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**RULE OF LAW AND ANTI-CORRUPTION: INITIATIVES,
STRATEGIES AND IMPACT PANEL**

Anticorruption Initiatives: Do Small Stuff Count?

Prepared by:

**OLGA NAZARIO, PhD
Senior Technical Advisor**

**CASALS & ASSOCIATES, INC.
1199 N. Fairfax Street, 3rd Floor
Alexandria, VA 22314
onazario@casals.com
www.casals.com**

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Corruption is a historical phenomenon that will not go away. Honesty and integrity, its traditional antidotes, are no longer effective. The alternative remedies, systemic and structural reforms, are of recent manufacture. There is growing frustration with the results achieved so far, as corruption in the developing world remains perniciously entrenched in every sector of society. Yet, like similar global initiatives, such as HIV/AIDS or human rights, the fight against corruption requires time for raising awareness, producing results, and satisfying the high expectations that these campaigns create.

This paper will look briefly at the short history of the international communities' acknowledgement of corruption's devastating effect and review some lessons learned from recent anticorruption initiatives. It is not an academic paper, but one that offers the perspective of field practitioners involved primarily with civil society's role in fighting corruption. It also provides some thoughts for future activities.

Corruption Awakening

The mismanagement of public funds and abuse of authority for private gain has been an inescapable feature of the political landscape for as long as we can remember. Allegations of corruption surged prominently during political campaigning, often to smear opponent. Prior to its globalization, combating corruption hinged on the integrity of public officials or party platforms. In the forties and fifties in Latin America, for

example, political parties and candidates in Cuba and Brazil used a broom as a symbol of their commitment to sweep out corruption.¹ There were no proposals for institutional reforms. The weaknesses that led to corruption were perceived as a matter of character and integrity.

Such approach may explain, in part, why the literature and curricula on development of the sixties and seventies barely mentioned corruption. When it did, it was practically justified as part of doing business and expected to go away with economic growth. International lending institutions, such as the World Bank, treated corruption practically as a component of sovereignty. The argument went that monitoring the mismanagement of their loans would be considered interference in the domestic affairs of the host country.

When the massive transition to democracy and economic reforms in the 1980s triggered waves of corruption, the international institutions finally acknowledged that corruption was a problem, both inside and outside their organizations. Today, corruption is finally widely recognized as one of the major obstacles to development.

This recognition brought about a significant shift on the causes of corruption. The burden moved from the individual (character/integrity) to institutional weaknesses that allowed those with authority, too much discretion while demanding little accountability, following the formula definition of the new anticorruption guru, Robert

¹ In the 1940s, the Orthodox party in Cuba used a broom as a sign that it would sweep away corruption. Brazil's president, Janos Quadro, used the same symbol during his political campaign in the late fifties.

Klitgaard.² New tools, such as the Integrated Financial Management Systems (IFMS), were introduced in the developing (and post-communist) nations, some more successfully than other.

Much has been accomplished during the past two decades. Yet, much remains to be done. Comprehensive transformations, take longer than we wish or expect. Perhaps the human rights campaigns may serve as example of the time and difficulties faced by great transformations. In 2008 Amnesty International called on world leaders “to apologize for six decades of human rights failures.”³ Yet, these “failures” cannot hide the reality that just twenty years ago most regimes in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Central and East Europe disregarded human rights completely. Similarly, frustration over underachievement in reducing corruption should bear in mind that this is a very young process.

A development concern

In 2000, Enery Quiñones, head of the Anti-Corruption Division at OECD, argued that, “In the long run, no country can afford the social, political or economic costs that corruption entails.”⁴ This is increasingly true every day. Corruption involves large sums of money and resources that are lost to the country but, it also affects the credibility of governments and its institutions. It leads to disregard for the rule of law; distorts the

² Robert Klitgaard’s famous formula of Monopoly + Discretion – Accountability = Corruption.

³ “Sixty years of human rights failure—governments must apologize and act now,” <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/sixty-years-human-rights-failure-government...> (27 May 2008).

⁴ Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) Observer No 220, April 2000 (http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/printpage.php/aid/233/What_is_corruption_.html)

allocation of resources and undermines competition in the market place. It has a devastating effect on investment, growth and development. In sum, corruption conspires against governance.

