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Profile in Public Integrity: Frank Vogl

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Profiles in Public Integrity: Frank Vogl



Frank Vogl is Co-Founder of The Partnership for Transparency Fund and Co-Founder of Transparency International, former Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors and currently a member of the Transparency International Advisory Council and the Advisor to Transparency International's global Managing Director. He is also the President of Vogl Communications and former

World Bank Group Director of Information and Public Affairs and acting head of External Relations. Previously, Vogl was an international economics correspondent for Reuters news service and The Times (London).

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You began your career as a journalist covering international economics. What led you to transition to fighting against corruption?

As a reporter in the late 1960s and through the 1970s I wrote about many business and political scandals, including Watergate and the important subsequent U.S. Congressional hearings that led to the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), which strengthened my understanding and interest in business ethics and corruption control. From 1981 to 1990, I served as the Director of Information & Public Affairs at the World Bank and became increasingly sensitized to the impact that corruption had on undermining aid initiatives and in increasing poverty in poor countries. So, when Peter Eigen, then the Director of the World Bank's Regional Mission for Eastern Africa, started talking with me in late 1990 about the need for a global anti-corruption NGO I was most interested. Together with a group of like-minded friends, we went on to launch Transparency International (TI) in 1993.

TI's goals were: (1) raising global awareness of the damage done by corruption; (2) campaigning to convince the World Bank and other aid agencies to recognize that they had responsibilities to counter corruption; and (3) campaigning to create a level business playing field where multinational corporations worldwide were subject to national laws similar to the FCPA.

Transparency International quickly built a global reputation through high-profile projects like the annual Corruption Perceptions Index. What lessons did you learn from the rise of TI about how anti-corruption activists can communicate effectively and gain visibility?

The prime organizational lesson was that securing sustainable anti-corruption action demanded national organizations campaigning at the national level, mobilizing citizens and monitoring developments. This led to the formation of TI national chapters and today there are 100 of them. They are the driving force of the global TI movement, each contributing both to TI's global agenda, while building domestic priorities and domestic anti-corruption measures that are likely to be most effective within the national setting. The second very important lesson is that all of our activities needed to be solidly grounded and that here research has to play a vital role. The *Corruption Perceptions Index*, first launched in 1995, is one of many research tools and products developed by TI, widely used today.

What do you think have been TI's biggest accomplishments? What challenges remain for the organization, and for the anti-corruption movement in general?

Our greatest accomplishment has been the building of a genuinely global anti-corruption movement that at municipal, national, regional and global levels has had and is having a major impact on a broad anti-corruption agenda, spanning human rights and poverty, to peace and security, to business and finance. We have played major roles in promoting international anti-corruption conventions, setting new national laws and regulations in many countries and securing powerful anti-corruption statements from world leaders. But the biggest challenges today remain enforcement of government declarations, conventions and laws and the ending of impunity. Our new "No Impunity" campaign underscores the essential need for building strong, independent institutions that can secure justice for all and be transparent and publicly accountable.

In 2000, you co-founded the Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF), a nonprofit organization providing advice and small development grants to local partners in new democracies. What lessons have you learned about fostering effective anti-corruption efforts at the local level?

We have implemented over 240 PTF projects in about 50 countries with a very large number of local civil society partners. We have learned how valuable it is to develop time-bound, sharply targeted, local projects to build

transparency and public accountability through citizen empowerment at local levels in poor countries. The knowledge gained by PTF is important and should be recognized far more broadly. It is knowledge based on pragmatic engagement. We have demonstrated that citizen demands for anti-corruption initiatives can lead to sustainable improvements in the lives of millions of people – this has to be fully appreciated by aid agencies, all of which need to provide far greater support.

In 2012 you published *Waging War on Corruption* (Rowman & Littlefield 2012), reflecting upon your years of experience as a leader in the anti-corruption movement. What have been some of your takeaways from engaging with your readership?

We have to end the public complacency about corruption: the widespread wrong-headed notion that we can do nothing about corruption and that corruption will always be with us. Speaking about my book across the world over the last two years has been a tremendously optimistic experience – time and again I meet people who are highly skeptical, but when they learn of the record of achievement over the last two decades by the anti-corruption civil society movement, then they start to consider how they can join the fight against corruption.

You spoke at CAPI's *Corruption in the 21st Century* conference. What advice can you offer to help CAPI in its mission to bridge the gap between civil society, academia, and practitioners in the public integrity field?

Focus on enforcement. Focus on No Impunity. Focus on the experiences of the outstanding public prosecutors that you invited to your conference. The United States has abundant corruption in public life, yet what distinguishes it today from all other countries is the determination of so many of its public prosecutors and judges to bring corrupt politicians to justice, to underscore the risks to those in public office of enriching themselves at the public's expense, and demonstrating that promoting transparency and accountability are core American values that we cherish and fight for. CAPI's leadership here will bring together journalists and activists, academics and business leaders in, I hope, the common cause of promoting integrity in this country and so serving as a model for the rest of the world.