Taking action against corruption

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE
BY YOUTH FOR YOUTH
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Information contained in this publication has been derived from a variety of sources, including but not limited to discussions with and among young people globally and reviews of materials published in the popular press.
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The YouthLED Integrity Advisory Board is a group of young people from all over the world and all walks of life. As a way of ensuring gender and regional representation, the Board is composed of two young people (a young woman and a young man, aged between 18 and 30 at the time of application) who are interested in youth empowerment, integrity, ethics and anti-corruption, from each of the regions listed below:

- Central Asia, East Africa, East Asia, Europe,
- Middle East, Northern Africa, North and Central America, Southern Africa, South–East Asia and Pacific, South Asia, South America, West and Central Africa

WHO WROTE THE TOOLKIT?

Following a recommendation from the Youth Forum on “Countering Corruption through Collaboration: Youth Perspectives and Engagement”, organized as a special event to directly contribute to the special session of the General Assembly against corruption held in 2021, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) established the YouthLED Integrity Advisory Board in 2022, within the framework of the Global Resource for Anti-Corruption Education and Youth Empowerment (GRACE) initiative.

Through the establishment of the YouthLED Integrity Advisory Board, the aim of UNODC is to provide a platform for young people to discuss and contribute to the anti-corruption work of UNODC and to strengthening the mainstreaming of youth perspectives for the purpose of finding efficient and sustainable ways to address global corruption problems. The establishment of the Board is a testament to the commitment of UNODC to finding sustainable and forward-looking methods for tackling corruption, in which the engagement of young people is an intrinsic and inseparable part.

The YouthLED Integrity Advisory Board comprises 25 young people from 25 countries. We are from Argentina, Brazil, Burkina Faso, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, El Salvador, Georgia, India, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Mongolia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Portugal, South Africa, Sudan, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam.

We advise UNODC on strategies to engage young people in effective and meaningful anti-corruption efforts and we seek to increase youth involvement in the anti-corruption work of UNODC. This is how the idea of the present toolkit took shape. We, as the first cohort of the YouthLED Integrity Advisory Board, see the need to collect and collate simple and easy-to-use tips so that more young people can become interested in and gain knowledge about anti-corruption.

A 2022 survey conducted as part of the “Be Seen, Be Heard” campaign, launched by the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, revealed that “67 per cent of people believe in a better future, with 15- to 17-year-olds being the most optimistic about this. Despite facing significant barriers, young people continue to work tirelessly to raise their voices on the issues they care about – youth political apathy is a myth”. It is with this belief in mind that, after two years of participating in the YouthLED Advisory Board, we have decided to share what we have learned by engaging with other young people, to inspire and encourage them, because we also believe that a better future infused with integrity is possible.

As youth advocates for the anti-corruption work of the United Nations, it was often hard to get started. We realized that more insider knowledge needs to be shared so that more young people can do their part, feel empowered and feel hopeful about a future that upholds the values of integrity and knowing what is right and what is wrong. Barriers to youth engagement and participation need to be demolished and this toolkit is our effort to make anti-corruption work more accessible to our peers.

WHO IS THE TOOLKIT FOR?

This guide on how to develop an anti-corruption initiative has been developed by young people for young people. It is designed to inspire you to become an anti-corruption advocate by providing short and simple tips to help you get started. If you are a young person with little or no knowledge about corruption, anti-corruption, youth works and the work of the United Nations, and you are interested in becoming active in your community, region or internationally by building your own anti-corruption initiative, then this toolkit is for you.

Without further ado, let’s get down to it!

The Body Shop in collaboration with the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, “Be Seen Be Heard: Understanding young people’s political participation” (2023).
10 Steps to an Anti-Corruption Initiative

After a lot of discussion, we have identified 10 steps that we think are fundamental to ensuring that an anti-corruption initiative is impactful and safe.

You can use this guide in any order you want. While the steps are organized chronologically, we also know that we are all at different stages in our anti-corruption journey – so pick and choose the step that best fits your needs.

We suggest you take some time to read the entire document. But also feel free to jump around to the different sections as you see fit. Getting to the end is not mandatory to start taking action!

The 10 steps are a starting point and the knowledge included in this toolkit is far from exhaustive. However, it is a fairly comprehensive step-by-step guide to inspiring action without becoming overwhelmed.

01: Educate yourself

The first step to start becoming active in the anti-corruption movement is learning about corruption and how it affects us all. While it might feel overwhelming at first, we hope that the information in this section can support you in becoming familiar with the concept of corruption. It provides a series of tips on how to educate yourself, rather than an exhaustive list of available resources.

If you have a smartphone, a television or a radio or you have had a look at the news, you might have heard stories or interviews about something called “corruption”. These stories have shaken Governments, institutions, organizations and private companies all over the world for years. It would be convenient to think of corruption as something on our screens or in newspapers or at the highest levels of Government, and far away from us. Instead, it affects everyone directly. The negative impact that corruption has is felt harder by the poorest and most vulnerable – the powerless of our world.

Corruption has existed since the beginning of time and, unfortunately, no country is free from it.

Let’s go step by step...

What is corruption?

At present, there is no unified and collectively accepted definition of corruption. Therefore, interpretations vary.

However, there are usually three elements in a corrupt act:

(a) Authority: someone has the power;
(b) Abuse: this someone abuses the power; and
(c) Benefit: this someone obtains undue benefit as a result of the abuse of power.

The best resource, covering all types of corruption, is the United Nations Convention against Corruption (which is commonly referred to as UNCAC).

The Convention against Corruption does not provide an overarching definition of corruption. Rather, it defines and classifies various acts of corruption both in the public and private sectors as criminal offences. Notably, the Convention has a far-reaching approach and vast geographical coverage, which helps make it a unique, holistic and comprehensive tool for responding to corruption.

If you are interested in the specific forms of corruption covered by the Convention, take a look at the table on the next page.

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1 UNODC, Knowledge tools for academics and professionals: Module Series on Anti-Corruption: Module 1: What is Corruption and Why Should We Care? (Vienna).

2 UNODC, Knowledge tools for academics and professionals: Module Series on Anti-Corruption: Module 1: What is Corruption and Why Should We Care? (Vienna).
Bribery

A bribe is the solicitation or offering of an undue advantage to a public official to persuade them to stop acting in their formal capacity. Both participants to the bribing process are committing an illegal act. For example, paying small amounts of money to police officers to overlook traffic violations or offering gifts and money to politicians in order to obtain information, pass a specific law, secure government contracts or manipulate procurement processes. Remember, the person with the power can be the one soliciting a bribe!

Embezzlement

This form of corruption happens when a person entrusted with some form of property or funds decides to keep it for themselves or to pass it to others, damaging the intended beneficiaries and in violation of the original purpose. A typical example of embezzlement is when a high-ranking public official appropriates public funds for personal purposes.

Abuse of functions

This form of corruption could apply to situations such as patronage (the use of state resources to reward individuals for their financial support during election campaigns); nepotism (preferential treatment of friends and relatives); clientelism (awarding jobs and other advantages for electoral support); and extortion (the demand for sexual favours as a form of payment).

Trading in influence

Corruption is often facilitated by intermediaries. An intermediary is a person with power who uses their influence over public officials or authorities to obtain a benefit for others. Here, the corrupt act is to trade one’s influence in exchange for an undue advantage.

Illicit enrichment

There is the suspicion of illicit enrichment when a public official lives a luxurious life and owns assets and funds that they would not be able to afford on their civil servant’s salary. This can also be applied to those who work in the private sector.

Other related crimes

While corruption is often associated with economic crimes such as fraud and money-laundering, it is important to clarify that they are all different crimes. Not every form of fraud that lacks the corrupt element described above. For instance, tax evasion or the falsification of financial documents and data can occur without the help of public officials or a private sector employee. Hence, there is no need to bribe someone to commit these crimes.

Did you know...that the United Nations Convention against Corruption is the only global legally binding framework to prevent and counter corruption? Adopted in 2003, it is almost universally applied, with 190 States parties. And this number keeps increasing!

The guardian of the Convention against Corruption is UNODC, which provides a range of resources on the topic of corruption.

