

Long WORKSHOP REPORT FORM

Number and title of workshop: Workshop 5.3. “Achieving quality education for all by 2015 – How to curb corruption effectively?”

Coordinator: Samuel De Jaegere – Policy Analyst Anti-Corruption – UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre

Date and time: Thursday, 11 November 2010 (9-11am)

Moderator: Jairo Acuna – Senior Policy Advisor on Public Administration Reform and Anti-Corruption – UNDP Vietnam

Rapporteur: Marc Schanck – Programme Officer – Governance Cluster – UNDP Vietnam

Panellists

Chua Cher Yak – former Director of the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau - Singapore;

Hoang Duc Vinh – Deputy Director of the Anti-corruption Bureau - Government Inspectorate – Vietnam;

Sinziana Elena Poiana – Coordinator of the Coalition for Clean Universities – Romanian Academic Society – Romania;

Joy Aceron – Director Government Watch (G-Watch) / Director Centre of Social Policy – Ateneo School of Government – Manila University – Philippines;

Vitus A. Azeem – Executive Secretary – Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII) – Africa Education Watch Program – Ghana.

Summary

The workshop “Achieving quality education for all by 2015 – How to curb corruption effectively?” took an in-depth look at both grand and petty corruption in the education sector and discussed its negative impact on achieving MDG2.

International and national experts discussed successful policies and programmes in combating corruption in the education sector. The invited panelists presented their experiences from Ghana, Mongolia, the Philippines, Romania and Vietnam in promoting accountability, transparency and integrity.

The workshop concluded that corruption was still undermining best efforts in improving education for all. A clear correlation between increased corruption and the reduced quality and quantity of education was notified. And that there can be no doubt that good governance matters for education as corruption often results in financial resources being pocketed and funds allocated to schools not arriving. Corrupt practices in the education sector affect entire societies. But invariably it is the poor who bear the brunt.

Panelists saw a great need to integrate anti-corruption efforts and the MDGs, with a focus on engaging citizens in monitoring funding and its application. In this prospect, local

accountability projects should be strongly promoted, the right to information guaranteed and access to information on public spending improved.



Summary of presentations

Mr. Jairo Acuna, in his introduction, challenged the panellists to seek strategies for reaching achievement of MD2 by 2015. Interventions should tackle the main issues of corruption in the education sector and identify systemic weak points from school procurement, to hiring, to the administration of examinations. The panellists were invited to identify priority areas for effective action and how interventions in the latter could harness positive spill over effects to eradicate corruption in the sector. He asked what positive actions have been taken to address these problems in the respective countries under review. What different key actors had to be activated and what alliances to be forged in the fight against corruption? What are the good practices and lessons to be learnt?

Mr. Chua Cher Yak, former Director of the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau in Singapore, referring to his current project experience in Mongolia, sees corruption in the education sector most commonly spread in the areas of procurement (infrastructural projects, school meals or textbooks), hiring and promotions, administration of examinations and school admission. To sanitize the sector, sound and effective administration and good governance are critical. He called for designing corruption unfriendly systems and procedures as well as re-designing corruption-friendly systems into corruption-unfriendly ones. Following Mr Yak, preventive education is key, but the answer would rather lie in promoting enforcement strategies, braking the negative cycle generated by a poor enforcement culture which otherwise would further reinforce the already weak enforcement environment. But stringent enforcement through criminal and administrative sanction mechanisms requires the setting up of strong and independent anti-corruption agencies. He also stressed the need for changing mentalities as social and cultural traditions numb awareness for corruption control and blur the line between what is and what is no corruption. Social apathy combined with lack of political will to tackle corruption in any decisive manner is exacerbating the problem further. Therefore, ultimately, the 'real best practice' is to practise what is preached, along the motto "Say What You Do, Do What You Say".

Mr. Hoang Duc Vinh, Deputy Director of the Anti-corruption Bureau in Vietnam, explained that in his country acts of corruption frequently occur at the admission and examination stage of pupils and students. Other forms of corruption include the organisation of extra private classes, the collection of informal additional school and enrolment fees. All forms of procurement in the education sector are prone for corruptive behaviour. According to Mr. Vinh, a wide range of interventions are required to fight corruption: law enforcement, awareness raising on corruption practices, review of the existing legal framework, with the aspiration to simplify procedures and to better synchronise anti-corruption measures. Elevating access to information and improving transparency can reduce nepotism, bribery and other forms of corruption and thus help ensure the quality of education.

