procurement

Processes are often over complicated, and this facilitates corruption. For two years the NPA have worked on procurement, one of the most difficult things he has worked on. Looked at the whole process, much simplifying, but within the international standards of procurement. It took a high level of political involvement to make this happen. It ends up being a multi-directional approach. You have to keep the process going. First need to work on legislation. The first version of the law was actually a barrier to reform, identified those, then that removed

a lot of the barriers. Then started working with stakeholders, and realized that lack of systems, data and information was the key problem. The results are well known to everyone, and there has been major impact in reducing contract corruption.

Civil Service Commission

The reform needs to start from the Civil Service Reform Commission. If you want to fight corruption – forget about your personality and self-esteem. If we think of ourselves we will never fight corruption.

Several participants spoke of going through the CBR process, it cost more than what they were thinking. There was a lot of pressure, but it was to be a very competitive recruitment process. They took no pressure on the recruiting, which was hard, but very worthwhile.

In the past three/four months Civil Service Commission has now built a large-scale recruitment system. We have piloted it by announcing 700 professional procurement positions in the government. We had 33,000 applications for the 700 positions. We had an exam and the results will be out next week.

And now the Civil Service Commission has moved on to the second large-scale recruitment, by announcing 17,000 positions this week, including teachers.

ACJC and Attorney General Office reforms

Participants often referred to these improvements and were very well aware of the potential long-term impact on corruption.

E-Tazkera

E-Tazkera is perhaps the most important move that the government can make. It is a classic example of a system improvement that is fundamental to many other consequential improvements. It will bring many other integrity benefits in its wake.

4. Leadership examples from other countries

Look at the chart below, which shows 'control of corruption' on the y axis for a range of countries over the past fifteen 15 years. Some countries have had quite quick success, like Georgia, but this is not normal. If you look at World Bank research, they find that it typically takes 20 years for a country to get out of corruption.

What you see is that a wide range of countries that have had success against corruption. There are 21 countries with this upwards trend (NOTE: It's not on the same scale for every country). There is, of course, another set of graphs with countries that have a downward trend, but they are not the focus of today's discussion.

There are many interesting stories about these results:

First interesting thing, quite a few countries are having success. Some have very serious problems – not 'easy' countries, like Germany or Spain. If you look at them, ask why they did better – it's different on every country.

Look at **Georgia** – they focused very strongly on one/two parts, police and education. They showed people a very rapid change. Dismissed all the police and rehired. And improved education system.

Look at **Poland**. There, one part of government led, and dragged the others with it. It was the Defense Ministry that led.

Romania – core of the change was in the Justice Ministry, strong laws – like ACJC. That was the driver that pushed the country forward.

Kazakhstan – it has put some clean people at the top of its state-owned enterprises.



Macedonia is in the list, successful in the fight against corruption. What worked there was like Afghanistan, tackling a big impunity problem – the ministers, MPs – they are untouchable. And no one wants to talk about it. People say they do not want to create a political problem. When we drafted the anti-corruption strategy, we changed 14 articles in our constitution in order to have this happen. This was proposed by the independent anti-corruption commission. The politicians will never change their life unless there is no pressure from the people and the international community. Even the international community said that this was going too far. But it was done and it changed the country. Day and night they worked on it, and had many stakeholders involved, that way everyone was familiar with what was in it and how it was created.

In **Taiwan**, the lead for anti-corruption was the Justice Ministry. They were always exceeding their authority slightly, and periodically someone was fired. So there is a way to advance by each time slightly exceeding the rules – a grey area.

So, lots of countries are succeeding. And the way they do it, is totally different from one to another.

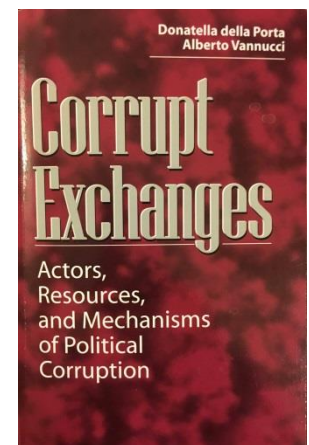
Anti-Patronage example from Saudi Arabia

Example from another country of countering patronage. In Saudi Arabia, they have a huge patronage problem, so the pressure on ministers is unbelievable. One man was chairman of one of the state organizations. To solve the patronage problem, he created a training academy, and put all the people who were using influence into the eight-month academy. That filtered the patronage. He set up a highly-vetted examination team at the end of the process, so that the exams were graded honestly. So only competent people will graduate. There was a surge of failed graduates that start calling the King, only to be told 'no'. So this filters the patronage and it genuinely trains people. The underlying purpose was patronage management.

Reform against political corruption in Italy

After WWII, Italy looked very like Afghanistan. Huge amounts of money were coming in from the U.S., and from Russia, each of whom wanted Italy's support in the Cold War. The political system became 100 percent corrupted in 10-15 years. (See discussion of Italy in Annex 1). Speeches from the leading politicians in Italy said very publicly that not one single Member of Parliament was clean. This is very like Afghanistan.

Italy changed this situation around 1988-1995, and it is interesting to note how they changed this. It was a combination of circumstances to make a sudden change. A large mass of Italians got totally fed up with the system corruption. They also had higher social expectations that were not being fulfilled. They voted both political parties out of power. This created a change in the social environment



which allowed the judges to be more active against corruption. It is as if the societal anger gave them a mandate to be more energetic. Corruption prosecutions had been at a stable level for decades, then accelerated to 10 times their previous level and stayed at that new level. There is still significant corruption in Italy, but smaller by an order of magnitude.

So here is an interesting parallel with Afghanistan. Is the government is willing and able to dramatically increase the activity of institutions like ACJC and the courts generally? If so, might this have a similar impact to the Italian case?

