COMBATING CORRUPTION IN INDIA

The Role of Civil Society

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1.   INTRODUCTION

Fighting corruption has emerged as a key development issue in India in recent years. More and more policymakers, businesses, and civil society organizations, have begun to confront the issue openly. At the same time the general level of understanding about corruption has risen markedly. Until recently, it was not uncommon to hear someone discuss anti-corruption strictly in law enforcement terms. By contrast, most people working in the field today acknowledge that public education and prevention are equally important. The field has also come to appreciate how critical the role of civil society is for effective and sustained reform.

A number of factors explain this growing emphasis on fighting corruption. Expansion and consolidation of democracy at the grassroots level has enabled citizens to use the vote and new-found civil liberties to confront corruption, prompting leaders and opposition figures to show a stronger anti-corruption commitment. Internationally, since the end of the Cold War, donor governments have focused less on ideological grounds for foreign assistance and concentrated more on trade and development, both of which are undermined by corruption. Countries with high levels of corruption, like India, have found

themselves less able to attract investment and aid in a competitive global market. At the same time, business within the country has faced ever stiffer competition with the gobalization of trade and capital markets, and has become less willing to tolerate the expense and risk associated with corruption.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

The body of theoretical and empirical research that objectively addresses the problem of corruption has grown considerably in recent years (Elliot 1997, Coolidge and Rose-Ackerman 1997, Gandhi 1998, Gill 1998, Girling 1997, HDC 1999, Kaufmann and Sachs 1998, Mauro 1995, Paul and Guhan 1997, Shleifer and Vishnay 1998, Stapenhurst and Kpundeh 1998, Vittal 1999, World Bank 1997). A preliminary analysis of the literature shows that corruption in India and elsewhere is recognized as a complex phenomenon, as the consequence of more deep seated problems of policy distortion, institutional incentives and governance. It thus cannot be addressed by simple legal acts proscribing corruption. The reason is that, particularly in India, the judiciary, legal enforcement institutions, police and such other legal bodies cannot be relied upon, as the rule of law is often fragile, and thus can be turned in their favour by corrupt interests.

3.   BASIC HYPOTHESIS

Preliminary examination of data from various sources suggests the formulation of a clear hypothesis concerning the role of civil society in combating

corruption in India. The hypothesis is that the sustenance and success of efforts to combat systemic corruption in India is directly related to the extent of participation of the civil society in these efforts. The underlying idea is that development is not the product of set of blueprints given by the political leadership independently of the civil society but is often a joint output of the civil society itself. The pace and direction of the developmental efforts is shaped by the umbilical relationship between the state and civil society.

Viewed in this perspective, anti-corruption strategies are not simply policies that can be planned in advance and isolation, but often a set of subtler insights that can be developed only in conjunction with citizen participation. Combating corruption is, therefore, not just a matter of making laws and creating institutions, but rather it is deeply rooted in the activities of the civil society itself.

4.   METHODOLOGY

In recent years significant improvements have been made in the measurement of corruption, in the construction of composite corruption indices, and in the design and implementation of surveys. Beyond applying improved empirics through a multi-pronged approach to surveys, it is now possible to construct a framework linking the analytical and empirical research with operationally relevant utilization. We can effectively utilize empirical analysis in the design and implementation of action programs. The Economic Development

Institute at the World Bank, in collaboration with the Transparency International and local NGOs, has developed a methodological approach integrating within one empirical framework the various components identified so far for understanding and combating corruption. This overall empirical approach links worldwide database and analysis with determinants of corruption, in-depth country analysis, and country action program (Kaufmann, Pradhan, and Ryterman 1998). In this research paper the World Bank framework is used to understand and explain the role of civil society in combating corruption in India, and consider recent initiatives for an effective action plan in this regard.

Anti-corruption Analysis and Action

Database and Analysis	Determinants of Corruption	Country Analysis	Action Programme
*Worldwide and Regional data and analysis *Prevalence of corruption *Consequences of corruption *Country governance factors	*Political patronage *Administrative labyrinth *Lack of punishment *Social environment	*Political Will *Civil society understanding *Focus groups *Task forces	*Institutional priorities *Political will and government role *Civil society *Role of inter national community

Adapted from: Kaufman, Pradhan, and Ryterman (1998).

