POVERTY AND CORRUPTION IN AFRICA
COMMUNITY VOICES BREAK THE CYCLE
Foreword

Thanks to Poverty and Corruption in Africa (PCA), the use of participatory approaches has opened up new ways to influence policy or development decisions by those who are poor, marginalised and excluded. The poor mass in Africa has been made to believe they have no say in the development debate since they are “poorly educated, illiterate, and uninformed”. They have been kept unaware of their rights, leading to their social exclusion and marginalisation. There is usually a strong temptation to “help” the poor and marginalised with ready made solutions to their problems. In PCA we listened and offered space for participation, and quickly it became clear that people know best about their local conditions and circumstances, hence the best solutions to address their problems. Using various approaches such as participatory video, risk mapping, facilitating poverty forums, and development pacts, citizens in Ghana, Liberia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia became aware of the power behind their voices. They now are conscious of the importance of participating in the affairs of their own communities to ensure better governance.

To me, the greatest achievement of the PCA approach has been the poor and marginalised realising that they have the power to change their local conditions and circumstances in a peaceful and constructive way. Many conflicts in Africa have erupted as a result of marginalised groups not being any longer able to bear the heavy burdens placed upon them and their children. By providing platforms for discussions between citizens and public officials, PCA has enabled communities to safeguard harmony while demanding for greater transparency, participation and accountability. Moreover, PCA has shown that citizens are ready to invest time and resources to contribute to preventing corruption and consequently, to the improvement of their living conditions. The project has immensely contributed to making the rights based approach to development a reality in the communities that where involved: citizens do not only know their rights, they are ready to fulfil their responsibilities.

In the strategy 2015, Transparency International has committed to engage with people more widely than ever before. For the last 3 years in Africa, we have been able to set solid grounds for such engagement thanks to the approaches promoted through PCA. Communities have been empowered to unravel the links between poverty and corruption.

Chantal Uwimana
Regional Director for Africa
Transparency International

Copy Writing and Editing: Stephanie Debere
Contributions: Mary A. Addah, Wesley Chibamba, Annette Jaitner, Edward B. Koroma, Anderson Miamen, Dionisio Nombora
Translation into Portuguese: António Roxo Leão
Cover Design: Sophie Everett
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Introduction
Corruption perpetuates poverty. It skews decisions and diverts scarce funds, denying poor people access to basic social services and resources to improve their livelihoods. Where better-off people can find private solutions to public failures – water filtration, generators, private schools and hospitals – disadvantaged groups have no alternative. For them, corruption creates a vicious cycle. If poor people can’t speak up for their rights and demand accountability from their leaders, their needs aren’t met and they can’t escape poverty.

The role of corruption in fuelling poverty was among the reasons Transparency International (TI) was founded. Despite increased global investment in recent years, corruption remains a key reason for the failure to combat poverty. Through coalitions with the public and private sectors and across civil society, TI promotes the fight against corruption as an integral part of the global development agenda.

Helping communities speak out
No region is more severely affected than Sub-Saharan Africa. That’s why we ran a three-year programme from 2009-12 in six African countries, to help communities tackle corruption in development processes. The programme, Poverty and Corruption in Africa, emphasised poor people’s role in improving service delivery in Ghana, Liberia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zambia. It aimed to create understanding of the link between poverty and corruption, enabling those affected to demand accountable and transparent governance.

Transparent governance reduces the risk of corruption. If poor people are involved in the decisions driving service provision and overseeing service delivery, weak governance is less likely. But often, people are not aware of their rights, and don’t have access to the information they need to influence decisions and monitor budgets and resources.

Poverty and Corruption in Africa enabled disadvantaged people to take part in development processes by opening dialogue between them and their governments. Every activity centred on raising the voice of the community – on the basis that people know their own problems best and with the right training and information, are best placed to oversee solutions. We showed people the links between poverty and corruption, listened to their needs and shared ways to demand transparency and accountability from service providers and local administrations. They did the rest.

Local action, universal principles
From video advocacy to pacts binding officials and communities to agreed development targets, every activity was tailored to the national and local context. Communities focused on their most pressing issues – such as agricultural support, water supplies or free medicines. But the entire programme was underpinned by the common principles of community participation.

