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### REAL LIVES REAL STORIES

The Asia Pacific Region

Transparency International is a global movement with one vision: a world in which government, business, civil society and the daily lives of people are free of corruption. With more than 100 chapters worldwide and an international secretariat in Berlin, we are leading the fight against corruption to turn this vision into reality.

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This publication is a compilation of stories written by staff from Transparency International national chapters in the Asia Pacific region: Ali Shareef, Ferdian Yazid, Kashif Ali, Laura McKenna, Prum Seila, Singhtarith Chea, SM Rezwan-Ul-Alam, Thamnath Ghimire, Vu Ngoc Anh, and Yvonne Ngutlick.

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Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Every effort has been made to verify the accuracy of the information contained in this report. Note that people's names in the stories have been changed to protect their identities. All information was believed to be correct as of December 2017. Nevertheless, Transparency International cannot accept responsibility for the consequences of its use for other purposes or in other contexts.

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## TRUE STORIES

...about different people and different situations in different contexts. But with one common message:

change is possible when citizens get involved, even when the odds seem stacked against them.

From Pakistan to Papua New Guinea, these are stories about standing up for transparency and accountability.



### MONGOLIA

Mongolian youth are well educated and globally connected, and are the country's first generation to grow up under a modern democratic government.

A vast and proud country, known for its long winters, short summers and grassy steppes, Mongolia has undergone significant socio-economic changes in the past 25 years. As a result, young people are experiencing unique challenges in the country's education system.

A 2017 report by The Asia Foundation that investigates transparency within Mongolia's education sector found that 70 per cent of primary and secondary school students widely believe that parents use bribes, connections or position to enroll their children. Another 47 per cent believe these are used to secure scholarships. The findings suggest that the situation is even worse at colleges and universities.

Transparency International Mongolia has found that young people living in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia's capital city and home to 40 per cent of the country's population, want to learn more about corruption and how they can get involved to stop it.

Batbold, a student from one of the city's secondary schools, embodies this need to bring about change:

"We are the successors to this corrupt era. We must learn about why things are wrong and then learn to do better than our predecessors," he said.

Batbold's words reflect the general feedback from TI Mongolia's anti-corruption workshops in the country, where more than 260 young people have learned about transparency, integrity and participation.

These workshops are part of our regional programme, known as the Youth Movement for Transparency International Asia Pacific, which also employs a range of online and offline engagement tools.

A two-month social media campaign generated online content to boost engagement from young people. Its inspirational quotes, promotion of activities and photos engaged thousands of people, with success being measured by the number of likes, shares and comments that posts received. An essay competition required students to answer why it is important for young people to care about corruption. Prizes were awarded for the most inspiring answers and handed out by the Monglian Parliament Vice Speaker and the British Ambassador to Mongolia. Young people were very engaged with the essay competition and eager to use the space it gave them to speak up.

Roughly 95 per cent of students who attended the workshops stated afterwards that the workshops had increased their knowledge about corruption and bribery. Thirty per cent believed that young people having their voices heard was a key way to counter corruption.

Transparency International Mongolia Project Officer Indrashidi was impressed with the workshops and campaigns, saying:

"There aren't many specific anti-corruption programmes aimed at youth in Mongolia – our workshops and campaigns made a big impact with students and overwhelmingly young people told us that they want to be involved in countering corruption."

#### 70%

of primary and secondary school students widely believe that parents use bribes, connections or position to enroll their children

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40%

of the country's population, want to learn more about corruption and how they can get involved to stop it

### BANGLADESH

On 9 December 2017, International Anti-Corruption Day was officially observed in Bangladesh for the first time. Thanks to the persistent advocacy of Transparency International Bangladesh, the country's Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and Deputy Commissioners joined hands with our organisation to observe the day officially, by organising human chains in their 64 respective districts to highlight our key message: Together Against Corruption.

It has not been an easy journey. The government has been critical inside and outside of Parliament about many of our research findings.

In 2011, three court cases were filed against TI Bangladesh for allegedly defaming the judiciary for its findings in the National Household Survey Report of 2010. An arrest warrant was issued for the Chair, Executive Director and the lead researcher.

