

# REAL LIVES. TRUE STORIES.



Transparency International is a global movement with one vision: a world in which government, business, civil society and the daily lives of people are free of corruption. Through more than 100 chapters worldwide and an international secretariat in Berlin, we are leading the fight against corruption to turn this vision into reality.

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# 10 TRUE STORIES

...about very different people, in very different contexts.

But with one common message: change is always possible, even when the odds seem stacked against you. From India to Zimbabwe, these are stories about standing up and fighting back against corruption.

In the words of one citizen in Guatemala:

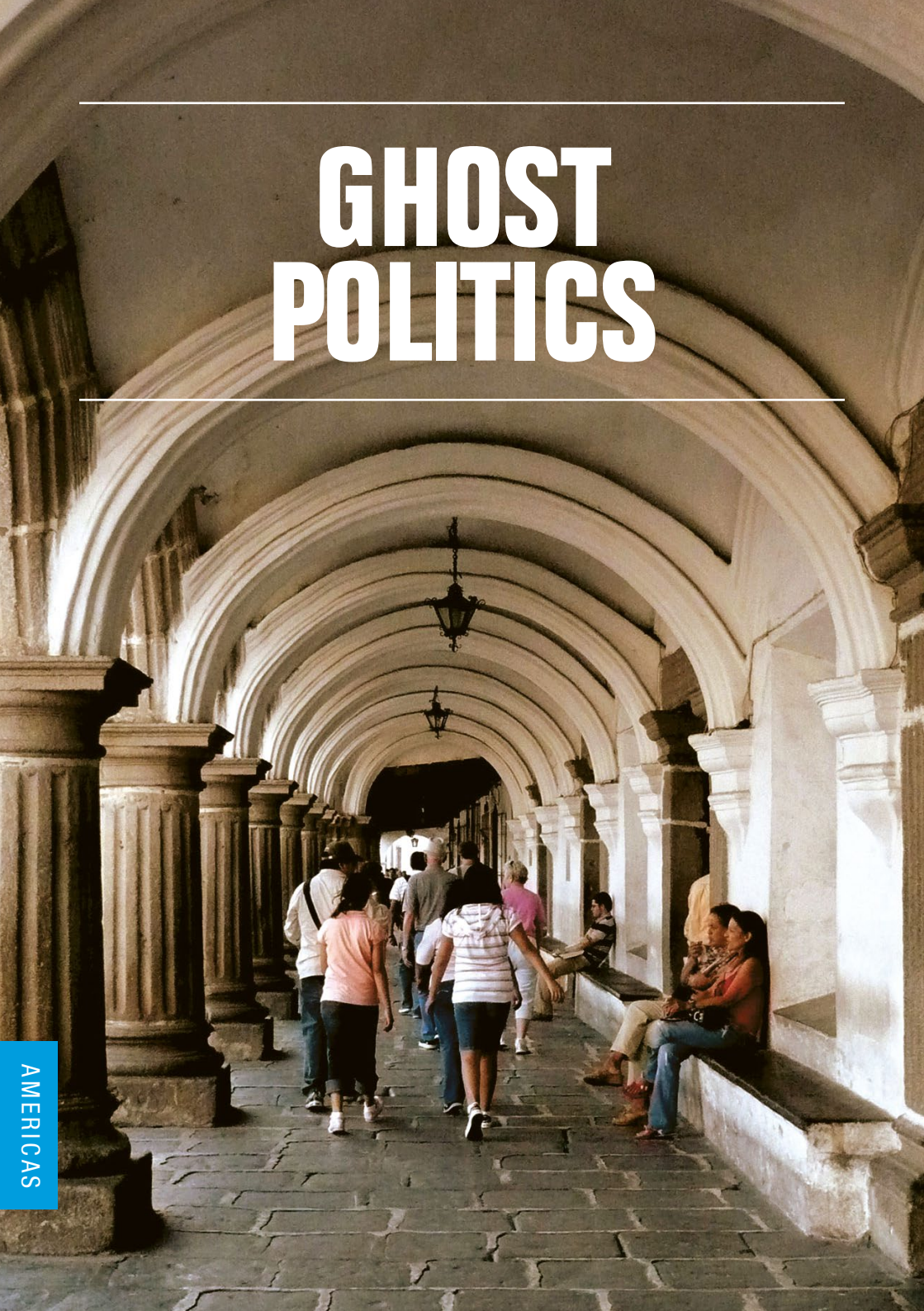
**“Now we are awake.”**

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# GHOST POLITICS

AMERICAS



# GUATEMALA



53.7% live below the poverty line



31% score for controlling the abuse of power for private gain



Highly corrupt

Very clean

29/100



Addressing crowds during campaign season, a local politician in Guatemala pledged that if he became mayor, he would invest urgently-needed funds into public services. When elections came, the crowds stretched far outside the polling booth, winding across the square.