With its universal principles and adaptable methods, the programme approach is applicable in communities far beyond its scope. In this document, we share tools and stories to help make wider application possible. From the villagers now drinking clean water in Ghana, to those with free healthcare in Mozambique, and many communities in between who have toilets, bridges and schools, the results speak for themselves. Poor people’s involvement in shaping and overseeing service delivery dramatically improves their lives.
Participatory governance: the ripple effect

“Don’t forget that when fighting corruption to benefit the poor, you take the food out of somebody else’s mouth.”

Edward Koroma, a programme coordinator from Transparency International Sierra Leone, sums up a key challenge when fighting corruption: where’s the incentive for anyone in a position of power to stop benefitting from corruption? Why compromise on leading a more comfortable life financed by bribes or embezzled funds?

In this scenario, a win against corruption means a loss for the person in power. The Poverty and Corruption in Africa programme deals precisely with this core issue. It addresses the type of corruption which affects the poor directly – often termed as petty corruption¹ and embezzlement. Such corruption leaves poor people with impossible choices: “Do I buy bread for my family today or do I pay the bribe to the hospital to get treatment for my sick child, or to the school to get my child enrolled?”

Poverty and Corruption in Africa aims for a win-win-situation, which provides benefits to all stakeholders – including those in power – in the governance of citizens, especially poor people. How can this win-win-situation be reached?

The win-win social contract

In democratic systems the social contract² between people and their governments provides a simple framework of give and take, of mutual appreciation and benefit. The voting citizen puts the government in place and if the government takes good care of the citizen, the citizen will vote the same government into power again. But these systems can fail because incentives other than content citizens are more attractive to those in power, or because the social contract is irrelevant because citizens have no voice, or because there is no space for the government to demonstrate integrity.

If the social contract system fails, people – especially the poor – are forced to compromise on the quality of their livelihoods and their social and human rights. In this case, in order to reinstate the

social contract, people need to claim their rights and make their voices heard. And those in power need a platform to showcase their integrity, so that content citizens again become an incentive.

But making your voice heard is very difficult for people who feel they have no voice or are not listened to. A culture of silence prevails. Poor people very often find they do not have a say and are not invited to participate, because they might be poorly educated, illiterate, uninformed, unaware of their rights or socially marginalised. They are therefore excluded from any decision-making processes.

**Raising people's voices**

Given that around 80 per cent of African people live on less than US $2\(^3\) a day and often remain silent, those in positions of power can easily abuse their roles and continue excluding and exploiting the poor. But if people have a say in how they’re governed (participatory governance) and officials are accountable to the people they serve (social accountability), poor people become aware of their power and the force their voices have when raised.

Participatory social accountability tools increase the citizen-government interface and therefore increase transparency, accountability and good governance. They reduce the opportunities for people in authority to abuse their power. Increased citizen participation means better informed communities, increased public oversight and less corruption in planning and monitoring local development.

Reinstating the social contract helps create the win-win-situation. The poor benefit from local development, people in power benefit from being considered champions of integrity, and when the community develops and prospers, everybody lives a better life.

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**Development Pacts** are negotiated agreements between those in public office and constituencies or groups to whom they are accountable for the delivery of public goods and services. In the framework of a Pact:

- service providers, local governments and political or administrative public officials commit themselves to delivering on people’s development priorities with integrity
- community-based or interest-based organisations, service users and communities commit themselves to participating in the setting, implementation and monitoring of development priorities.

*Adapted from: [www.transparency.org/news_room/in_focus/2010/development_pacts](http://www.transparency.org/news_room/in_focus/2010/development_pacts)*

**Participatory Video** is a set of techniques to involve a group or community in shaping and creating its own film. Because making a video is easy and accessible, it’s a great way of bringing people together to explore issues, voice concerns or simply be creative and tell their stories. This process can be very empowering, enabling groups or communities to take action to solve their own problems, and to communicate their needs and ideas to decision-makers or other groups and communities.

Participatory Video can be a highly effective tool to engage and mobilise marginalised people and to help them drive their own forms of sustainable development based on local needs.

*Adapted from: [Insights into Participatory Video – a Handbook for the Field, N. and C. Lunch, InsightShare 2006](http://insightshare.org)*

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In the following pages, the six TI chapters in Africa which took part in the programme describe the social accountability tools they developed to engage poor people and their governments in constructive dialogue. Starting on a small scale at the local level, their experiences demonstrate how the community participation they initiated gains momentum and ripples outwards, increasing the citizen-government interface further.