The impact of corruption is easily recognized in some developing countries. Nigeria, for example, is the 10th largest exporter of crude oil but ranks 151 out of 177 in the United Nations Development Index of 2004. It ranked 121 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2008 Corruption Perception Index. Angola, another oil rich country with a very poor population, mismanaged more than \$4.2 billions of oil revenues between 1997 and 2002. These rich countries have rampant poverty because of high levels of systemic and endemic corruption. They are excellent examples of the view that there are no poor nations; but nations poorly managed.

In many countries, Nigeria among them, corruption impacts delivery of basic services and this affects disadvantage citizens disproportionately. Studies conducted in several developing countries indicate that poor households use a higher percentage of the family budget to pay for bribes than more affluent homes.⁵ In the Dominican Republic, for example, citizens paid approximately US\$188 millions in bribes to get some type of services (visas, someone out of jail, water, birth/death certificates).

⁵ Professor Mitch Seligson has conducted victimization surveys in several Latin American countries. See, Seligson, Mitch "The Measure and Impact of Corruption Victimization: Survey Evidence From Latin America" (World Development Vol. 34, No. 2, pp. 381–404, 2006), (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/files/qTPvBm/Seligson%20The%20Measurement%20and%20Impact%20of%20Corruption%20World%20Development%202005.pdf>). A similar study was also conducted in the Dominican Republic. See, USAID, *Estudio Nacional del Costo de la Corrupción para los Hogares de la República Dominicana-- Resumen Ejecutivo* (http://www.psykhe.org/noticias/Resumen_ejecutivo_ENCCH-RD.pdf).

Not everyone can pay bribes. Many people suffer because they cannot afford the *dash* (bribe) that poor Nigerians and many others across the globe pay for health care, access to water, access to justice, education and other basic needs. In these cases, corruption causes illnesses and death.

Corruption is undermining social values in villages and communities around the world. Bribing officials to get services has become the norm rather than the exception in the developing world, leading citizens to no longer recognize it as corruption. That is just how things work. It is teaching youngsters that landing a government job that provides “bonus money” is the way to escape from poverty.

There is growing concern over the number of states being captured by powerful interests, linked to illicit trafficking in drugs, gas, oil, timber, water and more. This grand corruption involves complex operation while impacting the environment as well. It is usually linked to money laundering operations abroad. The impact on development is more devastating than the corruption skims affecting citizens every day.

Developing societies are not the only ones suffering from increasing corruption. The recent Maddox case showed that United States citizens can also see their financial security collapse because of corruption. Public officials at the national and local level in the United States and other rich countries are frequently indicted on corruption charges. The difference between cases in the United States and most developing countries is that American citizens still trust that the media is going to investigate and disclose these cases and that the justice system will seek punishment. Institutions are still trusted,

which is not the case in places where there is little respect for rule of law or where the media and the judicial system are not fully independent.

Impact of International Cooperation

For the past two decades, international entities and donor organizations worldwide have been supporting governance reforms around the globe. Development agencies include not only the multinational organizations, like the United Nations, the World Bank and several regional institutions (i.e. InterAmerican and Asian Development banks, Council of Europe), but also the international cooperation agencies of the United States, European Union, Canada, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Japan and a few others.

In addition, several important initiatives have highlighted the need to address corruption. In 2000, the US Congress passed the International Anticorruption and Good Governance Act establishing anticorruption as one of five major U.S. foreign policy goals. The 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development, gathering 50 heads of state established that “fighting corruption at all levels is a priority.”⁶ Also, the US government’s Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) singles out corruption as a key obstacle that must be cleared before a country can receive contract status and substantial financial support. The increased attention to corruption, however, has not been matched by greater funding. United States funding by USAID, Departments of the Treasury, Justice, Commerce and State for anticorruption programs in Africa

⁶ Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development, 18-22 March, 2002.

represented only about 2.4 percent of total US assistance to the region in fiscal years 2001-2002.⁷

The multipronged strategy to address corruption followed by the United Nations, the World Bank and national anticorruption institutions focused on prevention, education and enforcement. The main objectives for each were:⁸

- Prevention: increasing transparency and oversight of government functions; eliminating opportunities for corruption; improving incentives for good performance in public office; and simplifying procedures for basic services such as granting permits, licenses, bank loans, and passports.
- Education: Informing citizens about how corruption lowers their standards of living and about their role in monitoring government performance and reporting abuses. Without such information citizens may not understand their role in addressing corruption.
- Law enforcement: prosecuting, fining, or imprisoning corrupt officials.

