



12th International Anti-Corruption Conference
Guatemala City and Antigua, Guatemala
15-18 November 2006 - www.12iacc.org

Sharing Information and Knowledge to Fight Corruption Challenges and Opportunities

Workshop Report - Special Strategic Session

Rationale for the session

In spite of enormous efforts by government, business and civil society to share knowledge, much useful and sometimes critical information and knowledge remains untapped by experts, the public and other stakeholders. The session therefore sought to explore the challenges and opportunities for gathering and sharing information and knowledge within, between, and beyond individuals and organizations.

Speakers presented their experience and reflections on the following

- 1) How technological solutions can facilitate the collection and sharing of information relevant to the anti-corruption community;
- 2) How knowledge can be gathered, managed and used by organizations in the fight against corruption; and
- 3) How to overcome the inherent limitations of technology in the sharing of information and knowledge

The first three panelists shared innovations within ICT that facilitate anti-corruption efforts

- Kevin Ford from Goldman Sachs described databases developed by Regulatory Data Corp www.regulatorydatacorp.com and World-Check www.world-check.com, which identify “politically exposed persons” such as high-ranking officials, their families and close associates. Information is used to trigger due diligence on the part of financial institutions dealing with those individuals. Mr. Ford noted that such technologies reflect a “revolution” in the way financial transactions occur. A decade ago, banks would be reluctant to delve into the identity of clients. Today, thanks to anti-money laundering laws, they are expected to “know their customer” and verify the legitimacy of transactions. Transferring funds gained through corruption has become a high-risk activity.
- Ann Harrison presented Martus, a secure information management tool that allows users to create a searchable and encrypted database. Martus was developed by Benetech www.benetech.org, a non-profit organization based in California, and is used in at least 15 countries by human rights and anti-corruption organizations to protect sensitive information and shield the identity of victims, witnesses, and whistleblowers. Databases are backed up on publicly available servers, and the open source software is free

(downloadable on www.martus.org and available on CD-ROM in seven languages: English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian, Nepali and Thai).

- Julian Casabuenas, representing the Association for Progressive Communications, www.apc.org, introduced the Internet for Accountability Project in Colombia, www.iprc.org.co, which established local municipal websites to facilitate access to public information. The project was born at an ICT for local government workshop, and includes internet training and the use of standard models for presenting information. One of the unique aspects of this project was the multi-stakeholder involvement in the design, implementation, and evaluation of its initial phase.

The final two panelists reflected on the nature of knowledge management within organizations dedicated to fighting corruption

- Monjurul Kabir shared the experiences of UNDP, which has built communities of practice around democratic governance issues such as anti-corruption, human rights, gender, microfinance, energy and the environment, HIV/AIDS, etc. Through these communities of practice, staff recommend and share best practices, and engage in discussion fora on issues like political corruption. While much of the sharing is online, members have met twice in person to solidify and build the network. KM is now institutionalized within UNDP through the KM Roadmap, stocktaking exercises, dedicated personnel, practice notes, practitioner/expert databases, etc. Every project is required to close with a workshop on lessons learned to reflect upon, and document, experience. Mr. Kabir noted that “knowledge is power upsetting” and incentives must be created to share. The cultural transformation within UNDP was promoted by the inclusion of knowledge management criteria in staff evaluations and country office assessments. The new challenge is to incorporate other UN agencies into UNDP’s knowledge management framework.
- Harald Mathisen from U4 (www.u4.no) observed that the world of anti-corruption is characterized by “information overload” and “knowledge deficit”. We simply do not know what works, where and why. Strategy formation happens in a vacuum and practitioners reinvent the wheel, over and over. The following obstacles inhibit the sharing of knowledge among donor practitioners:
 - Lack of resources and staff
 - Time pressure on field staff, which prevents them from reflecting upon, and documenting, their experiences
 - Outsourcing of anti-corruption evaluations to consultants and other outside experts who do not feed knowledge into the system
 - The recognition that knowledge is power, and people are reluctant to share their knowledge for fear of reducing their monopoly on expertise
 - The absence of organizational systems that *require* the sharing of knowledge on a regular basis e.g. publication of PremNotes (Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Notes) on lessons learned.

The U4 Centre seeks to facilitate KM through the following tools:

- 1) a project database for project funded by U4 donor partners. This database includes descriptions, lessons, contact information and, where available, evaluations.
- 2) The U4 Help Desk, operated by TI Secretariat. Questions sent in by development practitioners are answered within 10 days, based on the inputs of outside actors in civil

society and academia. The knowledge documented and shared is inherently demand-driven, timely and relevant as it responds to the immediate needs of the requester.

- 3) U4 Theme Pages dedicated to specific challenges relevant to anti-corruption practitioners.

Lessons and recommendations

The discussion following the presentations brought out the following important points with respect to ICT and KM:

1. Lack of translation of knowledge products into local languages is a major obstacle to the sharing of knowledge. Organizations should make every effort to ensure that information is accessible to potential users - both in terms of language and presentation.
2. In order to be effective, access to information regimes require a) buy-in from different stakeholders and b) timely updating of materials. Providing common, simple templates for the exchange of information by government, the private sector, and civil society is necessary but insufficient to guarantee meaningful access in the longer run. A priority for such efforts should be to ensure that information is current and relevant. This requires dedicated resources.
3. Organizations should incentivize staff to share information. UNDP, for example, has integrated knowledge management into performance appraisals and evaluates national offices on their knowledge management efforts
4. Resources must be available for knowledge management activities, and people with specialized knowledge management skills should be integrated into anti-corruption programming efforts.
5. The anti-corruption community must recognize, and compensate for, the limits of technological solutions. Many people lack access to the Internet, for example, so web-based approaches can only be considered one part of a broader effort to collect and disseminate information. In addition, experience suggests that the trust required for meaningful knowledge sharing can best be established through face-to-face contact. Information sharing and knowledge management efforts should reflect diverse approaches that exploit the opportunities afforded by technology but also include low-tech solutions and personal exchanges.
6. Communities of practice should be expanded beyond any individual organization to incorporate other bilateral and multilateral donors, business, government, academia and civil society organizations.
7. The experience of U4's Help Desk may be instructive as a way to tap into tacit knowledge held by academics and practitioners. Such a Help Desk should be developed for other actors, including the TI movement.
8. We need to better understand the possibilities and limitations of different tools for knowledge sharing and communication, whether they are based on information technology or meetings like the IACC. Efforts should be made to evaluate the effectiveness of these tools so that opportunities for communication are best exploited to serve the needs of the anti-corruption community.

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Panelists

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- Ann Harrison, Benetech, Communications Director
- Julian Casabuenas, Association for Progressive Communications, Colombia
- Monjurul Kabir, UNDP, Knowledge Network Facilitator, Democratic Governance Practice
- Harald Mathisen, U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, Project Coordinator

Further Information

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