

Project Completion Assessment
For three projects sponsored by the Partnership for Transparency Fund

FIGHTING CORRUPTION IN THE MOLDAVIAN UNIVERSITIES
Tiraspol State University, Chisinau Campus
Taraclia State University, Taraclia, Moldova.

Implemented by the Institute for Democracy
Comrat, Moldova

MONITOR THE EXAMINATION SYSTEM IN RAYON SOROCA

Implemented by Soarta
Soroca, Moldova

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12-27 July 2010

1. Project completion assessment TOR

The country visit included the assessment of three Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF) sponsored projects. Two projects implemented by the Institute for Democracy at Tiraspol and Taraclia State Universities with the following PCA goals:

- a. To verify the accomplishments and conclusions set out in the completion reports.
- b. To assess the sustainability of the institutions and processes set up under the projects and recommend measures to ensure continued sustainability
- c. To assess the potential for a national anticorruption program in the education sector based on the experience of the three projects and outline main elements of such a program.
- d. To assess the capacity of the CSOs involved in the three projects and recommend measures to strengthen them to play a role in a national program.
- e. To compile "lessons from experience" to be used for other projects in Moldova and in countries

The third project, implemented by Soarta, took place at high schools in the region of Soroca with the following PCA goals:

- a. Assess whether project objectives have been or are being met;
- b. Draw, with Soarta, the lessons learned from the project. including, in hindsight, whether the approaches adopted were appropriate and effective.
- c. Advise PTF concerning potential future collaboration with Soarta.
- d. Gauge the willingness of the actors noted above to implement effectively the new draft regulations and standards that Soarta has proposed.
- e. Ascertain and understand the significance of the changes in examination procedures that took place during the project, for the project.
- f. Assess the effectiveness of the Soarta project team, through the eyes of the other actors in the project, i.e. the district education committee, etc.
- g. Review expenditures with Soarta and judge whether the project

budget has been followed.

2. Overview of corruption in Moldova and in schools university.

Corruption is a widespread issue in Moldova. A number of organizations including UNDP, USAID, OSCE have worked on the issue. Specific work in schools and universities does not seem to have been an emphasis for these organizations. Education in Moldova, according to a Transparency International report, is among the most corrupt institutions in Moldova. This may reflect the fact that a broad spectrum of the population has contact with schools and universities while a smaller proportion of the population has regular contact with other public institutions.

Corruption in Moldovan schools is perhaps unique in that both the students and the teachers have an interest in continuing the practice. Teachers gain a much needed supplement to their salaries; students receive higher grades without the effort required to study or gain assistance on exams used for college admission. It is therefore difficult to gain a foothold in corruption prevention in schools.

Corruption in Moldovan schools takes many forms. Sometimes it is a direct request from a teacher asking for money in exchange for grades. Most of the time it is more hidden. A teacher may encourage parents to enroll students in extra lessons for a fee, or give students poor grades until they do. Because the state does not fund schools well, school administrators rely on parents to subsidize the school budget. Therefore, a very large sum of money crosses the director's desk. Some of the money collected goes through a parent organization and some accounting; some of it does not. Parents have complained that not all money goes to the intended purpose such as school repairs. Staff at the Center for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption (CCECC) mention that now teachers are selling things such as Mary Kay cosmetics, and those who buy more get better grades. Or, teachers publish small texts and require it for the class, collecting money from students.

The situation is exacerbated by the wide disparities in income. Teachers can earn as little as 100 euros a month. Many parents work abroad, earning much more. In some schools a fifth of students have neither parent in the country, and another fifth of students have only one parent at home. There seems to be a consensus that students with parents abroad are asked for more money than students with parents in country, at least in rural areas.

There is no end to the blame game. Some blame parents for sending money to schools “with noble intentions” according to an official at the CCECC of helping the school. Some say parents feel bad about leaving their children behind while they are abroad working. They send money to children at home or attempt to help their children by buying grades from teachers. Some blame students for being lazy and unwilling to study. Some blame teachers for extorting money from students.

It is important to note that despite the suspicions, there are teachers and students who do not give or accept bribes.

At Tiraspol State University (SU) corruption is considered to be at a lower level than at some of the other universities. According to both students and staff interviewed, Tiraspol SU students are mostly from rural areas, in general come from less well off families, and go on to be teachers. Because of the lack of funds, there is less money for corruption. Students and staff are also quick to point out, with some justification, that thousands of euros get lost to corruption at the national level, but teachers are held to account for “100 lei” bribes and gifts of flowers.

All those interviewed in Taraclia, with one exception, claimed that there is no corruption at the university, and even in the community. From the students to the president of the region, all said that the community is small; everyone knows everything about each other. This acts as a check on corruption. Another possible explanation for possible lower levels of corruption at the university is the extra funding from Bulgaria. Sixty percent of the budget comes from Bulgaria. Students are eligible for

additional stipends from Bulgaria, and instructors are eligible for supplements to their salary from Bulgaria as well. However, this supplement is not always paid to teachers. Students and instructors are relatively better off because of these additional funds.

Schools in Soroca are typical of schools in Moldova. Only one teacher and her colleague, a school psychologist, suggested that there was no corruption in schools. All other parents, students, teachers, and directors admitted that it took place. No one admitted to first hand experience. Students suggested that teachers are more careful now, than previously, about soliciting bribes. The reason for this is unclear.