A 2012 study published by TI Bangladesh found that 97 per cent of Members of Parliament were involved in illegal activities, with 77 per cent abusing their positions on local election boards, 75 per cent abusing development projects for their own benefit, 53 per cent being involved in outright criminal acts, 69 per cent influencing procurement decisions, and 62 per cent influencing local elections.

In 2015, one Member of Parliament threatened to close down TI Bangladesh for remarks we made on the effectiveness of the Parliament.

Also, we have often not agreed with the ACC on many issues, in spite of the fact that we were jointly behind the creation of the anti-corruption body.

Over the years, our anti-corruption advocacy programmes, widespread civic engagement and policy stances have established our image as an uncompromising body in the fight against corruption. This eventually brought the ACC and TI Bangladesh together.

When we entered into a formal partnership in 2015, public expectation was that we would make a significant contribution in terms of turning the ACC into a more effective body. International Anti-Corruption Day will now be marked in Bangladesh on 9 December every year. This breakthrough approval emerged as the outcome of four years' worth of relentless advocacy led by us and the Government of Bangladesh, including direct contact with the Prime Minister's Office.

The official celebration adds strength to our advocacy initiatives and public engagement with the movement against corruption.

With continuous anti-corruption advocacy initiatives, an objective stance on policy issues and lobbying of relevant ministries and government departments, we are poised to further strengthen the Bangladesh government's anti-corruption stance and create an environment for achieving good governance.

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The official celebration adds strength to our advocacy initiatives and public engagement with the movement against corruption.



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### PAKISTAN

The deplorable state of Pakistan's rural health sector can be seen in the number of complaints received by Transparency International Pakistan's Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre (ALAC) in Karachi.

The problems discussed in these complaints cover a wide spectrum of issues: from doctors not showing up for work, to lack of beds, substandard equipment and unsanitary environments.

While infrastructure is a challenge in many Pakistani government hospitals, this problem is made greater by doctors offering their services to private clinics. In Pakistan, doctors in public hospitals are forbidden to work in private clinics. However, a lack of transparency and enforcement of regulations has meant that many doctors practise in private clinics during the time they are supposed to be on duty in public hospitals. This creates an acute shortage of medical doctors, especially in rural and impoverished regions, where people cannot afford private clinics.

Usta Mohammad is a small city in Baluchistan that survives on the back of over 150 rice mills. While the city supplies most of Baluchistan with milled rice, poverty remains rampant.

In January 2017, TI Pakistan set up a mobile ALAC in Usta Mohammad. The goals of ALACs are to hear the grievances of local people who cannot afford legal help, and to connect them with local lawyers who can assist them in their own language. Of the complaints received by the ALAC in Usta Mohammed, complaints about the health sector top the list.

During its time in the city, the mobile ALAC received a number of complaints about poor conditions in the city's only government hospital. ALAC staff heard that while the hospital lacked basic amenities, with long waiting times and not a single ambulance, many of the doctors were constantly absent as they operated their own private clinics.

Based on these complaints, TI Pakistan contacted several government officials, including Baluchistan's Chief Secretary, the Health Minister, and the Provincial Director General of Health Services. The chapter also worked with a local non-governmental organisation to mobilise civil society organisations to talk directly to the hospital's administrators. In response to TI Pakistan's actions, a committee of government and private sector health professionals came together to address a range of issues – in particular, absenteeism among doctors.

Within four months, people in Usta Muhammad informed the Pakistan chapter that conditions had improved significantly at the hospital. Doctors were now adhering to a strict schedule and absenteeism had ended. The availability of much-needed medicines had also improved.

Similarly, the province's Health Ministry designed regulations banning doctors from operating in private practices during the day, and gave instructions to the district's administration for their effective implementation.

TI Pakistan's ALACs have assisted over 2,600 people in Pakistan who are unable to lodge complaints about public services due to geography, access or poverty. The work of the mobile ALACs starts from the understanding that citizens have fundamental rights and are entitled to receive essential government services.

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### MALDIVES

Easa, a 36-year-old activist, is arguing passionately with a receptionist at the Maldives Parliament. He is upset because his Right to Information (RTI) application form, seeking the names of parliamentarians who have submitted their asset declarations, has been rejected.

Easa is frustrated – this is the fourth government institution to reject his RTI application this month.

The receptionist explains to Easa that his RTI application cannot be processed because it is incomplete – he has left blank the field which asks him to give the reason why he is seeking to obtain the requested information.

