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The International Dimension

Although civil resistance targeting corruption is, by its very nature, bottom-up and homegrown, it impacts foreign policy considerations, donor effectiveness, and overall anticorruption, development, democracy, and peacebuilding strategies. While this may first seem paradoxical, it becomes evident once people power is taken into consideration. Given the capacity of citizens, mobilized in nonviolent civic initiatives, to effectively wield power, the grass roots is by default part of the overall equation of political, social, and economic change. Moreover, as this research has found, successful civic anticorruption initiatives can be sources of transnational inspiration, strategies, and knowledge, thereby adding an international dimension to local and national struggles.

Ten Policy Implications

Taken together, the twelve case studies point to the following policy implications and development outcomes.

Enriched Analysis and Policy Development

The civic dimension is often lacking or minimally examined in country analyses. Thus, the foreign policy realm can acquire a fuller, more dynamic overview of political, social, and economic currents when the grievances of citizens and their capacities to shift the power equation are included. Telltale examples are the 2010–2011 manifestations of people power in the Middle East, and the nascent Russian democracy mobilizations, which took many governments, analysts, and journalists by surprise. While the complexity of multifaceted social phenomena

makes it impossible to identify a special set of precursor conditions or to predict when a civic initiative or social movement will emerge, one can ascertain where the likelihood exists by recognizing the building blocks of civil resistance. They include

- Shared awareness among people of tangible, often everyday concerns that are linked to corruption, impunity, abuse, injustice, and poverty.
- Collective feelings of being affronted by powerholders (state or nonstate).
- Emergence of cooperation and new alliances at the grass roots.
- Decreasing citizen fear to express dissent.
- Recurring small-scale or larger-scale nonviolent tactics (on the ground and digitally) expressed in an organized, collective manner.

The international reaction to post-Taliban Afghanistan provides lessons about the need to integrate the civic dimension into policy and peacebuilding. Notwithstanding the enormous challenges facing the country when the Taliban was violently deposed at the end of 2001, an earlier awareness, both of citizens as sources of positive power and the corrosive social impact of corruption, could conceivably have resulted in somewhat different strategies and priorities. Corruption has reached such epic proportions that it is now considered a clear threat to peace, counterinsurgency, reconstruction, and development.¹ Malfeasance is undermining trust in the government, adding a crushing burden to the overwhelmingly poor population and enabling a flourishing drug trade that is a source of revenue for warlords and the Taliban. In congressional testimony, then US secretary of state Hillary Clinton stated that “much of the corruption” in Afghanistan has been fueled by billions of dollars’ worth of foreign money spent there, “and one of the major sources of funding for the Taliban is the protection money.”² Afghans fighting corruption within the state and in the civic realm lament that early opportunities for systemic reforms were missed.³ International and local civil society organizations contend that donor strategies were largely influenced by security concerns rather than people’s needs.⁴ Nor were citizens considered as players in the process.⁵

Practical Insights into Systems of Corruption and Development Challenges

By understanding what happens on the ground, the international anticorruption and development realms gain practical knowledge and insights

about corruption patterns in countries, how they function and are manifested vertically and horizontally, and what the pervasive challenges are from a humanitarian perspective. Hence, substantive engagement and consultation with grassroots civic actors can contribute to identifying forms of corruption that matter to the public as well as developing accountability, economic, and social programs in tandem with governments receiving international assistance that are user-friendly for citizens. Engagement and consultation also inform the parameters and substance of policy reform and institution-building initiatives supported by the international community, and the prioritization of donor support and projects. Communication with grassroots civic actors helps incorporate people-centered concerns and mechanisms into top-down anticorruption initiatives at the national and multilateral levels. It can contribute to reduced corruption in development efforts, donor project subcontracting, and the political leveraging of donor aid by recipient country powerholders.

Civic initiatives have an inherent wisdom to them since they zero in on those forms of corruption most egregious to citizens. The international community and national decisionmakers can learn from those on the ground rather than deciding what forms of corruption they think should be tackled in order to improve the lives of the public. Ordinary people—often socially and economically disadvantaged and facing duress for expressing dissent—do not voluntarily give of their time and precious resources unless the graft and abuse they target truly matter. While these points may seem obvious, anecdotal input and research find they are not the norm. The Listening Project, which solicited 6,000 views about international assistance (humanitarian, development, peacebuilding, human rights, environment, etc.) in twenty societies, found that respondents wanted more ownership and opportunities to play an active role in their own development—to “discuss together, decide together, and work together.”⁶ Furthermore, corruption was one of their principal concerns, not only as practiced by powerholders in their countries, but also in aid and development efforts. An Afghan man characterized a common observation in this way: “The donor comes to an international NGO, the INGO comes to a local NGO, the local NGO comes to a contractor, the contractor to a subcontractor, and finally we receive nothing.”⁷

However, there are promising signs of international engagement with grassroots anticorruption initiatives. For instance, in July 2011, Integrity Watch Afghanistan had meetings in Washington, DC, on improving the effectiveness of aid distributed by the United States Agency for

International Development (USAID), which included a briefing in the US Congress on corruption in Afghanistan.⁸

Enhanced Top-Down Anticorruption and Accountability Mechanisms

A general lesson emerging from the comparative examination of citizen engagement and accountability is that the involvement of credible collective actors in policy reform, notably from grassroots initiatives, can strengthen top-down “accountability functions.”⁹ A number of compelling cases are available for study, ranging from the role of the Sanitarista public health movement in the reform of Brazil’s state health system to the impact of the Mexican women’s movement for reproductive health in crafting participatory mechanisms.¹⁰ In this study, potent examples include the development of India’s landmark Right to Information law (see Chapter 7), implementation of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption in Egypt (see Chapter 10), and transparency in reconstruction and development projects in post-violent conflict settings (see Chapter 8).

