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Best practices in engaging youth in the fight against corruption

Query

Please provide examples where civil society organisations have successfully mobilised youth (18 – 35 yrs old) to advocate for anti-corruption reforms and/or achieve demonstrable results. If available, analysis about the factors that contributed to the success would be appreciated.

Purpose

We are looking for information about successful efforts in engaging youth to drive anti-corruption reforms (the reforms need not be limited to youth-specific topics).

Content

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Summary

Engaging youth is essential for success in curbing corruption; youth represent a significant portion of the population (especially in developing countries) and are generally more open to social change and political transformation, since they may have less interest in maintaining the status quo.

A significant number of activities to engage youth have been undertaken by the anti-corruption movement, especially in the last decade. These initiative range from Integrity/Democracy Camps and Summer Schools to work within schools and universities, training teachers, developing curricula and setting up Integrity Clubs. Many civil society organisations (CSOs) have also developed awareness-raising campaigns and activities targeted at young people.

Engaging youth should not be a box-ticking exercise and many questions are raised regarding success and sustainability of youth engagement efforts. Generally, projects designed and led by young people, supported by CSOs, have been more successful with outreach and sustaining individual engagement. Many CSOs working with youth have focussed the initial phase of their work on education about the concepts, thus paving the way for further involvement. Moreover, using existing structures and integrating youth engagement activities into a broader context has proved to be an effective approach in many settings.

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U4 is a web-based resource centre for development practitioners who wish to effectively address corruption challenges in their work. Expert Answers are produced by the U4 Helpdesk – operated by Transparency International – as quick responses to operational and policy questions from U4 Partner Agency staff.

1. Why working with youth?

Youth constitutes a sizeable portion of society. The Population Reference Bureau estimates youth (age 10 to 24) to represent 25% of the world population in 2013 and 32% of the population in the least developed countries (PRB, 2013). Beyond 2015, the civil society campaign pushing for a new Millennium Development Goals (MDG) framework estimates that 87% of the population in developing countries is under 25 (Beyond 2015, 2013). These numbers support the argument for the need to involve youth in the struggle for social change.

In addition to representing a significant part of the population, young people tend to be more exposed to bribery and therefore particularly vulnerable to corruption, as they are involved in almost every aspect of society – as students, pupils, workers, customers and citizens, (Transparency International 2009). According to Transparency International's (TI) Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) 2013, 27% of people under the age of 30 paid a bribe in that last 12 months worldwide. Some country results demonstrate the vulnerability of youth to corruption in specific country contexts, such as in Indonesia (44% of youth for 34% of adults), Argentina (20% of youth for 11% of adults) or Bangladesh (47% of youth for 37% of adults).

Against this backdrop, youth can play a pivotal role in the fight against corruption. They tend to be more open to wide-scale socio-political transformation and have less vested interest in maintaining the status quo (Transparency International 2009). Young people are an integral element for the success of a cultural change in attitudes and behaviour towards corruption and in the shaping of the values of tomorrow, since they represent the future of their countries.

Civil society increasingly works with youth and encourages youth to engage in civilian movements. For example, in its strategy for 2015, Transparency International (TI) makes it a priority to "develop greater resistance against corruption among youth and strong commitments by current and future leaders to stop corruption" (Transparency International 2011).

2. Youth engagement: overview of practices

In 2006, Amnesty International (AI) conducted a study carried out on its young members (about 50% of AI

membership is between the age of 14 and 25) about the best ways to reach out and engage youth in social and civic movement. The top 5 answers were: long-term education, concerts and festivals, outreach programmes in schools and universities, television and celebrity endorsement. The individuals surveyed also mentioned international youth meetings and social media as good ways to get young people's attention.

This section gives an overview of the main practices used to engage youth in the fight against corruption, from education work in schools or summer camps, to collaboration with youth networks and use of social media. Transparency International, through its national chapters, has been pioneering for a number of years youth engagement approaches to strengthen its efforts to put an end to corruption. Thus the best practices presented below contain examples from TI's local groups.

Youth integrity camps

The concept of youth democracy camps or youth integrity camps stems from a growing understanding that involving, informing and educating young people about the benefits of integrity, transparency and good governance can make a significant difference in the shaping of future societies and the balance of power within them. The objective of these camps is to give young people and young leaders from various sectors the tools and incentives to become strong supporters of open and responsible governance, and to mobilise their peers. Integrity camps bring together people with very diverse backgrounds, including journalists, students, artists, civil servants.

Integrity camps usually alternate presentations and training from professionals and interactive lessons and activities, such as role playing games and simulations. Participants are taught about their rights, existing legislation and institutions and about the way government should work. They are also encouraged to come up with creative approaches to mobilise citizens, raise awareness about corruption and wrong-doings and hold leaders to account. Some integrity camp organisers use the opportunity to set up a public event such as a march against corruption.