Back to Afghanistan discussion. Some of us have been here a long time. My parents left here and I was raised in the U.S. MEC is something that I am familiar with, I have has seen their journey. Had MEC not taken the stands, and not given it teeth, there would not be a level of confidence. So hat's off to MEC for being able to stand up and say the right thing. MEC has crashed the illusion that we need to be at the beck and call of the Donor.

Greece and 'self-cleansing' Ministries

The Greek Prime Minister has given all ministers the "self-clean" concept, which means finding ways to reduce corruption that do not depend on recourse to the courts. Responses:

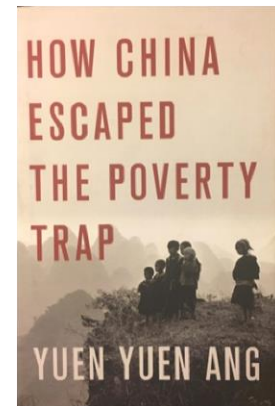
- The element of naming and shaming is very strong pressure but how to implement it is the question, like making it through social media.
- You have to be creative with this idea. But here corruption is culturally accepted. So we can encourage the idea of integrity.
- It won't work because of the existing culture of impunity.
- I did exactly the same thing. Now let me tell you what happened. There was a guy who was working in our ministry. He had the antenna of a telecommunication company inside his home. Having it, he also had access to free electricity. He started stretching electricity to others for money. We fired him but did not reveal his name. We were greatly admired in social media. People started giving positive comments. But we have been informed that he was given a job in any other ministry.
- We have joined art-lord and painted a picture on the wall of the Ministry of Justice. It was part of our national campaign against corruption. So every minister has a security wall. They could do the same thing.

China - a very different anti-corruption strategy: one that alternates between control and revenue growth

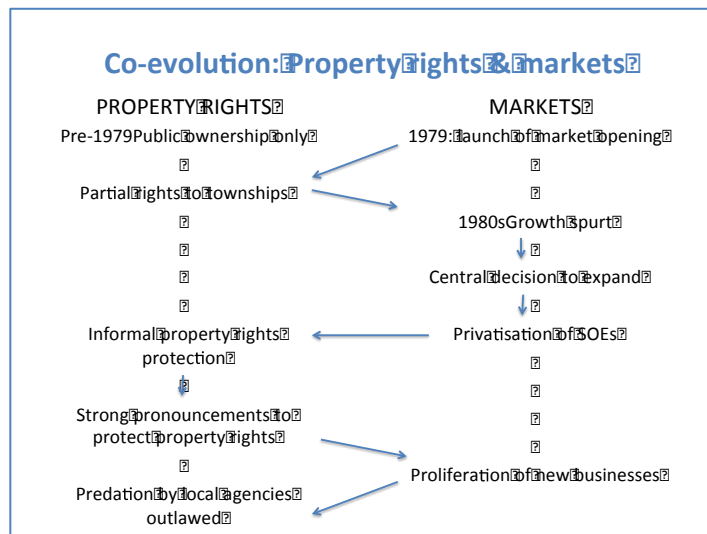
A new and rather impressive analysis of how China developed has recently been published. It claims that the path out of poverty was achieved by alternating between economic growth and control, and being very flexible in how they permitted each province to develop. This latter

flexibility is termed 'Directed improvisation'. The analysis gives meaning to this phrase as follows:

- Delimit boundaries of experimentation and flexibility
- Activate incremental changes across connected domains simultaneously
- In the beginning, define success narrowly
- Give everyone a personal stake in the development process
- Let some get rich but pair up the poor and the rich
- Harness weak institutions to build markets



The book gives an example of the alternating strategy by showing how property rights were periodically strengthened, and then at other times the market was allowed to grow in an uncontrolled way in some provinces, and then some years later control was strengthened again.



So, China allowed economic development for a few years, almost uncontrolled, highly corrupt. Then they strengthened the anti-corruption for about three years, then opened it up again. In Afghanistan, the arrival of the ACJC is a good example of a 'control' period.' The ACJC is good, now people may go to jail for their crimes.

The element that is missing, in a comparison with Afghanistan strategy, is revenue growth.

What are your views on this theory, and how Afghanistan can be actively pursuing economic growth with tackling corruption at the same time?

Georgia had to fight very strongly in the face of mafia; they made reforms, but very harshly fought them. By comparison, Turkey was always business friendly, since the mid-1970s. They created a middle class, then other reforms started and investment flowed. A middle class then pays taxes and they want accountability.

Afghanistan needs a strong stable government in order to have this back/forth. And we don't have this. So would be frightened to open the gates.

Last week we met a dozen businessmen and asked what they thought. One thing they said is that they have nowhere to go for help. And there is no good answer. In the A-C Strategy, the government has proposed being more friendly to business, but then not a lot to back it up. What are people's opinion on helping business, so they grow more rapidly?

There has not been joint discussion on economic growth. Instead, the High Council is a forum for approving projects. Tackling corruption and economic growth can actually feed each other. A High Council meeting could address this.

4. Private sector, less corruption and economic growth

Do you have examples of strengthening private sector?

