



DISRUPTING CORRUPTION: PEOPLE POWER TO GAIN ACCOUNTABILITY



How is corruption linked to violent conflict and human insecurity?

- War economies function through malfeasance – parties depend on fraud, bribery, and criminal groups to “grease the wheels.”
- Corruption can draw out bloody confrontations.
- Endemic corruption can stimulate social unrest and foment violent conflict.
- Corruption can inhibit sustainable peace in post-conflict contexts.
- In fragile/new democracies, corruption is an enabler of state capture.

Breaking the vicious cycle

- Authoritarian and/or ineffectual governance paired with endemic corruption results in further de-legitimization of authority and rule-of-law.
- This leads to fragmented tyrannies, which in turn reinforces authoritarian rule and ineffectual governance.
- Civil resistance can activate an anti-corruption cycle.
- Nonviolent social movements and grass-roots campaigns can create alternative loci of power which can impact this corruption-violent conflict cycle.

CORRUPTION IS--

the misuse of entrusted power for private gain.

Transparency International

a system that involves a complex set of relationships, some obvious and others hidden, with established vested interests, that can cut across political, economic and social forces.

...the external manifestation of the denial of a right, an entitlement, a wage, a medicine...

Aruna Roy, Co-founder, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) movement

LIMITATIONS OF TRADITIONAL, TOP-DOWN APPROACHES TO CURB CORRUPTION

- **Technocratic and legislative emphasis:** developing rules, norms, practices and institutions that usually target public administrations, e.g., commissions, decrees, codes of conduct, ethics agencies, laws
 - Systemic nature of corruption can be missed
 - Limited focus on societal sectors beyond the state.
- **Assumption:** once anti-corruption structures are put in place, illicit practices will change
 - But how can those benefitting from corruption be the ones to curb it?
- **People not factored into the equation:** ordinary citizens bear the brunt of corruption and suffer from it. Bottom-up approaches:
 - Alter priorities to controlling those forms of graft and abuse most harmful or common to the public, especially the poor
 - See citizens as sources of power and positive change.

A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH TO CURBING CORRUPTION

Strategic value of people power: extra-institutional pressure to push for change, when power-holders are corrupt and/or unaccountable, and institutional channels are blocked or ineffective.

Top-down and bottom-up, grass-roots approaches are not mutually exclusive. Civic campaigns and movements can:

- Disrupt vertical and horizontal forms of corruption
- Foster holistic approaches, including graft both in the state and other sectors of society;
- Embed anti-corruption into larger set of goals for accountability, participatory democracy, and social and economic justice
- Create political will and bolster efforts within systems of corruption
- Complement and reinforce legal and administrative mechanisms
- Support/protect honest individuals and other powerholders who are attempting to enact reforms and change.



Dynamics of Civil Resistance to Curb Corruption

Mobilized citizens, engaged in organized, collective nonviolent action, can generate social force - people power - that:

- disrupts dishonest relationships and the status quo within systems of corruption by -
 - shaking up corrupt interactions and relationships, generating political will
 - pushing for people-centered measures
 - reinforcing new patterns of administration and governance centered on accountability to citizens.
- wins people over to the civic campaign or movement, from the public and even from within corrupt systems
- weakens sources of support and control for unaccountable and corrupt power holders, entities, and their enablers
- exerts pressure on the state as well as on other sectors of society



Tactical range of grass-roots anti-corruption campaigns/movements

- noncooperation
- civil disobedience
- low-risk mass actions
- displays of symbols
- street theatre, visual dramatizations, stunts
- songs, poetry, cultural expressions
- humor
- services “report cards” and candidate “report cards”
- monitoring of officials, institutions, budgets, spending, public services
- information gathering, Right to Information procedures
- social audits and “face the people” fora
- social networking technologies (e.g., FB organizing, blogging, SMS)
- education and training
- social and economic empowerment initiatives
- youth recreation
- creation of parallel institutions
- anti-corruption pledges; citizen-sponsored awards
- protests, petitions, vigils, marches, sit-ins
- strikes, boycotts, reverse boycotts
- nonviolent blockades
- nonviolent accompaniment.



COMMON ATTRIBUTES OF CIVIC ANTI-CORRUPTION CASE STUDIES

- Can be found in democracies and brutal authoritarian regimes
- Prevalent in societies enduring poor governance, poverty, low levels of literacy, and severe repression (perpetrated by the state, organized crime or paramilitary groups)
- Rather than spontaneous outbursts, organization and planning precede action (even when there's a scandalous event arousing public indignation)
- Struggles are often multidimensional in focus - corruption doesn't occur in a vacuum
- Skills and strategy matter more than conditions
- Women and youth often play galvanizing roles
- "Defining methods" around which an array of nonviolent tactics revolve, are common
- Civic pressure can be magnified through engagement with selected powerholders
- Success in one struggle inspires new applications, knowledge-sharing among campaigns – even across borders.



GENERAL LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Moving from abstract issues to everyday concerns – to win public support**
2. **Clear objectives and demands – to engage citizens and have visible outcomes and incremental victories**



The Textbook Walk in Dauin, Negros Oriental coincided with the town fiesta, resulting in what organizers called high-energy volunteerism. The local government provided two trucks to haul the books from the schools district to the local elementary schools. Photo courtesy of G-Watch



3. **Unity** – of grievances, goals and people



4. **Ownership and social identity** – cultivating a sense that everyone is part of the fight against corruption and everyone can play a role



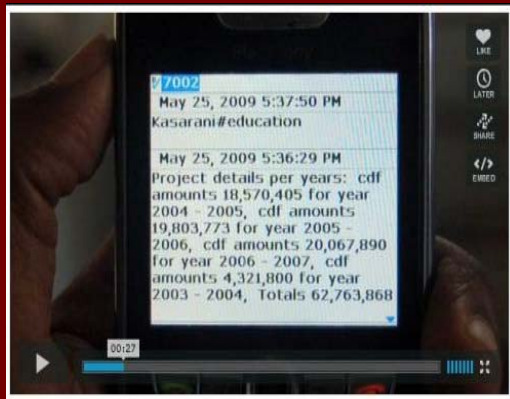
Tunis, Jan. 17.11. (AP Photo/Christophe Ena)

5. **Honest image** – the association of groups in society perceived as incorruptible and honest can have a galvanizing effect.



6. **Creativity and tactical innovation** – necessary to overcome obstacles and

repression, adapt to changing circumstances, build campaign resilience, maximize the impact of resources.



7. **Information+action= power**

-- collection, access, and dissemination of info can be a powerful tool when combined with nonviolent action



8. **Education and training** – often neglected but always essential for building campaign capacity, confidence, hope, courage

9. **Communications** – strategically important to build awareness, win support, involve citizens in activities



CANVAS (Centre for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies)

10. **Skills, strategies & planning** - can overcome difficult conditions and situations





Image: AP Photo



Mohammed Abed, AFP / Getty Images