
Education, Health & Water Topic Guide

Contents

- What are corruption assessments in basic services?
- Purpose and context of the assessments
- Assessment approaches
- Data sources
- Key issues and challenges
- Examples of promising practices

What are corruption assessments in basic services?

We define corruption assessment in basic services as those tools and methods which aim to diagnose corruption and/or corruption risks in the delivery of education, health and water and sanitation services. The scope of tools includes analyses of: (1) the overall political/governance situation in a sector, (2) the flow of resources from government to service providers, (3) the role of and relationships between different actors (e.g. service providers, service users, government officials), (4) specific processes within the broader system (e.g. health insurance, university admissions), and (5) particular corruption problems (e.g. teacher absenteeism, informal payments to doctors etc.)¹.

Purpose and context

Corruption assessments in basic services use a broad range of research methods. From an anti-corruption perspective, the purpose of these tools may include one or more of the following:

- Providing a picture of the overall governance environment in a sector to inform more detailed assessments (e.g. political economy analysis and risk assessment)
- Assessing the levels of transparency and accountability and identifying corruption risks at different levels of the service delivery chain to prioritize advocacy and reform efforts (e.g. mixed methods and risk assessment)
- Tracking resources through the service delivery chain to identify leakages (e.g. PETS and QSDS)
- Empowering citizens to demand greater accountability from service providers (e.g. social accountability tools).
- Diagnosing specific corruption problems at the micro level (in schools, hospitals etc.) (e.g. Interviews and direct observation)

¹ Other topic guides relevant to assessments in basic services include, in particular: Public Procurement, Corruption Risk Assessment, Local Governance, Political Economy Analysis, Social Accountability, and Transport, Energy and Infrastructure.

Approaches to corruption assessment in basic services

The range of approaches which can be used to assess corruption in education, health and water and sanitation at different levels makes for a complex picture. Generally speaking, sector-wide (macro) approaches tend to focus on anti-corruption and risk assessment, whereas local-level (micro) approaches tend to focus more on perceptions of, and experiences with, corruption. Figure 1 shows how these different approaches fit within a given sector. Some of the most promising assessments in this area use a combination of one or more of these approaches in order to provide a more holistic picture of the governance challenges throughout the sector (see promising practices).

(1) Sector-wide approaches

- Political economy analysis² approaches tend to focus on power relations, stakeholder interests/incentives, and accountability relations at the sector level. An additional component may be an assessment of the capacity and readiness for reform within the sector. Such an analysis can provide insight into the reasons for disparities in both performance and governance across and within sectors and between national and sub-national levels, and can be used to inform a deeper assessment of corruption risks (see below). The approach generally involves desk-based research and legal institutional analysis, combined with interviews with knowledgeable experts on the political dynamics of the country and sector in question. Because it is a highly context-specific approach, political economy analysis tools tend to offer guidance on how to develop an assessment at sector level rather than a rigid methodology³.
- Risk assessments are designed to help identify those areas of a particular sector which are most vulnerable to corruption. This includes the use of indicators and ‘scenarios’ which may indicate where corruption is more likely to occur (red flags) as well as assessments of accountability and transparency gaps at different levels throughout the sector⁴.

(2) Micro-level approaches

- Social accountability tools can be used to gather information on public service users’ experiences with corruption, most notably through the use of Citizen Report Cards (CRC). The CRC addresses issues such as access to, and quality and reliability of, services, problems encountered by users of services and responsiveness of service providers in addressing these problems. Although most CRCs are designed to gather user feedback on the *performance* of public services, they can also been used to assess the level of

² See also Political Economy Analysis Topic Guide

³ E.g. ODI - Analysing and Managing the Political Dynamics of Sector Reforms: A Sourcebook on Sector-level Political Economy Approaches, Danida - Guide to Political Economy and Stakeholder Analysis at Sector Level, EC - Analysing and Addressing Governance in Sector Operations, OSSREA - Governance and Drivers of Change in Ethiopia’s Water Supply Sector