There are no clear indicators of the results of the anticorruption cooperation, in part because the bulk of the assistance started less than ten years ago. The activities have included: supporting legal, judicial and regulatory reform; strengthening law enforcement; creating anticorruption commissions/agencies; enhancing government transparency and accountability; providing election assistance; strengthening the oversight institutions; promoting e-government, freedom of information acts; strengthening civil society and more.

⁷ GAO, *U.S Anti-Corruption Programs in Sub-Saharan Africa will Require Time and Commitment*, (Washington, DC, Report to the Sub-Committee on African Affairs, Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate), April 2004, p. 3.

⁸ This brief summary is found in the GAO report cite above.

The most systematic evaluation of corruption, conducted as part of the World Bank Institute's 'Governance Counts' series, found in 2008 that "there is little evidence of significant (or quantitatively important) changes in world averages of governance over the past decade."⁹ Only two or three countries showed improvements in control of corruption. The Kauffman, Kray and Mastruzzi governance studies are now ten years old and recognized for methodology consistency.

Yet, there are tangible, if not measurable results. Rule of law mechanism are present in countries previously under military/authoritarian rule; new laws on assets declaration, citizens participation, access to information, etc. are in the books or being discussed by the legislators and civil society; internal controls mechanism are more common in oversight bodies; and practically every region in the world has agreed to increase transparency and accountability and engage in institutional reform.

Perhaps the greater and more sustainable gains are in the areas of education. Generally, awareness and understanding of corruption is broader now worldwide. There are new tools, data, websites and other sources readily available. Civil society has not only raised awareness but, taken action. Citizens participate in budget decision at the local level, conduct oversight exercises and public awareness campaigns. The spaces gained by citizens, even if small, can have positive consequences. In Mongolia, as a result of a rudimentary finance campaign monitoring

⁹ Kaufmann, Daniel, Kraay, Aart and Mastruzzi, Massimo, Governance Matters VIII: Aggregate and Individual Governance Indicators, 1996-2008 (June 29, 2009). World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 4978. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1424591>

exercise conducted by the Women for Social Progress, the prime minister was forced to ban the use of government vehicles in political campaigns.¹⁰

Finally, the drafting and signing of regional or international conventions is a significant accomplishment. These conventions bind the States, regardless of the party in power, to comply with a number of actions to prevent, detect and punish corruption. While conventions often are received with skepticism, they have called attention to corruption issues and have provided uniform guidance to governments and in some cases, offered a role for civil society participation.¹¹

At least two of these conventions have monitoring mechanisms. For the IACC, there is

LEGAL ANTICORRUPTION INSTRUMENTS

- Inter-American Convention Against Corruption (IACC)(1996)
- OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions (1997)
- EU Convention on the Fight Against Corruption Involving Officials of the European Communities of Member States of the European Union (1997)
- Council of Europe Criminal law Convention on Corruption (1999)
- Council of Europe Civil Law Convention on Corruption (1999)
- Asian Development Bank/OECD Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia and the Pacific (1999)
- African Union Convention on Prevention and Combating Corruption (2003)
- UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) (2005)

the Mechanism for Follow up on Implementation of IACC (MESICIC), which calls for

¹⁰ A group of women sat at the town entrance with notebook and pencil in hand and counted the number of government cars and truck coming in and out for political proselytizing. They tallied the results, published them and asked the Prime Minister to pay attention to this situation.

¹¹ For full text of the conventions, see Transparency International Anti Corruption Handbook (http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/ach/introduction)

peer and expert evaluation of compliance. It also includes provisions for civil society monitoring and reporting to the Organization of American States.¹² The citizens' report is taken into consideration when analyzing the government's own progress report. The Council of Europe established the Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO) in 1999 to monitor its members' compliance with the Councils anticorruption standards.¹³ Independent anticorruption experts analyze governments report on compliance and make recommendations.

Lessons Learned

Researchers and practitioners agree that fighting corruption takes time and commitment. Most research on lessons learned in fighting corruption agrees on several points. Bruce Bailey found in 2003 that donors have learned that:¹⁴

1. There are no quick fixes. Fighting corruption requires long-term, comprehensive approaches that aim at systemic change.
2. There are a variety of entry points. Fighting corruption does not have to be the main point of entry. Others can be efficiency or greater transparency.
3. Civil society involvement is extremely important and building coalitions with a wide range of stakeholders is fundamental.
4. The reasons for success frequently include a combination of internal factors (managerial leadership, "reengineering" of processes, improved incentive systems, transparency and consultation with stakeholders) and external ones (changes in the economic or political environment which support, for example, an efficient customs services, political support and stakeholders support for change).

