NEW TECHNOLOGIES AGAINST PETTY CORRUPTION

Tactics and Lessons from the 2012 International Anti-corruption Conference

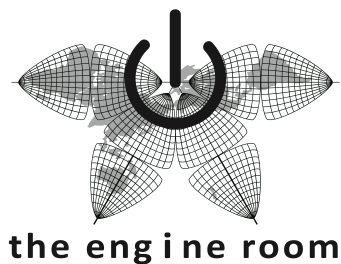This report was produced by the engine room in collaboration with the IACC.

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A Note on Audience:

This report is meant for anti-corruption advocates who are interested in identifying innovative tactics and tools that might be appropriate to integrate into their work.

A Note on Feedback:

Send feedback to post@theengineroom.org or comment at https://theengineroom.org/anticorruption.

INTRODUCTION

New technologies present anti-corruption advocates with a host of new opportunities for engaging and mobilizing constituents. In 2012, the engine room worked with the International Anti-Corruption Conference to better understand these opportunities. We identified innovative tactics at the conference and spoke with the practitioners responsible for them. The theme of the event was citizen mobilization, and many of the initiatives that participated sought new ways to bring citizens into the fight against corruption; the majority focused on addressing petty corruption[1].

In the following sections we will describe some of these new initiatives, the tools they used and their tactical choices. This report will conclude by suggesting best practices that can be inferred from their experiences.

FEATURED INITIATIVES

We have organized initiative descriptions according to two main categories: gathering data and advocating with data. Within each category, initiatives are presented and grouped in order to highlight distinct tactics that emerging initiatives can consider applying to their own contexts, audiences and goals.

I. Gathering Data

Many initiatives gather data about petty corruption in order to make it more accessible for other actors such as public officials, investigative journalists or NGOs. These actors are able to transform data into meaningful information that can serve to engage new audiences. Further, when data is easier to access it allows citizens to take on a monitoring role; this may spur improvement or deter malfeasance among public service providers[2].

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[1] Transparency International defines petty corruption as "the abuse of entrusted power for personal gain by bureaucracy in sectors that provide basic public services or goods, such as access to hospitals, education, electricity and water." (The Anti-corruption Plain Language Guide)

[2] For instance, see "Power to the People: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment on Community-Based Monitoring in Uganda," by Martina Björkman & Jakob Svensson.

Online Reporting

Online reporting websites solicit and aggregate citizen perceptions of corruption. One of the most well known sites is the Bangalore, India-based I Paid a Bribe. The website documents first-hand experiences of petty corruption throughout India. These include two main categories of citizen reports: "I Am a Bribe Fighter," which documents instances where a citizen resisted or refused to pay a bribe, and "I Met an Honest Officer," which documents instances where a citizen was not asked to pay a bribe by a government official.

Key Takeaways: I Paid a Bribe

HOW MANY REPORTS? 22,480 in 2 years.

WHAT IS DONE WITH THEM? Up until just before the time of this writing, I Paid a Bribe did not systematically forward citizen complaints to other institutions. However, reports have been picked up by media outlets and resulted in the arrest and conviction of perpetrators on at least one occasion. As of this writing, citizens who wish to identify themselves can choose to share their reports with the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC). The CVC is a governmental body mandated to address corruption.

WHAT WORKS? I Paid a Bribe has received extensive media coverage. This helps to build awareness about the tool and attract more citizen reports. Aggregating positive in addition to negative experiences with access to public services can also engage a greater number of people by making participation seem like less of a political act. Highlighting positive reports also rewards public service delivery institutions that refrain from malfeasance.

CHALLENGES: It is difficult to know if the platform reaches new people as opposed to providing a tool for people who are already engaged in civic issues. This is in part because the initiative has until recently required participants to maintain anonymity when reporting. When participants are anonymous, an initiative cannot systematically follow up with them in order to learn about the impact of participation. While the I Paid a Bribe platform provides data analytics and visualizations, this data is likely skewed towards the experiences of more technologically savvy citizens.

INITIAL COSTS: 150 USD for a domain name and one year of hosting costs. I Paid a Bribe recommends that replicators purchase Small Instance from Amazon Web Servers.

GET THE CODE: The source code can be shared after a Memorandum of Understanding and software license are signed.

GET IN TOUCH: I Paid a Bribe welcomes the interest of potential partners as long as they are not affiliated with a political party. Contact Joylita[at] janaagraha.org.

I Paid a Bribe has been duplicated in various countries, including Pakistan, Kenya, Nigeria and Zimbabwe.

Bribe Market is a newer online reporting platform in Romania that asks people to send in stories with the specific amounts of money they paid in bribes in order to access public services. It ranks service providers so that citizens can find the cheapest provider - in other words the one that requests the smallest bribes or no bribes at all.

