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## **Fast Facts from *Tackling Corruption, Transforming Lives***

### **Scourge of Corruption**

- The first global legally binding anti-corruption instrument was created in 2005 - the United Nations Convention Against Corruption. In the Asia-Pacific region, out of 35 UNDP programme countries, 19 have signed it while 10 have ratified or acceded as of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007<sup>1</sup>.
- Countries with higher rankings on the democracy scale tend to also be high on control of corruption (as measured by the World Bank Control of Corruption Index). Exceptions include Singapore, Bhutan and Hong Kong (SAR), China.
- Corruption hampers growth in the long run; it diverts funds from productivity-enhancing investments and discourages innovation for instance.
- Countries in the region with higher levels of human development tend to have lower perceived levels of corruption, as measured by the control of corruption index.

### **Justice for Sale**

- The Report cites Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer of 2006 which states that people in Asia-Pacific perceived the most corrupt group to be politicians, but the police came in a close second while the judiciary was not far behind.
- The police in Asia-Pacific are perceived as somewhat more corrupt than those in Western Europe and in North America, though less than those in Africa and Latin America.
- Nearly one in five people have paid a bribe to the police according to a survey in the Asia-Pacific region.
- A number of studies across Asia found that two-thirds or more of the population consider the routine court system to be corrupt. They admit that they themselves will pay bribes, regardless of whether they are guilty or innocent.

### **Keeping Public Services Honest**

- Some of the most common forms of corruption in education systems in Asia and the Pacific are bribes for admission and grades, 'ghost schools' and 'ghost teachers' as well as kickbacks for construction.

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<sup>1</sup> As of 14<sup>th</sup> May 2008, 117 countries have ratified or acceded to the UNCAC.

- Absenteeism can be a form of corruption in health and education services. Across the region reported absenteeism rates of health workers cluster around 35 per cent to 40 per cent. Absenteeism among teachers has been shown to range from 16 per cent to 25 per cent in primary schools.
- Corruption in the procurement of material and labour for school construction can increase costs between two and eight times, as funds for school buildings are siphoned off by corrupt officials.
- Higher levels of corruption are correlated with lower school enrolment and higher dropout and illiteracy rates, thus blocking key routes out of poverty.
- For electricity supplies, much of the corruption is linked to illegal connections from the main line. Corruption can also occur when the utilities are privately run though the contract may be obtained with a certain amount of 'generosity' – such as paying for Municipal staff's travel and accommodation.

### **Stopping Leakages in Financial and Material Aid**

- Countries with low levels of corruption tend to have fewer conflicts.
- Corruption can exacerbate the impact of natural disasters. A significant relationship was found between perceived levels of corruption and the earthquake death toll in a review of the impact of 344 large-scale earthquakes in 42 countries, occurring worldwide.
- A UNESCAP study concluded that in some countries in Asia between 50 per cent and 70 per cent of resources in food subsidy programmes were lost through leakages.

### **Cleaning up Natural Resources**

- Land administration is one of the three main sectors prone to corruption according to a 2002 Transparency International survey conducted in five countries in South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka).
- In some countries in Asia-Pacific, the proportion of illegal logging, which often involves corrupt activities, may run as high as 90 per cent.
- Deforestation and land use change is currently the source of about 20 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.
- South-East Asia is responsible for one quarter of the global trade in illegal wildlife, thought to be worth around \$15 billion per year.

### **Crushing Corruption from the Top**

- Out of 28 Asia-Pacific countries, all have established formal anti-corruption agencies in some form or the other and 22 have specific legislation on corruption, according to one of the Report's surveys.

- It is important to protect ‘whistle-blowers’ – individuals who disclose information about wrongdoing. Of the 28 countries in the region that responded to a survey for this report, 11 offer some protection to whistle-blowers though this may not always be adequate.
- Establishing a right to information (as against secrecy) is an essential ingredient in tackling corruption. Eight countries in the Asia-Pacific region have established right-to-information laws. None of them is a Pacific Island country although the matter has been debated extensively in Fiji and in August 2006, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum, called for appropriate legislation.
- One regional agreement on anti-corruption for Asia-Pacific is the ADB/OECD Regional Anti-Corruption Action Plan. This initiative was launched in 1999 and supports its 28 member countries in strengthening anti-corruption policies and frameworks.
- As of 2007, 6 of the world’s 39 tax haven countries are in the Asia-Pacific, while one country is a member of OECD. These numbers represents a major drop from 2000 during which there were 71 tax haven countries globally which included 13 from the Asia-Pacific and 21 from OECD member countries.

### **Citizens on Watch**

- The media can sustain an open and transparent flow of information, fostering a climate of opinion that is increasingly intolerant of corruption.
- An indication of the extent of press freedom can be gleaned from the ratings of organizations such as Reporters without Borders – an NGO which compiles an annual index of press freedom based on 50 criteria. The 2007 index rated 169 countries, of which the top 10 were all European. The highest rated Asia-Pacific countries were New Zealand (at 15<sup>th</sup>), followed by Australia (at 28<sup>th</sup>).
- The Asia-Pacific region has a variety of organisations undertaking anti-corruption activities. Transparency International, for example, opposes corruption around the world, and also has 20 local chapters in the region. The Asia Foundation, meanwhile, deals with corruption as part of a broad repertoire of regional concerns.

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***The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the UN’s global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build better lives. UNDP works in 37 countries in Asia-Pacific.***

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*The UNDP Regional Centre in Colombo (RCC) was established in January 2005 to serve countries of Asia-Pacific. It is a regional hub for development knowledge and expertise, providing policy advisory and capacity development services in Poverty Reduction and HIV and Development, with Gender Equality as a crosscutting concern.*

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