Example of the Youth Democracy Camps in Papua New Guinea

Transparency International's chapter in Papua New Guinea (TIPNG) is one of the pioneer organisations for youth democracy camps. TIPNG's annual event is

called the Mike Manning Youth Democracy Camp (MMYDC). TIPNG considers the summer camps as a long-term strategy. The MMYDC concept was initiated in 2008 as a way of dealing with the declining faith in democratic processes and the rule of law due to rampant and unchecked corruption and poor governance in the country. The MMYDC recruits and targets likely future national leaders and puts them through what is in essence a first year law, economics, political science and media degree in ten days through an intensive set of presentations, skill building sessions and leadership scenario simulations. The organisation relies on schools for the selection of participants.

The first report that was produced, following the 2008 camp, compiles some of the feedback and follow-up activities. The participants admitted having learnt a lot about the meaning of corruption, about the fact that everyone, to some extent, contributes, actively or passively, to corruption and therefore can act to put an end to it. The participants were encouraged to come up with projects to implement after the camps (organise their own community monitoring, hold awareness raising events, become role models in their community/school etc.) and, soon after the camp, an advocacy chain message system had been initiated and many pupils had organised events to teach their classmates about their rights and good governance. The organisers stated that using films and government simulations to educate the participants about corruption was a very efficient technique to get young people's attention.

For more information, please click [here](#).

Collaboration with schools and universities

A number of organisations have chosen to use schools and universities as venues for reaching out to young people. Taking advantage of existing structures requires prior approval of the authorities since it implies adding to academic programmes or utilising the time young people spend in school. A number of practitioners identify collaboration with schools and universities as a good practice because it uses the existing infrastructure and immediate context of a certain group of young people which facilitates their

engagement. The education system is an influential institution for youth in many contexts.¹

The AI study on good practices to engage youth lists the need to consider the possible overload of activities offered when trying to engage young people in a cause. Holding meetings and activities during school is therefore an efficient way to connect with young people (Amnesty International 2006).

CSOs have used their collaboration with schools to engage students in elections simulation and debates/discussions on the topic of corruption and ethics, as well as to develop specific curricula and manuals for stand-alone classes or to integrate the topic of corruption into various subjects.

Examples of anti-corruption courses can be found [here](#).

Integrity clubs and youth movements

Engaging youth in the fight against corruption does not necessarily mean involving young people in existing "adult-led" structures. It can also take the form of separate youth-led movements (see next section on governance and involvement).

The anti-corruption movement can benefit from working with existing youth networks or from helping interested young people to set up integrity clubs. Such initiatives can be an efficient way to attract interest from and engage a new and broad audience in the topics of corruption and good governance. Youth groups can find it easier to act at the local, grass-root level, outside of "CSO bureaucracy", but the latter can add significant catalysing value by providing platforms, resources, knowledge, visibility etc.

A necessary condition for making this approach a success is for CSOs to be in a supportive role, give up some control and leave the leadership and freedom of choice to the youth group.

A significant number of such groups already exist, both with a global and a national mandate, such as the [Voices Against Corruption](#) or the UNDP-sponsored [Thai Youth Anti-Corruption Network](#) described below.

¹ This information was gathered during an interview with members of TI Chapters in July 2013.

Example of the Thai Youth Anti-corruption Network

The Thai Youth Anti-corruption Network is a student-led network that was created in 2012 in partnership with UNDP and Khon Kaen University's College of Local Administration. It started off as a group of 36 students with the mission to eliminate corruption from Thai society through the empowerment of young people. The project was built on the objective to make students take a pledge to "refuse to be corrupt". In one year the campaign managed to grow to a network of 4000 students in 90 Universities.

This initiative is completely "bottom-up", meaning that the direction given and leadership arise from the students themselves, with UNDP playing a support role. The students created their identity, logo and messaging by themselves. The network organises conferences and camps to raise awareness among students about the negative effects of corruption and the importance of taking action, as well as campaigns and public events. The students use Facebook as a platform to exchange information and coordinate their work. They provide trainings on social media as an advocacy tool to widen the core group of communicators and partner with more universities to promote integrity.

The significant growth of the network as well as the quality of the activities undertaken has attracted the attention of other institutions and networks in the country, such as the private sector Anti-Corruption Network led by Thai businessmen and industry associations, including the Thai Chamber of Commerce, the Thai Bankers' Association, the Federation of Thai Industries, and the Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET), with which the youth network signed a partnership.

For more information, please click [here](#).