This leads to more transparent and accountable governance and community involvement in local development projects. That in turn means poverty reduction and improvements in poor people’s livelihoods.

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\(^3\) According to The World Bank, Africa Development Indicators (ADI) 2011
Ghana – mapping corruption risks

Ghana’s Poverty Reduction Strategy mentions supplying safe drinking water to everyone as one of its leading development challenges. Poor water delivery exacerbates already bad living conditions for many people. Communities rarely have the chance to participate in decisions relating to their water supply, and often suffer as a result of impropriety in water system management. Water-borne diseases and time spent collecting water from distant sources keep people out of work and school, and are major drivers of poverty. So the TI chapter in Ghana, the Global Integrity Initiative (GII), helped three communities to demand better water supplies and protect their water resources against corruption risks.

Mapping the risks
The focus on drinking water was collectively agreed by people in three rural communities in the Greater Accra Region – Adenkrebi, Kweiman and Otinibi. It far outweighed other pressing needs, such as good schools or roads. One community relied on a distant polluted stream for its drinking water. The other two had boreholes with 20 standpipes, where official vendors were employed to sell the water and keep the pipes clean. This system often exposed communities to risks of petty corruption, such as inflated water prices or diversion of maintenance funds.

To help people present their case for better water supplies, GII organised quarterly forums where officials and the community could share experiences and agree on a way forward. Each community elected a project leader and a monitoring team which GII trained to run and monitor activities, and work with the authorities to achieve transparency and accountability in decision-making and service provision.

GII also trained 50 volunteers in Participatory Video so communities could present their needs to decision-makers in a powerful, direct way. They used their new skills to make films telling people’s own stories, highlighting governance problems in their water supply and suggesting solutions.

Photo: Filming the river-bed on the way to Adenkrebi © Transparency International
To improve water system management, GII taught communities to make a corruption risk map. Through group discussions and interviews, people charted the possible severity and frequency of corruption risks on a graph, then suggested solutions to the most urgent. Their findings and recommendations were confirmed in a community forum. People and officials then attended a water systems management workshop, working together to block opportunities for corruption in the water supply.

Clear results
Through using video to tell their stories and risk maps to prioritise actions, people have greatly improved their water supplies. The community which drank from a dirty stream has been given a water purification machine while a new borehole and pipes are installed. Through monitoring and greater transparency from officials, people using standpipes have undermined potential for corruption in the supply system.

With community action at its heart, the approach opened dialogue between communities and the authorities. They are now working together on other issues – so successfully that a local councillor even initiated a Development Pact committing everyone to achieving their goals.

Refreshing improvements to water supplies
By Mary Awelana Addah, Ghana Integrity Initiative

Water in the stream below Adenkrebi, outside Ghana’s capital Accra, is cloudy and brown. You wouldn’t want to drink it. But the villagers had no choice. It was their only supply – and isn’t even close to their homes. Before school, children hiked miles up and down the hill with buckets on their heads fetching water for drinking, bathing, cooking and cleaning. Besides making them sick, using the stream for water takes hours each day. Teachers posted to the village either refused to come or were often absent.

But the authorities paid no attention to the villagers’ situation. So when we met with the community, they immediately identified water as the service with most potential to improve their lives. Through community meetings, we worked with people to decide the best approach to help them get a better water supply. Villagers elected a focal person to lead their efforts, and a monitoring team to oversee activities.

We approached the local authorities and water board officials, who joined in the process, attending quarterly community forums. We also trained the monitoring team to work with officials for greater transparency in service delivery.

The community worked together to construct their case and presented the District Assembly with a written proposal for a better water supply. They were met with immediate success. Adenkrebi now has a purification machine to make the stream water safe to drink while a borehole is being drilled and pipes laid to bring water to the village. Members of the District Assembly were so impressed by the process that they have asked for the project to be replicated elsewhere, stating it helped them serve the people better.

Adenkrebi’s monitoring team has been trained to help manage and maintain the water supply system when it finally starts operating. “The process has brought great change in our people,” says Adenkrebi’s Chief. “They can use their days more productively.” Instead of collecting dirty water, people have the health and time they need to work and study.

