Defining Characteristics of Citizens Organisations

- They are not formed to take political office
- They are not formed to seek profits
- They are formed to take action based on shared values and shared commitment amongst groups of citizens
Functions of Developmental Citizens Organisations

• To hold the government and business accountable to the citizen
• To allow citizens to associate
• To benefit the citizens
Fighting Corruption offers a powerful new theme for Citizens Organisations.

Fighting corruption is:
• Value based
• Affects the well-being of large numbers of citizens
• Offers a chance for:
  - new directions for existing citizen organisations
  - new citizens organisations
However...

Citizens organisations, if they are to be effective in the long fight against corruption, need:

• To have a strong constituency
• To be well governed
• To be well managed
• To have skills in advocacy
• To be focussed on winnable issues
• To be sustainable
Those opposing them will be:

• Politically strong
• Financially strong
• In control of the major media
Those opposing them will attack them for:

• Representing the views of a small, unrepresentative clique
• Being a tool of foreign interests
• Being unpatriotic
• Being politically motivated
Citizens Organisations are vulnerable to these accusations

NGOs need to:
• examine themselves carefully for the truth in these accusations
• prepare to refute these accusations
Accusation 1: Representing the views of a small clique

Difficult to refute: most Citizens Organisations working on corruption issues are NGOs with a shallow constituency and small membership
Accusation 2: A tool of foreign interests

Difficult to refute:
• they are almost completely dependent on foreign funding
• fighting corruption is generally seen as a donor driven agenda
Accusation 3: Unpatriotic

Easier to refute: very possible to show that the corrupt are the ones acting against the interests of the country
• requires research/good data
• requires good presentation skills
• requires good command of the media
Accusation 4: Politically motivated

Should be easy to refute: it requires -
• clear understanding in the public of what an NGO is
• a clearly non-partisan stance
• well-placed champions to defend you
Essentials for an NGO fighting corruption

• To have a strong constituency
• To be well governed
• To be well managed
• To have skills in advocacy
• To be focussed on winnable issues
• To be sustainable
To have a strong constituency

Citizens Organisations working on corruption are of two types:
1. Mutual Benefit Organisations
   composed of citizens who suffer corruption and want to change things to benefit themselves.
2. Public Benefit Organisations
   composed of self-selected citizens who perceive that corruption harms others or harms everyone. (NGOs)
Very few anti-corruption NGOs have:

• A constituency
• A membership
• A mandate from people who suffer the effects of corruption
  and many of them are also looking for these
Anti-Corruption NGOs need:

• The public to verify their stance
• Coalitions of citizens with direct experience of corruption to give them a mandate

They are legitimimized by the seriousness of the topic only so long as they can show popular support
Funding is an indication of popular support

Anti-corruption NGOs must raise a part of their funds locally

• this shows their popular support
• this defuses accusations of being foreign pawns
• this gives them independence from external donor conditions
To be well governed

Boards provide the governance function for the NGO. They own it. Board members must be:

- impeccable
- impressive
- interested

Many NGOs do not separate governance from management
Being a Board Member is a serious matter....

Board members must:

• set policy for the organisation
• advocate for the organisation
• fund-raise for the organisation
• be responsible for the organisation
• defend the organisation
To be well managed

NGOs are organisations. They need competence in:

- Governance
- Management Practices
- Human Resources
- Financial Management
- Service Delivery
- External Relations
- Sustainability
To have skills in Advocacy

NGOs fighting corruption are advocacy organisations. They need competence in:

• planning and objective setting
• media relations
• coalition building
• research and presentation
• negotiating
To be focussed on Winnable Issues

• What is your NGOs own capacity?
• What is your own ability to mobilize others?
• What are the external risks?
• What short term objectives can you achieve with what time and resources?
• Will these short term gains add to a broader campaign in the future?
To be sustainable

Fighting corruption is not a short term process: it is not a project.

It needs:

• broad base of support from the public
• strong arguments to donors to move from project to program funding, and to support sustainability strategies
• accessing a range of resource mobilization techniques
Sustainability is not just a financial issue

Sustainability needs a competent organisation which can:

• keep its staff,
• build up a body of knowledge and experience,
• develop a reputation and credibility,
• deliver on its mission
Citizens Organisations have a comparative advantage in anti-corruption work

They can:
• raise the consciousness of the people
• mobilise the people
• provide skills and direction to the people

They can also be donor driven, unrepresentative cliques of self-selected people with their own agendas.