3. Project Background: Fighting Academic Corruption at Moldovan Universities

The PTF funded project at Tiraspol State University (Tiraspol SU) took place in the 2008-2009 school year. Tiraspol State University is the oldest university in Moldova and was located in the break-away region of Transnistria but moved to Chisinau during the short Civil war in 1992. The project continued at the State University of Taraclia in the 2009-2010 school year with similar goals and with the stipulation that ID continue monitoring the effects of the activities at Tiraspol State University. Taraclia SU is a collaborative effort between the governments of Moldova and Bulgaria. Sixty percent of the university's budget comes from Bulgaria. Although ethnic Bulgarians only make up about 2% of Moldova's population, they are concentrated in the southern part of the country. About 65% of the city of Taraclia is of Bulgarian ethnicity.

4. Tiraspol/Taraclia State Universities Activities

Tiraspol State University

1. Essay competition.
2. 8 seminars for students, devoted to the problem of Academic Integrity and fighting corruption.
3. Round table on Academic Integrity and corruption (for professors of Tiraspol State University)
4. Publishing of 4 articles, devoted to Academic integrity and corruptions.

5. Round table “New Trends in Higher Education and Corruption”.
6. Honor Codes competition. Voting for Honor Code adoption.
7. Moldavian conference “Academic Integrity and Corruption”.
8. The creation of the anonymous anti-corruption box (for students).
9. Survey of student and professors. (quoted from proposal)

Taraclia State University

1. To work out and to implement the transparent methods of the financing the State University of Taraklia (transliteration from Russian tends to spell Taraclia with a ‘k’.);
2. To elaborate and to implement in the curriculum of the State University of Taraklia the subject on the anticorruption education for the students’ consciousness of the negative influence on the development of the human society and the formation of the negative attitude to it.
3. To implement the national mechanism for resisting to the university corruption (Independent Anticorruption Commission);
4. To promote the cooperation of the Moldova Ministry of Education and the authority of the universities with the national and regional NGOs (within the Independent Anticorruption Commission).
5. To promote the growth of the information for the administration of the State University of Taraklia in cases of corruption;
6. To implement the mechanism of control for the cases of corruption for taking measures for their liquidation (the creation of the Anticorruption Council in the State University of Taraklia);
7. To initiate the development and implementation of Honor Codes in State University of Taraklia;
8. To promote the establishment of the collaboration of the administration of State University of Taraklia with non-governmental organizations and the bodies of the state power for the anti-corruption struggle;
9. To inform students and professors of State University of Taraklia about corruption phenomena and its manifestations;
10. To assist the realization of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy; to make for the strengthening of the partnership between the non-governmental organizations, the State University of Taraklia and the mass media.
11. To promote the organization of the civil anticorruption education of the students and the lecturers of the State University of Taraklia.
12. To contribute to the mobilization and involvement of the students at

the State University of Taraklia in the struggle with the tendencies of corruption in the university, to help in the formation of student initiative groups for the civil resistance against the corruption. (quoted from proposal)

ID has focused very much on the process of the project. Reading between the lines, this is intimated in their proposal and was clear in their behavior during the PCA. The project manager and consultant regularly presented official, stamped indicating that something on the list of objectives had taken place. They were not dissuaded from this practice by the little effect the processes may have had.

5. Project background: Monitor the Examination System in Rayon Soroca

The organization Soarta in Soroca, Moldova worked in the 12 liceums in the region of Soroca in the north-eastern edge of the country. The project included the following three goals:

- Raising awareness of the pupils, teachers, parents, school administrators, state officials and public in Rayon Soroca of the educational corruption and its effects, and of the Educational System Law.
- Increasing skills of NGO "Soarta" to monitor the examination process to prevent corruption in 12 lyceums of Rayon Soroca.
- Through lobby and advocacy activities, to establish institutional and behavioural changes of disciplinary action for bribe-taking or bribe-giving in educational domain in Rayon Soroca.

But after several days in the region talking with Soarta staff another line of the proposal perhaps better describes the intentions of the organization:

to monitor the educational activity, the teachers' behaviour and pupils' feelings and results during the ordinary exams and baccalaureate exams, and to make some important changes at the local level.

These changes, as discussed below, included the formulation of recommendation for carrying out the 9th grade end of gymnasium exam and the Baccalaureate school-leaving exam that is also the basis for admission to university. In addition, Soarta developed ethical codes, on

the recommendation of Michael Lippe, that provide clear expectations for students, teachers, and parents. The ethical codes include issues of dress, involvement of parents, academic integrity, and general behavior at school. Soarta has developed the codes so that all will understand their obligations and expectations within the school community. The organization Soarta takes a larger view of corruption than simply exchanging money, or favors, for grades. The actions and comments of Soarta staff indicate that they believe that 'fighting corruption' is perhaps not the best way to diminish the phenomenon.

6. Limitations

The PCA took place during the summer when it was more difficult to meet with and interview students and teachers than it would have been during the school year. Earlier planning would have ameliorated some of these difficulties. An official at Tiraspol State University told me that ID announced the site visit only four days in advance. Nor was the consultant able to observe the implementation of the exam recommendations or attend the seminars. Furthermore, discussing issues of corruption with a stranger and foreigner is not likely to lead to open conversations about any personal involvement. Although not officially part of this PCA, I did speak to many friends about corruption in Moldova. These conversations have provided a great deal of background and context for this report.

In regards to assessing the activities at Tiraspol State University, the PCA for this report is limited in the fact that the project took place over one year prior to the country visit. The PCA will focus on the long-term results and sustainability of the project and presume that the meetings and classes took place as described in the progress reports.

The students interviewed at Tiraspol State University, were students contracted to help paint the building during the summer months. For this, they were guaranteed a spot in the dormitory, and received room, board, and stipends during their work. An administrator at the university stated that these students are not serious students and are not representative of the student body.

