Summary literature review
Civil society against corruption in Ukraine

The research project *Civil society against corruption in Ukraine: political rules, advocacy strategies and impact* explores the success and failure of anti-corruption activism in Ukraine. Civic activism has continued since the Maidan Revolution in 2014 and is perceived as crucial for fighting corruption. This study will examine the spectrum of anti-corruption activism, including professional and informal types of activism, nationwide and local activism, and activism by small and large organizations. This will be achieved through case studies from geographically-diverse regions in Ukraine with a significant degree of anti-corruption activism.

Main findings

- The main rationale for civil society engaging in anti-corruption efforts lies in the potential of civil society to overcome the 'collective action dilemma' of corruption and directly hold the government accountable. Many civil society organizations possess specific capabilities, such as monitoring of government performance and mobilization, which make them particularly effective at fighting corruption.
- There are also reasons, however, to question the role of civil society organizations in anti-corruption efforts. These include a lack of accountability, an often limited effectiveness and a lack of true commitment to anti-corruption efforts.
- Social accountability, defined as an approach toward exacting accountability that relies on the participation of ordinary citizens and/or civil society organizations, is becoming increasingly influential and is viewed by many as the key mechanism of anti-corruption citizen engagement.
- The primary methods that civil society organizations employ when they fight corruption are running public awareness campaigns, conducting research and education on corruption and anti-corruption, organizing public forums and hearings, monitoring of government performance, crowdsourcing of information, and creating anti-corruption coalitions.
- The issue of 'measuring success' remains a controversial in anti-corruption literature. Scholars recognize an overreliance on awareness-raising campaigns and static indicators such as the passage of laws, number of publications or amount of people trained. Such an approach provides limited information about an initiative's relevance to its ultimate goal of improving services and reducing corruption, and has even led to suggestions that direct impact measurement is impossible due to the challenges of establishing reliable causative indicators.
- Specific contextual factors can be distinguished as key determinants in facilitating or obstructing the effectiveness of civil society anti-corruption activism, concerning:
  - **The political and societal environment**: factors often mentioned in the literature include a competitive political system, respect for civil liberties, a favourable legislative environment, and political will among authorities.
  - **The nature of civil society and its activities**: factors include strong capacity of civil society organizations, grassroots support and clear substantive focus of their work, and, in the case of donor-supported initiatives, sustained donor commitment.

Policy messages

- When supporting anti-corruption initiatives of civil society organizations, donors should assess if the relevant organizations are interested in working for the public good and if they are accountable to the citizenry.
- Given that civil society efforts against corruption tend be more effective in environments with a reasonably competitive political system and political will among authorities, donors should prioritize supporting anti-corruption work in countries where those conditions are present.

- Donors should focus on supporting civil society anti-corruption initiatives that have a clear, substantive focus and that demonstrably resonate with citizens' concerns.

Relevant literature

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