5.   CAUSES OF CORRUPTION

There is little doubt that corruption in present-day India pervades all levels and all services, not even sparing the Indian Administrative Service and Judicial Service. The bureaucracy of the British India was considered to be largely untainted with corruption. Compulsions of electoral politics in independent India changed this image and the administrative as well as the police and judicial services came to be charged with colluding with the political leadership to indulge in systemic corruption, making a mockery of democratic governance.

The mid-1960s is considered to be the great divide in the history of public administration in India. It marked the fading away of the Gandhian and Nehruvian era of principled politics and the emergence of new politics the keynote of which was amorality. The scams and scandals of the nineties revealed that among the persons accused of corruption were former Prime Ministers, former Chief Ministers, and even former Governors. India's experience with corruption has shown that laws, rules, regulations, procedures and methods of transaction of government business, however sound and excellent cannot by themselves ensure effective and transparent administration if the political and administrative leadership entrusted with their enforcement fails to do so and abuses its powers for personal gain.

5.1   Political Patronage

The biggest cause of corruption in today's India is undoubtedly the political leadership at the helm of affairs in the country. From this fountainhead of corruption flow various streams of corrupt practices which plague the political, economic and social activities in the country. The post-independence political leadership has risen from the grassroots level in the form of regional, caste, linguistic and other protest movements. They have transformed the nature of politics and administration. Amoral politics, self-aggrandisement, disregard of the constitutional norms in the pursuit of power, political survival at any cost are their rules of the game. They interfere with the administration of justice and have bent bureaucracy to do their bidding.

The A.D. Gorwala Report was one of the earliest official documents that laid bare the problem of corruption in India. For Gorwala, character building was the basis of state building and the decline in character in India had two immediate causes in the post-1947 period. The first was the impact of the War. World War II was an expression of violence and also of greed. Though many people shared in the war effort, for most it was not their war. The war was boom time, and people benefited legally and illegally from it. Gorwala added to that the failure of the national movement to leave behind a spiritual residue among the people (Vishwanathan and Sethi 1997).

The Gorwala Report was particularly harsh on the role of the political leadership in setting examples before the public. "Enquiries into allegations have

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been made by senior all-India leaders of the principle party…. Often they have remained secret. Nor action was taken. It seems fairly clear that if the public is to have confidence that moral standards do prevail in high places, arrangements must be made that no one, however highly placed, is immune from enquiry if allegations against him are made by responsible parties and if a prima facie case exists. There should be no hushing-up or appearance of hushing-up for personal or political reasons." (India, 1951).

For the Railway Corruption Enquiry Committee, chaired by J.B. Kriplani, corruption was a failure of citizen ship. Whether it was the bribe, ticket less travel or theft, all these were acts which undermined the state. The report ruthlessly listed the categories of people who refused to pay and their attitude towards it. Politicians and senior bureaucrats were among those who claimed exemption from paying for travel on account of their status. The report therefore went on to insist that "apart from administrative reforms, and punitive measures, there is a great need for higher officials to play the leaders in a reform movement." (India, 1955).

The strange part of the story of the early years of corruption in India is that the protection that Jawaharlal Nehru extended to his corrupt colleagues did not benefit him any way. Wealth could not tempt him in any form, and he had a typical aristocrats disdain for money. However, by condoning high-visibility cases of corruption and shielding the guilty, Nehru legitimized graft in high places, and

this undermined the rule of law and the moral basis of the polity (Noorani 1973). After Independence their was a pressing need to strengthen the needs of the state, establish high norms of political morality, and make no exceptions in the punishing the culprit. There are a few failings for which India has paid so heavy a price as his tolerance of corruption among his colleagues and party men. (Gill, 1998).

