

### The Thai Youth Anti-Corruption Network (Thailand)

#### Scope of Good Practice

Sponsored by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Thailand, the Thai Youth Anti-Corruption Network is an active group of more than 3,500 students from over 90 universities across Thailand on a mission to eliminate corruption in Thai society through the empowerment of young people. The campaign was built to get students to take a personal pledge to "refuse to be corrupt." The campaign was created by students and implemented by students, and the results are the thoughts and ideas of those students.

#### The Problem Addressed by the Campaign

Corruption is a common practice in Thailand, and it is getting worse. Major news media sources recently

reported that according to a June 2012 poll, a majority (63.4 percent) of Thai people still hold the view that

corruption in government is acceptable as long as they benefit from it. A majority of young people under 20 now

hold the same attitude. In response, UNDP in Thailand began the Thai Youth Anti-Corruption Network to educate

and inform young people about the dangers of corruption in Thai society.

#### Background Research

An International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) conducted in 2009 in 38 countries measured student perceptions and behaviors relevant to civics and citizenship. ICCS showed that Thai

students expressed the most favorable views among the five Asian countries studied for these statements: 1) It is

acceptable to bribe government officials to get things done; 2) It does not matter if a public official uses resources

from his/her institution for personal gain; 3) Preventing corruption is adults' business, and has nothing to do with me.

Thai students' score in civic participation is more than 10 percentage points above ICCS average, but their civic knowledge is the fifth lowest and gender difference is the largest, i.e. female students are more knowledgeable and hold less positive attitudes toward acceptance of corrupt practices than male students. These statistics are revealing and indicate that strong participation does not translate into better civic knowledge among Thai youth.

### Strategy

- Raise youth awareness about corruption and its negative impacts.
- Form an inter-university student network (via Facebook) as a platform for active participation and engagement in promoting integrity and preventing corruption.
- Train students on the use of social media as an advocacy tool and teach them interpersonal skills needed to share key messages with their peers.
- Establish a national brand, a logo, and key messaging that will become nationally recognizable.
- Partner with Thai universities to further expand the network and plan campus-wide/inter-university activities to promote integrity and prevent corruption.

### Creative

While UNDP has been active in engaging youth on a number of issues including transparency and

corruption — this is the first time that UNDP in Thailand has engaged with so many national universities in this

case over 90. This is a one-of-a-kind initiative because it is completely 'bottom-up' meaning the direction of the

program is designed entirely by students. The campaign gave them the tools and capacity needed to build

their own network.

The team believes this campaign is unique because its creativity does not come from UNDP or any other sponsor. The results are the products and ideas of Thai students, who conceptualized every key message and every creative expression on social media, who gathered themselves in Bangkok from every corner of the country, and

who jointly showed off their artistic side through the national art exhibition.

In the end, the students accomplished what they originally set out to do—build a youth anti-corruption network and

empower students to actively fight corruption in Thailand.

### Media

The "Thai Youth Anti-Corruption Network" campaign was primarily a social media exercise on Facebook. The site served as a common forum for students to share ideas, photos, and information after they attended a series of educational/advocacy oriented anti-corruption camps at select universities. They did not pay to generate social media traffic.

They used media selectively and timed it to our two major events on International Anti-Corruption Day, December 9, 2012. For the related art exhibition, the team hired a creative arts company to design the exhibition and handle logistics. The team partnered with universities to organize a massive rally of 2,000 students in downtown Bangkok.

Overall national media coverage for both events was phenomenal. They achieved above the fold or front page news coverage in every major Thai newspaper (with circulations above 500,000) and the two English language daily papers (with circulations above 100,000), as well as television news reports from as many as 15 Thai language networks. Newspapers also ran large four to six column wide photos of the major afternoon rally. The campaign was also covered by international news agencies such as Thomson-Reuters and the Spanish-language newspaper Publico.

### Impact

The "Thai Youth Anti-Corruption Network" began with just 36 student leaders from fifteen universities in June of 2012. After six intensive anti-corruption "camps," the campaign built a solid network of more than 3,500 students from more than 90 Thai universities. Each camp has recruited new leaders –anti-corruption champions at Thai universities.

UNDP built solid partnerships with key universities in Thailand, like Khon Kaen University ' s College of Local Administration, and attracted attention from the private sector. The campaign also featured high-level speakers and advocates, including former Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva.

The anti-corruption campaign has continued to attract attention from other institutions and networks, most notably Thailand ' s private sector Anti-Corruption Network (ACN). In August, the team signed a partnership to promote dialogue and strategy on fighting corruption, to develop future advocacy campaigns, and to build the capacity of organizations within our expanding networks. The Anti-Corruption Network (ACN) is led by a group of Thai businessmen and more than 30 industry associations, including the Thai Chamber of Commerce, the Thai Bankers ' Association, the Federation of Thai Industries, and the Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET).

However, the campaign's biggest impact was on December 9th, International Anti-Corruption Day, where 2,000 university students came to Bangkok –pouring out of mass transit stations dressed in trademark " Refuse to be Corrupt " blue t-shirts. They came from all over Thailand. More than 500 students came from the Southern provinces of Thailand. 23 universities participated in the anti-corruption themed art exhibition at the Bangkok Art and Culture Center, in partnership with the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC).

### Conclusions and Recommendations

UNDP's anti-corruption camps were one part civic education and one part communications and media training.

One lesson the team learned was the importance of increasing the time they had with each student, which was just two days. It was extremely difficult to educate and recruit active participants with communications and advocacy tools in such a limited time.

However, they were still successful. UNDP aims to continue advocacy work in developing campus networks

at Thai universities. The camps were aimed at getting their attention — now they aim to make campus groups a

permanent fixture. The campaign's long-term goal is to create a national leadership and advocacy programme —

and an accompanying certified academic and leadership credential that students would earn through

participation and engagement.