Follow the integrity trendsetter

How to support change in youth opinion and build social trust

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In some societies people come to see corruption as the norm. When popular opinion in a country normalises corruption, this results in low trust in public administration. In Nepal, a youth fellowship programme has been successful in changing youth opinions about corruption through direct interaction with officials known for their integrity. Such programmes can enhance development partners' and practitioners' efforts to build greater accountability and trust in the public sector.

Main points

- Trendsetters are individuals who abandon established norms, spearhead change, inspire others, and mobilise others to follow in their footsteps. They are an important element in changing norms that favour corruption.

- 'Pluralistic ignorance' describes a situation in which people follow a norm because they falsely believe that everyone else agrees with it. For example, individuals may reject corruption personally yet still assume, incorrectly, that most others in the society participate in it.

- In Nepal, youths who interact directly with integrity trendsetters abandon such beliefs. They come to trust that not all government officials are corrupt, and that there are public servants who work with integrity and deliver good services.

- Youths who interact with trendsetters often become more interested in working in public administration themselves. They believe that they can maintain personal integrity throughout their working life, regardless of career choice.

- Practitioners need to recognise that individual trendsetters function within wider social and professional networks. Including these networks in programmes can help trendsetters be more effective in building integrity. Programmes where youth co-learn and interact with trendsetters can strengthen networks that promote integrity in trendsetters' places of work.

- Mentoring, fellowship, and integrity award programmes that include bureaucrats in training or newly graduated civil servants can help to build the next generation of trendsetters.

- Formalised peer exchange on positive experiences with public servants can help reduce pluralistic ignorance and increase trust.

- Historically rooted inequalities in caste, gender, and social status should be considered when identifying integrity trendsetters and selecting youth participants.

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Acknowledgements

Youth in Nepal: Rethinking dominant structures

Political changes open windows of opportunity for anti-corruption initiatives, but they also bear risks, as a UNDP study shows. Nepal stands at a crossroads after a turbulent history of civil conflict driven by widespread inequality, a stagnant democratisation and federalisation process, and two devastating earthquakes. In 2017, the country held its first local elections in 16 years. Many Nepalese youth and young adults, who make up 40% of the population, according to the National Youth Policy 2072 (2015), voted for the first time. Our research shows that Nepalese youth are hopeful that the newly elected political representatives will be accountable to the public. Indeed, there is growing demand among youth in Nepal for greater government accountability. Young people have the ability to rethink dominant structures and social norms, which gives them a strong potential role in making change (Jeffrey 2012; Mannheim 1972 [1936]). However, not all youth become engaged when confronted with difficult life circumstances, such as unemployment, poverty, or corruption (Mains 2007; Jeffrey 2010). In Nepal, youth are still widely resigned to inefficiency and corruption in public service, indicating low levels of trust in public administration.

> *There is growing demand among youth in Nepal for greater government accountability. Young people have the ability to rethink dominant structures and social norms.*

This U4 Issue investigates how positive anti-corruption measures can change youth opinions and begin building trust in public servants. In Nepal, young people's firsthand interactions with 'trendsetters' have begun to alter their perception that all government officials are corrupt. They learn that there are officials who work with integrity and deliver good services to the public. Many have argued that it is crucial to build social trust in order to create a sustainable environment in public service, one where the public holds the government accountable for service delivery and officials carry out their duties with integrity. Social trust refers to a generalised trust in people within society and institutions. It is grounded in the assumption that most people in a society share one's own general moral orientation and incentive structure – an assumption not based on personal knowledge – and that those ideas are reflected in the

society's institutions. Social trust thus differs from personal trust, which is based on 'personal knowledge of the other individual's moral orientation and/or [his or] her incentive structure' (Rothstein and Eek 2009: 83, emphasis added).

Through shared personal experiences with idols fellows change expectations of corruption. Photo credit: Accountability Lab Nepal.

Changing youth opinions: A youth fellowship programme in Nepal

We analyse a youth fellowship that is part of Integrity Idol, an accountability and integrity programme of Accountability Lab Nepal. The research findings presented here are based on a field trip to Nepal in October 2018. During that visit, interviews were conducted with Integrity Fellows and with Accountability Lab staff involved in the Integrity Idol campaign.[1]

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1. Unless otherwise noted, all direct quotes from Integrity Fellows and Accountability Lab staff come from these interviews in October 2018.

