

Concept Note
**UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Community of Practice Meeting on Transparency,
Accountability and Anti-Corruption.**
11-12 June 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand



Introduction

Over the past decade, the anti-corruption movement has been gaining momentum with a recognition and consensus amongst governments, donors, civil society organizations, the public and private sectors, and the development community that corruption is a major bottleneck and an impediment to sustainable development, peace and security.

The implementation of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), which has achieved a near universal ratification, has also provided an opportunity for policy and institutional reform on anti-corruption. UNCAC also considers the growing importance of governance and anti-corruption in enhancing sustainable development by improving the capacity, efficiency and effectiveness of public institutions; strengthening coordination and monitoring mechanisms; and removing governance and corruption bottlenecks that impede progress to achieve development goals.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda by 193 Member States in 2015 was a breakthrough for the anti-corruption movement, by capitalizing on the importance of promoting transparency, accountability and anti-corruption, and by making an explicit link between anti-corruption and peaceful, just and inclusive societies. SDG Goal 16 aims “to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Some of the key targets of SDG 16 include: substantially reducing corruption and bribery, developing responsive, accountable, and transparent institutions, reducing illicit financial flows, ensuring inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making and ensuring access to public information and protecting fundamental freedoms. The fight against corruption is therefore acknowledged as central in the context of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development.

Over the last two decades issues relating to transparency and accountability have become acknowledged as central to the ability of states to fulfil their obligations to reduce poverty, sustain peace and achieve internationally agreed goals such as MDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This was succinctly stated in the UN General Assembly 2010 outcome document, “We stress that fighting corruption at both the national and international levels is a priority and that corruption is a serious barrier to effective resource mobilization and allocation and diverts resources away from activities that are vital for poverty eradication, the fight against hunger and sustainable development. We are determined to take urgent and decisive steps to continue to combat corruption in all of its manifestations, which requires strong institutions at all levels, and urge all States that have not yet done so to consider ratifying or acceding to the United Nations Convention against Corruption and begin its implementation.”¹

¹ 2010 UNGA outcome document paragraph 52

Moreover, UNDP's Strategic Plan (2018-2021) emphasizes 'strengthening effective, inclusive and accountable governance' in addressing complex and interconnected challenges such as shocks from crises, economic stagnation, inequality and poverty, providing access to clean and affordable energy or mitigating and adapting to climate change, etc. The Strategic Plan has highlighted anti-corruption to 'build inclusive, effective and accountable institutions and mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of conflict and for advancing cohesion', including ensuring the inclusion of women, youth and other vulnerable groups.

Responding to corruption challenges, strategic plans of UNDP since 2007 have acknowledged the need to support targeted initiatives and sectoral accountability mechanisms to address drivers of corruption. It is encouraging to note that UNDP has developed anti-corruption initiatives in 65 countries and has aimed to address corruption through its governance and public administration programmes in at least 124 countries. UNDP expenditures related to programmes that address drivers of corruption during the period 2008 to 2015 amounted to \$1.46b billion and initiatives related to strengthening AC policies were \$371 million²

UNDP is therefore undeniably one of the main providers of policy and programme support on anti-corruption with almost 124 countries in all 5 regions being supported on issues of transparency, accountability, integrity, etc. UNDP's Anti-Corruption programme for Peaceful and Inclusive Societies (ACPIS) and its predecessor initiatives coordinates UNDP's global support on anti-corruption with various partners and provides policy and programme support to UNDP Country Offices and programming countries, through UNDP Regional Hubs in Addis Ababa, Amman, Bangkok, Istanbul and Panama. ACPIS also manages anti-corruption knowledge and leads global advocacy on anti-corruption, with around **30 knowledge products** and **9 online courses** developed over a range of thematic areas, to support countries in increasing awareness, advocacy and knowledge in anti-corruption, and in developing and implementing anti-corruption activities.