Contact: gii@ghanatel.com.gh; tighana@4u.com.gh; www.tighana.org
Liberia – Poverty Forums

Liberian people have minimal involvement in shaping or monitoring service delivery. This has allowed corruption to thrive, resulting in profound poverty. Centralised decision-making and a complete lack of public information about services and budgets mean most people see governance issues as nothing to do with them. Excessive amounts are leaked through administrative costs such as salaries and allowances, leaving little for development programmes that would improve people’s livelihoods. To help turn this round, the TI chapter in Liberia launched activities to stimulate ordinary people’s voices and help them drive advocacy for better services. People from all backgrounds soon demonstrated their ability to play a key role in decisions for services that will actually improve their lives.

Forums for change
Assessments by Liberia’s TI chapter, The Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia (CENTAL), showed that without information about their rights and where resources should be going, people could not take part in decision-making or monitor public expenditure. This dramatically undermines service delivery.

In four counties – Nimba, Bong, Margibi and Grand Bassa – CENTAL formed Poverty Watch Councils of 10 community members from diverse backgrounds, and trained them in corruption issues, advocacy and monitoring. To help people improve service delivery, each council held two Poverty Forums – public meetings bringing together the authorities, service providers and communities for open discussions.

Representatives from the health, education, justice and infrastructure sectors gave presentations on recent development work and responded to people’s challenges. They explained shortfalls, shared the difficulties they face and worked with communities to agree on steps towards solutions. A public works official agreed to send a representative to discuss road and bridge construction. An education officer promised to press his ministry for more qualified teachers.

Photo: Poverty Forum in Liberia © CENTAL
Local radio and drama groups publicised the forums. Turnout exceeded expectations, reflecting people’s desire for information and to voice concerns without fear of reprisal. More than 200 people attended one forum, with a total of 1,300 for all eight. Even more people were reached through radio broadcasts of two forums. For many people, the forums provided the first opportunity to speak with their officials.

**Discovering a role**

Poverty forums helped fill the information gap across a wide range of subjects, from empty clinics, the shortage of qualified teachers, poor quality roads or projects uncompleted due to stolen funds. They gave communities the information they needed to contribute to decision-making and demand accountability from officials.

People learned the role they can play and developed the self-confidence to improve service delivery. This built relationships between people and their leaders. Local officials now act with more transparency and integrity, unwilling to incur people’s criticism or loss of confidence.

Participants suggested repeatedly that the forums be replicated across Liberia. They showed that if properly informed and given a platform, communities will act against corruption.

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**“You mean healthcare is free?”**

*By Anderson Miamen, CENTAL*

The audience was astounded. At a poverty forum in the country of Margibi, the chief administrator of the district hospital had stated that all government health services were free of charge. From immunisations to X-rays, he emphasised, no one should pay. “They are free and will continue to be free as long as it’s government policy.”

People erupted in disbelief. His claim didn’t reflect their experiences and they quickly challenged him. A visually impaired man recalled the authorities at a local clinic demanding fees before giving urgent medical attention to his wife. A barrage of similar stories followed from the floor. Now it was the administrator’s turn to be shocked.

Services at the hospital and other government medical facilities are indeed free – but because most people don’t know that, overstretched health practitioners often take advantage of this and extort money from patients. No one ever reported this because they had no idea treatment should be free. Embarrassed by the audience’s experiences, the administrator apologised and assured them he would investigate and take action.

At a more recent forum, people praised him for honouring his commitment. The administrator explained that through regular engagement with incoming patients and strong administrative action, he had worked to change the situation. Signs have been put up outside clinics and hospitals, stating clearly: “All services are free. Don’t pay any money.” Clinics are proactively informing patients of services available free of charge, to prevent extortion. The administrator has announced his private phone number and urged people to blow the whistle if asked to pay for health services.

This time, people at the forum reported receiving “totally free services” at the hospital. “Let me say thank you for intervening over the money we were paying,” said a local craftsman, representing his association. “I didn’t pay a cent during my latest visit.”

*Contact: tnah@cental.org; www.cental.org*
Mozambique – using technology to fight corruption

Local government in Mozambique has a weak service delivery record. What little it does deliver is often poor quality, owing to corruption in public procurement and contracting. The concept of community participation in local governance is almost non-existent, with people not knowing how to tackle corruption, suggest ideas or influence decisions. The overwhelming dominance of the ruling party also stops them speaking out. So the TI chapter in Mozambique, the Centre for Public Integrity (CIP), designed ways to enable local communities to hold officials to account for the quality of service delivery, by overseeing budgets and planning.

