

U4 Expert Answer



Barriers to collective action against corruption

Query

What evidence is available on the barriers to fomenting collective action against corruption, and are there any examples of successful donor initiatives which have sought to reduce these barriers? I would ideally like examples of anti-corruption initiatives which have successfully broken down the barriers preventing citizens from working together, in their mutual interests, against corruption. In the absence of examples relating to anti-corruption, I would also welcome examples from other fields where collective action is required to overcome problems.

Purpose

To support the development of a programme to reduce the barriers to collective action against corruption in Malawi.

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Summary

Collective action refers to actions undertaken by individuals and/or groups towards a collective purpose or goal. Attempting to foment collective action as an anti-corruption strategy is a tactic that is enjoying growing support. However, experience

suggests that collective action is difficult to foster, and evidence of success is scarce.

Collective action can take the form of multi-stakeholder initiatives at the national or global level (referred to as elite forms of collective action), bringing together representatives from the public sector, the private sector and civil society. Common barriers to elite collective action include a lack of political will and incentivising relevant stakeholders, among others. Defining a clear strategy for the collective action, and establishing trust between members are key to addressing these barriers.

Collective action can also take place at the local or community level, seeking to empower citizens at the local level to express their voice and participate collectively in governance processes. Such forms of collective action have to deal with a different set of challenges around issues of mobilisation, representation, capacity, sustainability, among others.

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U4 is a resource centre for development practitioners who wish to effectively address corruption challenges in their work. Expert Answers are produced by the U4 Helpdesk – operated by Transparency International – as quick responses to operational and policy questions from U4 Partner Agency staff.

1. What is collective action?

In many countries, a lack of political will severely undermines the effectiveness of top-down anti-corruption approaches. Some academics argue that the failure of many anti-corruption initiatives to date is due to the sole focus on top-down oversight and control methods, as opposed to making use of collective action (Mungiu-Pippidi 2013; Mungiu-Pippidi et al. 2011). Furthermore, there is significant evidence that to be most effective, anti-corruption reform should incorporate both bottom-up and top-down strategies to increase the sustainability of the reform and to ensure that change occurs at all levels of society (Fox 2015). Collective action can also help build political will by creating bottom-up demand for anti-corruption reforms.

Collective action refers to actions undertaken by individuals and/or groups for a collective purpose or goal, or for the furtherance of an ideology or idea.

The theory of collective action has been offered as complementing the prevailing principal-agent theory in terms of conceptualising how corruption occurs and how it can best be prevented. The theory highlights the relevance of social or group dynamics to individuals' decisions, including trust in others and the (real or perceived) behaviour of others. Therefore, if corruption is seen as normal in a given context, it may be rational for people to also act corruptly, and, as a consequence, make it difficult for actors to take the first step towards complying with anti-corruption reforms (Marquette & Peiffer 2015). If the decision to engage in corruption is in part a consequence of how one observes the (corrupt) behaviour of others, changing the corrupt status quo requires concerted action by many, i.e. collective action. For example, if a large majority of community members decide collectively to stop bribing the school principal, it is harder for him to continue asking for bribes. Moreover, the remaining members of the community are also less likely to pay bribes, provided they trust each other to stick to the agreement.

There are various typologies of collective action, e.g. individualistic versus collectivistic, normative versus non-normative, and punishable versus unpunishable. Most relevant for the purposes of this answer is the differentiation between persuasive and confrontational forms of collective action. Persuasive forms of collective action are intended

to solve internal issues and disputes, such as petitioning or lobbying, while confrontational forms directly and often publicly target other parties, via demonstrations for example (Postmes & Brunsting 2002).

Collective action can take the form of elite level coalitions of government, private sector and civil society coming together to push change forward at a national and international level. Collective action can also take place at the local level, involving citizens in key governance processes, such as budget and policy formulation, or mobilising citizens to put pressure on government to achieve social change. This answer will outline the barriers to elite level collective action, and how to overcome them. It will then do the same for lower level, local forms of collective action. It will include examples of successful initiatives to breaking down such barriers, where possible, throughout the report.

2. Elite level coalitions

Anti-corruption collective action at the national or elite level usually comes in the form of multi-stakeholder initiatives or coalitions, featuring civil society, government and the private sector. Such coalitions can be defined as "self-conscious, freely-organised, active and lasting alliances of elites, organisations and citizens sharing partially overlapping political goals" (World Bank 2008), and enjoy the positive of being visible and legitimate reform movements which can help to mobilise resources from within society (Johnston & Kpundeh 2002). These coalitions may come in the form of national-level groups, or they may be international stakeholder initiatives. Such initiatives may focus on single issues or sectors, but may also be broad based national-level coalitions against corruption. The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) for example works to implement global standards for the extractive industry, while the Ghana Anti-corruption Coalition and the Anti Corruption Coalition Uganda focus on bringing together stakeholders from various sectors to fight corruption in their specific countries.

There are a number of barriers that can prevent successful collective action. Some of these apply to collective action in general, and some are specific barriers to collective action against corruption.

Barriers to collective action

The barriers to collective action in general include a lack of incentives, a lack of resources, the funding and sustainability of a coalition, organisational issues and issues that are specific to a country's context. The following looks at these barriers in more detail.