With such a global reach through targeted knowledge products, advisory services, training programmes and participation at international conferences, UNDP has internally been able to keep pace and update itself with developments and trends in anti-corruption through its community of practices a network of professional colleagues with responsibilities to provide technical assistance in anti-corruption at the country, regional and global levels. The first anti-corruption COP was held in Seoul Korea in 2003 and attended by 17 UNDP anti-corruption advisors and specialists and participation grew to 90 experts by at the 2012 held CoP in Brasilia the capital city of Brazil. The increased focus on and demand for anti-corruption efforts around the world requires that UNDP practitioners, development partners, and the larger anti-corruption community keep abreast of recent developments, good practices, new tools and trends in anti-corruption technical assistance. UNDP, through ACPIS, continues to lead the discourse on anti-corruption by bringing members of the anti-corruption community together, through its Global and Regional Anti-Corruption Community of Practice (CoP) to exchange experiences, knowledge and expertise.

² Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Anti-corruption 2016 @ page 10

Experiences from past CoP meetings have shown that by actively promoting the exchange of knowledge and experiences at the global and regional levels, anti-corruption practitioners and key stakeholders have enhanced their analytical comprehension of the impact of anti-corruption initiatives. Not only has this raised awareness and advocacy, and encouraged active knowledge exchange on anti-corruption, it has also promoted enhanced coordination and cooperation between relevant internal and external stakeholders.

Regional Anti-Corruption Community of Practice

Since 2003, UNDP practitioners from Country Offices, regional bureaus and hubs, headquarters as well as representatives from key partner and donor organisations, gathered to take stock of developments in the nascent anti-corruption practice areas, share experiences and lessons learned, and develop appropriate policies and strategies to implement priorities, particularly looking into UNDP's mandates and competitive advantage. To date, global meetings have been held in Seoul (2003), Guatemala (2006), Athens (2008), Bangkok (2010), Brasilia (2012), and Malaysia (2015).

This year, UNDP's ACPIS and the Bangkok Regional Hub, through its regional initiative, "Promoting a Fair Business Environment" will be jointly organizing the Regional Anti-Corruption Community of Practice for Asia and the Pacific, from 11 to 12 June 2019, held in Bangkok.

Objectives of the Regional Anti-Corruption Community of Practice

This Regional CoP aims to take stock of the emerging trends and challenges on anti-corruption, particularly in the context of Asia and the Pacific, and position UNDP's work in the region within the context of the 2030 Agenda. This CoP will harness the wealth of information and knowledge from UNDP Country Offices, the Bangkok Regional Hub, headquarters, as well as key partner and donor organisations, the private sector, and civil society organisations.

- **Internal Capacity Development:** To provide an opportunity for UNDP practitioners to update themselves on emerging issues on corruption and development in the context of ASGs.
- **Policy development:** To equip members of the CoP with tools to support their host countries in the area of transparency, accountability and anti-corruption.
- **Community Needs and Priorities:** To identify needs and priorities of the CoP members
- **Knowledge Management:** To share experiences, good practices, strengthen knowledge sharing, and promote interactive knowledge management.

Based on the above priorities and building on the current trends of the anti-corruption agenda, this Regional CoP will address various emerging challenges highlighted below:

- Bridging the gap between policies and practices and shifting the discourse from only transparency to increasing accountability.
- Engaging with multiple stakeholders including governments, private sector, civil society, academia, to fight corruption collectively and more effectively.
- Developing a common understanding and sharing lessons learned on the prevention of corruption, including transparency and accountability in service delivery.

- Discussing the anti-corruption challenges related to implementing the 2030 Agenda, particularly the anti-corruption targets of Goal 16.
- Discussing the gaps in measuring and monitoring corruption and anti-corruption.
- Exploring the opportunities of innovation and technology for anti-corruption efforts.
- Strengthening UNDP's anti-corruption architecture, results and approach on anti-corruption.

Expected Outcomes

The Regional Anti-Corruption CoP will create an opportunity for anti-corruption practitioners, key partner and donor organisations, private sector, and civil society to network and share their experiences, knowledge and expertise. By providing insights on the region, exploring regional trends and identifying needs and entry points for policy and programmes, this Regional CoP will help shape UNDP priorities in advancing its anti-corruption agenda in Asia and the Pacific within the context of the 2030 Agenda.

While specific outcomes will evolve from discussions at the Regional CoP, this meeting will serve to reinforce anti-corruption learning and knowledge management. It will help position UNDP's anti-corruption work within the evolving global development agenda as well as within the ongoing work of partners.