Our preliminary findings indicate that bringing together youth and trendsetters in anti-corruption initiatives gets youth involved in a positive discussion on anti-corruption. Such interventions show strong potential to change youth opinion, enabling them to abandon the descriptive norm of corruption and enhancing their trust in public servants. We suggest that by including professional and peer networks in the fellowship, the effects of these interventions could be made more sustainable and could ignite more widespread changes in social norms.

The fellowship enables idols and fellows to exchange knowledge. Photo credit: Accountability Lab Nepal.

Corruption as a social norm in Nepal's public administration

When addressing corruption through a social norms lens, it is important to bear in mind that corrupt practices emerge from a variety of conditions and are reinforced in different ways.[2] Corruption is, essentially, a social practice resting on the structure of social relations in wider society. Such practices and norms

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2. We follow Ostrom's definition of social norms as 'shared understandings about actions that are obligatory, permitted, or forbidden within a society' (Ostrom 2000, pp. 143–44). Recent publications highlight the increasing recognition of the importance of social norms in sustaining corrupt practices (Kubbe and Engelbert 2018; Jackson and Köbis 2018; Baez-Camargo et al. 2017).

should be viewed in relation to the material conditions within a society, the concentration of power and wealth over time, and the normalisation of corruption. Essentially, social values and norms emerge from interactions between individuals, groups, and socioeconomic structures.

> *'In Nepal, we say the government is this, the government is that. We have to go several times to get our work done. We wait for hours and waste a whole day. The government is not working properly.' —Rujina Maharjan, Integrity Fellow*

In Nepal, corrupt practices in public administration – such as bribery, systematic work delays, absenteeism, nepotism, and patronage-clientelism – are descriptive norms, meaning that people think that everyone else is engaging in these behaviours (Bicchieri 2016).[3] Along this logic, an individual public official or service taker will engage in corrupt practices because in his or her perception, everyone else in the same community, organisation, or network is doing exactly the same (Köbis et al. 2015; Bicchieri 2006, Bicchieri and Funcke 2018).

Our interview respondents all said they expect to encounter corruption in government offices. They believe that most people have to engage in corrupt interactions of one sort or another in order to obtain official services and documents such as licenses, passports, or birth certificates. Many of the youths we talked to do not have firsthand experience of interactions with government officials. For most, their parents, mainly their fathers, access official services for them. Their attitudes are shaped by the experiences of people in their close networks, such as their families, as well as the discourse of corruption in wider Nepalese society. Underlining our findings, a study shows that one in four students in Nepal expect to give or take a bribe in future (Adhikari 2015: 106).

These widespread empirical expectations of corruption do not necessarily correlate with individual opinions regarding corruption (Bicchieri 2006). Our respondents agreed that corruption hinders development and economic growth in Nepal and impedes the everyday lives of citizens. A situation of 'pluralistic

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3. For literature on rampant corruption in government service in Nepal, see Adhikari 2015; Bhattarai 2017; Dix 2011; Dix, Hussmann, and Walton 2012; Jamil and Dangal 2009.

ignorance' prevails, however, meaning that individuals may reject corruption personally yet still assume, incorrectly, that most others in the society participate in it (Jackson and Köbis 2018). This crucially hinders the building of social trust in public institutions and the public servants employed in them.

Other social norms also enable and influence corruption. One of our respondents clearly pointed out what many people in Nepal experience: in the private context, the pressure on public officials to generate extra income is huge, as extended family members rely on them for school fees, health care, and other economic support. Furthermore, these expectations of shared support are reinforced by wider norms of accumulation and consumption, which may dictate the purchase of luxury items as a means to raise one's social status. In this context, normative expectations are strong, and corrupt practices become socially acceptable behaviour. Indeed, interview respondents reported that the extended family and wider society would consider non-corrupt public officials to be selfish for depriving their families of financial security and socioeconomic mobility, while others seize these opportunities. As a consequence, such officials can experience sanctions from their kinship group (Hoffmann and Patel 2017; Misangyi, Weaver, and Elms 2008).

In this context of these kinship and social pressures, an ethic prevails among public officials that justifies corrupt activities in order to meet the expectations of families and norms in wider society. The resulting horizontal pressures, from a significant reference group of colleagues, sustain corrupt practices.[4] These practices become 'injunctive norms,' behaviours that are perceived as being widely approved of by others.

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4. See Anders (2008) for examples of sanctions imposed for defying horizontal pressures.

Building networks is important for challenging social norms of corruption. Photo credit: Accountability Lab Nepal.