Lack of political will

It is generally agreed that many anti-corruption reforms require government involvement to succeed and that there needs to be a degree of willingness on the part of the power holders to make changes happen (Persson et al. 2010). As corruption is political in nature, political actors may well be highly disincentivised to join with collective action against corruption. This may be due to their proximity to corruption scandals, because they do not believe themselves to be accountable to civil society or the coalition, or because the corrupt system currently benefits them (Johnston and Kpundeh 2002) or the work of the coalition could be perceived as a risk to maintain stability/control of violence (North, Wallis and Weingast 2013).

Lack of incentives

Stakeholders must be attracted and incentivised to join a coalition by the work and outcomes of the collective action. For collective action against corruption, the main incentive is the potential benefit from a reduction in corruption levels, but other incentives also exist, such as remuneration or security, and less tangible incentives, such as prestigious recognition, or a genuine belief that change is possible.

High costs

There are a number of general costs that forming a coalition can pose to any potential stakeholders and members. These include the input of time into the action while members have other commitments, a loss of autonomy and the need for compromise that comes from working in a group, the expenditure of scarce resources, a lack of direction, reduced visibility and personal/individual recognition, and the potential negative exposure if the coalition is not successful (Raynor 2011).

Limited benefits

Collective action might not initially be able to provide compensation for its members (Johnston and Kpundeh 2002). Moreover, those in society that benefit most from a corrupt system are likely to have great wealth, power and resources with

which to oppose the anti-corruption drive, and are likely to be better placed in society to voice their views and support their own cause (Mungiu-Pippidi 2013).

Uncertain outcomes

It can take a long time to properly effect anti-corruption change (Johnston and Kpundeh 2002). This is a severe disincentive as it requires a lot of commitment from stakeholders to persevere with the cause, often without seeing many short-term benefits. This therefore makes it more likely for members of society to "free ride" on the back of the effort of others by not actively participating, as they will not see the benefit in sacrificing their time for a goal that is so far away.

Patron-client relationships

If a society is dominated by one or two particular groups who spend their time and resources furthering their own ends, it might be more convenient for individuals and organisations to join the privileged in society – either as clients or patrons – rather than fight against them in what is likely to be a long-term struggle for ethical equality (Mungiu-Pippidi 2013). It is therefore a major challenge for coalitions to engage potential supporters that find themselves in such a situation, as the long-term goal of anti-corruption reform cannot offer the short-term support that clients or patrons of a corrupt society require.

Obstructing political environment

Coalitions are also more likely to be able to attract support from stakeholders if a country allows for a credible political opposition (Hollyer 2011). Moreover, in contexts where political parties based on factional lines (for example, ethnicity or clan) there can be a very weak interest in furthering the common or public good, with interests instead focused on serving those people in the clan or ethnic group of the ruling party. This context makes it very challenging to build a collective action coalition, as the political environment disincentivises the ruling party from tackling corruption issues, especially if corrupting helps to maintain their current position (Booth 2012).

Citizens may wish to fight corruption, but in a situation where there is no potential for a real alternative they are much less likely to expend effort in fighting the corrupt incumbent. However, if elections are relatively free, and offer the opportunity for non-corrupt opposition parties and

candidates to get elected, then citizens have a greater incentive to exercise their right to vote and may be more open to supporting anti-corruption collective action initiatives (Boerner and Hainz 2006).

Funding issues

Lack of resources

A coalition may suffer from a lack of resources because corrupt interests are able to monopolise opportunities and access to resources. There is also a problem if there are not enough resources available to sustain a coalition specifically geared towards anti-corruption. The coalition may be forced to dilute its message by working on issues that diverge from its core message. This could lessen the support it receives from the anti-corruption stakeholders in the country.

Similarly, in smaller countries with fewer funding opportunities, the coalition partners may find themselves necessarily competing for the same funds. This can be problematic for relations between organisations, but can also serve to limit the amount of resources that a coalition is able to mobilise. This would prevent growth of the coalition, limiting the ability of the collective action to spread to the wider populace of a country (Johnston and Kpundeh 2002).

Sustainability

For a collective action or coalition to have a major impact, the sustainability of the coalition is key as anti-corruption reform can take a long time to achieve (World Bank Institute Working Group 2010). However, coalitions are difficult to sustain where resources are scarce, or where there are a number of organisations competing for the same pot of funding (Community Tool Box).

Moreover, if they are exclusively funded from one source, or via a small number of donors, or if the coalition is funded exclusively by one kind of donor (for example, exclusively by a government/aid agency), this leaves the coalition open to changes in the agendas of its donors. This makes the coalition potentially unstable, and could lead to stakeholders abandoning the cause (Johnston and Kpundeh 2002).

Independence from donors

Conflicts of interests can also arise when a donor offers funding to the coalition to further its own agenda. This has the potential to compromise the

independence and impartiality of the coalition, thereby diminishing the support the coalition receives from its core supporters and stakeholders (Martini 2013).

Legitimacy of the coalition

Legitimacy must be earned from those to whom the coalition is accountable. If a coalition lacks legitimacy then it will struggle to both attract stakeholders to join it and will also find it difficult to work effectively (or at all) with government.