1. We have done an analysis of all private sectors in Afghanistan. The government has decided to put private sector as a priority. Local manufacturing should be supported and strengthened. Chicken farms are one of them. We invited representatives from all sectors and listened to their challenges. They were quite painful. I proposed to immediately call a workshop. In the agriculture sector, to facilitate some policy directions, policies should be made related to customs. We have also decided to bring more coordination in our anti-corruption agencies. We asked UNAMA to bring coordination between civil societies. The government does not want to get involved with civil society groups directly. The other thing is about coherence between anti-corruption agencies. President invited people and listened to their advices on how to do it. So restructuring of our anti-corruption institution is one of them main topic.
2. Promoting private sector can tackle corruption. In MoCIT, we have decided to stop monopoly of communication companies. With the new policy, there would not be one dominant telecommunication companies. Encouraging private sector will result in economic growth.
3. I would like to talk about the industrial parks. I see that people invested a lot but they don't have raw material to produce products due to lack of electricity. They could not succeed in their businesses because they could not reach to ministers to address their challenges. But we visited them and listed their challenges.
4. The issue is that we made some reform. But that has further exacerbated the problem. For example, Municipality sold most of its lands but we are getting complaints about the selling process. In terms of incorporating the private sector into our Anti-corruption efforts, it is hard. We have a company here that has manipulated everything.
5. The private sector is helping a lot in this regard in our Ministry, and we have seen successful of contributions to anti-corruption cases. I have an example, where we have online complaints for private sector where people can address their concerns, and this is working well. We also have other stories that private sector helped us in anti-corruption cases.
6. We should indeed build the trust for private sector. My example is from two cases I have had in the last 3 months. I told the business people to provide me the name and their issues, and that I will take care of the situation. I took action and the problem did not happened again so the private sector helped us to solve this problem, and we helped them back too!

7. I have an example too; a company came and complained that its competing company is providing fake equipment to the bidding, and they won. So we took their complaint, escalated it, and this complaint helped us avoid corruption in the work for our agency.
8. The Commercial Bank is part of central bank, and if we get complains from private sector, we do the full investigations. We have some of the cases that were taken to ACJC. Complaints from the private sector are very important to us; like a red flag.
9. Two years ago we would send the passports to provinces and in the middle of this process, some corruption did also happen. One company was the contracting company to take the passports the provinces and we received complains about some cases that passports were missing. In this case the private sector people helped us find the problem and solve it.
10. We have also a forum rather like this one in our office too. These forums are managed by two major private entities; one is the LEAD group, which is a female owned group, and the other one is managed by a Kandahari entity. They come together and let us know the corruption cases they have found and we take their cases to major high level friends and we try to help them.
11. A good first step is to start talking constructively with businesses. Could there be an open day for business? Like the AGO has done?
12. On Wednesday, for the first time we celebrated the accountancy international day here at the Serena. Establishing CPA Afghanistan. One of the things learned, is that there is a lack of capacity in the trainers. Sometimes they are doing the training, they are not aware of the laws, especially tax. So the time they are going to renew their licenses, they receive a huge penalty. So are changing the law on accountancy. There is a need of accounts who keep the books of the traders. They need to see what laws should be applied for the businesses. Many businesses failed because they could not pay the penalties or the taxes. They must file their taxes, or there is a penalty, and many don't know. So many end up with huge penalties, and these are more than the taxes they should have paid.
13. One good thing we see happening is innovations and technologies being brought by businesses to Afghanistan. It's very good and amazing. It brings a lot of efficiency. For example, I have good reports about municipalities relying on private sectors to clean their cities.
14. I just want to share the experience of private sector that we earlier talked about!. The private company can share their concern with us. Since the two years ago that we had started this, the operating company shared lots of their thoughts with us and they are happy that they have improved a lot. In one experience we listened to them and they gave us very helpful feedback. We should listen to private sector more!

15. As a physician who is now a senior manager in MOPH, I think public sectors need to learn how to win public trust. We see famous doctors in private sectors. Patients wait in long lines to visit the doctor, but they never come to the public hospitals.
16. I would like to share the importance of checks and balance in private public sector like what kind of control we have to measure QC and that creates a clean competition. Standardization is very important especially in health sector and I am interested to see MEC's contributions to this sector.
17. Asan Khedmat has established a good system for those working in Afghanistan, a business registry. MoF has established Small Tax Office, Medium Tax Office and Large Tax Office under one roof. The idea behind this was to make it easy for businesses to pay their tax. The front desk checks all the relevant documents. The physical location is being established now.
18. The two big challenges that businesses are facing are access to credit, and complex processes, where there is much corruption. Now access to credit is coming back, with access to agricultural loans. On the process side, the main challenges are land, visas, and certifications of private businesses, all of which have corruption issues. Harakat is now establishing a virtual and physical portal, so business can access these approvals online.
19. On the negative side, one participant closely engaged in business/government dealings commented that there has not yet been any positive change. More medium sized companies are currently closing their businesses than opening. One or two medium sized companies each month are opening new businesses, but five to six per day are closing. So the comparison to ones opening and ones closing is currently highly negative: 100 a month closing to 1 -2 a month opening. Large companies, e.g., telecoms and banks, are static – neither new ones opening nor existing ones closing.
20. In the telecoms sector, most of the contracts are with the bigger companies. They win the contracts, whilst security problems and financing problems force the small companies to close down.
21. Part of the problem is that Afghanistan suffers from land grabbing, which has been going on for 40 years. There are some positive initiatives. For example, one major Afghanistan organization has created a database of all its properties, with the support of one of the national societies. They have gone after those who have been taking their lands – the biggest one is the Government. They recently gave back 61 jerib, and the number one market price. They are currently in negotiations with a very big government agency and over 100 Jerib will be taken from them. This is a very positive piece of real progress, with proposals of how to solve more of the problem.