Although the project took place more recently in Taraclia, the university administration selected the faculty and staff interviewed. As noted below,

this might have been a representative sample. In addition, a Peace Corps Volunteer was able to contact three students to be interviewed in a less formal setting.

7. Project evaluation. This section follows the format guidelines for PCAs found in the PTF manual.

- a. The original project objectives and design: Were the objectives appropriate to the problems being addressed? Were they within the partner's capacity to implement? Were the components realistic and consistent with the objectives? Was the advice provided by PTF followed? Was the advice appropriate and useful?

Institute for Democracy:

Most of the objectives of this project were process objectives: setting up a national commission, developing a course about corruption, installing an 'anti-corruption' box. As noted above, there was a long list. However, with any process goal, the effect is expected to be more than completing the process, but influencing the wider goal of reducing corruption. ID project administrators seemed more focused on the former and less so on the latter.

At Tiraspol University these methods seem reasonable in regards to the admitted corruption at the school. In Taraclia, where only one student (of ten interviewed) admitted to third hand knowledge of incidents of corruption, and all other respondents, including the rector, denied that corruption existed at their university, a different strategy might have been more efficient. All of those interviewed for the PCA, including the president of the region claimed that Taraclia is a small community where everyone knows what every one else is doing. It was striking how consistent this explanation was.

However, the survey administered by ID indicated high levels of corruption, despite this, if there is no acknowledgement of the problem, any attempts to reduce it will be of limited value. Respondents said that they benefited from the project as a prevention of corruption. There may be truth to that, but a more modest project focused on prevention instead of reduction could probably serve that purpose.

ID published a number of books and articles. Several Moldovans with experience in the field of corruption indicated that the materials, especially the reader for the course, were somewhat simplistic. They also admitted that this might be very appropriate for an introductory course. Getting to the larger issue of fighting corruption, publications in academic journals that are not widely read would not seem to be an effective approach. Officials at CCECC (a government organization) and others interviewed for this PCA suggested a mass-media campaign instead.

I interviewed two students who had taken the anti corruption course at Tiraspol SU. Because more than a year had passed since they took the course, they did not recall any specifics about the course. They did say it was worthwhile. I did talk to several students who had taken the course at Taraclia State University. These students enjoyed the course, could describe its themes, and compared it not to anti-corruption, but a course on morality or 'upbringing.'

ID did develop an anti-corruption commission to act on a national level with the participation of several NGOs. This did receive the approval of the MOE. However, it is unsure what real authority it may have and how it will go about conducting its work. So far the commission is in the information gathering stage and will begin work on fighting corruption in the fall.

An anti-corruption committee was formed at both universities. I spoke with a member of these committees at each university. At Tiraspol SU, the committee had investigated several cases of corruption and had examined the budget. Given the reported lack of corruption at Taraclia SU, the committee had not been so active.

ID staff seems to have maintained positive relations with the university staff at Taraclia. This may reflect a common interest in continuing the project rather than a strong partnership. At Tiraspol, the relationship seemed more distant, perhaps reflecting less involvement recently.

Soarta:

The Soarta project focus on the broader issue of academic integrity, or using a liberally translated phrase from Soarta staff "corruption of the academic process." This includes the exchange of money or favors for

grades and assistance on exams. A strong motivation for addressing the exam procedures was the conditions of the exam the previous year. Ms. Railean, director of Soarta, several times described the difficult conditions of the previous year. Students waited several hours in an overheated room with no ventilation before beginning the exams. In addition, Ms. Railean described corruption not just the exchange of bribes and grades, but in terms of academic integrity and respect for learning (appropriate dress, language, and behavior for school are other issues she mentioned several times).

Soarta worked at raising awareness of corruption, learning of the issues, and making recommendations to reduce corruption in schools as well as improving the teaching and learning process. Included in these recommendations was a code of ethics that interprets corruption more broadly to include aspects of academic integrity. Soarta had the capacity and has developed this further to provide workshops and use the website to provide information and raise awareness. When appropriate, they hired consultants to support the tasks. Soarta was able to build relationships with the *Directia* (local arm of MOE) to support the monitoring of the exams. Conducting the survey stretches the capacity, and Soarta could benefit from a basic survey construction methods course and a statistical analysis course to help interpret the data. [see recommendations regarding measuring corruption] These are technical issues; regarding the implementation of the survey and the assurance of anonymous, independent responses, it seems that appropriate methods were used.

Soarta was able to lobby the *Directia* to implement changes and especially the ethical codes for teachers, students, and parents. PTF suggested Soarta develop three instead of the single code planned. The *Directia* and the MOE have both supported the use of the ethical codes and encouraged their implementation. Importantly, the codes were developed with community involvement at the many seminars. Furthermore, the codes Soarta has developed are templates; school communities may amend them before adopting them.

Finally, Soarta was able to discuss the sensitive issues of corruption while maintaining friendly relationships with school administration, teachers, and students. However, there is still a great deal of anxiety surrounding the issue of corruption. Soarta staff had invited parents to come to their

office to discuss corruption; parents declined to do this because of possible association with corruption

Given the difficult nature of fighting corruption in schools, this approach of improving relationships and academic integrity may be a reasonable approach to engage people on the related issue of corruption.

- b. The implementation experience: Was the project carried out as planned? Were there significant changes? Did they affect the outcome materially?

Institute for Democracy:

The Taraclia project was carried out as planned according to documents provided by ID. However the information gathered in the interviews show some inconsistencies.

During interviews at the university, no student, professor, or rector admitted that corruption existed or had existed at the university. There was one exception to this; one student interviewed through arrangement of a Peace Corps Volunteer said that she had third hand information that some students had purchased grades.

