Smarter Crowdsourcing | Anti-Corruption

Problem 3: Public Engagement in Anti-Corruption Efforts
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How can the public support and strengthen anti-corruption policies, mechanisms and programs? What incentives and strategies are best suited to secure sustained civic engagement? How can government institutions effectively incorporate and manage public participation?

Review full set of guiding questions here.

SUMMARY OF THE PROBLEM

Seven out of 10 Mexicans believe government actions to prevent, detect, investigate and punish corruption are ineffective.[1] Of 42 former governors accused of corruption since 2000, seventeen have been investigated, and only three convicted.[2] In 2015, exhausted by political and institutional paralysis in the face of daily corruption, Mexican citizens initiated several grassroots initiatives of unprecedented size and impact. These led to the introduction of an anti-corruption bill to Congress that garnered over 634,000 signatures, citizen collaboration with Congress to reform six additional anti-corruption laws and eventually the passage of Mexico's National Anti-corruption System in 2016.

As part of recent legal reforms, the Mexican government has deepened its commitment to public engagement in the fight against corruption. A key initiative of these reforms is the creation of the Citizens Participation Committee, which will promote the generation of new spaces and mechanisms for citizens to prevent, detect and investigate corruption.[3]

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[1] Transparency International, Global Corruption Barometer (2013).
[2] Casar, María Amparo. "México: Anatomía de la corrupción." (2015).
[3] Article 21, Chapter III. General Law of the National Anti-Corruption System (2016). Available at: http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/LGSNA.pdf

However, a number of challenges need to be addressed to make these efforts meaningful. They include:

1. **Lack of appreciation for the value of participation**. Although the public understands participation as a way to ratify or overturn government action, it has less experience with using engagement to improve the quality and effectiveness of new policies and services. There is an absence of well-designed processes and platforms to tap the public's intelligence in generating policy solutions, despite explicit commitments in Mexican law to co-create governing.

2. **Limited forms of participation.** The default model for civic participation focuses on informing, rather than actively involving, citizens in developing and implementing policy. The government will need to diversify avenues for civic participation in order to foster deeper and broader engagement.

3. **Lack of institutionalized structures for engaging citizens.** In the past, the government has been most likely to respond to large-scale, but usually one-off, citizen initiatives to demand specific changes. To secure long-term citizen participation, as well as political support, the government must incorporate incentives and conditions for sustained participation into institutional mechanisms. In other words, to optimally foster and learn from public engagement, institutions need to change how they work.

4. **Systems for prioritizing and coordinating citizens demands.** As civic participation can take many forms, the government needs to develop methods and tools for collecting citizen input across various mediums, and a democratic process to set priorities for reform.

BACKGROUND

In recent years, a series of major scandals has demonstrated the pervasive nature of corruption in Mexico at local, state, and federal levels.[4] Of 42 former governors accused of corruption since 2000, seventeen have been investigated and only three convicted.[5] As recent polling suggests, Mexicans see government action against corruption as ineffective.[6] In reaction to a faltering institutional and political response, Mexican citizens have taken to the streets in protest and have signed petitions by the thousands to demand reform.[7]

One outcome of this civic engagement has been Mexico's new National Anti-Corruption System, which was proposed and developed by civil society rather than by government. There have also been successful citizen initiatives such as the "*Ley 3 de 3*", civic bill that was introduced to the Mexican Congress and backed up by over 634,000 signatures. The law states that every government official must publicly disclose assets, interests and tax declarations.

In spite of this success, academics and practitioners increasingly believe that citizen participation should not be limited to one-time "brute-force" actions, such as street demonstrations and protests. Instead, the wealth of knowledge, expertise and resources held by citizens should be channeled into the creation of new policies, services and tangible practices to prevent, detect and investigate corruption. The implementation of

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[4] President Peña Nieto has come under scrutiny for his involvement in several controversial real estate transactions in both Miami and Mexico City. According to a report by the New York Times, local governments in Mexico are complicit in corruption schemes with drug cartels.The former Governor of the state of Veracruz, Javier Duarte, was recently arrested in Guatemala, after fleeing the country to avoid prosecution for allegedly embezzling hundreds of millions of dollars.

[5] Casar, María Amparo. "México: Anatomía de la corrupción." (2015).

[6] Transparency International, Global Corruption Barometer (2013).