I Paid a Bribe and Bribe Market frame their call for citizen engagement differently. Both are indicative of the need – recognized among a variety of new online reporting platforms – to customize the call for participation to the audience and context.

Data Aggregation

Data aggregation was another common strategy among initiatives. For example, Hungary's K-Monitor built a database of media reports about corruption and organized them so that people can view the data by location, political party, institution, sector, type of malpractice, time period and other categories.

Instead of building a database of media reports manually, some initiatives aim to make existing large data sets more accessible. For example, Argentina's Dinero y Politica and Colombia's Ciudadamos present data on political party campaign spending according to more user-friendly categories with visualizations. These websites may require less human resources to build, however they also face the challenge of reaching and involving new users.

Exit Surveys

Exit surveys allow anti-corruption advocates to go directly to constituents and interview them about their experiences accessing public services. Two initiatives that survey citizens about recent experiences with public service providers are The Punjab Model for Proactive Governance, a government-led initiative in Pakistan, and Shudhify, a citizen-led initiative in India. Both use new technologies to gain broader audiences for the data they collect.

Key Takeaways: Shudhify

HOW MUCH DATA? 3180 surveys.

WHAT IS DONE WITH IT? Shudhify creates rating algorithms and generates localized data maps to differentiate between areas in Bangalore with high versus low rates of petty-corruption.

The initiative puts concerted effort into the targeted distribution of its data. For example, its team appeared in front of the worst offending public service provider, sang the Indian national anthem to attract passersby, and then left a hard copy of its report on the office's steps.

Most recently, they have partnered with Department of Administrative Reforms in the government to make policy reforms based on the data.

WHAT WORKS? Collaboration with the World Bank made it easier to obtain public data directly from service providers. This public data complemented the data that was collected via surveys.

CHALLENGES? Relationships with local NGOs were not formalized in the same way that relationships with international institutions were. This made it more difficult to obtain the resources – access to new audiences, credibility - that local partnerships provide.

INITIAL COSTS: A total of 6000 USD was spent over 2 years.

GET THE CODE: The survey instrument is available upon request

GET IN TOUCH: Contact sguillapalli@colgate.edu.

II. Advocating with Data

When the resources and appropriate contextual factors are in place, some initiatives advocate for institutional response to petty corruption. Advocacy for response to reports of petty corruption can provide initiatives with an

opportunity to create feedback loops with citizens.[3] These feedback loops can be developed maintained even if the advocacy does not result in a direct improvement of access to public services.

Sending Data to Officials

Operation Thank You is the issue-resolution program of Check My School (CMS), a transparency and social accountability initiative that aims to improve public education services by making school information available through the use of digital technology and community mobilization. Its digital technology platform integrates the use of a website, SMS, and social media. Its community mobilization component consists of a network of education stakeholders in the schools (parents, teachers and students) and outside the school (media, local government, the Department of Education, universities, and citizen groups).

Key Takeaways: Operation Thank You

HOW MUCH DATA? Approximately 120 since April 2012.

WHAT IS DONE WITH IT? Letters with information about resource shortages are sent to the Department of Education's local and national offices. Responses are forwarded to the schools.

23 issues have been resolved concretely – for example, with a school receiving new textbooks. Certain unanswered issues are sent to other sectors.

WHAT WORKS? The established relationship with the Department of Education made things easier and more effective.

The blend of digital technology and offline activity worked to make issue resolution faster and information easily accessible. Technology made it easier to consolidate information and forward it to particular stakeholders. It also helped to provide voice to the public: different channels – for instance SMS or social media -were made available for them to participate.

The strongest and most effective component of Check My School was its coalition of education stakeholders. This included schools, infomediaries who coordinated data collection with the schools, local government and citizen groups.

CHALLENGES: Keeping track of follow-up letters and maintaining pressure on stakeholders to respond is a challenge.

CMS also faces difficulties in maximizing the use of its digital platform, both in terms of data advocacy and public engagement.

INITIAL COSTS: Total technology development costs of the current platform were 25,000 USD.

GET THE CODE: Not available.

GET IN TOUCH: Yes. Contact email[at]jecelcensoro.com

The initiative started with a partnership between the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia Pacific (ANSA-EAP) and the Philippine Department of Education. A network of volunteers, called infomediaries, gathered data about

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[3] For more on how feedback loops can reinforce citizen participation and empowerment see, for instance: "ICT-Enabled Citizen Feedback Loops," a how to note from the World Bank Institute.

the delivery of service sector budgets to local levels. This data about the services of the schools was brought online and vise-versa. School issues were then consolidated monthly and forwarded to the government for action.