This information contradicts what was written in the reports produced by ID. In the report dated August 2009-October 2009, ID staff wrote, "The report was done on the basis of the poll that was carried out within the given project and of students' complaints found in the anticorruption boxes. The report witnessed on the high level of corruption in Taraklia State University and disbelief of the students in the possibility of the effective struggle against corruption." Students interviewed did mention taking the survey. More detailed results are reported in a document dated 30 October 2009 but only in Russian.

Again in the report dated February- April 2010 ID staff wrote, "The analysis of the survey poll questionnaires has demonstrated the decrease of the level of corruption in Taraclia State University, namely 66 per cent of the students have marked that during the three last months the level of corruption in the university has decreased. . ." It does not seem reasonable to claim this as an indicator of success given the short time frame and since it would not include the period of exams that usually take

place in June. [I presume this is a second survey, although I have not seen more extensive results for it.]

This casts doubt on the accuracy of the reports conducted by ID or on the representative selection of the students interviewed for this PCA. Since the rector also indicated that there was no corruption at the university, it questions the wisdom of conducting an anti-corruption program at a university that has no problem with the issue or is not willing to admit that corruption exists. During the interview with the rector, I asked Ms. Sergeeva what the results of the survey indicated. Her response during the interview was that the surveys indicated that there was no corruption on the university.

Another discrepancy involved the exam procedures. According to professors and students interviewed in Taraclia, about half of the exams were administered in written form, while the rest were administered in oral form. Furthermore, students with whom I spoke indicated that this ratio had not changed since the previous year. However, in the report dated November 2009 –January 2010, the report authored by ID staff indicated that the Taraclia Senate had adopted a new exam policy, which included “carrying out the exams and tests in writing.” It is unclear why this policy is not fully implemented.

Soarta:

Soarta faced the challenge of significant changes in exam procedures brought about at the national level and also faced limitation on meetings because of the threat of a flu epidemic. Soarta responded appropriately to both challenges by developing a television broadcast to explain the changes in exam procedures and meeting individually with beneficiaries.

- c. Financial Management: Were proper financial records maintained? Were the funds spent for the purposes intended? Are the CSO's accounts subject to a proper audit?

Both organizations had well-organized documentation of expenses with receipts. Both are also subject to audit by the state authorities. Expenditures appeared appropriate to the project. However, whereas

Soarta had bank transfer records for nearly every expenditure, in addition to receipts where appropriate, ID had mostly receipts. This included salary payments, which were documented by signed receipts.

- d. The impact: What did the project accomplish? Did it have any measurable impact on corruption in the country? Is this impact likely to be sustainable? Was any measurement of the impact undertaken? Has there been any follow-up or is any follow up planned? Was there real value added?

Institute for Democracy:

The most definite indication of the impact of the ID project is the implementation of new exam procedures at Tiraspol SU. One administrator at Tiraspol suggested that 80% of exams are now written while before the project 20% of the exams were written. The increased accountability this has brought is significant. The average grade fell from about 9 to about 7 (ten being the best) due to the decline in purchased grades. In addition, for this administrator, 40 of 46 students wanted to review their written exams after the grades were posted. This transition to written test was not carried out in Taraclia at the same level. Although the decline in test scores is a good indicator that corruption has decreased, it is hard to justify politically a policy by claiming that test scores will decrease.

The publication of articles and books has not focused on widely read publication but on academic journals. While it is important to have some academic discussions on the issues, this does not typically have impact among students in schools and universities.

Early on in the project at Tiraspol SU the anti-corruption box seems to have had some affect as the administration did conduct some investigations based on anonymous tips. Most respondents interviewed did not indicate that the box has done much good recently. No one in Taraclia suggested the box had ever had an impact or had even been used. This is not consistent with the reports from ID. In addition, the anti-corruption box in Taraclia was broken into during the project. According to the reports from ID, the administration felt that this was an indication that the box was effective. Dr. Borshevski, a consultant working with ID and a

university professor, suggested the boxes “work against” instructors and therefore may have prompted the vandalism. If this is the response from the university faculty, this may represent a failure of the approach. This project involved much more than reporting cases of corruption; without building positive relationships with the faculty and gaining their cooperation, monitoring corruption will have limited influence on the reduction of corruption.

The project leaders of ID have emphasized official documentation with official stamps as justification of the project. This is significant in terms of gaining the official support of the MOE or the university. However, this does not indicate impact among beneficiaries. This is evident in the effects of the written exam policy at Taraclia SU.

An honor code was adopted at both universities. The students interviewed at Tiraspol SU had no familiarity with the code, one had heard of it. An administrator at Tiraspol SU claimed that the honor code did help. She tried to quantify this by stating that “25% of the students already followed the code . . . an additional 10% follow it now” that it has been promoted.

The three students in Taraclia interviewed off campus expressed little familiarity with the code; one had heard of it. The students interviewed in Taraclia on campus all claimed familiarity. The professors at Taraclia SU also indicated that they used/discussed the honor code with their students. This second group of students at Taraclia SU discussed the code and its meaning on various occasions in classes.

If a senior administrator at the university chooses to promote the use of the code, it may have stronger and lasting influence. Without such support, the code will fall into disuse. [When I challenged the project manager and director of ID by stating that some students claimed that the honor code was not introduced in their classes, the project manager called the students interviewed (on campus) and later reported that perhaps I had misunderstood them; all students said that they knew of the code. The project manager asked me for the names of the students I interviewed off campus. I did not record the names of any of the students and could not have provided them.]

Soarta:

"I won't say that you won't find corruption in schools in Soroca, there is, but the quality of teaching has increased. There is more quality teaching, greater respect, humanitarianism and improved behavior." Asea Railean, Director of Soarta.