22. Obtaining business licenses: has there been any progress? A little progress at MoCI, but not really. MoCI has the central business registry office, but other ministries also provide licenses. Business needs two licenses: one provides you the ability to do business in Afghanistan, the other is given by a line ministry, like the MoPH, which should review everything needed for the functioning, like a hospital, and to give permission to open the hospital. There are around 25 ministries, which issues licenses. No one knows how many licenses are issued in Afghanistan.
23. Two successful initiatives from the one-stop shop at Asan Khedmat (AK). 1) for work permit for the foreigners. Now AK is working on improving the visa extension process for foreigners; and 2) the process for printing and processing all the passports at the Passport Agency in MoI. Next AK will start with improving the traffic system, hopefully to bring all these under one roof.
24. There is need for a better system for vendors, so smaller companies can participate in procurement – this will regularize the market, which at present favors the larger companies. Promoting medium and smaller businesses is essential. One participant was a member of that group from the MoF. How we can have such policies to promote medium and small businesses? For instance, take electricity. There is a requirement for possible electricity services providers to have 10 years of work experience. Which kind of businesses will apply for these contracts? If you specify a requirement for 10 years' experience, this automatically means most businesses will not qualify. From 2001 to now, almost no companies would qualify.
25. There needs to be one platform, working with different offices at the same time. Once the systems are developed, the systems can be connected. MoLSAMD is happy now to get results, and will open for work permits for domestic employees.
26. Others spoke of the need to strengthen technology capability, for example through MCIT actions. So from the telecom side, MCIT is promoting technology companies. For example, call centers located in India bring in USD 20 billion. Such these services can easily be supported here. For example, Rana Technology has about 100 people doing this, and they want to get the call centers. Government needs to support this at the embassy level - Ambassadors should go to speak to people in those countries.
27. There are now several initiatives being undertaken in MAIL, on the availability for water and mechanisms borrowed from international best practices – making farmers aware of what to grow, where to grow it, what kind of crops.
28. Other participants were focused on the situation right now, not on future 'plans'. For example, you can go to the airport and see agricultural produces – fresh fruit. But in Kunduz and Helmand, the products are eaten by the animals since the goods cannot get to the center. If you close the border doors and not allow the fruit to be sent outside, there is an un-sellable surplus. These businesses are losing money so cannot invest for

tomorrow, e.g., millions of dollars have been invested in farms for chickens and for fish, but these businesses are mostly now closing since they cannot export. This sort of reality data on agriculture and business and corruption needs to be the focus for action, not future planning.

29. There is a policy that 25 percent of purchases must be local. But it is not at all respected. Who will implement the 25 percent policy? None. Even on imports, the firms are exempted. So in practice, many big companies are providing foods for ISAF and others from Dubai. They are still not allowed to take the local food, instead they must supply from outside. One big company is supplying most of this food. They have their rules.
30. There have recently been useful declarations and resolutions on Beneficial ownership and who owns the companies.

5. Thinking about practical anti-corruption approaches

What should be the desired 'beneficial outcome' of the anti-corruption strategy?

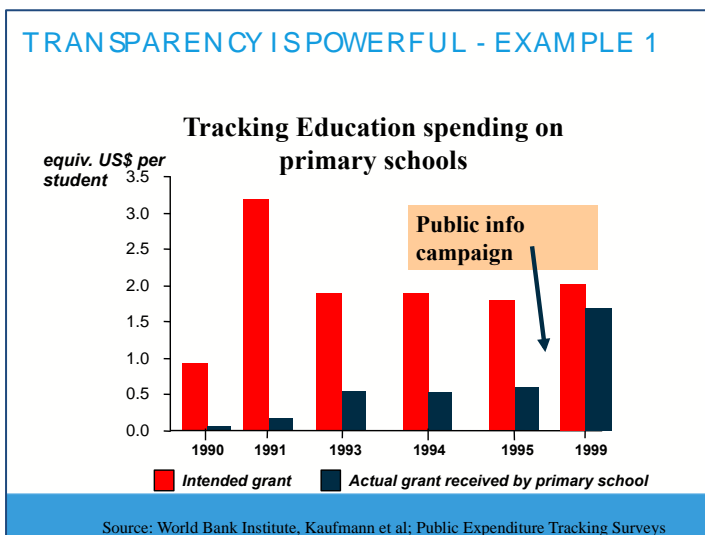
Reducing corruption is not really an end objective in itself. It's really step on the way to improved services, or improved revenue, or a more satisfied set of customers...or what?

- One of the key criticisms of the public against the government is existence of rampant corruption. The first desired outcome is to get the trust of the public to win the fight against corruption.
- The administration should be able to achieve rule of law to curb corruption. The government needs to revise its financial system. We also systemize the system to stop nepotism. Yes, public trust is also very important.
- As long as there is impunity for crimes, it is hard to fight against corruption.
- We need to increase efficiency of public services to curb corruption.
- To fight corruption, we need to stop nepotism. Afghan institutions are corrupt and so are the International ones. International NGOs are also involved in corruption.
- The current government needs to strengthen its institutions. For example, recruitment processes and projects should be properly monitored.
- I travel from time to time to the States. I noticed that roads are so clean. You wouldn't see any trash but once you exist east coast, you see piles of trash. The reason is because control is there. People know others see them. In our system, as long as there is culture of impunity, nothing else will work.
- I will focus on corruption because it is a big impediment to economic development in my country. I will see how we can tackle it so that we can grow economically.
- We need to place right people on the right places. We should not sub-contract projects because creates socio-economic gaps.

Using 'transparency' cleverly can be very powerful

Example of school budgets in Uganda.