Conditions Are Not Predeterminants

The misconception prevalent in the anticorruption and development realms that structural conditions are predeterminants for civic initiatives to develop and succeed can have a disempowering effect on grassroots initiatives. First, it can perpetuate top-down approaches to anticorruption and accountability when conditions on the ground are not perceived as being ideal for citizen dissent. More significantly, it can demotivate civic groups and citizens from taking collective action and divert campaigns away from appropriate goals. For example, Right to Information laws (RTIs) are undeniably useful to fight corruption. But even if there is no RTI in a country, change is still possible before an RTI is attained, and all civic efforts need not focus on getting such legislation passed. People power can be used to secure information even in the absence of legislation, which Kenya’s MUHURI demonstrated (see Chapter 10). Finally, such civic pressure can also push for the enactment of people-centered RTI legislation, as was achieved by the Indian Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) movement. In a film interview, MKSS cofounder Aruna Roy explains, “In 1996, the MKSS sat in a forty-day sit-in in Beawar, and we were demanding the right to access records of the Panchayat, the smallest elected body in India. We involved the entire city and made it a people’s campaign. We involved people from all over India, and the national campaign for people’s right to information was born.”¹¹

*Affirming Enabling Environments Versus
Interference in the Trajectory of People Power*

Enabling environments is a valuable concept that is circulating in the development and anticorruption realms. From the civil resistance perspective, it offers an alternative to the notion of preconditions for citizen empowerment and action. The international community can play a role in affirming enabling environments for the emergence of home-grown anticorruption campaigns and movements. However, the challenge for external actors is to do so without imposing their own notions about what they consider acceptable forms of citizen dissent and nonviolent action. For the grass roots to wield power to gain reforms or change, a combination of tactics is needed: some that disrupt the status quo and some that engage people, groups, and institutions, shifting loyalties and pulling them toward the cause, including from within such corrupt systems.

A powerful illustration of how international actors played an enabling role can be found in the case of Santa Lucia Cotzumalguapa, a small town in Guatemala, where the nexus of corruption, impunity, and cross-border narco-trafficking created a horrendous situation akin to violent tyranny. In the aftermath of the civil war in 1996 this ongoing movement emerged to recover the community from the hands of drug lords and organized crime, maintain resilience in the face of violent repression, defend victories, and foster social and economic development. Their successes triggered severe counterattacks, including murders and electoral fraud. By 2007, eleven community leaders had been murdered, four attempts were made on an honest mayor's life, slandering and defamation cases were lodged, electoral fraud was orchestrated, and the police, prosecutors, and judges favored the drug cartels.¹²

Under such abysmal circumstances, how could the international community affirm the movement, thereby fostering an enabling environment for action and survival? Together with Guatemalan human rights defenders, international groups drew world attention to the struggle. The movement also garnered support for civic initiatives from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. International observers and nonviolent accompaniment were provided to protect people at risk. Finally, Santa Lucia Cotzumalguapa became the host of national and international meetings, thereby sending a message to the corrupt powerholders—that the country and the world were watching and stood together with the townspeople.

A more complex example can be found with the aims and activities of the Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF). A valuable international

source of modest grants and, more recently, peer-to-peer exchanges, its stated vision is for societies in which “citizens succeed in making their government free of corruption.”¹³ As discussed in Chapter 9, PTF’s support enabled the launching of the Police-NAFODU-Community Partnership initiative in Uganda. Nonetheless, it imposes its own notions and values about civic dissent onto the CSOs it funds. While there is no debate over its right to set funding criteria as it sees fit, there are implications for grassroots civic initiatives and people power.

The fund’s website states, “PTF believes that in most cases collaborating with the public sector, while addressing a corruption problem, provides the greatest chance for long-term change. . . . The hypothesis is that consensus building and collaboration yield better and longer-lasting results than confrontation.”¹⁴ But what exactly is meant by consensus building, collaboration, and confrontation? These assertions suggest an underlying ambivalence and discomfort about citizen dissent. It considers some forms of nonviolent action—consensus building and collaboration—as more legitimate and effective than other forms. It appears to imply that when citizens raise their collective voice and exert nonviolent pressure—people power—they should behave in a nonchallenging manner. In a filmed interview, Rev. James Lawson, one of the leaders of the US civil rights movement, described nonviolent action as “your dignified, disciplined, confrontation of the wrong.”¹⁵ Thus, a distinction needs to be made between positive (constructive) and negative confrontation. Positive confrontation involves the refusal to continue acquiescing to malfeasance, combined with nonviolent action to curtail abuse, corrupt practices, venal systems, oppression, and injustice. Negative confrontation, in contrast, is characterized by indiscriminate belligerence or hostility directed toward individuals.

What are the implications of PTF’s viewpoint? For CSOs and other grassroots groups, the internalization of such beliefs can be self-limiting. First, it could dampen the potential for bottom-up civic initiatives to emerge if civic actors or citizens themselves believe they need to enter into agreements with public entities in order to effectively target corruption. Second, those living under authoritarian regimes or facing unresponsive state entities might conclude that prospects for success are negligible and give up before even trying. Third, civic initiatives may not consider the full range of nonviolent tactics available in their context, because international actors may consider them to be confrontational and frown on them. This could include a variety of types of civil disobedience: public forums, street actions (protests, vigils, processions, marches, etc.), street theatre, stunts, visual dramatizations, cultural ex-

pressions (songs, poetry, ringtones), graffiti, displaying symbols, petitions, digital resistance, information gathering, publicly exposing corruptors and graft, citizen-generated blacklists, and disseminating information about citizen rights and public sector fees outside government offices.