According to the survey conducted by Soarta, the incidence of corruption increased during the course of the project. As noted by Soarta staff, this may be due to the increased trust on the part of students toward Soarta. If this is true, this is a positive indication of Soarta's work, but indicates the difficulty of measuring corruption. The same survey indicated that conditions for exams did improve and students felt less stressed.

Other impacts are less readily defined. Most respondents indicated that Soarta raised the awareness of corruption during seminars. This process will continue through the implementation of the ethical codes in the coming year. Other recommendations regarding exam procedures, if accepted, could also be a benefit. These may be difficult to implement for two reasons. First, the MOE issues its own procedures, and, second, implementing the procedures to prevent corruption depends on school officials. Current procedures do call for outside proctors for the exams; however, despite this teachers are known to help students write the exams. According to students interviewed and the survey the recommendations regarding the general conditions of the exam seem to have improved testing conditions according to the survey. The recommendations for exam procedures does not seem to be a critical for other aspects of the project.

There may have been unanticipated benefits to the public awareness campaign. According to the school superintendent for the region, more parents called the central office regarding teacher behavior, although not about corruption. The superintendent suggested that this is due to the work of Soarta in raising awareness and providing information to parents. This may be a powerful indicator showing the increased involvement of parents, which may lead to parents holding teachers accountable to an even greater degree in the future.

The sustainability of the codes may be increased by the fact that the region already has an ethical code for public employees. Also, the MOE approved the codes for use in the Soroca region. This will support the

official use of the codes. Here again, without some local involvement and local support the ethical codes will fall into disuse.

Given the status of the ethics codes and the good relationships with beneficiaries, continuation of the project is poised to have a greater impact. However, some of these impacts may be more closely connected to academic integrity than with corruption.

- e. Institutional development: Did the project help the CSO and the educational institutions participating to enhance capacity to carry out anti-corruption programs? Did the PTF grant enable the organization to do things that would otherwise not have been possible?

Institute for Democracy:

Given the different circumstances in Taraclia compared to Tiraspol, namely the difference in acknowledgement of corruption, ID showed a lack of flexibility. ID continued to carry out the project as proposed without adapting the work to the new circumstances. The focus in discussion with Tatiana Sergeeva and Andrei Borshevski was on the implementation of the project. Dr. Borshevski in particular was interested in showing documents with official stamps without discussion of the possible impact on corruption.

Other than maintaining the anti-corruption box, it is unclear if any other aspect of the project continued at Tiraspol SU. The seminars did not continue, the honor code did not seem to be in use. The new rector had “[his] own anti-corruption project.”

The proposals from ID have long lists of activities and longs lists of other projects completed. During the site visit, as noted above, ID was very interested in documenting the activities completed. I saw much less evidence of personal involvement and collaboration. Their approach to implementation does not seem to have changed.

ID did not express any plan to develop their sustainability other than to continue to solicit funds from foreign donors.

Soarta

The work of Soarta focused on informing and raising awareness. It is uncertain how much capacity they developed for the partner institutions. The regional superintendent told me "Soarta is doing things we cannot do." In part this is due to the lack of resources and the general high workload and low salaries of those working in the education sector.

The positive relations with partners indicate that Soarta is developing the human capacity to continue the project. In this respect, Soarta has developed and increased its capacity.

Soarta has expressed the intention of using less formal methods to work with students, parents, and teachers. This included 'non-traditional' teaching methods, or having dinner at the school to encourage parent involvement.

- f. Dissemination: What steps were taken by the CSO to disseminate the results of the project? Were all the key documents posted on their website?

Institute for Democracy

ID published several books and articles, but these venues will have limited influence and that among academic circles. Only the final report from Tiraspol was published on the website.

Soarta:

Soarta did use their website to publish articles and other activities related to the project. The ethical codes were sent to the MOE and approved. Furthermore, the school superintendent shared the ethical codes with colleagues from other regions.

- g. Lessons learned—What did the CSO, institutions, other groups feel were the principal lessons of experience gained? Does the assessor have any additional views?

Both organizations had a difficult time reflecting and describing changes they would make in future projects.

Throughout the site visit, ID mostly argued that their work was effective and should be continued as is.

Soarta did suggest that they pursue some 'non-traditional' methods to engage students and parents, noting that the traditional seminar approach is not always effective.

h. Links to other CSO driven anti-corruption initiatives: Were there any?

Institute for Democracy:

ID did collaborate with several other CSOs in forming the national commission on anti-corruption. In an interview with the director of the NGO "Institute for Women's rights", it appeared that the director was reading from a script regarding seminars it conducted at the state pedagogical university. ID also collaborates with the National Institute for Women of Moldova "Equality."

Soarta:

Soarta has collaborated with other CSOs but it was not on the topic of corruption.

8. Workshop

The workshop was held on 27 August 2010 from 10:00 am to about 3:30 pm.

The goal was to discuss lessons learned, the impact of the work and ways to measure it, next steps in future projects or a national program.

The workshop faced a significant challenge, the group affiliated with ID spoke Russian and very little Romanian. The other group, including Soarta staff, spoke mostly Romanian and some Russian. This prevented more open discussion between the groups.

The representatives of the two CSOs began with a brief discussion of the project with an emphasis on lessons learned. They had a difficult time

discussing such lessons and mostly spoke about what they had done, and the success of their projects. This was despite the fact that both Lars Jeurling and I emphasized the 'lessons learned' activity in discussions with the CSOs prior to the workshop.

It might have been better to treat the 'lessons learned' topic in a workshop session where CSOs analyze a single activity such as the anti-corruption box, or seminars, or codes of ethics. The CSOs would then indicate what went well, what went poorly, and what they would change in the future.

