



Why work in sectors matters

Sharing experience
from the UNDP
Global Thematic
Programme on
Anti-Corruption
for Development
Effectiveness

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Until recently, the focus of the development discourse was more on scaling up resources than on preventing leakages of them, as in the case of corruption. However, 2010 witnessed a major breakthrough in the framing of discussions on realizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The outcome document ‘Keeping the promise: United to achieve the Millennium Development Goals’, adopted by the High-level Plenary Meeting of the UN General Assembly (20-22 September 2010), identifies corruption as a major bottleneck in the effort to achieve them.

After the 2010 MDG summit, the sectorial approach to fighting corruption (for example in the education, health, and water sectors) became one of the top priorities in the UNDP Global Thematic Programme on Anti-Corruption for Development Effectiveness (PACDE). This fresh sectorial emphasis stemmed from a realization that substandard management and governance – exemplified by inadequate transparency

and accountability on the part of national and local governments as well as service providers – is a major bottleneck in achieving the MDGs. Moreover, public delivery sectors such as health and education account for the biggest share of national and state budgets and are thus especially susceptible to corruption.

A sectorial approach to fighting the scourge has several advantages. First, there is less resistance by governments to sectorial approaches than in the case of high-level political intervention. Second, such approaches target public service delivery, with a positive impact on poor, marginalized, and vulnerable populations. Third, a risk-mapping approach makes it easier to sustain the drive against corruption by minimizing the risk that it will occur within particular sectors. Fourth, sector-based work results in a more integrated interdisciplinary approach to curbing corruption. For example, the skills of practitioners and experts in both anti-corruption activity and education are needed to identify the risk of corruption in the education sector and to develop and implement a risk mitigation plan. Sector-based work thus promotes transparency, accountability, and institutional integrity, and ultimately has a cumulative positive impact on the prevention of corruption.

From theory to practice

To take stock of already existing tools, methodologies, and good practice and to guide UNDP sectorial interventions in individual countries, PACDE commissioned three studies on fighting corruption in the education, health, and water sectors. The studies were first presented at the Fourth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in Marrakech (Morocco) on 24-28 October 2011, at which IIEP was also represented.

As a follow-up to the three studies, PACDE launched pilot projects in education, health, and water sectors in 16 UNDP Country Offices at the beginning of 2012. PACDE support for the projects aims to

¹ Armenia, Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, Costa Rica, China, Ethiopia, Guinea, Lebanon, Liberia, Jordan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Philippines, Swaziland, and Uganda.

improve public service delivery, the transparency and accountability of national and local governments, and the efficiency of existing mechanisms, and to lower the risk of corruption in the sectors concerned. In the first stage of their implementation, the projects carried out participatory assessments to gather baseline data on corruption risks in a specific sector and they are now developing and implementing a risk reduction plan.

The pilot projects have also brought together key stakeholders such as government, civil society, UN agencies (including WHO, UNICEF, the UNDP Water Governance Facility at the Stockholm International Water Institute, and IIEP), other donors, and

local communities. Besides seed funds provided by PACDE, both PACDE and UNDP Regional Offices are providing the advisory and technical support needed to ensure that the projects are sustainable and yield tangible results.

Indeed, results are already apparent even though implementation is still at its initial stage. Local communities and citizens are more involved in oversight activities and can now ensure that authorities and service providers are accountable to their constituencies. This will greatly help to improve the quality of services, and decrease the risk of corruption likely to thwart progress towards the MDGs. PACDE will continue to support the pilot projects in 2013 and beyond to ensure that they

deliver further results and remain fully effective and sustainable.

Notwithstanding such promising results, there is concern that in a more sectorial approach to corruption, UNDP may be neglecting its prime commitment to addressing large-scale political corruption. UNDP recognizes that any sectorial approach should not be isolated but part of a comprehensive anti-corruption agenda as in national anti-corruption strategies. Serious consideration should thus be given to linking such an approach to other ongoing governance and anti-corruption reforms, in order to maximize impact and sustainability. ■

Inside the International Anti-Corruption Conference¹

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Battle plans and new online weapons against bribery and corruption were onstage at the 15th International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC) in Brasilia in November 2012.¹ In its final declaration, anti-graft activists and government representatives from 140 countries issued a warning to those who skim off development funds: "We are watching those who act with impunity and we will not let them get away with it".

In a session organized by IIEP, it was clear that education has now become an important element in the anti-corruption debate across the world, both as a sector prone to corruption and a means of dealing with it. Large sums of money from state programmes and donor funds are spent on expanding access and improving the quality of education. Yet systems of accountability sometimes lack the capacity to handle the increasing flow of funds. And a lack of transparency mechanisms means that additional cash often gets diverted for personal benefit.

A more decentralized and participatory system was another key IACC topic. While recognizing that a decentralized system could be beneficial in letting some of the most vulnerable sections of society have their say and in creating an enabling environment for constructive change, the meeting also highlighted the risks inherent in pro-poor incentives.

The IACC further emphasized the increasing role of ICT in accountability and transparency mechanisms, both at state level and in civil society. Producing good quality, reliable real-time data is essential to policy-making. The availability of technology, such as mobile telephony and the Internet, and the anonymity associated with it, has made it much easier to collect and provide data in recent years. Among the many examples cited were the following: the collection and provision of data on resource and expenditure flows; the visualization of existing government data by making them more user-friendly; the involvement of youth organizations in data collection; the use of ranking-based systems to create competition; the mapping of corruption through crowd-sourcing and SMS technologies; and institutionalizing citizen platforms to facilitate exchanges between users and public authorities.

Last but not least, education could come to the forefront in the fight against corruption through the targeted training of young people to mobilize them for involvement in the battle.

¹ The IACC is organized by Transparency International and takes place every two years in a different world region.