The role of political leadership in aiding and abetting spread of corruption in India was most clearly brought out by the Shah Commission of Enquiry constituted to look into the excesses committed during the period of Emergency (!975-77). Justice Shah reserved his most damning observations for the role that Sanjay Gandhi, son of Indira Gandhi, played subverting rule of law in the country. Shah noted: " The manner in which Shri Sanjay Gandhi functioned in the public affairs of Delhi in particular is the single greatest act of excess committed during the period of Emergency for which there is no parallel nor any justification for such assumption of authority or power in the history of independent India. While the other acts and excesses may have been in the nature of acts committed by functionaries have some shadow of authority acting in excess of their powers. Here was a case of an individual wielding unlimited powers in a dictatorial powers without even the slightest right to it. If this country is to be rendered safe for future generations the people owe it to themselves to ensure that an irresponsible and unconstitutional centre of power like the one which revolved

around Shri Sanjay Gandhi during the Emergency is not allowed to ever come up again in any form or shape or under any guise." (India, 1978).

The nexus between corrupt politicians and corrupt bureaucrats has been clearly proved in recent years by scams like the Animal Husbandry (fodder) scam in Bihar (in which the former Chief Minister, some of his ministers, legislators of the ruling and opposition parties and several senior bureaucrats were charge sheeted by the C.B.I.), Coal scam in Tamil Nadu (involving the then C.M. Ms. Jayalalitha), Urea scam (involving the son and a relative of the former Prime Minister Narasimha Rao), Telecom scam (involving the Union Telecom minister Sukh ram) etc. Since the corruption flows down from the top it is not easy to stop it or limit it, and it has a devastating effect on the administration and the society in general.

5.2   Administrative Labyrinth

Cumbersome and dilatory administrative procedures and practices are another major cause of corruption in India. India's legal and administrative system was designed in the middle of the nineteenth century to serve the interests of colonial administration. The Indian Penal Code, the main instrument for controlling crime and administering criminal justice, was enacted in 1860. The organization and functions of the police are governed by the Indian Police Act of 1861. The Indian Evidence Act came into force in 1872. The Indian Telegraph Act, which regulates the control of air-waves and licensing of broadcasting facilities, was passed in 1855-even before the invention of the wireless.

Fundamental Rules and Supplementary Rules, the financial Bibles for all government financial transactions, were framed in the twenties when the government's financial transactions and commitments were very simple.

The British had designed this legal system to strengthen a regulatory colonial administration. These laws were based on distrust of the 'natives' and a firm belief in their inability to govern themselves. It has in built provisions for delays, prolonged litigation and evasion. Its provisions are ideally suited to the promotion of corruption at all levels, as graft provides the quickest immunity from delays and punitive action. Thus archaic legal system is not only least suited to the promotion of a democratic, egalitarian, welfare state, it fosters an outlook which is subversive to social equity. The focal point of colonial justice was the individual and the protection of individual property rights whereas the emphasis of a welfare state is on the rights of the society and social justice.

5.3   Lack of Punishment

A contributory factor to the growth of corruption in India is that the cases relating to corruption are often handled in a casual and clumsy manner. Those in hierarchy vested with disciplinary powers shirk duty and show unwillingness to use their powers against corrupt practices. This may be due to different reasons like political or trade union pressure, vested interests, or sheer ineptitude in handling criminal investigation. The result is that the corrupt are rarely caught and even if caught are let off with minor or no penalties. The government officials

entrusted with the responsibility of dealing with corruption do it in a most inefficient and lethargic manner and this suits the political leadership which patronises corruption.

The judicial system is so expensive, dilatory, and inefficient that it takes years and years for corruption cases to be decided. The infamous Harshad Mehta case of organised corruption in the stock exchanges of India, in which small investors lost thousands of crores of rupees, has been in the courts for almost a decade now and as yet there is no indication of its nearing any decision. The result of such inordinate delay is that the accused often escape punishment because a long time span has an adverse effect on the evidence in a case. The conviction rate in the Indian courts is only 6%. There are three crore cases pending in the Indian courts and average time taken for disposal of cases is from 10-20 years (Vittal 1999). Justice delayed is justice denied in most cases of corruption.