There are three common challenges to the legitimacy of coalitions: i) weak roots of the coalition in society; ii) priorities of the coalition being formed by external funding support; and iii) increasing restraints placed on the coalition by the government (Halloran and Flores 2015).

Strategic risks

Collaborating with certain actors can potentially cause issues to members of a collective action coalition. These include the possibility of reputational risks which can negatively impact the cause of the collective action. Such reputational damage can foster calls that the work the coalition does is tainted by the influence of corrupt partners and is therefore illegitimate. This is particularly true for anti-corruption work where coalitions must ensure they are not found to be working with individuals with questionable integrity (de Souza 2008).

How to remove the barriers

There are a few structural long-term factors that enable the building of successful collective action, including a functioning state, a genuine intent to govern well, a reasonable level of order, meaningful relationships between state and society, basic civil liberties and a relatively free media (Johnston and Kpundeh 2002). Moreover, the strategy of the coalition can be instrumental in removing barriers, determining which partners the coalition works with and whether or not it adopts a non-confrontational/confrontational approach.

The literature also suggests that there are a number of things that can be done to improve the chances of elite level collective action being successful.

Timing

One major factor in the success of anti-corruption coalitions and collective actions is the timing of the action. Often it is a crisis that makes anti-corruption action necessary for citizens, such as elections, revolutions, or status upgrade perspectives (when a country joins an international group or free-trade agreement) as events that can create a “critical mass” of support for governance based on ethical universalism (Mungiu-Pippidi 2015). These opportunities can be grasped to build momentum for collective action against corruption. Having strong momentum will allow a coalition to quickly gain support and drive home its message, if exploited correctly.

External support from the international donor and civil society communities should attempt to support and look to tap into such events (Johnston and Kpundeh 2002). Donors can do this by helping to build the supporting structures around potential leaders of anti-corruption reform until the movement is better able to sustain itself.

Non-confrontational vs. confrontational approaches

Adopting a non-confrontational approach can be a good way of engaging with stakeholders that were previously uninterested in the anti-corruption agenda. Moreover, when government commitment to anti-corruption reform is limited, direct confrontation might be counter-productive and may undermine the ability of a coalition to encourage dialogue or real change (OECD DAC 2009). This could include focussing on effecting change in areas that are not direct threats to the ruling elites, but which themselves would help to achieve the ultimate goal of reducing corruption. An example of this could be focussing on an increase in the wage of doctors, rather than focussing directly on the issues of corruption in the health service. In such situations, adopting a non-confrontational approach would be recommended as it helps both to de-politicise the issues at stake and move the discussions on to issues that are more acceptable to the establishment (Zaum and Cheng 2012).

Engaging with governments and helping them to understand that reducing corruption is a way for the government to more efficiently achieve their desired goals is a prime example of a non-confrontational approach, as it helps to align the goals of the coalition with the goals of the government.

However, not every context requires a non-confrontational approach to achieve results. Confrontation can send a strong signal to governments. Moreover, in some societies non-confrontational approaches can make a coalition seem to be too close to governments, and so a more confrontational stance might be necessary to maintain the legitimacy of the coalition (Zaum and Cheng 2012).

In Poland, the coalition *Antykorupcyjna Koalicja Organizacji Pozarządowych* (AKOP) was formed in 2001. AKOP set itself the goal of checking whether or not politicians elected to the Polish parliament would fulfil their anti-corruption pledges and work towards raising the standards of public life. AKOP undertook both confrontational and non-confrontational actions, such as collecting signatures in a petition that was presented to political parties, and creating a number of monitoring reports. AKOP organised events and engaged in policy/decision-making processes related to anti-corruption in Poland. The coalition also sent questions to each of the political parties across Poland, asking how they planned to reduce corruption. AKOP received responses from 16 committees, which they published online. This action has forced politicians to produce clear anti-corruption programmes and to defend their actions in public. More information on the work of AKOP can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Mobilising broad coalitions and strengthening familiarity and trust between civil society and state actors

Mobilising a broad number of stakeholders, including government and civil society, and bringing them to the same table, especially when such stakeholders have not traditionally shared the same goals, can be a challenge. Moreover, a coalition can follow a number of steps aimed at fostering long-term cooperation and trust between stakeholders, starting with awareness raising of corruption more generally before narrowing the focus onto more sensitive issues.

A lack of trust between state actors, members of government and citizens can also make mobilising a coalition difficult. Therefore, attempts should be made to remove any kind of “them versus us” mentality in any party. This includes all parties being well informed about the motivations and capabilities of the others and not leading into discussions with pre-conceived notions that may not be correct (Kukutschka 2014). Therefore, clear and regular communication should be used

as much as possible, and there should be an effort to make use of neutral spaces for meetings, which do not offer bias to any party and which engender trust and collaboration. In addition, all parties should avoid simply flagging issues that are the fault of the other, and should instead bring potential solutions to the table (Malunga 2014). Collaboration between stakeholders does not necessarily require them to agree, but there must be a willingness to collaborate (Kukutschka 2014).