Finally, PTF advises CSOs to obtain formal agreements. Its guidelines state, “Consequently, where support of a public entity is necessary for the success of the project, the applicant needs to line up the support from the municipality, government department, judicial structure, legislative body, university, etc., and confirm the public sector entity’s willingness, preferably in writing.”¹⁶ This arrangement had strategic and practical benefits for NAFODU in Uganda. In other situations, however, there may be less to gain. One can take the case of 5th Pillar in India. Although operating within an established democracy, had they sought permission for volunteers to post official fees for documents and certificates outside public offices, it is doubtful they would have received it, and the time spent would have been a distraction. Moreover, a civic initiative entering into formal cooperation with a state entity may not be strategically wise. In some contexts, this could be viewed cynically or suspiciously by regular people and thus undermine a civic initiative’s legitimacy and capacity to mobilize. In fact, NAFODU first encountered such negative sentiment among locals, but fortunately was able to overcome it.

Citizen Voice and Social Accountability Involve People Power

While development practitioners and international donors understand that citizens have the capacity to impact corruption and are eager to support people’s empowerment, there is limited knowledge about how citizens actually achieve such bottom-up change. They tend to view grassroots civic initiatives through the framework of citizen voice and social accountability, which neither offer an explanation about the process through which accountability is gained nor explicitly encompass the underlying dynamics of people power.¹⁷ Traditionally, citizen empowerment was viewed as part of governance, which was considered a political issue and not an element of development.¹⁸ As a result, social accountability emerged as a framework through which innovative development and anticorruption practitioners could get around this impediment and incorporate the notion of citizen-generated pressure into policymaking and programs.¹⁹ In light of the paradigm shift under way in the development realm over the role of citizens in undermining corrup-

tion and oppression, the timing is right for the social accountability field to incorporate people power concepts and scholarship, in which three dimensions are key.

First, the *social accountability* framework, up until now, has not been able to articulate what actually produces change, relying instead on circular definitions such as, “a wide range of citizen and civil society organization actions to hold the state to account, as well as actions on the part of government, media, and other societal actors.”²⁰ Social accountability at its core consists of empowered citizens generating social pressure, which shifts power imbalances; disrupts corrupt practices, relationships, and systems (vertically within an institution or horizontally across institutions and groups); and supports honest powerholders who attempt reforms but alone cannot stand against all the vested interests in the venal status quo. In other words, social accountability involves people power.

Second, as in any struggle, *negotiation* may play a role in interactions between the grass roots and powerholders. But on its own, negotiation is unlikely to yield favorable results if a power imbalance exists at the outset. People power has the potential to equalize the interaction and further negotiations by creating leverage for the civic initiative.²¹

Lastly, *donor-initiated or -sponsored efforts* to build social accountability into national development projects require permission or some form of acceptance from government counterparts, for example, the World Bank’s Global Partnership for Social Accountability. While such initiatives do not appear to grow organically out of the grass roots, they seek citizen engagement and action, and ultimately have the potential to generate social pressure through which accountability is gained.

Hence, the social accountability field can benefit from accumulated knowledge about effective social movements, particularly the need for strategy, planning, organization and tactical innovation, diversity, and sequencing.

Bottom-Up People Power Initiatives Do Not Equal Top-Down Mechanisms Involving Citizens

A disquieting trend is emerging to institutionalize and scale up civic anticorruption and social accountability initiatives. While the embrace of citizen-led change is laudable, if it is translated into attempts to jump-start, engineer, or standardize civic initiatives, the results may lead to disappointment and could be detrimental to the civic realm. The following points elaborate on this issue.

A randomized, controlled set of field experiments conducted in 608

Indonesian villages is illustrative of these hazards. The widely cited study intended to compare the efficacy of “top-down monitoring by government auditors and bottom-up monitoring through grassroots participation in the village monitoring process.”²² But what was construed as citizen engagement was designed by external actors and, not surprisingly, failed to yield significant outcomes. Each community was the recipient of a new road under a national infrastructure program. After the project design and allocations had been finalized but before materials procurement or road construction began, villages were subjected to one of three interventions: external audit, accountability meeting, or accountability meeting plus comment boxes. In the external audit intervention, communities were told that after the funds were awarded but before construction began, they would be audited by the state audit agency (BPKP), and the results would be reported to the central government and publicly presented at an open meeting. In a second experiment, villages were informed that “accountability meetings” would be held after the project, at which point officials would explain how they spent the funds. Invitations were distributed to approximately half of the households, apparently by village heads. In addition to the accountability meetings, in the third intervention, anonymous comment forms were attached to accountability meeting invitations given to community recipients. The forms could be left at drop boxes and would be summarized at the accountability meeting. The results were that external audits (intervention 1) reduced missing expenditures, but the accountability meeting scenarios (interventions 2 and 3) had little average impact.

The study concluded that “grassroots participation in monitoring” had a negligible effect on corruption. In fact, the research inadvertently demonstrated the opposite—namely, the limitations of externally driven, narrowly defined accountability initiatives projected onto citizens, who were assigned monitoring roles, responsibilities, and actions by powerholders. First, regular citizens did not have input about how to monitor the road construction projects. Second, citizens neither initiated nor organized the public accountability meetings. As importantly, they did not attempt to mobilize fellow residents to participate. Finally, the complex process of exacting accountability was reduced to attendance in one meeting—in some cases, combined with the option of filling out an anonymous comment form prior to the gathering. Thus, there was no local ownership of the development projects and accountability measures, let alone a sense of collective responsibility and even a shared goal of preventing corruption. In contrast, one can compare these artificial grassroots efforts with the successful outcomes of MUHURI’s so-

cial audits in Kenya and Integrity Watch Afghanistan's community-monitoring initiatives (see Chapters 10 and 8, respectively).

When it comes to scaling up civic initiatives, effective civic campaigns and movements naturally inspire other communities and groups. For example, the Right to Information movement in India had a transcontinental impact in Africa and inspired the young founders of Integrity Watch Afghanistan. Domestically, each time an Afghan village successfully monitors a development and reconstruction project, other communities hear about it and want to embark on their own civic initiatives. Thus grew the original pilot program of ten villages in 2007 to 400 in 2013.