UNODC launched the Global Resource for Anti-Corruption Education and Youth Empowerment (GRACE) initiative to promote the role of education and youth empowerment in preventing and countering corruption and to provide educational tools to different target groups (educators, academics, young people and children). The goal of the GRACE initiative is to create a culture of rejection of corruption among children and young people by harnessing the power of education and youth empowerment. You can learn more about this topic in an accessible way by visiting the GRACE website. Of particular interest, and helpful to understanding corruption and its different dimensions, are the various modules developed by academics for academics to strengthen anti-corruption, integrity and ethics teaching at the university level, and the tools developed for young people. These include:

- UNODC, University Module Series on Anti-Corruption
- UNODC, University Module Series on Integrity and Ethics
- UNODC, Youth Anti-Corruption Tools and Events

There are also other internationally recognized laws and international organizations that can support your educational journey. Numerous international and multilateral organizations have established common frameworks to guide and enhance national anti-corruption efforts. These frameworks consist of laws, rules, regulations and resources that define corruption, govern anti-corruption procedures and promote integrity in the public and private sectors. They serve as reference frameworks to reform policies and facilitate cooperation between countries to combat transnational corruption through conventions, agreements and recommendations.

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The values behind an anti-corruption mindset are integrity and a clear understanding of what is right and what is wrong. Having integrity and behaving in an ethical way means not only acting according to the law and national policy frameworks but going beyond this by doing the right thing even when no one is watching. In fact, we can observe that some actions are legal but not ethical, while others are ethical but not legal. Having integrity also means understanding that corruption does not have to be the norm and that having integrity and
behaving ethically means reflecting on what morality means and sometimes going further than the law. We encourage you to have a look at the UNODC module on ethics, integrity and law and to start reflecting on how to act with integrity and in an ethical way in your daily life.

Now that you understand the core values needed for a culture of integrity and you have a better understanding of what corruption is, as well as what regional and international mechanisms are in place to prevent and counter it, you might want to look at the context in your country.

The first thing to do is to look up the state of affairs in your country when it comes to corruption, governance and any other topics that you might be interested in. It might be worth looking at the laws on corruption, integrity and ethics in your country, because these are the laws that protect you and regulate how your local authorities and national Government operate. To guide you on how to navigate the vast universe of laws and rules that contribute to the development of an anti-corruption framework, we have developed a set of questions below:

**How to find out what the anti-corruption framework looks like in your country**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Does your Government have an anti-corruption strategy?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does your Government have anti-corruption legislation?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does your Government have a freedom of information law?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Does your Government have a law that protects whistle-blowers or people who report corruption?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Where is integrity mentioned in the laws of your country?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is judicial integrity and the independence of the judicial system mentioned?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is there a code of conduct for civil servants?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is there a code of conduct or a code of ethics for teachers and professors?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Is the behaviour of private businesses in relation to corruption, integrity and ethics mentioned anywhere in a policy and the legal system in your country?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is the integrity of businesses regulated in your country?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A good starting point to better understanding the strength of the legal and policy system in your country is to have a look at the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Through this peer review process coordinated by UNODC, you can assess the level of implementation of the Convention nationally.

Now that you have some knowledge of the topic, we would like to recommend that you pick a focus. This will help you narrow the focus of your initiative, making it more impactful. In order to help you do this, you can learn below about how corruption affects many sectors and areas. Again, this isn’t an exhaustive list, but is designed to provide you with a starting point with regard to making connections. These topics have been selected by us, the members of the YouthLED Integrity Advisory Board, because we consider them of relevance to young people and the anti-corruption agenda.

**Corruption and human rights**

Access to health care, education and clean water, and participation in political life may be restricted by corruption, such as acts of bribery and embezzlement. Corruption is a barrier to the realization and enjoyment of all human rights. It can be difficult for nations to adequately build and implement human rights frameworks when corruption undermines institutions.

It also important to note the positive connection between anti-corruption efforts and the protection of human rights. Acting to prevent and counter corruption helps to create an environment where human rights are better protected, respected and promoted. Conversely, upholding human rights can help anti-corruption efforts.

In the political declaration entitled “Our common commitment to effectively addressing challenges and implementing measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation”, adopted by the General Assembly at its special session against corruption held in 2021, Member States expressed concern about the negative impact that all forms of corruption, including the solicitation of undue advantages, can have on access to basic services and the enjoyment of all human rights, and recognize that it can exacerbate poverty and inequality and may disproportionately affect the most disadvantaged individuals in society, and pledged to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation in a manner consistent with our obligations with regard to and respect for all human rights, justice, democracy and the rule of law at all levels.

**02: Pick a focus**

Now that you understand the core values needed for a culture of integrity and you have a better understanding of what corruption is, as well as what regional and international mechanisms are in place to prevent and counter it, you might want to look at the context in your country. The conclusions reached during the discussion included the following:

- Corruption violates the core human rights principles of transparency, accountability, non-discrimination and meaningful participation.
- Corruption hinders access to basic services and human rights for the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children, especially in rural or conflict-affected areas. As a result of inequalities and intersectional discrimination, corruption has a disproportionate impact on women, children, migrants, persons with disabilities and persons living in poverty as they are often more reliant on public goods and services, and as they have limited means to look for alternative private services.
- Corruption has a negative impact on access to justice, especially for the most vulnerable.
- Corruption restricts people’s opportunities to participate in the design and implementation of public policies and programmes and deprives people of the resources to seek accountability and reparations.

**“When there is corruption, human rights disappear”**

- Olajobi Makinwa, Chief, Africa, United Nations Global Compact

In its resolution 21/13, the Human Rights Council requested that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights organize a panel discussion on the issue of the negative impact of corruption on the enjoyment of human rights at its twenty-second session, held from 25 February to 22 March 2013.

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2 UNODC, “Knowledge tools for academics and professionals: Module Series on Anti-Corruption, Module 7: Corruption and Human Rights” (Vienna).
In July 2021, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 47/17, on the negative impact of corruption on the enjoyment of human rights. In the resolution, the Council decided to convene an intersessional panel discussion on the challenges and good practices in the prevention of corruption and the impact of corruption on the enjoyment of human rights in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The panel was held on 15 February 2022.

More broadly, anti-corruption efforts and the protection of human rights were recognized as mutually reinforcing in resolution 43/17, on the negative impact of corruption on the enjoyment of human rights, by the Human Rights Council, in which the Council invited the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNODC to exchange views in order to deepen understanding of the link between corruption and human rights.

In its resolution 52/21, on the negative impact of the non-repatriation of funds of illicit origin to the countries of origin on the enjoyment of human rights, the Human Rights Council invited the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption to consider ways of implementing the Convention that take human rights into full consideration.

While we will cover more human rights and their connection to corruption in this section, for more information on the link between the two, as well as an account of the impact of corruption on the enjoyment of human rights, the Human Rights Council invited the Platform for Action.

Defining Intersectional Discrimination

According to the Council of Europe, intersectional discrimination occurs when two or multiple grounds are in existence simultaneously and interact in an inseparable manner, producing distinct and specific forms of discrimination.

The concept of multiple discrimination recognizes that discrimination can occur on the basis of more than one perceived characteristic.

For example, a person who is discriminated on the grounds of their ethnicity may be also discriminated on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, age, and so on. Such discrimination can, and does, create cumulative disadvantage.

In 1995, at the World Conference for Women, attention was drawn to the fact that age, disability, social and economic status, ethnicity and race create particular barriers for women.

This led to the development of a framework for recognizing multiple and coexisting forms of discrimination, which became part of the Beijing Platform for Action.

In 2019, a regional governor in Norway was found guilty of abusing his position and exploiting the vulnerability of the three young male asylum seekers (the youngest was 17).

The three individuals said they believed their response to the governor’s demands for sex could result in them either being deported or securing permanent residency.

Corruption in the Education Sector

Education is a major driver for professional, personal and social development, a fundamental human right and a basic precondition for exercising many other rights and freedoms. Recognizing its importance, it is established in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that collective efforts must be made to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Sustainable Development Goal 4).

Corruption is, nevertheless, one of the main obstacles to the pursuit of this goal, by seriously threatening equal access to all levels of education and by compromising its quantity and quality. Therefore, being able to identify different corrupt practices in the education sector and being conscious of its harmful effects is crucial to raising awareness of the importance of corruption-free education.

In general, corruption has an extremely damaging effect on society, in education, corruption has a severe economic and social impact, which can be felt immediately and in the long term. For example, corrupt schools and universities serve as a breeding ground for corruption itself, by normalizing the acceptance of fraudulent practices at an early age of life and replacing meritocracy with the "ability to pay". Moreover, corruption in the education sector contributes to the erosion of trust and sabotages development by undermining the formation of educated, competent and ethical citizens and leaders. Also, as touched on in the section on human rights, the consequences of corruption are particularly severe for the poor and people in vulnerable positions, who, without the means to be educated, have little chance to escape a life of poverty and marginalization. Therefore, corrupt practices will contribute to the repetition of this behaviour and the deepening of inequalities, hindering social mobility and stopping society from evolving and flourishing.