5.4   Social Environment

Public administration is a sub-system of the political system which itself is a part of the larger whole called the social system. Therefore the societal culture or societal environment has powerful impact on public administration. Put differently, administration cannot be plucked out from the tissue of culture in which it is embedded as a member of the wide societal system. A bureaucrat

reflects the spirit and ethos of that society, and his actions are bound be the manifestation of his cultural moorings.

In present day India, corruption has found an acceptance in the social psyche and behaviour. Social evils like bribery, nepotism and favouritism have come to be accepted in the society. People often approach someone known to them for favours which they know are not legally due to them. Jumping the traffic lights or a queue or getting the benefits not due to one has become part of social ethos. A person who has acquired wealth through unfair means is often accorded the same, if not higher, status in Indian society as that given to persons of excellence.

Whatever the people may say in coffee houses or in seminars, they show awe and respect to the corrupt. Such people are repeatedly elected or appointed to positions of power, and they go on to distribute the spoils of office to their near and dear ones. This group psyche is very infertile soil for public morality. In the ultimate analysis the corrupt politicial or the corrupt administrator is a creation of the public and is a concrete manifestation of the psychologically corrupt men in the street with whose approval corruption flourishes with impunity. It is no surprise therefore that at times the corrupt political leaders walk majestically to the court and acknowledge their supporters greetings as if they were to receive award for public service.

6.   CONSEQUENCES OF CORRUPTION

In the final analysis, corruption is as much a moral as a development issue. It can distort entire decision- making processes on investment projects and other commercial transactions, and the very social and political fabric of societies. The Supreme Court of India in a recent judgement gave its comments on the far reaching effects of corruption, and these comments deserve to be mentioned in some detail. The apex court observed that, " Corruption in a civilised society is like cancer, which if not detected in time is sure to malignise the polity of the country leading to disastrous consequences. It is termed as a plague which is not only contagious but if not controlled spreads like a fire in a jungle. Its virus is compared with HIV leading to AIDS, being incurable. It has also been termed as royal thievery. The socio-political system exposed to such a dreaded communicable disease is likely to crumble under its own weight. Corruption is opposed to democracy and social order, being not only anti-people, but also aimed and targeted at them. It affects the economy and destroys the cultural heritage. Unless nipped in the bud at the earliest, it is likely to cause turbulence shaking of the socio-economic political system in an otherwise healthy, wealthy, effective and vibrating society" (AIR 2000, SC 870).

6.1   Economic Development

Some fairly robust statistical evidence has now been furnished showing that higher corruption is associated with (i) higher (and more costly) public investment; (ii) lower government revenues; (iii) lower expenditures on

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operations and maintenance; and (iv) ensuing lower quality of public infrastructure. The evidence also shows that corruption increases public investment, by making it more expensive, while reducing its productivity.

A recent study by the Peruvian economist Paolo Mauro (1995 and 1998) found that a corrupt country is likely to face aggregate investment levels of approximately 5 percentage points less, than a relatively uncorrupt country. The evidence from India is particularly stark. If corruption levels in India were reduced to that in the Scandinavian countries, investments rates could increase annually by some 12 percent and the GDP growth rate by almost 1.5 percent each year (Gandhi 1997). Corruption also acts as an additional tax on investment by lowering the potential return to an investor on both the initial investment and on subsequent returns. In India, current corruption levels mean that the implicit corruption tax on investment is almost 20 percentage points (Gandhi 1997).

The impact of corruption on the quality of public infrastructure is all too clearly visible in the towns and cities of India. The Public Works Department and the State Electricity Boards which are largely responsible for the maintenance of roads and management of power distribution respectively, are among the most corrupt government departments in India. In the capital city of Delhi itself the transmission and distribution losses in the power sector are estimated to be over 50% out of which almost 30% is attributed to theft which is done with the connivance of the electricity board employees. A former Chairman of the Delhi

Electricity Board (DVB) was very recently suspended and charged with amassing assets worth over 14 crore rupees, which is almost a hundred times more than his known sources of income. Such massive corruption is certainly one of the main reasons for perennial power shortages and frequent breakdowns in the capital.