Externally driven efforts to encourage citizen engagement tend to simplify the complex reality of civic initiatives, limit the anticorruption arena to prescribed interactions with governments, and narrow the range of tactics. They can unintentionally create confusion about what constitutes citizen empowerment and action. Top-down accountability mechanisms (designed by states or donors) that include citizen input into government policy and activities are not the same as civic initiatives springing organically from the grass roots. The former's track record is mixed. One large literature review concluded, "No 'accountability effect' was in evidence in cases where voice mechanisms failed to facilitate the influential expression of civic voice."²³ In another analysis of public sector reforms, it was found that elites can hijack institutional opportunities to engage with policymakers. The authors concluded, "The 'success stories' are rooted in social movements and organizations which have built trust and mutual support among members."²⁴ And they caution donors to "not assume that accountability initiatives can be treated as mechanisms to be 'transplanted' in new contexts without considerable groundwork in building social and organizational support."²⁵

While recognizing some donors' worthy objectives to support citizen empowerment and action, a potential danger exists that in seeking to multiply "demand-driven initiatives," they may unintentionally channel bottom-up civic impulses into structured social accountability projects, thereby hampering the emergence of other forms of citizen dissent, social mobilization, and people power.

People's Engagement and Civic Initiatives Are Not Formulaic

To expect to see a direct linear relationship between a tactic and an anticorruption or accountability outcome is unlikely. Civil resistance takes place in what sociologist Lee Smithey describes as a cultural, social,

political, and economic landscape.²⁶ And that cultural, social, political, and economic landscape varies in each situation. The overwhelming conclusion among scholars and activists is that there is no such thing as a viable, effective people power formula or a replicable set of objectives, strategies, actions, and outcomes. Nor are particular tactics inherently good or bad. What works in one context would not necessarily work in another. In the anticorruption and development worlds, social accountability activities (many of which can be construed as nonviolent tactics in the people power realm) are commonly viewed as fixed variables. But to be effective, they need to resonate with the existing culture and values in the particular society, and provide motivational and emotional resources to those who engage in them and those who react to them. An example is Addiopizzo's creation of stickers resembling traditional Sicilian obituary notices that were affixed to walls and street lamps.

Thus, there is a difference between copying a nonviolent action and deriving inspiration from it. The efficacy of tactics depends on struggle context, social and cultural intangibles, and the parameters of the struggle, such as objectives, strategies, unity, organization, overall tactical repertoire, and social infrastructure. Nevertheless, effective tactics in one situation can offer inspiration to civic actors targeting corruption by stimulating new ideas or serving as examples to be adapted and contextualized. For example, the defining method of monitoring is a potentially powerful set of tactics. The key lesson is not that there is a formula for this method that can be reproduced and scaled up across settings. Rather, its potential efficacy derives from its capacity to disrupt the smooth functioning of the corrupt status quo. Hence, monitoring can take a variety of forms depending on the creativity of civic actors and the situation at hand.

As well, civic actions need to tap into shared identities and, on occasion, raise ethical dilemmas, as demonstrated by Addiopizzo's slogan, "An entire people who pays pizzo [extortion money] is a people without dignity."²⁷

In sum, tactical creation and selection depend on the overall strategy, the local context, and their combination with other actions in a sequenced, complementary manner—that all come together in a coherent, organized campaign or movement that mobilizes people and maintains nonviolent discipline. How does this apply to a real case? Site inspections of public works projects are touted as a method to decrease corruption and increase accountability. Inspections have the potential to disrupt corrupt practices by documenting illicit activities or preventing

them—when corruptors know they will be exposed. But the impact of this tactic depends on multiple factors—for instance, the credibility, reputations, societal positions or roles, and social perceptions of the individuals conducting the inspections; nonviolent tactics leading up to the site visit (for example, obtaining information from authorities); behavior during the site visit; tactics following the site visit to disseminate the findings; messaging and communications directed to the community or powerholders; support from other groups and sectors in the community, larger society, or external actors; potential support from sympathetic officials; timing of the action, and so on. In a strategic campaign, these multiple considerations are factored into the design of the tactic(s).

Adverse Consequences of Standardization Efforts

Standardized, prescriptive blueprints of tactics and tools promoted by third-party actors to in-country CSOs may not only lead to failure but can divert grassroots efforts from more effective paths, create disillusionment, and potentially put regular people in harm's way. In the latter case, what may be low-risk in one setting could be high-risk in another. Strategic planning includes risk assessments, which are always context specific and cannot be done by outsiders. Continuing with the case of monitoring public works, if some kind of inspection is planned, have the following questions been addressed: Is there a likelihood the monitoring activities could be thwarted? Would the citizens conducting the visit be attacked or face subsequent reprisals? Would the likelihood of interference be the same for people of different social sectors (for example, adult men or grandmothers or schoolchildren)? Are the people volunteering to take part aware of the risks and willing to continue? If the possibility of retaliation exists, what can be done to make it backfire? As a result, a host of other alternatives might be designed, thereby enabling a campaign to strategically consider different or complementary tactics to further the original objective.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dosta! strategically decided to use social media tactics rather than traditional street protests, because the movement's leaders understood that corruptors were ready to thwart nonviolent direct action but were taken by surprise with digital resistance (see Chapter 10). Therefore, those who are involved in the civic initiative are the best placed to diagnose such situations, as well as to decide on the course of action—whether to assume risks and face potential negative consequences.

Constructive Support

International actors, donors, and development institutions can play positive roles and provide invaluable forms of support to bottom-up anti-corruption efforts, including access to information; small, flexible grants; and opportunities for national and transnational peer-to-peer learning and dialogue (see the “Recommendations” section below).