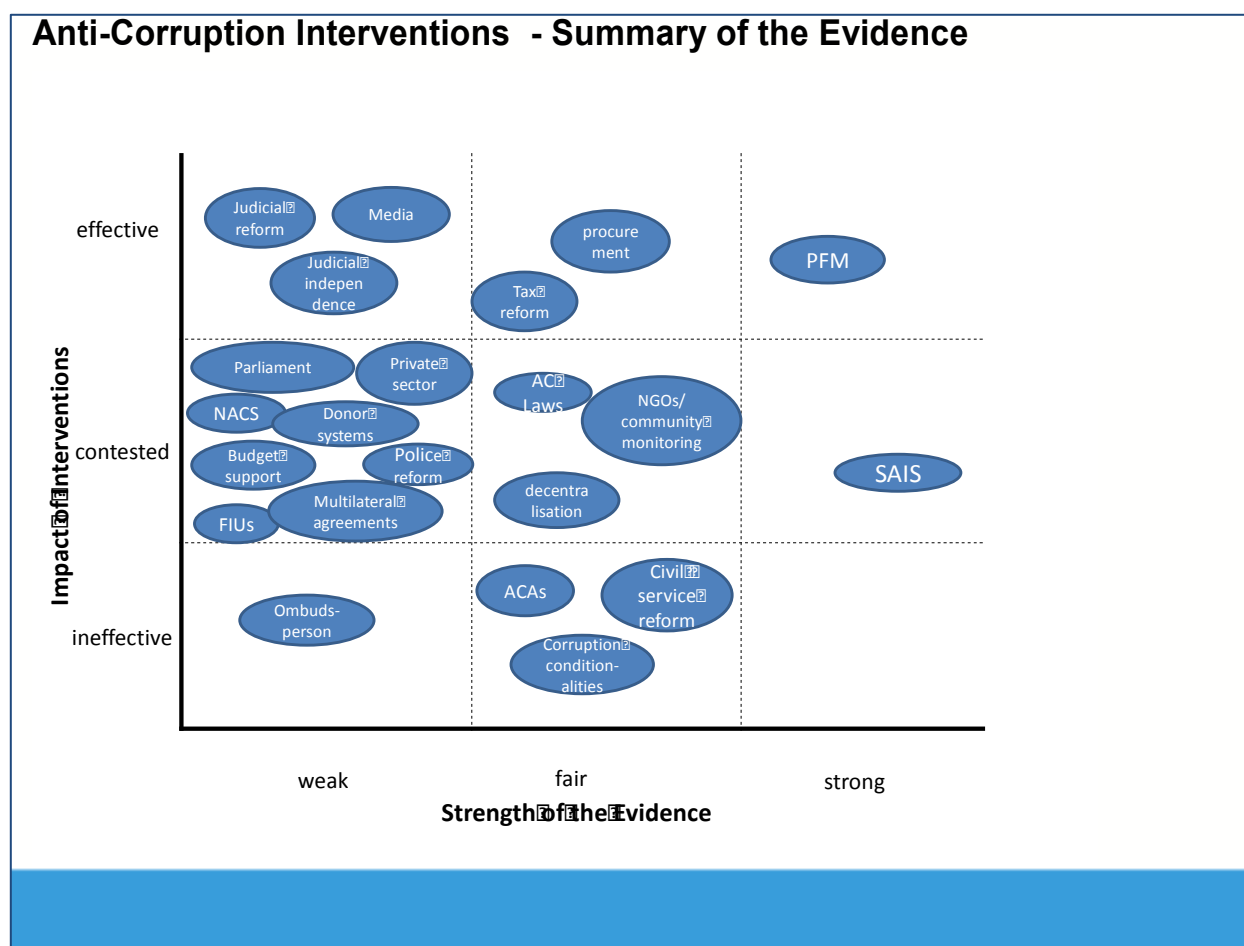
Transparency as a prime driver of government change. Transparency is not just a 'good thing;' but how good use of the concept can drive rapid



change within government. The facilitator shared an example of how greater transparency of primary education budgets at schools across one country had demonstrated graphically the scale of corruption, and this had led to a major reduction in government education corruption.

See the slide opposite. Responses. Again, this topic generated a lively discussion and many examples.

Research evidence: Measures that are effective against corruption



The slide above shows international findings regarding reform measures against corruption: where there is evidence that they are effective.

The most effective measure, and the one for which there is the most evidence, is Public Financial Management (PFM).

Also effective, though somewhat less so according to the available evidence, are Procurement, Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIS), Tax reform, monitoring by NGOs, Anti-Corruption laws and Decentralization. Responses:

- Decentralization is listed here in the doc as an important issue. I totally agree with it especially in the health sector. There are a lot of anxieties in provinces and districts regarding lack of sufficient attention in the provinces.
- This diagram is very encouraging. Australian government helped us with some components, which are some parts of the PFM reform, which is a five-year program. So it is encouraging to see that we are on the right direction.
- Who has good experience of internal audit? Only two hands were raised out of 10. It is difficult to run an organization like a company. X runs his organization as if it were a company, with rules where everyone has a say. Last year he probably had 10 different groups of auditors – four he requested, and six at someone else's request. One set of auditors said that every year they receive gifts as part of audit, and if they receive those then the audit will be finished. The audit was covering the guy who was in charge last year, so audits should get gifts from them. Then for the current year, the audit team named him as a problem as part of their audit findings. So when he received the audit, he wrote a letter saying he would have nothing to do with the audit – never heard another word. An auditor said that they had paid USD 40,000, in order to get the job of doing that audit, so the auditor was asking for his pay from the organization. So as soon as the chief of an organization says there is no benefit to doing an audit there – then in the future, no auditors want to come in the future. Idea: So if there is an organization that no one wants to audit, then perhaps it means that the organization is probably honest. There are many unprofessional audits, people come in and ask things for which they don't have a clue. Each entity should be audited by professionals every year. It should be a key mechanism. Audits can indeed improve management efficiency. But it depends on who has commissioned it. They can also be an excellent tool for manipulation. Audits should be helping us.

Empowering officials to become reformists

Corruption is curbed better when you empower committed people and inspire them to do the right thing, especially those in government. So we could have a strategy to encourage a wide range of people to do the right thing. What do you think? Responses:

- I agree with you that the work of large number of like-minded people in different government organizations can help to curb corruption. Individuals need to be united. Tashweeq program is a good example. Such programs can create a system and bring committed people together.
- I agree. Assan Khidmat was a small project that was initiated by a small number of individuals. Now are determined to make electronic all government services. It would not have been possible, if we had not taken the risk and stepped up.

- We need champions to bring committed people together. One champion will have scores of followers.

Anti-Corruption strategies should cover both 'systems' and 'people'

There are two sides to corruption control, one is reform of the systems. And the other is to **give hope to people**. Dramatic example – the New York police were corrupt from top to bottom in the 1980s. Several police chiefs started with the police on the street acting nice to people. It ended up being very successful. This is a very real issue. Ministers need to pay more attention to visible change, not just systems change.

