

Why, when and how to use the Global Corruption Barometer

Data from Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) is useful for diagnosing corruption. Development practitioners can in particular benefit from the tool at the early identification and formulation stages of a programme or a strategy, by making inferences regarding the state of corruption in a country and sector institutions. It is preferable to many other indices because it provides experience-based data. However, if questions on attribution, effectiveness or impact of specific reforms or organisations are asked, then more intervention-specific data is needed. The GCB can only be used as supplementary data when appraising, monitoring and evaluating policies, programmes, and institutions.



Introduction

The Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) is a survey of the general public, which captures the experience that ordinary people have of paying bribes for local services as well as their perceptions of corruption. The survey has been conducted since 2003 and is now the largest cross-continental public opinion survey focusing on bribery and corruption. The survey sample in each country is approximately one thousand people. Depending on the country context, interviews are conducted either face-to-face, by telephone or online surveys. Now covering one hundred countries in the 2010 and 2011 rounds of surveys with another round planned for 2012/2013, the survey can identify regional and global trends and make cross-country comparisons with respect to people's perceptions and experiences of corruption.

Specifically, the survey provides information on:

- Which countries report high or low levels of petty bribery
- Which sectors/institutions are considered most affected by corruption
- Attitudes towards the government's effectiveness in fighting corruption
- Attitudes towards reporting corruption
- Attitudes on what sort of behaviour constitutes corruption

Unlike most other indices, the GCB allows for disaggregation of data by gender, income, age group, and urban/rural residence. This is useful for policymakers and programme managers to tailor their interventions and track progress.

This brief is structured around questions that development practitioners might want to ask Transparency International (TI) about the GCB. The questions were posed by Jesper Johnsøn from the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre and answered by Deborah Hardoon from TI. The concluding analysis is done by U4.

How is the GCB different from other country-level indices?

TI's other main global measurement tool, the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), is an aggregate index, providing a headline figure for perceptions of corruption in the public sector, as perceived by business people and country experts. Thus, the CPI ratings are not based on the public's experiences. The Bribe Payers Index (BPI) focuses on foreign bribery by the private sector. It scores and ranks

countries based on perceptions of the likelihood of companies from those countries paying bribes when doing business abroad, not actual experiences of bribery in the domestic context. The GCB, unlike these other indices, use public opinion poll data. Therefore, it can show ordinary people's views on the state of corruption as it affects them. The quantitative data gathered by the survey allows for detailed analysis at the institutional and different demographic levels (age, gender, etc.).

One of the reasons the GCB was picked first in this series of measurement tools is precisely that it provides experience-based data, not perceptions-based data like the CPI and BPI, or the World Bank's Control of Corruption index. It is also different from the expert assessments of the National Integrity System, or Global Integrity's reports, which do not measure corruption, but rather anti-corruption initiatives and actions. What other main features of the GCB should be highlighted?

A key strength of the GCB is that it measures both how people perceive corruption in their country and how they experience it. It also captures the willingness of ordinary people to stand up against corruption. Capturing individual citizens' views, as opposed to expert opinion or business-based perceptions, allows us to better understand how corruption affects people and is particularly relevant in countries where formal accountability processes are weak and people's views would otherwise not be heard.

As a global survey, with the same questions asked in one hundred countries, the GCB also provides comparable data that can be tracked over time and across countries, to help users understand how public perceptions and experiences vary and change around the world. Moreover, the GCB questionnaire asks respondents to distinguish between their perceptions and experiences institution by institution. This provides essential information for prioritisation and targeting of anti-corruption efforts, as further explained below.

What are the main limitations of the GCB that practitioners should be aware of when interpreting the survey results?

The results of any public opinion survey must be analysed with caution, and this is particularly important when the survey deals with sensitive issues like bribery and corruption. People's responses to a survey may be influenced by the specifics of a country's environment, such as freedom of speech or freedom of information. This should be considered when analysing country results and also when making country-by-country comparisons. Further, in some countries, where it was not possible to survey a national sample, the results reflect experiences of the urban population only. Depending on the country context, the mode of sampling varies between face-to-face, telephone and online methods.