Although the Maldives RTI Law does not require those seeking information to state their reason for doing so, the RTI application requires applicants to state this – a technical loophole that enables institutions to easily reject requests for information.

And Easa is not alone: hundreds of people seeking access to information have had their RTI requests denied because they left blank the "reason" field in their application.

"Information Officers in public institutions lack even very basic awareness of the RTI Act. Every time I submit an RTI application, I have to explain the RTI Act to the staff at the institution and I have to explain that I am not legally obliged to provide a reason for asking for information," Easa explained, adding that no one should have to explain why they need access to public information.

Transparency International Maldives works with people like Easa, who are seeking access to information, to encourage more and more citizens to use the RTI application form as a tool to demand transparency in order to hold public officials accountable.

Looking to streamline access to public information since the passage of the RTI Act in 2013, TI Maldives has worked with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICOM) and has held several training sessions across the country to build the capacity of information officers and increase their knowledge of the RTI Law. Subsequent lobbying efforts resulted in a notable policy impact in July 2017: the Information Commission changed the RTI application form by putting the word "optional" in the field which asks why the applicant requested information.

"Even though it is a small technicality, this change will have tremendous implications for the way public information is demanded and supplied," said Mariyam Shiuna, the Executive Director of TI Maldives. She added that this is a positive step forward in the work TI Maldives does to combat corruption and hold public officials accountable.

Easa is delighted by the news: "Institutions can no longer reject my RTI applications. I'm hopeful that people will submit more RTI applications and seek more information, making it more difficult for public officials to be corrupt."

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Transparency International Maldives works with people like Easa, who are seeking access to information, to encourage more and more citizens to use the RTI application form as a tool to demand transparency in order to hold public officials accountable.



thoughtful, committedcitizens canchangetheworld;

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### PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Madang is a scenic town on the north coast of Papua New Guinea. Surrounded by jungle-covered mountains and active volcanoes, it is a popular tourist destination and home to the island nation's only nickel cobalt mine.

Despite the economic advantages in Madang's Rai Coast District, the only road connecting it to the rest of the country is a rough dirt track, and there are no bridges to traverse two fast-flowing rivers that cross the track.

People endanger themselves by crossing on foot, with loads of produce carried in coconut-woven baskets on their backs. Income levels are very low in the Rai Coast District, and education is a luxury, while health is rarely taken seriously – even in a place that is plagued by tropical malaria.

When construction on a major bridge across one of the rivers suddenly stopped, Rai Coast resident Justin Balop knew something was not right. The government had hired a foreign-owned company to build the bridge and the project was now clearly behind schedule.

Justin knew the bridge was important to his community and he knew that he had to do something.

Justin formed a village drama troupe to act out plays about corruption. The plays helped people understand what corruption is and generated discussions about community issues.

The people were engaged: they wanted to take action, but they needed more information.

It was at this point that Justin approached Transparency International Papua New Guinea to facilitate a community information workshop on fighting corruption and budget tracking.

As a result of the workshop, Justin mobilised his community: a protest march took place and a petition was delivered to their provincial government demanding an explanation for the incomplete bridge. The community also requested improved services for their district. The bridge construction has since restarted. The story of the mobilisation of Justin's community quickly spread throughout Madang Province and more communities began organising themselves, requesting assistance from Justin to help them tackle issues of corruption in their communities.

"I always thought there was nothing left for me to do as a citizen after voting for a leader during an election," said Justin. "Transparency International Papua New Guinea helped me to understand that citizens have a higher calling to ensuring accountability and transparency by demanding it from their leaders."

TI Papua New Guinea continues its work to build a coalition of anti-corruption communities that are committed to ensuring transparency by empowering citizens to demand quality public services from their government and local authorities.

#### "

As a result of the workshop, Justin mobilised his community: a protest march took place and a petition was delivered to their provincial government demanding an explanation for the incomplete bridge.

### CAMBODIA

In a tiny farming village in Siem Reap, Cambodia, a high school student called Sok stands before his fellow classmates and offers a proposition. Bathed in the tropical sunlight of a breezy afternoon he suggests that he and five other students conduct a survey on the local government's responsiveness to the needs of local villagers.

Sok is one of the 30 young people participating in Transparency International Cambodia's Youth Empowerment for Transparency and Integrity (YETI) camp event in Siem Reap.