The politician won. But he didn't keep to his word. A year into his leadership, schools continued to crumble, meals for children never arrived. According to rumours, the projects hadn't stalled due to a lack of money. A local person working in the public comptroller's office claimed the works were marked as completed in official reports. It looked as if the money had been paid out.

Amid growing frustration, residents started to gather for informal meetings in parks and houses. Soon their group swelled to more than 150 people. Petitioning the authorities, they were eventually granted access to the documents. Examining them, the full picture came into view. There were over 100 cheques paid out on projects that had no supporting documentation. All payments had

been collected and signed for by the mayor himself.

We met the community when they came to our legal advice centre for support. We contacted the public comptroller, calling for a full audit of the mayor's term in office. Opening investigations, they confirmed that irregularities had been found.

Meanwhile, it was election time again, and the mayor had already presented himself as a candidate. As news of the suspected abuse grew, his popularity plummeted. Yet he still secured a victory. The reason, say the residents, is that he paid neighbouring communities to vote, hiring buses to bring them to the booths. As outrage grew, the election was annulled and a new vote was held. This time local people positioned themselves at entry points to the town, keeping watch for any incoming buses. The mayor was defeated, and lost his immunity.

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**“He paid neighbouring communities to vote, hiring buses to bring them to the booths.”**

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The office of the comptroller general charged the mayor with misuse of more than US\$250,000 that was allegedly “invested” in ghost projects. He's paid an initial fine of US\$100,000 and is now awaiting trial. As his successor takes over, the residents continue to keep watch. “We are a group of men and women who have confronted the irregular practices of a mayor,” one man said. “Now we are awake.”

# VENEZUELA



25.4% live below the poverty line



83% think the police are corrupt



Highly corrupt | Very clean |  
20/100



Fifty-year old Carmela\* was sleeping at home when she was woken by banging and shouting from the apartment above, where her son lives. Rushing upstairs, she says she found the 27-year-old mechanic being beaten by police officers. Ignoring her cries, the officers dragged him from the apartment and took him to their local headquarters, where they demanded payment for his release.

We met Carmela when we started working with her community in Venezuela, a makeshift settlement where homeless people are allowed to erect houses on state-owned land. The people we met there complain that they suffer constant harassment from certain police officers. They say these officers demand bribes in return for leaving them in peace. If they refuse to pay, they reportedly risk incrimination, illegal detention, and physical and sexual assault. Others told us that the officers confiscate identification cards and demand payment for their return – reportedly asking for as much as much as several thousand US dollars. Local

people say they fear their cards will be dropped at a crime scene if they refuse to hand over the money. As a result, most find a way to make the payment.

For Carmela, this was impossible. She has four children. One suffers from cancer. Another committed suicide, leaving her with five grandchildren, the youngest aged only three. Her small income as a housekeeper does not provide her with money to pay off police officers.

**“If they refuse to pay, they risk incrimination, detention and assault.”**

Acting on Carmela's behalf, we contacted senior government and police officials, calling on them to take action. As a result, when she went to the local police headquarters to pay the bribe, the state authorities were watching. As soon as the money changed hands, they moved in and arrested the officers involved. Her son was released without payment. The police officers were detained and now await trial, while a full investigation is underway.

\*Name has been changed.



A close-up photograph of a police officer's hands holding a large, clear riot shield. The shield is held in front of the officer's torso. The shield has a black horizontal band across its middle with the word 'POLICIA' in white capital letters. The shield is secured with four metal bolts. The officer is wearing a dark uniform and black boots. The background is a paved ground with red and grey bricks.

# POLICE CRACKDOWN

**POLICIA**



A photograph of a traditional wooden door made of vertical planks, set within a frame of red brick walls and a tiled roof. The door is closed and has several metal bolts visible. The text "INFORMED, EMPOWERED" is overlaid in large white letters. The background shows a rustic setting with a tiled roof and brick walls.