Another limitation relates to the relatively small sample sizes (approximately one thousand respondents in total), so a given country's sample might include only a few respondents (less than a hundred) who have had contact with for example the police, making findings

at the level of the individual institution less rigorous. Moreover, some would say that the GCB does a good job of capturing petty corruption, but says little about grand corruption, nepotism, embezzlement, fraud, etc. Are these fair critiques?

On the sample size, it is true that sometimes the results for bribes paid per institution are based on few respondents. Even so, the GCB provides a good indication of where problems are. If more statistically reliable results are desired, then larger surveys are needed. On the question of capturing grand corruption, we agree that the GCB does not do so. As a public opinion survey, it is appropriate that the GCB asks people questions they have sufficient experience and insight to answer fairly. Therefore, we do indeed focus the survey questions on experiences that the public have had with petty bribery for services such as health and education, and ask less about high-level government corruption and specifics of policy capture, nepotism, etc., which they may be less exposed to and where answers are likely to be driven more by media stories and hearsay for example.

It is fair to say that none of the current indices provide an accurate picture of grand corruption, and the GCB is not intended to fill this gap in the measurement toolbox. Accepting that GCB data focuses on petty corruption, how could the barometer inform policymakers in their daily work? What examples are there of the GCB having added valuable information to policy reform, to serve as inspiration for greater use of the GCB?

As a barometer, the GCB measures the "pressure" of corruption based on people's attitudes and experiences, not only with respect to governments' effectiveness at dealing with the issue, but also regarding public readiness to stand up against corruption. We ask for example if people could imagine themselves getting involved in the fight against corruption, or if they would report an incident. It is based on an in-country survey, it is harder for governments to dismiss the findings compared to international surveys based on "expert" opinion. Towards Transparency, a partner of TI in Vietnam, took the GCB country-level results and really explored the data to produce a report that was then used widely to inform policy debates.¹ The findings were presented at the annual Anti-Corruption Dialogue (a high-level policy dialogue between the Vietnamese Government and development partners) and used in studies by the World Bank, UNDP, and DFID/UK Embassy, as well as in a range of events directed at Government officials, academics, and other stakeholders. In the weeks following the 2010 GCB launch, there were a number of media reports on Government calls for and initiatives to stamp out corruption in the police (the most corrupt sector according to the GCB) and the judiciary (perceived to be the fourth most corrupt sector in the GCB).

Beyond the broader governance reforms, how can the barometer specifically inform anti-corruption practitioners and programme staff in their daily work? Starting from the beginning of the policy/programme cycle, how can GCB data feed into decision-making for anti-corruption policy and programme design?

Because the GCB disaggregates its findings by institution, it can help programmers identify priority institutions (e.g., judiciary, education, health, or police) where anti-corruption reform is needed and find “champions” or “islands of integrity” where reforms can be anchored.

The GCB also provides a picture of a population’s readiness to support anti-corruption efforts which enables donors, governments, or civil society groups to tailor their programmes according to the constituency they are serving. For example, DFID is supporting the GCB to be conducted in a number of its priority countries, in order to be able to monitor trends and better target its interventions.

Programmes can use the GCB results as baseline data on corruption victimisation (experiences) in a country or for an institution, with identification of specific demographic groups (e.g., differential exposure to corruption among women and men) as input into programme design.

Can the GCB also be used to evaluate anti-corruption institutions and/or programmes?

While the GCB does not directly evaluate the work of anti-corruption institutions or projects, it measures views on and experiences with corruption within a country/sector through recurring questions. For those countries surveyed in several waves, this allows observation of improvements and declines over time.

Ministries in several countries use the data to monitor whether anti-corruption efforts are contributing to positive change, and they compare changes with other ministries nationally and internationally. Moreover, the GCB directly asks the respondents to assess the effectiveness of their governments in addressing corruption and to name the most important anti-corruption actors. This information generates general feedback on how various corruption efforts are perceived by the population.

For example, the Government of Malaysia has developed Key Performance Indicator (KPI) benchmarks, and is using the responses to the question on views of government effectiveness to measure their progress. People in Malaysia reported little confidence in their government’s efforts in 2009 (28 per cent thought the government was effective), but the rate was much higher in 2010 (48 per cent). This has now stabilised at 49 per cent in the most recent 2011 survey, demonstrating that their efforts have been recognised by an increasing number of people.