YETI camps equip Cambodian youth with anticorruption knowledge and skills through training on transparency, integrity, good governance and project management. They are also used as a platform to share ideas about how to contribute to the anticorruption movement, which is what Sok was proposing to his classmates.

Following his proposal, Sok's team conducted surveys with 102 people in five villages. They found – among other things – that 42 per cent of those surveyed believed road maintenance was up to acceptable standards. However, 26 per cent mentioned that they had witnessed corrupt practises in their community.

These findings illustrate that although people are satisfied with their community development, they are also concerned about corruption.

Sok's findings were presented to the local council, and leaders accepted their suggestions on areas for improvement.

The Cambodian Prime Minister himself has spoken publicly of the need for reform in government:

"First, you need to use a mirror to look at yourself. Second, you have to take a bath to clean your body. Third, you have to scrub your body while bathing, if it is plagued by dirty things. Fourth, you have to heal your disease."

Echoing the Prime Minister's remarks, senior government ministers now openly accept that corruption exists within the public sector, from traffic police taking bribes to illegal logging and malpractice. This acceptance of the reality seems to be having an effect: based on the 2016 Global Corruption Barometer, in 2013 over 60 per cent of Cambodians paid bribes to the police but in 2016 just 11 per cent said they had done so.

Through campaigns and outreach programmes, TI Cambodia has built a network of more than 20,000 people across the country, through workshops, forums and camps. Millions of Cambodians have been reached through social media and the mainstream media. The word 'corruption' is no longer taboo in Cambodian society.

Based on surveys conducted with 102 people in five villages

**42%** 

believed road maintenance was up to acceptable standards, however

26%

mentioned that they had witnessed corrupt practices in their community





### INDONESIA

Officials from PLN, Indonesia's national electricity provider, were under investigation and were sentenced due to corrupt behavior in 2011. Eddie Widiono who served as PLN president between 2001 and 2008, was given a five-year prison sentence for charges related to shady procurement procedures.

A state-owned company with 45,000 employees, PLN was in the news due to poor electricity service delivery, unwarranted price markups, and facilitation payments demanded by PLN employees from customers.

Electricity is a basic need in Indonesia: the tropical heat demands power for a variety of needs, from air conditioning in office towers to refrigeration in rural villages.

Seeing that all Indonesians feel the effects of a poorly performing PLN, Transparency International Indonesia offered to assist the company in taking a stand against corruption.

Since 2012, TI Indonesia has assisted PLN in developing and rolling out an anti-corruption programme called PLN Berintegritas. PLN Berintegritas conducts risk assessments, and develops programmes and software platforms that mitigate corruption risks. TI Indonesia also hosts anti-corruption training programmes for employees.

Over the last few years, PLN has accomplished a lot. According to the Central Information Commission of Indonesia, PLN has been assessed as one of the most transparent state-owned enterprises in Indonesia for four consecutive years — from 2013 to 2016.

PLN has also obtained more customers, at an average rate of 7.5 per cent per year. Service delivery is now monitored through online anti-corruption applications and facilitation payments are for the most part a thing of the past. The rate that Indonesians pay for electricity has also declined since 2014.

"Before PLN Berintegritas started, many PLN household customers had a mindset to give facilitation payments in order to get services, and many corporate customers would give gifts. This programme has successfully encouraged us to leave those bad habits behind," said Dikdik A.S. Taufik, a PLN District Manager.

"It's obvious that Transparency International Indonesia's efforts to assist PLN have already created successes," said Dadang Trisasongko, the Secretary General of TI Indonesia. The chapter's anti-corruption programme with PLN has created a new collaborative model of corruption prevention which will be promoted in other state-owned enterprises and private companies."

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### VIETNAM

Young Vietnamese are particularly vulnerable to various forms of corruption. A Youth Integrity Survey carried out by Towards Transparency Vietnam in 2014 indicated that 85 per cent of Vietnamese youth consider a lack of integrity to be harmful to their country and family. And while 87 per cent believe that youth have a role to play in fighting corruption, 74 per cent said they have no or very little knowledge about corruption and integrity.

The answer to this challenge was to create a space where Vietnamese youth could learn about integrity, transparency and anti-corruption efforts. Thus, the Vietnam Integrity School (VIS) was born.