# INFORMED, EMPOWERED

ASIA  
PACIFIC



# INDIA



21.9% live below the poverty line



58% have paid a bribe to land services



Highly corrupt

Very clean

36/100



In the rural district of Bihar, India, a community centre is packed with people. It's hot and full, but the crowd is silent. Standing at the front of the room, a man in his twenties is telling his story. While speaking, he breaks into tears.

The man's name is Altaf\*. He lives and works with his family on a nearby plot of land. Legally, his family are entitled to the land, but first they need a land entitlement certificate. And getting hold of the document is not as easy as it might seem.

Altaf says he first applied at the land revenue office more than two years ago. Every time he enquires at the office, staff demand a bribe of 2,000 rupees (US\$32). Unable to pay, he was terrified of what would happen next. This is a state where almost half are landless, and it's not uncommon for people to be forcibly removed from their homes – Altaf had seen this happen to his neighbours. Like many others, he had come to our meeting for help.

"Our trainings give people skills to uphold their rights," says Akanksha of

Transparency International India, who helped organise this meeting in 2012. For Altaf, help came in the form of India's Right to Information Act.

As Akanksha explains, public information requests can be very effective against bribery. "When a citizen sends in a request, local bureaucrats are forced to provide an official update on the status of an application – often, this is enough to stop them withholding documents and demanding bribes."

We helped Altaf file an information request about his application. When there was no response, we filed another, prompting the district authority to open an investigation.

## "Our trainings give people skills to uphold their rights."

Unable to provide a legitimate reason for delaying the application, the land office restarted the process. It took six months, but Altaf's family received their documents, and with it the assurance that they can stay in their home.

And they weren't the only ones – suddenly the officials began approving pending applications. Now the case is encouraging others to come forward. "Citizens were previously scared to speak out, or felt there was no point," says Akanksha. "Altaf's story is helping us change their minds."

\*Name has been changed.

# PAPUA NEW GUINEA



39.9% live below the poverty line



70% think public officials and civil servants are corrupt



Highly corrupt

Very clean

25/100



Simon did not set out to become a whistleblower. He set out to build a proper school. Yet this was what happened to this education chair from Papua New Guinea, whose fight against corruption took him from a day job in a school to a sting operation in the dead of night.

His story starts more than five years ago, when the government announced new funds for school buildings. Operating on a tight budget, his school had little money for improvements and buildings badly needed repair.

But the money never showed up. At first, Simon assumed there had been an administrative error, yet every time he visited the authorities, he heard the same excuses: the officers weren't in, come back tomorrow, come back next week.

After more than two years chasing the payments, it finally seemed like there was a breakthrough – he was contacted by people claiming to be officials who could release the funds. But there was a catch – he'd need

to pay 30,000 kina (US \$13,300) in “processing fees”.

“This was the time I came face to face with corruption,” Simon says.

He called our legal advice centre, and we helped him approach the police. Together, a plan was formed. Under the cover of night, Simon met his unknown correspondents in a hotel room, his pockets filled with cash. At the moment when he was handing over the bribe, police stormed in and arrested the “officials” red-handed.

But his fight wasn't over yet. Investigations began, then seemed to stall. So we helped him blow the story open. Holding a press conference, we called on the authorities to explain what had happened, inviting officials to discuss the case on radio. Soon, other schools came forward to say they were also waiting for their money.

**“This was the time I came face to face with corruption.”**

With the authorities in the spotlight, Simon's school finally received its funding. Visit the site today, and you'll see building projects underway. For Simon the effort was worth it. “The fight against corruption is long and tedious,” he says, “but courage to do the right thing can see you through.”

# SCHOOL STING





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**“We want all citizens to get the treatment they deserve, regardless of whether they have money and powerful connections.”**

## AZERBAIJAN

So says Kanan from our Azerbaijani legal advice centre. We took action in Azerbaijan after a child was denied an urgent eye operation because her mother couldn't pay an illegal €1,200 fee. Calling on the health ministry to investigate, we asked why the mother's own complaints had been ignored. Soon, the six year-old received her first operation. Today she can see without difficulty. Now we're working to help others speak out on corruption.



## BRAZIL

These people have been trekking for days through hot and dusty savannah. The reason? They're fighting back against corruption in Piauí, Brazil – where drought has reached emergency levels, despite federal investment into infrastructure. Local people say construction is being delayed by a powerful few who use the shortage to extort money and votes from communities desperate for water. Travelling to remote villages, we're helping people fight back.



