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CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK





Chapter 1 - Conceptual framework

Chapter overview

Guiding question:

What information, data, research and concepts are the present guide based on?

Key points:

- ➔ This present guide fills the gap between the intention of anti-corruption authorities to engage young people and the lack of guidance available on how to do so in a meaningful way.
- ➔ Three concepts relate to the nexus of meaningful youth engagement and the work of anti-corruption authorities:
 - ◆ Youth engagement: Depending on their role and the type of engagement, the contribution of young people can be categorized as “voice”, “insight” or “action”.
 - ◆ Meaningful youth engagement: To make youth engagement meaningful, it must occur under certain circumstances, which are defined by the five themes of meaningful youth engagement: diversity and inclusion, engagement-enabling environment, intergenerational collaboration, quality youth participation and youth empowerment.
 - ◆ The work of anti-corruption agencies is categorized into five functions: prevention, law enforcement, public outreach/awareness-raising, education and regulation/policymaking.
- ➔ The present guide is based on the study of existing literature and primary research (both qualitative and quantitative data).

1A. Policy guidance on meaningful youth engagement for anti-corruption authorities

The fight against corruption is not the responsibility of Governments and anti-corruption authorities alone. The importance of a multi-stakeholder approach is increasingly acknowledged through global policy instruments. This includes the United Nations Convention against Corruption, in which in article 13.1 stipulates that States parties are urged to “take appropriate measures to promote the active participation of individuals and groups outside the public sector, such as civil society.”

As members of civil society, young people play an important role in strengthening anti-corruption efforts in their countries and territories and it is essential that they continue to be encouraged, empowered and enabled to perform it. The Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, at its ninth session, held in Sharm El-Sheikh from 13 to 17 December 2021, adopted resolution 9/8, affirmed the need to “promote the role of education and youth empowerment in preventing and countering corruption”. It reiterated the importance of a strengthened and coordinated approach to support anti-corruption education, engagement and the empowerment of young people.

While the importance of engaging young people has been stressed, there is a lack of guidance on how anti-corruption authorities can achieve this engagement. The present guide is intended to bridge this gap and to assist anti-corruption authorities and stakeholders from the international anti-corruption community in meaningfully engaging young people in their work. It seeks to add value to anti-corruption authorities that are already engaging young people in their work, deepening this collaboration, and to inform and inspire anti-corruption authorities that have not yet embarked on this journey. It is also aimed at being a useful resource for anti-corruption policymakers from related government departments and for other stakeholders, including international organizations, academia, development partners, civil society and young people themselves. The target audience for the present guide includes officers and managers of anti-corruption authorities and other policymakers who spearhead national anti-corruption efforts in their countries and territories.

To provide useful and practical guidance, the present guide focuses on the implementation of youth engagement approaches. While theoretical concepts are briefly included, the emphasis is on sharing advice and examples to operationalize them. The basis for such guidance is both a review of existing research and the collection of primary data to understand the current practices, needs and interests of anti-corruption authorities around the world.

The present guide is not intended as a standalone product but as an initial impetus to create for anti-corruption authorities a community of practice for meaningful youth engagement. To this end, details of a web portal for peer learning through the sharing of experiences, tools and lessons learned, as well as the results of the research for this report and initial practical examples, are also provided. It can be found at <https://www.icac.org.hk/icac/myeguide/>. In addition, further ideas for accompanying measures to support the implementation of the recommendations outlined in this guide are provided in chapter 4.



1B. Definitions of terms and concepts

The following terms and concepts underpin the discussions in the present guide:

Youth: Individuals aged between 15 and 30. While the official definition of youth provided by the United Nations refers to persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years (and indeed, all United Nations statistics on youth are based on this definition), the United Nations recognizes that “the operational definition and nuances of the term ‘youth’ vary from country to country”¹ as it relates to sociocultural, institutional, economic and political factors, and adapts to the countries where it operates.² In line with this flexible definition of youth, for the purposes of the present guide, the upper age limit of the definition of youth has been extended to 30 years.

