REPORT ON THE CIVIL SOCIETY GRANTS IMPLEMENTATION IN THE FAST-TRACKING PROJECT.
The Civil Society Unit at UNODC is implementing an anti-corruption project funded within the UK’s Prosperity Fund called “Fast-tracking UNCAC Implementation”, which seeks to prevent and combat corruption in the Southeast Asian, East African, South American and Mexico, and Southern African regions through effective implementation of UN Convention against Corruption.

The main objective of the grants schemes was to encourage civil society organizations to work collaboratively with their respective governments on anti-corruption projects. The anti-corruption themes per project reflected the regional recommendations adopted to fast-track UNCAC implementation.
Whistleblower Protection & Integrity in Public Procurement
TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL - RWANDA

TI Rwanda held two training workshops on 4th and 27th August 2020 in Rwanda, to identify discrepancies in the law N° 44 bis/2017 of 06/09/2017 relating to the protection of whistleblowers, and to increase all relevant stakeholders from the private sector, media, CSOs, public actors, and the general public’s knowledge on the whistleblower protection law for improved reporting on corruption cases in Rwanda.

Around 30 participants took part in the workshops, including representatives from the African Parliamentarian Network Against Corruption, Office of the Ombudsman, Rwanda National Police, Rwanda Investigation Bureau, National Public Prosecution Authority.

The National Human Rights Commission, Rwanda Law Reform Commission, and various CSOs and media practitioners. The outcome were 12 recommendations such as enhancing collaboration among institutions and putting in place a trained person in charge of whistleblowers in every institution.

Due to COVID restrictions, TI Rwanda asked for a five-month no-cost extension until 30 November 2020. An outcome statement with 12 recommendations was adopted with the aim of consolidating achievements and making further progress, including the recommendation to enhance collaboration among institutions and placing a qualified whistleblowing focal point in every institution.

ADVANCE SOUTH SUDAN
PROMOTED INTEGRITY

Advance South Sudan created a project named "Building Capacities to Influence Citizenry Anticorruption Debates in Public Procurement Sphere", which seeks to enhance the capacity of South Sudan citizens to understand the content of the public procurement policy so as to effectively and confidently engage the government in seeking transparency and accountability.

With the grant received, Advance conducted a training workshop for 50 stakeholders to understand the content of the public procurement policy and two dialogue forums to engage various stakeholder groups that included business leaders, CSOs and the South Sudan Anti-Corruption Commission.

In a bid to increase awareness on South Sudan’s public procurement policy and transparency in public business dealings, Advance launched a weekly talk show program named "The Integrity Hour" the show broadcasts every Saturday (4:00 PM- 6:00 PM) at Advance Youth Radio 99.9 FM aimed at restoring citizen's trust in the public service delivery in South Sudan, by providing a platform for stakeholder groups to meaningfully participate in dialogues and public media debates programs regarding transparency and accountability. The project ended in September 2020 with the final report forthcoming shortly.
Mid-western Region Anti-corruption Coalition (MIRAC) have popularized existing laws on public procurement and whistleblower protection in two districts of Uganda. MIRAC received support from UNODC to strengthen citizen action through trainings with government officials, distribution of pocket-friendly Acts, and civic education sessions. MIRAC trained local government officials in the use of various communication channels, distributed 500 pocket-friendly whistleblower protection and public procurement acts, held six information sessions on whistleblowing to fight against corruption and four community civic education sessions. The project, entitled Strengthening Citizen Action on anti-corruption efforts in procurement and whistle-blower protection, was implemented in six sub-counties of the Hoima and Kikuube districts in Uganda.

The information sessions invited local leaders in the departments of planning and budget matters to be aware of the common threats of corruption. Executive Director of MIRAC, Kusemererwa Ismail, said “Through the information session with local leaders, we awakened the possibilities of reporting any corruption work by equipping them with the formal procedures when blowing the whistle. They assumed corruption is the only embezzlement of public funds for personal gains, not knowing that stealing government property is also a form of corruption.”

The relationships built through the trainings and information sessions, have led MIRAC to become a member of the Hoima District Technical Planning Committee, which is responsible for decisions on the beneficiaries of government projects. The input of MIRAC on the committee and future government projects stems from their service delivery monitoring reports and community dialogue meetings that show the citizens’ priorities based on the state of services in a given place or community.