Awareness-raising through arts and sport

As mentioned, festivals and concerts are seen by young people themselves as appropriate settings to engage youth. Cultural and sport events are avenues with enormous potential for outreach and awareness-raising, thanks to their popularity and the diverse audiences they attract. Many organisations use such events to communicate their message to youth.

CSOs increasingly use public events, such as flash mobs, marches or street campaigns, to get young

people involved in the fight against corruption. Similarly to cultural and sport events, this approach combines entertainment with the use of social media, both to mobilise people and to disseminate images and videos afterwards.

Arts can also serve as a way to involve youth in the fight against corruption by collaborating with artist groups to organise public events. For example, Transparency International's chapter in Morocco is associated with a young artists' collective (many members coming from the art faculty of the University of Casablanca) called [Paroles Urgentes](#) that uses street theatre, breakdancing, slam poetry and music to raise public and youth's awareness about social issues such as corruption.

Civil society organisations, including those working in the field of anti-corruption, have started to partner with sports associations to educate young people on ethical values, democracy and solidarity. Transparency International Italy has used sport clubs to inform youth about the importance to resist corruption through the values of sports and fair-play (more [here](#)). On a different topic, Never Again, a Polish CSO, effectively works with football clubs and football stars to raise awareness among young people about the destructive effects of racism and neo-fascism on the Polish society (Amnesty International 2006).

Competitions and training

Reaching out to a young audience can also be done through innovative approaches. One way to facilitate the development of new youth-oriented activities is to give young people the opportunity to raise their voice, using the networks and visibility of existing CSOs, and implement their ideas through competitions and seed grants.

A common way is to use writing and essay competitions. These have been organised by many organisations and they allow young people to communicate how they perceive corruption, how it affects their lives and what they think should be done to stop it. Writing competitions are not only a way to encourage youth to think about the issue, they also serve as a method for CSOs to learn about other perspectives and to understand how young people could get involved.

Recently, other forms of competitions have been organised such as art competitions or project design competitions.

CSOs increasingly turn to new means of communication to try to reach a younger audience, and use the need for innovative ideas to engage youth in the fight against corruption by providing them with the means to deepen their knowledge in the use of multi-media, traditional and social media. CSOs offer more and more training to young people in film-making, journalistic writing, photography, etc., to allow young people to become a relay to disseminate the values of transparency, integrity and good governance.

Example of the Youth Box Channel in Vietnam

Towards Transparency Vietnam (TT) launched its youth integrity programme in 2010, along with a number of other TI groups from the region. With 55% of the country's population being under 30 years old, finding ways to engage youth on good governance issues appeared as one of the priorities of the organisation.

The first step of the youth programme consisted in a [survey](#) conducted in 2010. This research project interviewed more than 1000 young people in 11 provinces of the country and aimed to improve the understanding of youth's attitudes towards corruption in order to later develop targeted and effective anti-corruption initiatives. The survey also looked at young people's influences and concluded that the sources most susceptible to encourage them to act with integrity were broadcast media, family members and the education system.

The survey results informed the organisation's further work with youth. For example, given the survey results indicating that the media had a strong influence on young people, TT launched a pilot project called the Youth Box Channel (YBO). The YBO is a media initiative, led by young volunteers who produce news reportages, interviews, short films, articles and comics on issues related to anti-corruption and sustainable development. By engaging young people in media production, the initiative provides a platform for youth to foster critical thinking and encourages young people to take a leading role in promoting integrity, transparency and social justice. YBO is aimed at reaching youth audiences across Vietnam.²

² This information was gathered during an interview with members of TI Chapters in July 2013.

For more information, please click [here](#).

Hackathons and new technologies

In the last decade, CSOs have started to organise hackathons to engage young professionals specialised in computer programming, graphic design, and software design. Hackathons seek to use these technical skills to find solutions and new means to detect, combat and communicate about corruption through new technologies. Hackathons are events that last for a short period of time (often less than a week). They connect organisations that need help in solving a specific problem with programmers and designers. The outcomes of a hackathon are most often technology-focussed solutions, such as mobile phone applications, web platforms etc.

Hackathons are not specifically targeted to youth but, in practice, they tend to attract many young people. Hackathons are a way for CSOs to involve young people in their activities without putting them on the passive receiving end. These initiatives help to engage youth in the fight against corruption by demonstrating how they can contribute very practically with their skills, talents and knowledge.

Example of the joint initiative between Random Hack of Kindness and Transparency International

In October 2012, a joint initiative between Transparency International and Random Hack of Kindness brought together CSOs and software developers in six cities throughout the world to find innovative solutions to the "problem statements" submitted by the local organisations. Some of them wanted to target the young audience more specifically with the help of new tools to identify corruption and inform them about their rights. The young professionals present at these various events developed games, mobile applications, tools to report electoral advertising, to provide user feedback to service providers etc. (more [here](#)).

