



Fighting Corruption in Cameroon: Why Collaborative Non-Confrontation Matters

The University of Buea: Five Years On After PTF Funding Support

The University of Buea is no more ignorant of the added value that curbing corruption brings to the reputation of the University as a whole. Since 2009 FITCAM and its Partners (Partnership for Transparency Fund) have been working with students, lecturers, support staff and top management of the University of Buea to support anti-corruption and integrity building activities. During the first two years (2009-2011) widespread corrupt practices at the top management level of the university made it quite difficult for FITCAM to enlist the support and commitment of the newly created University of Buea Anti-Corruption Sub-Committees to begin the process of cleaning UB of corrupt practices.

Eventually, a series of proposed meetings, trainings and investigative activities on corrupt practices at the university were pushed out of the university campus, forcing FITCAM to carry out training and capacity building activities for UB Anti-Corruption Sub-Committees outside of the University. Instead of signing off the Buea University as a no go area to confront the monster of corruption that was ravaging public resources, professionalism and academic potential of its more than seven thousand (7000) students and staff, FITCAM adopted an approach of collaboration and non-confrontation and mobilized support from a few following within the administration of the university, who became convinced that addressing and tackling the problem of corruption in UB was the right and just thing to do.

As a result a number of advocacy activities were conducted not to name and shame those who were identified to be perpetrators of corrupt practices but rather to gain support to tackle corruption in the university from the Higher Education Ministry. Our persistence and dedication to this cause permitted FITCAM to enlist the support of the Minister of Higher Education of Cameroon who came on board to press all universities to install mechanism to counter

corruption and to allow access to FITCAM and its support initiatives to monitor and counter corrupt practices in universities.



In that same year, we were able to draw attention in a challenging and yet constructive way, to the problems of corruption within higher education as a university leadership that was initially skeptical in the Buea University came around to recognize the extent of the problem.

Today, FITCAM is not only able to carry out anti-corruption investigations and monitoring of public expenditures in the university of Buea, but more importantly the university's top administrators are working with FITCAM to 'change a culture of corruption' from all angles of university activity. Early this year (2015) FITCAM became the first civil society organization to deliver an academic working worth up to 12 semester credits for the first badge of the Buea University Masters in Business Administration Students. One of the key workshop material titled 'Anti-Corruption: What It Means to the Economy' can be found here ([link](#)).



In an effort to continue the work started by FITCAM in 2009, the University of Buea's top management is financing the training of the university of Buea students on Public Service Integrity and Nonviolence Discipline; leading up to the creation of an 'Anti-Corruption and Nonviolence Discipline Club in UB as of March 2015. A complete payment of all arrears owed members of the University of Buea Anti-Corruption Sub-Committees have been made, to be followed by a second training for the Committees by April 2015 financed by the University of Buea's Department for Internal Control and Evaluation.



According to the Vice Chancellor of the University, Dr Nalova Lyonga; UB needs to clean up its acts in order to achieve its full potential as the premier University of Cameroon. In the views of FITCAM which is collaborating with the university on these UB clean up initiatives, Cameroon as a nation has a vast number of young people,

whose education is critical to its social and economic development. It is vital that they experience a system that is fair and clean of corruption, enabling them to achieve their potential, and providing an example of excellence at the start of their careers. A new diploma course program on Anti-Corruption and Nonviolence Discipline will soon to implement by midyear-2015 through a partnership between the University of Buea and FITCAM under the University's Department of Economics and Management Studies.

Through persistence and dedication our Team has learned that constructive engagement with public officials works much better than confrontation and denouncing malpractice, especially in a context where the whistle-blower has little or no protection. Howbeit, we have equally learned that constructive engagement does not come about automatically, since it is based on mutual trust and commitment to a common goal of avoiding waste of financial and other scarce resources. Rather, constructive engagement and its gains come about when, in their battle for accountability and transparency civil society actors learn to remain persistent and dedicated.

Also leaders or organizations working against corruption should be able to identify actors (a person or group of people) within organizations and public service institutions (even within those that strongly oppose anti-corruption activities) who can engage their active support and advocacy in addressing identified corrupt practice.



For us we believe that Anti-Corruption should not just be perceived as a mechanism for intervention when aiming for development and poverty reduction but rather an ideological framework that is capable of leading our societies and economies in ways that points to all that 'our lives and well-being are all interrelated and sustainability depends on how we effectively manage both our human and environmental resources.

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