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Mobilising People

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Changing the Rules of the Game

Workshop: People Count: Citizen Empowerment, Grass-Roots Action, Corruption Disruption

Everyday citizens bear the brunt of corruption and suffer from it. But they also have power and are proving they are not passive recipients of elite-driven initiatives, but drivers of accountability, reform and change. Mobilized citizens, engaged in organized nonviolent tactics, constitute a social force that can exert pressure on the state as well as on other sectors. They often target graft that is most harmful or common to the public, particularly the poor. Citizens make use of a multitude of tactics, such as demanding information, social audits, monitoring, social networking, low-risk mass actions, street theatre, protests and petitions.

People power may be particularly suited to a systemic approach to curbing corruption. It consists of extra-institutional pressure to push for change, when power-holders are corrupt and unaccountable, and institutional channels are blocked or ineffective. Thus, bottom-up approaches can complement and reinforce top-down administrative strategies.

Together, we'll examine the dynamics of people power and civil resistance, and share insights and experiences about mobilizing citizens, creative tactics, and overcoming apathy and fear. We'll learn about grass-roots campaigns and movements from activists, and jointly discuss the need for strategy, general lessons learned, and pitfalls of rote copying of tactics. This session is coordinated by Shaazka Beyerle of the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict.

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