Trendsetters can help change corruption norms

The expectation of corruption goes hand in hand with a sense of resignation. The attitudes of 'I alone cannot do anything' and 'What to do?' are widespread in Nepal (Nepalese: *Maile matra garera ke huncha* and *Ke garne*). The latter phrase is an expression of both resilience and fatalism, of being at peace with the cards life has dealt you, strongly influenced by the religious concept of karma. In this context of systemic corruption characterised by strong normative pressures from kinship groups and a sense that corruption is inevitable, trendsetters can take on the crucial role of changing public behaviour and opinion and rejecting existing social norms (Jackson and Köbis 2018).

Trendsetters are people who abandon established norms, spearhead change, inspire others, and mobilise others to follow in their footsteps (Bicchieri and Funcke 2018; Bicchieri 2016; Paluck, Shepherd, and Aronow 2016). They are dissatisfied with specific social circumstances – in our case study, with systemic corruption in public service. Importantly, they believe in their own capacity to

change these circumstances and the events that affect their lives (Bicchieri and Funcke 2018: 3–6; Bandura 1993). Violating or attempting to change social norms bears a risk of social sanctions and comes at a cost that not everyone in society is willing to pay. Trendsetters assess this risk as worth taking; some may also underestimate the risk. Typically trendsetters are relatively insensitive to pressures for conformity and value autonomy in their decision-making. They are often drawn from the ranks of religious or ethnic leaders, politicians, or activists on such issues as right to information, women's rights, LGBTI rights,[5] or environmental rights.

With respect to anti-corruption measures, the trendsetter defies the descriptive norm of corruption as well as other social norms enabling corrupt practices. He or she may be a public servant who does not take bribes and who fulfils the duties in the job description with integrity. Trendsetters can also be service users, people who refuse to give bribes and who use accountability tools to secure the services they are entitled to. Importantly, trendsetters affect other people in their extended network. Research indicates that their impact is greatest in contexts where people rely on public opinion to form their own attitudes (Bicchieri and Funcke 2018: 19). As mentioned above, our research shows this is the case for youth in Nepal. Studies have also shown that the media can create trendsetters, who may even be fictional characters (Hoffmann and Patel 2017). It is this transformational power of trendsetters that Accountability Lab attempts to activate with their Integrity Idol campaign.

Naming and faming trendsetters: Creating Integrity Idols

Inspired by Pop Idol, the British television series whose musical competition format spawned an international franchise, Accountability Lab launched an initiative called Integrity Idol. It seeks to 'name and fame' public servants who have demonstrated integrity and who spearhead anti-corruption and accountability activities in their own government departments. According to Blair Glencorse, Accountability Lab's executive director, the idea is to use the media to highlight honest government officials – the 'idols' – as role models and to create positive narratives about officials with integrity who are solving problems. Focusing only on incidents of corruption, he contends, produces negativity and a sense of powerlessness. It perpetuates the widespread feeling

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5. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex. See https://freedomhouse.org/issues/lgbti-rights.

that nothing can be done, and paralyses the public. On the contrary, naming and faming sparks hope and enhances the idol's role as a trendsetter, helping to change social attitudes, spur a debate on integrity, and inspire future generations of civil servants. The highlighting of integrity acts is an intervention to counter pluralistic ignorance, as defined above.

The programme started with a flagship project in Nepal in 2014 and has since expanded into other countries (Liberia, Pakistan, Mali, Nigeria, South Africa, and Sri Lanka; Mexico is planned in 2019). With our focus on youth engagement, we limited our examination to the implementation in Nepal, because it is only there that the youth-centric Integrity Fellowship, described below, has been added to the Integrity Idol campaign.

Every year, Accountability Lab Nepal publicises an open call for nominations online and activates its network to find honest government officials. An expert panel shortlists five nominees, and the Accountability Lab team then makes a video of each contestant to highlight his or her achievements. These videos are shown on TV, radio, and social media for a week, while the public can cast votes online or by SMS or email. The votes determine who will become the Integrity Idol of the year, an award conferred in a broadcasted public event. According to Accountability Lab, the first campaign received 300 nominations and was broadcasted on TV to around 2.5 million people; 1,000 voters participated in selecting the first idol. Only three years later, in 2017, the campaign reached over 6 million people on radio and TV, and 90,000 people participated in the vote. Publicity is crucial to the campaign and a focus of Accountability Lab's planned future efforts.

