



GOPAC Strategy

Global Conference, Mexico City, March 11-13, 2011

Global Partners and Associates (GPA) was asked to help GOPAC develop and refine its strategy for the next 3-5 years and to provide a document for discussion at GOPAC's global conference. The work identified GOPAC's key strengths and weaknesses and analysed the current funding environment (particularly in relation to parliamentary strengthening, anti-corruption and support to global networks).¹

GOPAC is a worldwide network of politicians, parliaments and former parliamentarians, committed to combating corruption and promoting integrity, honesty and transparency in public life. Since its creation in 2002 the organisation has expanded its work and grown in size - developing its activities around the core parliamentary roles of providing oversight, monitoring government, and articulating the public interest. It has placed corruption at the heart of the governance agenda, providing information and analysis, establishing international benchmarks, and improving public awareness through a combination of global pressure and national action.

Why corruption matters

The effects of corruption are profound and pernicious - distorting economic growth, undermining the quality of public provision and decreasing the legitimacy of governance. Corruption destabilises economic planning, by creating additional risk and uncertainty, increasing the cost of doing business, and constraining levels of foreign direct investment. These costs fall disproportionately on the poor, diverting public money from critical areas of development such as healthcare and education, meaning poorer public services and heightening the costs of alternatives. And, where corrupt public servants are not held to account, citizens lose faith in the process of governance. Ultimately, these conditions fracture any form of social contract between government and the people.

Why parliaments matter in the fight against corruption

Parliaments are central to controlling corruption. Executives are unlikely to hold themselves to account across the range of government activity – this is the job of parliaments. A parliament should be at the apex of the system of accountability – drawing together the investigations and reports of the panoply of accountability agencies that exist within a nation (from the Supreme Audit Agency to the Human Rights Commission to the ombudsman to the electricity regulator) and using them as the basis to call ministers to account.

The aid effectiveness agenda, developed in the high-level forums of Paris and Accra, has sought to ensure that donors work more effectively with the institutions of domestic accountability –

¹ GPA conducted around 25 interviews with internal and external stakeholders, assessed GOPAC's events and publications, and undertook a wide-ranging review of documentation on funding priorities and strategies. A longer version of the strategy paper is available on request.

parliaments must be central to these efforts. Unlike civil society organisations and the media, parliaments have the statutory power to call government to account. It is the job of politicians to monitor and scrutinise government activity, enact legislation, articulate the public interest and ensure probity in government. In short, parliaments are critical allies for donors in the fight against corruption.

The strength of the global network

However, corruption does not recognise national borders; it takes many forms and varies from country to country. And, it is often difficult to make an impact at the national level alone. Brave individual politicians often struggle to make a difference. Corruption is amongst the most politically sensitive issues. Those parliamentarians who raise the issue for genuine purposes make themselves immediately vulnerable to political and sometimes physical attack. For such reasons, the international network provides moral and political support – through a network of like-minded MPs which to develop and enforce international principles for anti-corruption, and promoting awareness and understanding of the global challenge.

A twin-track approach to tackling corruption

This network approach means that GOPAC works simultaneously at international and local level. Globally, the organisation is building and promoting universal principles, while offering support, advice and guidance at the regional and national level. GOPAC provides a central, global resource for parliamentary efforts to stamp out corruption. It provides politicians with the practical advice and tools through knowledge exchange, support and leadership. Through its monitoring it provides progress checks on anti-corruption initiatives. Through its activities it provides support and capacity for politicians. Through its resources it provides principles and practical advice. And through its members it generates knowledge and momentum behind the issues – particularly by facilitating south-south learning.

The twin-track approach means that individual members and national chapters are part of wider international initiatives, providing recognition at the global level and inspiration for national-level action. It is the interaction between the global and the local that gives GOPAC a unique expertise in the fight against corruption.

GOPAC's work so far ...

In the first phase of its development GOPAC has focused on three main challenges. First, it has sought to provide an international agenda for parliamentarians to combat corruption, as set out in the GOPAC conference declarations from Arusha in 2006 and Kuwait in 2008. These principles provide the basis for parliamentary action, committing the participants to strengthen the performance of parliaments in monitoring corruption in all its forms – particularly by tying parliamentary action to ensuring the provisions of the UN Convention on Anti-Corruption (UNCAC) are implemented and observed by national governments.

Second, in order to mobilise its members around key policy issues it has created a series of global task forces. These task forces are responsible for investigating specific aspects of anti-corruption, namely, implementation of UNCAC, parliamentary oversight, ethics and conduct, and anti-money laundering. They thus provide a space for international dialogue between parliamentarians, a means to highlight the issues on a global stage and a source of expertise on which the network can draw.