¹² For more on MESICIC, see: http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/mesicic_intro_en.htm

¹³ See GRECO webpage at: http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/greco/general/3.%20what%20is%20greco_EN.asp

¹⁴ Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), "Synthesis of Lessons Learned of Donor Practices in Fighting Corruption," (Development Assistant Committee, DAC Network on Governance, 2003), report prepared by a team of consultants led by Bruce B. Bailey, 2003.

Based on field experience, USAID Missions abroad have shared their lessons learned with anticorruption programs:¹⁵

5. Anticorruption commissions often lack the resources and authority to be effective and are often manipulated for political purposes.
6. National anticorruption plans can be time-consuming distractions and ultimately may not be executable. They can easily become large and unwieldy wish-lists that far outstrip implementation capacities.¹⁶
7. Public awareness campaigns are ineffective when not linked to specific reforms, and, similarly, reform efforts are only successful when they incorporate elements of public education and engagement

The UNDP Oslo Governance Center's *A Users' Guide to Measuring Corruption*, issued in 2008, includes among the good practices in measuring corruption, the following:¹⁷

8. Know what you want to measure, and find the appropriate measurement tools.
9. Break down ambitious goals of "measuring corruption" into more discrete and clearly defined policy outcomes.
10. Look for data that capture the voices and experiences of the poor and minority groups
11. Combine quantitative data with qualitative political-economy analysis;
12. Engage national actors and use local sources of information whenever possible, and
13. Be transparent in constructing a methodology for measuring corruption.

¹⁵ USAID, *Anticorruption Strategy*, (Washington, DC: United States Agency for International Development, October 2004), p. 12.

¹⁶ They are also often discarded by the next administration to create their own, usually also financed by donors.

¹⁷ UNDP, *A Users' Guide to Measuring Corruption (Oslo, Norway: UNDP Oslo Governance Center, 2008)*(http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/docs08/users_guide_measuring_corruption.pdf).

Practitioners at the international development firm, Casals & Associates, Inc., like many other in the field, could add a few more observations to the lessons learned information bank. From our work, we can share the following observations:¹⁸

- Transparency is essential but does not always signal less corruption. Corruption has become transparent and a way of life in many societies. Reliance on e-government or other electronic media do not necessary reduce corruption. Information provided must be relevant, comprehensive and easily accessible to citizens. Efforts to improve transparency should be linked to accountability.
- Citizens are often reluctant to deal with corruption—a politically charged word in many places. This may be because of fear of retaliation and/or pessimism about results. Providing them with solid information (results from studies, facts) and breaking corruption down into manageable components contributes to start getting citizens engaged.
- In contrast, governments/institutions are usually enthusiastic about anticorruption discussions. Frequently, this amounts to political maneuvering. Anticorruption commissions and agencies that lack real independence tend to be counterproductive because they further weaken citizens' trust in their institutions. Actions rather than words should be the measurement of a government's political will for reform.
- Anticorruption strategies should be simple, focused on specific objectives and include a timeframe. Not every corruption problem can be tackled at the same time. De-bundling corruption issues makes the task more manageable.
- Anticorruption international conventions provide basic agendas of more attainable goals, already agreed by the government. These agreements help to depoliticize anticorruption policies. They are also tools for civil society in holding their governments accountable.
- Individual institutions or leaders are important entry points when political will at the executive is weak. Also, working at the local level is essential but may offer opposite results: things can get done faster or not at all. The power of local authorities cannot be underestimated.
- Public education is essential. Data from local and national studies brings corruption home. It helps citizens understand how paying bribes affects their budget; how

¹⁸ Casals & Associates, Inc, (www.casals.com) an international consulting firm, has implemented more than twenty USAID-funded anticorruption projects worldwide. Lessons learned listed here are based on Casals' practitioners' observations.

corruption is responsible for the people killed when a bridge collapses because of poor construction, or how their tax dollars are being wasted in salary increases for the mayors' inner circle. Well-thought out and carefully designed public awareness campaigns are crucial in getting messages across to key audiences.

