



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

**NEWS RELEASE: MEC to Assess Process for Investigating and Prosecuting
*Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) Cases***

KABUL, Afghanistan, August 8, 2015 – Today, MEC announces the launch of a comprehensive Vulnerability to Corruption Assessment (VCA) on the justice sector's handling of EVAW cases. Although legal frameworks and procedures designed to protect women from violence exist, corruption appears to pervade the ways in which EVAW cases are investigated, prosecuted and judged. The vast majority of EVAW cases are inadequately addressed by the justice system, deterring victims from appealing to formal institutions.

Based on two consultation meetings with civil society organizations and with government representatives and academia, MEC has identified several vulnerabilities to corruption in EVAW cases. The lack of coordination among numerous government stakeholders, coupled with insufficient public awareness, creates an environment conducive to corruption. Justice-sector officials often accept bribes to come to decisions to which they are already predisposed. The lack of female prosecutors, judges, and police officers further exacerbates the myriad problems with the handling of EVAW cases. Interference by high-level officials, such as Members of Parliament, is another cause of mishandling EVAW cases. A lack of sufficient EVAW prosecutors, defense attorneys, and Family Response Units at the provincial level likewise hampers due process. While the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) could potentially play a key role in mitigating corruption in EVAW cases, it lacks the technical and advocacy capacity to do so.

Our consultation sessions also found widespread discriminatory attitudes towards women by justice-sector personnel—including by police, prosecutors and judges. Many women experience harassment, threats, and coercion by these actors, deterring them from seeking help in the first place. If women elect to pursue legal recourse after experiencing violence, cases are often dropped upon a variety of pretexts, such as insufficient evidence or misinterpreting laws. Forensic examinations are often falsified in exchange for bribes, and, in many cases, women even become the target of the investigation.

Obstructing the legal entitlement to due process of Afghan women who were afflicted by violence further disenfranchises an already vulnerable part of the population. With this VCA, which we plan to issue this autumn, MEC will equip various stakeholders involved in EVAW issues with practical recommendations on how to improve the current adjudication process.

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