A programme built around youth volunteers

The Integrity Idol campaign successfully mobilises young people and engages them in accountability and integrity work. Given the project's low budget, outreach depends on the work of volunteers. Beyond financial motivations, building of a network of young volunteers increases youth participation in the campaign. The volunteers receive an initial capacity-building training by the Accountability Lab personnel and then travel to the various districts of Nepal to gather nominations. In this process, the young people survey and collect information about potential trendsetters and positive role models in public

service.[6] They hold public meetings in the various localities and generate positive discourse on the need for integrity in the public sector. They participate in screenings of the idols' videos, encourage people to cast votes, and assist during the main award ceremony.

According to Ashmita Sharma, who is responsible for the Integrity Idol programme in Nepal, Accountability Lab focuses on art and fun activities to encourage young people to be more engaged in the campaign. This seems to resonate, as many young volunteers rejoin the campaign each year (Ashmita Sharma, Integrity Idol Programme Manager). The fact that young people sustain their engagement indicates a strengthening of youth commitment to integrity through the campaign. Sharma herself began her engagement with Accountability Lab as an intern for Integrity Idol.

The Integrity Idol and fellowship programs create opportunities for youth volunteering in local communities. Photo credit: Accountability Lab Nepal.

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6. According to Paluck, Shepherd, and Aronow (2016), trendsetters and influential actors are usually known in their communities.

Integrity Idol fellowships

In 2017, Accountability Lab Nepal added a programme to their campaign after several youth volunteers showed interest in gaining firsthand experience of the idols' work for integrity. It was called the Integrity Fellowship. The fellowship provides an 'immersive experiential learning opportunity for young Nepalis in accountable and transparent government,' according to the project website.

The main concept is that for one month a young person shadows an Integrity Idol nominee during the official's work and free time. Wherever possible, the fellow lives with the idol and participates informally in his or her social network. Calls for applicants are made over the Accountability Lab network, on social media, and in universities and colleges. When idols agree to take in fellows, they request specific skills and provide information about potential projects the youths could engage in. Ideally, these activities involve assisting the idol in efforts to increase accountability in the workplace. Then the Accountability Lab team screens the applications to assess whether each applicant's interests, skills, or current studies fit any idol. The applicant and the idol must agree upon the match and a shared activity before the fellowship can begin. In this way, the Integrity Fellowship is designed as a co-learning and knowledge-sharing platform. Before fellows join their respective idols, they participate in a workshop organised by Accountability Lab. Its staff and invited government experts give interactive sessions on accountability and integrity and a general introduction to the government sector (Ashmita Sharma, Integrity Idol Programme Manager).

> *'I followed the idol through his day, walked to the school with him, asked questions when I wanted to, listened to him talk in meetings, wrote it down, and then had talks until late into the night with him.' —Radip Tandukar, Integrity Fellow*

During the fellowship, each participant writes a weekly learning diary and contributes to a blog. So far, according to the Accountability Lab's internal assessment, participant feedback has been positive. The young people come back inspired by the idols. In at least one instance the fellow and the idol built a strong rapport and remained in touch after the fellowship was over, with the

idol taking on the role of mentor to the fellow (Ashmita Sharma, Integrity Idol Programme Manager).

> *'I had seen the negative side of government officers. Now I wanted to see the positive side. How do these positive, motivated, and engaged people work?' —Suvechchha Chapagain, Integrity Fellow*

Why become an integrity fellow?

*'It was because of past experiences I had in government offices [that I wanted to join the Integrity Fellowship]. You will never get the government officers' work done because it is messy due to corruption. I had a lot of experiences like that. I was sent for an internship at one government office, but I dropped out because there was no one in the office and no one there to guide me. When I started a different internship and was sent to another government office, the situation was the same. I even had an appointment with the government official but the person did not appear. So because I had seen the negative side of government officers, now I wanted to see the positive side. How do these positive, motivated, and engaged people work?' —*Suvechchha Chapagain, Integrity Fellow

Our research shows that participatory learning was an effective means to sensitise youth on questions of accountability and integrity. The direct interactions between fellows and idols, as well as on-site experiences of integrity in action, shaped the young people's definitions of integrity. It also sharpened their assessment of how to handle difficult situations and resolve conflicts appropriately.

