

Short WORKSHOP REPORT FORM

Number and title of workshop: WS 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 Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau, Singapore;

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

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

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

Main Issues Covered

The workshop gave the opportunity to take an in-depth look at both grand and petty corruption in the education sector and to discuss its negative impact on achieving MDG2. Successful policies and programmes to promote accountability, transparency and integrity were presented by referring to country experiences from Ghana, Mongolia, the Philippines, Romania and Vietnam.

Mr. Jairo Acuna, in his introduction, challenged the panellists to draw the main issues of corruption in the education sector and what actions have been taken to address this systemic problem in many countries. The panellists were asked to identify priority areas to commence with and how interventions can positively spill over in order to eradicate corruption in the entire sector.

Mr. Chua Cher Yak, referring to his 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 calls 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. 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.

Mr. Hoang Duc Vinh, provided an overview of the extent of corruption in the Vietnamese education sector according to survey results from parents and teachers. Mr. Vinh explained that 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 to 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 help ensure the quality of education.

Ms. Sinziana Elena Poiana 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 and 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 presented the 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 approach could also be used to monitor the delivery of basic social services and thus hold state authorities accountable for the responsible use of public goods and the respect of human rights.

Mr. Vitus A. Azeem 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 the 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. However, further efforts have to be put into reviewing or developing regulations on financial record keeping, building the capacity of school managers and 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 and stimulating and motivating the school community are prerequisites for combating corruption.

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 ensuring their effective operation.
- Broader general public attention must be drawn on issues of corrupt practices. Information on corruption and its devastating effects on human development etc. have to be made more accessible.
- Better communication of best practices in the fight against corruption must be made in and outside the expert community.
- Collective and comprehensive action is demanded. No player/actor has the monopoly 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.