Developing community activists

To ensure community ownership of the initiatives, CIP worked with community-based partner organisations and radio stations in two districts in Gaza Province. With CIP training, campaign materials and technical support, they began by making local people aware of the consequences of corruption and what they could do to prevent it. At public meetings, the communities then decided the issues they wanted to address, choosing education, health and water and nominating activists to drive their campaigns.

The community activists then gathered information about irregularities in services and presented their complaints to local and provincial authorities. The process was reinforced by community radio programmes on fighting corruption, to inspire communities to participate in demanding accountability. People were interviewed about perceived abuses by the authorities, with service providers responding from the studio to public phone-ins. Subjects ranged from health supplies being sold illegally, to people being forced to drink dirty water from ditches, or the diversion of school funds intended to support vulnerable children. The radio stations followed up on the authorities’ promises for service improvement, broadcasting directly from the communities.

Photo: Participatory Videoing in Hokwe © CIP
The community activists and radio programmes brought local officials in both districts closer to people’s concerns. As a result, they began working with activists to address them. The Provincial Health Directorate visited one district and carried out a survey before agreeing measures to improve services. Communities were consulted and kept informed through regular activity planning meetings, and quarterly monitoring and evaluation forums.

**Spreading the word**

Once trained and provided with key knowledge, community activists held their leaders to account. The project enabled them to be heard at the top level – generating clear improvements in service delivery. Fewer medicines are sold in the markets, local clinics have stopped illegal charges and nurses refuse bribes. School funds to support orphans and vulnerable children are transparently managed, and damaged water pumps repaired.

People are increasingly aware of their rights to participate in governance, and have shown their commitment to tackling problems affecting their daily lives. The authorities have welcomed the activists’ work and are encouraging them to extend the approach to other districts. That shouldn’t be hard. Seeing their success, neighbouring communities have already contacted Mozambique’s new activists asking for training.

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**Harnessing the power of technology**

By Centro de Integridade Pública

Communities in Mozambique embraced technology to help them lobby officials to meet their most basic needs. Using radio and video, they investigated problems, ignited debate, presented requests, demanded answers – and changed the way their services are delivered.

In the districts of Chokwe and Mabalane, we trained staff at two local radio stations to identify and prevent corruption. We then gave them mobile recording equipment and amplifiers, and they headed out into their communities to investigate and monitor specific issues. Together with community activists, they organised large local meetings where they hosted and recorded discussions on topics raised by the community – including health services, water supplies, education and the use of local development funds.

People participated willingly, and with this rich raw material, the stations made several radio programmes, each covering a separate topic. During broadcasts, the radio stations invited local officials to the studio to respond to phone-calls from the public. In Mabalane people raised concerns over the use of school budgets and the diversion of food meant for students. We trained local activists in budget monitoring, and with the radio station they broadcast public discussions highlighting ways the community can monitor the use of school subsidies. When the radio team went back to assess progress, pupils reported that more food and learning equipment was reaching them.

In Hokwe, video was the key to improving local services. We trained members of a local community-based organisation (mostly illiterate women) in corruption prevention and Participatory Video. They chose to film testimony from community members on bribes they had to pay at the local hospital – especially in the maternity ward, where new mothers were forced to pay for items such as mosquito nets, which they should receive for free.

The women presented their evidence to their local leader. When he was unable to help, they were undeterred and went to the Provincial Ministry of Health. As a result, the relevant official visited the local hospital and put an end to bribery and embezzlement. Thanks to the women’s video skills, people now receive healthcare without charge – and babies sleep safely under nets.

Contact: cip@cip.org.mz; www.cip.org.mz
Sierra Leone- monitoring public services

Sierra Leone is rich in natural resources, but ranked by the UN among the world’s poorest countries. Corruption is a major cause, with the authorities enriching themselves on state assets rather than meeting people’s needs. To help prevent a future of underdevelopment and extreme poverty, Transparency International Sierra Leone worked to help ordinary people identify and prevent corruption. By setting up monitoring groups and training them to use video, we enabled them to oversee development projects and advocate successfully for improvements to their lives.

Monitoring improvements

Transparency International Sierra Leone established monitoring committees in two districts, Kenema and Kono, each with 20 members from across the community, including youth and women’s groups, religious and traditional leaders and trade unions. We held workshops to train them in corruption and development issues, and how to monitor and advocate for change. To provide a focus for monitoring activity and build relations, we also held a two-day seminar on development issues for councillors, monitors and community members.