Channeling Reports to Advocacy Partners

The traditional audience for Transparency International Advocacy and Legal Advice Centres[4] (ALACs) is over thirty-five, and the ALAC program in Macedonia wanted to reach more young people. To do this, TI-Macedonia decided to create an online reporting platform and use social media to solicit reports of corruption from younger audiences; citizens can also send in reports to the platform using a mobile application that is available for iPhone or Android. The platform, Report Corruption, is a joint project with the Center for International Relations in Washington, D.C.

Key Takeaways: Report Corruption

HOW MUCH DATA? In 2012 160 reports were received and 81 were verified.

WHAT IS DONE WITH IT? Reports are examined by TI Macedonia staff and then converted into cases, which the ALAC staff use in strategic advocacy.

ALAC staff add comments to reports on the website to keep the person who sent in the report updated about its status.

WHAT WORKS? The support of TI's ALAC allows Report Corruption to conduct systematic follow-up with citizen reporters, creating feedback loops that keep them engaged and build trust. Report statuses are kept up to date on the comments section of the online platform, which is visible to the public.

Requiring verification of identify is necessary for Report Corruption to work, as ALAC program staff would not be able to advocate on behalf of anonymous reports.

CHALLENGES: When an anti-corruption program is soliciting different kinds of data from different sources, all which it intends to act on, it is important to plan for how this data will be integrated. More than a year into its operations, TI-Macedonia realized that maintaining two separate databases of reports was not tenable. It is now working to integrate the database for its ALAC with the database of its online reporting platform.

INITIAL COSTS: 3000 USD

GET THE CODE: It is a customized version of the open source software Ushahidi.

GET IN TOUCH: Yes. Contact info[at]prijavikorupcija.org.

Unlike online reporting websites that are created as standalone projects in order to collect data about petty corruption, Report Corruption is one component of a larger program that is dedicated to fighting corruption through strategic advocacy.

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[4] There are 80 ALACs in the Transparency International movement. Their mandate is to provide free and confidential legal advice to witnesses and victims of corruption. They do this by identifying corruption hotspots that demand reform or official action, harnessing the citizen reported data on the consequences and mechanisms of corruption, and engaging in strategic advocacy to bring about change.

TRENDS & INSIGHTS

The initiatives surveyed for this report are few in number and in many ways dissimilar. Yet commonalities in the challenges they face and the tactics they employ do suggest a number of lessons and heuristics. Here follow such lessons, which are drawn from conversations with initiatives participating in the IACC.

1 **The decision to engage in advocacy with data should be informed by a close analysis of context and resources.** For example, Bribe Market decided not to advocate for official response to any reports that it received for fear of being perceived as political, which would dissuade Romanians from participating. In Morocco and Macedonia, the online reporting platforms Mamdawrinch and Report Corruption had Transparency International ALAC staff resources available to them, so it made sense to adopt a mandate of engaging in strategic advocacy with citizen reports.

2 **There is not necessarily any correlation between the quantity of data that is collected and the impact of an anti-corruption initiative**. On the contrary, metrics for assessing impact should vary according to a particular initiative's theory of change. For example, Macedonia's Report Corruption has received less than 200 citizen reports, but each report that is verified becomes part of a campaign to empower citizens and change institutional behavior. Measuring Report Corruption's success using the number of reports it received to its online platform would not capture the impact of the project as much as would a measurement of the reports that have been resolved and information about what that resolution consisted of.

3 **If citizen participation is unlikely, then it may make more sense to choose a data collection tactic that does not involve broad public engagement.** Various contextual factors influence the degree to which a critical mass of citizen participation can be achieved. These may include available resources for traditional or digital marketing techniques, general literacy and digital literacy levels in the population, ubiquity of Internet access or mobile technology, freedom of press and association or security threats for would-be citizen reporters. When the factors for getting citizens to participate are not in place, a tactic that does not include broad engagement may be more strategic. For instance, Shudhify does not require mass engagement to provide information about the public sector that is relevant for citizens wishing to become more informed.

4   **Using online reporting platforms to collect data about petty corruption often works best when it is targeted towards a specific audience, as opposed to the general public.** For instance, Bribe Market made evidence-based decisions about which audiences to target after researching the interests and media consumption behaviors of different demographics. It chose middle-aged males as its target audience because they would be most interested in the topic of corruption tracking, and thus most likely to participate.

5   **If an initiative has the resources to invest time into training and managing volunteers, then doing so can generate a wide range of additional resources.** If volunteers have ownership over specific tasks, such as mobilizing individual communities, then they can serve as ambassadors for the initiative. They can support awareness building and cultivate relationships with different community-level stakeholders. Volunteers may also play the role of intermediary between online initiatives and demographics that are, because of illiteracy or lack of access to technology, unlikely to directly participate. Shudhify and Check My School provide examples of efficacious volunteer networks.

