



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

NEWS RELEASE: Afghanistan's Disabled—Victimized Once Again by an Inefficient and Corrupt Bureaucracy

KABUL, Afghanistan, June 3, 2015 - This Vulnerability to Corruption Assessment (VCA) focuses on what Afghan citizens disabled in security incidents must go through to receive compensation payments from the government. As a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Afghanistan is obliged to accord the disabled due respect, providing them with equality of opportunity and equal access to services and facilities. However, based on MEC's findings, it would be hard to argue that the Government of Afghanistan upholds these principles in practice.

The Law on the Rights and Privileges of People with Disabilities (the "Law") defines disabled persons as those who have been injured as a result of an armed conflict, either as a member of the military or police, or as a civilian. This is the definition that the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MOLSAMD) uses when registering disabled persons.

To obtain the payments to which they are legally entitled, disabled persons must negotiate a series of convoluted, redundant, and time-consuming steps, many of which do not follow any discernible policy. After obtaining a document verifying they were injured in a security incident (usually from a local Shura, although no uniform, nationwide standards exist) and a separate certification from a Health Commission, applicants must then submit their paperwork to MOLSAMD. But almost no one interviewed by MEC could accurately describe the process from start to finish, nor could anyone provide MEC with a document defining payment-eligibility criteria.

Multiple applicants interviewed by MEC stated that MOLSAMD often resorts to bureaucratic tactics to solicit bribes, conducting little if any substantive fact finding to determine an applicant's eligibility. In many cases, it is alleged that the Fact Finding Commission holds up the processing of valid applications for 2-3 years.

The government also lacks a sufficient number of trained personnel to process these applications. For instance, many provincial Health Commissions allocate only about 8 hours per week for the processing of disability payments. This causes significant backlogs and creates opportunities for corrupt government officials to demand bribes for processing the appropriate paperwork in a more timely manner. Moreover, the general database used to register disabled persons and dependents of martyrs is done in Excel, which effectively means it can be manipulated at any time. Multiple payment cards for one individual are also not uncommon.

Furthermore, the government is not in compliance with a key provision of the Law. According to Article 22, disabled persons should make up at least 3% of government employees. In raw numbers, this means that there should be 11,280 disabled persons employed by the Afghan government. In reality, though, there are only 637. In a country ravaged by more than three decades of unrest, it seems unlikely that this is due to a lack of qualified disabled job applicants.

To address the numerous deficiencies identified in this VCA, MEC urges the government to adopt new eligibility criteria for disability payments and make them publically available and easily accessible. Finally, MEC recommends that MOLSAMD establish "one-stop shops" in its provincial offices to make it easier for individuals to navigate the unnecessarily complex application process.

For further information, please direct all inquiries to contact@mec.af. For more information on MEC, please our website (www.mec.af) or our Facebook page ([mec.afghanistan](https://www.facebook.com/mec.afghanistan)).