The evolution and use of social audits in Kenya and community monitoring in Afghanistan demonstrate the positive confluence of bottom-up civic initiatives and external actors, directly through international NGOs and indirectly through donors. In both cases, tactics were adapted at the local level rather than copied from other campaigns and movements in the international arena. The origins of the six-step social audit developed by MUHURI in Kenya stem from the MKSS and the Right to Know movement in India, through the *jan sunwai* (public hearing) nonviolent actions in Rajasthan.²⁸ Two NGOs, the New Tactics Project of the Center for Victims of Torture and the International Budget Partnership, played catalytic roles in disseminating information and lessons learned from this movement. The New Tactics Project makes available online an outstanding case study authored by Sowmya Kidambi, a former MKSS activist. The International Budget Partnership facilitated a workshop in Mombasa that brought together MKSS activists, MUHURI, local citizens, and other CSOs in Kenya. The international dimension is further bolstered in that both the New Tactics Project and the International Budget Partnership receive financial support from foundations and development agencies. Other examples are the modest financial support provided by the Partnership for Transparency Fund to NAFODU in Uganda and TIRI and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation’s overall support to Integrity Watch Afghanistan, which allowed the CSO to allocate a small amount to pilot the community-monitoring initiative.

When grassroots CSOs and community-based organizations are considered counterparts rather than recipients of aid or conduits of externally driven programs, valuable synergies can emerge that build anticorruption into aid and development by harnessing the strengths and capacities of citizens wielding people power. A case in point is the innovative form of cooperation initiated between the World Bank and Integrity Watch Afghanistan. As mentioned in Chapter 8, they came to a monitoring agreement whereby in July 2011 the CSO opened a field office in the province of Badakshan, in order to begin empowering willing local communities to monitor World Bank–funded reconstruction projects.²⁹

Guiding Principles for Third-Party Actors

Although third-party actors cannot bring grassroots civic initiatives into existence or direct them, the international community can develop a host of supportive policies and measures. The following general principles are presented as a guide to international engagement:

- *Affirm*, through solidarity and engagement, rather than interfere in the development and trajectory of civic anticorruption initiatives.
- *Enable* the emergence of citizen empowerment and action through efforts to improve challenging situations on the ground.
- *Empower* citizens and civic organizations through actor-oriented approaches that can include transfers of useful knowledge and skills, peer-to-peer learning exchanges, access to information, national and international networking opportunities, provision of modest grants, support for ICT development and new tools, and access to ICTs and infrastructure.
- *Recognize* that citizens have agency and power—generated through nonviolent, bottom-up initiatives and social movements. They are sources of change rather than simple recipients of peace-building, anticorruption, social accountability, and democracy efforts that are determined, designed, and directed on their behalf by elites or external actors.
- *Respect* the wishes and judgments of civic actors and regular people on the ground. In some contexts, international contact and support can be beneficial. However, in other situations, it can be detrimental by delegitimizing the campaign or movement, harming the credibility of civic leaders, and in some cases, leading to harsh repression and physical harm.

Recommendations

The following overall recommendations are presented for the international community, including the anticorruption, development, peace-building, human rights, and democracy/good governance realms.

Protection

It is unfortunately all too common for anticorruption advocates in the civic realm and within governments, as well as investigative journalists, to face harassment, intimidation, and violence from both state and non-state entities.³⁰ The CIVICUS 2009–2010 Civil Society Index concluded,

The world is presently witnessing a cascade of laws and regulatory measures to restrict the rights of citizens to freely express their views, associate, and assemble. Peaceful demonstrators, activists, journalists, human rights defenders, and ordinary citizens are increasingly facing motivated prosecution, harassment, physical abuse, and threats to their lives for challenging well-entrenched power structures.³¹

In the course of my research, several civic leaders and activists noted that solidarity and protection were among the most valuable contributions the international community could make. One anticorruption activist said, “First, to defend the lives of the people who are involved in these campaigns and movements. Activists in my country are in constant risk.” This view was echoed in a study interviewing 500 local stakeholders in fourteen countries on donor democracy support.³² It found that “much more valuable than slightly increased amounts of money, or slightly changed funding rules, would be more effective international pressure on regimes to loosen civil society and other laws.”³³

Condemning crackdowns can include exposing violations of international or regional conventions signed by aid-recipient governments, and developing joint statements and actions among like-minded governments. An important caveat is that external actors should act in concert with anticorruption advocates under threat, or their associates and family members. They can best determine whether international solidarity will be beneficial or harmful and which forms of support are needed, and in some cases, point to targets of such efforts, such as powerholders, media, third-party intermediaries, or other governments that have leverage.

Wider strategic benefits also come with international exposure, attention, and condemnation of repression against individuals or civic initiatives. First, international solidarity constitutes the civil resistance principle of unity and can create pressure in the international arena through the dynamic of the power of numbers (of people, actors, institutions, entities). Second, protecting a few can empower many and make crackdowns backfire by thwarting oppressors’ goals, which include instilling fear, hopelessness, and apathy among anticorruption advocates and the general public; impeding unity among anticorruption organizations and networks; and preventing alliances with other nonviolent struggles, for example, democracy, labor, women, minorities, and the environment.

Genuine Inclusion and Engagement

Grassroots leaders and community figures have vital input that can be systematically and meaningfully included in top-down reform through

policy and program development deliberations conducted under the auspices of external actors, including donor governments, multilateral institutions, think tanks, and academic centers. On the basis of anecdotal accounts conveyed to me, exclusion seems to be more common than inclusion. Civic anticorruption leaders reported instances in which they did not get responses when contacting the local missions of multilateral institutions, or they were not invited to anticorruption forums that involved NGO elites and decisionmakers from their countries. On the other hand, civic actors want meaningful consultations, not a “façade of a democratic process . . . with no option, whatsoever, of real dialogue,” said a young CSO leader.³⁴

Self-Organization and Capacity Building

International strategies to foster democracy, accountability, and human rights have focused on the creation of in-country (often elitist) NGOs. Civic activists anecdotally report that external actors often do not see or marginalize social networks on the ground, in part because they do not resemble the Global North’s notions of organized civil society. Accordingly, less attention has been given to other forms of citizen groups, such as indigenous cultural organizations, people’s associations, and social movements.³⁵ In the anticorruption and accountability context, while some bottom-up initiatives are spearheaded by CSOs, others may be linked to an organization or emerge from one, but essentially operate as a social movement—or they consist of alliances and networks coordinated by an informal group of nonstate actors from across society.