Examples of Corruption in the Education Sector

- **Money lost to corruption will not be invested in the education sector**
- **Teacher recruitment and posting are influenced by nepotism, favouritism, conflict of interest, abuse of power and bribery, including sexual bribery**
- **The quality of teaching is reduced and children do not meet internationally recognized learning objectives**
- **Corruption in procurement, embezzlement of funds and diversion of funds deprives educational facilities of much-needed resources and supplies**
- **Undue churning out of degrees to gain institutional advantages**
- **Awards of underserved pass marks in exchange for favours (payment of bribes, sexual favours, etc.)**
- **Payment of bribes and fraudulent “fees” for educational services that are supposed to be free**

7 Intersectional discrimination recognized by the 1995 World Conference for Women.

8 UNODC, “Knowledge tools for academics and professionals: Module Series on Anti-Corruption – Module 9: Corruption in Education” (Vienna).


10 Steps to an Anti-Corruption Initiative


14 UNODC, “Module Series on Anti-Corruption – Module 7: Corruption and Human Rights”.

Corruption and gender

Corruption and gender inequality are in many ways closely connected. Traditionally, women were perceived as being less corrupt because there were fewer instances of women engaging in corrupt practices. However, this theory has been disproved as more research was done into the power dynamics connected to gender norms that underpin our society. Women are not less corrupt – historically they have simply had less power in patriarchal societies.12

However, gender equality and diversity can disrupt established, collusive networks, which are pre-dominantly male and, therefore, tend to benefit men more than women. Several studies have concluded that gender equality and the increased representation of women can improve transparency in organizations, and that there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between gender equality and anti-corruption efforts. Generally, women experience corruption and its effects differently because of unequal and gendered power relations. Typical manifestations include the limiting of women’s access to public resources, information and decision-making. Therefore, these circumstances reinforce social norms, cultural stereotypes and political disadvantages.

Furthermore, corruption has a disproportionate impact on women as a reflection of the biases in our societies. For example, testimonies of sex being used as a currency (sexual corruption) in corruption, where someone forces or asks a vulnerable individual (often a woman or a girl) to perform sexual acts in exchange for something of value. Corruption affects the LGBTQI+ community, its incidence and impact are buried even further, because of laws that make same-sex relationships illegal.

For an in-depth account of this topic, take a look at the UNODC module on corruption and gender14 and the UNODC publication entitled The Time is Now: Addressing the Gender Dimensions of Corruption.

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12 UNODC, “Knowledge tools for academics and professionals: Module Series on Anti-Corruption, Module B: Corruption and Gender” (Vienna).
14 UNODC, “Knowledge tools for academics and professionals: Module Series on Anti-Corruption, Module B: Corruption and Gender” (Vienna).
15 Corruption and Crime Commission of Australia, Report on the Investigation of Alleged Public Sector Misconduct by Dr Nadir Armeel All as a sessional academic employed by Curtin University of Technology (September 2010).
Corruption and climate change
As illustrated in the Sustainable Development Goals, the economy, the environment and society are intimately linked. Without a healthy environment, there cannot be a healthy society and without a healthy society, there cannot be a healthy economy. Hence, the protection of the environment is the foundation of a well-functioning society and economy. In October 2021, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 48/18, on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, in which the Council recognizes that sustainable development, in its three dimensions (social, economic and environmental), and the protection of the environment, including ecosystems, contribute to and promote human well-being and the enjoyment of human rights.

According to the United Nations, climate change is affecting the global ecosystem and reshaping the future of the entire planet. Severe weather events cited by Yale Climate Connections should serve as a dire warning to humanity. Given the urgency and scale of the climate crisis, more countries are turning to adaptation and limiting loss and damage to cope with its impact, including the increase in greenhouse gas emissions, rising sea levels and climate-induced displacement. In response, corruption is often overlooked as an increasingly prominent threat, which has the potential to stall, jeopardize and undermine the effective implementation of the climate crisis.

Corruption is an enabler of the climate crisis and forest loss. It hinders the actions of international commitments to mitigate climate change. For example, the lack of regulation makes carbon offset schemes, such as carbon credit markets, vulnerable to corruption. Corruption derails access to and the delivery of climate finance, it hampers political and legal structures, fuels biodiversity loss and it threatens the lives and livelihoods of environmental defenders and the most-affected people and areas. As such, tackling corruption in the context of climate change is key to upholding the transparency and effectiveness of climate action, as well as to protecting the environment and indigenous populations from vested interests and criminal activities. Corruption linked to climate change and the environment can result from lack of financial transparency and can take the form of embezzlement of funds destined for climate projects.

Corruption and misappropriation of climate funds in Malaysia
In 2022, the former prime minister of Malaysia was convicted for misappropriating millions from the national development fund, which included funds designated for climate change mitigation efforts. The former prime minister was found guilty on all counts, including abuse of power, money-laundering and criminal breach of trust, all of which relate to $10 million in funding that was deposited into the account of the former prime minister from a former unit of the development fund.

Moving forward, we need to focus on the link between climate change and anti-corruption and devise appropriate and sustainable strategies to address their intersections. Failing to address corruption in the response to climate change not only weakens the effectiveness of these actions but also erodes trust in Governments and threatens to exacerbate the inequalities we see in the impact of climate change on high- and low-income countries.

If you want to know more about corruption and climate change, we recommend reading the UNODC and World Bank Group paper: “Discussion draft for the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention: Addressing the links between corruption and the response to climate change”, which was presented at the tenth session of the Conference of the States Parties to United Nations Convention against Corruption, held in Atlanta, Georgia, United States of America.

Corruption and disability inclusion
Persons with disabilities are likely to feel less empowered than other groups to stand up to corruption and act against it in its varied forms. This is because persons with disabilities often have fewer choices, less information, fewer resources and fewer opportunities to voice their concerns, and they are often dependent on others.

Defining persons with disabilities and what these definitions mean
According to article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (which is commonly referred to as UNCRPD), by persons with disabilities, we mean “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”. Therefore, the term “persons with disabilities” is a clear indicator of the approach that should be used in relation to this group: people first and their disabilities after. However, having said that, this is not the only definition that is used. For example, there are networks of persons with disabilities who prefer the term “disabled person”, such as the European Network for Independent Living, which uses the term in order to stress that people are being disabled by their environment.

In terms of corruption that persons with disabilities are vulnerable to, research shows that persons with disabilities are exposes to abuse by those that provide care (for example, the embezzlement of funds intended to benefit persons with disabilities and exertion in the process of acquiring a disability certificate); and that they can be forced to bribe nursing staff to get their entitlements in closed institutions where they are under constant control and lack the ability to report such treatment.

Furthermore, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which oversees the implementation of the Convention, has observed that persons with intellectual disabilities, persons with psychosocial disabilities and children, people of senior age and women with disabilities are particularly exposed to systematic and structural discrimination. This discrimination can result in greater exposure to corruption. Indeed, groups that are more exposed to discrimination tend to suffer from an above-average risk of falling victim to corruption, whereby corrupt actors intentionally target them. Both corruption and discrimination create and perpetuate structural inequalities and are interconnected. Both create circumstances in which persons with disabilities are likely to feel victimized and cut off from services and resources necessary for their well-being.

These examples clearly prove that persons with disabilities can be severely and disproportionately affected by corruption and that as a result, even more resilience and drive is needed by persons with disabilities to fight against corruption.

However, it is important to remember that persons with disabilities can also be perpetrators of acts of corruption. This understanding is crucial to avoiding discrimination based on disability. According to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, this discrimination is “any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.”

As also discussed in the section on gender, persons with disabilities and their assistants are often perceived as “better people” by people who, because of their circumstances, have a higher moral standing. Therefore, it is often unimaginable for the public to believe that persons with disabilities, their family members and professionals working with and for them can commit acts based on greed and other factors that are conducive to corrupt behavior. Put more simply, just like everyone else, persons with disabilities have positive and negative characteristics and aspirations.

With this information on corruption and disability inclusion in mind, when you are in the process of developing your anti-corruption initiative, it is important that you pay attention to whether the organizations that you are reaching out to or with which you are partnering have a legitimate and genuine interest in improving disability inclusion, rather than, for instance, using the cause to promote personal economic benefits or using funds that were originally allocated to this cause for personal gain.