Youth engagement: Two main factors define how young people engaging in anti-corruption activities can contribute to their planning and design, implementation and results:

- ➔ **Role:** Young people can have different levels of responsibility, such as participants, volunteers, paid interns, young anti-corruption authority staff, partners or initiative leaders.
- ➔ **Type:** Young people can contribute to anti-corruption authorities’ activities in different forms depending on how their strengths are leveraged. In the present guide, youth engagement activities are divided into the following three categories:³
 - ◆ **Voice:** engaging constructively in dialogue and raising issues that affect them with stakeholders and decision-makers including anti-corruption authorities
 - ◆ **Insight:** gathering and communicating knowledge from young people to inform decisions of anti-corruption authorities, including their policies and programmes
 - ◆ **Action:** leading or participating in initiatives to address issues affecting them and their communities, including anti-corruption-related activities

These are not strict distinctions and for many activities they may overlap. The definitions provide a useful conceptual framework for understanding the different types of engagement of young people.

¹ United Nations, “Global Issues: Youth”.

² General Assembly resolution 36/81; and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Meaningfully engaging with youth* (Paris, 2019).

³ The concept is drawn from the research detailed in Plan International and Asian Development Bank, *What’s the evidence? Youth engagement and the Sustainable Development Goals* (2018).

Meaningful youth engagement in anti-corruption: Youth engagement that occurs under enabling conditions, whereby young people actively participate at different stages of an anti-corruption initiative, in collaboration with stakeholders, and which results in their empowerment and the promotion of anti-corruption outcomes.⁴ Distinguishing “meaningful” youth engagement from youth engagement is important because not all activities that engage young people can be considered to be meaningful. For example, they may be tokenistic⁵ and may even have a negative impact on the young people involved, the initiatives and the agencies that run them.⁶ This aside, youth engagement activities may produce valuable learning experiences on a journey for anti-corruption authorities to meaningful youth engagement (see the information on opportunities for meaningful youth engagement on pages 30-31).

In the literature on meaningful youth engagement, the various definitions that have emerged often refer to a specific sector or theme, as illustrated by the definition of meaningful youth engagement in the United Nations publication entitled, “Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policymaking and Decision-making Processes”. According to our research, these definitions congregate around five central themes that serve to define the engagement of young people as “meaningful”. The themes are summarized in the table on the next page.

⁴ Adapted from Plan International, *Youth Voice in Youth Employment: A roadmap for promoting meaningful youth engagement in youth employment programs* (2021).

⁵ For example: a superficial or symbolic effort to involve young people in decision-making processes without actually granting them meaningful power or influence, or selecting a limited number of youth representatives without ensuring a diverse and inclusive representation of young people.

⁶ UNESCO, *Meaningfully engaging with youth*.


Table 1: Themes that define meaningful youth engagement

Theme	Description
Diversity and inclusion	Recognizes the heterogeneity of young people and stresses the need for organizations to acknowledge and respect young people's different backgrounds and to provide equal opportunities for all young people, especially those from marginalized backgrounds.
Engagement-enabling environment	<p>Emphasizes the importance of ensuring that interventions and agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Are equipped to engage young people (e.g. resources, staff capacity and senior leadership support) ➔ Employ youth-friendly working methods and materials (e.g. using simple language and scheduling when young people are free) ➔ Promote a safe space for young people to share their views and participate
Intergenerational collaboration (or partnerships)	Promotes young people and adults working together and holding each other accountable, with adults respecting the contributions of young people and considering them as equals and vice versa.
Quality youth participation	Refers to activities where young people consensually participate across different stages of an initiative, especially at the onset; interventions that are aligned with the age and capacities of young people; and where information is regularly shared, particularly on how youth inputs are used.
Youth empowerment	Opportunities to build and improve the capacities of young people are provided, access to networks and stakeholders is increased and youth-led actions are initiated and affect change in communities and wider society.