The Transparent Accountable Governance (TAG) initiative in the Philippines is a good example of mobilising a variety of stakeholders in a context in which there was little political support for anti-corruption. While initially TAG was unable to collaborate with the Philippine government or businesses due to a lack of interest in the subject of anti-corruption, following TAG's work building awareness of corruption issues, and in particular after corruption allegations against the president led to his ousting from power in 2001, corruption and anti-corruption became a topic that was acceptable to discuss. TAG seized on the corruption scandal surrounding the president and was regularly sharing information about corruption. With the election of a new president, TAG formally created the Transparency and Accountability Network (TAN) which has since been approached by the Philippine government to diagnose corruption risks in the country and produce plans to help counter them. This culminated in a successful e-governance campaign (The Asia Foundation 2008).

Diverse and convincing incentives

A coalition must be able to convince all prospective stakeholders that joining the collective action it is in their interest and that they will gain from working together rather than having multiple groups working separately or remaining at the sidelines (Community Tool Box). Relevant types of incentives for anti-corruption coalitions include purposive incentives, which centre on the accomplishment of the organisation's purpose or goal. To function as a compelling incentive, the benefit of successfully completing the goal(s) of the collective action must outweigh the costs and losses to all stakeholders.

However, incentives such as prestige and mutual support can also be useful for maintaining support for a coalition (Johnston and Kpundeh 2002). Therefore, the creation of anti-corruption awards or other similar initiatives may be useful for convincing stakeholders to join the initiative.

Other benefits a coalition may be able to offer are the ability to network, share information, provide greater access to resources, offer resource pooling, involvement in an important and shared mission, greater ability to attain a desired outcome, the increased power in numbers that collective action provides and the ability to build skills (Raynor 2011). Many of these can be offered relatively easily but require a good organisational capacity to be most effective.

It is important to note that collective action can in itself be used to create and foster political will. Anti-corruption coalitions can use their positions of legitimacy to convince the political elites of the need for anti-corruption change. They can also provide assistance to governments that lack the capacity to work on an issue properly, enabling existing political will to materialise in effective action.

Demonstrating the clear benefits of joining the collective action

Governments can be convinced to join coalitions by civil society providing reliable examples and evidence that their solutions actually work. By demonstrating the mutual benefits an anti-corruption agenda can offer to both government and citizens, it is possible to engender a degree of political will (Brinkerhoff 2010; Malunga 2014). These must also be portrayed to political elites in a way that convinces them that it would be in their interests to support it.

Donors can help to build political will by increasing the incentives for the government to engage in anti-corruption collective action. This can be done by offering immediate incentives, such as mutual aid and support in return for collaboration on anti-corruption projects (Brinkerhoff 2010).

Using the media and new technologies

The media

A relatively free press can be very helpful for a coalition to raise awareness to its issues and increase its support (Johnston and Kpundeh 2002). Publicity of successes and of the organisation's message can be a good way to bring the goals of the coalition to a larger audience. It can also help to demonstrate that a coalition is making progress, which may help to attract more support and momentum.

The use of ICTs

New information communication technologies (ICTs) have facilitated effective collective action among citizens (Hu et al. 2014). These ICTs can help take the work of a coalition to a much wider audience, aiding in awareness raising, and can be used to build momentum by quickly spreading information to potential supporters and activists (Mungiu-Pippidi 2015).

Moreover, activists are more likely to become involved in collective actions if they are invited via someone with whom they have a personal connection (Bennett et al. 2008). The internet and mobile technology makes it much easier for such connections to be made, making it easier for individuals and organisations to find supporters who share their beliefs and who are willing to join their cause.

3. Citizens collective actions

Collective action can also take place at the local or community level when citizens come together to express their concerns, demand accountability or constructively engage with governments to solve specific problems and find practical solutions for better public service delivery. There are many opportunities for mobilising citizens for collective action at the local public authorities and services level as that is where most interactions between the state and citizens take place (McNeil & Malena 2010). By building civic pressure on local government actors, this approach is seen as increasing accountability and responsiveness of local governments, strengthening citizens' empowerment and capacity as well as contributing to better development outcomes. There has been a growing interest from donors to support such approaches in recent years (O'Neil, Foresti & Hudson 2007).

Collective action initiatives usually bring together a collective of members from different groups and organisations to achieve a common goal. Opportunities for collective action at the local level can be more focussed and have the same goals as social accountability interventions, such as complaints mechanisms, public information/transparency campaigns, citizen report cards and score cards, budget accountability, community monitoring and social audits. There is an emerging body of evidence suggesting that such interventions can contribute to a range of positive outcomes including, such as increased state or institutional responsiveness, lowering of corruption, building new democratic

spaces for citizen engagement, empowering local voices, better budget utilisation and better delivery of services, if not always at the macro level, at least at the local level (McGee and Gaventa 2010).

Barriers to local collective action

In spite of this growing interest and indication of impact, experience shows that these expectations are not always met. Local collective actions are not equally successful in terms of increasing the accountability and responsiveness of government institutions (McGee and Gaventa 2010; Andrews 2003), and a number of factors can act as barriers to the effectiveness of collective action at the local level.