Corruption also reduces the government's resources and hence its capacity for investment, since tax revenues are depleted by tax evasion (Jain 1998, Shahid 1991). This has two adverse effects: first, shifts away from investments in development areas occur as bribe-takers are less likely to invest in activities with significant positive social benefits like education and health. Second, overall investment levels may fall, since conspicuous consumption or flight of illegal earnings is probably higher than legal earnings. The high potential for capital flight of illegal earnings makes corruption more likely to be associated with a negative impact on the balance of payments (HDC 1999).

India's Chief Vigilance Commissioner recently observed that," India's economy today is a standing monument to the corruption and inefficiency of four specific departments, namely, Customs, Central Excise, Income Tax and Enforcement Directorate. It is the evasion of taxes and the failure of these departments to check illegal activities that has crystallised into the large percentage of black money in the economy. The quantum of black money has been estimated from Rs.40,000 crores to Rs.100,000 crores. Whole industries

today depend on black money. The film industry, a substantial part of the construction industry and a large number of small industries are run on the basis of black money " (Vittal 1999).

6.2   Social Welfare

The damaging effects of corruption on investment and economic growth are widely recognised. But corruption also has adverse effects on human development. First, corruption reduces the availability and increases the cost of basic social services. Access to core social services can be easily restricted with the intention to make corrupt gains. For instance, a government doctor may deliberately store away free medicines until he is bribed, a police inspector may deny a First Information Report to a victim until he is paid a kickback, and a principal may refuse to admit a child in a school until he is paid under-the-counter. Since obtaining access to basic public services normally requires an illegal cash payment, corruption also raises the price of these services.

Second, in addition to a decrease in total government expenditure (due to tax evasion), corruption also shifts government expenditure from priority social sector spending to areas, where the opportunities for rent-seeking are greater and the possibilities for detection are lower. Allocating government funds to a few large defense contracts or mega-projects may seem more attractive to corrupt bureaucrats and politicians than spending the same money to build numerous rural health clinics (Bardhan 1997). Similarly, there may be a temptation to

choose more complex technology (where detecting improper valuation or over-invoicing is more difficult) than simpler, and more appropriate technology.

6.3   Political System

Politically, corruption increases injustice and disregard for rule of law. Basic human rights and freedoms come under threat, as key judicial decisions are based on the extent of corrupt bribes given to court officials rather than on the innocence or guilt of the parties concerned. Police investigations and arrests may be based on political victimisation or personal vendettas rather than on solid legal grounds. Commenting on the socio-political consequences of corruption the Supreme Court of India observed in the judgement cited above that corruption in a civilised society was a disease like cancer. If not detected in time it was sure to turn the polity malignant leading to "disastrous consequences". The apex court said a socio-political system exposed to such a dreaded communicable disease was likely to crumble under its own weight.

7.   COMBATING CORRUPTION

Looking at the number of agencies created to tackle corruption, it is apparent that the government has been keen to eradicate this malady. Even before Independence, the colonial rulers had established the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) to control corruption which surged during the Second World War. The Prevention of Corruption Act was passed in 1947 (Ramakrishna 1997), and an Administrative Vigilance Division (AVD) created in the home

ministry in 1955. Vigilance officers were appointed in each ministry to enquire into charges of corruption against employees in these organisations. Then, owing to mounting public criticism, a Committee on Prevention of Corruption was appointed in 1962 under K. Santhanam to examine this issue in depth and recommend remedial measures. As a result of its recommendations, the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), independent of ministerial control was set up in 1964. Another important measure during the early decades was the creation of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in 1963, which incorporated DSPE as the Investigation and Anti-Corruption Division (Gill 1998).

7.1   Political Commitment

This elaborate and multi-layered apparatus to control corruption could hardly make a dent on the situation because of lack of political commitment on the part of political leadership in the states and at the center. It is more than clear all these institutional arrangements to combat corruption can be useful only if correctives come from the political class which is the final legislative and executive authority in a parliamentary democracy. The waywardness of the politicians can be curbed only from within, there is no agency which can continuously impose probity from outside. Unless the politicians are made to differentiate private conscience from public morality, and personal profit from national interest, the ongoing unrestrained plunder of the exchequer cannot be stopped. The case of Bihar during the past decade shows that all anti-corruption instruments and strategies come to naught against a political leadership which

has a vested interest in continuing corruption. Similarly, the spate of criminal cases in which a former Chief Minister of Tamilnadu, Jayalalitha, was herself involved shows that during her tenure political and administrative corruption could not have been checked effectively primarily because of the political patronage she had given to corrupt practices.