In the afternoon I posed several challenges to the group. The goal was to encourage the participants to think about the issues, not necessarily to develop answers.

First, I asked about the difficulties of measuring corruption. Repeatedly there was mention of the complexity of the task, but the only possible solution was from Soarta. That is to measure the causes of corruption in terms of relationships, policies, and individual involvement. Lars Jeurling does have a point that trying to measure corruption is a difficult task that may have minimal benefits while taking a great deal of resources.

A second topic was on developing positive relationship while trying to police corruption. A leader in another NGO suggested changing the name of "the box" from 'anti-corruption' to something more positive such as 'your opinion counts.' Another suggestion was having parties or gatherings to build relationships. This was on the premise that people who know each other would not consent to bribes. However, bribes are sometimes seen as business transactions, not extortion and a more familiar relationship probably would not stop it.

Third, sustainability. Both NGO's indicated that they would continue the search for funding to continue their projects. There was little discussion about how to create a more profound and long lasting effect. A high school student mentioned debates as a method of teaching about the negative effects of corruption. The Soarta director added that 'non-traditional' methods may be useful in teaching about anti-corruption.

The final activity divided the participants into four groups to complete four tasks, design an ideal project, discuss ways of measuring corruption, the

differences between fighting corruption and promoting anti-corruption, and discuss the components of a national program. Although the participation was good, none of the ideas suggested discussed were different than what had been discussed previously and presented in the PCA in other places.

Importantly, the two NGOs did have the chance to hear how the other approached the work even if they could not discuss it in detail.

9. General Recommendations:

- a. Local Involvement: Soarta staff lived and worked in the same region as the project sponsored by PTF, while ID worked in regions distant from their office. This may have allowed for the positive relationships to develop in the work of Soarta and the more cordial relationships developed by ID. Having a CSO near the partner organization would also help in monitoring and adapting the work to fit the context, something that did not happen in the work at Taraclia.
- b. Language: ID staff spoke almost exclusively Russian. This limits the area where the staff can work effectively. Many people in Moldova are nationalistic and prefer Moldovan, many of these, however, will speak Russian when needed. Most Romanian speakers speak Russian, while most Russian speakers do not speak Romanian. Respondents interviewed for this work, including CSO staff, reflected this stereotype. Building rapport with the larger population requires knowledge of Romanian.
- c. Capacity building and sustainability: both organizations view success as soliciting funds to carry out projects. Developing the capacity of educators is very difficult because of the low wages and already difficult work loads. Teachers and professors are obligated to take on other work, in addition to teaching, to earn money. For village teachers this may mean working in the garden, or leaving the country for short periods of time. This should not prevent the search for ways to build capacity to support sustainable development. (See recommendations below)
- d. Further complicating this sustainability effort are the plans to optimize the school system in Moldova. This will result in closing many rural schools and transporting children to centralized locations. Many teachers will loose

their jobs. This may have minimal effect in larger towns and cities where classrooms are full. However, in villages where class sizes are small, many school will be closed.

- e. Any future proposals in Moldovan schools should address these changes. (see section below on a national program)
- f. Measuring corruption/progress: This is very difficult for a CSO to do on a limited scale. It may be more beneficial to look for other ways to measure progress in anti-corruption projects. Soarta director suggested measuring the factors of corruption such as the involvement of parents and the relationships among stakeholders. The former could be measured objectively, how many parents attend meetings, and the latter may not be as sensitive a topic as corruption. As evidence for this latter point, the superintendent's office in Soroca received a number of calls about teacher behavior but not about corruption. As Lars Jeurling has pointed out, if there is an over emphasis on numbers, there will be a large temptation to game the system.
- g. Site visits: Site visits by the sponsoring agency are invaluable. Visiting several projects in the course of one site visit is one cost effective way to conduct these evaluations. Timing is important, arranging for this PCA may have been better during the school term. However, proper planning could have helped as well.
- h. Progress reports: A consistent reporting structure may make monitoring and reporting easier. This may also require some 'teaching' on the part of PTF to help grant recipients write their first reports. The reports should involve concrete examples. The ID reports include many generalized comments; Soarta's reports also suffer from this, but to a lesser degree. This is hard to do over the internet in a foreign language (foreign for the grant recipients). Efforts should be made to find speakers of the local language to assist in this work. Part of this support could take place over skype conversations provided there is a speaker of the target language.
- i. Academic integrity: Both projects promoted academic integrity through their respective codes. This is a valuable approach that can address corruption, but does not begin with that sensitive subject. This also allows some give and take. For example in Soarta's ethical codes, each stakeholder group gains some benefit while also some increased

responsibility. This also acknowledges the limited opportunity to reduce corruption in Moldova. In many respects, eliminating corruption in schools/society is a change in culture. Corruption was a way of life in Soviet times, and the dire economic situation in Moldova has provided an incentive to take bribes.