> *The idol held the public good – quality education of children in public schools – over the social norms prevalent in the local community.*

Observing the work of a trendsetter

Radip Tandukar followed his idol Gyan Mani Nepal, District Education Officer (DEO) in Khotang, into the remote regions of Nepal in 2017.* He observed him during a heated conflict with villagers over sanctions the officer had placed on a teacher who had come to school drunk and not done his work properly. When local community members and political party activists supported the teacher, the official did not bend to the pressure. The fellow was impressed with how the idol dealt with the situation and how he held the public good – quality education of children in public schools – over the social norms prevalent in the local community. From the experience, Radip learned that working with integrity means clearly assessing to whom one is accountable. In this case, the officer's accountability was to the larger public of Nepal and to the younger generation of Khotang District. Shadowing the idol during this crucial incident sensitised the fellow to the challenges that an official working with integrity has to face. In Radip's eyes, the idol he shadowed was not a civil servant but a civic activist, one whose commitment went beyond normal government service.

Gyan Mani Nepal was the District Education Officer of Panchthar in 2014 when he became an Integrity Idol. He was later transferred to Khotang district.

A success story: Changing expectations and opinions of youth

The fellowship sparked hope that even in a context characterised by systemic corruption, people and pockets of integrity exist. The interaction with trendsetters helped undermine the collective empirical expectation of corruption as a norm in public service. It decreased pluralistic ignorance and changed the opinions of the young participants. We found that the fellows had very little firsthand experience with government offices before their fellowship, which is why exposure is a key component of the programme. As a result of the fellowship, their first experience of government offices was positive. After their personal experiences with the idols, the fellows showed a change in their expectations with regard to corruption in government offices.

The fellowship sparked hope that even in a context characterised by systemic corruption, people and pockets of integrity exist.

After interacting with the idols, the fellows give public officials the benefit of the doubt. They have now seen how hard office holders work and how much integrity and passion for their jobs government officials can have. Several fellows said they had expected to observe public servants who did not show up for work, delayed procedures, or were not responsive to the needs of citizens. However, every one of our respondents reported seeing that the idol and his or her team were service-oriented. In one case, the idol was accessible to the public at all times of the day and night. Another fellow saw the idol walk for hours in remote areas to do his job. Yet another was impressed that her idol was impartial towards all the people entering his office, giving the same amount of time and respect to a poor person as to an influential leader (Kusum K. C., Radip Tandukar, and Rujina Maharjan, Integrity Fellows). All of our respondents also mentioned that they had seen how heavy workloads and tight schedules put pressure on people working in government offices.

'We create this huge propaganda that all civil servants are corrupt. But this is not the case. I went. I lived. I saw. I realised.' —Radip Tandukar, Integrity Fellow

Most important, as a result of the fellowship, the fellows no longer generally expect corruption in government offices. Instead, they are open to looking at each public servant's performance individually, realising that there are individuals in government service who work honestly. This stands in marked contrast to general perceptions held by the Nepalese population as a whole.

Rebuilding social trust in government

Persistence of corruption is linked to the public's lack of trust in government institutions (Rothstein 2013: 1010). As a consequence, the building of social trust is a priority in anti-corruption measures. The opportunity to witness individual officials acting with integrity helped fellows re-examine and contest public discourse on corruption as a social norm. They increased their trust in

government officials, especially those government officials nominated and participating in the Integrity Idol process. Here, the fellows do not distinguish between the idol they shadowed and other idols in the campaign. The building of trust is initiated by the direct interaction with one idol, but the nomination then works as a quality label. It gives the nominated public servants credibility and labels them as individuals with integrity. As a consequence, the fellows develop a more generalised trust beyond their personal experience.

The building of generalised trust in idols does not necessarily change the fellows' level of trust in government institutions overall. Instead, the experience enhances self-reflection, encouraging fellows to question their negative stereotyping of government officials and their own expectations of corruption. Importantly, it breaks down pluralistic ignorance (when people follow a norm because they incorrectly believe that everyone else agrees with it). In other words, the youths realise that the norm that 'everyone in government is corrupt' cannot be true. This new assessment allows them potentially to abandon the descriptive norm of corruption and plants the seed for social trust to grow. But trust does not come automatically. While one fellow concluded that even beyond the current idols, there are other people in the system with integrity (Kusum K. C., Integrity Fellow), another cited police corruption in a current rape and murder case as a reason why she still cannot trust the government despite her positive fellowship experience (Suvechchha Chapagain, Integrity Fellow). These diverging assessments indicate that a growing self-reflection on expectations and partial abandonment of norms does not suffice to build broad social trust. It remains a fragile process, affected by feedback loops of cumulative experiences with people and institutions within society.

