

Partnership for Transparency Fund

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Project Completion Assessment Mongolia: Anti-Corruption Media Competition

Introduction

In [December 2001], the Partnership for Transparency Fund approved a grant of \$15,000 to the Zorig Foundation in Mongolia to sponsor a media competition on the theme of anti-corruption. The competition was targeted to journalists, radio and TV reporters and artists. It involved the development of radio and TV commercials and programs, newspaper articles and posters on corruption issues. The winners were to be awarded cash prizes and the winning entries were to be carried in the national and local media. The objectives was to raise awareness in the society on the consequences of corruption in Mongolia.

On Thursday, June 26, 2003 Daniel Ritchie, the Secretary of the PTF, visited the offices of the Zorig Foundation in Ulaan Bataar, Mongolia and met with the Chairman of the Board, the Executive Director and staff of the Foundation. He reviewed the results of the project. His principal findings:

Original objectives and project design

Compared to other countries in the Region, Mongolia does not at the moment have a high level of perceived corruption, but it is growing. Consequently, the title of the competition was "Today Or It May Be Too Late." The competition appeared to have been well planned and organized. Prior to the competition itself, staff of the Zorig Foundation met with stakeholder organizations including the Mongolia Artists Union. TV and radio stations agreed to provide free time for winning advertisements. Contest rules were drafted with their cooperation. A roundtable discussion was carried out with the national daily newspaper and Central Mongolian Radio to provoke interest in the subject. Judges were selected who were well known for their opposition to corruption.

The PTF funded the announcements of the contest on the radio and prize money. The Zorig Foundation funded the preparatory workshops, roundtable and project staff time.

The contest attracted over 400 entries from about 450 people, including 166 posters, 170 essays, 20 TV programs and advertisements and 55 radio programs and ads. Entries were judged over a two week period in March 2002. The Award ceremony was held in the Exhibition Hall of the Artists Union. More than 500 visitors attended and was widely reported in the media.

Recently, the Soros Foundation funded the publication of 4000 copies of the posters and essays that have been distributed throughout the country in all school and 360 village libraries.

The implementation experience

The contest appeared to have generated considerable attention. Several ads were broadcast on TV and radio. Winning essays and posters appeared in national newspapers. At least one university professor was dismissed after students recorded him demanding bribes for better grades. Other professors were called to “explain” their behavior.

The government controlled radio and TV stations broadcast the winning ads briefly. Independent TV and radio (Eagle TV and Channel 25) provided more air time. The winning film was shown at the film festival of the 11th International Anti-Corruption Conference in Seoul, Korea in May 2003.

Copies of the Soros-funded booklet were distributed at the Mongolia National Anti-Corruption Conference in March 2003.

The impact

It is difficult to assess the long-term impact of such an event. According to the Zorig Foundation, the competition had several longer-term consequences:

- Many people had reason to think about the question of corruption and its consequences. The weeks that the ads and programs were played, anti-corruption had the most hits on the media websites.
- The event generated a good data base for education work on anti-corruption and a cadre of interested stakeholders
- The competition mobilized staff in local organizations at the grass roots level and the results have been made available to every community in the country, and
- In 2002 an anti-corruption action plan was approved by the government (just before an aid group meeting!).

On the other hand, anti-corruption legislation has languished in Parliament for the last two years, and there is no secretariat nor budget for the anti-corruption action plan.

According to the Zorig Foundation, the competition was by far the most visible anti-corruption activity in Mongolia in 2002.

Institutional development impact

The beneficiary organization, the Zorig Foundation, gained valuable experience in raising public awareness of the corruption issue. Its Executive Director was named to the

Committee to oversee implementation of the national anti-corruption action plan. The Foundation has recently approached the PTF for a second grant to monitor implementation of the action plan and provide a monitoring tool to be used by the National Committee. It would be the first M&E tool for monitoring corruption in Mongolia.

Lessons learned

It is very difficult to assess the impact of an event such as a competition. Awareness has been raised at many levels, among the 400 participants, the students and their peers who engaged in essay writing, the general public who listened to the TV and radio spots and those who have received the anti-corruption booklets. It is not clear that it has materially changed the behaviors and attitudes of public figures, some of whom complained that the issue was overblown.

The monetary prizes were substantial--\$1000 each for the winners in three categories and \$800 in two others. A total of 24 prizes were awarded. Clearly the relatively generous awards provided considerable incentives for participation, and the impact was substantial.

Prepared by Daniel Ritchie