## PALESTINE

More than US\$64,000 of public money was reclaimed in Palestine after one man took on a tax-evading electricity company. After reading one of our reports, he came to us with evidence that the firm was dodging tax by falsely registering as a cooperative. Together, we called on the finance ministry to investigate. Thanks to him, the public regained the money, the company is now paying its taxes, and the ministry is taking action to stop other firms playing the same trick.

**“Officials didn’t tell the women about the money. Instead, they made lists of fake mothers, and pocketed the cash themselves.”**

## NEPAL

This is what a whistleblower told us in Nepal, where certain officials were abusing a government scheme designed to cut maternal mortality. The initiative – which offered payments to women who gave birth in hospital – aimed to reduce high numbers of unsupervised births. But in one district, the money wasn’t getting through. We released the story to the media, prompting the officials to own up and return the money to those who need it most – new mothers.

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# HONESTY TEST

EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA



# HUNGARY



Average monthly wage: US\$1,114



12% have paid a bribe



Highly corrupt

Very clean

54/100

On a busy street in Hungary, Márton\* practised his driving skills with his instructor. It was days before his test, and he felt a blend of excitement and nerves. As the lesson drew to a close, he pulled the car to a halt and waited for final feedback from his teacher.

What came next was not what he had expected. Márton's driving instructor told him that if he wanted to pass his test, he would need to bribe the examiner. If Márton gave the instructor 25,000 Hungarian forints (US\$100), he would happily act as a go-between, making sure the examiner received his money before the test began.

Márton did not know how to respond, and as time ticked down to the test date he searched the internet for advice.

It was then that he came across the website for our legal advice centre. With only 30 minutes to go until the deadline for paying his driving instructor, Márton called the centre and reported the incident.

"We realised immediately that there

wasn't time to involve the police," says Miklós, an expert who works at the centre, "so we advised Márton to postpone payment by telling his instructor he hadn't managed to get the money yet. After confirming the district where the transfer was supposed to take place, we called the local police station with Márton's story."

With our support, Márton agreed to take part in a police sting operation. Calling his instructor, he arranged a time to meet and hand over the money. In the meantime, he took the money to the police, who recorded the serial numbers on the bank notes. After Márton handed over the cash, the police followed the instructor. When he took the money to the examiner, they recorded the transaction on video and arrested them both, using the cash serial numbers as evidence. Márton was fully reimbursed – and is now looking forward to a corruption-free driving test.

**"We realised immediately that there wasn't time to involve the police."**

Already, the story is inspiring others to refuse corruption. "Since we posted the news on our website, we've had a surge of reports from victims of bribery," says Miklós. "Petty corruption is common here, but people are realising they don't have to accept it. Márton's story is helping us turn the tide."

\*Name has been changed.

# KOSOVO



29.7% live below the poverty line



70% think health and medical services are corrupt



Highly corrupt

Very clean

33/100



With price tags running into millions of dollars, health contracts mean big money for winning companies and high risks of corruption – particularly when deals are kept from public scrutiny.

In Kosovo – still in a transitional phase – it's vital that public money is well-spent. With limited resources, adding one drug to the state shopping list can mean removing another. That's why our centre keeps watch over new procurement contracts. Consulting with experts, we help ensure contracts go to the best bidder, at the best price. In late 2012, one item started to raise alarm bells.

Examining the medication on the state's essential drugs list, we found an anti-nausea drug listed under treatments for cancer. And it wasn't only that it had been misclassified – the drug also seemed to be mispriced.

“Two years earlier the state had purchased two different kinds of anti-vomiting medication at a cost of just €7,920,” says Merita, who led the monitoring initiative. “Now, the two previous brands had been cancelled in favour of a new alternative, and the

total price had skyrocketed to €1.2 million.”

Put another way – there had been a 15,000 per cent increase in the bill. It wasn't only that this new medication was almost 60 times more expensive per unit, the quantities on order had more than doubled.

We asked pharmaceutical experts if there were any medicinal benefits to this new alternative. They couldn't find any. We also looked to see if any neighbouring countries chose to rely exclusively on this alternative. No examples were found.

When we released our findings to the media, the health minister swiftly organised a committee to look into the charges. As the final authority for signing high-value contracts, the minister has the power to refuse a deal. Following consultation with the committee, he publicly accepted our analysis, and refused to sign off. The medication was removed from the essential drugs list, and reclassified as an anti-nausea treatment.