The idols who inspire a future generation of civil servants

'There were people coming in who wanted to have really secret conversations with him [the idol] because it is the National Reconstruction Authority. His department is all about handling foreign aid and it is all about money there. But there was not a single time that he told me to just go out because [he had] to talk with these people. You know, he was very transparent the whole time. He had a 200 rupee note stuck to his calendar, and I asked him, what is that? He told me that one week beforehand a person who had come to see him had lost the note from his pocket. He kept it here so the next time the person came, he could give it to him. He could have spent it and given him a different 200 rupee note, but he was so honest and genuine that he actually stapled it here so he could give

the same note to the person. That is really inspiring for me.' —Suvechchha Chapagain, Integrity Fellow

'Before being associated with the idol I never thought I would join a government office, as the officials were unresponsive when I had problems and delayed my work. But now I think, being a public health graduate, I have to join government service. Not all government officers are the same. We can be role models.' —Kusum K. C., Integrity Fellow

Among the fellows interviewed, several have become motivated to join government service. The inspiration they received from the idol they followed equipped them with a sense of individual agency. They hope that by joining government service, they can actually make a change for their country. One of our respondents knew she wanted to be a government official beforehand. She believes that the way government works can only be changed from within, and that from inside the government she can make a significant impact. The fellowship increased her level of conviction and refined her idea of what kind of government official she wants to be and how she wants to work. She wants to incorporate her experiences with the trendsetter into her future career. Today, she strongly believes she can work in a government office and keep her personal integrity (Suvechchha Chapagain, Integrity Fellow).

Another fellow never intended to join government service, but she was so inspired by her idol that she changed her mind.

Another fellow never intended to join government service before her internship in 2017, but she was so inspired by the everyday impact her idol had that she changed her mind. She is currently working on a start-up project on the Sustainable Development Goals in collaboration with the government to gain experience, and she is preparing to take the government entrance exams in 2019. She believes that in future she also can be a role model (Kusum K. C.,

Integrity Fellow). Even those fellows not planning careers in government said they wanted to be accountable and keep their personal integrity in their chosen careers (Radip Tandukar and Rujina Maharjan, Integrity Fellows).

Youth volunteers, staff, and idols at the 2017 Integrity Idol Award ceremony. Photo credit: Accountability Lab Nepal.

In whom do we trust? Integrity Idol's focus on upper-level bureaucrats

While praising their idols and the value of the shadowing experience, fellows also voiced some concerns. In particular, they made suggestions about how the campaign might be made more inclusive and less individualistic in order to broaden its reach and impact.

The public officials singled out by Integrity Idol are usually in relatively high positions within their departments. Theories on social norm change show that vertical pressures from highly placed individuals can be successful in anti-corruption measures because they establish 'new orders' in an institutional setting that do not allow corrupt norms to prevail (Jackson and Köbis 2018; Roll

2011). While such top-down norm change can be positive, one of the fellows rightly criticises the focus on highly placed trendsetters as a means of developing social trust among the public. He hypothesises that the idol campaign will increase the public's trust only in high-level officials and not in public servants at lower levels, because the campaign's nomination and election process seldom gives space to low-level officials (Radip Tandukar, Integrity Fellow).[7] However, it is precisely these low-level bureaucrats, clerks, and other office staff with whom the public interacts on a regular basis. This is particularly relevant in Nepal, which is characterised by significant, historically rooted caste, social, and gender inequalities. It is imperative to take these issues into consideration when identifying trendsetters and youth participants. More research is required on the dynamics of building trust in upper-level government officials and the potential of establishing generalised trust based upon that process. Likewise, questions of perpetuating historical inequalities in the selection of fellows and idols require more in-depth analysis.

This fellow's statement points out an additional problem with highlighting individual trendsetters. The campaign does not take into consideration that trendsetters act in networks of social relations (Bicchieri and Funcke 2018: 6). It is within and through these networks that they establish their position as trendsetters. There are indications that the idols have built and continue to build islands of integrity in their respective departments. For example, a new colleague of an idol told Accountability Lab staff that before the idol was transferred into his department, he felt alone and hopeless in trying to change working ethics in the department. After the transfer, he started to work closely with the idol to introduce integrity, and others in the department also joined the movement (Ashmita Sharma, Integrity Idol Programme Manager). A fellow described the hierarchically initiated norm change and subsequent growth of an island of integrity: 'I also found out that the DAO [District Administrative Office] there has a zero tolerance policy to 'an extra charge' for any service. Mr Pradip being a CDO [Chief District Officer], and thus a focal person who leads other government bodies in his area, promoted a faster service delivery system among his staff, who were also very devoted to their roles' (Rujina Maharjan, blog post, 11 September 2017).