Anti-corruption: Efforts that are aimed at preventing, detecting and sanctioning acts of corruption in both the public and private sectors. For the present guide, the United Nations Convention against Corruption serves as the main reference for defining corruption and anti-corruption. To account for the diversity of national legal frameworks and the dynamic, evolving and complex nature of corruption, the Convention against Corruption does not provide an explicit definition. Rather, it defines specific acts of corruption and provides a legal framework for States parties to criminalize them. It is the only international legally binding anti-corruption instrument and, at time of publication, has been adopted by 190 States parties, which makes it the most widely accepted anti-corruption standard.

Anti-corruption authorities (or agencies): Public bodies mandated to combat and/or prevent corruption. Although some anti-corruption authorities have been in existence for a long time, the establishment of dedicated agencies to curb corruption emerged increasingly as an institutional response to international instruments, most notably the Convention against Corruption, which was adopted in 2003. The Convention includes provisions to ensure a body or bodies exist to prevent corruption (article 6) and to combat corruption through law enforcement (article 36). While this does not oblige States parties to have a specialized anti-corruption authority, it has led to many countries and territories establishing such bodies. To date, for example, the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (IAACA) has more than 160 member anti-corruption authorities. There are many additional anti-corruption authorities around the world, although no current research was identified that establishes their exact number.⁷

The main functions of anti-corruption authorities in their national contexts are described in table 2. International obligations, such as asset recovery, international cooperation in investigations and mutual legal assistance, are not included. These require specialized technical skills and are executed by officers acting on behalf of agencies. Therefore, they are considered less suitable for engaging young people.

⁷ See French Anti-Corruption Agency, *Global Mapping of Anti-Corruption Authorities* (2020).



Table 2: Definition of anti-corruption authority functions in the national context

Function	Description
Prevention	Efforts to stop corrupt practices from occurring by enhancing transparency, oversight and checks and balance systems (e.g. conflict of interest regimes, asset declarations and codes of conduct). This includes activities aimed at promoting the participation of society in collective actions and fostering the dissemination of knowledge about such practices and policies (see articles 5 and 6 of the United Nations Convention against Corruption).
Law enforcement	Efforts to combat corruption through the investigation and prosecution of cases, the reporting of suspected cases, evidence-gathering, inter-agency cooperation and the enforcement of administrative and criminal sanctions (see article 36 of the Convention against Corruption).
Public outreach, awareness-raising	Efforts to promote public awareness and understanding of the detrimental effects of corruption, and to foster support for anti-corruption principles such as transparency, integrity, accountability and the rule of law as well as a culture of honesty and trust. This includes campaigns, advocacy work and communication to the public.
Education	Efforts to facilitate learning or the acquisition of knowledge, skills and values. This includes knowledge-building activities to promote a culture of anti-corruption and ethical behaviour among the recipients of primary, secondary and tertiary education, including advanced vocational and professional education.
Regulation and policy-making	Efforts to assess existing anti-corruption measures, to reform policy and to create public rules and laws on anti-corruption. Activities include (contributions to) the drafting of laws, regulations and policies to prevent or curb corruption. This multi-functional role comprises the design, coordination and implementation of national anti-corruption strategies and the coordination of multiple national anti-corruption authorities and bodies engaged in the fight against corruption.

The mandate of an anti-corruption authority can be limited to preventive or enforcement functions or may contain a combination of both. This can result in three different types of agency: prevention, enforcement or multi-purpose.⁸ However, the guidance on how to meaningfully engage young people depends solely on the nature of the activity and, therefore, is applicable to any type of anti-corruption authority or other public institution implementing anti-corruption work.

⁸ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Specialized Anti-Corruption Institutions – Review of Models: Second Edition* (Paris, 2013).