Each month, the committee monitors municipal budgeting and expenditure, and checks progress on development works. Each committee has sub-groups to monitor specific sectors such as health, education and agriculture. Members report their findings at quarterly meetings with public officials, where they agree on improvements needed. Monitoring team members then ensure these take place.

The monitoring committees report back to the community through monthly forums and local radio programmes, where a wider audience can join the discussion by phoning or texting. These give monitors, community members and councillors the opportunity to discuss developmental issues openly and work together to improve service delivery.
To support the monitoring teams, we trained a task force of senior district leaders and sent staff to assess monitors’ work and suggest ways to increase their effectiveness. We also trained community volunteers in Participatory Video, so they could make short films to highlight their problems and record progress in addressing them. With its direct impact, the video footage gave officials welcome insight into local needs, helping people advocate for change.

**Breaking the silence**

As a result, the monitors have helped kick-start several council building projects which had stalled. Street traders and local farmers have smart new market stores to help them earn a living. Officials now regularly publish public accounts on notice boards and involve the community in their development plans. They are more responsive to poor people’s needs.

Through speaking out, communities have brought about huge improvements in their lives. School fee subsidies are distributed on time, classrooms are built and furnished, and more people receive medicines and farming assistance. People now understand their right and responsibility to demand accountability from their local authorities. The culture of silence around corruption in Sierra Leone is finally being broken.

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**Filming the way to better health**

*By Edward Bankoloh Koroma Jr., Transparency International Sierra Leone*

Without proper toilet facilities, people in the town of Giima often suffered water-borne illnesses like cholera and diarrhoea. Attempts to construct public toilets had failed, owing to a lack of monitoring mechanisms. Funds contributed by the community were embezzled by local officials, and materials supplied by a development organisation were stolen. But thanks to the power of video, people’s health has improved dramatically.

To help people influence decisions that affect their lives, we ran a Participatory Video training course for 10 community volunteers. With great enthusiasm, people learned to use a camera, develop story boards, conduct interviews and edit footage. “I now feel confident to tell the authorities about issues that concern us,” said one participant. “We can show our problems and suggest ways of addressing them.”

After consulting with the community, the volunteers made a film highlighting the shortage of toilet facilities. People explained to the camera how the lack of sanitation damaged their health and ability to work or attend school. When the volunteers showed the film to the district council, it made a powerful impact. Able to see for themselves the extent of the problem, officials promised to find funding to build toilets.

When nothing initially happened, the community monitoring team stepped in, following up their promises with the authorities. People also expressed their frustration through community dialogue forums and radio discussion programmes. As a result, the district council chairman called an emergency council meeting to ensure that toilet construction began. This time, the monitors played a crucial role in seeing that funds were accounted for and materials stored and used properly.

Within three months, the people of Giima had five public toilets. Their health quickly improved. “We’re no longer living under threat from water-borne diseases,” says the local health officer. “Our people can stay healthy and strong, and work on their farms to earn a living.”

**Contact:** nagsl@yahoo.co.uk; www.tisierraleone.org
Uganda – preventing corruption in agriculture

Despite increased government spending on services, Uganda is making limited progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. Corruption perpetuates poverty, especially in the agricultural sector, where poor governance in services designed to support farmers is hindering progress. With just under 80 per cent of Ugandan households relying on small-scale agriculture to make a living, this has a huge impact on national development. When TI Uganda asked local communities the sector where anti-corruption initiatives would most increase their living standards, they chose farming. In response, we worked with them to improve agricultural support services, by helping plan and monitor their delivery.

Weeding out corruption
The Ugandan Government’s agricultural service provides loans, supplies and advice to local farmers’ groups. But across the poor rural district of Rakai, people reported that funds are often mismanaged or embezzled, beneficiaries selected without transparency and the cost of supplies inflated so officials can make a profit.

So TI Uganda asked communities to select committees to drive people’s involvement in improving agricultural services. We trained members to identify corruption, monitor service delivery and advocate for improvements with local officials. To ensure real and lasting effort from communities and officials towards improving services, we suggested that everyone sign a Development Pact – a social contract committing them to an agreed development priority.
TI Uganda helped communities identify goals for the pact, and met with key local officials to gain support. Two pacts were signed, each committing officials to transparent delivery of agricultural services, and communities to supporting and monitoring progress.

