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WRITING TELLS OTHERS WHO WE ARE: TASK

Example One

Corruption in Cameroon

Cameroon was perceived as the one of the most corrupt countries in the world in the years 2008 and 2009 according to the TI corruption index. Corruption in all levels has been denounced by social, religious and political leaders as the primary obstacle for development in Cameroon and the Government of Cameroon has hence declared its commitment to the fight against corruption. Despite the declared political will for the fight against corruption, significantly little has changed in any tangible manner. As an example, the report Global Corruption Barometer released in December 2011 by Transparency International highlights Cameroon as the country with the worst results, with 79% of Cameroonians admitting to have paid a bribe for services in the last year.

This project is based on the view that lack of knowledge is not the main obstacle to the fight against corruption in Cameroon and that sensitisation of the public that corruption exists and needs to be fought has little value if the public is not empowered to take any action against it. The use of the media in naming and shaming techniques also has limited value, as limited, in fact, as the power of public opinion inside the country to change the current state of affairs. Corruption in Cameroon relies not much on the inability to know as on the inability to act. This project is, therefore, trying to empower citizens to actively fight against corruption, creating a tool for the victims of corruption to open court cases against corrupt officials and set precedence creating deterrence. This is an enormous challenge as the justice system itself is plagued with corruption and will require innovation and experience in getting laws applied in a corrupt judicial environment. The project is based on a similar anti-corruption techniques implemented and refined by LAGA (the Last Great Ape Association) in Wildlife Law Enforcement. LAGA's fight against corruption techniques shifted Cameroon from a decade-long baseline of zero prosecutions under the wildlife law to a one per week rate. The challenge it faced in this experiment can be portrayed in the cases statistics where, in the field, LAGA documented bribing attempts in 85% of operations. In the current legal system there are documented bribing attempts in 80% of the cases. When precedence is achieved, it will change the power balance between the victims of corruption and the corrupt official. where the mere threat of legal action against a corrupt official will become a new tool in every citizen's hand to fight corruption.

The law in Cameroon allows the accusing party to be compensated by the accused of all the costs incurred in order to win the court case within the procedure of demand of damages. This fact allows some costs to be recovered, increasing sustainability. The project offers a multiplying effect, and is expected to encourage beneficiaries to take action beyond its existence. Once a good model for successful legal action by citizens against officials is created, any citizen can initiate an action on his own with relatively low costs, recoverable if the lawsuit is won.

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professional development for development professionals



Example Two

Registering our Support for Children: Protecting Children through Birth Registration in Rural Nepal

Problem Analysis

Very few children in Nepal are registered at birth. From 2000-2008, only 35% of children's births were registered nationally, and these rates are even lower in rural areas. Birth registration is one of many strategies used to protect children from violence and increase their access to basic social services. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) children have the right to a name and legal identity.

Not knowing the exact age of a child poses many problems such as:

- Early marriage
- Underage military service / Lack of legal protection
- Lack of access to social services

Early marriage is commonplace in Nepal with around 2/3 of girls marrying before the age of 18 (with 7% marrying before the age of 10). It is hard to counter forced marriage of young girls without proof of age. It is also difficult to ensure children enroll in school and to enforce laws to prevent child labour.

Protecting young people from underage military service or conscription and harassment by police and police becomes a challenge. Access to appropriate juvenile justice services is also not possible when the child's age cannot be verified.

Because of the lack of birth registration, children do not have official documentation or proof of citizenship. Without official identification documents children cannot secure the right to a nationality, a passport, a bank account or obtain credit and vote. It is also harder to repatriate and reunify families when children have been trafficked or otherwise separated from their families. Unregistered children are also more vulnerable to illegal adoption. Without official documents, children's access to basic services, including education and healthcare, is limited.

There are many reasons why so few children are registered at birth. These include:

- The ten-year conflict has created an administrative vacuum
- Existing registration processes are in disorder
- Cultural attitudes and economic constraints also hinder birth registration

A decade of violent conflict and political crises has severely affected local government systems. Councils have not been elected at any level of local government since 2002 and there has been little participation in civil society. Most Village Development Committees (VDCs) are underfunded and undersourced with annual child protection budgets of just \$300. Political instability has meant frequent staff changeovers, making planning and developing human resources difficult.



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The present registration process is difficult and fragmented. The Birth, Death and Personal Incident Act (1976) covers registration but has not made it compulsory, and there is little government funding for birth and other vital registration. While a central system for registering children at birth does exist at the district level, it is not always functioning. At the district level, there is just one employee responsible for birth registration. It is also very difficult for many parents from the villages to reach the district headquarters.

There are also cultural behaviour and attitudes which lead to many children not being registered. Lack of awareness of need for birth registration is commonplace in most villages. Nationally, literacy rates are low – 54% for the total population (around 65% for men and 43% for women).

The cost and the expense of travel means many families do not register their children at birth. While birth registration within 35 days of birth is free, registration after 35 days costs Rupees 8/-, and after 70 days or more costs Rs 50/-.

However, only 4% of women in the lowest income quintile give birth in a health facility meaning many children's births are not documented. Therefore most women do not receive information on how to register their children and its importance. Discrimination on the basis of gender, disability, caste or ethnicity also means that some groups of children are even less likely to be registered at birth.

Both pilot districts (Mugu and Kalikot) also have high levels of male migration to India for work. Meanwhile, women are not empowered to make decisions for the family and often cannot travel alone to the district headquarters.