1C. Research for the policy guide

There is a lack of academic research on the nexus of meaningful youth engagement and anti-corruption authority work. Within the broader literature on participation and development, youth engagement (or youth participation) has been documented, particularly in academic papers on education, health and governance, as well as in non-academic literature such as organizational reports and other publications, workshop papers and declarations. There is little academic research on the engagement of young people in anti-corruption initiatives. Moreover, the concept of “meaningful” youth engagement has only emerged in recent years, in particular from international organizations such as the United Nations⁹ and various civil society networks.

The need for expert guidance on meaningfully engaging young people in the fight against corruption has prompted new research to be carried out for the present guide. This was done between September 2022 and February 2023. One challenge encountered was the need to adapt existing concepts of youth engagement and meaningful youth engagement and draw out their linkages to anti-corruption in a framework for policymakers and practitioners to apply in their work. The result is a first-of-its-kind policy guide on the subject, based on original and innovative research into a new field, which will benefit from more research in the future.

A description of the methodology and research conducted for the present guide is provided in annex I.

⁹ United Nations, *Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 3: Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policymaking and Decision-making Processes* (2023).

INTERESTED TO KNOW HOW ANTI-CORRUPTION AUTHORITIES AROUND THE WORLD ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE?



ICAC Ambassadors in Hong Kong, China raises awareness of corruption amongst university students

The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) has developed the **ICAC Ambassador Programme** to engage young people in supporting their work on integrity and anti-corruption. This annual programme is implemented in partnership with universities.

An open recruitment process is conducted to select young people interested in promoting integrity, anti-corruption and the rule of law. Selected ICAC Ambassadors join a year-long engagement program, which includes leadership training, mentoring and project design and management.

The young people work in groups to curate youth-oriented messages on integrity and lawfulness, which are then shared with their peers, both on campus and through online media. This may involve organizing carnivals, workshops, quizzes, online campaigns and other youth-led events that are popular with young people.



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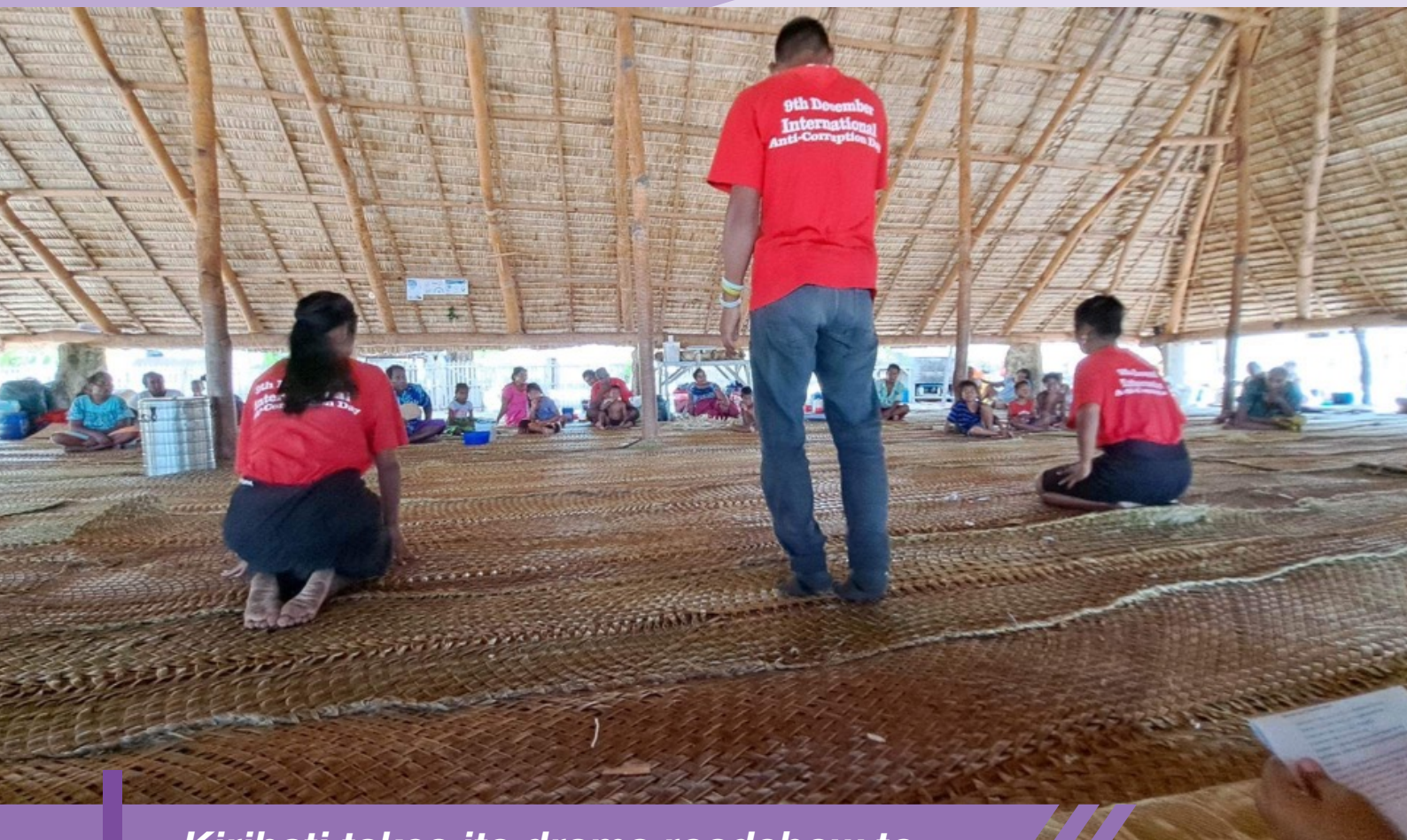


