Tools to Support

TRANSPARENCY

in Local Governance

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL

UN-HABITAT
UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME

URBAN GOVERNANCE TOOLKIT SERIES

Tools to Support Transparency in Local Governance

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Urban Governance Toolkit Series

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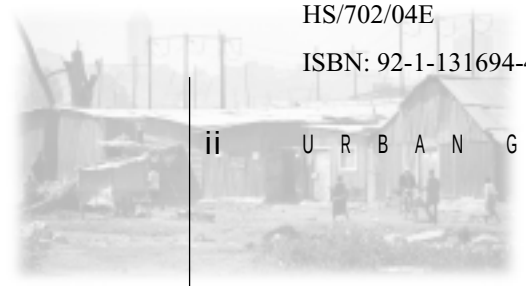


FOREWORD

The product of a partnership between Transparency International (TI) and UN-HABITAT (the United Nations Human Settlements Programme), ***Tools to Promote Transparency in Local Governance*** has been developed under the umbrella of the Global Campaign on Urban Governance. It builds on the first toolkit developed by the Campaign to promote good urban governance, *Tools to Promote Participatory Urban Decision-Making (PUDM).*

Tools to Build Transparency in Local Governance appears just as we usher in the "Urban Millennium," at a time when national and local governments across the world are beginning to recognise the inextricable linkages between urban poverty and good urban governance. As the UN agency responsible for monitoring the progress in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goal 7, Target 11, ***"Improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020"***, UN-HABITAT plays an important role in promoting a wide range of efforts to reduce urban poverty. If poverty is understood not only as lack of access to livelihood and basic necessities but also exclusion from decision-making processes, improving the quality of governance in towns and cities forms a vital element in combating this phenomenon. Transparency is one of the key principles of good urban governance.

Inadequate governance at the local level affects the poor in many ways, often enhancing exclusion. Lack of participation means that the poor often do not have a choice in determining their own development needs and priorities. Bureaucratic, complex and non-transparent municipal administrative practices lead to lower revenues, which in turn results in less spending on social programmes to benefit the poor. Non-responsive allocation of resources can lead to a disproportionate spending on the priorities of the better-off rather than on those of the poor. Non-transparent land allocation practices push the poor to the urban periphery and hazardous areas prone to earthquakes, landslides and floods, depriving them of secure access to a major productive asset. Moreover, poor women are even more severely affected by these phenomena as they often shoulder the major burden of household responsibilities and are more vulnerable to exploitation.

This Toolkit argues that the quality of urban governance can mean the difference between cities characterised by prosperity and inclusiveness and cities characterised by decline and social exclusion. It describes how increased transparency at the local level can help in combating urban poverty and enhancing civic engagement. Promoting transparency, through the application of a range of public education, public participation, e-governance, ethics and institutional reform instruments, can:

Reduce citizen apathy, by building trust between local governments and other stakeholders, by reducing the opportunities for corruption at the local level, and by engaging all stakeholders in identifying development needs and setting priorities;

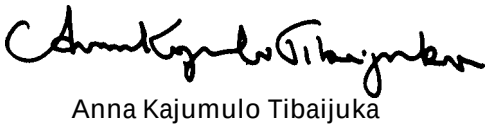
Make service delivery contribute to poverty reduction, not only in improving the overall effectiveness of services, but also in terms of making services accessible to more citizens on an equitable basis;

Increase city revenues, by increasing citizen confidence that the taxes collected are being used to improve the city, and by demonstrating the rule of law, particularly regarding contracts and property rights;

Raise ethical standards, by enhancing the quality of political and professional leadership and instilling a sense of public service among elected, appointed and potential officials.

UN-HABITAT welcomes readers' views on this Toolkit, including information on any other tools related to transparency and governance, lessons and experiences from the field, success stories as well as problems and challenges. The online version of the Toolkit will be updated regularly based on the feedback received.

I hope this Toolkit will make an important contribution to promoting good urban governance and to the reduction of urban poverty – both of which are central goals of the UN-HABITAT and its Global Campaign on Urban Governance.



Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka
Executive Director, UN-HABITAT

PREFACE

EMPOWERING CITIZENS TO WORK TOWARDS A WORLD FREE OF CORRUPTION

By Peter Eigen, Chairman, Transparency International

Corruption continues to be insidious around the globe. It deepens poverty by distorting political, economic and social life. Corruption means that decisions are taken not for the public benefit but to serve private interests. Democratic institutions are weakened, as public trust and support for politicians is lost. Corruption also harms trade, deters investment, threatens the environment, leads to human rights abuses, and makes it impossible for millions of people, especially in developing countries, to earn an honest living. At its worst, corrupt political elites allocate scarce resources to huge arms deals, combining kickbacks for their cronies with an escalation of conflict, thus worsening the plight of populations in some of the world's poorest regions.

Nowhere are the effects of corruption felt more directly by citizens than at the level of local governments. For most people, it is the local government where they encounter the public sector: from public procurement and housing to business permits, zoning regulations and licensing, through to basic services such as schools and hospitals. Corruption directly affects the viability of our social contract by altering the nature of the relationship between governments and citizens, a relationship where public officials are not providing what is expected, and where citizens no longer trust their authorities. Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer 2003, a general public survey conducted in 48 countries around the globe, found that corruption hits the poor hardest, with two out of five respondents on a low income responding that corruption has a very significant effect on their personal and family life.

But the news is not all bleak. The signing in December 2003 of the UN Convention against Corruption, the result of a three-year effort by 129 countries, reflects a global consensus on the need for an international legal system to fight corruption. Concern for improved standards of governance, transparency, and accountability is now spreading across the globe. At the local level in many countries, citizens groups are holding their governments to account. In Bangladesh, Transparency International's national chapter has initiated the formation of Committees of Concerned Citizens, which rate municipal services and lobby for reform where municipal service delivery is perceived to be failing. TI's national contact in Nicaragua, Grupo Cívico Ética y Transparencia, recently worked with the mayors of several municipalities to develop an instrument to evaluate local government in terms of transparency, efficacy, and citizen participation.

Increasing government accountability and tackling corruption requires a holistic approach. Many anti-corruption strategies have failed because they have been too narrowly focused. Transparency International works to foster, evaluate, and strengthen "National Integrity Systems" in line with local conditions. The pillars upon which a National Integrity System

(NIS) rest are all those institutions and practices that work together to protect society against corruption. If the system is wholly dependent on a single "pillar" such as, perhaps, a "benign dictator," or only a very few functioning pillars, it will be vulnerable to collapse. The NIS approach unlocks a new form of diagnosis and potential cure for corruption. Instead of looking at separate institutions (e.g., the Judiciary) or separate rules and practices (e.g., the criminal law) and then focusing on stand-alone reform programmes, it looks at inter-relationships, inter-dependence, and the combined effectiveness of the whole. Establishing a sound NIS requires a move away from top down reforms and emphasises "horizontal accountability". It also requires the systematic identification of gaps and weaknesses, as well as opportunities for strengthening or augmenting each of these pillars into a coherent framework.

Government cannot tackle corruption effectively on its own, other than in highly authoritarian and potentially abusive ways. Civil society organizations need to engage with each other, and with governments and the private sector, so that our voice is heard and taken seriously by policymakers at all levels. The coalition-building approach enables the three parties – government, the private sector and civil society organizations – to find areas of common interest where no single government or company would otherwise be willing to unilaterally apply more responsible standards of behaviour.

Any good strategy to combat corruption should be based on solid research, strong advocacy, and tools that have been tried and tested. This Toolkit, jointly published by Transparency International and UN-HABITAT, offers a collection of practical tools that civil society organizations and other advocacy groups can use in their efforts to clean up local governments. The Toolkit highlights the potential of civil society to create mechanisms for scrutiny and control of public institutions and to demand and promote accountable and responsive public administration.

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