⁴ E.g. CSD - Corruption in the Healthcare Sector in Bulgaria, GATEway - Education Risk Assessment Topic Guide, DFID - How To Note on Addressing Corruption in the Health Sector, WIN - Uganda: Risk Opportunity Mapping Study on Integrity and Accountability in the Water Supply and Sanitation Sector, TI - Transparency and Integrity in Service Delivery in Africa (TISDA), WIN - Annotated Water Integrity Scan (AWIS)

transparency in service provision, and hidden costs such as bribes.⁵ Other relevant social accountability approaches include community scorecards, social audits and participatory M&E⁶.

- Surveys generally aim to gather information on the experiences and perceptions of citizens when interacting with service providers⁷. In many cases, these are national level surveys which include questions across a broad range of sectors (public sectors, police, judiciary, taxation, social services, basic services etc.)⁸. Community-based surveys are also commonly used, often as part of social accountability approaches (see above).
- Sub-sectoral and institutional approaches are designed to diagnose corruption problems in specific sub-sectors (e.g. higher education, pharmaceuticals) or in specific institutions (e.g. water company). They generally use targeted surveys or key informant interviews sometimes combined with institutional analysis⁹.
- Assessments of specific corrupt practices at the service provider level in different sectors (e.g. informal payments, absenteeism) generally involve in depth interviews and focus groups, sometimes combined with cases direct observation or 'surprise visits' to service provider institutions¹⁰.

(3) Multi-level approaches

- Mixed method approaches generally combine two or more of the following: household surveys, service user surveys, key informant interviews with service providers, government representatives or public officials, institutional analysis and desk reviews, and expenditure tracking. Further analysis may be done through focus groups. The combination of methods allows for analysis at different levels in the service delivery chain and triangulating the data allows for validation of information¹¹ (see promising practices). To facilitate the use of mixed method approaches there are a small number of sourcebooks which offer guidance on the most appropriate combination of tools for particular contexts and purposes¹².

⁵ E.g. PAC and ADB - Improving Local Governance and Service Delivery: Citizen Report Card Learning Tool Kit, IIEP - Transparency in Education: Report Card in Bangladesh.

⁶ See also Social Accountability Topic Guide

⁷ E.g. ACTION Project - National Study on Corruption in the Higher Education Sector in Ukraine, OSCE - Student Perception on Corruption in the Armenian Higher Education System, TI Sri Lanka - Report on Integrity in Government Hospitals in the Colombo District

⁸ See also Public Surveys Topic Guide

⁹ E.g. WHO - Measuring Transparency to Improve Good Governance in the Public Pharmaceutical Sector, TI Kenya - Integrity Study: Teachers Service Commission, WIN, UNDP & SWH - Corruption Risks in Water Licensing: With case studies from Chile and Kazakhstan

¹⁰ E.g. Banerjee et al - Wealth, Health, and Health services in rural Rajasthan, WB - Absenteeism of Teachers and Health Workers, OSI - Drawing the Line: Parental Informal Payments for Education across Eurasia, USADI - Informal Payments in Public the Health Sector in Albania