17 UNODC, Rooting Out Corruption: An Introduction to Addressing the Corruption Fueling Forest Loss (Vienna, 2023).
21 Matthew Jenkins and Ellie McDonald, “Corruption and the equal enjoyment of rights for persons with disabilities”, UN Helpdesk Answers 2022, 29 April 2022.
Corruption and artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence is revolutionizing our world at a rapid pace, affecting how we work, learn and interact with each other. One of the areas in which artificial intelligence can make a positive contribution is the fight against corruption. Over the years, we have seen how technology has contributed towards improvements in transparency, how it has helped promote accountability and how it has encouraged active civic participation in our societies. If developed ethically and in accordance with human rights standards and principles, artificial intelligence will undoubtedly become a key tool for the anti-corruption movement.

How can we use artificial intelligence in the fight against corruption?

There are several ways we can do this:

• **Data analysis.** Artificial intelligence algorithms can be used to process large amounts of data, such as financial transactions or procurement information, to detect irregularities such as fraud or embezzlement. Moreover, using advanced artificial intelligence techniques, such as anomaly detection and network analysis, can reveal intricate corruption schemes that might go undetected by traditional methods.

• **Predictive modeling.** Artificial intelligence can help to develop predictive models, based on historical data, that can be used to identify where corruption is likely to occur in certain sectors of society, and to determine its impact. This will aid policymakers and the public in developing preventative approaches, enabling proactive measures to be taken to mitigate corruption risks.

• **Whistle-blower support.** Artificial intelligence chatbots can be developed, trained and used to provide information to whistle-blowers on safe processes when exposing corruption or resources that they can access if they uncover or are subject to malpractice. Additionally, leveraging natural-language-processing capabilities, artificial intelligence-powered systems can analyse vast amounts of text data to identify potential corruption patterns within whistle-blower reports, thereby facilitating more effective responses.

• **Education and awareness.** Artificial intelligence can provide the public with important information on public processes and systems, thereby increasing knowledge about and reducing vulnerabilities to corruption. Artificial intelligence-driven educational platforms can offer personalized learning experiences for different demographics, helping individuals understand the complexities of corruption and empowering them to take informed action to combat it.

Advancements in artificial intelligence are continually reshaping our approach to combating corruption. For instance, emerging technologies such as blockchain and federated learning are being integrated with artificial intelligence systems to enhance the security and privacy of sensitive data used in anti-corruption activity. Blockchain technology can provide tamper-proof and transparent record-keeping, ensuring the integrity of the data used for analysis and decision-making. Federated learning enables collaborative model training across multiple decentralized sources of data, preserving the confidentiality of individual data while still deriving collective insights to identify corruption patterns. By embracing these cutting-edge technologies, we can foster even greater effectiveness and efficiency in our anti-corruption endeavours, staying ahead of evolving challenges and safeguarding the integrity of our societies.

These interventions, if implemented correctly, will hopefully contribute towards reduced levels of corruption in our society. However, it is important to remember that artificial intelligence is not a silver bullet in our fight against corruption – it must be used with other meaningful tactics and activities.

While we recognize that the use of artificial intelligence is advantageous in our efforts, we should insist that these technologies and algorithms are built in transparent and accountable ways and that they are aligned with ethical values and human rights.

Did you know that the insightful section you just read was crafted using artificial intelligence? Using artificial intelligence in this toolkit not only showcases its potential in addressing complex issues such as corruption, but also underscores the importance of harnessing technology for positive change. As you navigate through this toolkit, remember that artificial intelligence isn’t just about futuristic robots – it’s also about leveraging intelligent systems to build a brighter, more transparent future for all.

While these topics are covered in the toolkit, we would like to ensure that you know that this is not an exhaustive list. For instance, other interesting interlinkages can be found in exploring corruption in sports, corruption in the health sector, corruption in the private sector, etc. So, if the topic you are passionate about is not here, don’t panic; you can find more information through your research and apply the other steps to your initiative as appropriate.
03: Contextualize

Now that you have learned about corruption and have picked a focus, understanding some of the ways in which corruption intersects with other themes, you are ready to contextualize the issue.

Starting your journey towards fighting corruption may feel like a hard task, especially based on your capabilities and the time at your disposal. Nonetheless, we want to remind you that every small action has the power to generate significant change. It is important to be creative and integrate your local languages and culture into your anti-corruption initiative. The more relatable and closer to the heart your idea is, the more it will inspire other young people. Therefore, start by contextualizing the issue.

In order to understand the way corruption is present where you live or in the context you are the most interested in, you may be interested in examining how the corruption issue you have chosen affects your community, city, country or region. In this part of your journey, you may wish to carry out some research on corruption and your focus topic in your chosen context. If you decide to carry out desk-based research, you may wish to look at local, national and regional media. You can also carry out research by accessing local, national and regional databases: look at both government websites and civil society, academia and international organization resources.

Another way to find more information and develop your ideas is to ask people in your community. You can start by talking to the people you trust – this is because corruption is a sensitive issue and it is important to handle it carefully. If you decide to collect information from people through interviews, you should phrase the questions in a way that will provide you with the data you are looking for. Make sure to keep track of what you are learning in this process, because it will be necessary in the development of your anti-corruption initiative. You can do this by asking people to record your exchanges (make sure to always ask for consent), by taking notes or by writing your reflections after each meeting. More tips on how to formulate interview questions can be found in the last section of the toolkit, “Last tip… don’t forget to assess and communicate your impact”.

What is a political economy analysis? And how to use one

A political economy analysis is concerned with the interaction of and relationships between political and economic processes in a society: the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals and the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships over time.

Using a political economy analysis is a way to apply a “close-up lens” to a specific context or problem. While it might sound difficult, political economy analysis is less about the skills and more about asking the right questions.

Once you have developed a better understanding of corruption related to your focus area in your chosen context, you are ready to start planning your initiative.

1. **The problem:** Spend some time using what you have learned to frame the issue that you have chosen to address.

   Example:
   Young people in my community do not understand their role in the fight against corruption. They often feel disempowered and there is a general sense of disillusionment towards change. Some people protect corrupt individuals out of fear of retaliation or in the hope that keeping their mouth shut will yield advantages. The result is that a lot of corruption that could be prevented continues to happen. This is especially true in the spaces where young people spend their time, such as schools and universities.

2. **The solution:** What is the solution to the problem? Alone or in a group, dedicate some time jotting down your idea and how it can solve the problem that you have identified.

   Example:
   My idea is community monitoring in secondary schools and universities in my community. Have you ever wondered how much money your school or university receives and what it spends it on? Is it public or private funding? Are there other resources that are made available to students, such as books and computers? How are they procured and managed? Can you identify waste? Is there a way that the money could be spent more efficiently? Is it important for the students to be involved in monitoring and deciding how the money is spent?

   Example:
   The target audience is students in three secondary schools in my community. The age of the students should be between 15 and 18 years.

3. **Create a mind map about your plan:** Using visualization tools can help you understand the practicality of your idea. How will it work in practice? In order to do this, you can answer a series of questions that will help you reflect on what is possible and what is needed. These are just a few questions that can help you design the details of your initiative, but there are many tools available online to further support you. One idea is to use the concept poster below, which is based on design thinking methodology.

   - How can we put this idea into practice?
   - What kind of resources (time, manpower, etc.) do you have?
   - What resources are already available?
   - Who do we need to involve?
   - Who can help us?
   - What more do we need to know?
   - What further research needs to be done?
   - How much time do we need?

   Example:
   Train young people in the three secondary schools that you have chosen on freedom of information and community monitoring to help them monitor school resources. Using the results of the community monitoring exercise, support them in developing a communication and advocacy campaign to increase transparency and accountability of school teachers and the school management and to involve more students in decision-making.

   - Identify 20 to 25 students per school
   - Develop a training methodology
   - Carry out the training
   - Support the monitoring by means of regular check-ins (perhaps through a WhatsApp group)
   - Lead three or more workshops to design the communication and advocacy campaign based on the results of the monitoring

   This activity needs the expertise and assistance of a trainer and a project coordinator. It needs access to the schools and commitment from the school teachers. It needs the students to be motivated.

4. **Identify challenges and risks:** It is important to start thinking honestly about what could go wrong from the outset of an initiative. This means your anti-corruption initiative can be developed to mitigate challenges that may arise.

   Example:
   The teachers and the school management may not like the call for transparency and this may result in retaliation. The students should be aware of their rights, which should be a strong component of the training. In addition, with the help of the trainer and the project coordinator, the students could seek support from the local police, local religious leaders, the media, non-governmental organizations or municipal leaders to help them negotiate and motivate the school.
Innovating for People
Activity Template

What is the concept called?
Who is it for?
What problem does it solve?
What is the big idea?
Illustrate how it works
Why might it fail?
What should we prototype and test?
How might we measure success?
How will we make this happen?