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7. Radip explains the reason for the disproportionate selection of high-level public servants as follows: 'As the selection procedure of the Integrity Idol is a hundred percent democratic, i.e., only via public nomination, scouting, voting, and awarding, the high-level bureaucratic actors attract a higher degree of attention and have comparative advantage to jump to higher selection rounds. Lower-class officers, despite possibly being an epitome of accountability, might not be successful to climb higher levels due to insufficient goodwill and popularity amongst the common public' (Radip Tandukar, November 2018).

Rallying media, parents, and students: A case study of an island of integrity

In 2014, Gyan Mani Nepal became Accountability Lab's first Integrity Idol. His actions against corruption in the education sector during his time as the District Education Officer of Panchthar illustrate that only by building strong alliances can trendsetters withstand pressures, particularly partisan pressures. Rallying local support increased his political capital, enabling him to reduce the discretionary power of teachers and improve educational standards. His actions established islands of integrity in the schools in his district, with visible results in school grades and literacy.

When Gyan Mani Nepal became the DEO in Panchthar district of eastern Nepal, only 14% of students passed their exams to obtain School Leaving Certificates. Teacher attendance was very low. When he visited schools he saw that the students were present, but the teachers were not. He then asked Class 10 students to solve mathematical problems apt for their level, but they could not; even simple multiplications were a problem for many. He was shocked. After that experience, he travelled from school to school to observe how the teachers were teaching. He did not reveal his identity, and being new in the region, he was not recognised. He realised that many teachers came to the schools drunk. So he recorded their performance in class on his phone and broadcasted it in collaboration with local radio stations. At the same time, he removed these teachers from school.

He experienced massive repercussions from the ruling political party and the teachers' union, who wanted to remove him from his post. But the media, the students, and their guardians rallied behind him and supported his actions. This gave him a sense of positive agency and confidence and enabled him to resist being pressured out of his job. Then Gyan Mani Nepal started to teach the students himself and employed several good teachers. He also introduced accountability tools into the schools, empowering the students. Teachers' attendance sheets were posted in the schools for the students to sign. The DEO gave his mobile number to the students to call him in case their teacher was absent or late, or if any other grievance occurred. In this way, the pass percentage at final exams increased to 40%. Some teachers even followed his example and introduced participatory budgeting. They invited guardians to the schools on a monthly basis to discuss the schools' budgets (Ashmita Sharma, Integrity Idol Programme Manager). During his time as a DEO, the district was also declared fully literate by the government of Nepal. He later also went on to take action against around 300 teachers in the district who were working as political leaders and party cadres, recognising that the teachers were more involved in politics than actually teaching in the

classrooms. The plan was to replace them with newly hired teachers – a move the political parties strongly disliked.

Failing to appreciate that the success of an idol may also involve other people's accomplishments and integrity can isolate the idol from others in his or her network who work with integrity and support the idol. This might help explain the challenges some idols face in their workplaces after their nomination, though more research is required.[8] A 2018 report on Integrity Idol mentions jealousy on the part of idols' colleagues, reprisals from their superiors, and in one case defamation by political parties. Our data confirm that there is a need to think of both the fellowship and the idol programme in terms of the wider social networks of trendsetters. As it is designed now, the fellowship helps to maintain the momentum of the award. But insofar as it reminds other public servants in the respective offices of the idols' specialness, the challenges in the workplace are not mitigated and could potentially even be intensified.

Suggestions for improved sustainability

Strengthen networks, not just individuals: Assign a fellow for the whole department

Accountability Lab is reflecting on how to integrate idols' colleagues into the campaign. Suggestions are to include them in the short documentaries or invite them to the ceremony. We propose that the fellowship can be a tool to strengthen workplace networks and build more inclusive trust in government officials among youth. In order to do this, the fellow needs to be assigned to the department or agency and not merely to the idol.

In this way, the fellowship would include the social and professional network of the idol, strengthen the idol's relationships within his or her immediate work space, and broaden the reference group of colleagues with integrity in the department. When the fellow is assigned to the department, the idol's integrity is highlighted, but others also get the opportunity to serve as role models, pass

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8. MIT GOV/LAB at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Building Integrity Programme at Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford, are conducting research with Accountability Lab on how highlighting individuals through Integrity Idol can lead to collective changes in integrity.

on their version of working with integrity, and benefit from a co-learning experience. The departmental involvement could strengthen potential islands of integrity. Consolidating a reference group of honest public officials in the idol's workplace is crucial to sustain the idol's success and reduce the horizontal pressures that sustain corrupt practices. Here lies an unexplored potential to change the injunctive norms fostering corruption.

