

Central American Anti-Corruption Summit

Highlights media role in promoting clean government

This article originally appeared in Today, the daily E-Magazine for World Bank staff.

April 27, 2000—There was a buzz of intense discussion in the San José, Costa Rica, hotel meeting room as young journalists and anti-corruption workers from Central American civil society groups and governments scribbled down key words describing obstacles to clean, transparent government in their countries.

At long tables spread around the room, workshop participants sought to define the corruption problem. Raising this subject, long unspoken in Central America, is like opening a spigot from which a torrent gushes. Delegates almost rushed to describe the corruption they've seen all their lives: lack of credibility of government institutions, weak tax systems, politicized judges, drug trafficking, impunity and human rights violations, to name a few.

The event—"Central American Meeting on Anti-Corruption: The Role of the Media," co-hosted by the World Bank Institute (WBI) and the Organization of American States' Trust for the Americas earlier this month—was unique in that delegates included about 40 journalists from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, and the Dominican Republic. Also included were representatives of organizations including Transparency International, the Carter Center, and Controllers-General from the region.

The workshop was a demonstration example of



Daniel Kaufmann, senior manager of governance, regulation & finance at World Bank Institute (WBI) (right), Chris Neal, LAC external affairs officer and Luis Moreno Ocampo, president of Transparency International



a four-phase course developed by WBI to spark a process in which countries draft anti-corruption action plans based on consultation with and continuous involvement of civil society. Steering committees for the WBI course, Controlling Corruption and Improving Governance, have been established in Bolivia and Paraguay, as well as seven African countries. But this is the first introduction of the concept in the six Central American countries and the Dominican Republic.

"Most anti-corruption plans have been drafted by governments," said Maria Gonzalez de Asis, of the WBI's Governance Team. "But it is the involvement of civil society that ensures that such a plan is credible."

Civil society includes the media. Central American journalists at the San Jose anti-corruption meeting also participated in two one-week courses on investigative journalism techniques and practices, one of which was held the week before the meeting and the other a week after. The courses were delivered by investigative reporters Sandra Crucianelli of Bahía Blanca, Argentina, and WBI consultant Rod MacDonell, of Montreal, Canada. Sponsors were Radio Netherlands, the Panama-based Centro Latinoamericano de Periodismo, and WBI.

"The media are a critical element in a country's anti-corruption program," said Daniel Kaufmann, senior manager of WBI's Governance, Regulation and Finance Division, a speaker at the conference. "That's why WBI has organized over 25 workshops for nearly a thousand journalists in Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, and now Latin America."

Reviews from the journalists themselves, typically a skeptical group, were positive. "It was a very valuable meeting, because it gave us a chance to discuss an issue that isn't raised very often," said Indira Murillo, of Honduras television station TN5. "I learned that journalists

"It is the involvement of civil society that ensures that an anti-corruption plan is credible," said Maria Gonzalez de Asis, of the WBI's Governance Team



"The media are a critical element in a country's anti-corruption program," said Daniel Kaufmann, senior manager of WBI's Governance, Regulation and Finance Division, a speaker at the conference

The logo for the World Bank Institute (WBI) consists of the letters 'WBI' in a bold, purple, sans-serif font.

Promoting knowledge and
learning for a better world

from many countries face the same problems of censorship and the same struggle against corruption, so we were able to create some solidarity, thanks to this course."

Today *thanks Christopher Neal with LAC for contributing this article.*

[Back to top](#) 



[Search](#) | [Index](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Help](#) | [WB Home](#)

© 2001 The World Bank Group, All Rights Reserved. Terms and Conditions