Creative tools | Purposes | Examples | Target
--- | --- | --- | ---
Virtual reality and augmented reality | Fundraising Outreach Communication | Kiosks Metaverse Augmented reality filters Virtual reality innovation Workshops on opportunities for people with visual impairments | 
Media | Raising awareness Promoting causes | Podcasts Online streaming Op-ed articles Social media vlogs Braille posts and accessible content | Young people of all age ranges
Art | Interpret, express and resolve conflicts Interpret, express and address pressing issues | Tangible art pieces (i.e. sculptures) Comic books Music Films Murals Flashmobs Photobooks | 
Trends | Mainstreaming anti-corruption slogans, encouraging public participation | Fashion designs Viral Internet content Audio code-poem competitions | General public
Sport | Generate physical and mental energy to drive action, creativity and innovation | Fundraising tournaments Marathons Paralympic Games | 

05: Be creative and innovative

Know that every effort to tackle corruption counts. Just like any other major aspect of society, corruption evolves over time. And it can do so quickly and significantly. For this reason, anti-corruption measures must be flexible and innovative, and they must take into consideration social change. Use arts, sports, music, blogs, storytelling and any other creative strengths to invest your anti-corruption campaign with the potential that you have at your disposal.

Today, people don’t pay much attention to static and conventional content. With non-interactive and non-immersive tools and approaches, it’s almost impossible to truly engage people and evoke the emotions you want. We need to be innovative to connect, educate and motivate our audiences and to help them understand our mission and make it theirs. There are various ways of using modern tools to achieve this goal, including:

- Virtual reality and augmented reality:
  - Kiosks
  - Metaverse
  - Augmented reality filters
  - Virtual reality innovation
  - Workshops on opportunities for people with visual impairments

- Media:
  - Podcasts
  - Online streaming
  - Op-ed articles
  - Social media vlogs
  - Braille posts and accessible content

- Art:
  - Tangible art pieces (i.e. sculptures)
  - Comic books
  - Music
  - Films
  - Murals
  - Flashmobs
  - Photobooks

- Trends:
  - Fashion designs
  - Viral Internet content
  - Audio code-poem competitions

- Sport:
  - Fundraising tournaments
  - Marathons
  - Paralympic Games

Know that every effort to tackle corruption counts.
Creativity and innovation in an offline setting
As soon as you and any team member you may have recruited decide to move to an offline setting that involves an artistic approach, the ways you can deliver your message are limitless. Today, graffiti, street art, three-dimensional wall art and music are major platforms that allow young people to share their voices, especially after political activists and artists such as Banksy and Shepard Fairey have found international fame. Not everyone may be able to take this kind of action, but you can always use alternative mural art forms (on walls, sidewalks, etc.) in your school, organization or activist group area. Always make sure to respect national laws and to have the necessary permits.

Brainstorming activity: Why take an artistic approach to combating corruption?
Visual communication can often be a great tool for delivering ideas, conveying thoughts and sharing messages (remember: “A picture is worth a thousand words”). In a community, people are from different backgrounds, have different religions, have different gender identities, are from different races and have different levels of education: this makes art more accessible and a powerful tool to promote and share ideas.

Common forms of artistic activities include:
- Art exhibitions, flashmobs, music contests and sports competitions
- Short film festivals, open mic events and movie nights
Also, ask yourself how you can implement your initiative with creativity in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Creativity and innovation in an online format – using social media
Considering that almost two thirds (62.3 per cent in 2024) of the world’s population uses social media, it is a great outlet to raise awareness of corruption among young people. Since the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the use of social networking platforms has increased and this scale presents many opportunities for communication. This makes a great case for using it in your anti-corruption initiative.

Brainstorming activity: Keeping up with current online platforms
Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok are currently the most used social media platforms. What does this mean in terms of developing your anti-corruption initiative?

Tip: When strategizing and sharing your voice, you can use these platforms to target different demographics. For example, you can research podcasts and similar online content on corruption on a range of platforms, including Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Soundcloud, Spotify, Discord and YouTube.

Tip: Let’s say that you would like to address the topic of “gender dimensions of corruption” on social media. You can make and upload a series of posters, cartoons, comic books, educational videos, vlogs, short music, films and op-ed articles to your Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok accounts in order to raise awareness of the impact of corruption on gender equality. For example, you can explain important terms used in relation to this topic (networking, patronage, clientelist behaviour, etc.) through a combination of social media trends to help deliver your message to young audiences.

Always make sure to check your facts: avoid spreading fake news!
Online safety is as important as safety in real life. In fact, the two worlds are very much connected – something that you do in the online world can have consequences in your offline life. Therefore, considering your choices of words and weighing up the risks of an online interaction are key to avoiding putting yourself in danger. For more ideas on how to keep safe, take a look at step eight on being safe, where we dive deeper into this important topic when talking about sensitive topics such as corruption.
Creativity and innovation in a hybrid format

Adding an innovative twist, you can use augmented reality to make your artwork come alive and interact and engage with people. Ways of using augmented reality include:

- Immersive storytelling. To make the community better understand and emotionally connect to social issues, including corruption, you can imbued videos on posters, two-dimensional murals and graffiti.
- Interactive gamified campaigns. To engage with and motivate social media users, you can use gamification in a fun and convenient way.
- Augmented reality kiosks. You can set up augmented reality kiosks for launching initiatives and driving engagement, using interactive quizzes and games in shopping centres, at events and at transport hubs (airports and train, bus and metro stations).
- Social newspapers and billboards. You can convert static printed communication material into interactive and engaging content to better communicate and connect with your audience.
- Metaverse. In the metaverse, you can create an ideal world and you can build a community that gets stronger and stronger thanks to direct inspiration and immersive peer-to-peer teaching and e-learning practices.
- Augmented reality filters. Various face filter applications have imbedded quizzes, games, etc. that can be used on social platforms to educate, inspire and motivate people.

Tip: You can combine artistic works with technology, creating a storytelling e-book with choose-your-own-adventure options. This means users can choose the plot of the story while engaging with illustrations that you designed.

Tip: How about designing a mini game on corruption? This kind of innovation will increase engagement. Of course, your financial resources may limit what you can do, but there are lots of options in this section that do not cost much.

To conclude, it is important to remember that creativity and innovation do not only mean using art and technology. There are many ways to be innovative and creative when it comes to resolving a problem. Further examples are shared in step nine on educating others.
Finding partners and teammates to design and implement your initiative

Many young people around the world are fed up with corruption and many young people are trying to do something about it. Finding partners in your community, region and country (and internationally) may help amplify your cause, foster creativity and diversity, and bring in extra resources. The easiest step is to reach out to friends and family, but reaching out to other youth groups in your community or region is a good step too. Make sure to share your ideas with them in your message and ask them to meet up to talk about it more. They could have important and useful skills and perspectives to enrich your ideas.

Learn from others

Do not reinvent the wheel. Find out if there are other young people or youth groups that are doing or have done something similar. You can reach out to them to learn from their experiences and avoid duplication and making the same mistakes.

Build partnerships to expand resources

Joining forces can also mean joining resources. In order to be effective and sustainable, an initiative may need seed funding. Looking for partnerships may be a good way of tapping into existing resources or even of developing the trust and ambition needed to do joint fundraising. Fundraising could also be done by seeking individual donations from community members, friends and family who believe in your cause and want to contribute. Nonetheless, a lot can be done without financial resources. Therefore, assess your start-up needs first and only fundraise if strictly necessary.

And after that, you can go global!

Corruption is a pervasive problem that affects the social, economic and political fabric of societies worldwide, with particularly significant consequences for countries in the Global South. In an increasingly interconnected world, those engaging in transnational crime and corruption exploit legal frameworks and trade infrastructures, making it a pressing global challenge that requires collective action.

International cooperation is crucial to meeting this challenge, as it facilitates the sharing of knowledge, best practices and resources between countries and organizations. For young anti-corruption advocates, leveraging global cooperation networks is essential to amplifying their anti-corruption efforts and to having a meaningful impact. You can take policy requests linked to your initiative abroad by sharing what you have learned.

You can do this by:

- Promoting the adoption of global anti-corruption standards and best practices, which can help strengthen national legal frameworks and promote integrity
- Providing access to resources, expertise and support that can enhance the effectiveness of youth-led initiatives
- Facilitating cooperation and partnerships between youth and like-minded organizations across borders, promoting a global community united against corruption

Civil society organizations have a key role to play in promoting international cooperation and raising awareness among local actors of their importance in the fight against corruption. By engaging with global networks and aligning their initiatives with international standards, young people can contribute to building more transparent and just societies.