[7] Mass marches took place across Mexico in 2014.

the new anti-corruption mandate will require anti-corruption policies, programs and mechanisms to be created and adjusted, bringing opportunities to incorporate citizen participation in more sustained and meaningful ways.

Moreover, the National Anti-Corruption System calls for the establishment of a Citizen Participation Committee to promote citizen engagement in broader anti-corruption reforms. This Committee has been granted a prominent position within Mexican anti-corruption institutions, and is in theory intended to exercise significant influence in steering the direction of the reforms. Besides chairing the National Anti-Corruption System and monitoring implementation of the national anti-corruption policy, the Committee is also responsible for proposing and suggesting mechanisms for different anti-corruption agencies to engage with citizens.[8] These include a register of organizations and citizens interested in collaborating with the government and tools to prevent and report corruption. How such measures will be implemented has yet to be clearly defined.

PROBLEM OVERVIEW

The nature and complexity of corruption schemes demand collaboration with citizens who possess on-the-ground knowledge of corruption, and the ingenuity to know how to stop it. Citizen participation can increase the efficacy of **mechanisms to prevent, detect or investigate corruption**, while also **building buy-in and legitimacy**. Taking into account the multiple forms of corruption – from bribery to state-capture – engaging citizens in anti-corruption efforts requires a comprehensive approach. Frequently, the default model of civic participation focuses on informing rather than actively involving citizens in the development and implementation of anti-corruption policies. It is critical to go beyond

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[8]Article 21, Chapter III. General Law of the National Anti-Corruption System (2016). Available at: http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/LGSNA.pdf

this model and take into account a wider and more diverse range of ways in which citizens can participate (see table 1) in order to achieve more effective outcomes.

Table 1. General typology of citizen participation models identified for anti-corruption efforts			
Citizens input	Participation objective	Institutional objective	Example
Reports	Provide specific data about interactions or experiences related to corruption or quality of public services and government procedures.	Detect risks or areas where corruption may be happening and trigger government response.	Reporting apps
Analysis and evidence	Provide facts and other information based on research about corruption problems.	Incorporate citizen knowledge into the design and adjustments of government anti-corruption policies.	Policy labs
Ideas and proposals	Present and introduce alternatives to solve concrete corruption problems.	Identify potential and actionable solutions that could address corruption risks or problems.	Idea-thons
Opinions and perceptions	Share thoughts and beliefs on certain issues regarding government actions against corruption.	Prioritize resources or actions towards areas that are perceived in need of attention or that are relevant for certain groups or communities.	E-petitions
Tasks and actions	Collaborate by going out to the streets, or joining forces with other citizens to increase institutional capacities against corruption.	Reduce costs and/or strengthen government capacities to address a corruption problem.	Public challenges

While both government and civil society have acknowledged that technology can be a powerful tool in managing citizen input, they continue to lag behind in effectively implementing these tools. For example, while many countries, including Mexico, have launched mobile applications and platforms for reporting corruption, most initiatives have

been ineffective in getting citizens to sustain their use over time. Moreover, citizens are rarely told how their reporting will be used, leading to skepticism that using the tool will lead to any substantive changes. Therefore, it is not enough for governments to simply invest in technology for citizen engagement; they must also make sure initiatives are relevant, user-friendly and lead to government action.

Finally, it is critical to think about how the government will collect and internally process civic engagement data across all the channels and mechanisms in which participation can occur. Governments need methods and tools that secure a democratic and open process to set priorities for reform and manage the involvement of citizens in addressing public problems.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. How can the public meaningfully support and strengthen anti-corruption policies, mechanisms, and programs?

    a. **Incorporating citizens' knowledge into anti-corruption efforts.** Which mechanisms could allow the incorporation of citizen data and information – such as evidence, facts, ideas, opinions, and perceptions – to shape anti-corruption policies?

    b. **Beyond dots on a map: effective reporting tools.** How could citizen reporting tools become effective mechanisms to detect corruption risks and schemes?

    c. **Activating citizens.** Which mechanisms could allow citizens to undertake concrete tasks and actions to support anti-corruption efforts?

2. What incentives and strategies are best suited to secure sustained civic engagement?

    a. Which strategies are key to bringing citizens into new participation mechanisms?

    b. Can certain institutional or social arrangements promote longer periods of engagement?