The role of donors

We all know the way there can be double-standards among the Donors. Do you think the Donors are behaving better – standing up against this bad behavior like nepotism – since seven years ago? Nine people answered: Five said they are better. None said worse. Four said they were the same.

The contracts with the Donors, we do see a change in their national approach toward with corruption. Donors and internationals were previously not willing to talk about corruption since it jeopardized their work. There is a UNAMA officer who was here, and has returned and who sees the same thing, that donors are acknowledging it more. Within Resolute Support, there are now 80 people looking at tackling corruption, up from 25 six months ago. Anti-corruption actions will now be reflected in everything they are doing.

I recruited 100 percent of my staff in XX Directorate on the basis of their experience and their education. In the last year, officially started in July 2016, the staff are working in a very good friendly environment, with good teamwork and the team members supporting each other. I see that family ties are corrupting; I would not recruit anyone's family and friends.

Having lived here for the past 15 years, I have come to the conclusion that donors dealing with corruption are a seasonal thing. They focus on it for a while, and then move on to other things. What is important is Afghans themselves, all these years; they have not stood up to Donors and their well-known corruption. If we do stand up to them, as we have been doing at MEC, they back off and listen to you. Donors were pressurizing us not to investigate one of their programs and threatening to cut off our funding. We had to take our objection to this to the level of the President, but then they backed off.

There used to be 99 percent corruption in my part of my ministry. Now the corruption has been dramatically reduced. We take serious actions, we fire people. My minister supports me. Some 30-40 people have been fired, others sent to other provinces. People see that serious decisions are made. I receive letters that threaten, including kidnapping. But now the problem is that after making these decisions, people are not supporting me. In addition, there is no

proper protection from the government. So we make progress, but we must do much more to support committed individuals like me.

Donor engagement is declining. Forty percent of the GDP is from Donor assistance at present. By 2020 it will decline to 20 percent. Donors are looking for savings, not only in the military sector, but outside of this. So they are building mechanisms for improvement. He agrees there is reform at CSTCA and RS to be more active against corruption, and there is a five-year program at USAID for anti-corruption. World Bank is the primary supporter of the current procurement reform. These international bodies are currently very open on their support for anti-corruption programs.

6. The importance of family ties in Afghanistan

Family ties in Afghanistan are much stronger than in Europe, where ties are weak. There is a theory that says that the stronger the family ties, the stronger the corruption in a country.

Research

Across countries and cultures, the norm to favor one's family varies greatly. Göran Hydén described Africa's "economies of affection" where kinship and tribal obligations inhibit good governance. A saying in the former Czechoslovakia was "He who does not steal from the state, steals from his family."

From Latin America come accounts of clans and also *compadrazgo* or fictive kinship that provides mutually supporting and constraining networks

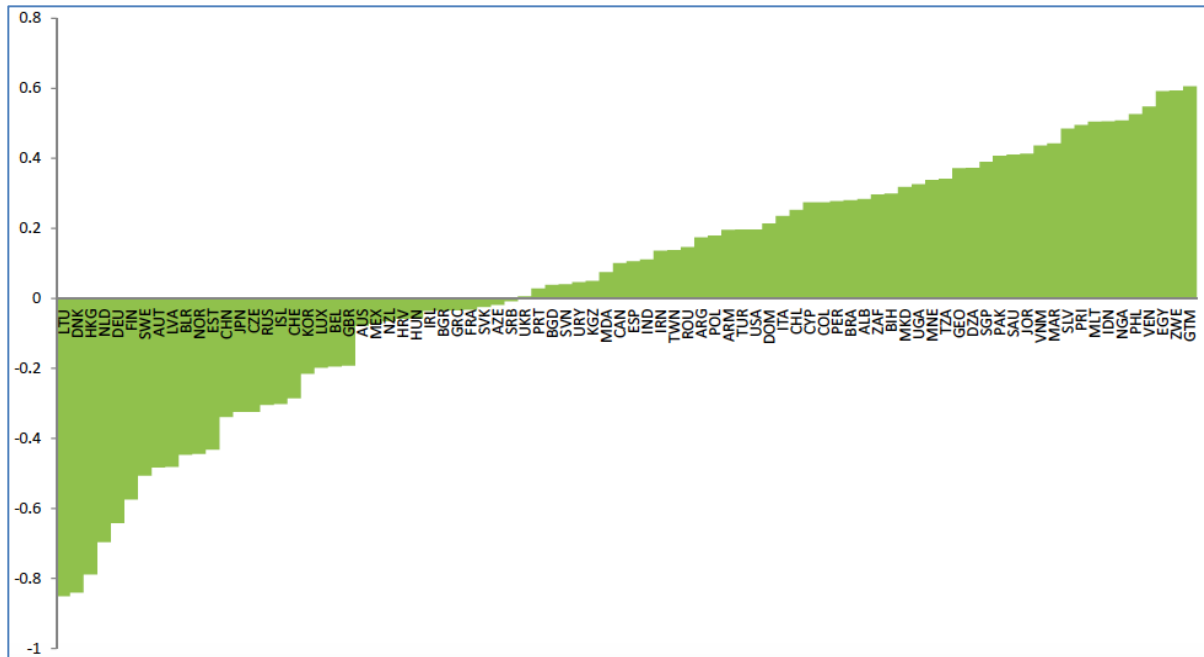
In India, Narendra Modi argued that he would not be corrupt because he is single, as opposed to other Indians with strong, corrupting family ties.²

From Egypt and Afghanistan come analyses of the power of family and clan to distort the good governance many in these countries say they seek

Using the World Values Survey, Alberro Alesina and Paola Giuliano (2010) created a measure of the strength of family ties. "Scandinavian countries and many Eastern European countries tend to have the weakest levels of family ties. In a middle range are France, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. More familistic societies are Italy and many Latin American countries including Colombia, Peru and Brazil. In the extreme part of the distributions are some Latin America countries like Guatemala and Venezuela, African countries like Egypt and Zimbabwe and Asian countries like Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

The graph shows the strength of family ties from weak (left side) to strong (right side). Far left is Lithuania, and the far right is Guatemala. Afghanistan is not shown, but it would show up far on the right-hand side. The research (from Robert Klitgaard, 2017) goes on to correlate the family ties to corruption in a country. What is your opinion about this?