6   **Collaborative data collection processes can facilitate effective data advocacy.** For instance, Shudhify and Check My School began their projects by securing working relationships with, respectively, the Police Commissioner's Office and the Department of Education. These working relationships were formed with the mutual goal of collecting better data about corruption and public service delivery. Both initiatives were able to springboard these relationships into advocacy in response to issues that were surfaced by the data collection process.

7   **Partnerships can increase the impact of data.** When initiatives involved groups such as journalists, online influencers, data visualization experts, politicians and members of citizen-led political movements early on, for example by approaching them to ask them how they might use data being collected, it made it easier to build strong partnerships that brought a variety of resources into the project.

8   **For online reporting platforms, navigating between the anonymity, information security and verification remains a pressing challenge.** Initiatives continue to grapple with decision-making around this issue. The online reporting website I Paid a Bribe recently decided to allow non-

anonymous reporting so that it could provide citizens with the option of forwarding their reports to an official anti-corruption institution. Macedonia's Report Corruption attributes its ability to build trust and achieve impact to the fact that it requires users to identify themselves.

CONCLUSION

This report documents lessons learned in order to support and inform the work of other anti-corruption initiatives. Most anti-corruption advocates who use new technologies are not inventing new methods for fighting corruption, but rather expanding the reach of previously tested tactics by adding technology components. Individuals or groups designing new initiatives should also keep in mind tested methods from the social accountability sector, such as citizen report cards and community scorecards.

It is important to note, however, that while case studies can be useful for designing and developing new initiatives, their utility is limited. The efficacy, impact and appropriateness of web and mobile-supported initiatives are ultimately determined by host of contextual factors for which there exists no "cookie cutter" solution. Advocates designing new initiatives should make tactical choices based on contextual opportunities and constraints; in many cases, tactics that have worked elsewhere will not make sense for given advocate or organization's specific context.

Annex I: Threat Awareness

Assessing digital risk is critical when designing programs to build awareness and collect data about corruption. Risks vary from context to context, and have different implications for projects that engage different kinds of stakeholders. There is no right answer when making decisions about digital safety and security. The first step in addressing risk is to understand what threats a program faces. Below are a few questions that practitioners should ask themselves:

- Are reprisals against participants or data submitters likely if their identity or reports are accessed?
- Who are potential adversaries of the project and what kind of resources (technical and political capital) do they have at their disposal?
- Is there a person involved in the project that understands information security and technology enough to assess risks during program design and plan good team practices?

Working through these questions is a good way to determine if it is necessary to get outside help from organizations that provide assistance in digital security planning. Online resources like Security in a Box and FrontLine Defenders' guide to risk assessments can be helpful in thinking through vulnerabilities.

Annex II: Table of All Initiatives

NAME	QUANTITY OF DATA ACCESSED	TACTICS USED	TWITTER FOLLOWING	FACEBOOK FOLLOWING
I Paid a Bribe India www.ipaidabribe.com	22, 4000 citizen reports	Web based citizen reports, Infographics, Static maps	3656	39822
I Paid a Bribe Nigeria www.bribenigeria.com	66 citizen reports	Web based citizen reports	n/a	n/a
I Paid a Bribe Naija Nigeria www.ipaidabribenaija.com	12 citizen reports	Web based citizen reports	1674	91936
I Paid a Bribe PK www.ipaidbribe.pk	64 citizen reports	Web based citizen reports	n/a	738
I Paid a Bribe Kenya www.paidabribe.or.ke	964 citizen reports	Web based citizen reports	n/a	238
I Paid a Bribe Zim www.ipaidabribe.org.zw	75 citizen reports	Web based citizen reports	89	101
Bribe Market www.piatadespaga.ro	654 citizen reports	Web based citizen reports, Dynamic map, NGO partnership	n/a	1308
K-Monitor www.http://k-monitor.hu	26 947	Aggregation, Advanced search	n/a	1773
Ciudadamos www.ciudadamos.org	Fragment of spending data from cuentasclaras.com)	Aggregation, Infographics	n/a	n/a
Dinero Y Politica www.dineroypolitica.org	All spending data from 2007-2011	Aggregation, Infographics	n/a	n/a
Shudhify www. shudhify.org	3180	Surveys, Static maps	n/a	n/a
Check My School Operation Thank You www,checkmyschool.org/issues	120	Surveys, Contact public institution, NGO partnership	104	3070
Report Corruption www.prijavikorupcija.org	161	Web based citizen reports, NGO partnership, Contact public institution	n/a	20211
Mamdawrinch http://mamdawrinch.com	200	Web based citizen reports, NGO partnership, Contact public institution	179	1760

The engine room partners with advocacy initiatives to achieve greater impact with new technologies.

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