Moving forward, MIRAC will act as the citizens’ voice to ensure that issues raised by the community are being discussed, continuing to bring accountability and transparency to budget decisions. The project is sponsored by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office to contribute to fast-tracking UNCAC implementation in Eastern Africa.
Whistleblower Protection & Integrity in Public Procurement

PROGRESS INTEGRATED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (PICDO) – ETHIOPIA

With the grant secured by UNODC - Civil Society Unit in Vienna, Austria; On 24 December 2020, PICDO organized a National Panel Discussion Workshop in collaboration with the Federal Attorney General on Prevention of Corruption and Promoting Integrity in Public Procurement which took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia with 35 participants from Government Institutions, Private Sector, CSOs, and representatives from UNODC Ethiopia. The objective was to identify ‘weak links’ in the public procurement process where the risk of corruption is high, to explore the best ways of improving transparency and accountability, and to identify effective actions to prevent, detect and sanction corruption. The panel discussion provided government officials, businesses and civil society a practical introduction to the risks of corruption in public procurement and outlined key principles and minimum standards which can protect public contracting from corruption. The multi-stakeholder approach with private sector, public institutions and civil society all contributing to identify challenges and solutions in public procurement will strengthen those responses. The workshop was concluded by confirming commitments of all participating stakeholders to join-hands and strengthen the firm engagements in the fight against corruption in public procurement.

CONSTITUTION AND REFORM EDUCATION CONSORTIUM (CRECO) – KENYA

With the UNODC support, the Civil Society Organization (CSO) Constitution and Reform Education Consortium (CRECO) successfully implemented the project ‘Empowering Social Media Whistleblowers to Report on Corruption in Kenya’. At the core of CRECO’s project was the need to improve laws protecting whistleblowers in Kenya and the role of social media whistleblowers therein. To do so, relationships between social media whistleblowers, CSOs, private sector representatives, and government agencies had to be established.

In this context, CRECO and the Kenyan Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) collaborated on organizing training and meetings on the status of whistleblowing in Kenya. CRECO’s project provided space for building scenario workshops affecting whistleblowing in the country, including the impact of constitutional reform proposals and Covid-19. The project identified pressing issues affecting whistleblowing, as well as key stakeholders, at an introductory meeting with selected media, CSOs, and individual whistleblowers. CRECO, in partnership with the EACC, subsequently held a virtual training for 50 social media whistleblowers on digital skills, digital media literacy, and digital security.

CRECO representative, Ms. Zipporah Abaki said: “Unclear laws worsen the situation as whistleblowers lack faith in the disclosure system. It forces potential whistleblowers to remain silent because of low awareness and lack of trust in the government’s witness protection mechanism”. Consequently, CRECO believes a culture of whistleblowing in Kenya has so far not been promoted as the various laws governing anti-corruption do not prioritise whistleblowing.

The network of stakeholders the project created will be a basis for further advocacy for the future enactment of the whistleblower laws and culture in Kenya.
Malaysia held webinars by the end of February 2021 on the implementation of Corporate Liability Provision 17A in 4 different languages (Bahasa Malaysia, English, Tamil and Mandarin). The law is in its advocacy period where close to one million SMEs in Malaysia need to be sensitized to its effects. The English webinar included a presentation delivered by Senior Superintendent Sivarasan Kalidawson of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) to hundreds of SME participants. The webinars were timely to assist the MACC in their need to ensure all SMEs have taken adequate procedures to address corruption risks. MACC will not undertake any arrests or penalties until everybody has had the chance to take adequate procedures to address the corruption risks.

Out of the four webinars, the sessions in Bahasa Malaysia and English garnered the most interest from Malaysian SMEs, while the Mandarin and Tamil sessions particularly demonstrated participants’ need to improve their knowledge on Corporate Criminal Liability and the new 17A provision in the act.

The main stakeholders engaged within the project are the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission who delivered presentations at the webinars; the Small & Medium Enterprise Corporation (SME Corp) who were vital in disseminating the invitations and content on the webinars to the SMEs; the SMEs themselves; Government-Linked Companies; and finally, government officials.

The project has engaged 650 participants across the webinars thus far (list of participants available upon request). Ti Malaysia have received numerous requests to have further webinars to reach more SMEs, especially for the English and Bahasa Malaysia versions. Ti Malaysia will provide a short overview of the status of Corporate Liability Provision 17A at the 2021 OECD Global Anti-Corruption and Integrity Forum on 25th March.
Manushya Foundation is developing ‘Right to Know’ toolkits. The toolkits will provide easily accessible information on access to information in the 9 Southeast Asian countries in the platform. They will provide action-oriented recommendations addressing gaps in AI. The knowledge gained is to seek to empower grassroots communities to denounce and tackle corruption. The project is being conducted as follows:

- Document the landscape on access to information in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam through a desk study analysing the legislative framework at the international, regional, and national level, along with the identification of barriers to access information and preliminary recommendations as provided by human rights experts.
- Capture community voices on the lived realities of grassroots communities in Southeast Asia.