A conceptual transformation of donor support is needed from clientelism to citizenship. The aforementioned donor democracy study states, “It emerges from our interviews that civil society organizations most appreciate local-level projects that assist self-organisation based around issues of practical relevance to individual citizens.”³⁶ At the macro level, this includes

- “Creating capacities for citizenship through the provision of opportunities for social bargaining and social learning within post-conflict societies.”³⁷
- Building holistic approaches based on the inherent links among anticorruption, human rights, peacebuilding, and development efforts.
- Considering social networks and preexisting relationships when supporting nonviolent initiatives.
- Supporting INGOs, global civic alliances, and international digital

movements that are close to in-country, grassroots civic initiatives; serve as catalysts for peer-to-peer, bottom-up knowledge and skills transfer; protect activists on the ground; wage transnational campaigns linked to internal civic struggles; and provide modest funding directly to local actors to turn ideas into action.

In contrast, international support for self-organization doesn't necessitate institutionalizing bottom-up anticorruption campaigns and movements by encouraging their transformation into conventional NGOs removed from the grass roots. As people power is extrainstitutional by nature, such attempts to standardize the process of social pressure can interrupt its dynamics; divert time, resources, and attention away from the struggle; and harm the campaign's vibrancy, adaptability, local ties, legitimacy, sense of ownership, and social identity. In tandem, credible civic initiatives have the responsibility to practice what they demand—integrity, fiscal responsibility, and accountability.

Access to Information

While information is not a precondition for successful people power, its availability contributes to an enabling environment. Rather than expend precious resources and efforts to acquire information, nonviolent campaigns and movements can bypass the hurdle of acquiring information and directly use it for the anticorruption challenges at hand. To this end, the international community can advocate for access to information among powerholders in aid-recipient countries. It can also set an example of transparency about its own development activities. Additionally, external actors can make available information needed by grassroots civic actors for anticorruption and accountability initiatives, as the latter often face obstacles from their own national and local governments. Finally, what can also be helpful, on occasion, is informally shared information about integrity champions—state and nonstate powerholders who are favorable to anticorruption and accountability efforts, for example, honest officials, legislators, local administrators, reformers, and representatives of organized labor, professional associations, and the private sector.

Exchange and Knowledge

Although there is no dearth of anticorruption forums, fewer opportunities are available for dialogue and peer-to-peer learning among grassroots civic organizations, their leaders, and local activists. The international community can make possible more frequent exchanges and bring

together civic actors who fight graft and abuse but come from realms beyond anticorruption and accountability, such as democracy, peace-building, antipoverty, social and economic justice, human rights, women's rights, labor rights, minority and indigenous rights, the environment, and countering organized crime. A noteworthy development was the Fifteenth International Anti-Corruption Conference, with the overall theme, "Mobilising People: Connecting Agents of Change."

Such exchanges have multiple benefits. Their challenges, strategies, tactics, and practical lessons can be circulated widely within the anticorruption and accountability realms. Others can draw inspiration from the sheer ingenuity, courage, and resilience of those engaging in nonviolent action, who often face intimidation and repression. Such encounters may contribute to a "thickening of alliances and relationships" across borders, thereby fostering transnational peer-to-peer networks and the people power dynamic of power of numbers.³⁸

Global South-to-South transfers are particularly important. No longer is it the case that the main flow of learning is from the Global North to the Global South. The most fertile source of skills, innovation, strategies, tactics, and ICT applications for gaining accountability, justice, and rights is now the Global South. A fascinating illustration comes from Asia. Launched in 2010, *Ipaidabrike.com* is a digital portal developed by the Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy in Bangalore, India. Through ICT modalities—email, SMS, Twitter, mobile phone video uploads, and so forth—citizens can safely and, if they wish, anonymously, post instances of bribery and resistance to it in public service delivery, as well as interact with one another and Janaagraha members. In spite of the Chinese regime's Internet censorship, the country's savvy digital surfers learned about *Ipaidabrike.com* and have taken inspiration from it. Several Chinese websites have been launched, such as "I Made a Bribe," the latter calling on citizens to "Please reveal your experiences of paying bribes so embezzlement and corruption have nowhere to hide."³⁹ Regular visits to the Indian *Ipaidabrike.com* reveal an ever-increasing number of countries that are developing their own sites, such as Greece, Kosovo, Kenya, Morocco, and Pakistan, and many more are in the pipeline.

The international community can more fully foster South-to-South transfers in which activists are encouraged to assume various degrees of collective responsibility and ownership in the content and pedagogy, rather than rely on standardized training initiatives managed by external actors. An example from this study are the International Budget Partnership workshops, which are designed and conducted by veterans of suc-

cessful civic initiatives, and have the dual purpose of knowledge and skills transfer and training of trainers, who can then in turn impart what they have learned to others.

External Corruption Drivers

Corruption as fostered by external actors and policies takes many forms, including lack of transparency in payments by companies to foreign governments; opaque company ownership and transactions; weak money laundering and foreign bribery laws, as well as stolen asset tracking measures; and legal, safe tax havens for corruptors and their assets.⁴⁰ A recent study found that from 1990 to 2008, approximately US\$197 billion moved from the forty-eight poorest countries, mainly into banks, tax havens, and offshore financial centers in developed countries.⁴¹

One of the most potent anticorruption strategies the international community can employ is the disruption of external corruption drivers. Such measures can be taken in both national and multilateral settings and involve state and nonstate actors. For instance, donor governments can improve oversight and accountability for major reconstruction and development investments. Integrity Watch Afghanistan asserts that corrupt international contractors are part of the development and problems in the country. “The reality,” said Karolina Olofsson, then with IWA, “is that when these private companies are found guilty of corruption, the consequences, if any, are low.”⁴² According to IWA, home country governments are slow to react or continue the contracting relationship.

