



*Money, Politics
and Transparency*

The Money, Politics, and Transparency Campaign Finance Indicators:

*Assessing Regulation and Practice
in 54 Countries across the World*

Methodology Brief

A PROJECT BY:



THE ELECTORAL INTEGRITY PROJECT
WHY ELECTIONS FAIL AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

Methodology

Introduction

The Money, Politics, and Transparency (MPT) Campaign Finance Indicators mobilized a highly qualified global network of more than 110 political finance experts from academia, journalism, and civil society to generate rich, comparative, country-level data on the transparency and effectiveness of political finance regimes across the world. A rigorous cross-national survey, MPT examines both the *de jure* legislation regulating political finance and the *de facto* implementation of that legislation.

In an iterative process dating from March to June 2014, Global Integrity, Sunlight Foundation, and the Electoral Integrity Project worked in close consultation with a carefully selected reference group of political finance experts to develop a concise set of 50 indicator questions, which were compiled into a comparative country scorecard. The project partners also selected an economically, politically, and regionally diverse sample of 54 countries in which to apply the scorecard. The selection process, though not randomized, ensures that MPT reflects the exceptional variety characterizing the range of political finance systems across the world.

The MPT scorecard evaluates the key components of effective political finance regimes, including the regulation of direct and indirect public funding, limits on contributions and expenditure, reporting and public disclosure, the regulation of third party actors, and monitoring and enforcement. Researched scorecards account for both the existing legal particulars of each of these issue areas and the *de facto* realities of practical implementation in each country.

MPT delves into critical aspects of political finance by examining not only what laws are on the books, but also whether and how those laws are effectively enforced. The combination of rigorously selected quantitative scores and detailed, evidence-based explanations supporting those scores, in addition to the inclusion of a number of non-scored, open-text questions that provide additional, context-specific detail, make the MPT indicators a

rich source of granular information for interested stakeholders, policy makers, and reformers. As such, the MPT data can serve as a useful resource for crafting more transparent, accountable political finance systems.

Research Team Members and Roles

The team for each of the 54 MPT Campaign Finance Indicators country scorecards consisted of:

- A lead researcher responsible for collecting data, compiling initial scores, drafting explanatory comments, and providing relevant sources.
- At least one peer reviewer that blindly reviewed draft data and provided comments, criticisms, recommendations, and where appropriate, additional research. Relevant peer reviewer comments are published alongside the finalized data, offering an additional perspective.

Global Integrity staff working from Washington, DC leveraged the extensive MPT network to identify, recruit, and train qualified country experts to work as researchers and peer reviewers in the field. Qualified applicants exhaustively reviewed the indicator questions prior to signing on, and each prospective contributor was provided with detailed terms of reference that were thoroughly discussed during an in-depth interview. After a competitive application process, selected members of the research team participated in a comprehensive training conducted by GI staff. All researchers and peer reviewers were required to rigorously adhere to the tenets of Global Integrity's evidence-based methodology during all stages of the project. This meant completely following GI guidance, documenting sources, and relying on clear evidence from within the project's period of study (January 2013 – July 2014) when answering indicator questions.

GI worked closely with the field-based researchers during the data collection process, guiding the fieldwork, carrying out intensive quality control, and ensuring the cross-national comparability of the MPT information. In order to safeguard the integrity and independence of the data, researchers and peer reviewers were kept unaware of the identities of other members of the MPT team. All data was gathered, reported, and refined through the use of specially customized Excel spreadsheets.

Global Integrity staff reviewed all draft data for completeness, consistency, and accuracy; managed the peer review process; and methodically evaluated the resultant cross-country quantitative and qualitative data to verify the integrity and comparability of the MPT dataset.

Fieldwork

Research on MPT began in July 2014. The research process, including various stages of fieldwork and an exhaustive peer review, was completed in December 2014. The period of study for the research is January 2013 through July 2014 – all scores and comments thus refer to sources and evidence that were current during this timeframe. In cases where the most recent national level elections occurred prior to 2013, the study period was elongated so as to include those elections. When applicable, information from late 2014 has also been incorporated into the scorecards.

