

## **Afghanistan: Apr/May '11**

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IWPR report addresses local fears about getting caught in crossfire between police and insurgent groups.

Afghan officials say that an IWPR report highlighting the problem of security checkpoints located near clinics and schools has prompted them to change this practice.

The story, published on March 30, related how locals in Kapisa province were reluctant to use medical services or send their children to school for fear of getting caught up in clashes between Afghan local police – in effect, semi-official militia – and armed opposition groups.

Officials said that after IWPR had contacted them about the problem they felt compelled to act.

“I contacted the security forces and the paramilitaries about this and convinced them that their security checkpoints did not help people but rather created problems,” Tagab governor Abdul Hakim Akhondzadah said. “They were finally convinced.”

The director of public health in Tagab district, Hashmatullah Amin Yaqubi, said, “After the IWPR reporter contacted me I shared our concerns on this issue with the Provincial Reconstruction Team and security officials in the area. As a result, the checkpoints were removed.

“Media outlets such as IWPR not only look for the roots of problems but also then share them with officials so solutions can be found.”

Kapisa’s director of education Abdul Wahed Hekmat welcomed the IWPR report, adding that the measures the authorities had subsequently taken had made life easier for many people.

“I was not aware of the problem, because I was only appointed recently,” he said. “When the IWPR reporter contacted me, I learned about these concerns and talked to the government officials about them a week later. I took this issue seriously.

“Now, with the blessing of God, the checkpoints have been removed from the schools’ vicinity.”

Bakhtullah, a resident of the Adazai area in Tagab, said, “We were very unhappy about the paramilitaries’ checkpoints and had decided not to send our children to school because of this.

“We thank IWPR workers for telling the government officials about our problems. Now, the paramilitary forces, whom the people feared, have moved out of the area and our children go to school.”

A school teacher, Mahfooz, who had been interviewed for the original article, said, “The IWPR report really solved our problem. We could not speak to the paramilitary forces directly as people were scared of them.

“I am sure the problem would not have been addressed if the IWPR reporter had not written the story.”

One young student, Hewad, said, “I used to worry every morning that fighting might break out, like it did last year when my friend Khaleqyar was wounded and now walks with sticks. My mother would tell me, ‘First check, and if there is anyone armed near the school, come back home.’ But for the past two months, we have come to school regularly.”

**Location:** [Afghanistan](#)

**Topic:** [Reconstruction](#)

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