- There is a dire need for responsible investigative journalism. It is often the only means for identifying corruption and informing citizens. On the other hand, sensationalist journalism can undermine citizens' trust when corruption allegations are not substantiated or are used for political attacks.
- "Frying the big fish," one of the initial anticorruption strategies, not always has lasting impact. Instead, seeing a mid-level procurement officer escorted in handcuffs out of the office shows that rules and sanctions are being observed.
- An independent and efficient judicial system is pivotal to a successful anticorruption reform. It restores citizens' trust in their institutions.
- Corruption cannot be eliminated. But, it can be prevented, persecuted and punished.

Improving strategies and initiatives

Much remains to be done that could increase the impact of the international community's anticorruption initiatives. Here are some thoughts.

More temperate international assistance

- Consider if some international donors may be contributing inadvertently to governments not assuming their full responsibility for strengthening transparency and accountability. Perhaps it is time that wealthy, developing countries like Nigeria, Angola and others, share the financial burden of the technical assistance, while donors invest in citizens.

- Similarly, funding provided by the international community to corrupt governments and institutions requires closer scrutiny. When conducting corruption assessments, citizens often blame the presence of major international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, as contributors to corruption in their countries. Many societies are burdened by the debts from funds mismanaged by a previous administration. Donors should work more closely with civil society and well as with auditors to demand greater accountability for these loans.
- Tighter coordination among donors to avoid duplicating efforts or creating conflict in anticorruption strategies. One case in point is the advocacy for anticorruption commissions or agencies and the development of national anticorruption plans. When donors/lenders are not in agreement, it produces anxiety and uncertainty among civil society organizations, as well as opportunities for corrupt officials to use these tools recklessly.
- Training is a flagship for donors programs abroad. Yet, this well trained personnel is generally dismissed when a new administration comes in. Hence, civil service reform should be a pre-requisite to further training. Practically all international conventions commit governments to establish a merit-based, professional civil service. Few are complying.
- Donors should also be held accountable for the assistance they provide. These institutions should be ready to walk away if there is no progress or opportunities to make a difference.

Priorities, consistency and time frames

- Transformations take long time and technical assistance programs should be long term.
- Avoid the short term programs that are producing piecemeal results, particularly when implementers change often.
- There is a need for consistency, particularly in completing institutional reforms.
- Some institutional reforms are practically preconditions for effective anticorruption initiatives. A case in point: rule of law. An efficient, reliable and independent judiciary is practically a prerequisite for anticorruption efforts to be successful. High levels of impunity continue to undermine anticorruption efforts.

More vulnerable sectors

- New vulnerable sectors, other than health and education, have emerged. Among them, those related to extractive industries and the environment.
- Corruption in these sectors is generally linked to outside actors, both multinationals and governments.
- These sectors often require specialized anticorruption initiatives and this is needed urgently.

Look closer home

- Curbing grand corruption requires greater cooperation from the rich countries.

- Following the money, stopping money laundering, imposing sanctions (such as denying visas) to corrupt officials are task for banking and government abroad.

Mainstreaming Anticorruption

- Corruption is cross-cutting and so should be the response to it. All international programs should include an anticorruption component.
- Resources allocated by the international community to health and education could go further if the corruption that flows with them could be reduced.

Build citizenship¹⁹

- Attention needs to be focused not only on strengthening civil society organizations but on building citizenship.
- Citizens must develop sense of ownership in order to be responsible citizens and make reforms sustainable. The wasted resources belong to them and not to an elusive “national treasury.” It is important that they realize how is affecting the governments inability to satisfy basic needs.
- Citizens and communities need information and it is often lacking.

¹⁹ For more information on building citizenship, see: Ramón Daubón, “A Primer in Promoting Deliberative Democracy and the Dynamics of Development at the Grassroots” (*Journal of Public Deliberation*) (http://www.auburn.edu/academic/liberal_arts/poli_sci/journal_public_deliberation/printerview/a_primer_for_promoting_deliberat.htm)

Conclusion

Every little bit counts when fighting corruption. From freezing corrupt officials bank accounts in Switzerland to empowering citizens to refuse to pay an undue fee at the local clinic, no anticorruption gain should be minimized. Progress is being made step by step, even if not always in a linear progression or as fast as needed. Just the fact that anticorruption is a top issue on the development agenda shows how far the international community has come on this issue. Yet, international institutions would be well-served if they review and evaluate their anticorruption strategies and provide the appropriate funding for those in need, while perhaps asking wealthy countries to assume their own responsibilities. In many countries, supporting civil society and citizens in general would result in more positive outcome than in assisting corrupt governments that are reluctant to change.

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