From Klitgaard, 2017. <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/working-paper-series/culture-and-corruption>



Would like everyone's opinion, any experience with this in their work.

I would call this a social network, not so much family ties. Sometimes it goes beyond rules and regulations. Historically, in Afghanistan, we did not have a government which could provide. People usually rely on their family, friends, relatives and neighbors. These people are their insurance. People try to keep their networks, if they get a call from a close friend, they know their friend will stay with them for their entire life.

This graph does not address the issue fully, because social networks are always going to help. We are where we are because of our networks.

All nations go through a natural state of evolution. We start off as a child, we have desires. As a tribal society, we will have desires. So Afghanistan, we are where America was in the 1800s. What you are bringing up here, family ties, this could be a fallacy because if you go into the Afghan tribal system of years ago, it was based on a handshake. Was there corruption with this handshake; no? Today, you can give a handshake and then the person is your enemy tomorrow. See the subject of 'Spiral dynamics.'

It is unfair to generalize. In the case of Afghanistan, some UNDP experts did personal research on corruption. They found that in order to fight corruption here, you need to go back 400 years. It's a transformation from the previous administrations. For instance, my uncle was in the army as a general, he had a son who went into the Army. The son was dispatched to Kandahar, but he wanted to redeployed to Kabul where it was safe. But the father had strong integrity and said the son could not do this. To look at it from a value perspective. It's how you abide by the code of conduct. How you want to treat everyone, how you want to do justice.

Yes, family ties have affected the increase on corruption, but this example also shows the opposite. We need to work from education level to strengthen this correct use of family ties.

Afghanistan is not a corrupt nation – it's not in our DNA, and according to our religion, corruption is not allowed. Many of us have fought it for many years, because we love this country. The reasons that, in the last 15 years, we have sunk into corruption – a big issue – is that it needs political will that we have not had. If there is political will against corruption, then we can make the right decisions.

There is also a key issue of salaries. For example, all the officers in the MoF have a low salary – less than USD 100 per month, and even director level is only USD 400 per month. The average family size in Afghanistan is seven people. Only one or two of them are working. Most of the people in Kabul have come from the provinces and have to pay for food, housing, health; and with seven people to feed, then it is hard to survive.

This participant, with just one signature, is generating millions of AFs for the government. She is seeing the staffs' family, some are sick, and money is needed for their treatment. Suppose for one or two years, their salaries are increased. They will increase the revenue of the government. If the salaries are raised two or three times, then you will eliminate 70 percent of the corruption in the Revenue and Custom Departments.

I would take the graph with a grain of salt. I am probably the oldest Afghan here, and I remember the pre-war times. In this time, we had the same strong family ties, same clan ties, we had poverty – and yet, the level of corruption was significantly lower. It is hard to simplify this issue. The level of corruption today is due to the lack of rule of law, which in those days did exist. We are a nation of survivalists; four decades of war vanishes morality and ethics. The insecurity about the future is more important in conditioning behavior, rather than the family ties.

This insecurity is top of most peoples' minds. Afghanistan does not have a social security system. If you lose your job, the government does not pay you anything. We always live with massive uncertainty. So we must rely on family, friend, tribe, etc. This is only partly about corruption. On the corruption side, if you look at the Afghan job market, most of the employment opportunities are not done on the basis of merit, but on influence. This might be based on family nepotism, but it is also for other reasons, like political favors.

We cannot deny family ties cause huge corruption in the system. Why this exists in the system? It could be the other way round – nepotism and payment for favors has become an endemic system, and in every job where you have to do any work, you need recommendation, even if a patient has been recommended by the doctor for surgery, they family will try to contact the big boss of the hospital to encourage it go well.

Facilitator: In order to make a different point, I suggest to you that the direct connection between family ties and corruption. Of course, family ties are strong, but if we are thinking

about strategies to reduce corruption in this environment, and to create leverage, then these family ties are an extremely important source of leverage. The example of the general requiring his son to serve in Helmand, even though the son wanted a safe posting in Kabul, is a good example of this. So, where we are all seeking to strengthen national A-C capability and progress, using these family ties for integrity can be put to positive use.

I agree that if Afghanistan was on the graph, it would be far to the right on the graph, and I do believe there is a correlation between family ties and corruption. Positions are passed down to the children. In some cases, a person's entire clan is seen as something very special. Generals' children are being promoted in the military, even without any training.

There needs to be educational programs in schools about honesty. In the constitutional laws, we need to have stronger provisions about nepotism, and stronger enforcement.

In the last 17 years, the foreigners made Afghans professionally corrupt. In their village, they never looked to others for help. If we look at Afghanistan's history, there was a percentage of corruption in the high positions, but not in the lower. If there is political will and proper enforcement, even for the big fish, the government should take the proper action. Singapore the corruption is around zero, because they take action. In Afghanistan, we never go after the big fish, so the lower people learn from this. They see that the corrupt people have a good lifestyle, and that they have nice investments in other countries.

In our office, there were five people arrested in my office due to corruption – about USD 20,000 value. They were arrested and now action will be taken. But, at the end of this case, all of these people will pay money and be released.

Eight years ago, I was in a situation where a particular recruitment was done corruptly, and I did not have the ability to fight against them. A year later this became a disastrous situation, so the person was let go. If we look at the issues here, when you have this double standard constantly in your face for 15 years, and these people are getting enriched. No matter how many investigations there are, SIGAR, etc., people lose hope.

