

Project Completion Assessment

CSO Name: International Governance Institute-Focal Integrity Team for Cameroon (IGI-FITCAM)

Project Titles	Grant Amount (US\$)	Dates of Implementation
Strengthen the Internal Mechanisms of the University of Buea for Tracking and Curbing Corruption	20,000 (plus 2,200)	Mar 9, 2009-Feb 13, 2010
Siantou University Anti-Corruption Program	34,000	Apr 27, 2010-Jan 10, 2011
Follow-up Project to Reinforce the Capacity of the University of Buea to Undertake Concrete Actions Against Corruption	30,000	Feb 22, 2011-Nov 28, 2011
Construction of Two Steel Billboards on the Campus of the University of Buea	3,380	Sep 13, 2011- Oct 31, 2011

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Overview

“Fighting corruption is a risky business. Corrupt practices are a way of life, not exceptions.”
Prof. Victor Julius Ngoh, Deputy Vice Chancellor of Research, Cooperation and Relations with the Business World, Buea University

To address the rampant corrupt practices in higher education, in 2008, the Minister of Higher Education called for the establishment of sub-committees for the promotion of ethics and the fight against corruption at public universities. The University of Buea (UB), once considered a “showpiece” university in Cameroon, receiving substantial donor support, was the first to set up these committees in 2010. This move gave IGI/FITCAM an entry point to carry out its goal of improved governance. It requested assistance from PTF to develop and conduct a training program for members of the newly-established sub-committee on ways to curb corruption and reduce waste of scarce university resources. This training program was combined with a citizen empowerment scheme that raised awareness about corrupt practices in higher education to the general public, so as to challenge the prevalent “mindset of powerlessness”. The IGI/FITCAM experience has proven to be a good example of how to fight corruption in a non-confrontational manner and gradually bring about positive change in a pro-active manner in higher education.

An important point to keep in mind is that, at the beginning of its activities, IGI/FITCAM met considerable resistance during the implementation of the first project from the Vice Chancellor of UB, who did not want to raise the issue of corrupt practices at the University. In fact, the public meeting of the first project took place outside the campus of the University of Buea. In mid-2010, an external event was held at Siantou University (a private university), during which the Minister of Higher Education gave a highly publicized speech, denouncing corrupt practices in higher education. IGI/FITCAM presented its work at this meeting, which was attended by representatives of high-level leaders of all Cameroonian universities. This occasion was very effective in diminishing the resistance of the Vice Chancellor of UB and facilitated the emergence of champions for anti-corruption initiatives at UB.

It remains to be said, moreover, that despite the achievements of the UB projects, the road has not been an easy one for the staff of IGI/FITCAM and its supporters at the UB, who have had to tread very carefully so as not to “step on toes”. With the installation of a new Vice Chancellor at UB in 2012, there appears to be a more optimistic outlook for continuing the anti-corruption work started by IGI/FITCAM. The new Vice Chancellor is clearly seen as a change factor and champion in the fight against corruption, with her very strong commitment to transparency at all levels of University life.

This Project Completion Assessment focuses on the three projects at the UB, as they are part of one effort to strengthen the university’s internal mechanisms to curb corruption and reduce waste of university resources. In reality, the last project (construction of billboards) is merely a supplement to the second project at UB. The PTF team did not evaluate the project at Siantou University in September 2012, modeled on the project at UB (same objectives, methodology, and similar activities), but which did not benefit from the same degree of involvement from IGI/FITCAM.

Approach and Design

On approach to corruption: “Need knowledge of community concerned to know how far to push.” Prof Ngoh

The first project at the University of Buea aimed at strengthening internal mechanisms for curbing financial mismanagement and corruption, so as to improve institutional performance and reduce wastage of public resources. Its principal objectives were to raise awareness about the problem of corruption, strengthen the newly formed Anti-Corruption and Ethics Sub-Committees (ACEC), and launch a new strategy to fight corruption at the University. To achieve these objectives, the project raised awareness of corruption at a public workshop off the university campus, held an intensive series of capacity-building activities for the members of the ACEC on identifying, monitoring, reporting, and documenting the many forms of corruption at the university level. The training was followed by “field investigation” of three months to identify and categorize corrupt practices at UB. The results of this investigation were reviewed by a University Ombudsman and further discussed with UB’s top executives to ensure their appropriateness. Though the Vice Chancellor refuted the identified practices, Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research and Cooperation with the Business World (well-respected by the university community) declared them true and factual. A year later the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Internal Control and Evaluation also accepted the findings of the field investigation. The results of this baseline fieldwork



UB Student anti-corruption monitors receiving their certificates after the IGI/FITCAM workshop

formed the basis for the preparation of an anti-corruption strategy in the identified areas. The strategy was widely distributed and shared within the university.