At the multilateral level, coordinated government measures can disrupt external corruption drivers. One example concerns revenue transparency legislation in the resource extraction sector. On June 26, 2013, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (consisting of EU member states) enacted a landmark transparency law affecting the extractive and forestry industries. European Union logging, mining, gas, and oil companies are now required to report what they pay governments over €100,000, on a country-by-country and project-by-project basis.⁴³ According to Catherine Olier, EU policy adviser for OXFAM, “This is a critical step forward in the fight against corruption and tax dodging that will help ordinary people in the developing world harness their countries’ natural resources wealth and lift themselves out of poverty.”⁴⁴

UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC)

UNCAC is a comprehensive, legally binding, international anticorruption instrument that is considered a valuable tool for bottom-up grass-

roots civic initiatives. It includes a mandate for civil society organizations and citizens in national accountability processes, and commits signatory governments to a high standard of preventive measures, criminalization of a wide range of corrupt actions, effective asset-recovery provisions, and review processes.⁴⁵ Articles 9, 10, and 13 support the use of social accountability activities, such as social audits, budget tracking, and public procurement monitoring, in order to foster citizen engagement and action.⁴⁶ UNCAC is considered a vital top-down measure that can empower and even protect homegrown campaigns.⁴⁷ A striking instance of its impact comes from Egypt. In 2007 the Mubarak regime cracked down on the shayfeen.com anticorruption campaign and charged the group with incitement, corresponding with a foreign entity, possessing documents challenging government policy (including the Transparency International Toolkit), and spreading negative information about the country. Shayfeen.com successfully sued the government by demonstrating that its activities were legal under UNCAC, of which Egypt was a signatory. Moreover, the government was then forced to publish UNCAC in Egypt's official legal chronicle, which was essential to render it binding in courts of law.⁴⁸

UNCAC is a work in progress, with ongoing review mechanisms and negotiations to adopt resolutions. There is still much on which governments can agree or disagree. Civil society, both globally and national actors, is united around common demands. For example, ahead of the Fifth Conference of States Parties (November 2013), the UNCAC Coalition, an international network of over 350 CSOs in one hundred countries, released eighteen "Asks" related to ratification, corruption prevention, criminalization and enforcement, asset recovery, and the UNCAC country review process.⁴⁹ Adoption of such recommendations would go far toward thwarting external corruption drivers, improving challenging situations on the ground, and providing access to information.

Financial Support

External funding is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, grassroots civic initiatives are often in dire need of material and financial support. They may not have access to domestic sources, such as the private sector, and in-country foundations may not exist or have an interest in people power. As importantly, civic initiatives need to maintain their independence from the state and political parties.⁵⁰

On the other hand, external support can, in some instances, have unintended negative impacts on grassroots mobilization. One such outcome is the "channeling effect," which occurs "when a social movement

and its leadership redirect their strategies, goals, and alliances away from the original mission toward those acceptable to funders.”⁵¹ In the anticorruption context, this can arise when donors require CSOs to engage in formal relationships with state powerholders, frown upon disruptive nonviolent actions, or tie grants to preselected corruption targets. A second possible consequence is demobilization. A recent literature review on the impact of foreign aid on SMOs and social movements concluded, “While much of the literature has focused on the enabling aspects of transnational links . . . such links, particularly ties of money, also have the unintended effect of weakening domestic movements by limiting their capacity for mass mobilization.”⁵²

There is no one-size-fits-all solution for this conundrum. This research found a demand for flexible funding and small grants that enable grassroots organizations to pilot innovative civic initiatives or conduct homegrown training sessions. In order to avoid the pitfalls, three guidelines for external financial and material support are as follows: (1) the support should not interfere in the civic initiatives’ strategies, priorities, objectives, and nonviolent tactics; (2) the support should empower civic leaders to launch homegrown civic initiatives and mobilize citizens rather than execute projects designed by external actors; and (3) the support should be combined with local resources, such as volunteerism, and financial and material support.

Specific Recommendations

The following recommendations for specific groups are intended to illustrate the breadth of positive measures that various actors in the international community can and do take to support bottom-up civic initiatives targeting corruption. They have been derived and adapted from two outstanding sources: *A Diplomat’s Handbook for Democracy Development Support* and *Nonviolent Civic Action in Support of Human Rights and Democracy*.⁵³ Some proposals appear more than once, illustrating their relevance to multiple realms. As a caveat, given that individual country situations are different, interactions with the civic realm need to be tempered with sound judgment and common sense.

For On-the-Ground External Actors

In this section, I provide recommendations for diplomats, development practitioners, and INGO in-country staff.

Include grassroots campaigns and movements in the “field of vision.” This can translate into adding civic leaders in their rounds of

calls when taking a new country posting, incorporating bottom-up initiatives on the meeting agenda for visiting delegations or home-country teams, and even conferring with civic groups before and after anticorruption negotiations or development meetings with governments. During the UK presidency of the European Union in 2005, for instance, British diplomats and officials consulted with Russian NGOs before the EU-Russia dialogue meetings and debriefed them afterward.⁵⁴

Ensure access to information that the state or other actors refuse to release to civil society, such as development policies, budgets, expenditures, international loans, procurement figures, foreign aid amounts and dissemination, foreign direct investment data, and so on.

Exhibit solidarity through releasing statements in support of civic leaders, campaigns, and movements targeting corruption; honoring activists who exemplify courage, integrity, and resilience; visiting communities and sites linked to grassroots initiatives; and circulating information and activist stories to the international media.

Highlight legitimacy by linking the rights of civic actors and the goals of campaigns and movements to international conventions on human rights, UNCAC, and others.⁵⁵

Bear witness to the nonviolent actions of civic initiatives, trials of civic actors, and imprisonment of activists.