Greece's Integrity Leaders of Tomorrow competition inspires the young generation to get engaged

In response to the lack of anti-corruption awareness among young people, the National Transparency Authority (NTA) in Greece took proactive measures by launching a nationwide campaign focused on anti-corruption education for youth.

Rather than simply targeting young people through traditional means, NTA opted for a collaborative approach, empowering young individuals to create their own campaign projects centered around anti-corruption, ethics, and integrity in daily life. To attract a wide range of participants, NTA forged partnerships with elementary, middle and high schools, encouraging them to submit **art projects** encompassing various mediums such as short films, posters, cartoons, stories and other creative endeavors. These submissions were then meticulously curated by a competition committee comprised of professionals from diverse fields.

NTA frequently collaborates with esteemed entities like the Ministry of Education, international organizations, NGOs, and influential figures in the youth community to select the most exceptional projects.



Kiribati takes its drama roadshow to the tribes of the Outer Islands

The Public Service Office of Kiribati (PSO), a small nation state consisting of 33 islands in the South Pacific, has been trying to find ways to communicate with the population about its reforms, including anti-corruption. The PSO concluded that young people are the best amplifier of the message to youth which constitutes the largest population group in the country, and that the performing arts are the best way to communicate with them.

The PSO engaged a local civil society youth group to perform a **drama** written by the PSO anti-corruption staff with the intention of communicating key messages to young people in their own language and in an interactive way. The performers were chosen from twelve young activists who travelled in small groups around the islands and offered these interactive performances to the local tribes. The performances were also used to engage the public in discussions about anti-corruption concepts..



Young people collaborate in Mexico's Anti-Corruption Datathon

Since 2018, through the National Digital Platform, the Executive Secretariat of the National Anticorruption System of Mexico has organized an annual **anti-corruption Datathon** which serves as a platform to bring young people together to counter corruption using data from government systems. The data includes information from multiple government institutions, such as public procurement offices.

Each year, the Datathon attracts over 70 participants, with a significant presence of women and young people. Teams are mentored by experts in specific areas of corruption. Participants pitch their solutions and the best ideas are selected as winners, promoting the nexus between digital innovation and anti-corruption. The creative ideas of the young people are integrated into the country's National Digital Platform, reinforcing the significance of youth-driven innovation in combating corruption.

Details about these examples can be found on [the web portal of this policy guide.](#)