TI Uganda trained the committees in budget tracking, monitoring and appraisal of agricultural services against government guidelines. This enabled them to see whether the funds allocated to help poor farmers were used properly and offered value for money. They made sure people understood how the service should function and could feed back their experiences. Monitors reported their findings to their communities and local officials at workshops where they could resolve issues affecting service delivery and livelihoods.
Fair support for farmers
By clearly defining targets and roles, the pacts have brought visible improvements to agricultural support services. Community involvement in planning and budgeting has stemmed the diversion of funds. Through regular monitoring activities, the committees have gained people’s trust, so farmers now report issues of concern and help plan services. The communities are confident about working with their officials and demanding financial transparency.

In response, officials are more open, sharing key information such as the government price list for farming supplies. They appreciate their new understanding of people’s concerns and are working towards solving them. The pacts prove that service delivery can be turned around if officials and community members agree on targets and work together to meet them.

An Ark for farmers to escape poverty
By TI Uganda

For a programme meant to help the majority of people make a living, the verdict on Uganda’s agricultural service wasn’t good. “Officials allocate themselves money, saying they must be satisfied before serving others,” reported one farmer in the poor rural district of Rakai. “There’s favouritism in who can benefit,” said another. “And we pay increased costs for supplies which are often low quality.”

Barely any of the service’s activities were transparent or involved the community. Funds often went missing without explanation from officials, or were released very late, meaning farmers couldn’t plant seasonal crops such as beans or maize in time for the rains. The price of supplies they were obliged to buy under the scheme was often inflated way above market value. One supplier delivered 200 chicks and told the farmer to sign for the 300 requested, promising to deliver the rest later – which he never did.

With people’s belief in the service in tatters, Rakai needed more than just promises to improve the situation. So we brought together communities and officials and introduced Development Pacts. Under the pacts, officials, suppliers and community members commit themselves in writing to agreed development goals. This makes it far more likely that everyone will stick to their promises, play their part and generate results.

In Rakai, officials and community members signed two pacts to improve the delivery of agricultural supplies and services. To show their ownership of the goals, they renamed Development Pacts Ekyombo – meaning ‘boat or Ark’ in the local language, Luganda. The Ark symbolises the need for people to come together with one voice if they’re to succeed in improving service delivery. This local name also helped increase awareness of the pacts among people and their leaders.

As they began to work together, we helped with training in improving processes, monitoring budgets and getting community feedback. Officials began publishing information about budgets and prices, with the committees monitoring progress. Farmers started choosing suppliers, negotiating their loans and selecting beneficiaries – so that people most in need receive support. By injecting ownership and enthusiasm into their signatories, Ekyombo are helping Ugandans farm their way out of poverty.

Contact: info@tiuganda.org; www.tiuganda.org
Zambia – Development Pacts

Complacency and manipulation in Zambia’s state services have held back the country’s development. Very little service provision is checked by civil society. People can be wary of officials as a result of past repression. The state does have systems of checks and balances, but communities need to monitor service delivery to make sure these safeguards aren’t bypassed. The key to success is collaboration, with communities, officials and service providers working in unison. That’s why TI Zambia’s approach focused on creating committees of local people to forge alliances and drive agreements committing service providers to honest fulfilment of development goals identified by the community itself.

Pacts for social change

TI Zambia met with communities and their leaders in two districts, Chongwe and Choma, to discuss how best to help poor people participate in local development activities. We suggested forming committees of people chosen by the community to promote dialogue with service providers and enhance transparency and accountability in public service delivery.

Communities in both districts agreed this could work, so each held elections for ‘Community Notice Board’ committees, with 12-15 members to monitor development programmes and share information to make sure officials are accountable. By providing a bridge between people and officials, they enhance officials’ ability to respond adequately to people’s needs.

TI Zambia trained committee members in transparency and accountability issues, monitoring and evaluation, and how to interact with the community for feedback and ideas. The committees take a non-confrontational approach, negotiating for change using evidence from surveys and score cards that assess service providers’ performance. To boost service provision, they used Development Pacts – contractual agreements between the community and public officials to meet certain development priorities. Officials commit to honest service delivery, and the community agrees to support their efforts.
The Community Notice Board committees worked with people to identify and rank their development targets. TI Zambia expected eight pacts to be signed across the two districts. The final total was 14 – four in Chongwe and 10 in Choma, with goals ranging from health or education, to bridges or water supply.