Obstacles to broad mobilisation of citizens

Mobilising citizens poses a number of challenges, such as inclusiveness and representation. In some cases engagement can be diverse and inclusive, involving large segments of society, while in other cases, engagement will be narrow, allowing only a small segment of society to participate. Another challenge is the capacity of the collective to meaningfully influence government officials, the governance process, agenda and outcomes. Even when local collective action is inclusive, some voices within the coalition may be more influential than others and some dominant groups may be able to exert a disproportionately strong influence (Andrews 2003).

Representation, voice weight and voice capture

It is rarely possible, especially in the anti-corruption arena, to involve all stakeholders, given the sheer number of people affected by corruption. Selection mechanisms for effective representation of all public service users or citizens having a stake in decision making and benefit sharing processes are therefore essential (African Highlands Initiative 2007).

Social trust is central to how collective action emerges and how citizens engage and cooperate with state and non-state actors. Inequalities are likely to have a profound impact on the social fabric of local communities and their ability to cooperate, affecting individual decisions to participate in collective organisations, individual aspirations and expectations as well as group-level cooperation and trust. As such, inequality may create barriers and prevent the poor voicing their demand in equal weight to the rich and from participating on equal terms in collective action..

This can result in the exclusion of disadvantaged groups from collective action processes, leading to results which do not necessarily reflect their preferences (Justino 2015). In such unequal settings, marginalised and non-professional groups also tend to partner with more organised and professional groups to voice their concerns. While potentially providing an avenue for disadvantaged groups to voice their concern and influence the goals of the action, may also lead to the capture and co-optation of the poor's voice by wealthier, more educated and advantaged groups (Andrews 2003).

Inequalities and collective action

Inequalities affect collective action through their impact on individual motivation to engage, norms of group cooperation and trust and the efficiency of coordination of collective action (Justino 2015):

In unequal societies, individual engagement in collective action may in principle be perceived as a way to achieve expectations for higher individual welfare and to climb the social ladder. This is not always the case as people at the bottom of the ladder may have internalised lower expectations, and a sense of powerlessness vis a vis their current situation and ability to reach higher levels of social welfare, limiting their ambition and leading them to assume behaviours that keep them at the bottom. Such patterns of behaviour, which are shaped by wealth, values and beliefs, tend to be transmitted across peers and generations. These lower ambitions and expectations from people at the bottom may result in their lesser engagement in various forms of collective action, including voting (Justino 2015). In addition, collective action participation may be affected by immediate short-term subsistence concerns of more disadvantaged groups which are likely to block the focus on longer-term changes.

Effective collective action also requires a certain level of trust and social cooperation, the existence of certain norms of intra-group cooperation, and how citizens engage with state and non-state organisations. High levels of heterogeneity and inequalities between groups have been shown to increase suspicions and discrimination across groups and reduce group cooperation at the local level (Justino 2015).

Inequalities may also affect the efficiency of collective action in achieving common goals, leading to costly negotiation of cooperative

arrangements and bargaining disputes over the benefits of the collective action.

Social norms, power relations and reference to authority

In addition, many traditional African cultures have strongly ingrained respect for and deference to authority, leadership, elders and traditional leaders, which may create barriers for ordinary citizens (especially poor people, women and youth) to question authority figures, as the very act of advocating for change or seeking accountability from public officials can be perceived as an act of disrespect (McNeil & Malena 2010)

Legal and institutional barriers

As for elite multi-stakeholder initiatives, there can be legal and institutional barriers to citizens' engagement, with some political structures likely to hamper effective participation. If the country's political process is undemocratic, centralised, highly hierarchical or unrepresentative, disadvantaged citizens are likely to be left out of collective action initiatives

Local governments can also act as barriers to collective action when resources and capacities of sub-national actors are limited, when they lack political will and have different priorities and when there is insufficient coordination between local governments and NGO actors (Ireland & Thomalla 2011).

Access to information is also a pre-requisite, especially information on public finances to enable collective action with the goal of holding public officials to account (McNeil and Malena 2010).

Corruption and transparency

In an environment where corruption and a lack of transparency are deeply entrenched, and where high hopes can be placed on citizens' outrage to mobilise collective action and put pressure on government, some scholars argue that corruption and a lack of transparency can erode trust in government institutions and lead to public disengagement with politics. In such settings, transparency can also reveal improper or illegal government practices and potentially erode further institutional confidence and citizens' willingness to engage in the individual or collective actions by fuelling a sense of helplessness and resignation (Bauhr and Grimes 2013).

How to remove the barriers

Addressing legal and institutional barriers

The extent to which the external environment enables or disables citizens collective action greatly varies across countries, according to political cultures, legal and policy frameworks, etc. In some contexts, it will be necessary to use a gradual approach and advocate for changes in the legal and institutional frameworks, including access to information, transparency, and democratic reforms (McNeil and Malena 2010).

Strong leadership and social networks

Strong and influential leaders with good social networks can be an enabling factor for local collective action, as suggested by two case studies on the role of collective action in enhancing the adaptive capacity to environmental risks in Nepal and in Thailand (Ireland and Thomalla 2011). Strong leaders may not necessarily have a formal position but are those that have influence in their communities, and who are perceived as competent due to their background, position or skills. Religious leaders may also play an important role in some communities.

