SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME
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Area 8.5.1 Participation and Citizenship in Europe

RESEARCH PROJECT: "ALACs"

ALAC Database Training
Berlin, 17/18 October 2011

Workshop Report

1. Background

Having received over 100,000 complaints from witnesses and victims of corruption since their inception, ALACs have built up an important information bank on the affects of corruption at grass root level. To date, this knowledge has been of key importance in identifying corruption "soft-points" and undertaking evidence-based advocacy, resulting in numerous systemic changes in laws, policies and practices around the world. Nevertheless, this success represents only a fraction of what could be achieved if the ALACs were able to harness this data more effectively and exploit it to bring sustainable change in peoples lives.

To that end, TIS has been facilitating the development of a new Database Application in order to create a "one-stop shop" software for the ALACs to use in all aspects of their daily work. This software will enable ALACs to record and organise their information more systematically and efficiently, storing sensitive information securely and compiling statistics at local and global level.

The database workshop was organised in the framework of the ALACs research project, coordinated by Konstanz University, and aimed at training ALAC staff on effective usage of the new database application to record, organise and analyse data. The workshop mostly consisted of interactive training sessions, discussions and practical exercises with the database. The participants have been skilled on how to transmit this knowledge in their office by training other staff where this applies.

Although the workshop has mostly focused on the new database, there have been also opportunities to discuss project implementation, reporting and financial issues. On the afternoon of the second day an expert from Tactical Tech, an international NGO "working at the point where rights advocacy meets information management and technology" also presented their work.

Agenda Overview

Day 1, 17ᵗʰ October 2011, 9 am to 5 pm:

- Welcome and Introductions
- Presentation of the new features of the database
- How to install the database – discussion around installation options
- Understanding the interface, terminology and main data elements used in the database
- How to enter and organise information in the database
  Joint dinner

Day 2, 18th October 2011, 9 am to 5 pm

- How to customise and localise the database
- How to administer the database
- How to ensure maximum data security and integrity
- Data analysis presentation (Tom Longley, Tactical Tech)
- Wrap up and closing

Departure

2. About the Database Project

Collecting and organising information on corruption cases more systematically will build a "corruption library", massively increasing the ability to harness data effectively and to use it to inform future plans, reach out to a wider audience than ever before, and undertake evidence-based advocacy to bring sustainable change to peoples' lives.

To this end, Transparency International Secretariat set about designing software that would do just that - a "one stop shop" where ALACs could store all of their information securely and access and navigate through it easily. It was developed according to the day to day needs and working modes of ALACs, from feedback regarding previous and pilot versions of the database, as well as with input from a wide range of software development, design, and IT security specialists. This custom-made database software will not only enable ALACs to efficiently manage complaints, but also to document and demonstrate the impact of corruption, motivating more people to overcome apathy toward corruption, and to promote reform on a strong evidence base.

3. Organisation and Content of the Workshop

The two-day database workshop took place on the 17th and 18th of October 2011. The main organisers of the workshop were Anja Osterhaus and Conrad Zellmann (both of the Transparency International Secretariat-TIS, Berlin) and Angelos Giannakopoulos from the RTD-performers team. Milena Marin, Assistant Programme Coordinator at TIS, led the participants through the sessions and activities. The workshop was held on-site, in rooms at the Transparency International Secretariat, Berlin, Germany.

In addition to those already named, other participants present were Santeri Eriksson, representing Transparency International Finland, John Devitt of Transparency International Ireland, and Victor Alistar (Transparency International Romania), Diana Sebestyen (Transparency International Hungary), Jeyhun Atayev (Transparency International Azerbaijan), Niringa Mickeviciute (Transparency International Lithuania), Vladan Broz (Transparency International Czech Republic), and Angelos Giannakopoulos and Felix Tirschmann, representing the RTD-performers. Thus, all institutions taking part in the ALACs- Project were represented at the database workshop.

After the initial greeting and introductions for workshop participants, the beginning session on the first day was an introduction to the new features of the ALAC software. An overview was given of the new possibilities that the ALAC software allows, using typical problem situations

as examples. Workshop participants were invited to write down solutions that they might typically use for everyday problems and to then discuss these solutions with one another. To facilitate discussion, the moderators wrote down typical problem situations on coloured cards that were pinned to the wall. ALAC representatives could gather in front of the cards thus displayed and talk over their proposed solutions and preferences.

Typical sets of problems, from the areas of organisation, public relations, funding, and education, were up for discussion. The discussion problem concerning ALAC internal organisation was: "A new staff member joins your team. You are overworked and need to hand over a number of your cases for her to work on. How do you get her up to speed as quickly as possible?" In the field of public relations, one possible problem was as follows: "You are planning a campaign on corruption and gender and need to compile information on the kinds of corruption challenges that women report." Or, with a rather different emphasis: "You have a small amount of money to pay for some advertising and it is your role to decide what to spend it on." In matters of funding, the following typical situation was up for discussion: "A donor calls you and wants information on the impact their money is making. You have a meeting with them tomorrow and have heard that their decision on whether to fund you next year will depend upon this information." (For the complete list of discussion topics cf. Appendix B: *Scenarios used to demonstrate how the database could be used in practice*)

On the first day, the first session encouraged communication between workshop participants, focusing everyone's attention on situation-specific topics in the fight against corruption. The approach allowed us to examine how representatives from the different ALACs suggested the same solutions to typical problems, or how their proposed solutions differed either slightly or substantially. In the sessions to follow, the workshop built upon this introductory session, showing how, by using the ALAC software, the various suggested solutions could be integrated. This brought home the idea that the ALAC software is indeed a "one-stop shop". All the problems presented in the scenarios can now be addressed in a user-friendly, practical fashion using the new features of the ALAC software.