At the same time, the learning experience will be expanded as the fellow interacts with various public servants instead of just shadowing one person. This more versatile participation will lend greater understanding of the functioning of a government department. Ideally, the fellow will build trust with government employees who are not nominated as Integrity Idols. This could facilitate the generalisation of personalised trust and thus enhance social trust building.

Designed in such a way, the fellowship could be a valuable component of the 'naming and faming' programme – one that genuinely recognises that while a trendsetter can initiate norm changes, sustaining integrity in government service requires a network and mutual relationships with other people within the respective departments.

Expand the target group of fellows

Currently, fellows are chosen by an open call and consist of young, urban, educated youth enrolled in undergraduate or graduate programmes. Broadening the target group may offer unexplored potential. One idea would be to engage youth preparing to take the government entrance exam (trainee bureaucrats) in fellowships with the idols. Considering the positive results of our research with regard to changing opinion and expectations, expanding the pool of fellows to include future service providers could enhance the impact of the programme.

Formalise peer exchange and sharing

The fellowship creates momentum, inspiration, and hope that so far has not been harnessed systematically by Accountability Lab's programme. Up to this point, the fellowship has not initiated a wider change in norms among youth. Participants themselves are likely to abandon the descriptive norm of corruption and develop social trust in government officials. After their

fellowship, they interact with their peers and share their experiences informally. However, besides an online blog, no institutionalised peer exchange has yet been initiated.

We suggest that after completion of the fellowship, the fellows should hold or participate in a specified number of interactive workshops or youth meets among their peer group to spread their positive experiences with public servants beyond their informal network. These sessions could be held in colleges, youth clubs, youth associations, boys' and girls' scouting troops, and so forth. They should be interactive and shared on online and other platforms. Such events mobilise youth to come together, share experiences, and developed wider bonds and networks. By offering an alternative narrative to the commonly heard narrative of corruption, such peer exchanges hold the potential for a larger norm change among youth.

To prepare for the sessions, the fellows should attend an additional workshop in public speaking skills, workshop management, and leadership skills. This could increase the learning incentive for the fellows. Potentially, the fellows can be supported in becoming integrity trendsetters in their own right.

These peer exchanges could be crucial in addressing pluralistic ignorance. A suggested intervention – besides highlighting integrity acts – is to provide credible information on the frequency of corruption (Jackson and Köbis 2018). Both interventions can be geared to a specific target group. The fellows could be provided with reliable information on corrupt practices, combine this with their personal and inspiring experience, and indicate the trend of decreasing corruption. The latter strategy has been shown to be promising (Köbis, Soraperra, and Troost 2018).

Recommendations

Recommendations for donors and governments

Development partners should consider supporting holistic integrity trendsetter initiatives that include youth engagement. Adding a youth dimension to trendsetter programmes changes opinions regarding the ineffectiveness of government and builds trust in service providers.

Donors and governments wishing to introduce integrity-based awards and youth fellowships should do so across sectors and levels, in a variety of programmatic areas.

Governments should consider establishing fellowship programmes for youth, including those preparing for government entrance exams.

Recommendations for civil society organisations and youth

Civil society organisations should consider developing programmes that facilitate dialogue and interaction between youth and integrity trendsetters within government. These programmes should be developed with long-term dialogue in mind.

Youth and youth organisations should develop ties with integrity trendsetters within government to challenge descriptive norms of corruption and build paths for developing social trust.

General recommendations

During the programme design phase, the context should be studied to determine whether the opinions of the target group can be influenced by trendsetters. This can be achieved through social network analysis and comparative observational data.

In order to build trust sustainably through integrity trendsetter programmes, it is crucial to integrate the trendsetters' social networks into programme design and planning. In this example, many fellows engaged with the informal social networks of idols by living with them and participating in their social lives. Additionally, including the professional network of idols' colleagues can strengthen generalised trust in government service.

Expanding the programme to work with youth preparing for government entrance exams can help create a new generation of trendsetters. For example, trainees can be offered internships within departments where there are existing trendsetters, or given trainee integrity awards.

Expanding the programme to include institutionalised peer exchange sessions can help bring about a wider norm change among youth.

Any programme needs to take into consideration social, gender, and ethnic inequalities when designing interventions that foster intergenerational exchange between youth and trendsetters.

Replication of the Integrity Idol and fellowship programme, with the additional recommendations above, can enhance the activities of development partners and practitioners towards building greater accountability and social trust in the public sector.

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