07: Be inclusive

When designing your anti-corruption initiative, remember to be inclusive and apply gender and human-rights-based approaches. The approach must be intersectional: It must reconcile a vast range of aspects and identities and include all groups equally and meaningfully.

Having a human-rights-based approach to corruption means designing your initiative in a way that it is focused on prioritizing human rights holders (meaning individuals), while demanding that duty bearers (i.e. Governments) respect, protect and fulfill their inherent obligations.

We know that addressing corruption with a gender-sensitive and a human-rights-based approach is complex. You can start by having a look at the UNODC briefing note “Mainstreaming Gender in Corruption Projects Programmes” or the UNODC publication The Time is Now: Addressing the Gender Dimensions of Corruption.

Generally, the aim of these approaches is to guarantee the fair distribution of opportunities, equal access to public services and goods, and respect for human dignity and freedom without any form of discrimination.

In practical terms, you can have an active role in the fight against corruption and the promotion of human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion by:

- Raising awareness of the complex nature of the relationship between corruption and human rights, gender and disability with your peers and colleagues
- Advocating for the human rights of victims of corruption, especially minorities and vulnerable groups, and for the need to provide effective remedy to victims
- Promoting transparency, accountability and participation to prevent everyday acts of corruption, especially when connected with the protection and promotion of human rights
- Strengthening anti-corruption legal frameworks from a bottom-up perspective
- Breaking the chain of corruption and exposing the detrimental effect corruption has on all human life, including on the respect for and the safeguarding of human rights

While inclusivity is a much broader concept than just recognizing the importance of disability, gender and rights (for example, taking into consideration the unique perspectives and needs of indigenous populations), here we are focused on disability inclusion, with the hope that it will be a good starting point to stimulate your creative thinking on the incorporation of diversity in your anti-corruption initiative.

When it comes to disability inclusion, enhancing the agency of persons with disabilities and ensuring their meaningful inclusion in decision-making processes is the way to go. If we believe that persons with disabilities are people just like everyone else, then we need to accept that they know their own needs better than others. As such, for example, persons with disabilities have to be the ones who voice their needs and concerns, they have to be the ones who are consulted when treatment is to be discussed, services are to be provided and funds are to be disbursed, and they must be the ones who employ and manage their assistants.

The main slogan of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is “nothing about us without us” and corruption affects persons with disabilities just as, if not more, than everyone else. As such, we should actively promote inclusive and accessible learning environments for persons with disabilities who may be interested in learning about corruption and obtaining skills and developing mindsets that are aimed at rejecting it in all its forms. If we believe that persons with disabilities have real-life experience in being victims of corruption, then we must empower them and enable them to use this experience to combat corruption.

An effective way of dealing with this delicate topic in an efficient and inclusive way is to engage persons with disabilities at the inception of your anti-corruption initiative. You should consider collaborating with persons with disabilities in order to access a source of expert advice and substantive expertise, so that they can provide contemporaneous inputs, active participation and advocacy, and so that they can play a part in the implementation of your initiative. Moreover, involving young persons with disabilities during the first stages of the design of an educational activity has the added value of allowing you to learn about the priorities of the disability community in your city, country and region when it comes to combating corruption.

Another idea is for persons with disabilities who are participants in your initiative to be taught by able-bodied trainers and vice versa, with the aim of building mutual learning experiences that benefit all participants. This should be considered when addressing all topics, including anti-corruption education and civic engagement.
Disability inclusion is essential to upholding human rights, to sustainable development and to peace and security. We must uphold and safeguard the promise of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group for inclusive. The following are easy-to-follow tips:

- When announcing your call for participants, you should clearly invite applications from persons with disabilities and clarify any special assistance and support that you can provide, and provide a space for applicants to request any special needs. Many persons with disabilities could be discouraged from applying if they assume they would be discriminated against or that their needs would not be catered for.

- After launching your call for participants, you should consider reaching out to networks or communities of persons with disabilities to inform them of your project and to ask them to share your call and spread the word to relevant networks and potential participants from their communities.

- If you find out that persons with disabilities will attend, connect with them and ask them about their specific needs without assuming they necessarily need any special assistance. Find out in advance if they need sign language interpretation, a palantypist, materials in Braille, personal assistance, physically accessible space (for instance, an elevator, a ramp or a bathroom) or any other assistance that may require prior preparation and financial expense. You can try to request emergency funding to cover the costs related to reasonable needs. If you don’t have the funds, discuss low or no-cost alternative measures with the participants.

- Prepare to make the learning activities inclusive: you are encouraged to start with getting-to-know/ice-breakers activities, then maybe consider movie screenings, thematic discus-

08: Be safe

Generally, where corruption thrives, human rights are weak. Where corruption levels are low, we find higher levels of respect, protection and enjoyment of human rights across all generations. For instance, it is stated in the Amnesty International Report 2022/23 that there were at least 50 cases in which human rights were violated in relation to anti-corruption activism in its reporting period, while in the Global Analytics 2022 report from Front Line Defenders, the killing of 401 human rights defenders from 26 countries is recorded, with reference to at least 15 cases of the criminalization of individuals acting against corruption. Unfortunately, many anti-corruption activists are tracked by groups involved in corruption and other crimes and there is always a risk of being targeted, in terms of arrest, defamation, detention, harassment, repression, torture and even murder.

As such, it is always essential to be aware of your environment and what it means in terms of anti-corruption involvement, and to act in a manner that guarantees your physical, mental, personal and professional safety and that of your loved ones.

In this regard, the most important advice is to be aware of the laws that protect you. Countries that have ratified the United Nations Convention Against Corruption should be doing their best to implement articles 33 and 34 on the protection of victims of corruption and on the protection of those who report corruption (e.g. whistle-blowers). Check your national laws and the legal advice and protection that is provided by anti-corruption authorities and civil society organizations in your country (for example, Transparency International Advocacy and Legal Advice Centres, which usually have reporting channels and pro-bono lawyer networks available, and the Platform to Protect Whistleblowers in Africa, which offers an encrypted email service for whistle-blowers and guidance and support on how to behave safely).

Furthermore, it is important to tell your family about your interest in anti-corruption. Establish a network of professionals, including journalists and lawyers, whose work focuses on the protection of civil liberties. Avoid acting alone or implementing initiatives that identify you as an individual threat – rather operate as a group of actors against corruption. Collective action means the costs for corrupt actors to punish and deter anti-corruption policies are higher.

09: Educate others

You have done your research and have come up with a strategy. You are ready to educate others about your idea.

If your initiative is a communication or awareness-raising campaign, then you can start communicating about corruption and its negative impact is not the main goal of your anti-corruption initiative, educating others should still be an important part of your initiative. It is important to promote solidarity and build support for your approach and related activity. Present your strategy to stakeholders, peers, colleagues, friends and family members to raise awareness of your initiative and to encourage participation.

Remember to communicate clearly and convincingly. To build support, you need to convince audiences of the goals of your initiative and why it is important in the fight against corruption. Use interesting visuals, compelling case studies and facts and evidence to encourage stakeholders to support your initiative. Take a look at step five to get ideas and tips on how to encourage creativity and innovation in your anti-corruption initiative.

Remember to give regular updates and feedback to those who are funding your initiative and participating and collaborating in your work. It is important to keep stakeholders in the loop as you proceed with your initiative. Provide updates on the initiative and regularly communicate your achievements.
10: Act!

Now it is time to act and implement your anti-corruption initiative.

This chapter includes a series of examples of successful initiatives – ones that sparked our imagination and that should be easy for you to replicate. We hope the information provides you with the motivation, knowledge and inspiration for your anti-corruption initiative. Again, this is not an exhaustive list. There are many more examples available that are not included here.

Educational institutions worldwide are developing tools to uncover, denounce and combat corruption, and to promote integrity, transparency and accountability as foundational social values. An example is the Red Escolas Anti-Corruption programme in Portugal, which could serve as an inspiration for creating your own network at your school or university or in your community. The programme is being developed by All4Integrity. The third edition of the programme is now running (2023 to 2024) and involves 59 schools (50 from Portugal and six from Angola, Brazil, China, France and Mozambique).

The main aim is to promote a sense of public space and common good among young people, as well as trust and empathy for local and central institutions, in the process of raising awareness and changing behaviours that favour the sharing and deepening of a culture of integrity in the country. Any school can apply to the programme, helping young people to become actors and drivers of change. By engaging in these efforts, schools can be awarded with a “Digital Seal” and an “Anti-Corruption Ambassador” certificate.