3. How can government institutions effectively incorporate and manage public participation?

    a. Which institutional arrangements allow government bodies to integrate citizen ideas and solutions into their work?

    b. How can technology and communications tools strengthen the ability of governments to collect citizen input across various mediums?

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

REPORTS

Name of solution	Description	Author
Fix my street	FixMyStreet is an independent platform, built by mySociety in the UK. It allows citizens to "report broken or dirty or damaged or dumped, and need fixing, cleaning or clearing, like graffiti, dog fouling, potholes or street lights that don't work" [9]. Reports sent through FixMyStreet are sent to the local councils.	My Society
Colab.re	Colab.re is a Brazil-based civic tech platform that aims to enhance government's' ability to engage with and respond to citizens. It allows citizens to report the city's daily issues, suggest urban improvements and rate public services. On the	Colab (startup)

[9] Fix My Street FAQ, My Society. Available at: https://www.fixmystreet.com/faq

	other end, it offers governments a freemium CRM and Workflow management tool[10].	
Ushahidi	Ushahidi is a platform developed to map reports of violence in Kenya after the post-election violence in 2008. Since then, thousands have used the crowdsourcing tools to raise their voice. Ushahidi allows for reports to be collected using the web, email and SMS.	Ushahidi
Timby	Timby is a suite of interconnected digital tools that help members of civil society (on the ground) to tackle complex problems with unparalleled speed and security. It includes a secure Reporting App, an Investigation Dashboard and a Storytelling tool. Timby has been used to map illegal forestry concessions in Liberia, deaths due to pregnancy in Kenya, and environmental conservation in Chile.	Timby
Action for Transparency (A4T)	Action for Transparency (A4T) empowers citizens and government employees to act against the acts of corruption they experience in their everyday lives. Using a mobile phone with Internet access, anyone is able to check the amount of government money pledged to each school and health clinic – and the amount actually spent (conduct PETS). By exposing which institutions and individuals are involved in corruption and providing the data to journalists and activist groups, A4T intends to make corruption less attractive.	Uganda Media Development Foundation Board
BribeSpot	Bribespot is an anonymous app that allows citizens to track and report bribes with their smartphone. The app allows users to see any bribes reported in their proximity through an interactive map. The app is available in Google Play and has been installed more than 1,000 times.	Bribespot
Citizens' Feedback Monitoring Program	The Citizen Feedback Monitoring Program is a government-initiated, feedback gathering tool. It seeks feedback from citizens after they have	Punjab Information Technology Board

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[10] Information taken from the websites of Omiday's Network and Colab.re

	used public services (driving license issuance, property registration etc.). The collected feedback is then analysed in order to identify problem areas and assist relevant officials in taking evidence-based corrective measures.	
Whistle Now!	"Whistle Now!" is a mobile app that allows citizens to blow whistles and expose any kind of information or activity that is deemed illegal, unethical or not correct in our public organizations, and in society at large. To preserve the integrity of the platform and to prevent deliberate maligning of individuals or organizations, each whistle is verified by a group of administrators for its genuineness before it goes live.	Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau
Central Commission for Discipline Inspection	The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection has added a new function to its mobile app (available in the Apple Store as well as in the Google Store), and opened an online platform to allow citizens to report corruption, according to the commission's website. The app allows users to report public servants that accept bribes; use public funds to dine or travel; and hold lavish wedding banquets or funerals for family members, among other practices.	Central Commission for Discipline Inspection

ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE

Name of solution	Short description	Author
Open Up Guide	The Open Up Guide is a practical tool for governments who want to use open data to fight corruption. It identifies strategic datasets for preventing, detecting and investigating corruption, and it also provides potential users with cases. Currently, the International Open Data Conference is developing strategies for governments to implement the guide.	International Open Data Charter, Open Contracting Partnership, Transparencia Mexicana
UK Parliament evidence checks	The Science and Technology Committee launched the Evidence Check programme to establish what evidence underpins specific policies, how robust the evidence is, what the	UK Parliament, Science and Technology Committee

	gaps are, and to determine how closely the policy is based on the evidence. Individuals or organizations may submit evidence in the form of written submissions or testimony.	
Parlement & Citoyens	An online platform that connects citizens and representatives to discuss policy issues and collaboratively draft legislation. In a consultation, participants may propose solutions to, and causes of, the problem posed by the representative; these suggestions are later synthesized into a collective understanding of the topic and how to address it. In engaging with each others' proposals, participants can submit evidence in support of or against a proposal.	Cap Collectif