The GCB provides useful, disaggregated data for monitoring and evaluation. However, on its own it cannot establish causality between the programme or reform and the impact. Are there any positive examples where GCB data are used in actual outcome/impact evaluations?

The GCB captures people’s experiences and perceptions, but cannot directly attribute these responses to particular policy or programme interventions. One

can explore patterns in data both at the country level, comparing against previous results, and across countries, drawing inferences about what may have contributed to some of the differences that appear in the results. A study being carried out by Transparency International in collaboration with the Developmental Leadership Program² has used the data set to apply a statistical “positive outliers” approach, in order to identify incidences of unexpected excellence or surprising improvements in the governance, performance, or perception of specific public or private organisations (e.g., judiciary, police, essential service providers). The second stage of this project due to commence this year (2012) is to explore in more detail what could be the underlying drivers of these positive outliers.

Agreed that the GCB can help institutions and programmes to claim “contribution,” but not “attribution.” And whilst the GCB cannot serve as a stand-alone evaluation tool, combined with institution- or programme-specific output and outcome data, the GCB can be a valuable data source, particularly to monitor broad trends. What are the pros and cons for using the GCB versus other variants of user satisfaction surveys, such as the WB’s Quantitative Service Delivery Surveys (QSDS) or community scorecards (CSCs)?

QSDS methodology is tailored to assess the efficiency of delivery of public or private services. This methodology can obtain much more detailed information about the quality of service delivery from public institutions than the GCB. However, they look at different aspects of service delivery. While the QSDS typically takes the service provider facility as its unit of analysis, the GCB as a public opinion survey offers insight into views and experiences of the people who use these services.

CSCs are a system applicable to the local level only and function more as a tool for strengthening civil society by holding governments accountable. Due to its flexible methodology, it is not suitable for international comparisons. Its focus is more on immediate feedback and accountability than on the data, whereas the GCB mainly provides an overview on general corruption developments on the national level and generates data of international comparability.

The GCB is a public opinion poll, sampling across the population, whereas the above user satisfaction surveys are direct user surveys. Would it be fair to say that whereas the GCB has more useful data for corruption diagnostics (ex ante), the user surveys provide better information on the effectiveness of a specific intervention (ex post)?

The QSDS, CSC, and the GCB are useful to provide information on public services and people’s views and interactions. But they serve different purposes and as such have methodologies specifically designed to serve them most effectively. The GCB focuses on the experiences and perceptions of bribery and corruption across the population of a given country. Who pays a bribe and where? This provides a broad picture of where problems are located and therefore helps target interventions. User surveys are focused on gathering