Road map to strengthening the role of non-governmental actors in the fight against corruption

YouthLED Integrity Advisory Board members, together with other young people, took part in a one-year consultation process with non-State actors in Asia, Europe and South America on how to strengthen the role of non-State actors in the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

The outcome of the process was a youth statement (the first of its kind) and a recommendation, made by the Government of the United States of America, for a road map to strengthening the role of non-governmental actors (young people, academia and civil society) in the fight against corruption (also the first of its kind) at the tenth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, held in Atlanta, United States, in December 2023. 26

“I am a Woman against Corruption” initiative in Indonesia

In 2014, the Corruption Eradication Commission in Indonesia and the Government of Australia launched the “Saya Perempuan Antikorupsi” (“I am a Woman against Corruption”) initiative in Indonesia.

In 2012, the Corruption Eradication Commission conducted a survey that revealed that only four per cent of parents teach honesty to their children. It also showed that mothers are the primary source of moral education for children. Based on the results of the survey, the initiative was formed and given the objective of training 20 women (mothers, teachers and women activists) to promote anti-corruption education. The scope of the project was subsequently expanded to include women in law enforcement and other modern and traditional professions, who were tasked with identifying the reform needed to better address the corruption problems in their work institutions. To date, the initiative has around 1,600 participants and covers 34 provinces in Indonesia.

The success of the initiative, and its innovative methods for countering corruption, has been recognized by law enforcement agencies in Indonesia. These methods include the use of gamification to promote anti-corruption values, capacity-building sessions and awareness-raising activities. As a result, the initiative has become a globally recognized independent organization that is empowering women to act against corruption.

Policy guide for national anti-corruption authorities on meaningful youth engagement in anti-corruption work

The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), UNODC and the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities have collaborated to develop a policy guide to help anti-corruption authorities to meaningfully engage young people as an anti-corruption force.29

Members of the YouthLED Integrity Advisory Board and ICAC Ambassadors programme were involved throughout the development of the guide, helping to shape its content and structure and providing feedback and ideas. This is an example of meaningful youth engagement in anti-corruption.

Making freedom of information laws accessible to persons with disabilities in Pakistan

In 2018, the non-governmental organization Transparency International Pakistan conducted an awareness-raising campaign for persons with disabilities as part of an effort to improve access to information, services and resources for this group. Subsequently, over 60 persons with disabilities in the Toba Tek Singh district have used freedom of information requests to secure disability certificates.

Helping persons with disabilities fight corruption in Nigeria

The Centre for Citizens with Disabilities in Nigeria carried out an awareness-raising project in collaboration with ActionAid, UK Aid and the Centre for Communication and Social Impact in the states of Kaduna, Kano and Lagos.30

The purpose of the project was to educate persons with disabilities about how they are disproportionately affected by corruption, in particular in relation to their rights to health care, education and other services.

Another objective of the project was to track relevant government programmes in order to generate data that can be used to help inform persons with disabilities about programmes and benefits that they may qualify for and be entitled to. The Centre also provided training on how to lodge complaints about corruption in the public sector to persons with disabilities.

Tools for persons with disabilities who are victims of crime

In the European Union, the non-governmental human rights organization Validity is developing practical tools for people with disabilities who are victims of crime in order to help ensure that they can participate actively in criminal justice processes. 31

Civic monitoring in Italy

Since 2018, Gruppo Abele and Libera have been supporting the action of young people in Italy who want to monitor what is happening in their communities and bring about change.

For example, in 2018, a group of young people interviewed local people in Erbè, Italy, raising awareness of the presence of organized criminal groups in the area. After the interviews, the young people visited (by bike!) properties confiscated from organized criminal groups, which are now publicly owned, and demanded to use them for community needs.32

Gruppo Abele and Libera are partners of the European project “You Monitor”. Check out the You Monitor Toolkit – it provides a step-by-step guide to monitoring and is available in a range of languages.
MoMoEU: More Monitoring action in the EU

The “MoMoEU: More Monitoring action in the EU” project was founded by eight European civil society organizations, which have created an educational website on the topic of civic monitoring based on the premise of offering simple explanations, activity proposals and interactive digital resources (including two escape games). The digital resources are designed for 15 to 25-year-olds and have been translated into seven languages. Check out the resources on the website.

Integrity clubs

With integrity clubs, young people can monitor issues in their schools, such as problems with water and sanitation, teacher and student attendance and behaviour, the accessibility of the school facilities and the lack of basic supplies (desks, blackboards, etc.). Some clubs have expanded the scope of their activities by looking at services and infrastructure projects in their community, taking the impact of monitoring outside the classroom walls. Check out also the Integrity Action guide to integrity clubs in schools. It can help you find the inspiration for establishing a successful integrity club in your school. For example: motivate other young people to get involved in monitoring.

Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras

The Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras was established by the Organization of American States and the Government of Honduras and is an example of the positive impact that international cooperation and the adoption of anti-corruption legal frameworks can have on the fight against corruption.

The Mission is playing a crucial role in empowering young people to fight corruption by providing a platform for collaboration, technical assistance and capacity-building. An example is the OAS Fellowship on Open Government in the Americas – a leadership programme on transparency and citizen participation that ran between 2015 and 2017. The Fellowship sought to create a network of 25 young leaders who would act as agents of change, bringing together the next generation of young leaders of public sector affairs, civil society and the private sector in Honduras. The programme was aimed at offering them a space for reflection, debate and exchanging knowledge and experiences on issues of open government. The network linked participants from these sectors to generate innovative proposals that addressed the challenges in Honduras relating to corruption prevention, transparency, accountability and citizen participation.

In conclusion, the creation of the Mission highlights the value of international legal frameworks in combating corruption and impunity, while also demonstrating the essential role of young anti-corruption champions in these efforts. The successful collaboration between the Organization of American States, the Government of Honduras and young advocates, guided by these frameworks, has contributed to more effective anti-corruption efforts and provided valuable support and protection for the next generation of changemakers committed to building more transparent and just societies.

YOUNGO: a youth non-governmental organization for climate change

YOUNGO is the official children and youth constituency of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. YOUNGO is a vibrant, global network of children and youth activists (up to 35 years) as well as youth non-governmental organizations, which contributes to shaping intergovernmental climate change policies and strives to empower young people to formally bring their voices to the processes of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

YOUNGO is focused on the following areas:
- Awareness, knowledge and capacity-building
- Collaboration, cooperation and networking
- Policy, lobby and advocacy
- Youth action

Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP

The Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP is the official youth engagement mechanism of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), including in relation to negotiations involving the United Nations Environment Assembly and other processes and activities related to UNEP.

The group brings together young people from different regions, ethnicities and economic backgrounds and inspires them to act locally, nationally and internationally on environmental conservation and environmental governance based on the interests of young people.

United International Federation of Youth for Water and Climate

The United International Federation of Youth for Water and Climate is the official youth constituency of the Water and Climate Coalition, which is hosted by the World Meteorological Organization. The role of the Federation is to ensure the active participation of young people in high-level water and climate policy negotiations. Its activities include empowering young people through water and climate education, capacity development, active engagement, global mobility, governance and resource mobilization. Access to water is another area that is vulnerable to corruption.

In conclusion, the creation of the Mission highlights the value of international legal frameworks in combating corruption and impunity, while also demonstrating the essential role of young anti-corruption champions in these efforts. The successful collaboration between the Organization of American States, the Government of Honduras and young advocates, guided by these frameworks, has contributed to more effective anti-corruption efforts and provided valuable support and protection for the next generation of changemakers committed to building more transparent and just societies.

Do you have a special knack for technology? If you do, consider digital innovation as your gateway to a meaningful social enterprise to preventing corruption and sparking positive change. The UNODC Coding4Integrity youth anti-corruption hackathon project could inspire you.

Coding4Integrity is aimed at educating young software developers and tech enthusiasts about corruption, the United Nations Convention against Corruption and how technology can provide new ways to increase the participation of young people in efforts to counter and prevent corruption. Participants also get the chance to develop their own technological solutions to real-life corruption problems.

During the hackathons, young coders learn about key topics directly from UNODC representatives and experts from national anti-corruption authorities. They also get the opportunity to build technical agency thanks to a network of partnerships with information and communication technology companies and entities.

Keep up to date with the GRACE initiative for information on future Coding4Integrity hackathons. Want to do more? Why not create a similar event in your community? Challenge yourself to take on a more active role. Perhaps it would be helpful to spend some time learning how the legal entities needed to organize these activities were founded. Look for laws, lawyers, law students and non-governmental organizations that will provide information on a pro-bono basis to non-law students on the legal steps needed to create these entities.

