

Transparency International's *Corruption Fighters' Tool Kit*

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Corruption is increasingly being recognized as the single greatest obstacle to development. It undermines good government, fundamentally distorts public policy, leads to the misallocation of resources, harms public and private sector development, and hurts the poor in particular.

Since 1993 Transparency International (TI), through its International Secretariat and more than 90 independent national chapters around the world, has worked tirelessly to curb corruption by mobilizing a global coalition to promote and strengthen international and national integrity systems. Much progress has been made on the anti-corruption front in TI's first decade of work. The *Corruption Fighters' Tool Kit*, published by TI in October 2002, highlights many of the anti-corruption activities implemented by the agency's chapters and other civil society organizations around the world.

The *Corruption Fighters' Tool Kit* is a compendium of practical anti-corruption experiences described in concrete terms and accessible language. It presents innovative anti-corruption tools developed and implemented by civil society groups. The 2002 print edition follows the first edition produced in 2001 in CD-ROM format.

Transparency International believes that corruption is an obstacle to healthy social and economic development and poses grave political, economic, social, and environmental costs. On the political front, corruption constitutes a major obstacle to democracy and the rule of law. In a democratic system, offices and institutions lose their legitimacy when they are mis-

used for private advantage. Though this is harmful in established democracies, it is even more so in newly-emerging ones. Accountable political leadership cannot develop in a corrupt climate.

Economically, corruption leads to the depletion of national wealth. It is often responsible for the funneling of scarce public resources to uneconomic, high-profile projects, such as dams, power plants, pipelines, and refineries, at the expense of less spec-

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tacular but more necessary infrastructure projects like schools, hospitals, and roads, or the supply of power and water to rural areas. Furthermore, it hinders the development of fair market structures and distorts competition, thereby deterring investment.

The effect of corruption on the social fabric of society is the most damaging of all. It undermines people's trust in the political system, its institutions, and its leadership. Frustration and general apathy among a disillusioned public result in a weak civil society. That in turn clears the way for despots as well as democratically-elected yet unscrupulous leaders to

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turn national assets into personal wealth. Demanding and paying bribes becomes the norm. Those unwilling to comply often emigrate, leaving the country drained of its most able and honest citizens.

Environmental degradation is yet another consequence of corrupt systems. The lack of, or sometimes non-enforcement of, environmental regulations and legislation has historically allowed the North to export its polluting industry to the South. At the same time, careless exploitation by both domestic

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and international agents of natural resources—from timber and minerals to elephants—has led to ravaged natural environments. Environmentally devastating projects are given preference in funding because they are easy targets for siphoning off public money into private pockets.

The *Corruption Fighters' Tool Kit* highlights the potential of civil society to fight corruption actively, create mechanisms for the scrutiny and control of public institutions, and demand and promote accountable and responsive public administration. The publication provides ideas and inspiration for those within and outside the TI movement. It is an attempt to answer the question “How do you fight an entrenched problem like corruption?”—something that everyone engaged in this struggle is asked daily. The individual tools also create concrete results that allow members of the coalition against corruption to answer questions skeptics ask about the impact of anti-corruption work.

The *Corruption Fighters' Tool Kit* introduces tools geared toward creating public awareness about the problem of corruption, monitoring public institutions, encouraging citizens' participation in key decision-making processes, and opening channels of communication between governments and their citizens, among others. For example, operating in a country of extraor-

dinary size, *Transparencia Brasil* has turned to the airwaves, designing radio spots to raise awareness among the public about the risks of everyday encounters with corruption. In Lebanon, where the construction sector has been identified as one of the most corrupt industries in the country, the TI chapter has designed a manual to guide citizens through the process of acquiring construction permits, thereby reducing the risk that they will resort either to bribing officials or hiring a middleman to get a permit or license approved. Despite a difficult political context, civil society activists in Kazakhstan developed a program to raise standards in the judicial system. Not content to be mere by-standers to democracy, TI Bangladesh is monitoring the proceedings of the Parliament in Dhaka. In the *Corruption Fighters' Tool Kit* one can also learn how TI Kenya made an impact with the design and implementation of an urban bribery index, a tool to diagnose bribery in Kenya's urban centers. These are but a few of the innovative and practical tools in the *Corruption Fighters' Tool Kit*.

The *Corruption Fighters' Tool Kit* is a testament to the creativity and commitment of the diverse groups engaged in the fight against corruption. The tools in the kit also confirm coalition-building as the hallmark of effective work to combat corruption. Transparency International hopes that the *Corruption Fighters' Tool Kit* will facilitate the sharing of information and experiences, allow practitioners to build on past achievements, and minimize duplication in this important facet of development work. ■