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ANTI-CORRUPTION
CONFERENCE

**MOBILISING PEOPLE:
CONNECTING AGENTS OF CHANGE**

**BRASÍLIA BRAZIL
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Short Session Report: Global Solutions

Session Title: After the Transition: The Role of People Power in Dismantling Entrenched Corruption, and Consolidating Democratic, Accountable Governance and Sustainable Peace

Date & Time: 9:00-11:00, Friday 9th November

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Experts:

Dr. Geo-Sung Kim, Chairperson, Transparency International Korea

Dr. Hadeel Qazzaz, Pro-Poor Integrity Programme Director, Integrity Action

Dr. Yama Torabi, Co-founder, Integrity Watch Afghanistan

Dadang Trisasongko, National Advisor on Human Rights and Anti-Corruption KEMITRAAN (Partnership for Governance Reform)

Moderated by: Arwa Hassan, Regional Outreach Manager, Middle East and North Africa, Transparency International

Session coordinated by: Shaazka Beyerle, Senior Advisor, International Center on Nonviolent Conflict; Visiting Scholar, Center for Transatlantic Relations, School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University

Main Issues Covered (500 words or more, narrative form)

This session focused on how to address the issue that corruption does not necessarily evaporate after a transition towards democracy and peace. Many of the same players retain influence and power, and systems of graft and abuse reconfigure as the vested interests benefitting from corruption adapt to the new situation. If left unchecked, corruption threatens the consolidation of peace and democratic governance by hindering critical reforms, the emergence of a legitimate government,

fair and clean institutions, and overall trust in the state and the new political system.

At the same time transitions to peace and/or democracy present opportunities to change entrenched patterns of power and corruption. However, genuine internal efforts by honest powerholders are often blocked, and externally driven reforms are rarely successful. Nonetheless, there is another force for change in societies – people power. Citizens mobilized in nonviolent civic initiatives and movements are impacting corruption and playing an active role in building accountable, democratic governments – even under the most difficult of conditions.

The session built on the experiences and insights of a number of civic leaders engaged in curbing graft and abuse during the post-transition process, focusing on: 1) the role of citizen campaigns and movements to undermine systems of corruption inherited from authoritarian regimes and/or violent conflicts, as well as gain accountability, facilitate reform, and support honest powerholders; and 2) what roles international actors can play to affirm civic initiatives and when they should stay away.

The session was divided into two parts. In the first part focus was on post-transition, grass-roots civic initiatives and general lessons learned. The experts from Indonesia and Korea highlighted successful people power campaigns that impacted horizontal corruption involving the executive and legislative branches of the government, and the economic sector. In the case of Korea, the audience learned about the Citizens' Alliance for General Elections 2000 (CAGE), which mobilized people to improve the quality of parliamentary candidates, blacklist corrupt candidates, thereby electing cleaner and more accountable elected officials. The Indonesian example looked at how the public - through the use of new social media (such as Facebook and Twitter) and a variety of street actions - came together in defence of the KPK (Indonesia's anti-corruption agency) when attempts were made to undermine its mandate. The experts from Afghanistan and Palestine presented examples of innovative civic initiatives at the local level (community monitoring and social accountability). In the case of Afghanistan the focus was on monitoring the implementation of development projects, in most cases, from start to finish. An added dimension of the initiatives is that local monitors were elected by their respective communities, thereby building democracy from the ground up. The example from Palestine focused on how the local population came together to hold the municipality accountable for more effective management of water resources. Both adults and youth, teachers and students were protagonists in the initiatives.

In the second part, the experts provided bottom-up recommendations for the international community on how to support transitions, facilitate reforms, and build the foundations for transparent and accountable governance systems. While the international community has an important role to play in giving a voice to civil society, it was also noted that they should themselves adhere to the principles of transparency in making public project documents and information about aid disbursement. Also, the international community was urged to not sacrifice anti-corruption reforms in order to achieve political settlements.

Main Outcomes/Outputs

In transition settings:

- It is often the case that state institutions are weak while citizens hold great expectations.
- Even with political change, the corrupt system persists underneath. For example, in spite of democratic presidential elections, corrupt systems can remain the same.
- The lessons from Korea and Indonesia are that two parallel strategies are needed – building capacity within state institutions along with strengthening and maintaining public pressure.

Anti-corruption movements can either be the pre-cursors to or the successors of democracy movements.

The experience in Afghanistan has been donors did not engage citizens in reconstruction efforts and the selection and design of projects and top-down accountability mechanisms have not been working that well.