Ms. Sinziana Elena Poiana from the Romanian Academic Society shared her insights into the integrity challenges in the Romanian higher education system and the *Coalition for Clean Universities*. This project aims to monitor and rank public universities vis-à-vis integrity and transparency standards by employing a naming and shaming strategy, while publicizing best practices. Peer-pressure is absolutely necessary to improve transparent institutional practices, guarantee academic probity, enhance democratic governance and establish sound financial practice. The lack of transparent and fair public procurement practices, transparent budget accounting systems as well as falsified information on the numbers of enrolled students were general practice. The monitoring and ranking of universities along administrative transparency, financial management, performance and governance criteria increased the level of public information, revealed a number of serious fraud cases that were sent to court and launched a general debate about the quality of education in the country.

Ms. Joy Aceron, Director of Government Watch (G-Watch), presented their *Text Book Count* initiative and the *Protect Procurement* project, the latter focusing on school related infrastructures and other types of procurement. Both are social accountability tools that activated citizens and CSOs as monitors holding the Philippine government department of education increasingly accountable. Through easy-to-use monitoring tools, communities were empowered to measure public service delivery performance. These monitoring initiatives contributed to improve the governance in public administration by enhancing transparency, accountability and efficiency which resulted in better education services and goods provided to school children. Given the conducive political climate in the Philippines, the aim is now to replicate the model and to use it for other education related services and goods (feeding programme), processes (allocation of resources) and service providers (local governments). Ms. Aceron specified that the same approach could also be used to monitor the delivery of basic social services and thus hold state authorities accountable for responsible use of public goods and the respect of human rights.

Mr. Vitus A. Azeem, Executive Secretary of the Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII), explained that despite an increase of resources for education, Ghana was still lagging behind achieving the MDG2. Among the root causes for its weak performance was corruption. The main challenges faced to tackle corruption and address resource wastage in primary education management are: lack of transparency and poor circulation of information within the system, non-existent or deficient book keeping and weak capacity of local governance structures. In presence of inadequate infrastructures, huge resources need to be mobilised which increases the potential for corruption. Regular inspections by the Ministry of Education, extensive training in financial management and systematic book keeping requirements proved to be successful to prevent corruptive behavior. However, further efforts have to be put into Reviewing or developing regulations on financial record keeping, building the capacity of school managers, strengthening the inspections framework. Information about the allocation of material and funds for schools must be made public. Further, the roles and responsibilities of sub-national agencies should be clarified. According to Mr. Azeem, empowering communities and promoting their participation, stimulate and motivate the school community, are prerequisite for combating corruption.

Main Outputs

Please refer to “Recommendations and Follow-up Actions” hereafter.

Recommendations, Follow-up Actions

- In order to strengthen public trust in anti-corruption efforts, all relevant stakeholders have to be involved in open participatory processes.
- Potential implementation challenges/difficulties should be better anticipated and included in the planning of anti-corruption interventions.
- Enforcement of legislation is absolutely essential to move the anti-corruption agenda. Enforcement agencies need to be strengthened to assume their growing role.
- In situations of systemic corruption, prioritisation on areas and practices that are deemed most strategic in terms of positive spill-over effects is recommended. Interventions should tackle areas and practices that are most significant for the socio-economic development of societies and/or that are most pertinent from a legal or ethical point of view.
- Rigorous, independent and sustainable monitoring systems have to be installed.

-Anti-corruption institutions have to be independent and fledged with sufficient resources as to ensure their effective operationality.

-Broader general public attention must be drawn on issues of corruptive practices. Information on corruption and its devastating effects on human development etc. have to be made better accessible to a wider audience.

-Better communication of best practices in the fight against corruption must be encouraged in and outside the expert community.

-Collective and comprehensive action is demanded. No player/actor has the monopoly or exclusivity on anti-corruption.

-Citizen and CSO participation must be encouraged, supported and enforced. Citizens must be empowered to be part of the solution and become active agents of change.

-Social accountability and new innovative feedback and reporting tools should be promoted.

Highlights

Quotations:

Across Mr. Chua Cher Yak's presentation, the leitmotif was: "Say What You Do, Do What You Say".

On efficient ways to enforce anti-corruption laws and to sanction misbehaviour of public officials, Mr. Chua Cher Yak said: "If you kill one, you frighten hundreds."

Regarding the right anti-corruption strategy to apply, Mr. Chua Cher Yak said: "Be ambitious. Do not go for the low hanging fruits but tackle right from the beginning the most challenging issues."

Asked on the best strategy to fight corruption, Jairo Acuna said: "The best measures against corruption are those that do not talk about it."

Signed and date submitted

Marc Schanck (25/11/2010)