The second UB project built on the results of the earlier activities by broadening the political support base to fight corruption at UB. To mobilize greater support, the project strengthened the capacity of other UB stakeholders (student leaders from all faculties and departments and other top managers) and conducted a tracking exercise to check the progress made on implementing anti-corruption measures identified under the first project. It employed a variety of

approaches, including training, public awareness building (including distribution of anti-corruption flyers in the streets by students), preparation of codes of conduct and corruption monitoring. In 2011, IGI/FITCAM conducted a progress study to verify signs of improvement in curbing corruption (see below). To maintain the anti-corruption momentum on the UB campus in a visible way, IGI/FITCAM requested a small supplemental grant of \$3,380 from PTF to design and put up anti-corruption billboards at critical points on the UB campus.

The relevance and design of the projects can be rated as 4.

Project Implementation

***On how to change corrupt behavior: “creating awareness, publishing results...takes time.”,
Member of UB’s Anti-Corruption and Ethics Committee***

Despite strong initial opposition to launch corruption events on UB’s campus, IGI/FITCAM succeeded in implementing the planned activities as scheduled (in fact, the public launch workshop was held off campus, so as to avoid the resistance from UB’s Vice Chancellor). Ultimately, the results of the field investigation to identify corrupt practices at UB by ACEC members confirmed the relevance and pertinence of the training provided by IGI/FITCAM, and the categorization of the widespread nature of corruption provided a clearer way for University officials to attack the different malpractices (often delicate in nature), ultimately leading to an anti-corruption strategy at UB. The scientific manner in which the field research was carried out lends credibility to project results.

The fact that the second Buea project was implemented after the Siantou meeting, during which the Minister of Higher Education conveyed a forceful message against corruption in Cameroonian universities, paved the way to a more collaborative environment to introduce and track improved internal mechanisms at UB. Moreover, the methodology used to track progress (interviews, consultation of documents, and spot checks) has set up a sound basis to monitor and assess future progress in corrupt practices at UB and other universities.

Table 1 summarized the activities of the UB projects and their immediate outputs. Project finances were managed correctly and spent for the targeted activities.



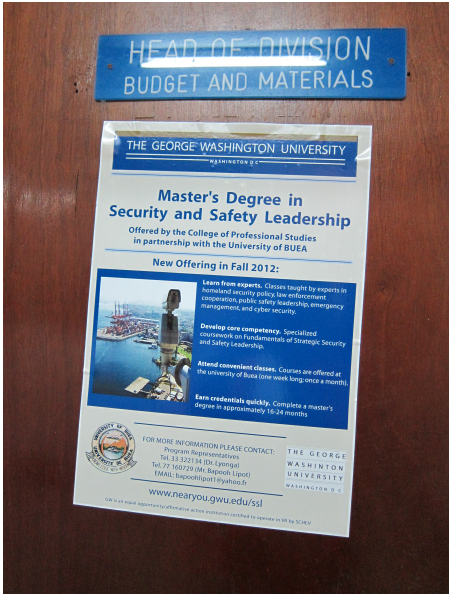
Stephen Asek (right) and Calvin Betika of IGI/Fitcam show off an anti-corruption billboard at the UB Campus

The efficiency and effectiveness of the UB projects, while they were ongoing could be rated as 3.5. The strong commitment of the Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellors represents one factor that will certainly help in ascertaining at least some follow-up of earlier efforts in tracking corruption. But it would most likely be necessary to look carefully through the entire financial, administrative and management system of the university, identify at which points corrupt practices are most likely to occur, and scrutinize those points over an extended length of time. The methodology adopted by IGI/FITCAM seems to be sound and has clearly

identified areas where corruption is likely to occur. To move toward sustainability, both IGI/FITCAM and UB have to demonstrate that continued monitoring and tracking is done and reported systematically, preferably by the University itself.



