Brief4 - Fighting corruption by improving transparency and access to information

Overview:

Using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), in the last decades countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama and Paraguay have designed and created electronic platforms that make information about procurement and government o!cials’ personal assets public. These electronic platforms have guaranteed an effective and transparent flow of public information, thereby empowering citizens to identify and  
demand action against corruption and allowing oversight agencies to detect and sanction public officials engaging in corruption.

Latin American countries such as Argentina with Ddjjonline or Mexico with Declaranet have designed and implemented electronic platforms to disclose public officials’ personal assets. These platforms allow public servants to submit electronically the yearly declarations of personal assets and income that by law they are mandated to.

By gathering all public officials’ declarations electronically in a single database, these platforms facilitate the review and analysis of information to identify, investigate, and impose sanctions on public o!cers engaging in corrupt practices like bribery or illicit enrichment, or demonstrating conflict of interest.

Intersting facts:

* The level of public officials’ compliance with this legal obligation has increased from 67% to 96% in Argentina since the electronic platform was first introduced.
* Public o!cials who do not submit their declaration or who engage in corruption are being investigated. In the first half of 2011, Argentina’s Investigations Department carried forward 10 investigations of illicit enrichment and 58 of non-compliance with the disclosure of personal assets obligation.

Key lessons:

* Enhancing transparency and access to information in sensitive areas such as procurement or about public officials' personal assets can reduce corruption and increase integrity in the public sector
* Civil society monitoring of procurement and public officials' personal assets information can contribute to identifying and highlighting corruption, thus increasing accountability
* Political will to strenghten public agencies' technical, institutional and financial capacities increases the chances of these transparency practices being successfull and sustainable
* Percieved high costs of tackling corruption can be handled. Taking advantage of technological advancments and having an innovative approach to corruption can make it possible to find effective and efficient mechanisms to reduce it.
* Fostering the rule of law, increasing citizen participation and better government accountability enhanced the chance of these practices being successfull at reducing corruption.