

What drives people to act against corruption?

Unpacking context and causal mechanisms that determine how, when, and why individuals choose to engage against corruption

A research project between Global Integrity and Transparency International

- 1) Why do citizens take action against corruption — when they do? What are the factors citizens weigh before they decide to engage in a particular mechanism? What do they consider to be a viable mechanism in the first place? Does engagement depend on the type of problem citizens are trying to solve? To what degree do contextual factors influence their decision-making; What is the role of personal safety, for example, or the role of citizens' beliefs about the legitimacy of civil society organizations overall? What can we learn from organizations that have been successful at providing mechanisms against corruption?
- 2) Together with Transparency International, we are looking at positive examples of mechanisms where citizens have chosen to act. This, we hope, will help us unpack and better understand those factors that determine why and how citizens choose to take action against corruption. We hypothesize that an individual's decision to act can be analyzed as a consequence of a series of decisions – a pathway – that begins with a grievance and involves a series of granular decision-making steps until a mechanism is triggered. We furthermore suspect that sustaining engagement will depend on citizens continuously recalculating the associated cost and benefits throughout the engagement cycle, taking into consideration other intangible factors such as trust, affirmation, and small wins on the way toward achieving success, etc.
- 3) The objective of this “Doing Anti-Corruption Differently” research project is to support the TI-Secretariat and front-line organizations around the world to better understand how and why citizen engagement works when and where it does. We have deliberately chosen to focus our efforts on unpacking factors to get conceptual clarity, rather than trying to assess this question quantitatively. To do so, we have conducted a literature review, built a conceptual model and have conducted fieldwork in Tunisia and Georgia. The aim was to gather information from citizens themselves and match the data with information collected about the particular mechanisms offered, to better understand the factors and dynamics that drive citizen's decision-making.
- 4) We concluded the fieldwork in June and plan to present our findings in October 2017 through a report and a learning workshop in a format useful to practitioners. We are not planning to deliver an authoritative ‘what works’ report — rather, we are trying to get clarity on the right types of questions practitioners might want to ask in order to figure out how they can create or tweak existing mechanisms to be as helpful as possible for their citizens to engage against corruption — in their particular contexts.

For additional information, questions, or comments you might have, please get in touch with Johannes Tonn at johannes.tonn@globalintegrity.org.