Curtailing Corruption
People Power for Accountability & Justice

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Research project ...

30 nonviolent movements, campaigns, grass-roots initiatives → 16 cases, millions of people, around the world

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brazil, Egypt, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, Philippines, Russia, South Korea, Turkey, and Uganda.

NOW MORE... Cambodia, China, UK, USA and ???
Tactical range of grass-roots civic initiatives targeting corruption:

- noncooperation
- civil disobedience
- low-risk mass actions (11.10)
- displays of symbols
- street theatre, visual dramatizations, stunts
- songs, poetry, cultural expressions
- humor
- dilemma actions
- monitoring of officials, institutions, budgets, spending, public services (16.10)
- information gathering, Right to Information procedures
- social audits and “face the people” fora (14.1)
- social networking technologies (e.g., FB, blogging, SMS, e-petitions, Tweeting)
- education and training (6.10)
- social and economic empowerment initiatives
- youth recreation
- creation of parallel institutions
- anti-corruption pledges, citizen-sponsored awards
- protests, petitions, vigils, marches, sit-ins
- strikes, boycotts, reverse boycotts
- nonviolent blockades
- nonviolent accompaniment.
1. Citizens - organized in grass-roots movements, campaigns and community initiatives – achieved real outcomes, for example:

- Resignation of corrupt prime minister halfway through term (Bosnia-Herzegovina)
- Ficha Limpa (Clean Record/Clean Slate) legislation (Brazil)
- Empowering ordinary people to file RTI petitions (India)
- Protection of anti-corruption commission and securing release of jailed deputy commissioners (Indonesia)
- Rectifying parliamentarian Constituency Development Fund projects (Kenya)
- Refusing to pay extortion money to Cosa Nostra mafia (Italy)
- Judicial investigations, trials and verdicts. (Turkey)
2. **People power targeting corruption is manifested most frequently in societies enduring poor governance, poverty, low levels of literacy, and severe repression, the latter perpetrated by the state, paramilitary groups, or organized crime.**

A ten-year meta-case study analysis of citizenship, participation and accountability concluded:

[citizen engagement] “can make positive differences, even in the least democratic settings – a proposition that challenges the conventional wisdom of an institution – and state-oriented approach that relegates opportunities for citizens to engage in a variety of participatory strategies to a more ‘mature’ democratic phase...”

3. **Corruption was not framed in the abstract, but linked to widely-shared grievances and venal practices that harm regular people in their everyday lives.**

- civic leaders identified fairly tangible goals and clear demands in spite of tackling overall systems of graft and abuse, most often in repressive, unaccountable settings.
4. *Citizen engagement and action can:*

- Empower and protect honest powerholders and integrity champions pursuing accountability, reform and change from within the system
- Empower and protect honest state officials caught in a system of corruption to refuse to go along with it, i.e., noncooperation with corruption
- Disrupt vertical and horizontal forms of corruption
- Create political will to enact policies, laws and administrative mechanisms to curb illicit financial flows and/or to implement them
- Contribute to changing behaviors, practices and general norms regarding corruption and, potentially, illicit financial flows.
5. **People power adds extra-institutional pressure to push for change** – when powerholders are corrupt and/or unaccountable and institutional channels are blocked or ineffective.

**Assumption** – once anti-corruption structures are put in place, illicit practices will change.

But how can all those benefitting from corruption be the ones to curb it?

6. **Top-down and bottom-up approaches are complementary (not mutually exclusive).**
CORRUPTION IS -

the misuse of entrusted power for private gain.

*Transparency International*

*a system of abuse* of entrusted power for private, collective, or political gain – often involving a complex, intertwined set of relationships, some obvious, others hidden, with established vested interests, that can operate vertically within an institution or horizontally cut across political, economic and social spheres in a society or transnationally.

...the external manifestation of the denial of a right, an entitlement, a wage, a medicine...

Aruna Roy, Co-founder, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) movement
HOW CITIZENS IMPACT
CORRUPTION ≠ PEOPLES POWER

- a positive force that constructively confronts and seeks to change injustice, impunity and oppression while pursuing engagement with both powerholders and the public.

A definition:

the social, economic, political and psychological pressure that is exerted by significant numbers of individuals organized together around shared grievances and goals, implementing nonviolent strategies and tactics, such as civil disobedience, non-cooperation, strikes, boycotts, monitoring, petition drives, low-risk mass actions, and demonstrations.
Dynamics of People Power to Curb Corruption

**DISRUPTION** -

disrupts activities, practices, dishonest relationships, and the overall status quo within systems of corruption and illicit financial flows

[Interrupts “business as usual” and changes behavior]

**PRESSURE** –

applies nonviolent pressure through the power of numbers – people raising their collective voice over shared demands, on corruptors who (up to that point) have been unwilling to change the venal status quo;

[Pushes governments, non-state actors and international bodies (e.g. G8) to change policies, and enact/implement legal and administrative measures]

**ENGAGEMENT** -

wins people over/shifts loyalties/produces “defections” from: the public; government(s); financial sector; multilateral institutions, and international groupings (e.g., G20).

[Not everyone is equally loyal – corruptible – wedded to the corrupt system!]
Thank You