- Develop the first-ever community-based toolkit on the right to access information through the ‘Right to Know’ information factsheets for each of the 9 ASEAN countries, which will provide communities with informational tools to ensure their right of access information and tackle corruption.
- Launch of the ‘Right to Know’ factsheets and an advocacy campaign to take the community-based toolkit from writing to practice. Grassroots community members affected by corruption and the lack of access to information shall be mobilised and placed at the centre of the advocacy responses, to amplify the voices of those who need to be heard the most to tackle corruption.

As a women-led organisation engaging with grassroots communities where the inclusion of an effective gender lens has always been central to Manushya Foundation’s projects. A special focus is put on the challenges faced by women, through their participation and contribution to evidence-based research, advocacy outputs and the implementation of community-led recommendations.

**THE PHILIPPINES CENTRE FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM (PCIJ): TRAINING ON CORRUPTION AND COVID-19**

PCIJ’s project aims to uncover corruption in COVID-19 responses through a training programme of 25 participants from the media and civil society. Participants have been chosen to favour women and CSOs from regions outside the National Capital Region.

PCIJ and others will conduct access to information requests among relevant government agencies off the back of the training, which is part of the curriculum. Currently, a lot of access to information initiatives and data projects are being undertaken by different stakeholders. The difference of this proposal to normal access to information initiatives is that it aims not only to monitor information but to grow the number of actors who will actively monitor government programmes and information.

From these access to information requests, two collaborative editorial products on corruption and COVID-19 will be produced that aim to uncover hints of corruption and engage a wider public towards the eradication of corrupt practices. The final steps will be to engage government agencies to answer to findings based on research results and implement a social media plan that seeks to ensure significant social media engagement of the editorial products.
Spectrum (Sustainable Development Knowledge Network) have revised their project in light of the military coup in February 2021 and will no longer cooperate with government agencies in the implementation of their project. Spectrum’s adjusted strategy is in line with UN guidelines on engagement which will not cooperate with government agencies to risk of legitimization of the de facto authorities. Spectrum apply the “do no harm lens” policy by seeking new opportunities to engage in anti-corruption amid the unfolding situation.

The original proposal would have seen ‘Spectrum’ raising awareness on the role of the 4,000 staffed Auditor General’s Office. Its advocacy intended to help create a stronger demand for accountability and transparency of the Auditor General Office’s audits which have historically gone unpublished or have been difficult for the general public to access. This would have been an innovative project in linking the work of auditing offices to specific anti-corruption advocacy. This overlap is a growing field of interest for UNODC.

Focus has switched to producing materials highlighting anti-corruption in the country. An anti-corruption song is being planned to be delivered by the end of the project (safety permitting). The planned activities linked to the launch of the song will be a press release to press /online media and an official collaboration letter between MRTV4 and Skynet, as well as social media.

Also, an anti-corruption caricature book was produced with 5,000 copies printed. Although the book was produced was printed with a different source of funding, a portion of the fast-tracking UNCAC funding will be used to publicise these images in an exhibition when the country situation is more stable and the restrictions limiting gatherings to 5 people are lifted. The materials are not considered sensitive to the ongoing political situation.
The aim of the project by Semillas para la Democracia is to promote transparency in public institutions in synergy with civil society and citizens. The CSO developed an open-data platform called ‘Control Ciudadano’ (‘Citizen Control’, available at https://www.controlciudadanopy.org/) where citizens can monitor resources stipulated in the Emergency Law and file complaints to promote transparency in the health sector and the actors involved in fighting the pandemic. The platform is currently being disseminated to involve citizens in the control and reporting processes.

The platform is accessible to the public to control and monitor the resources provided for in Emergency Law No. 6521/20. The platform thereby enables the detailed analyses of public procurement using emergency public funds in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Paraguay. It was established in collaboration with the Institute of Environmental Law and Economics, the Paraguayan Centre for Sustainable Development and the CSO reAcción Paraguay. Moreover, the project was technically supported by Open Contracting Partnership.

Previously, Semillas established a working group with the National Anti-corruption Secretariat (SENAC) in synergy with specialized organizations in Paraguay on corruption and citizen control issues. In this constellation, several interinstitutional working meetings took place which consequently helped Semillas successfully implemented the aforementioned digital open-data platform:

- A seminar on ‘Tools for Transparency and Citizen Control’ with the participation of 125 referents as well as key actors of the public and private sector
- A meeting for the exchange of good practices in the context of COVID-19

By means of this project, Semillas hopes to raise awareness of the social costs related to any undue usage of resources destined for COVID-19 efforts. Semillas is currently working on the development of an awareness and sensitization campaign for citizens to exercise their freedom to seek, receive, publish, and disseminate information related to corruption.
Access to information

CITIZENSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION (FCD) STRENGTHENS THE REGIONAL ADVOCACY STRATEGY IN ECUADOR

The project led by the Citizenship and Development Foundation (Fundación y Desarrollo - FCD), aims to improve standards of parliamentary openness in the legislative organs of the region. FCD is a specialist in issues of strengthening democracy and promoting transparency and citizen participation in Ecuador. It is also the coordinating organization of the Latin American Network for Legislative Transparency (RLTL). In line with these goals, FCD collaborated with members of the RLTL on a regional advocacy strategy to promote Article 10 on ‘Public Reporting’ of the UNCAC.

