CONCEPT NOTE

UNCAC Conference of States Parties 2023
Joint GNACTA Side Event

Event Title: The Ignored Pandemic: the need for strategic action against corruption in health
Location: Atlanta, Georgia, USA
Date & Time: Wednesday, 13 December, 13.00-14.00 EST

Background
Corruption undermines the human right to health and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 3 on Health and Well Being. It affects the ability of health systems to operate efficiently, leading to massive financial and material losses, it undermines financial protection and inhibits patients’ access to quality health services. Beyond financial waste and human suffering, corruption destroys the public trust needed for effective, accountable and inclusive health systems. In health emergency contexts, such as the recent Covid-19 pandemic, government responses often bypass standard operating procedures to rapidly address the health crisis. Under such circumstances, corruption drivers and vulnerabilities in health systems can be exacerbated.

Corruption is a consequence of weak governance which thrives in conditions where transparency and accountability are weak and where decision making has been compromised by conflicts of interest and political interference. There remains a gap between anti-corruption and health systems strengthening efforts to illuminate common threats and develop effective interventions. To date, anti-corruption, transparency and accountability (ACTA) in the health sector has been generally overlooked, and increased attention and action is urgently needed.

Multiple articles within the United Nations Convention against Corruption, including Article 5 to promote preventive anti-corruption policies and practices, Article 9 to safeguard public procurement and management of public finances, Article 12 on the private sector, and Article 13 on participation of society, among others, are relevant for addressing corruption linked to the health sector.

Singling out the health sector is also aligned with recent thought leadership to address corruption using a sectoral approach in support of the three pillars of the Conference of the State Parties, namely to improve the capacity of States to implement the Convention; to enhance cooperation among States in achieving the objectives of the Convention; and to promote and review the implementation of the Convention.

The Global Network for Anti-Corruption, Transparency, and Accountability in Health (GNACTA), a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral initiative, focuses on preventing, detecting, and addressing corruption in the health sector by uniting the efforts of a motivated global community.

This side event, organized by the GNACTA, will showcase ACTA enforcement in the health and other sectors and discuss how these initiatives can be sustained and integrated into health systems. The event will also present lessons from the COVID19 pandemic, including how corruption affected the human right to access essential health services and discuss lessons learned for emergency response.
The critical importance of how addressing corruption can help country efforts to sustain efficient domestic resource mobilisation and build stronger health systems able to prevent, prepare and respond to crises and pandemics as part of ongoing recovery efforts will be showcased.

The side event will also discuss strategic multisectoral and multistakeholder approaches to translate the main principles of good governance (information, transparency, integrity, accountability, participation) into action and present practical country examples of collective efforts and mechanisms to integrate ACTA and mitigate the impact of corruption on health systems.

Objectives
1. Present lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic response focusing on the impact of corruption on service delivery and the human right on access to essential health services, and discuss ways of integrating ACTA interventions in health systems strengthening policies in line with Resolution 9/1 “Sharm el-Sheikh Declaration on strengthening international cooperation in the prevention of and fight against corruption during times of emergencies and crisis response and recovery”
2. Discuss how addressing corruption can support more efficient domestic resources for health
3. Highlight the critical importance and need for strategic multisectoral and multistakeholder collective action to support the implementation of good governance principles, and how and what mechanisms are needed to support the integration of ACTA in the health sector
4. Showcase tried ACTA approaches and research at country level in the health and other sectors that have shown promise
5. Position the health sector as a critical area of public service delivery requiring special attention and collective action with regards to ACTA, and call for the health sector to be leveraged for testing relevant ACTA approaches

Speakers and Agenda

Opening remarks: Bruce Aylward Assistant Director General UHC Life Course Division (WHO) and John Brandolino Director of Division for Treaty Affairs (UNODC)

Panel discussion:
Panel Discussion Moderator: Sarah Steingrüber – WHO Consultant, Health Systems Governance and Stewardship Unit (WHO)

Contributor: David Clarke, Head of Health Systems Governance and Stewardship Unit (WHO)

Panelist 1: How corruption affects the human right to health
Maria José Veramendi Villa, Human Rights and Anti-Corruption Officer (OHCHR).

Panelist 2: Lessons on corruption in health emergencies response – Views from CSOs and PS
Johannes Tonn, Anti-Corruption Expert (Center for International Private Enterprise)

Panelist 3: Economic arguments on the impact of corruption in public service delivery
Alexandra Habershon, Global Lead for Anticorruption, Governance Global Practice (World Bank)

Panelist 4: Discuss the importance of translating good governance principles into action
Jennifer Lewis, Senior Anti-Corruption Advisor (USAID)
**Panelist 5:** Country experience  
*Susan Kinyeki, Deputy Director (Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission Kenya)*

**Closing remarks:** Harald Mathisen, Senior Advisor on Anti-Corruption (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation)

**Agenda**  
Total time: 60min

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Speaker(s)</th>
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<td>13:00-13:10</td>
<td>Opening Remarks</td>
<td><em>Bruce Aylward</em> – Assistant Director General, UHC Life Course Division (WHO)</td>
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<td><em>John Brandolino</em> – Director, Division for Treaty Affairs (UNODC)</td>
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<td>13:10-13:40</td>
<td>Panel Discussion (5-7 min per panelist)</td>
<td><em>David Clarke</em> – Acting Lead Health Systems Governance &amp; Stewardship (WHO)</td>
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<td>13:40-13:50</td>
<td>Question &amp; Answer</td>
<td>All</td>
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<td>13:50-14:00</td>
<td>Closing Remarks</td>
<td><em>Harald Mathisen</em> – Senior Advisor on Anti-Corruption (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation)</td>
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