Protect anticorruption leaders and activists, including temporary refuge in diplomatic space and emergency visas for those whose lives are endangered.

Provide funding. Small-grant seed money, as well as emergency and hardship funds from local embassies, can be invaluable for grassroots initiatives, not only to help sustain essential activities and expenses, but also for urgent appeals such as legal aid for detained campaign members or escapes for those who are at risk of torture or death. As an example, the government of Sweden provides its embassies with funding to support democracy development.

For Development Institutions and Bilateral Donor Agencies

Development institutions include, for example, the World Bank and the UN Development Programme, and bilateral donor agencies include organizations such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the US Agency for International Development.

Expand conceptualization of citizen engagement and empowerment to incorporate social mobilization, collective action, grassroots civic initiatives, nonviolent campaigns, and social movements.

Support “actor-oriented approaches” that recognize the agency of

*citizens to demand their rights.*⁵⁶ Rather than treating people as subjects of citizen voice and accountability projects and interventions, view them as initiators and drivers of change.

Involve bottom-up civic actors in consultations about top-down policies, measures, and reforms. Not only is their input inherently valuable, research finds that when the grass roots have a voice in policy formulation, they are more likely to engage in monitoring of policy outputs and activities.⁵⁷ When aid-recipient governments are hostile to such direct civic interactions, the development realm can incorporate grass-roots priorities and input into their own communications with state interlocutors.

Consider preexisting relationships and social support networks when supporting nonviolent initiatives. As mentioned earlier, civic actors anecdotally report that external actors often do not see or sideline social networks on the ground, in part because they do not resemble the Global North's notions of organized civil society.

Provide information to grassroots civic leaders about donor and aid activities, for example, development projects, aid policies, budget support to governments, and anticorruption and accountability champions or sympathizers among local and national powerholders.

For Foreign Governments and Regional Bodies

Recommendations for administrations, parliaments, and regional bodies, such as the European Union, are as follows:

Empower embassies, missions, and diplomats to incorporate engagement with bottom-up initiatives targeting corruption and gaining accountability. In a fresh approach, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs created the Transformation Policy Unit to “enable embassies to support democratization, human rights, and transition-related projects in countries with repressive regimes.”⁵⁸

Condemn crackdowns on civic and political space in general, and on bottom-up campaigns and movements targeting corruption in particular. This can entail developing joint statements and actions with like-minded governments.

Magnify breaches of international or regional conventions, when homegrown campaigns and movements invoke international or regional conventions signed by their governments that have been violated.

Target external corruption enablers, such as the laws, practices, and professional services that can drive malfeasance—in home countries, third-party countries, and through regional initiatives.

Engage with the grass roots—bottom-up organizations, campaigns,

and movements, for example—by including them in government-sponsored international forums, receiving them in home capitals, and meeting with them during country visits.

Reconceptualize support for bottom-up civic initiatives, such as building holistic approaches based on the inherent links among anticorruption, human rights, peacebuilding, and development efforts; and affording solidarity, small grants, and opportunities for practical, grassroots peer-to-peer exchanges, access to information, and consultation on donor country top-down development, anticorruption, and accountability measures.

Strengthen capacities of international civil society to affirm and empower grassroots campaigns and movements—by supporting INGOs with ties to homegrown civic initiatives, global civic alliances, and emerging online international civic empowerment movements. Such movements serve as catalysts for grassroots knowledge and skills transfer, practical dialogue within countries or across borders, protection of activists, transnational campaigning, and sources of modest funding for grassroots actors to turn ideas into action—for example, the Partnership for Transparency Fund.

For International Civil Society

In this context, international civil society can include transnational advocacy networks, INGOs, foundations, unions, professional organizations, and even diaspora, faith-based, and cultural groups. They have resources, capacities, and leverage that can complement and support in-country, bottom-up initiatives targeting corruption and abuse in order to accomplish the following:

- *Expand the arena* of the struggle beyond the domestic setting.
- *Amplify citizens' voices and bottom-up initiatives* on the international stage to policymakers, multilateral institutions, and the media.
- *Provide information and expertise* that civic initiatives need, such as foreign assets of authoritarian rulers, technical skills, relevant multilateral norms and conventions, sources of funding, legal advice, legal action in third-country courts, and media access.
- *Advocate to external powerholders*, such as governments and multilateral bodies, to act in solidarity with a civic initiative, particularly if it is imperiled by corruptors.
- *Protect* those within the civic initiative who face grave threats through exposure of the situation, advocacy campaigns, legal counsel, emergency assistance, and nonviolent accompaniment.

- *Expedite transnational contacts and learning* to facilitate dialogue and exchange of skills and expertise, as well as to build networks and alliances.

Conclusion

In their efforts to understand and support bottom-up, collective action, external actors in a sense are entering uncharted territory. One overriding lesson from the history and scholarship of nonviolent social movements is that international actors cannot bring them into existence. People power is organic; it springs from the grass roots. Top-down efforts to foster and standardize civic initiatives hold pitfalls. At the very least, externally driven programs will have limited or modest impact. Worse, though, they can potentially undercut bottom-up capacity for people power in societies and even put citizens at risk. However, careful forms of international policies, support, and solidarity can affirm, enable, and empower citizens, rather than inadvertently inhibit or interfere in civic initiatives.

In turn, the international community can benefit from civic initiatives to curb corruption and gain accountability. Beyond their most salient impact on malfeasance, protagonists in such campaigns and movements are a source of insights and information for policymakers, anticorruption advocates, and development practitioners. They often have fresh perspectives about genuine democracy, governance, and power relations in their contexts, as well as inventive approaches to addressing oppression, poverty, and peacebuilding that are not necessarily on the radar screens of elites and powerholders. All in all, their varied approaches demonstrate the vast possibilities available when regular people—young and old, women and men—refuse to be victims and combine ingenuity, strategy, and planning with hope, determination, and valor.

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