

FORUT Anti-Corruption Policy 2024-2028

FORUT – Campaign for Solidarity and Development
Revised and approved by FORUT Board August 31st, 2023

1. Introduction

This document presents FORUT's Anti-corruption Policy, revised in August 2023. The document is valid through the next programme period from 2024-2028. It contains an introduction to the topic and states how this policy is related to our vision, mission, and the FORUT Policy Document.

In addition, it describes in brief how we are working to achieve good governance and a more equal and sustainable world in our ongoing international development cooperation with partners in 6 countries.

However, this is not an exhaustive strategy nor an action plan, but it outlines our common understanding and basic principles.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to create an internal common understanding that good governance is the key to sustainable development and social justice, and corruption is its most dangerous foe.

Corruption has many faces. It may be in the form of money or providing services in order to gain advantages such as favourable treatment, special protection, extra services, or reduced delays. It is important to realise that corruption is not exclusively a matter of money.

3. Fundamental principles

The vision of FORUT is:

“... a peaceful, democratic and just world where everyone is secured human rights and a dignified life, and where alcohol and drugs do not jeopardise people's safety and human potential.”

Additionally, our Policy Document states that FORUT's goal is that people have the power to change their lives, and that our mission is to:

“... mobilise, organise and empower people, especially women and children, to develop their potential. They shall be able to demand their rights and combat poverty, injustice and oppression through democratic and peaceful means.”

FORUT has chosen the following definition by international corruption researcher Shaazka Beyerle in “Curtailling Corruption: People Power for Accountability and Justice” (2014):

“A system of abuse of entrusted power for private, collective, or political gain – often involving a complex, intertwined set of relationships, some obvious, others hidden, with established vested interests, that can operate vertically within an institution or horizontally cut across political, economic and social spheres in a society or transnationally”.

Corruption and kleptocracy breeds poverty, violence and oppression and undermines the trust between citizens and between citizen and state which is crucial to social and economic development. The greatest asset any society can have is not oil, diamonds or gold, but a government of, by and for the people which is inclusive, transparent and accountable, provides security and social services to all, enforces the rule of law for all and ensures political, economic and social participation by all. Only thus can all citizens realise their own potential and contribute to the economic and social development of the nation.

FORUT recognises the need to combine bottom-up and top-down approaches to combatting corruption and promoting good governance but focuses on bottom-up approaches in its work. We are convinced that nothing is more important than informed and empowered citizens in holding politicians and civil servants accountable and that the effectiveness of any national auditor or anti-corruption commission is contingent on public support and media exposure of wrongdoings.

FORUT works with local and national authorities to increase their capacity for good governance and willingness to be transparent and accountable, and with civil society and the media to enable them to expose corruption and act against it.

This analysis gives us a responsibility both to fight against corruption in the society at large – especially in the political and economic spheres – but also to ensure that our own organisations, projects and programmes are corruption-free, as civil society is not immune to being corrupted. This policy therefore covers both these aspects of corruption, and in this document, we call them external and internal corruption, respectively.

4. External Corruption

Fighting corruption is therefore a necessity in our struggle to achieve our mission and an integral part of our mission. FORUT will also mobilise, organise and empower people to fight against corruption, as it perpetuates poverty, injustice and oppression, and is an obstacle to claiming human rights.

The research by Shaazka Beyerle shows that, across countries, societies, contexts, and types of corruption, citizens demonstrated that they have agency and the capacity to wield power against corruption and impunity and to achieve visible outcomes. People power was also found to create political will where it did not exist, put pressure on governments and institutions to take action, and even support authorities, civil servants and politicians trying to fight the corrupt system who also faced intimidation and obstacles.

Programmatic mainstreaming

Good Governance and Civil Society are mainstreamed in the programmes and projects of FORUT and its partners. Anti-corruption work at the societal level is thus seen, not in isolation but as a crucial element in our work for improving the governance structures, cultures and policies of public authorities from local to national level, as well as our work for increasing the space for civil society and a civil society which itself is corruption-free.

“Do No Harm”

Beyond the specific anti-corruption programming, FORUT and its partners will follow a “Do No Harm” approach to external corruption. This means that the minimum requirement for all FORUT-funded programmes and projects is that they shall not in any way contribute to an increase in corruption among the communities, partners and other actors we work with, or in any way undermine the effect of anti-corruption work of other actors.

5. Internal Corruption

Fighting external corruption requires legitimacy, which would be undermined by every occurrence of internal corruption. FORUT and its partners therefore have zero tolerance for corruption in our organisations, programmes and projects. There is a high degree of systemic and institutional corruption in all FORUT programme countries. Both FORUT and its partners are therefore challenged to keep ourselves corruption-free. In this daily struggle, our most important weapons are transparency, confidence, vigilance and systems.

Transparency is the basis for fighting against corruption, and it must be so also internally. FORUT and its partners publish their financial accounts and key financial data regularly. Social audit and due diligence will increasingly be used as methods to allow local communities, media and authorities access to information about project finances.

A high level of trust between FORUT and its partner organisations and among the staff members is also conducive to uncovering and fighting corruption. FORUT's model of equitable partnerships is our most important asset in this regard, because it contributes to an organisational culture where suspicion of irregularities can be communicated without fear of unjust repercussions and that investigations can be carried out without witnesses being afraid to tell the truth.

Vigilance means that we must constantly be alert to the possibility that corruption may occur amongst ourselves, and that we have the knowledge and competence to know in which areas of operation it is most likely to appear, and to recognise suspicious signals when we see them. It is the responsibility of all FORUT and partner staff to be vigilant.

We need to have systems in place that both prevent corruption by making it more difficult, that increase the chances of corruption being detected, and that provide us with the means to investigate suspected corruption and deal justly and expertly with the cases that occur. Therefore, this includes our general human resource management systems, financial management systems, project implementation and transportation systems, whistle-blowing regulations and protection, and guidelines for how to investigate corruption and decide on measures to be taken against perpetrators.

6. Monitoring and compliance

A large part of monitoring our compliance with this policy will be through FORUT's regular monitoring. It is the responsibility of the Secretary General and the International Programme Director to ensure that policy, programme planning and implementation are rights-based. FORUT is committed to the following principles and measures:

1. Policies, strategies and programme planning, including results frameworks and funding applications, include, where relevant, external anti-corruption work with a focus on people power approaches to fighting corruption as a component within the good governance and civil society approach.
2. FORUT partners report annually on anti-corruption as a cross-cutting issue to ensure that programmes and projects do no harm.
3. FORUT and all partner organisations maintain a policy of accountability, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency, striving to become examples of good governance. They have written anti-corruption and whistle-blowing policies that adhere to these principles.
4. FORUT and all partners will annually revisit and update their risk analyses where the risk of internal corruption is a compulsory element.
5. Adequate training of FORUT staff and partner staff on anti-corruption vigilance and systems has been conducted, and there is a good governance focal person in the FORUT Programme Department.