In order to develop the regional advocacy strategy, FCD held two regional working sessions in January 2021 in collaboration with 12 Latin American CSOs specialized in projects on governance, transparency, and the promotion of access to public information. Moreover, FCD carried out a survey for the members of the RLTL to identify their knowledge and capacity to address the UNCAC within the organizations’ projects, as well as their capacity to conduct parallel monitoring and assessment of the UNCAC review mechanism. Another survey with special emphasis on regulations and mechanisms related to the implementation of Article 10 of the UNCAC was carried out.

FCD will continue to work on the analysis of the results from the surveys and working groups in order to identify the projects with the greatest potential to fulfill Article 10 and to disseminate examples of good practices across the RLTL network. Also, FCD has requested UNODC to support them on their upcoming two training sessions to expand the members’ knowledge about the application and implementation of Article 10 in related projects and to inform about advances and challenges on standards of parliamentary openness in the legislative organs of the region.

FCD’s project is set to promote the application of open parliament policies as a management model for the prevention of corruption among the RLTL network. Moreover, by means of the elaborated regional advocacy strategy, the aim is to achieve a greater sense of ownership among the region’s CSOs regarding their role as promoters of compliance with current regulations on access to public information.

Excerpt from FCD’s and RLTL’s first regional working session
COLLECTIVE ACTION IN ARGENTINA: CÁMARA DE INDUSTRIA Y COMERCIO ARGENTINO ALEMANA SHARED BEST PRACTICES AMONG SME

The project of the Cámara De Industria Y Comercio Argentino Alemana (AHK Argentina) aims to build capacities and awareness of business integrity in small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and to disseminate best practices through online training. To that end, AHK has been working on piloting a voluntary business integrity pact and conducting online compliance training and cross-border multi-stakeholder webinars gathering representatives of the public and private sector as well as civil society.

In close collaboration with the Global Compact Network Argentina which promotes the 10 Principles on Anti-corruption from the UN Global Compact, a webinar entitled “Collective Action: how to create ethical and sustainable business environments” a cross-border multi-stakeholder webinar was organized on February 23rd whereby the importance of an Integrity Pact was thematized to more than 170 participants. In this context, companies identify common integrity and anti-corruption needs and issues which will help the stakeholders to address emerging compliance challenges.

AHK has been collaborating with De Empresas Para Empresas (DEPE) on organizing two four-day compliance training for representatives of SMEs that will take place at the end of March. Thus, the next steps for AHK within this project will include the successful completion of these compliance training for 20 representatives of SMEs together with DEPE. In line with the preparations for the compliance training, AHK Argentina liaised with different authorities from the Cámara Argentina de la Construcción (CAMARCO), the main chamber in the country that gathers enterprises from the construction and infrastructure sector, on their participation, the involvement of their affiliated companies, and the Integrity Pact.

As a next step, AHK will mainly focus on the organization and the realization of a webinar focused on SME’s lessons learnt and the recollection of best practices regarding compliance which will take place at the beginning of May.

Composition of the audience for the webinar "Collective Action: how to create ethical and sustainable business environments".

Invitation for the webinar "Collective Action: how to create ethical and sustainable business environments".
Transparencia Mexicana New Project
Focused on Brazil, Colombia & Mexico

The aim of the project by Transparencia Mexicana is to systematize experiences in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico for monitoring, following up on and controlling public procurement in emergency situations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Transparencia Mexicana intends to comparatively analyse the participating countries’ governments’ behaviour in actions taken during the pandemic and to highlight recommended practices to strengthen integrity in public procurement and monitoring systems in Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil.

Transparencia Mexicana gathered a panel of experts in public contracting, data and tenders and purchases in the health sector to review their methodology on analysing government responses. The collected information will be used to systematize gathered data to identify the effects of different variables on public contracting outcomes and to identify the mechanisms that generated significant impacts in contracting systems. Following the start of the first acquisitions of vaccines in December 2020 and January 2021, Transparencia Mexicana has had to review its methodology in order to take into consideration the fast-changing conditions.

The reviewed methodology for the collection of information on public contracting in Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil that will allow the systematization of relevant variables is being applied in March 2021. As a next step, the results of the comparative analysis to understand the behaviour of the governments and a guide of best practices in public contracting will be published in April. Ultimately these findings hope to inform governments to detect possible shortcomings and allow to further strengthen their integrity in public procurement and monitoring systems.

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