Furthermore, you could volunteer at a social enterprise focused on technology and innovation. Perhaps you could do an internship at a start-up hub to learn about different projects and see how to customize your own anti-corruption idea. What if you contribute to a customer protection agency (public or private)? Find out how you can develop a set of skills attractive to the tech industry, such as knowledge of user experience, programming and website design.

Finally, remember that regardless of how you start your initiative, isolating yourself from society puts you at a disadvantage. To be an innovator, you need ideas and resources. Yes, an individual can have an idea, invest in it, launch it, promote it, measure its results and evolve it. However, this isn't the norm. Usually, developing an idea in this way involves a group of stakeholders, each with different roles. The potential for collective action and strong partnerships to increase social value for the good of all parts of society is significant and you should make use of this.
Fair Play: Music with a Message
Fair Play is a global music contest organized by Transparency International, the International Anti-Corruption Conference and JM International. It is aimed at sharing the voices of those affected by corruption and providing a global platform for young artists to express themselves through music and arts. Fair Play has reached over 10 million people (about half the population of the state of New York) from over 90 countries through 400 music videos since 2010.

Arcadia Earth
Arcadia Earth is an immersive environmental art exhibit in New York City that uses augmented reality to spread awareness about the impact of climate change. As visitors wander through the rooms filled with immersive installations, such as one made of 44,000 plastic bags (the amount used in New York state every minute before the plastic bag ban), the augmented reality headsets that they are wearing bring the installations to life, teaching them environmental facts.

Anti-Corruption Film Festival
The Anti-Corruption Film Festival was established by the Corruption Eradication Commission in Indonesia, the United States Agency for International Development and Management Systems International in 2013. The event consists of filmmakers, students and communities who strive to encourage public participation in eradicating corruption through creative industries and film media.

Speak Up
The Joint Commission “Speak Up” programme is aimed at helping health-care organizations, public health agencies, ministries of health and others improve the quality and safety of patient care. The goal is to help patients and their advocates actively participate in eradicating corruption through creative industries and film media.

Youth for Peace International
Youth for Peace International is a youth-led peace-building organization that envisions a peaceful world of empowered individuals and sustainable societies. Based in Delhi, India, the organization’s work is focused in three areas: capacity-building, ground action and advocacy. The link between corruption and the Youth Peace and Security Agenda is explored in step 2 on picking a focus.

Youth engagement in the National Security Strategy of Ghana
The National Security Strategy of Ghana contains a policy initiative to involve young people in the National Peace Council, the National House of Chiefs, civil society organizations and religious organizations for the purpose of enhancing national unity and cohesion, maximizing youth potential for socioeconomic development and strengthening peace and security in Ghana.

Youth Against Corruption in Lebanon
Youth Against Corruption is a youth-led initiative in Lebanon aimed at contributing to controlling and preventing corruption in more innovative and efficient ways through social innovation, collective intelligence and entrepreneurship.

Lebanon has lost a lot because of young people who underestimate the impact they can have on the future of their nation. This is why the principal aim of Youth Against Corruption is to inform young people about corruption and to inspire them to have their own opinions on national challenges, so that they can make informed sociopolitical choices and take action towards more sustainable development. The vision of the initiative is to create a global movement of young people who dare to break the corruption chain locally and globally.

Personal experience of YouthLED Board member Isalah
“Growing up I always heard about the work of the United Nations to maintain peace and prevent conflict through the protection of human rights laid out in the Charter of the United Nations. When I started university, I decided to get more involved with the United Nations to support the prevention of needless human suffering by volunteering my time and gaining deeper insight into the various agencies and programmes in the United Nations system. This was made easy due to the active social media presence of the United Nations, often cross-posting opportunities and events among the United Nations system entities.

Through this online engagement, I came across youth conferences such as the Youth Forum on countering corruption organized as a special event of the special session of the General Assembly against corruption in 2021. At this event, 850 young people from 122 countries gathered online to discuss the effect of corruption on young people and how the international community can better empower youth to actively engage in and help lead the design of future anti-corruption efforts.

Since then, I have become more involved in advocacy in policy processes related to climate change with YOUNGO and championed food system transformation at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2022, where the first-ever Children and Youth Pavilion was hosted, as well as advocating for youth inclusion in the inaugural Forecasting Healthy Futures Global Summit in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.”

LAST TIP:
Assess and communicate your impact
When developing a campaign or designing an initiative that is aimed at achieving change, it is important to always take stock and reflect on your achievements, the challenges you have faced and your ability to meet your objectives. By being willing to pause, reflect and assess, you will help improve your strategy, maximize your wins and learn from your losses.

Here are some tips to help you assess the impact of your work:
• Create a framework that outlines the targets you need to achieve in order to meet your objective
• Assessing targets can be based on both quantitative and qualitative data
• To get qualitative data, regularly engage with campaign/project partners and participants to get their feedback on performance and progress through surveys and interviews

Here is a simple framework to get you started on designing your quantitative and qualitative questions:
The “how” and “why” questions can be used to extract qualitative analysis, providing more analytical information on your initiative.
Here are some tips to ensure effectiveness of your interviewing process:

- It is important to develop trust with interviewees and to put them at ease. Interviewees can feel pressure to corroborate your assumptions to ensure they will continue receiving your support. As such, you should make it clear that the interview is a key learning moment (to improve the performance of the anti-corruption initiative) and that complete honesty and transparency is fundamental to improving follow-up actions.

- As well as interviewing individual participants, you should also collect quotes and commentary relating to the anti-corruption initiative and any related anecdotes. Always ask for permission to use the quotes and commentary (as well as photos).

- It is important to decide if you are going to use open-ended questions or closed questions. Each type of question has a purpose. Generally, closed questions help you understand how many people who participated in your initiative enjoyed the experience, while open-ended questions give you more details about why they enjoyed it.

- It is important to avoid using leading questions. Leading questions are questions that contain the answer inside them and therefore, they can influence the opinion and the response of the interviewee.

- Try to keep the interview process independent. Ideally, the person gathering the data should not be part of the group of organizers, so they can maintain an independent position. Nonetheless, with limited resources this might not be possible. Therefore, encourage everyone involved to always challenge their own biases and personal attachment to the anti-corruption initiative.

- Using quantitative data means recording important numerical data (i.e. the number of policy submissions, the number of community interviews, the number of legal applications and the number of people who participated).

- Design the indicators in a way that leads to impact. A good example of quantitative indicators can be found in the Sustainable Development Goals framework. Each goal has a set of indicators that are used to measure progress. Please note that they are very broad as they are applied to a global context but can be narrowed down to your specific anti-corruption initiative. But remember, quantitative data do not tell the full story. Always pair qualitative information with quantitative data or do a qualitative analysis of the data collected.

- A good way to decide between quantitative and qualitative data is to use mixed methods: quantitative data collection methods coupled with qualitative analysis. This is more likely to provide the full picture.

- Plan for monitoring, evaluation and learning moments. There is no fixed timeframe for how often this should be done. It should be done regularly and not only at the end of the initiative. Mid-term review processes are fundamental to ensuring that the initiative is adaptable. This should be an agile process of learning and adapting your strategy based on your assessments.

- Collecting feedback can help you learn and improve your upcoming actions. It can also motivate you and your team and support you in raising awareness of what you have achieved with partners, donors and international actors, as well as with your Government. Using the results of your analysis to position yourself as an anti-corruption champion in your community, country and region can amplify your impact moving forward, and can support you in empowering yourself and others to follow your cause – therefore, achieving the change you envisioned.

- Writing blog posts and articles (both online and offline) can be a good way to raise awareness of your impact. Participating in conferences and online events can be a good means of sharing best practices in your network. Finally, social media is a very useful tool when it comes to communicating your impact and doing advocacy and follow-up work based on your anti-corruption initiative.

What’s next?

Change doesn’t happen in a vacuum. It is a cycle and big changes may be visible only in the long term. Don’t forget to focus on the small wins as well, on the way individuals are positively affected by what you are doing. This will help you keep motivated.

Make sure to check in on your mental and physical health and make time for rest and recharging your batteries.

Remember that you cannot achieve change alone – you have to rely on others. Build a community and collectivity around you in order to maintain momentum and find motivation when you are running low.

We’re sure this isn’t goodbye. If you have made it to the end of the toolkit, you should know that we are here to support you. Reach out to us by regularly checking the GRACE news page or emailing us at unodc-grace@un.org and we can continue this conversation.

We may not eradicate corruption in our lifetime, but together we can shift mindsets away from corrupt practices and towards ethics, integrity, accountability and transparency, and make the world a better place!