MPT Campaign Finance Indicators Scorecards

The MPT country scorecards are comprised of 50 indicator questions. The assessment for each country scorecard examines two primary concepts:

1. The existence of laws and regulations to govern the role of money in political campaigns;
2. Whether and how laws and regulations, in practice, are enforced.

The MPT Campaign Finance Indicators scorecard is a unique instrument designed to provide a thorough assessment of the existing political finance regime in a particular country. The indicators were carefully developed in a consultative process that relied heavily on existing literature on political finance. Work by the OECD, IFES, IDEA, and a number of other sources was instrumental in guiding indicator development, as were the recommendations made by a reference group composed of political finance experts. The indicators are used to “score” the national-level institutional frameworks in place to regulate money’s influence in politics on metrics of transparency, accountability, and practical enforcement.

The MPT Indicators are organized into the following five main categories and nine subcategories.

I. Direct and Indirect Public Funding

1.1 Direct Public Funding (4 indicators)

1.2 Indirect Public Funding (4 indicators)

II. Contribution and Expenditure Restrictions

2.1 General Rules on Electoral Campaign Contributions (4 indicators)

2.2 Limits on Contributions and Expenditures during Electoral Campaign Periods (8 indicators)

III. Reporting and Public Disclosure

2.1 Reporting Requirements to the Oversight Entity (5 indicators)

2.2 Availability of Electoral Campaigns' Financial Information to the Public (8 indicators)

IV. Third Party Actors

4.1 Applicability of the Law to Third-Party Actors (4 indicators)

V. Monitoring and Enforcement

5.1 Monitoring Capabilities (9 indicators)

5.2 Enforcement Capabilities (4 indicators)

Generating an Integrity Scorecard

Each MPT indicator was scored directly by the lead researcher and substantiated with relevant references and comments based on desk research, information requests, media searches, and original interviews with key informants. Three types of indicators were deployed for this project: “in law,” “in practice,” and “open text.” “In law” and “in practice” indicators are scored on an ordinal scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is synonymous with the worst score, and 100 the best.

“In law” indicators provide an objective assessment of whether certain legal codes, regulations, and mechanisms exist. These *de jure* indicators have three possible answers: “Yes,” “Moderate,” and “No,” where “Yes” receives a 100 score, “Moderate” receives a 50 score, and “No” receives a 0.

When answering “in law” indicators, lead researchers are required to provide a reference to all current legislation that substantiates their chosen

score. They must also write a comprehensive explanatory comment in which they address each of the indicator's scoring criteria, thus demonstrating that the selected score is correct. In some cases, where the legal code may be ambiguous, lead researchers must consult with legal experts to determine the correct score.

“In practice” indicators address *de facto* issues of implementation, enforcement, effectiveness, and accessibility. Due to the complexity of many “in practice” situations, these indicators are scored along a scale of 0 to 100 in which the possible scores are 0, 25, 50, 75, and 100.

Lead researchers are required to provide a minimum of three primary sources for “in practice” indicators. An explanatory comment referencing the relevant scoring criteria is also necessary. At least one of the three sources must be an interview with a key informant, while financial reports, information requests, media articles, and relevant domestic civil society and academic reports may also be used as primary sources. All primary sources must be from within the study period, or refer to the most recent national level general elections at the time of the research.

To minimize bias in score selection and maximize the comparability of the country scorecards, MPT's methodology provided researchers and peer reviewers with extremely detailed scoring criteria for each individual indicator. The scoring criteria effectively anchor each indicator to a predefined set of conditions, and specify the general situations in which a particular score will be earned. For “in law” indicators, explicit scoring criteria are provided for each of the possible answers: “Yes,” “Moderate,” and “No.” For “in practice” indicators, criteria are defined for 100, 50, and 0 scores. 25 and 75 scores are deliberately left undefined to serve as in between scoring options when appropriate. The scoring criteria for each indicator are available for scrutiny on the MPT website.

