

PREVENTIVE EDUCATION AND ENLISTING PUBLIC SUPPORT AGAINST CORRUPTION

Executive Summary

1. The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) was established in 1974 under the ICAC Ordinance (Cap. 204). The ICAC has adopted a three-pronged approach of law enforcement, community education and prevention to combat corruption. Its work is carried out through three functional departments: (a) the Operations Department; (b) the Community Relations Department (CRD); and (c) the Corruption Prevention Department.

2. In 2012-13, of the ICAC's total estimated expenditure of \$876 million, \$152 million is for the CRD to provide the public with preventive education and enlist public support against corruption. According to the annual surveys conducted by the ICAC between 2010 and 2012, more than half of the respondents commented that publicity and education work for anti-corruption should be strengthened. The Audit Commission (Audit) has recently conducted a review of the work of the CRD.

Preventive education

3. *Preventive education for the private sector.* According to the ICAC's analysis, building management was the area with the most private sector corruption complaints/reports between 2008 and 2012. In 2012, 55% of the pursuable building management cases involved the operation and management of Owners' Corporations (OCs). Some cases were serious allegations of irregularities between OC members and building management practitioners over large renovation projects. However, the number of OCs reached by the CRD for providing preventive education decreased from 922 in 2008 by 16% to 779 in 2012. With the Government's financial support, the number of building renovation projects is likely to remain high for some time. The CRD should review whether more OCs could be reached (paras. 2.10, 2.11, 2.14 and 2.15).

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4. ***Preventive education for the public sector.*** Audit analysed the CRD's preventive education coverage for staff of the public sector from 2008 to 2012. Audit found that in terms of CRD talks for the 10 government departments which had the largest number of corruption complaints/reports, substantially all of the staff of three departments were covered. However, the coverage of the other seven departments varied from 18% to 44%. As regards the 10 public bodies which had the largest number of complaints/reports, the coverage ranged from 3% to 191%. Audit also found that between 2008 and 2012, the CRD had not provided preventive education talks to 14 bureaux/departments (B/Ds) and 62 public bodies, some of which were involved in corruption complaints/reports. There is a need to review the preventive education coverage for the B/Ds and public bodies concerned, and to provide preventive education talks to politically appointed officials who are not included in the civil servant target group. As an effort to improve the efficiency of preventive education, the CRD should also explore the feasibility of web learning (paras. 2.28 to 2.34).

5. ***Preventive education for the youth.*** The CRD disseminates anti-corruption messages to students in secondary schools and tertiary institutions through various means. Between academic years 2007/08 and 2011/12, the CRD did not reach four of the 17 degree-awarding tertiary institutions to conduct talks. While the CRD conducted interactive dramas or talks for about 310 secondary schools each year, it did not reach out to 45 secondary schools. The CRD needs to extend its preventive education programme to these schools and institutions (paras. 2.37(d), 2.38 and 2.40).

6. ***Preventive education for candidates and electors.*** In 2012, there was a surge in corruption complaints received by the ICAC concerning District Council Election/By-election. Many of the complaints concerned electors providing false residential addresses. As at December 2012, following ICAC investigations of the complaints, a total of 45 persons had been convicted of various voting offences, including vote-rigging, providing false information in the voter registration and conspiracy to defraud. Audit considers that, in addition to the ICAC enforcement action, the CRD needs to further educate electors to ensure clean elections (paras. 2.49 and 2.51).

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Enlisting public support

7. The CRD enlists public support against corruption by organising community activities, publicising ICAC activities in the mass media and encouraging the reporting of corruption. The CRD's community activities include: (a) regularly visiting district organisations and conducting talks; (b) organising multi-faceted activities jointly with district organisations; and (c) holding meet-the-public sessions regularly (paras. 3.2 and 3.3).

8. According to the ICAC, face-to-face contacts with different segments of the community and the general public is one of the most effective ways to get the anti-corruption messages across. However, Audit analysis of the CRD's community activities in the five years from 2008 to 2012 revealed significant decreases in the numbers of organisations and people reached. For example, for the CRD's multi-faceted activities, the number of organisations reached decreased from 1,664 in 2008 by 25% to 1,250 in 2012, and the number of people reached decreased from 450,000 in 2008 by 24% to 340,000 in 2012. Audit notes that changes in the nature, scale and format of the CRD's activities would affect the numbers of organisations and people reached. In Audit's view, the CRD needs to review its strategies and resource deployment for enlisting public support (paras. 3.4, 3.6 and 3.7).

Strategic planning and performance measurement

9. The CRD only prepares an annual work plan but not a formal strategic plan. A strategic plan will help ICAC senior management review the CRD's longer term strategic objectives and monitor its use of resources in achieving them. Audit also notes that of the four performance targets set for preventive education, two had all along been lower than the actual performance. Too easy-to-achieve targets may not serve the purposes of motivating and measuring performance (paras. 4.3, 4.8 and 4.10).

Audit recommendations

10. **Audit recommendations are made in the respective sections of this Audit Report. Only the key ones are highlighted in this Executive Summary. Audit has *recommended* that the Commissioner, ICAC should:**

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Preventive education

- (a) **step up preventive education efforts on building management with focus on management of renovation projects (para. 2.22(a));**
- (b) **review whether the CRD should make additional efforts with a view to reaching more OCs for providing preventive education (para. 2.22(b));**
- (c) **review the need to provide more preventive education to the departments and public bodies having corruption complaints/reports, particularly those without CRD talk arrangement or with fewer staff who attended such talks between 2008 and 2012 (para. 2.35(b) and (d));**
- (d) **provide preventive education talks to politically appointed officials after they have joined the Administration (para. 2.35(c));**
- (e) **explore the feasibility of web learning for all government staff above certain ranks (para. 2.35(e));**
- (f) **make efforts to extend the CRD's preventive education programme to cover all secondary schools and tertiary institutions as appropriate (para. 2.45(a));**
- (g) **review the CRD's publicity and education campaigns to see what further work could be performed to help electors better understand and comply with the legal provisions on public elections (para. 2.55(a));**

Enlisting public support

- (h) **review the CRD's strategies and resource deployment for enlisting public support (para. 3.8(a));**
- (i) **based on the review results in (h) above, set appropriate targets for the numbers of organisations and people reached by the CRD's community activities (para. 3.8(b));**

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Strategic planning and performance measurement

- (j) **consider the need for the CRD to prepare a strategic plan setting out the longer term objectives and direction for preventive education and enlisting public support against corruption (para. 4.4(b)); and**
- (k) **regularly review the performance targets to determine whether more meaningful ones should be set to reflect the latest situation (para. 4.11(b)).**

Response from the ICAC

11. The Commissioner, ICAC agrees with the audit recommendations.