



# 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



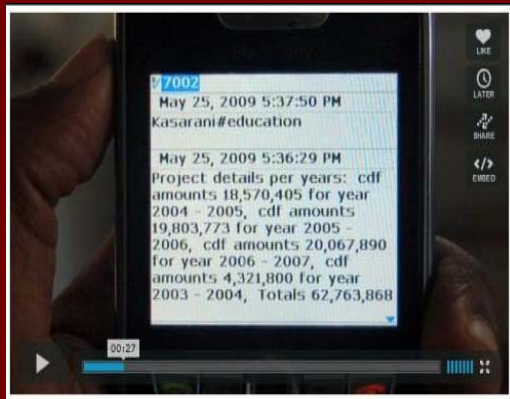
Tunis, Jan. 17.11. (AP Photo/Christophe Ena)

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