IDEAS AND PROPOSALS

Name of solution	Short description	Author
MyGov	MyGov is a recently launched platform to connect citizens with the Government of India and contribute towards good governance. MyGov platform has become a key part of the nation's policy and decision making process. Citizens are able to provide recommendations and support policy formulation. MyGov allows participation of citizens through actionable tasks. Its major attributes include Discussion, Tasks, Talks, Polls and Blogs based on diverse governance and public policy issues.[11]	Government of India
Better Reykjavik	Better Reykjavik is a platform that allows citizens to submit policy proposals to the municipal government. These ideas are publicly accessible, and may be debated by other participants and revised. The public is also encouraged to make a simple vote on each proposal—support or oppose. The platform has formally been adopted as an official channel for citizen petitions. Over 70,000 people have used the platform to propose and discuss over 1,800 policy	Citizens Foundation

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[11] MyGov: An Overview. Government of India. Available at https://www.mygov.in/overview/

	proposals and ideas, of which nearly 450 have received formal consideration from the municipal government and over 350 have been implemented or are in the process of implementation.	
Barcelona Decidim	Barcelona Decidim is a platform that allows city residents to make proposals for Barcelona's Municipal Action Plan, and to keep up-to-date with debate on the programme over the next four years.	
Citizens Initiative Act	From 2012, a new Citizens' Initiative Act enshrines the right of Finnish citizens to submit proposals for new legislation or amendments to existing legislation. When an initiative reaches 50,000 signatures of support (paper or online) it is reviewed and debated by Parliament, which can choose to accept, amend or reject it.	Finnish parliament
Decide Madrid	An online portal, launched in 2015, allows Madrid residents to submit proposals for draft legislation; vote on citizen proposals; participate in public dialogue; and engage in participatory budgeting.	Government of Madrid
Madame Mayor, I Have an Idea	A participatory budget program enacted in the city of Paris. City residents can go online to submit budget proposals, which are subsequently refined both in offline citizen working groups and through the program's web portal.	Government of Paris

OPINIONS AND PERCEPTIONS

Name of solution	Short description	Author
Mi Senado	Mi Senado allows citizens to participate in plenary sessions in real-time. They can follow Senate sessions, connect with Senators, see who is absent, check agendas and legislative bills, vote and see in real time how everyone votes. Citizens' votes are displayed in the plenary for Senators to see. The app, available	Colombian Senate

	in the Apple and Google Store, has been downloaded more than 10.000 times.	
[Mudamos](#)	Mudamos is an application for collecting electronic signatures on a popular initiative bill. App users can: (1) Prioritize ideas they consider relevant; (2) Discuss issues, agree and disagree with opinions and produce informed discussions; (3) support popular initiative bills electronically; (4) Use the Sources section and the Blog texts to participate in an informed way; and (5) Read the reports produced on the mobilization cycles.	Institute of Technology and Society in Rio, Brazil
[We The Citizens](#)	We The Citizens is a program created to test whether a citizens' assembly might be an effective public participation mechanism in Ireland. It had three key components: a series of regional meetings; a trial Citizens Assembly; and a comprehensive survey to identify citizens' views and opinions about the process.	We The Citizens (Ireland)

TASKS AND ACTIONS

Name of solution	Short description	Author
[Panama Papers](#)	When launching the Panama Papers, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists developed a series of tools to allow journalists to access and explore more than 11.5 million leaked financial and legal records.	The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists
[#LavaJota](#)	After a series of corruption scandals involving Brazilian company Odebrecht, Jota, an investigative journalism outlet, partnered with Digesto and Transparency International Brazil to launch a platform that allows citizens to explore the documents that were part of the official investigations. Based on a set of technologies documents searched by citizens.	Jota, Digesto and Transparency International Brazil
[Kaggle](#)	Kaggle is a platform for data science competitions that connects data with data	Kaggle

	scientists. It has more than one million users and I will partner with organizations to host up to five pro-bono research competitions or idea-thons a year.	
DrivenData	DrivenData hosts online challenges of two or three months duration, in which a global community of data scientists competes to come up with the best statistical model for difficult but important predictive problems.	DrivenData