3. Factors of success

Some success factors are beginning to emerge from civil society organisations that have worked with youth in the last decade(s). The elements listed below are drawn from the broader context of youth engagement in social movements and CSO activities, and are not limited to the fight against corruption.

Information means empowerment

Key to youth engagement is education on the topic. Similar to any people's engagement initiative, building the target group's knowledge and informing them about the various aspect of the issue is essential to provide a truthful opportunity to engage. In some cases, the young people CSOs want to engage with start with a rather low level of understanding of the very concepts and do not always see the impact of corruption on their lives. A number of research projects have collected recommendations from young people on how to best involve them in social movements and the need for information is identified as one of the most important conditions. Surveyed young people said that they needed to be better informed about current affairs through adequate guidance and materials targeted to their age group (Chana, 2007).

Many projects aiming at engaging youth in the fight against corruption are focussed on awareness-raising and information. When taking the example of Transparency International, one can note that a significant number of TI national chapters work with schools and universities, developing curricula and manuals to strengthen young people's knowledge, understanding and sensitivity to the topic of corruption.

Governance and degree of involvement

To create sustainable partnerships with youth CSOs ought to involve young people early in the design phase. It is important that young people are seen not as mere recipients but as valued, active participants of any project or initiative (British Columbia Criminal Justice Reform, no date). The insights and opinion of youth should not be overlooked by adults intent on delivering a finished product to youth. Anti-corruption practitioners that have been working with young people recognise that the more youth is involved in the design phase of a project and the more they take the lead, the more sustainable and successful the project.

To connect with any group means to appeal to its specific interests and use its means of communication. As much as young people need information to get involved, youth engagement should not be about imparting information but rather fostering dialogue (Amnesty International 2006).

In a 2007 report on youth engagement, Zimmerman shows that there is a wide spectrum of youth-led initiatives. There is a wide range of possibilities for

youth leadership and governance, and definitions often evolve over time. The continuum of youth governance stretches from organisations where adults serve young people as clients delivering a finished product, to structures where youth have decision-making power, to groups where young people occupy all leadership positions (Zimmerman 2007). Experts suggest that the best and most innovative youth projects are the ones led by young people themselves (Amnesty International 2006).

Who to involve?

Many expert studies reveal that youth engagement initiatives that fail to grasp the fundamental differences that can exist between various groups are destined to fail. It is thus important to acknowledge the individual traits of young people. Youth does not function as a homogenous group, and all young people do not think alike or are motivated by the same things. A consensual recommendation is to initiate any youth engagement project with the people who have a predisposition to the cause and appear like natural advocates, instead of targeting the mass of young people or the more difficult groups from the very beginning (Chana 2007).

Establishing collaborations with other NGOs, existing youth networks and formal institutions is often seen as a key to success. Using existing structures in which to integrate the topic of anti-corruption is a way to tap into already established and functioning systems, preventing an organisation from starting outreach from scratch.

Sense of control and efficacy

Young people need to feel that their contribution is valued and has an impact, or at least the chance of an impact, on their community, a specific policy or whatever domain they get involved in. A study conducted by the Portland State University in 2005 looked at a variety of factors that have an influence on civic engagement among students, and concluded that having a sense of citizen political control and of community efficacy were two of the most important conditions for youth engagement. Both of the latter derive from the concept of political efficacy, meaning that individuals feel that political action has an impact on the political process and that it is worthwhile for them to get involved with civic and political matters. This encompasses both the perception of citizens' ability to influence decisions and policy, and the

perception of the government or a community's responsiveness (Nishishiba, Nelson, and Shinn 2005).

Favourable environment

Moreover, youth engagement activities cannot be confined to working with youth to teach them about the values of integrity and honesty, without taking into account the broader context. Youth engagement projects should be integrated in broader anti-corruption efforts to avoid frustration and loss of credibility for the young people involved. The Youth Integrity Survey conducted in Vietnam shows that almost a fifth of the young people surveyed thought that dishonest individuals were more likely to succeed in life (Towards Transparency 2011). With such a common belief, it is important to ensure that the young people dedicated to refuse corruption do not systematically end up losing out in comparison to the others.³

In some contexts, encouraging youth to stand up against corruption without ensuring a safe environment can put the young people at danger. The Youth Integrity Surveys conducted by TI chapters in Asia show that a significant proportion of interviewed young people (more than 15%) would refrain from reporting corruption because of security reasons (Transparency International Korea 2012; Towards Transparency Vietnam 2011). This shows that security and safety are important issues to take into account when engaging youth in anti- corruption.

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