In the following sessions, essential aspects of installing and implementing the ALAC software were discussed. The first topic to be tackled was how to install the database. Various installation options were discussed; installation and data storage in the office (on the one hand), and installation and data storage on a remote server (on the other hand). Discussion of the pros and cons revealed a prevailing preference for Internet-based use of the ALAC software. Such an implementation has several distinct advantages, especially concerning accessibility, regulation of access rights, data transfer and data evaluation.

After further questions about installation, the next task was to provide an in-depth look at how the software functions. Aspects introduced and discussed here included the software interface and how it functions, the terminology used, and the main data elements. In keeping with the principle of "learning by doing", the participants paired up to practise working with the software through practical tasks and examples. This gave all participants the chance to try out entering information into the software and to learn how such data can be processed. User interface problems could be discussed directly with the software developers. At this point, workshop participants made some valuable comments and contributions, especially about the checklists and menus of possible answers built into the software.

The second day of the workshop was given over to the task of adapting the software to local conditions. Where the first day had provided an opportunity to learn the basic functions of the ALAC software, the learning sessions on the second day were devoted to the question of how to customise and localise the database. This was a first opportunity to try out and talk over one of the particular strengths of the new ALAC software. The fact is that ALACs in different countries use the software to address different needs; each country sets its own emphases in order to respond to local conditions. Therefore, the software must be designed to take into account the requirements of differing conditions in different countries - it must be flexible and adaptable, and the ALAC software is notable for its high degree of modifiability (customisation and localisation).

In these interactive training sessions, workshop participants were able to learn how to get the best out of the ALAC software, in other words, how they can make the ALAC software into *their* ALAC software. Part of this is the option of limiting access to the database. This is because not all data (e.g. information about a financial situation) should be uniformly accessible to all users. Thus, as a matter of course, the software administrator can set individual protocols for allowing access to various modules within the database. Workshop participants also pointed out in discussion that this is an important point, because not all countries have the same guidelines concerning data protection.

The (next to) last point addressed in the training session also concerned data protection, in the sense of data security and integrity. At this point, participants discussed important matters of data security, how to come up with secure passwords and also how to store passwords. Discussion clearly showed that the problem of data security correlated closely with conditions on the spot. In countries where it was important to protect submitted and archived data from unwanted access by the state, the problem of data security was especially keenly felt.

The last session of the workshop was devoted to the topic of "data analysis presentation". For this part of the proceedings, an outside speaker was invited. Tom Longley from Tactical Tech,

presented the various possible visual strategies for presenting statistical data on the one hand, and clear messages on the other, and how these two topics relate. His presentation gave powerful examples of the impact that visual images can have and the clarity that pictures can offer in communicating messages. Other examples showed how an image might contain too much information, or how a confusing infographic might fail to achieve the impact it aims for. Results from this session were compiled and are appended to this report (cf. Appendix C *Visualisation Images*).

4. Results of the Workshop

Introductory discussions showed that similar problems are sometimes solved in very different ways in different countries. The workshop's fundamentally interactive, problem-focused approach promoted communication and the exchange of ideas between participants. Right at the beginning of the workshop, a lively discussion developed about how the task of battling corruption is perceived in each of the participants' countries and which approaches are involved in this fight. Alongside strategic, legal and public-relations measures, this includes, above all, organisational and technical approaches to the problem. The ALAC software takes exactly these organisational and technical aspects of the fight against corruption to the next level. The aim of the workshop was to demonstrate how an organisation can boost its efficiency with the help of a new technology (the ALAC software) and what advantages this technology provides - a goal which the workshop achieved.

During the interactive sessions on both days of the workshop, it became clear that finding solutions for the problems that come up during an ALAC's day-to-day work often depends on precisely targeted use of the ALAC knowledge database. Thus far, however, the ALAC knowledge databases in individual countries have been inconsistently created and assembled, a situation which can be attributed to patchy standardisation. The new ALAC software now allows each ALAC to create a standardized database, a "corruption library" specific to the country concerned. The standardisation process makes it easier to search for and find evidence-based data about corruption, and also to archive the information obtained and compare knowledge. The process also allows and promotes comparison between the corruption databases specific to each country.

Workshop participants had a chance to become familiar with the individual database modules (Reminders, Dashboard, Case Management, Systematic Change, Partnerships, Outreach, Financials, Security Log, Data Analysis) in an interactive fashion. They also learnt how to adapt the new functions to their own needs (customise and localise). This showed that the new ALAC software allows quick access to all sorts of data, even from different access locations.

It becomes simpler, and thus more efficient, to sort through the compiled datasets and to search them in a focused way. Knowledge transfer becomes more straightforward, where this term includes both internal and external communication. Working methods within an office can profit from the introduction of the ALAC software, as can work with representatives of the media, the public and private sectors, and donors.

Where problems or delays are prone to occur, these can be addressed or prevented by correct use of the database and ongoing maintenance. All workshop participants confirmed that the importance of clearly structured data cannot be underestimated in the day-to-day work of an ALAC; this is also true for conscientious data archiving and organisation (dataset compilation and administration). For the first time, the ALAC software provides ALACs with the possibility of tackling all tasks as they arise by means of a software programme that serves as a "one-stop shop". The introduction of the ALAC software may thus be regarded as a milestone in improving both the technical and the organisational efficiency of the ALACs, an improvement that benefits all ALACs and Transparency International's entire network.