Citizen initiatives are organic; they develop out of the grass-roots. Hence, they cannot be programmed by international actors paid to conduct projects to mobilize citizens. Thus, international actors are urged to: not fund private sector development firms to initiate and manage social accountability; and not pay citizens to engage in civic action. This will: create a conflict of interest; delegitimize citizen mobilization; put a price on citizen action; create social tensions; and thwart the emergence of genuine civic efforts in which citizens take ownership and responsibility on a voluntary basis. It can also create social tensions. For example, in Afghanistan, a company was funded to both implement a development project and manage a monitoring effort of that same project. It not only paid local monitors, but used money to build a house for the head of the monitoring team, all of which created numerous problems within the community and undermined the emergence of a collective community effort.

Recommendations, follow-up Actions (200 words narrative form)

Our featured expert speakers offered a comprehensive range of recommendations pertaining to the role of the international community vis-a-vis grass-roots civic initiatives and social movements targeting corruption. They called for:

- Civil society and grass-roots citizen access to information. Information + citizen action = bottom-up power.
- Independent and strong anti-corruption commissions are crucial for transitioning countries. Therefore, international actors can facilitate strong cooperation and cross-learning among anti-corruption commissions around the world.
- International actors can enable peer-to-peer learning and exchanges, and support networks among civil society actors and grass-roots civic leaders across countries.
- A global social movement is needed to push all UNCAC state parties to

support the independence of anti-corruption bodies through legal and political back-up and sufficient budgets to enable effective functioning of these bodies.

- People power is needed to disrupt “intelligent corruption,” for example, in the global financial sector.

Several targeted recommendations focused on contexts where international aid may be forthcoming in large quantities following nonviolent struggles for democracy or during peacebuilding transitions:

- Do not sacrifice the anti-corruption agendas in recipient countries in order to achieve other political aims. This undermines national anti-corruption efforts and builds in the possibility of future instability.
- It is essential to rethink the model of using subcontractors in development activities because it is open to huge problems of corruption and erodes the chain of accountability both upwards and downwards.
- International pressure can have an impact, and governments – both at the local and national levels – may listen to them when they are resistant to interacting with citizen initiatives and civil society organizations close to communities. Thus, norms about social accountability can be pushed by the international actors.
- Do not fund the private sector to both implement a development project and initiate social accountability. This creates a serious conflict of interest.
- Do not contract private sector development firms and external organizations not immersed with communities on the ground to mobilize citizens.
- Do not pay citizens to engage in civic action.

Highlights (200 words please include interesting quotes)

People power is based on two complementary and reinforcing dynamics – disruption of corrupt systems and winning people and entities over, including engagement with honest powerholders from the state, private sector or other realms, who can become agents of change.

Citizens fighting corruption engage in a wide range of creative, nonviolent actions (tactics). For instance, the cases cited included: information gathering and dissemination, monitoring, rating services such as through report cards, street theatre, youth concerts, songs/ringtones, mobilization and awareness-raising cartoons, candidate blacklists, human chains, stunts, digital resistance (Facebook groups, Twitter), symbolic gestures (donations of money and building supplies because the Indonesian parliament did not pass budget allocation for building new KPK building).

Attention should also be paid to the emergence of ‘new’ donors, who may not always place as much emphasis on accountability and transparency on the part of recipient governments.

“We are still in a transition. It is not completed yet. It depends on the effectiveness of people power. If we have more pressure from people, the transition may be shortened.”

“We had the Arab Spring, now we need a Wall Street Spring.”

“There was a desert of accountability.”

“Political will means from the top. People power is from the bottom-up. We need both if we want democracy.”

Key Insights Recommended to be included in the IACC Declaration

People power is about changing the power dynamic, moving from top-down approaches to one characterized by bottom-up communication and accountability of duty-bearers to rights-holders. It encompasses social, political and economic pressure through nonviolent actions by significant numbers of citizens united around shared grievances and goals.

Through people power it is possible to create and strengthen political will to fight corruption. It should also be recognized that political will does not rest with one individual, but can be built through creating networks and alliances for change. In countries that are highly dependent on international assistance, the international community should recognize that they can have significant impact on political will.

Citizen initiatives are organic; they develop out of the grass-roots. Hence, they

cannot be programmed by international actors paid to conduct projects to mobilize citizens.

The volunteer spirit of community monitoring/people power should be safeguarded. In low accountability environments there is a strong desire for participation that should be harnessed, and care be taken to not undermine the legitimacy of people power movements by introducing financial incentives. Legitimacy can also be undermined when outside actors attempt to control, direct or co-opt these movements.

Rapporteur's name and date submitted

Shaazka Beyerle & Nils Taxell, November 9th 2012