Factors that further contribute to the functioning and sustainability of the collective as long as the goal is not fulfilled include a long-term commitment from the NGO, the capacity of key actors and the development of social networks – defined as the relationships between households, communities and institutions of governance that facilitate the flow of material and non-material resources. The strengthening of social networks through collective action as a communication channel for new knowledge and quick adaptation to changing circumstances and as a space for community members to identify and solve problems is perceived as crucial for the effectiveness of collective action and “just as valuable as the practical or tangible outcomes of the project” (Ireland and Thomalla 2011).

Transparent mechanism for participation

In some cases, certain normative factors such as legitimacy and representation can enhance the effectiveness of the initiative in achieving its goals and remove obstacles for collective action. The legitimacy and representation of the collective can be enhanced by using transparent and democratic selection processes and implementing

engagement methods that foster greater participation.

In a field experiment conducted in northern Liberia, for example, villages were randomly assigned to receive community driven reconstruction programmes. The administrators came to the villages to explain the programme and met with chiefs and elders and oversaw the election of community development councils (CDCs) of about 5 to 15 members. CDCs were then empowered to select and implement a “quick impact” project. The experience showed that the introduction of new institutions and practices can alter patterns of social cooperation even in the short term in a way that persists after the end of the project, indicating that the communities’ capacity for collective action can change over a short period of time. (Fearon, Humphreys & Weinstein 2013).

The core challenge of collective action is not only to bring citizens and state actors together but also to enhance the quality, effectiveness and impact of their interactions. State actors often tend to dominate such interactions. State actors decide who will participate (with risks of co-optation of civil society actors), what will be discussed, and whether expressed ideas and inputs will be taken on board (McNeil and Malena 2010). In cases where such domination may be detrimental to the effectiveness of the collective action to achieve its goals, it may be important to provide open and inclusive, varied and open channels for participation with few barriers to entry, such as widely advertised public hearings, workshops, community meetings, etc.).

Addressing power relations

The deference to authority figures in traditional contexts, although challenging, can be overcome by: i) advocating for change or seeking accountability from authorities in a respectful and productive way, thus rendering the efforts more culturally acceptable, and; ii) empowering citizens to actively advocate for fewer hierarchical and more democratic relations between citizens and public authorities. Social accountability interventions can be used as an effective measure to remove the obstacle of deference to authority.

Successful social accountability activities also frequently involve specific efforts to educate groups such as women and youth about their right to be heard, how to voice their demands and to

empower them to speak up (McNeil and Malena 2010)

Incentives

A major scandal can create people's outrage and create momentum for people's mobilisation, such as in the case of the Lokpal protests in India (see below).

As suggested by the above mentioned Nepal and Thailand case studies, more tangible incentives to engage in collective action at the local level can also be provided by a range of material and more intangible benefits, such as free services, health care, training or transfer of other skills that are beneficial for seeking employment or advancing careers. These are especially relevant to engage the youth. Engagement may also enhance social status, social networks and political advancement through local electorates (Ireland and Thomalla 2011).

Rather than being exclusively focussed on a narrow single issue, collective action may also benefit from integrating anti-corruption activities into strategies that address wider community priorities, such as improving public service delivery. The "framing" of the activities in terms that are relevant to the various partners appears to be crucial to build partnerships and bring people and organisations on board (Ireland and Thomalla 2011).

Strengthening capacities of facilitators of citizens collective action

One of the key conditions for effective collective impact is to have a separate organisation with relevant staff and skills that serves as a backbone for the entire initiative and coordinate participating agencies and organisations (Turner et al 2012). Even when collective action emerges organically, experience shows that strong backbone organisations created to coordinate community initiatives have the potential to maximise impact and accelerate change (Turner et al 2012).

Supporting local level citizen organised action may require substantial investment in networking and capacity (McNeil and Malena 2010). Training and capacity building interventions can help transfer the necessary skills that citizens and civil society organisations, as intermediaries to citizens' voice, may need to engage in complex technical processes, such as budget monitoring, procurement, planning and policy formulation . Efforts can also aim at building the capacity of the

facilitators of collective action or backbone organisations to become the neutral trusted arbiter, motivator, as well as the responsible for measuring progress towards the goal and formulate lessons learnt that feed into adjustments of activities and strategies to achieve the common goal (Turner et al 2012). This may involve building capacities and skills in raising resources, mobilising citizens at the grassroots level, and to ensure civil society's own credibility and accountability.

As an instrumental strategy to achieve the goal of the collective action, capacity building initiatives can also target local governments that often lack the resources, autonomy, skills and incentives for effectively engaging citizens.

Accountability of participation processes

Case studies from South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, Bolivia and Mexico indicate that citizens have a stronger voice and an increased capacity to influence policy processes when participation is designed with an integrated monitoring and evaluation mechanism. For example, in Mexico, a monitoring and evaluation mechanism introduced a participatory planning process to allow NGOs to evaluate the impact of their contribution on accountability and responsiveness (Andrews 2003). Building in a monitoring mechanism is a way to ensure the accountability of the process in terms of who was engaged in the process, whose voice was taken on board with what effect, and ultimately strengthening the quality and inclusiveness of the participation process (McNeil & Malena 2010).

