

Human Rights and Corruption

City Challenges and Possibilities

Date & Time: October 6, 16:00-18:00 KST / 9:00-11:00 CEST

Organizer: Raoul Wallenberg Institute (RWI)

Background

It is today widely recognized that corruption is a major impediment for the enjoyment of human rights and realisation of the sustainable development goals.

Corruption impacts the states' capacities to provide for its citizens; it undermines public investments in social infrastructures, erodes the rule of law, distorts the functioning of justice systems, interferes with political processes and affects delivery of basic goods and services, such as access to education and adequate health care. Corruption undermines the fair distribution of resources, diverts funds meant for poverty alleviation programs, and perpetuates a cycle of inequality. By addressing corruption and promoting transparency, accountability, and good governance, societies can ensure that resources intended for poverty reduction are effectively utilized and reach those who need them the most.

Corruption, in different shapes and forms, also exist all over the over world. It thrives in societies where there is a concentration of powers in the executive, inadequate or non-existent checks and balances, poor transparency, restricted access to information, weak institutions and dysfunctional systems of oversight and enforcements, a controlled media and lack of public trust in state institutions, governance and politics. Conversely, corrupt practices appear to be less frequent in societies with a high level of freedom of information, an independent judiciary, effective checks and balances, transparent public decision-making and a vibrant civil society.

Hence, it can be argued the respect for human rights and the rule of law correlates with the level of corruption in society, and that increasing enjoyment of human rights can contribute to the reduction of corruption, and poverty, in society.

Fighting corruption must happen within the boundaries of human rights and the rule of law. Thus, increased knowledge on international human rights standards, principles and values, such as,



empowerment, non-discrimination and diversity, equality and equity, participation and inclusion, integrity, transparency and accountability, are important preventive measures in the fight against corruption.

This illustrates and emphasize the need for education, professional training and awareness-raising programmes on the nexus between human rights and corruption at all levels of society, including cities, to promote the development of societies that are based on human rights, trustworthy institutions and the rule of law.

We need an integrated and holistic approach that promotes prevention and promote rights. This includes institutional reform programmes that, inter alia, address governance structures and legal frameworks, as well as actions that contributes to changes in public and institutional ethical frameworks and advances values, attitudes, and behaviours in respect of rule of law, works to fulfil the enjoyment of human rights and leaves no-one behind.

On one side, we need to persuade and involve decision-makers in their obligations and responsibilities as duty-bearers and political actors in the work to prevent corrupt practices and promote the enjoyment of human rights. And on the other side we need to encourage increased participation and inclusiveness of the population and citizens, especially those in the margins of the political, social and economic orders, that often are and/or feel left out of decision-making processes and institutions.

This entails advancing collaborations between civil society, academic institutions, the business community, local councils, anti-corruption bodies, national human rights institutions, the media, and criminal justice institutions, and the city populations and city decision makers.

Objectives

The overall goal is for participants to discuss and reach a better and deeper understanding of the relationships between corruption and human rights and how it affects populations and societies, and what we – as a community of practice (public and non-public)– can do to prevent corrupt practices and promote human rights at the local level. More specifically the goal is to deepen the knowledge and understanding of the capacity and powers of cities to combat corruption role of cities (and municipalities).

A session report with key takeaways for future actions will also be produced.

Main Agendas

In this session, we will discuss three overall issues concerning the relationship between corruption and human rights.

1. **How can we foster a deeper and better understanding of human rights, poverty and corruption relationships in the city, be it amongst practitioners, decision makers or city population?**
 - What are the main opportunities and potentials to achieve a deeper and better understanding of the relationships between poverty, corruption and human rights, and how the two agendas could reinforce each other in practice?
2. **How can a deeper and better understanding of human rights and corruption relationships, assist or contribute to improved and increased prevention of corruption and promotion of human rights?**
 - What can and needs to be done?
 - How can these action be followed up in terms of decreased poverty/risk of poverty?
3. **What are the obligation and responsibilities of citizens, institutions and decision makers?**
 - Who does what?
 - What are the limitations? How can they be managed?