- j. This is not a recommendation for a new project direction. Future projects should build on the progress already made. Also, because academic integrity is a broad theme, there should be specific goals and benchmarks used to chart progress. This may include exam procedures or other themes such as plagiarism, study skills, and teacher/student behavior.
- k. Evaluating proposals: Proposals from both organizations reflect the approach to implementation followed by the project managers. The ID proposals contain long lists of activities and long lists of 'actualized projects.' The Soarta proposal contains words such as partnerships, collaborations, relationships, feelings. How proposals are written provide key insight into the implementation and the potential impact of the projects.
- l. Sanctions and incentives: Creating sanctions or incentives is a simple matter. Implementing them fairly is much more complicated. It is difficult to prove the existence of corruption, except when it is flagrant, or the lack thereof. One respondent indicated that any code or policy should have explicit sanctions for violations. I heard several stories about teachers or professors being accused of bribes and then soon returning to work; some had charges dismissed for lack of evidence, others were convicted. The World Bank has decided not to support the CCECC because the judicial system is unreliable in pursuing the cases the CCECC does file.
- m. Schools and universities do have funds, from parents in the former case or from students on contract in the latter, they could use to develop some incentive system.
- n. Project implementation: Addressing corruption in schools through NGOs may require a unique approach, compared to addressing corruption in procurement. The MOE has implemented more stringent exam procedures, but this is not the level that NGOs work. Building relationships, building collaboration among stakeholders, and working with them over a long period of time will more likely be more successful

than holding seminars or promoting commissions or procedures that do not have local support. (An exception to this may be in rural areas where informative seminars have not taken place.) Given the difficulty of addressing corruption in schools, NGOs, instead of addressing corruption directly, should find related issues and concerns that have the support of local officials. These can then be expanded over time.

10. Recommendations, Institute for Democracy:

As noted above, fighting corruption when salaries are low and differences in income are great is very difficult. The advice from most of those interviewed regarding future work consisted of raising awareness of corruption. Although this is important, the benefits will be limited.

- a. Instead of focusing on the exchange of money for grades, the topic of corruption should be expanded to include the academic integrity. This notion is included in the honor codes, but does not seem to be emphasized in the project activities. A woman at the CCECC noted that students at Taraclia SU simply plagiarized material during an activity designed to raise awareness of corruption. If this is the work of the students, plagiarizing instead of developing their own thoughts, any activity or coursework is of limited value.
- b. Stronger use of honor codes that include academic integrity. These could be strongly promoted, for example have students sign a document, perhaps as part of the anticorruption class, perhaps with every class. Instructors and administrators too should sign this and be obligated to enforce it. One respondent even suggested that included in the code, or with its implementation, there should be a mechanism for investigating and sanctioning any breach of the code.
- c. More objective exam procedures is a common recommendation for anticorruption activities. The written exam policy at Tiraspol seems to have been implemented and effective. At Taraclia, the policy, although approved by the university senate, was not well implemented. ID should pursue this objective more rigorously.
- d. Recourse for students: I focus on the student here because they have the least authority in any 'exchange' although they are not necessarily

innocent. An anti- corruption campaign must have some way of reporting corruption that protects the individual from retribution. Although a dean said it is the administrations obligation “to protect” students, this is not necessarily a reliable method since they too can be implicated in corruption. The anti-corruption boxes may have served this purpose for a while, but no longer does so at least not from the perspective of the students interviewed. Perhaps using the box as a suggestion box would solicit more comments and give the administration an opportunity to act on issues other than corruption in order to institutionalize the use of the box and gain credibility.

- e. The mechanisms for financing universities has focused on distributing a portion of the funds collected from students on contract to the professors. (Some students do not pay tuition at the university because their grades were high enough to earn state sponsored scholarships. The university admits other students on contract who pay tuition.) Although this is better than nothing, the amount and regularity of this payment is uncertain and therefore is probably a minimal deterrent to corruption. Continued efforts should be put into this area to increase salaries. The importance of salaries, in terms of allocations, must be balanced with the importance of building maintenance, heating, and lighting.
- f. ID should address the issues brought up in this report. Namely, why conduct an anti-corruption project when the university administration does not admit to corruption being a problem? Second, ID should reflect on the efficacy of its work, or accuracy of the reporting, especially in terms of the policy regarding written exams at Taraclia and the apparent lack of implementation. Without a substantial change in approach, ID is not likely to be effective.

11. Recommendations, Soarta

- a. Develop a strategy to collect money officially with accounting in the schools. For example any efforts to collect money should be announced and perhaps posted with signatures from parents association, teacher collective and administration. The process could include a follow-up indicating when project is complete and the results of the project. This may involve teaching parents some accounting so they have the knowledge to audit small projects. This involvement may provide an initial

success on which to build. (I have since heard that this is currently a common strategy among NGOs in Moldova but at the local government level.)

- b. Try different strategies to reach out to parents who may not otherwise attend the sessions on anticorruption. Develop games and activities to engage parents, students and teachers in the issue of corruption. Importantly, teach these activities to teachers to increase their capacity.
- c. I would encourage Soarta staff to maintain a record of the seminars taught and at least a brief note of what happened at the meeting in order to chart progress and continue to learn from experience.
- d. Develop test-taking strategy courses to help students to develop the skills for taking the exams. A similar course could focus on study skills. This could continue to support students so they do not feel compelled to resort to corruption.
- e. Continue to reflect and develop plans on ways to increase the capacity of school personnel by transferring skills to teachers and school directors. This should be an explicit part of any future proposal. This is also challenging because teachers are so poorly compensated. For example, Soarta could develop materials, lesson plans or games, teachers can use to teach about corruption and introduce the ethical codes to students. Once these materials are prepared and teachers trained, they can be used with minimal preparation for longer periods of time. Another area to address may be parent meetings. Soarta could develop activities to be used at parent meetings and teach these activities to school faculty. There are publications on this theme available in Moldova.
- f. Develop a plan to develop the skills and leadership of Soarta staff. This may require Asea Railean to make a concerted effort to reduce participation in some aspects of future projects. There are others on the staff who have potential in this regard, and the skills of the other staff members must be developed if Soarta is to expand, as Ms. Railean has indicated it might, and if it is to be sustainable in the long term.
- g. The school superintendent said that he had shared the ethical codes with superintendents in other regions. This may be an opportunity to expand the project beyond the region of Soroca. Soarta should pursue this opportunity. This would be part of a long-term plan. I suggest Soarta investigate this possibility and build relationships with neighboring regions. If such expansion looks possible, then perhaps in a year Soarta could initiate a specific project.