7.2   Administrative Accountability

Another essential component of anti-corruption strategy is the strict enforcement of the principle of accountability at all levels. In India the government performs vast functions over a wide range of areas of public concern. Decisions are taken at various levels of government in which discretionary power may be involved. The present situation is that there is general lack of accountability in administration. Almost everyone in the public services is accountable to no one and is considered above the law. Respect for the rule of law is woefully uncommon and it is often noticed that those who violate the law in the most blatant fashion are the ones who get away the easiest.

The judiciary has a key role in ensuring that political and administrative power is used only in accordance with law and every one is held accountable for wrong doing or misuse of authority. Recent decisions given by the judiciary have created a hope for corrective action. The apex court and several high courts have upheld cases against political and administrative functionaries at the highest levels. The cases involving former chief ministers of Tamilnadu and Bihar are

illustrative of judicial activism that has come to the rescue of rule of law against the custodians of law themselves. The recent action of the Central Vigilance Commissioner of putting the names of administrative and police service officials on the internet against whom charges of corruption are pending has also gone a long way in instilling the sense of responsibility and accountability among these officials.

7.3   Procedural Simplification

As explained earlier administrative delay is one of the major causes of corruption. Therefore to reduce or control corruption it is necessary to eliminate such delays. For that it is essential that office procedures should be simplified and levels of hierarchy reduced. In the Indian situation the persistence of archaic structures has played havoc with the developmental initiatives. After Independence the country framed an entirely new political and economic agenda and this required new, matching structures for effective implementation, as the old administrative and legal systems clashed with the substance and spirit of the new agenda. And it is this mismatch between politico-economic agenda on the one hand and the administrative and legal structures on the other which is primarily responsible for the poor performance of the government.

Instead of the present system in which official files take rounds of several offices before a decision is taken, new pattern of decision-making, which is transparent and simple, needs to be evolved. This requires reorganisation of

government departments so as to reduce from nine to four the levels through which a case is processed today (Gill 1998). Such simplification and rationalisation is specially necessary with regard to all developmental projects in the infrastructure areas because inefficiency and corruption in these areas makes the whole socio-economic system unstable. There is need for single-window-decision system for all industrial projects, both in manufacturing and service industries. Official forms have to be brief and simple so that unnecessary complications do not hamper time-bound implementation of projects. Latest management techniques and methods need to be incorporated into the functioning of all public services and public sector projects so that their efficiency and productivity keeps up with their social obligations.

7.4   Civil Society Participation

Civil society is considered as the realm of association between the household and the state. Typically this includes professional organisations as well as other formal and informal non-profit associations. Such associations fulfil certain functions essential for aggregating and expressing societal interests, including social integration, social participation in state governance, and promoting the democratic values. Through its many functions, civil society can create pressure for policy reform and improved governance, as well as explicitly monitor the state's actions for fighting corruption and abuse. In other words, the civil society addresses the will of the state to operate in an accountable, transparent and responsive manner.

Civil society organisations have a key role to play in combating corruption. In fact, the task of ensuring sustained political commitment, administartive accountability, and procedural simplification can be achieved more quickly if vigilant and active civil society organisations take up the responsibility of interacting with the government organisations. Civil society is, in the end, the stakeholder and the ultimate affected party of corruption and thus must be engaged constructively to get the support and buy-in for the necessary reforms. Only in this way can the necessary policy and institutional changes become viable and sustainable. Countries that are supportive and hospitable to civil society bodies-through hearing arrangements in their regulatory and legislative procedures, involving them in oversight institutions, etc,- have in fact enabled the organic and internally driven evolution of policies and institutions to changes in circumstances.