Building classrooms – and relationships
By opening projects to public scrutiny, the pacts reduced opportunities for corruption, so helping community members achieve their development targets. With people overseeing procurement procedures and monitoring the use of funds and materials, there were no chances for bribery and theft.

Beside tangible results such as classrooms and clinics, the pacts also brought people together and helped them realise the value of their own contribution to development. Working with their communities has made officials more responsive to people’s needs. Through being more transparent and accountable, they are delivering higher quality public services. This means people are healthier and better equipped to earn a decent living.

A safe crossing
By Wesley Chibamba, TI Zambia

During the rains, the stream in Chalimbana community floods while children are at school, so they can’t get home unless they brave the current. Several have died trying. Each year, the dilapidated crossing threatens to get washed away. People are unable to reach their farms, schools and nearby communities. They are cut off from the rest of Chongwe district every rainy season.

When we asked people at community meetings to identify their most pressing need, they immediately chose a bridge. “The problem has persisted for over 20 years now, though we have been complaining about it to the authorities all this time,” said the Headman. “Some years, funds have been released to solve the problem, but nothing has come of them.”

The community wanted their councillor to sign a Development Pact committing himself to addressing the issue. They believed that the public pressure the pacts exert would compel the councillor finally to do something about it. He agreed, and a pact was signed in February 2011, committing the councillor to funding and arranging construction, and villagers to fetching sand and stones for the bridge.

Everyone showed willingness. The councillor said he was glad to have entered into a pact with the people, having previously found a general attitude of apathy towards community work. Now that they were committing themselves, he was happy. Among the community, the pact helped clear perceptions that the councillor was a thief.

The people finished providing sand and stones within a month of signing the agreement. But the councillor encountered problems: the district budget allocation was not enough. Under pressure to deliver on his part, he in turn put pressure on the rest of the council, advocating for cuts elsewhere in the budget so resources could be channelled into the bridge.

Determined not to fail the people, he persuaded the council to call the Government’s disaster management unit, which helps councils deal with key projects needing immediate support. Respecting the pact between the people and the councillor, the unit provided funds.

Chalimbana Bridge was completed in December 2011. So next rainy season, children can cross home from school without danger.

Contact: info@tizambia.org.zm; www.tizambia.org.zm
Lessons learned: putting people at the centre

Our accountability to people was key to building their trust. We took great care to include communities in the project from beginning to end.

This can raise challenges. Working with high levels of community participation is resource intensive in terms of time, staffing and funds – as all six TI national chapters found. Resources were provided not only by the chapters, but also came from the communities we worked with. In each country, the success of the work depended heavily on contributions from community volunteers – monitoring teams in Ghana and Sierra Leone, volunteer councils in Liberia, activists in Mozambique, volunteer committees in Uganda and Community Notice Board teams in Zambia.

Climbing into the driver’s seat

As the volunteers very often were poor, the time they spent on the project left them with less time to earn their daily living. We tried to compensate for this with small stipends and expenses for transport and food. These dedicated people, often from socially and economically marginalised groups themselves, assured the success of the project. They climbed into the driver’s seat as soon as they realised there was a road and a map to show the way towards change.

We learned that this only happened when we allowed and guaranteed people a role in planning and carrying out project activities, and when we found the right ways of doing so. Poor people developed trust and engaged with us proactively when we listened and worked with them on the concerns they raised as most important to them.

We also learned that they know best about local conditions and circumstances. We learned to rely on their judgement when assessing the integrity of their local officials and identifying anti-corruption champions to talk to. As a result, the communities we worked with were immensely responsive to the project. The highly positive results show that we took the right steps. In many communities the work continues without our further involvement.

A lasting legacy: the power of the voice

The key to the project’s success was putting poor people at its centre and allowing them to take the driving seat. Its greatest legacy is that poor people realise they have the right and the power to speak up against corruption, and the space to make their voices heard.

Having a voice is a powerful step towards advocating for your own case and demanding to be heard and listened to. It is a move towards responsive, transparent and accountable governance – which makes development, equal access to opportunities and better livelihoods possible for the poor.

From clean water to safe bridges, the changes the project brought to poor peoples’ lives are living proof of the power that lies in their voice.
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