After the IGI/FITCAM workshop UB Students took to the street to distribute anti-corruption flyers



UB is embarking upon a new Master's Degree program on Security and Safety Leadership, in collaboration with Georgetown University. The curriculum contains governance and anti-corruption courses

Outcomes, Impact & Sustainability

On the new budget system put in place in 2010 to reduce fraud: “ the level of misappropriations has dropped, there is more transparency in budgeting equipment, and there is more control on acquisition of materials.”, Member of ACEC at UB

On the billboards placed around the University: “ The message weighs on the conscience.” Prof Ngoh, Deputy Vice Chancellor, UB

The implementation of the awareness-raising and capacity-building activities of both projects has contributed to a more open and relaxed collaboration between university officials, administrators, faculty, students and IGI/FITCAM. The fear of discussing corrupt practices or of reporting them is less strong. These positive developments led to the recognition and acceptance of strengthening financial management mechanisms at UB and to stronger support for continuing the implementation of an anti-corruption strategy at key levels of UB.

In fact, the 2011 progress study on changes in corrupt practices found that:

- The improved procurement system, introduced in 2010 to try to stem extensive fraud, resulted in a slowdown of leakages in UB’s budget. It is estimated that resources lost from financial mismanagement and malpractices was reduced by about 25% during the 2010 budget year;
- Significant improvements in other areas identified in 2009: (i) a 50% drop in the frequency of professional misconduct; (ii) a significant decrease in bribes for academic matters (principally on theses); (iii) slight improvements in employment practices, but they remain a challenge; (iv) marginal fall in the pressure parents place on staff for grades or admission; and (v) a new attitude appears to be emerging among the student body for greater accountability from the University’s administration and management.

The overall impact of IGI/FITCAM projects at UB is also reflected in:

- The commitment and enthusiasm of UB’s ACEC members, who actively follow-up on all aspects of corruption (budget, admissions, exam practices, and recruitment/appointment of faculty and administrative staff). The training provided by the project gave them the tools to identify, assess, and monitor causes of unethical behavior and corrupt practices, as well as reporting them to higher officials of UB. The Deputy Vice Chancellor of Internal Control is the chairman of the ACEC;
- A whistle-blowing policy is now in place, allowing students to file a claim directly with the Vice Chancellor in an anonymous manner;
- The introduction of a Civics and Ethics course in UB’s curriculum in the 2012 academic year, to be given by IGI/FITCAM. The course, mandatory for all first year students, focuses on civic responsibility, not just on “what one can get from others”;
- Strong political support from Minister of Higher Education, Governor of Southwest Region, Lord Mayor of Buea Rural Council and national security and armed forces in SW region during implementation. There appears to be more general support to replicate anti-corruption efforts in the SW region. In addition, Ministry of Secondary Education and other political, regional

authorities expressed interest in replicating similar anti-corruption activities (see PCA of AGDGG).

Clearly, there is a long way to go in eliminating systemic corruption in budget management and other aspects of surveyed corrupt behavior. The project did, however, have a significant impact in raising the issue of corruption in various areas of University life. This has led to some changes in attitudes and expectations about corruption among key stakeholders at UB, including top management and the student body, and in keeping corrupt practices on their radar screen.

The outcome, impact, and sustainability of the UB projects can be rated as 3.5 on average. Despite strong outcomes, the budgeting management process needs to mature and be strengthened to ensure sustainability of anti-corruption efforts, and UB management should show its commitment to continue the efforts started by IGI/FITCAM by focusing on making the budget management system work better. Moreover, a rigorous tracking system of progress in the identified corrupt practices is crucial to document the impact of IGI/FITCAM and other efforts in fighting corruption at UB.



Vice Chancellor of Buea University, Dr. Nalova Lyonga

Lessons learned -- replicability

“Fighting against corruption – that is my life”, Ms. Nalova Lyonga, new Vice Chancellor of UB

A few lessons learned from these projects include:

- Resistance from top University management has to be faced in a collaborative, not antagonistic manner.
- Support from high-level authorities, who act as champions in the fight against corruption is crucial.
- Combating corruption at state universities requires the independence of the ACEC sub-committees from senior executives of the universities.
- Corruption needs to be tackled at both a centralized level (Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellors) and a decentralized level through members of the ACEC and students.

