YOUTH CLEARLY UNDERSTAND BUT READY TO COMPROMISE INTEGRITY

Vietnamese youth believe they can play a role in fighting corruption

Hanoi, 8 August 2011- Vietnamese youth well understand the concept and importance of integrity but seem ready to compromise it for their own benefit. This is one of the findings of the 2010 Vietnam Youth Integrity Survey (YIS) shared jointly by Towards Transparency (TT)- the official national contact of Transparency International (TI) in Vietnam and the Centre for Community Support and Development Studies (CECODES).

By interviewing 1,022 young people between 15- 30 years old, randomly selected from 11 provinces and cities across Vietnam, and a control group of 519 “adults” over 30 years old, the YIS explores Vietnamese youth's values and attitudes towards integrity as well as their experiences and behaviours in relation to corruption.

Perceptions & attitudes

According to the survey’s findings, a majority of young people agree that being honest is more important than being rich or increasing income (95%), and a lack of integrity (including corruption) would be very harmful for their generation, the economy and the development of the country (83-86%). However, around one third of youth are also ready to relax their definition of integrity when it is financially advantageous, will help in solving a problem or if the amount of bribe changing hands is small. 16% of youth are even ready to break the law in solidarity with their family and friends.

“This finding shows a need for enhancing integrity education for the young people, thus ensuring sustainability for achievements of anti-corruption in the country,” said Mr. Dang Ngoc Dinh, Director of CECODES.

Experiences and behaviours

Youth are more vulnerable to corruption than adults. According to the survey, in the past 12 months, around one third (1/3) of youth have experienced corruption in situations related to healthcare, dealing with the traffic police and getting more business for their company, a significantly higher proportion than adults (around one fourth). Youth living in urban areas experience much more corruption than those living in rural areas. 32% of urban youth gave an informal payment and 43% gave money to avoid a police fine, compared to 17% and 32% in rural areas, respectively.

Despite the fact that a majority of youth (86%) agree that they can play a role in fighting corruption, their commitment remains limited. Around 40% of the respondents said they are either not sure or would not report a corrupt act. Among 60% of those who said they would report an incidence of corruption, only 4% have done so in the past. The main reasons for youth not to report corruption are indifference and pessimism. 41% of the least educated youth said reporting corruption is not their business while 41% of the best educated ones believe that reporting corruption would not bring any result.
Influences

Media, school and family are the most important sources in shaping youth’s views and attitudes towards integrity. Although school acts as an important source of information and example of integrity, only 17% of youth considered that they have received any form of anti-corruption or integrity promotion education or programme at school. Of this number, almost two thirds felt that such programmes were not helpful enough.

“The findings consequently indicate that anti-corruption education remains unsuccessful in developing a generation of youth ready and equipped to fight corruption,” said Ms Nguyen Thi Kieu Vien, Executive Director of TT.

The survey puts forth a variety of recommendations to promote youth integrity education, including rooting integrity promotion and anti-corruption education in discussions about ethics such as what success means and whether it always accompanies cheating and abusing power; teaching and mobilising youth not only in but also outside schools, through concrete situations rather than abstract behaviours; promoting role models for youth to change their perception about the relation between success and integrity, and promoting the role of the mass media, school and family in influencing the youth’s values of integrity to enable them to refuse and report corruption.

“We do hope that the YIS findings would contribute to raising public awareness about the issue of youth and anti-corruption on the one hand, and to adopting and implementing anti-corruption policies, initiatives and programmes for Vietnamese youth on the other hand,” Ms Nguyen Thi Kieu Vien said.

The Vietnam Youth Integrity Survey was conducted from August to December 2010 within the framework of the TI Vietnam Programme on “Strengthening Anti-Corruption Demands from Government, Private Sector and Society, 2009-2012”. The survey was led by Towards Transparency in coordination with CECODES, researchers from DIAL, the Centre of Live and Learn for Environment and Community (Live& Learn), and with support from the Vietnam Fatherland Front.

The survey is based on the TI’s definition of integrity as “behaviours and actions, consistent with a set of moral and ethical principles and standards, embraced by individuals as well as institutions, that creates a barrier to corruption.”

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*Transparency International (TI) is the global civil society organisation leading the fight against corruption*

*Towards Transparency (TT) is the official TI national contact in Vietnam, operating with an aim of contributing to national efforts to prevent and fight corruption and promote transparency and accountability in Vietnam*

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