VIS's goal is to create a space for young people to learn, understand, practise and promote integrity by developing and working on their own ideas and projects.

The first session for VIS involved 43 students chosen from different demographics and social backgrounds. They were subject to 10 different lectures over three days, from experts on anti-corruption and governance from national and international institutions.

The students were also encouraged to develop projects to promote integrity in their own communities. Those projects included the organisation of mini-VISs in local communities, a project aimed at reducing corruption among traffic police called Traffic Integrity, a project aimed at promoting integrity among primary school students, and the organising of Integrity Café talks.

High school student Lan Nguyen is from a small village in the mountains of northern Vietnam. The opportunity to take part in the VIS has changed his life as he is now better able to understand what true integrity is in relation to his studies.

"I very much enjoyed the discussions on integrity and education," he said. "It resonated so much with me and helped me to realise that in many instances I acted without integrity in my school studies. The lectures motivated me to change myself in regard to how I study and take exams. It also encouraged me to push for more integrity across the broader education sector in Vietnam." VIS is new but already has a following. Vietnam's youth are well connected via social media platforms and the first public announcement of VIS posted on Towards Transparency's Facebook page received over 12,000 views.

Even with VIS's successes, it is still very challenging to engage youth on anti-corruption in Vietnam. Actions developed by Vietnamese youth following VIS need to be nurtured.

"Integrity is still a new concept in Vietnam," remarked one VIS graduate. "After attending VIS, I talked about integrity with my work colleagues. I was amazed to see that nobody understands what integrity is: they all said they had never heard about it!"

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### NEPAL

#### Ramesh, a 55-year-old resident of remote Gulmi District in Nepal, has to travel 15 kilometres over mountainous terrain to get to his district's only hospital.

The one hospital in Gulmi serves 280,000 people, so even on a good day it can be difficult to access health services.

And today has not been a good day for Ramesh.

During his visit, he had a difficult time finding the department he needed, as he was unable to find the Citizen's Charter that lists the hospital's basic information.

Upon inquiring about the charter at the information desk he was met with sarcasm and rude behaviour. Ramesh decided to seek help from the officer in charge, but he was nowhere to be found.

In short, he received no help.

Ramesh was eventually taken care of, but he remained frustrated because of the long period of time it took to revceive care, and the poor attitudes of hospital staff.

On his way back home, Ramesh saw one of Transparency International Nepal's Advocacy and Legal Advice Centres (ALACs) outside the front of the hospital. An ALAC is a mobile help desk that TI Nepal sets up at various remote locations across the country.

ALACs allow people to file grievances related to public service delivery and TI Nepal staff then do what they can to respond on their behalf. The aim is to put pressure on public institutions to deliver quality services, maintain good governance and handle service issues.

TI Nepal's district partner team immediately visited the medical officer in charge to address Ramesh's case, as stipulated in the Citizen's Charter.

The ALAC team found that the officer in charge was late getting to his office, which justified the evidence confirming the issue of non-punctuality. Similarly, the Citizen's Charter was found to not be displayed in a visible place and service quality was seen to be poor and conditions for patients uncomfortable.

Following TI Nepal's inquiries about the problems Ramesh faced, the Citizen's Charter was put in a more visible place and assurances were given that better services would be provided in the future.

"For the majority of people living in rural Nepal, getting access to good medical facilities is difficult. And it is also not easy to lodge complaints about poor health services at government hospitals," Transparency International Nepal District Partner Chair Shyam Pandey remarked.

"We are happy to have been of service to a citizen."

#### "

For the majority of people living in rural Nepal, getting access to good medical facilities is difficult. And it is also not easy to lodge complaints about poor health services at government hospitals.

### CREATE CHANGE WITH US

#### ENGAGE

More and more people are joining the fight against corruption, and the discussion is growing. Stay informed and share your views on our website and blog, and social media.

### **VOLUNTEER**

With an active presence in more than 100 countries around the world, we're always looking for passionate volunteers to help us increase our impact. Check out our website for the contact details for your local organisation.

#### DONATE

Your donation will help us provide support to thousands of victims of corruption, develop new tools and research, and hold governments and businesses to their promises. We want to build a fairer, more just world. With your help, we can. Find out more at:

#### www.transparency.org/getinvolved

And join the conversation: **f** transparencyinternational **y** anticorruption

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