Then eight years later, exactly the same situation reoccurred. This time the Donors supported me standing up against this (they did not last time). We are seeing a significant number of turnarounds like this. We should look at the positive things that are taking place.

7. The most interesting thing you have learned? 50 comments

1. I see everywhere a reform push.
2. We have developed a passport system, which easily tracks people, who was blacklisted. People no longer needing to stand in line. And are ready to launch the online passport application.
3. The willingness of the top leadership, the President, the Minister – if you have good ideas for reform, simplify the processes, or help the public, it is appreciated and taken into account. So this willingness is good. And for good reform, for good ideas, there is funding available. If we have good programs – either from government or donors – it will be funded.
4. We have heard about many good things happening, exams that are sophisticated, using IT, and are very objective. And one-stop-shops. And online applications for passports. All are good, real A-C measures. But the bad thing is that they are not presented as A-C measures: The people should see these good things.
5. Agreed. People from the government are not talking about this.
6. What is encouraging above all is the willingness of the top level of government to act on corruption.
7. The Civil Service Commission is doing impressive work. Having fresh blood in an entity or ministry, it will show new thinking.
8. We wanted to build the capacity of the inside of the organization. We wanted to identify the professional, dedicated capacities, which were earlier taken into isolation. The second thing, we stopped from external hands from interfering in the hiring of positions. So the ones now that are hired, they have the capacity. Stopped the MPs and others to interfere. And we strengthened the monitoring in all parts of the AGO. We are monitoring all the organizations to reduce corruption, to bring transparency. So anyone who wants to see our cases, they can see how we deal with the cases. These are the significant steps.
9. Although corruption is booming now in Afghanistan, AGO is actively fighting corruption. There was the publication yesterday of MEC's major report on Education. If these trends are continued, then this is the right direction.
10. Corruption is a silent enemy. Two things encourage me. The first, the establishment of the ACJC. Second, a major legacy of President Ghani is the appointment of young and talented Afghans. In the past there was so much patronage, unqualified people were being appointed.

11. I recently reported a corruption case. The attorneys then tried to prosecute me. It was AFN 320 million, 100 taken out by corruption, so all left was AFN 220 million. So he was asked many questions, who the people are that are corrupt. But now, with the AGO, the case can be tackled in the right way.
12. The new Anti0-corruption Law and whistleblower law are both good signs of progress
13. Some ministers are paying attention to the fight against corruption, and some are appointing good advisors in the role to fight corruption. And at the MoF, the Revenue Director, they have a complaint mechanism in place, and there is a complaint number which can be called. These are good signs.
14. We now see that, if someone is approached for a bribe, they can then contact AGO and then a sting operation will be set up and they can catch the person.
15. Leadership improvement in Afghanistan is positive. Second, reform-minded people. Third, things like ACJC.
16. The increased commitment of the Afghan Leadership. I attended the High Council meeting on Wednesday – the President and CEO strongly shared the same opinion,. They were completely aware that the deep problems in the MoE cannot be solved by the Minister alone. It's a much more structured approach at the top level, which has not been there in the past few years.
17. It is encouraging that the prosecutors now have a new criminal law.
18. Very useful, creates new ideas for us to fight against corruption
19. Discussions was focused on useful topics, the part on family ties is very interesting
20. Maybe there is a change in the terrain?
21. Perhaps the terrain is at last changing?
22. Afghans hold the solutions to their problems, we need sessions like this
23. We have talked a lot, but I need to look to the results of this discussion
24. Afghanistan has a lot of positive stories of successful fights against corruption
25. This group is encouraging, it comes up with positive stories
26. I am happy to learn that perhaps donor behavior is changing
27. I am very happy to have a forum where with all these problems, we can discuss realities
28. I am encouraged
29. With a strong judiciary system, we can kill corruption
30. This a very valuable discussion; could we extend these forums to have them also in the provinces?

31. In any project I work on, I try to educate people around me to avoid corruption.
32. I like the idea of decentralization, which is equal to efficiency but first we need to build capacity in local level.
33. We have high turnover in our organizations and many of our organizations have strategic plans. Teaching new employees about core values and familiarizing them with the strategic plans almost never happens.
34. The hope is in the young generation. If we identify the young talents, educate them, inspire them, they produce the best results.
35. You can't do everything by yourself and in a society, the civil society better come together and take actions.
36. I think being a good role model is critical; you should be the desired change. People begin copying you. We should not be two-faced kind of person and we should be transparent honest.
37. I think changing the position of civil servants can be a good idea and again for the having a good civil servant we need to invest more and bring more good people.
38. My observation or my experience is people can learn from each other and learn the conflict of interest. We should show them and teach by taking personal actions.
39. Good things have been raised in this meeting. We have a strong political will to fight corruption in Afghanistan. For low level people, there are reasons for them seeking corruption. Salaries are low. Need to evaluate in a broad way, what are the causes of corruption. And see those things which have been carried out in other ministries. We need to work systematically and combine efforts.
40. If everyone would agree, regarding this meeting, is to take the 10-20 positive experiences and send it to them.
41. Excellent, if we only had more time to discuss things
42. I like the way this forum is designed, to discuss actions, things that work in other countries and Afghanistan. In the future, specify on the tools that really work. Categorize the sectors and what tools to use to fight corruption
43. This sort of initiative is necessary. We all suffer from the same pain, and the cure is common. They are on the same page.
44. Very useful. If we start talking about our personal stories that will take a long time, so come with specific topics to discuss. Stories of our personal experience should only be used to add something to the discussion.

45. We all know that laws and procedures are in place, so in government the problem is implementation. So to form an anti-corruption culture, we need to expand the number of attendees.
46. Many would like to participate in future forums.
47. More time is good and in the evening, and a mixture of people, not a specialized group.
48. More women.
49. A diverse group is good.
50. Pleased to be a part of this, learned a lot. Should continue.