Researchers and peer reviewers were also all provided with a specific set of instructions that guided their research for each indicator. This guidance further ensures the consistency and comparability of the collected information. Indicator scores and comments were deemed incomplete

until all specified instructions had been demonstrably carried out. Indicator instructions can be accessed upon request.

“Open text” indicators are meant to provide additional context, and to give researchers the opportunity to delve into elements of the political finance system that are not directly addressed elsewhere in the scorecard. As such, “open text” indicators do not have a scoring element. The answer to each “open text” indicator consists of a detailed explanatory comment in which the researcher answers the indicator question and a series of related sub-questions. As with “in practice” indicators, all information presented in “open text” comments must be thoroughly sourced. A minimum of three primary sources from within the study period is required.

In summary, a given indicator has the following elements:

- Indicator question
- Researcher instructions
- Scoring criteria (not applicable for “open text” questions)
- Score (not applicable for “open text” questions) – Yes (100), Moderate (50), or No (0) for “in-law” indicators, and 100, 75, 50, 25, or 0 for “in-practice” indicators
- Relevant sources provided by the lead researcher and/or peer reviewer
- An explanatory comment that addresses all aspects of the chosen scoring choice/specified sub-questions
- Peer review comments (included when relevant)
- Peer review sources (included when relevant)

Peer Review

The Peer Review is an essential part of the MPT Campaign Finance Indicators research. The expert peer reviewers employed on the project provided an excellent source of perspective on the draft data, and used their own networks and skills to provide additional research, sources, and challenges when necessary.

Peer reviewers blindly reviewed the scores, comments, and sources prepared by lead researchers. Each peer reviewer was an expert on the country in which they were deployed. As such, they were able to identify

and correct errors, bias, and out-of-date information that had been submitted by researchers. Each peer reviewer was also given the task of conducting additional research on specific indicators on their scorecard. Flaws in the draft research identified by GI staff were sent to the reviewers, who were asked to resolve those flaws.

Peer reviewers were offered one of three standardized choices in responding to a given indicator:

1. *“I agree without any comment or sources to add.”*
2. *“I agree with additional information.”*

In this case, peer reviewers added supplementary information and/or sources that supported the lead researcher’s score and comment.

3. *“I disagree, with replacement comment and sources.”*

In this case, peer reviewers rewrote, re-researched, and re-sourced the indicator in order to comply with the provided guidance.

In cases where they independently identified mistakes, reviewers were required to write a replacement comment, complete with a full set of the obligatory references from within the study period. All content added by peer reviewers was subjected to the same rigorous quality control and verification processes employed during the original fieldwork.

When appropriate, peer reviewer comments were incorporated into the existing researcher comment. Suggested score changes and/or revisions to the comment were submitted to the lead researchers, who were given the opportunity to defend or supplement their original research. Based on all the information available, the GI research team then made appropriate decisions regarding potential changes to the data. In some cases, peer reviewer disagreements have been left alongside the researcher’s answer. This was done to provide the full range of nuance and complexity typical of political finance issues.

Consistency and Comparability

At the conclusion of the fieldwork, peer review, and quality control processes GI staff collated all scorecards into one master file in which all responses for each indicator in each country were included. GI staff used

the scoring criteria for each indicator and developed a set of guidelines, indicator by indicator, by which to further guarantee the cross-national comparability of the finalized information. Staff then methodically reviewed each of the collected indicators across countries to check for consistent application of the guidelines and scoring criteria.

The staff engaged researchers and peer reviewers in discussion of any identified issues, and based on the additional information they provided, ultimately decided if changes to the data were necessary.

While Global Integrity and its partners make every attempt to produce accurate, credible, and thoroughly researched information, we welcome all feedback on the veracity and correctness of the MPT data. Please contact Global Integrity with specific comments on indicator scores, comments, and sources, and on the scoring criteria and guidelines.