**“One item started to raise alarm bells.”**

Taken up by the state prosecutor and the local economic police, an investigation is ongoing into how the case came about. While there have been no official results so far, one message is clear already, says Merita. “Health procurement is too important to be kept in the shadows. For both our budget and our safety, the public has to be able to keep watch.”

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# DRUG DEAL

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# EMERGENCY HELP

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

# MOROCCO



8.9% live below the poverty line



51% have paid a bribe to health and medical services



Highly corrupt

Very clean

37/100



Kamal's\* anxiety increased with the heat of the day. His 11-year-old daughter, who is partially blind, had injured her head and urgently needed a brain scan. It was a hot, sticky day in Casablanca, and they sat uncomfortably in the hospital, waiting for the doctor.

Eventually, the nurse in charge of brain scans spoke to them. He told Kamal that it would be several months before they would be able to find an appointment for his daughter. If he wanted her to be seen sooner, Kamal should return early the next morning with 500 dirhams (US\$60) on top of the standard 200 dirhams (US\$24) scan fee. For Kamal, a market vendor, paying the nurse would mean finding around a third of his monthly income overnight.

It's a dilemma that regularly faces too many parents around the world – pay an illegal backhander, or risk the health of your child. Fortunately, Kamal knew of an alternative. Calling our anti-corruption helpline, he reported what had happened to him. When our advisors recommended

that he file a complaint directly to the Attorney General's Office, he quickly agreed, and presented the complaint in person that day.

As a result, he wasn't alone when he arrived at the hospital the next morning. Unnoticed by the nurse, the two men who arrived with Kamal were undercover police officers. When the nurse arrived and asked for his money, the officers arrested him on the spot. After a fast-moving court case, the nurse was imprisoned for two months. In the meantime, Kamal's daughter received the scan she so urgently needed – free from any excess charge.

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**“After a fast-moving court case, the nurse was imprisoned for two months.”**

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With help, more citizens could follow this example, says Ali, coordinator of the legal advice centre. “All Moroccans are legally entitled to call for police assistance when faced with bribery, but most people either don't know about this right, or they don't use it for fear of retaliation or demands for more bribes.”

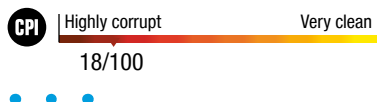
Kamal agrees. “We need to make sure there is real protection and support for people who speak out,” he says, “then more people in situations like mine can come forward and take action against corruption.”

\*Name has been changed.

# YEMEN

↓ 34.8% live below the poverty line

★ 69% think the police are corrupt



Picture the scene: you own a small shop on a busy street in a capital city. Arriving at work, it's clear there has been a burglary. Someone has burst through an inside wall – there's rubble and smashed glass everywhere. The door of the safe is hanging open, and the money has gone. So has US\$15,000 worth of merchandise.

You go straight to the police, but as soon as you start explaining what's happened, the on-duty officer stops you. He can't write anything down, he says, until he's been paid several hundred dollars. Next, the detective arrives to take fingerprints. He wants his money, too.

That was the scene that 33-year-old Hussein\* says he confronted in late 2011. The owner of an electronic shop in the Yemeni capital of Sana'a, Hussein's business is located just blocks from where the country's deposed president is under house arrest, and the road is lined with countless police cars day and night. Despite this, he says that there was little chance of finding an officer to help him. Like almost 60 per cent of

Yemenis, he had to pay a bribe before the police would listen to him.

"Security is extremely fragile in Yemen, and the police are paid little, so if you want something done, you need money," says Tawfiq, Executive Director of our centre in the country. "We've heard families of kidnap victims being asked to hand over thousands of dollars before the police would take up the case."

Hussein's bill was US\$1,200 – the equivalent of the country's GNI per capita. And even if you manage to pay, he says, there's still the chance you'll get out-bid.

**"He can't write anything down, he says, until he's been paid."**

"I was contacted by the deputy police chief while the investigation was supposedly ongoing", Hussein says. "He offered to pay me half of all damages as long as I dropped the charges." Hussein believes that while he was paying the police to investigate the crime, others might have been paying them to ignore it. Months have passed, he says, but still no-one has been arrested.

