



Summary of the Discussion following Michael Brown's Presentation - A Demand-Driven Model for Combating Corruption: Lessons from the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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Q & A Session

Mr Brown's Presentation can be found here –

<http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/research/africa/papers>

Muzong Kodi

Thanked Mr Brown for his presentation. Dr. Kodi felt that we shouldn't see tackling Grand and Petty corruption as an either / or choice but rather a pincer movement is needed. The bottom up approach is really important since after the election there is no political will to fight corruption.

Q.

Would a social contract that said from this day forward petty corruption ceases work?

Michael Brown

It won't work. In '82/3 the tribes were outlawed in Somalia but look at it now. You can create a law for anything but the culture and economics of it have to work as well. There is a vicious circle that is very hard to break out of. We need to raise awareness of the need to break *tracasserie*. Public administrators don't get paid or at least are not paid enough to live on. If the decentralized government programme doesn't go through there will be a big problem.

Q.

What is the composition of the committees? How are they spreading? How can that model be scaled up?

Michael Brown

There are some charismatic local leaders who get the anti-corruption fight started. The committees are making a big effort. Our next challenge is to channel these energies. We also have other committees that don't work so well. We want to promote an ethic and capacity at local level. The World Bank said they would put a billion dollars into the Congo especially for governance issues, but it is hard for a big organisation like the Bank to work with small NGOs like us, there is a major lack of co-ordination between donors.

Q.

What role does transparency play, for example the EITI? What is the role of Parliament and what potential does it have?

Michael Brown

We have a text that sets out what is and is not legal; it needs to be distributed more widely. Even an MP I spoke to did not know about the national audit. The issue is will anyone use the information and get it out to citizens? In theory parliamentarians will be very important, they have the ability to call a minister to account for not doing what should have been done. MPs can be proactive if they want. They can be really important but perhaps they won't.

Muzong Kodi

There is a lot of interest among MPs to work against corruption. There is still a huge need for capacity building, only 41 of 500 members of this assembly were in the last parliament. It's true that the information is there but people have no access to it, civil society could publish more widely.

Q.

What is the media doing to combat impunity?

Michael Brown

I'm not an expert on the media but I sense that some people are addressing important issues, but then how many people are reading the papers? They are a luxury item. Rural radio is an important medium to look at.

Q.

Can your network form alliances with other NGOs?

Michael Brown

We have talked to TI, we are happy to learn from them or to work with DFID and others. But the mechanisms don't exist for this. We want to scale up our activities.

Muzong Kodi

The problem of coordination among donors is the same as the problem of coordination in local civil society. If you want to work on artisanal mining you could work with already existing groups.

Michael Brown

We are doing that already.

Muzong Kodi

TI tried to build up capacity against corruption but we were told the priority was the election.

Q.

Artisanal mining, will the formalisation of the sector be corrupt?

Michael Brown

I'm not sure there is much social benefit coming out of the Artisanal sector. There is an official code for the sector but we are still waiting for it to be applied. I can't say that I'm optimistic.

Q.

Many countries with mid level corruption have grown very fast, for example the Asian tigers. What does this tell us for DRC?

Michael Brown

I think that's a similar argument to the one in favour of benevolent dictatorship. Some things under the Mobutu regime were better but it was not sustainable.

Muzong Kodi

There are lots of arguments that corruption can be helpful but most are wrong. Dr. Kodi thanked Mr Brown and the audience.

END