At Buea University, a cadre of faculty and students has been established as a permanent group to monitor corruption at the university and enhance proper conduct in all procedures. The monitoring group was trained by IGI and has signed a Code of Conduct. The work of IGI/FITCAM has been praised by the top-level management of UB and members of the ACEC, and has received strong support from the Minister of Higher Education to extend anti-corruption activities to other state universities. While the important lessons learned from the Buea initiatives could be packaged and used in other universities across Africa, it seems unlikely that any University would have the factors that played together to make this UB project a temporary success without substantial support from an external implementing organization acting as a catalyst to bring about a change in a bottom-top manner. This support requires

complementary backup from government administration, university officials, and from the external community. Because of this, the replicability of these projects can be rated as 3.5.

A summary of the project ratings:

Project Criteria	Rating	Weighted rating
Approach and Design	4	0.6
Implementation (efficiency and effectiveness)	3.5	0.7
Outcome/Impact/Sustainability	3.5	1.75
Replicability	3.5	0.7
TOTAL		3.75

Recommendations for PTF

The PCA team recommends the following actions for PTF:

- Disseminate the IGI/FITCAM experience more widely amongst PTF Advisers and feature the IGI/FITCAM report on the PTF external website
- Publicize IGI/FITCAM experience among relevant stakeholders to derive policy implications and lobby the Minister of Higher Education to have all universities adopt similar approaches, while at the same time strengthening UB’s tracking system.

Annex 1: IGI/FITCAM Projects – Key Outputs and Achievements

	Key Outputs/Achievements	
Activities	First UB Project	Second/Third UB Project
Public launch meeting to stimulate public dialogue and awareness in fighting corruption and generate potential political support	<p>Meeting held off campus (due to VC resistance)</p> <p>Participation of over 90% of UB Anti-Corruption and Ethics Committee (ACEC)</p> <p>Attendance of local government representative, including the Governor of SW region, Lord Mayor of Buea, imam of Buea, and union president of higher education teachers</p> <p>Presence of national media (radio and TV)</p> <p>Press conference</p>	<p>Public launch meeting on UB campus</p> <p>100% involvement of UB Anti-Corruption subcommittee members</p> <p>Participation of the Cameroon National Anti-Corruption Commission (CONAC)</p> <p>Attendance of national media</p>
Workshop of UB ACEC members to train on public ethics, development of a corruption risk assessment, and design of corruption monitoring tools	<p>Participation and training in corruption issues of 80% of UB's ACEC staff (45)</p> <p>Training in preparing corruption assessment report and in corruption prevention</p> <p>Preparation of anti-corruption monitoring handbook for education sector, as guidance for tracking and budgeting monitoring exercise</p> <p>Production of guidelines for ACEC members (<i>Procurement for Promoting Ethics: UB</i>)</p>	<p>Participation of all AC subcommittee members mandatory (supported by Deputy Vice Chancellor for Internal Control and Evaluation)</p> <p>Training of AC subcommittee members focused on skills identified by the first project's completion report</p>
UB budget field research on financial mismanagement by ACEC members	<p>Identification of baseline for main corrupt practices at UB and their categorization: budget management; professional misconduct; acceptance/demand for bribes in academic matters; employment; pressure on staff from parents; and student criminal networks.</p> <p>Definition of measures to improve service delivery, professional conduct and resource management</p>	<p>Progress study on changes in corrupt practices identified in 2009 baseline – improvements found, particularly with regard to budget management and professional conduct</p>
Forum to review results of field research and draft anti-	<p>Consensus reached on identification of corrupt practices</p>	

corruption strategy	Suggestion to carry out exercise in another State university to confirm that identified practices were not unique to UB	
Forum for approval of anti-corruption strategy action plan	<p>Development and approval of comprehensive UB strategy</p> <p>Attendance of UB's Deputy Vice Chancellor at forum</p> <p>public statement by Vice Chancellor in the press and on radio/TV, recognizing approval of strategy</p>	<p>Approval of action plan of the AC sub-committees by Vice Chancellor</p> <p>Elaboration of Code of Conduct</p> <p>Signature of Code by ACEC members</p> <p>Approval of anti-corruption awareness messages on 2 public billboards at entrance gate of UB and at strategic community square</p>
Capacity building and mobilization of UB students		<p>Training of student leaders on governance, transparency, accountability, leadership, and communication</p> <p>Anti-corruption campaign by Student Action Group (distribution of flyers, open discussions on corruption, open statements of denunciations)</p>