Mobilising collective action in deeply corrupt environments

In environments where corruption is widespread, citizens lose trust in democratic processes and may not engage at all or be tempted to disengage if they are. Depending on the extent of penetration of corrupt practices, some activities are likely to be more effective than others to get citizens to engage in order to achieve the common goal. More research would be needed to determine the particular type of activities to support in a variety of governance environments. For example, evidence from Eastern Europe suggests that dirty politics has discouraged petition signing but has had no impact on attending peaceful protests, while encouraging engagement in more confrontational activities, such as unauthorised strikes and occupying public buildings (Kostadinova 2013).

Lessons learned from examples of civic anti-corruption campaigns

A number of lessons can be learned from recent examples of citizens' anti-corruption campaigns.

Examples of citizens' anti-corruption campaigns

The Lokpal protests in India

In 2011, in the wake of major corruption scandals, a civil society organisation named Indians Against Corruption, led by an iconic ambassador, Anna Hazare, "the new Gandhi", mobilised a peaceful nationwide uprising for the passage of a strong *Jan Lokpal* (citizens' ombudsman bill). The protests mobilised not only grassroots communities, but also India's youth and the "new" middle class, groups usually known for their political apathy, and were marked by the absence of riots and other forms of violence that tend to be the norm of Indian popular protests (Kandhekar & Reddy 2015). The protests received intensive media coverage and extensive use of social media. Under pressure of Hazare's determination to starve to death and the broad popular support he received, the regime agreed to establish a parliamentary committee to discuss the establishment of the ombudsman (Kandhekar and Reddy 2015).

However, the success of the initiative was short lived and congress finally adopted its own version of the bill, which was much watered-down, highlighting the difficulty to sustain citizens' pressure overtime and the limits of democratic processes to represent people's grievances and empowerment (Visvanathan 2012).

Brazil's clean record bill (*Ficha Limpa*)

The Brazil's clean record bill is a more successful example on how organisations can create a momentum and create the conditions to channel people's outrage into constructively changing the rules of the game.

Until recently, it was not uncommon for Brazilian politicians to have criminal records, including violations of finance campaign regulations and corruption. A popular movement of outraged people emerged against parliamentary impunity. The movement started with a coalition of civil society organisations, called the Movement for Fighting Electoral Corruption, which organised vast campaigns of on-the-ground signatures, later relayed by Avaaz.com, mobilising and training

volunteers through street and online campaigns. The movement collected 1.6 million signatures manually with an additional of 3 million online supporters. In June 2010, the president signed the *Ficha Limpa* (clean record) bill, preventing politicians with a criminal record from running for office for at least eight years. After the law went into effect, protests against officials suspected of criminal activity were launched in 13 cities (Panth 2011).

This example shows how civil society, in an enabling environment that allows meaningful civic participation in political processes, can play a key role in empowering the grassroots to change the rule of the game and initiate laws.

Mexico's integrity pact

Mass mobilisation is not always needed to create change and targeted actions can also have a long lasting effect on laws and practices. Transparency International's Integrity Pacts (IPs) are a tool to prevent corruption in public contracting, involving an agreement between a procuring government agency and all the companies bidding for the contract that neither side will pay bribes, collude or conduct any corrupt practices for the duration of the contract. To complement this, IPs also usually involve civil society organisations that act as monitors of the process (Transparency International 2013). In bringing all actors together to make a formal agreement, successful integrity pacts fundamentally rely on building trust within the group of actors involved (Marquette & Peiffer 2014).

A specific case of successful IPs comes from Mexico. In 2002, following instruction from the Mexican government, the federal electricity commission approached Transparency International's Mexico chapter (Transparencia Mexicana) to implement an integrity pact in the contracting process for a new and highly expensive hydroelectric dam project in the country. With the IP in place, no corruption scandals emerged from the process, and the dam was completed in 2007. In addition to this success, in 2004 it became mandatory in Mexico to have an external monitor dubbed "social witness" in place for all public contracts valued over a certain threshold. This includes an obligation to respect the basic access to information standards so that monitoring can be effectively implemented (Transparency International 2014).

Factors of success and lessons learned

Local collective action has the potential to not only increase accountability at local levels but also to trigger change at the macro level, as reflected by these three examples. The analysis of these and 11 other case studies of non-violent anti-corruption actions of civil resistance show that collective bottom-up action has the potential to build democracy at the grassroots level through action and contribute to a shift in power relationships between the bottom and the top, with regular people, even disadvantaged people, moving from resignation to action. These initiatives share a number of common attributes, including (Beyerle 2014):

- Multi-dimensional focus: most anti-corruption campaigns were linked to broader struggles of impunity and unaccountability, and framing the action to widely held and everyday grievances.
- Neutrality: the goals, membership and mobilisation efforts were politically neutral.
- Using low-risk mass actions can also help overcome fear in hostile environments.
- Connectedness to grassroots: in most cases, the catalyst for civic action was already connected or cultivated deliberately through relationships with regular people through one-to-one interactions or social networking.
- Strategic planning: the leadership engaged in strategic thinking to link overall goals to methods of non-violent actions.
- Holistic approach: most movements developed comprehensive, multi-dimensional approaches involving awareness raising, changing attitudes towards the status quo, targeting youth because transformation requires a generational change, achieving incremental victories.
- Clear objectives are needed to engage citizens, produce visible outcomes and gain incremental victories and build a track record of success.