In recent years a growing number of structures, institutions and associations-outside state apparatus and profit-making businesses-have evolved in India for the joint pursuit of shared interests. Chambers of commerce, professional associations, various forms of non-governmental organisations have become players, shaping opinions, building coalitions, providing testimonies, monitoring government and enterprises. The Report Card methodology developed by the Public Affairs Center in Bangalore is an innovative instrument to track down and expose corruption in public services (Guhan and Paul 1997). Similarly, the Common Cause in Delhi has done considerable work in the area of

public interest litigation which has served the purpose of dragging corrupt officials to the courts. The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan in Rajasthan has done commendable work in making public information regarding development projects in the state. Such information has served to expose instances of bureaucratic corruption.

A sustainable participatory process, extending far beyond the initial awareness-raising and mobilization stages, is crucial for the implementation of the reforms. The experience of the scorecard method mentioned above illustrates how powerful such integration can be. The periodic application of the scorecard evaluation of local public services by the citizenry (including reporting on bribery and extortion), as well as the discussion and dissemination following each survey, provides continuous support for anti-corruption efforts at the local level.

The Government of India too has now become aware of the need to integrate public policies with public participation. At a Conference of Chief Ministers of Indian States in May 1997, the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Services evolved an "Action Plan on Effective and Responsive Administration", based on the responses and reactions from officials, experts, voluntary agencies, citizen's groups, media, etc. Among the various steps initiated in this respect, a core group was formed for the formulation and

monitoring of Citizen's Charter by identified Ministries with substantial public interface (Kashyap 1997).

The development and use of an interactive web site by the Central Vigilance Commission since January 2000 is a positive step in the direction of keeping people informed and involved in the framing and implementation of anti-corruption strategies. Currently the Chief Vigilance Commissioner, N. Vittal, is pursuing a proactive three-point operational strategy to fight corruption in India. The three points are (i) simplification of rules and procedures; (ii) greater transparency and empowerment of the public and (iii) effective punishment. In this strategy citizen participation has a key role. The civil society could participate in these efforts through the NGOs by bringing corrupt practices to the notice of the powers that be and also effectively help in operations like the trapping of corrupt persons or informing the CVC about the disproportionate assets of the corrupt public persons against whom raids can be undertaken by the CBI and the Income Tax Department (Vittal 2000).

Another notable instance of citizen involvement in combating corruption is the launching of Satyagrah (non-violent protest) by S.D. Sharma, an octogenarian freedom fighter and Vice-Chairman of the Transparency International-India, against political corruption and for honest and efficient governance. Established in 1997, the Transparency International-India has been playing a significant role in fighting corruption through Gandhian methods of non-

violent mass mobilization. It has now undertaken to organise 24 hour relay fast concurrently with the sessions of the parliament, to remind the government and the parliament that they have failed in their duty to the country to take effective steps for eliminating corruption from their ranks (Sharma 2000).

A participatory process involving citizens in the formulation and monitoring of anti-corruption strategies is thus taking roots in India. As more and more civil society organisations become involved in this process and take steps to both formulate and implement anti-corruption strategies it can be expected that in the coming years efforts to combat corruption should yield positive results.

8. CONCLUSION

There is a much better grasp today of the extent to which corruption is a symptom of fundamental institutional weaknesses. Instead of tackling such a symptom with narrow intervention designed to "eliminate" it, increasingly it is understood that the approach ought to address a broad set of fundamental institutional determinants. However, the challenge of integrating this understanding with participatory process has barely begun. The implementation of institutional reforms can benefit significantly from the participatory process that is being developed for anti-corruption activities. Equally important, any participatory process, however sophisticated, ought to lead to concrete results beyond enhanced participation and heightened awareness.

Thus, identifying key institutional reforms in India, and mobilizing support for such reforms, needs to be fully integrated into the participatory process from very early on. Such early convergence is likely to promote a better balance between prevention and enforcement measures in addressing corruption. Until recently, the pendulum was firmly in the "enforcement" corner. The gradual swing towards middle ground has taken place due to recognition of the limitations of ex post legalistic enforcement measures, since rule of law institutions themselves are currently part of the corruption problem in India.

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