Hussein's testimony paints a grim picture, and it's only one of many we've heard. Change is needed urgently. "Corrupt policing undermines safety and dignity," says Tawfiq. "The people of Yemen deserve better."

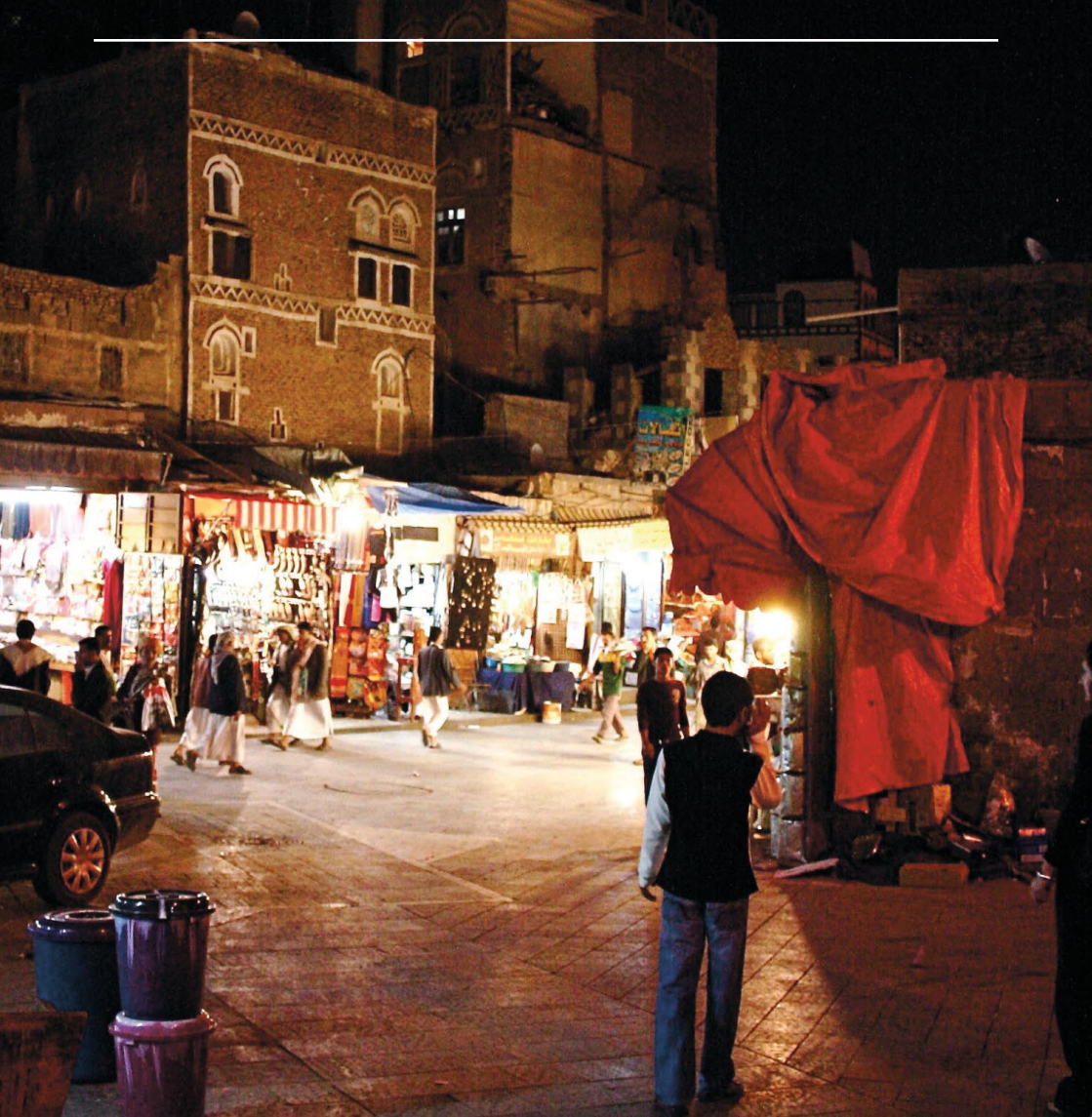
\*Name has been changed.



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# PRICE OF JUSTICE

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# STEALING FUTURES


SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA


REPUBLIQUE DU CAMERO  
Paix - Travail - Patrie  
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# CAMEROON

 39.9% live below the poverty line

 36% have paid a bribe to education services

 | Highly corrupt | Very clean |  
25/100

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It should be a proud day for any family. Each December in Cameroon, parents collect their children's primary school report cards, showing grades for first term exams. In a coastal town in the south of the country, Samuel\* went to collect cards for his four children.