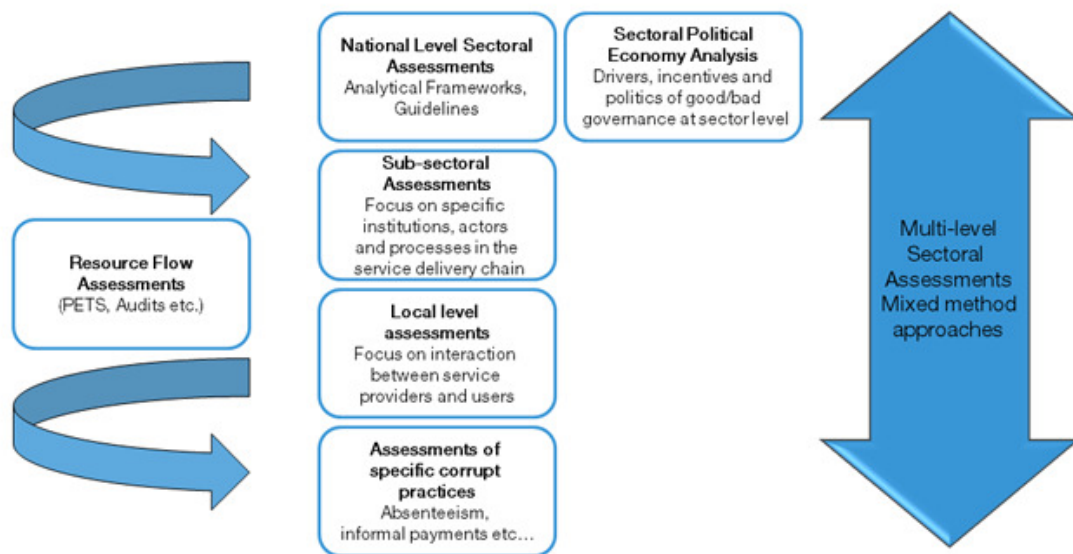
¹¹ E.g. TI - Africa Education Watch, CIET - Social Audits of Governance and Delivery of Public Services: Pakistan, TI Kenya - Kenya Health Sector Integrity Study Report, TI Kenya - Kenya Education Sector Integrity Study Report, TI Sri Lanka - Forms and Extent of Corruption in Education in Sri Lanka

¹² E.g. WB - Deterring Corruption and Improving Governance in the Urban Water & Sanitation Sector, WBI & TI - Improving Transparency, Integrity, and Accountability in Water Supply and Sanitation, DFID - How To Note on Addressing Corruption in the Health Sector

- Resource flow assessments¹³ are designed to assess leakage in sector funds. The Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) uses surveys of frontline providers and local government staff, combined with official financial data, to track the flows of resources from central government to the service provider. It collects information on facility characteristics, financial flows, outputs and accountability arrangements¹⁴. A related method is the Quantitative Service Delivery Survey (QSDS), most commonly used in the health sector. A QSDS take the PETS one step further by examining the efficiency of public spending and incentives at the level of the service facility. The QSDS focuses on the service provider as the main unit of analysis and involves interviews with managers, staff and in some cases, beneficiaries¹⁵.

Figure 1: Approaches to corruption assessment in basic services

National Level



Frontline Provider Level

Data sources

As a general rule data sources move from predominantly secondary to primary as one moves down the service delivery chain. Data collection methods range from desk reviews, legal institutional and expert analysis at the national level to surveys and interviews with service users, service providers, sector professionals, local and central government representatives at the local level. A common challenge with sectoral assessments in many countries is the limited access to official information from public agencies. In such cases assessments tend to

¹³ See also Public Finance Topic Guide

¹⁴ E.g. WB - Using Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys to Monitor Projects and Small-Scale Programs: A Guidebook, UNESCO - Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys in Education, ACCU - Public Expenditure Tracking Survey in the Water Sector

¹⁵ E.g. WB - Quantitative Service Delivery Surveys (QSDS)

rely on key informant interviews and information that is available in the public domain (e.g. school budgets)¹⁶.

Key issues and challenges

An initial challenge which faces anyone wishing to undertake a corruption assessment in the education, health or water and sanitation sectors is deciding at which level(s) to conduct the analysis. This will of course be informed largely by the purpose of the study, but will also depend on the time and resources available. A useful tool in this regard is the World Bank's Toolkit on Assessing Constraints on Service Delivery, which is designed to help identify whether problems arise primarily within the service-providing agencies, or at other provincial or national levels¹⁷.