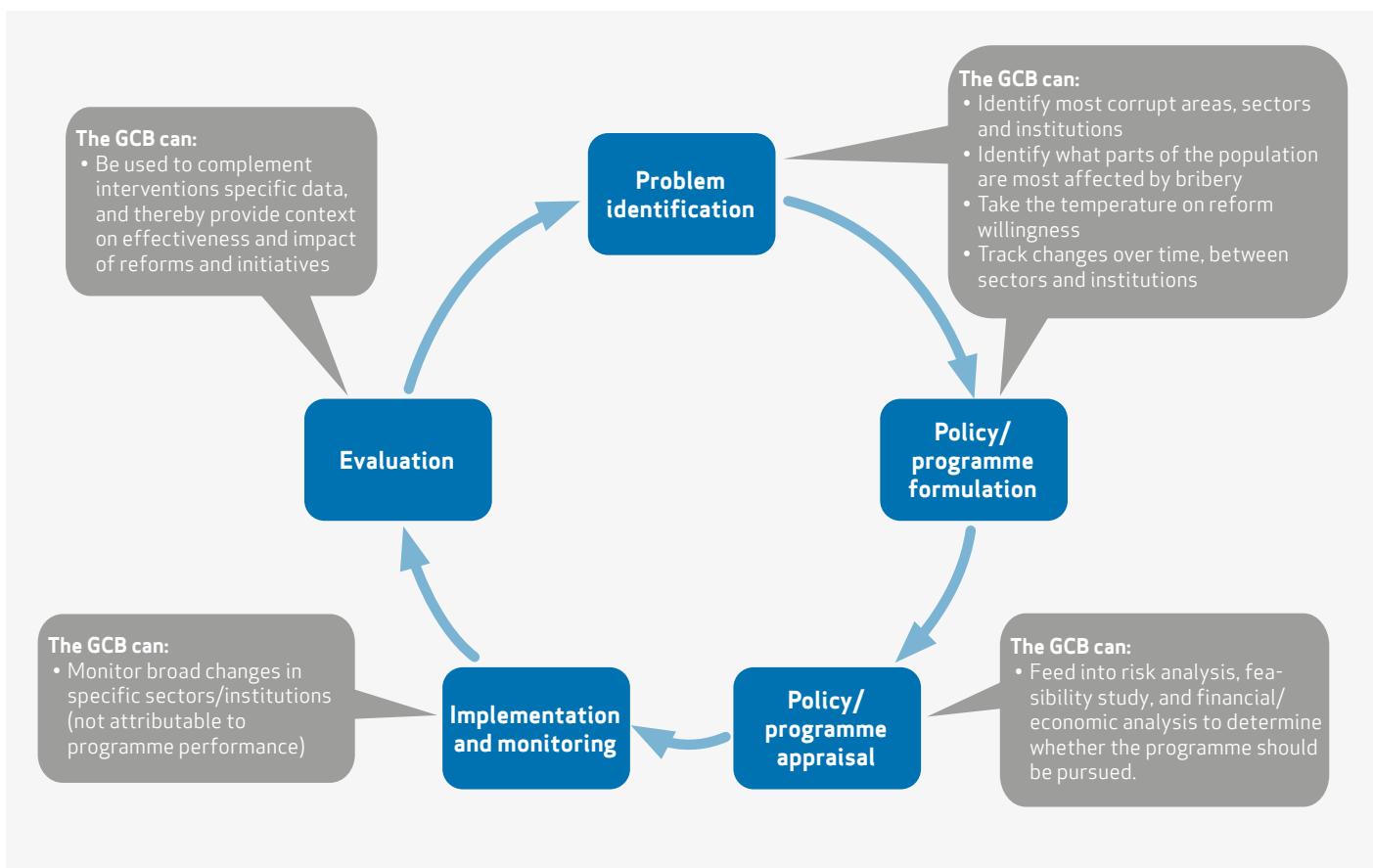
U4 is a web-based resource centre for development practitioners who wish to effectively address corruption challenges in their work. The centre is operated by the Chr. Michelsen Institute – an independent centre for research on international development and policy – and is funded by AusAID (Australia), BTC and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Belgium), CIDA (Canada), DFID (UK), GTZ/BMZ (Germany), Norad (Norway), Sida (Sweden) and The Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. All views expressed in this brief are those of the author(s), and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the U4 Partner Agencies or CMI/U4. (Copyright 2012 - CMI/U4)

information for a specific service. They can then go into much finer detail about the nature of interactions with service providers. Each approach serves a relevant purpose in its own right.

Thank you very much for educating us on the GCB. We hope that the data will be used broadly to inform the design, implementation, and evaluation of anti-corruption policies and programmes. It is U4's view that experience-based data is superior to perceptions-based data for these purposes, and the GCB offers easy access to such data.

In the figure below, we present U4's final analysis of when and how the GCB is useful in relation to different stages in the policy/programme cycle. The GCB data is particularly useful at the early identification and formulation stages, for diagnostic purposes, but can also be used for appraising, and monitoring and evaluating policies, programmes, and institutions. Most often, it is however recommended to use user surveys to assess questions of effectiveness. The GCB can work as a useful supplement to such intervention-specific data.

Figure 1: The Global Corruption Barometer's usefulness in relation to different stages in the policy/programme cycle



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Notes

1. Global Corruption Barometer 2010 – Vietnam country analysis of the views and experiences of urban citizens: <http://www.transparency.org/content/download/66652/1068775>
2. Developmental Leadership Program: <http://www.dlprog.org/>