The leader or the association of individuals and organisations needs to have an honest image, make sure that the campaign resonates with people's concerns, cultivate a sense of collective responsibility and enjoy legitimacy both in the eye of the public and the people in power.

4. Implications for donors

Can collective action be fostered by external actors?

The limited literature here reviewed is inconclusive on the extent to which collective action as a methodology to achieve change can be stimulated and sustained over time by external agents. While donors have gained a lot of experience in recent years in supporting grassroots organisations, their track record in kick-starting collective action is unclear. While there are some examples where collective action by communities has been induced in community forestry, for example, some argue that positive benefits brought by external agents are sometimes short lived (Barnes & Van Laerhoven 2013).

For movements seeking long-term social transformation, issues of recruitment, funding and sustainability require ongoing attention (Beyerle 2014). While funding from external actors can support initial phases, there is evidence that interventions based solely on funding communities can undermine durable collective action. In addition, successful civil society organisation-led development programmes tend to be those that do not require long-term resources for sustainability as the initial enthusiasm for induced interventions tends to fade over time, after immediate gains from initial activities and goals are achieved (Barnes & Van Laerhoven 2013).

Overall, donors are rarely able to work directly on fomenting local collective action due to their goals and policies. However, donors have a key role to play in supporting and nudging efforts to establish the systemic preconditions for the exercise of voice and accountability by citizens. This typically involves seeking to influence the "ecosystem of accountability": i) enabling environment; ii) channels through which citizens can express their voice or hold government to account; iii) the institutional framework required for voice and accountability; and iv) the individual state institutions/agencies required for voice and accountability (Halloran 2015; O'Neil, Foresti & Hudson 2007).

Recommendations for donor interventions

Many local level citizen-based collective actions involve external support in the form of either international funding, networking, or learning that can contribute to the success of the initiative. However, the role of development partners include supporting capacity building, the development and implementation of demand-driven initiatives, promoting an enabling environment, and facilitating the sharing of knowledge, lessons, methods and tools. Donor support to such initiatives should be provided in a manner that respect and promote locally driven approaches and initiatives rather than imposes predefined strategies or methods. Decisions about what methods to use, who to involve, whether to take a more political or pragmatic approach should be taken in-country and not imposed by external actors (McNeil and Malena 2010).

Building successful anti-corruption coalitions tends to be easier at a local or regional level where group interests are more in line and can be coordinated more easily. Indeed, many anti-corruption initiatives focus on specific sectors or regions. However, few anti-corruption programmes have consciously sought to build collective action at a national level, and those that do tend to happen by chance (Mungiu-Pippidi 2013). Therefore, donors seeking to support collective action should instead focus on funding and supporting already functioning groups and build on local institutions, especially those that are highly valued (Africa Highland Initiative 2007). To correctly identify and understand which projects and groups are best placed to receive support, donors could undertake comprehensive social mapping exercises, which identify the existing informal, formal and legal structures that can be used to fight corruption (Dix 2011).

Donors could also offer support to local and alternative media sources (such as bloggers) and the funding of investigative journalists. Such sources would be more willing and able to help in exposing corruption cases, as well as providing further coverage to the work of a coalition, allowing it to reach a broader base of support and also raising awareness to the goals of the coalition (Mungiu-Pippidi 2013).

Donors can also have success by targeting those in society who lose most from corruption, and supporting the creation of a safe environment in which they can report corruption and work on governance issues. An example is Transparency

International's Advocacy and legal advice centres which support victims of corruption and advocate for change based on citizens' experience of corruption. Moreover, donors and donor support to NGOs can play an effective role as intermediaries and facilitators between citizen and civil society groups and governments as they are not under the same level of political pressure that national or regional NGOs might be facing. A direct intermediary role for donors links to the current thinking on the need for donors to work and think politically, to improve effectiveness of donor interventions in governance (Disch et al 2014).

In the case of INGOs, Oxfam for example, was able to play the role of facilitator in Tajikistan effectively due to its international reputation. Oxfam was also less vulnerable to local political pressures than local NGOs, meaning that it was able to act with a larger degree of freedom and confidence (Rao 2013). To have an international facilitator or transparent exposure of collective action initiatives through reporting to an international body have been found to have a disciplining effect on the cooperation and furthering respect between various groups part of an initiative (Disch et al 2014).

Donors can also have a role in fomenting collective action by putting pressure on governments and businesses to change their stances on anti-corruption reform. In terms of large-scale international initiatives, this has proven to be a successful action, and has contributed to the success and spread of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI 2008; House of Commons International Development 2009).

Finally, donors are able to offer support to collective action by helping to strengthen government capacity to participate in collective action and respond to collective action's asks. This can be done via technical assistance around policy analysis, formulation, priority-setting, programme design and cost analysis.

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