11. Thoughts on seminars

Students, teachers and school directors all mentioned the seminars and meetings with Soarta. The goal of the seminars was not simply to discuss corruption, but to discuss the exam procedures, the ethical codes, and corruption. However, there does not seem to be minutes or notes from them other than those found in the quarterly reports.

My initial thought to these projects regarding seminars and classes about corruption is that 'talk is cheap,' and talking about the issues will not help raise teacher salaries or change legislation. However, nearly every group interviewed for these PCAs and working in the field has mentioned the need to raise awareness, to help people understand what corruption is. From a cynical perspective, this may simply maintain the sense of taking action without actually changing anything or addressing the issues. One respondent in Chisinau said she heard that people are "tired of seminars." This may reflect greater concentration of NGOs in the capital and fatigue with the common approach.

After some reflection and discussion with Asea Railean, my perspective has changed. The goal of the seminars is not simply about talking, but to create a new culture of schooling.

First, a great deal of change has taken place since the fall of the Soviet Union, and the lack of funding and the lack of strong leadership in the education sector has led to a great deal of confusion regarding the roles of parents, students, teachers, and the state.

The state, according to the constitution, is to provide free education to all children. The state does not do so. Because of this, school administrators have appealed to parents to contribute funds to maintain the school building or pay operating costs. Parents who have taken over part of the responsibilities of the state are more involved in schooling than they would be otherwise. Teachers are in difficult positions because their salaries are below the poverty line. Their efforts to increase their income lead to bribes or private lessons; even the latter case presents a conflict of interest. Students are also trying to do their best in a bad situation. Their prospects for admission to college are based solely on the school-leaving

exam. Especially in rural areas where the quality of schooling is lower, there are few opportunities to gain access to higher education.

The ethical codes set out clear expectations for these three stake-holder groups.

The second point of the seminars, the provision of information, can be also useful in the context of Moldova, especially in rural areas. In Soviet times, the aim of schools was too convince people that the policies of the Central Committee were correct. In many newspaper articles from the Soviet period, problems were attributed to the implementation and the people involved in implementation. They may not be working hard enough or without the correct attitude. One teacher and a colleague, a psychologist, interviewed denied any corruption at the school and were reluctant to admit that it takes place in other schools. (Asea Railean noted, "they did not want to acknowledge any familiarity with corruption.") This is an example still of someone holding onto this Soviet attitude of pretending everything is good and working according to 'the plan.' This however does not lend itself to acknowledging problems and working on strategies to resolve them. (Corruption is regularly reported in newspapers and is discussed on the radio.) Open discussions of the issues of corruption may help change this attitude. In some cases the parents may not know what to do or whom to appeal for help. Providing brochures with such information will help.

12. Regarding assessing the possibility of a national anti-corruption project:

Several challenges to developing a national project present themselves based on this PCA. First is finding an appropriate approach to anti-corruption projects. ID implemented their projects focusing on completing the tasks, there seemed to be little effort to reflect on the impact and the larger goal. Soarta's work did focus on developing relationships with the intent of making the school conditions better for everyone. The former approach seems to have had limited effect. The latter approach is specific to the personalities and the locality. Therefore, expanding Soarta's work to a national level would be very difficult.

Adding to the difficulty is the challenge of finding partner CSO's with whom to collaborate.

The MOE has made considerable progress in maintaining the security of the exams. Much of the corruption that takes place in schools is at the local level; students pay teachers for help on the exams. Even when representatives from the *directia* are present, this takes place. The MOE does not have the capacity to address corruption issues effectively at this level.

The national anti-corruption commission established by ID faces two major challenges. First, students must be aware of the commission and aware of its goals. And, second, it needs to earn the trust of students and instructors, in terms of protecting those who ask for assistance and in terms of effectiveness in monitoring and investigating cases of corruption. It is difficult to do both, especially when many ‘victims’ benefit from the corrupt exchange. This will also require an approach that is more involved than the procedural/academic approach ID has exhibited so far.

Although Soarta does not currently have the capacity to monitor a national project, there may be possibilities for the organization to grow.

Any nation-wide anti-corruption program for schools faces a number of difficulties. I have mentioned them in this report. If we take a step back from corruption and look at the value of learning, the picture is disappointing. In addition to forcing people to resort to corruption to get by, the Soviet system discredited learning as well. Soviet schooling was about memorizing Party rhetoric. This was exacerbated after independence when many Moldovans who had an “education” ended up in poverty, while many who did not became wealthy.

The factors contributing to corruption seem to be endless, but I want to end on a positive note.

Change is imminent in Moldovan education; much will change as schools are closed and the system optimized. There is the potential for saving that can be used to increase salaries. There is likely to be more competition for teaching positions. The system will become more concentrated (students in fewer schools); it may become easier to monitor. There is the potential of increasing the quality of teaching and learning and reduce corruption.

- Provide additional, legitimate ways for teachers to increase their salaries. This could include professional development for teachers so they can advance in didactic grade; for each promotion, teachers receive an additional percentage of their base salary. Or organize more formal means of providing after school help; teachers could then work at these centers. (A great deal of money is going to schools through informal payments. One estimate from 2006 suggests that informal payments, legitimate or not, make up about one-third of school budgets. The money is there if it could be used appropriately.)
- With this professional development promote academic integrity. Attempt to instill some value in learning. This may be a stretch in terms of PTF's stated goals. But given the low value of education, as opposed to certification, this will need to change to improve the education system.
- Develop a program to provide international monitors for exams similar to program that observe voting.