

Phones Against Corruption

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Organisation: UNDP

Country: Papua New Guinea

Level of government: Central government

Sector: General public services

Type: Communication, Data, Digital, Other

Launched in: 2014

Overall development time: 2 year(s) 3 month(s)

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

In 2014, UNDP partnered with Australian telecom MobiMedia to develop a SMS-based reporting system that allows citizens to anonymously monitor corruption. The initiative was tested within the Papua New Guinea Department of Finance at the national level, i.e. approximately 1,200 department staff and it was proved to be an alternative safe space for reporting corrupt practices, with almost half of the staff had participated. By the end of 2015, more than 20,000 SMS were received, 251 cases of alleged corruption were under investigation. Two public officials in PNG have been arrested for fund mismanagement of more than 2 million USD. Five more await court decisions. Based on the success of the prototype, in 2015 this initiative was rolled out to all public servants across government departments. Other countries are interested to replicate the model. The initiative won 2 consecutive awards in 2014 & 2015 from UNDP as the best innovative proposal in the Asia Pacific region.

Based on the success of the prototype, there are two opportunities to scale and replicate: both within PNG and to other countries. Within PNG, it is envisaged that the initiative could be made accessible to the general population countrywide. Expected impacts from this scaling-up could be significant, with corruption reports leading to arrests, restoration of public funds and/or improved public financial management. The initiative may be expanded to other countries. Preliminary coordination has commenced through UNDP Country Offices in Fiji, Bangladesh, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands and the respective government counterparts.

The beauty of "Phones Against Corruption" is that, is not a common mobile app that there are thousands on the web nowadays. It is a SMS interactive system, free of charge for users, 100% anonymous, used in simple mobile phones, no internet is required. It is an inclusive tool for population especially in rural areas to expose and combat corruption.

Why the innovation was developed

- The innovation was developed in order to offer a safe place to expose and combat corruption (the SMS system is anonymous) in a communitarian and complex environment, where the benefit of the community and the clan/'wantok' system justifies most means. At the same time, the abuse of public trust for individual benefit is seen as inappropriate. This being said, most citizens do not know where and how to denounce corruption, corruption reporting mechanism need to be expanded across the country. The reasons that UNDP is facilitating this project, is that PNG ranks 145th out of 175 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, and in the bottom 15% of the World Bank's Global Governance Corruption Index. An estimated 40% of PNG's annual budget (approx. USD 6.5 billion) is lost to corruption. At the end of 2015, the country couldn't reach any of the MDGs.
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Objectives

Enhance public trust, Enhance transparency, Improve service quality, Improve social equity, Increase citizen engagement, Other

- Combat corruption
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Main beneficiaries

Civil Society, General population, Government staff

Existing similar practices

i paid a bribe

In the private sector, civil society or elsewhere

i paid a bribe

It is a web platform to report on the web, blogs or mobile phones bad practices involving civil servants.

<http://www.ipaidabribe.com/>

Results

Service quality

Reliability:

- So far, the SMS system helped to improve the proper use of public funds, identifying gaps and closing it within the Public Financial Management System in PNG.
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User satisfaction

- Users are confident with the SMS system and continuously sending their SMS as per daily track records of the messages. Feedbacks and statistics are being sending to all users about the project results.

Development

Design

It was developed under the UNDP Provincial Capacity building project in support to the PNG Department of Finance in order to strengthen the Public Financial Management System. Design time: 3 month(s)

Testing

- It was prototyped within the Project and the PNG Department of Finance staff at national level, involving 1,200 staff. With successful results. 94 % of the cases were from the provinces and rural areas. Several stakeholders meeting were carried out to redefine and design the tool and the SMS questions. An independent user experience research was carried out in 2015 to improve the system.

Testing time: 1 year(s)

Implementation

Tools used:

- The system has three components: 1)The Awareness campaign, with the aim to inform Papua New Guineans about the availability of the SMS application and its conditions of service (free of charge, anonymous, user-friendly app, etc.). 2)The SMS Application: it aims to further develop the software application, reviewed and adjusted through a user experience research. 3)The actions taken: the messages received are gathered and analyzed through a filtering, scrutiny and prioritization process before taking any action. All using database management systems and mobile phone SMS technology.

Resources used:

- It used project staff and GoPNG counterparts Department of Finance who are leading the initiative. A budget from UNDP as seed funds were used (50,000 USD) and other GoPNG contribution (around 100,000 USD) in 2014 and 2015.

Implementation time: 2 year(s)

Challenges and solutions

- The key challenges for the scaling-up phase, both in PNG and outside the country, are: i) Leadership, as without champions that support and lead the initiative, it cannot prosper; ii) Political sensitivity, as this can slow down the process; iii) Inaction of responsible units responsible for investigations; and iv) Lack of funds. Currently we are coordinating at the Prime Minister Office in order to accelerate the establishment of the Independent Commission Against Corruption-ICAC and also requesting funds to donors (UNDP and GIF)
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Partnerships

Mobimedia ltd, Digicell-PNG, and Australian DFAT

Other Public Sector, Private sector

Mobimedia is an Australian communication company providing the platform of the SMS system. Digicell-PNG is a telecom operator that provided a free phone number to report cases. Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) provides technical assistance for the independent user experience research.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

- Lesson of the Phones Against Corruption initiative are several: 1. Involve as much as possible the direct users or beneficiaries of the system
 - 2. test, review and improve in a continuous cycle.
 - 3. Some innovations take time to mature
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Conditions for success

- I think, is Leadership and guidance. For P@C initiative a strong leadership was necessary in order to users can trust that any bad behaviors or practices be promptly addressed.
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Other information

We are in a phase of replication to other countries (scaling up) and funds are necessary. The SMS system was developed in a standard way for easily replication & adaptation to other countries.

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