On arrival, he found his children were among 100 to be refused certificates. According to the head teacher, it was the parents, not the students, who were to blame – they had failed to pay fees to the school's parent teacher association. Despite a law that clearly makes these payments voluntary, the teacher was demanding 5,000 Central African Francs (US\$10) per child before he would hand over the certificate.

Panic in the crowd was growing. Poverty is high in this fishing and mining community, and families struggle to survive on tight budgets. Yet without the card, students can't go into the next school term.

"Children in Cameroon are often punished or expelled because their families can't afford these association fees," says Hulloge, who works for

our legal advice centre in Cameroon. "Parents know the demands are illegal, but given the risks to their child's future they feel they have no choice but to pay."

But in Samuel's case, things worked out differently. Throughout 2012, we held public meetings and radio discussions encouraging parents to speak out about illegal demands. Samuel, who works at a local radio station, had heard the campaign, and reported the events to the authorities.

When they didn't respond, he came to our legal advice centre. We contacted the Ministry of Education on his behalf, which in turn approached the regional inspector general. Responding quickly, the inspector instructed the head teacher to issue all report cards unconditionally and immediately. Soon after, the parents had their children's report cards in their hands.

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## "Panic in the crowd was growing."

"Changing one school isn't enough," says Hulloge, "we want to stamp out these illegal fees for good. When we ran a petition calling on the government to take action, thousands of people added their names to the list. We'll make sure these voices are heard."

\*Name has been changed.



# ZIMBABWE



72.3% live below the poverty line



70% think public officials  
and civil servants are corrupt



Highly corrupt

Very clean

21/100



Around 200 kilometres from the Zimbabwean capital Harare lies the region of Hurungwe. Drought is common here, and back in 2011, minimal rainfall left crops devastated. Families had no surplus food to sell, and no money to buy grain. Nationally, an estimated one in three children suffered from malnutrition that year. Hurungwe was among the worst hit.

Help should have come from a state grain scheme that allocated seeds, grain and fertilisers to impoverished farmers, helping them survive through the next harvest. Yet when our legal advice centre visited the region, people told a very different story.

“Everyone kept mentioning one particular official,” says Danai, an officer from our legal advice centre. “They claimed he had been abusing his position for more than 10 years. Instead of giving out the supplies for free, he’d charge extortionate amounts from desperate farmers, making as much as US\$1,000 a day in profits. The only people who got the grain without paying were members of the ruling party. If depot staff tried to

leak the information to the public, they were threatened and dismissed.”

Taking on the case, Danai contacted the grain marketing board, asking to meet with them.

“They said no at first, but I persisted until they responded to me,” she says. “A few weeks after we first spoke, they got back to me. They said they had investigated, and while they did not have enough evidence to dismiss the official, they had decided to move him closer to the head office so he could be kept under surveillance.”

**“Instead of giving out the supplies for free, he’d charge extortionate amounts from desperate farmers.”**

She remembers the response from the community when they heard the news. “The women living there called me,” she says, “they were so happy that after 10 years someone had managed to get the manager removed from the depot.”

Today, Danai and her team are checking to ensure the villagers receive their subsidies. The bigger solution, though, is greater public scrutiny. “The grain initiative is so important, but there’s a lack of transparency in how it’s administered,” says Danai. “If we want to stop this kind of abuse happening again, this needs to change.”

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# HUNGER MONEY

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# THE STORY CONTINUES

From cities to rural villages, the voices speaking out against corruption are growing, both in number and in impact. They're getting children back into education, retrieving money from corrupt politicians and blowing the lid on backroom deals.

Find out how they're doing it:

**[www.transparency.org/stories](http://www.transparency.org/stories)**





## **NO ONE SHOULD HAVE TO FACE CORRUPTION ALONE.**

Working in more than 60 countries, our anti-corruption legal advice centres provide people with free confidential support against corruption, and the guidance to ensure their voice is heard.

## **HOW CAN YOU HELP?**

More than 140,000 people have contacted our centres so far. With your support, we could reach thousands more. Even a small donation can make a real difference.

## **WHAT'S NEEDED?**

Your donation could support a range of activities, whether it's a toll-free hotline, community outreach, or legal support. Please donate today!

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