

## **NGOs Fighting Corruption**

**Richard Holloway  
Pact Zambia**

### Defining Characteristics of Citizens Organisations

- They are not formed to take political office
- They are not formed to seek profits
- They are formed to take action based on shared values and shared commitment amongst groups of citizens

### Functions of Developmental Citizens Organisations

- To hold the government and business accountable to the citizen
- To allow citizens to associate
- To benefit the citizens

### **Fighting Corruption offers a powerful new theme for Citizens Organisations.**

#### Fighting corruption is:

- Value based
- Affects the well-being of large numbers of citizens
- Offers a chance for:
  - new directions for existing citizen organisations
  - new citizens organisations

However...

#### Citizens organisations, if they are to be effective in the long fight against corruption, need:

- To have a strong constituency
- To be well governed
- To be well managed
- To have skills in advocacy
- To be focussed on winnable issues
- To be sustainable

#### Those opposing them will be:

- Politically strong
- Financially strong
- In control of the major media

#### Those opposing them will attack them for:

1. Representing the views of a small, unrepresentative clique
2. Being a tool of foreign interests
3. Being unpatriotic
4. Being politically motivated

*Citizens Organisations are vulnerable to these accusations*

NGOs need to:

- examine themselves carefully for the truth in these accusations
- prepare to refute these accusations

Accusation 1: Representing the views of a small clique

Difficult to refute:

- most Citizens Organisations working on corruption issues are NGOs with a shallow constituency and small membership

Accusation 2: A tool of foreign interests

Difficult to refute:

- they are almost completely dependent on foreign funding
- fighting corruption is generally seen as a donor driven agenda

Accusation 3: Unpatriotic

Easier to refute:

very possible to show that the corrupt are the ones acting against the interests of the country

- requires research/good data
- requires good presentation skills
- requires good command of the media

Accusation 4: Politically motivated

Should be easy to refute:

it requires -

- clear understanding in the public of what an NGO is
- a clearly non-partisan stance
- well-placed champions to defend you

Essentials for an NGO fighting corruption

1. To have a strong constituency
2. To be well governed
3. To be well managed
4. To have skills in advocacy
5. To be focussed on winnable issues
6. To be sustainable

1. To have a strong constituency

Citizens Organisations working on corruption are of two types:

1. Mutual Benefit Organisations

*composed of citizens who suffer corruption and want to change things to benefit themselves.*

2. Public Benefit Organisations

*composed of self-selected citizens who perceive that corruption harms others or harms everyone. (NGOs)*

- Very few anti-corruption NGOs have: A constituency
- A membership
- A mandate from people who suffer the effects of corruption
- and many of them are also looking for these

Anti-Corruption NGOs need:

- The public to verify their stance
- coalitions of citizens with direct experience of corruption to give them a mandate

They are legitimised by the seriousness of the topic only so long as they can show popular support.

Funding is an indication of popular support: Anti-corruption NGOs must raise a part of their funds locally

- this shows their popular support
- this defuses accusations of being foreign pawns
- this gives them independence from external donor conditions

## 2. To be well governed

Boards provide the governance function for the NGO. They own it.

Board members must be:

- impeccable
- impressive
- interested

Many NGOs do not separate governance from management

Being a Board Member is a serious matter....

Board members must:

- set policy for the organisation
- advocate for the organisation
- fund-raise for the organisation
- be responsible for the organisation
- defend the organisation

## 3. To be well managed

NGOs are organisations. They need competence in:

- Governance
- Management Practices
- Human Resources
- Financial Management
- Service Delivery
- External Relations
- Sustainability

## 4. To have skills in Advocacy

NGOs fighting corruption are advocacy organisations. They need competence in:

- planning and objective setting
- media relations
- coalition building
- research and presentation
- negotiating

5. To be focussed on Winnable Issues

- What is your NGOs own capacity?
- What is your own ability to mobilise others?
- What are the external risks?
- What short term objectives can you achieve with what time and resources?
- Will these short term gains add to a broader campaign in the future?

6. To be sustainable

Fighting corruption is not a short term process: it is not a project.

It needs:

- broad base of support from the public
- strong arguments to donors to move from project to program funding, and to support sustainability strategies
- accessing a range of resource mobilisation techniques

Sustainability is not just a financial issue.

Sustainability needs a competent organisation which can:

- keep its staff,
- build up a body of knowledge and experience,
- develop a reputation and credibility,
- deliver on its mission

*Citizens Organisations have a comparative advantage in anti-corruption work*

They can:

- raise the consciousness of the people
- mobilise the people
- provide skills and direction to the people
- They can also be donor driven, unrepresentative cliques of self-selected people with their own agendas