Third, the network has developed its knowledge resources to provide guidance for parliaments, politicians and interested outside parties on the fight against corruption. For example, the parliamentarians' guide to controlling corruption provides analysis of the impact of corruption, its causes, and how a multi-pronged approach - designed to improve political accountability, private

sector competition, public sector management and an active civil society – can be developed. GOPAC’s guide to parliamentary ethics and conduct highlights the issues and processes of agreeing and implementing a parliamentary code of conduct. Most recently, GOPAC has worked with the UNDP to develop an UNCAC monitoring toolkit, improving our understanding of how far UNCAC is being adhered to, and building international pressure around its provisions.

Through these sorts of activities GOPAC’s membership has expanded, with increasing numbers of individual members and national chapters, alongside the continuing work of the regional chapters such as those in the Arab Region (ARPAC) and Africa (APNAC).

The next phase for GOPAC

GOPAC is though seeking to capitalise on its current position, and believes the next phase of its evolution should seek to heighten international understanding of, and attention to, corruption in all its forms. GOPAC is planning to work in three strategic areas of development: i) Monitoring, Analysis and Implementation, ii) Learning and Development, and iii) Building Public Awareness and Understanding.

i) Monitoring, analysis and implementation

Parliamentarians play a key role in the monitoring of government activity and implementation of its commitments. The members of GOPAC are uniquely placed to track a range of anti-corruption indicators and measures, and provide forms of information that the international community would otherwise struggle to access. This would be provided through three main initiatives:

- **Benchmarking and monitoring.** GOPAC’s global benchmarks provide an international standard against which anti-corruption can be measured. GOPAC’s members will be engaged in a thorough analysis of regional and national progress against the benchmarks. The GOPAC-UNDP assessment toolkit provides a way of measuring progress against the provisions of UNCAC. The UNCAC monitoring toolkit provides the basis from which to build a range of data sources on parliamentary activity and progress on anti-corruption activities. GOPAC believes that these sorts of exercises will address the current dearth of information in these areas, providing greater depth and detail on government performance, and valuable data for international anti-corruption programming.
- **Global Task Forces.** The GTFs provide a set of international committees built around four key policy areas: implementation of UNCAC, parliamentary oversight, ethics and conduct, and anti-money laundering. The politicians on each task force are the most active proponents of anti-corruption in their own countries and regions. The task forces develop policy and review progress on a transnational basis, and provide a link between the global network and individual members working in the policy areas.
- **Mapping vulnerabilities to corruption.** The World Bank is increasingly use a ‘process flow’ or ‘value chain’ approach to corruption, which identifies where particular sectors are vulnerable to corrupt practice. By focusing on the micro-level the weaknesses in the chain can be more easily identified and addressed – so that results are seen at the macro-level. GOPAC will seek to map the ‘process flow’ within the centre of government and legislative process to highlight particular weaknesses. The template will be distributed and applied across the network’s regional and national chapters.

The purpose of all these activities is, of course, to increase the likelihood of implementation – GOPAC’s work is designed to build national coalitions and domesticate international approaches. Given the unique position of GOPAC’s members as politicians, the combination of monitoring, analysis and implementation provides two distinct advantages to the fight against corruption. First,

it will provide useful and reliable information on the state of anti-corruption in different nations and regions. Second, the organisation's work is designed to build political pressure on governments at national, regional and international levels. Simply knowing that they are being watched is likely to change the way in which governments behave, but GOPAC's international co-ordination of such monitoring is designed to heighten that pressure.

ii) Learning and development

GOPAC has placed a great emphasis on its training, learning and development around anti-corruption issues. It has evolved a distinctive style of peer-to-peer learning, and that experience is now being used as the basis to develop a specific methodology which can be rolled out across the network. We believe the approach will have wider relevance for other international networks seeking to promote south-south learning. Overall, it is planning to consolidate and extend its knowledge resources in three main ways:

- **GOPAC's peer-to-peer learning methodology.** GOPAC's experience of building and strengthening its network since 2002 is that the most effective way of delivering practical advice, guidance and training is to utilise the expertise that exists within the members. The politicians within the organisation have a variety of experience that they share with one another around the key policy issues and anti-corruption initiatives. That interaction itself invariably generates new ideas and techniques, which GOPAC then seeks to capture and synthesise as the basis for its training methodology. GOPAC is refining that methodology into a specific form of south-south learning, facilitated by the international headquarters, which can be replicated across the organisation. We believe this may have wider application to international democracy and governance assistance work.
- **Publications and knowledge dissemination.** GOPAC has produced a wide variety of publications in recent years. International demand suggests that these should be focused in four categories, which will shape GOPAC's next phase of knowledge production. These are: 1) International standards and policy positions - to provide the principles around which all members of GOPAC work, and the benchmarks for anti-corruption initiatives. 2) Guidance and technical advice - to understand and address many of the practical challenges that members face when pursuing anti-corruption strategies at the national level. 3) Training materials - to capture GOPAC's particular experience of south-south learning and its own training methodology. 4) Anti-corruption monitoring data – to draw together the results of its anti-corruption monitoring and benchmarking in a series of documents to track progress at the global, regional and national level.
- **An international anti-corruption knowledge hub.** GOPAC believes that there is no substitute for personal interaction between politicians on these issues. However, as the network grows and the demands from members increase GOPAC will seek to turn its website into a knowledge hub which stores information generated within and outside the organisation. The website will also provide a forum where members can exchange information and expertise with one another – reinforcing its peer-to-peer learning, and will seek to provide a focus for new initiatives which then add momentum to the international anti-corruption movement. To achieve this the website will actively seek out examples of good practice in different countries and then promote through the website. The intention is to provide a useful and accessible source of technical information and practical advice.

The strategy is to build directly on GOPAC's previous achievements, ensure quality and consistency across the organisation, and provide tangible measures of progress and impact across the anti-corruption agenda.

iii) Building public awareness and understanding

During the first phase of its life GOPAC was concentrated on its core audience of parliamentarians. It is, clearly, an issue of concern to politicians in every corner of the world. However, parliamentarians alone cannot meet the challenge of stamping out corruption. This has to be an agenda which is shared by organs of civil society, the media, the private sector and the state. In the next years, GOPAC will seek to focus international attention on the efforts of national governments, improve public understanding of the issues and work collaboratively with different sectors of society.

- Publicising international progress against corruption. GOPAC will use the results of its monitoring and benchmarking activity as the basis for a new communications strategy. The strategy will seek to highlight both the best and worst governments who are attempting to tackle corruption within their own countries. This will include an annual report to measure that progress, along with regular updates from individual countries or regions where particular new anti-corruption techniques are being piloted. The strategy will seek to use the data as a basis from which to explain the tangible effects of corruption on individual citizens, from inefficiency in government to the quality of public services – and the actions that politicians are taking to tackle the situation.
- Extending the GOPAC network. GOPAC will continue to extend and expand its country chapters, increasing the opportunities for linking with other anti-corruption organisations at the national level. But, as part of its communication strategy GOPAC will also seek to broaden its reach beyond parliaments and politicians, by convening a range of organisations and individuals with expertise in the field of anti-corruption. GOPAC believes there is the opportunity to build a wide-ranging coalition for change which will reinforce the network's central objectives. The organisation will seek to draw together an informal network of such figures from academia, campaigning journalists, NGOs and the private sector to provide additional capacity and expert advice for regional and national chapters. They may become active participants in GOPAC web forums and possibly provide an informal advisory body for the network.
- International events. The network will be seeking to time its public messages to coincide with pre-existing international events such as the international day of democracy, to ensure that the various dimensions of corruption form part of the global dialogue on such issues. GOPAC will also be seeking to create annual events around its own publications, such as an annual lecture which would be given by a leading global figure, covering a specific aspect of corruption or the problems of corruption in a particular part of the world. Such events would be aimed at building international momentum and public understanding, drawing in the most senior figures from politics, civil society, industry, the public sector and the media.
- Beyond politics - building a business-parliamentary agenda to tackle corruption. Traditionally, business has not regarded corruption as a central issue. Where the business case has been made, this has tended to fall within a strategic approach to corporate social responsibility. But GOPAC believes that parliamentarians and businesspeople should be working more closely understand and tackle the various forms of corruption for three main reasons. First, corruption increases the price of doing business in any country, costing an estimated \$2.6 trillion globally in bribes, inflated project budgets and other expenses. Secondly, the global hotspots for corruption are developing countries, and corruption is high in the main emerging markets that are likely to drive economic growth in the coming decades. Third, although business has sought to put its own house in order, by tackling the supply side of corruption (i.e. the giving of bribes), it also needs to address the demand by addressing the legislative, monitoring and decision-making framework in the countries in which they operate.

Conclusion

GOPAC's expansion since 2002 highlights the extent to which it has tapped into a key issue for parliamentarians and given them the means and support to pursue them. It has established a common international agenda for parliaments and parliamentarians, and created the principles around which a network can be mobilised. Corruption is a challenge which very large numbers of politicians want to address, many of whom still exist beyond the reach of GOPAC. But, in an ever-more interconnected and flat world, the existence of the network is key to realising that shared agenda and finding ways to act upon it.

GOPAC exists to provide the global articulation of the challenges of corruption. In doing so it is able to draw on the direct experience and expertise of its members. But it also seeks to connect those members to each other; and provide ways of sharing knowledge, creating space for innovation and developing new techniques to address corrupt practice. Stamping out corruption will never be achieved solely by international initiatives, nor solely by on-the-ground activity. By connecting the two, GOPAC provides direct support to meet the challenge at the local level and the platform to increase international political pressure on national governments. That dual-track approach, we believe, is the most likely way of achieving meaningful, long-term and effective change to stamp out corruption.