Some of the key issues and challenges related to assessments at different levels include:

- Sector-wide: The strength of political economy analysis approaches lies in their focus on the underlying conditions which help explain the extent of poor governance and performance at sector level (e.g. political and economic processes, institutions and incentive structures, support for/opposition to reforms etc.). However, as a relatively new and politically sensitive approach there are very few available empirical studies in this area and those that do exist remain largely abstract with limited actionable information¹⁸. Risk assessment approaches offer a more targeted - if less politically incisive - tool for identifying those areas where more in-depth research may be warranted.
- Multi/level: The key challenge with multi-level, mixed-method approaches is the time and resources needed to undertake an assessment, especially where triangulation and validation are involved. This is particularly true of resource flow assessments. For PETS and QSDS, the choice of which resource flows to track is therefore crucial, especially given that distribution systems for sector funds tend to be rather complicated in practice. As such it is better to focus on select flows for which records or accounts are of good quality at different levels of government¹⁹. Furthermore, from an anti-corruption perspective, it is important to recognise that whilst most resource flow assessments can provide an *indication* of whether corruption exists, they cannot establish the *level* of corruption within a sector. Leakages, for example, may be the result of incompetence or inefficiency rather than corruption, or may simply reflect different priorities between central and local government²⁰. Indeed, this is an important distinction to bear in mind in all sectoral assessments given that the relationships between transparency, accountability, corruption, and performance in service provision are complex²¹.
- Micro-level: Compared to sector-wide approaches, micro-level approaches are generally able to produce more policy relevant and 'actionable' data. A number of

¹⁶ TI Kenya - Kenya Education Sector Integrity Study

¹⁷ WB - Assessing Constraints on Service Delivery

¹⁸ ODI - Analysing and Managing the Political Dynamics of Sector Reforms: A Sourcebook on Sector-level Political Economy Approaches

¹⁹ WB - Methodological Approaches to the Study of Institutions and Service Delivery: A Review of PETS, QSDS and CRCS

²⁰ U4 - Using PETS to fight corruption

²¹ TI - Transparency and Integrity in Service Delivery in Africa

tools, for example, address specific corruption problems within a sector (e.g. absenteeism, ghost workers, informal payments, bribes etc.) allowing for more targeted advocacy and reform efforts²². Many of these approaches also involve the active participation of those affected by corrupt practices, helping both to raise awareness and empower citizens to engage with policy makers and service providers and to hold them to account. The drawback is that they often fail to take into account the broader political context, thus diagnosing the symptoms rather than the cause.

Examples of promising practices

As mentioned earlier, given the complex web of institutions, actors and processes involved in the delivery of basic services, the most promising practices in this area are those which use multiple methods at multiple levels.

- Triangulation involves the use of multiple methods to compare the consistency of findings and hence increase the validity of the assessment. Confidence in the evidence is gained by the observation of patterns and correlations between various sources of information. One good example of triangulation is CIET'S Social Audits of Governance and Delivery of Public Services (Pakistan), which includes: (1) a household survey with over 50,000 respondents, (2) focus groups, (3) key informant interviews with teachers, health facility staff, elected government representatives and public officials, and (4) institutional reviews of health facilities and schools. Data from all these sources was then analysed in consultation with communities to elicit their views on areas for improvement, and findings were discussed among all stakeholders to develop consensus on planned changes²³. Likewise, a key focus of TI's Africa Education Watch (AEW) project was on the relationships between different stakeholders (head teachers, representatives from school governance bodies, local governments and parents). Respondents from each group were interviewed about the same topics, including: (1) the existence and efficiency of voice and accountability structures, (2) the use of these mechanisms by parents, and (3) experiences with and perceptions of corrupt practices in the education system. Results were compared from all parts of the school community to give a more complete picture of the most pertinent governance challenges²⁴.
- Multi-level analysis: Conducting an assessment at multiple levels helps to identify which areas of the service delivery process are most prone to corruption and hence require the most attention from policy makers. TI Kenya's Education Sector Integrity Study, for example, assesses the key governance risks in the education sector at the various levels of decision-making, resource allocation and utilisation. Through a combination of legal-institutional analysis and case studies, it investigates: (1) the key role of local stakeholders in ensuring integrity, (2) the key constraints to accountability and transparency in the education sector, (3) theft, embezzlement/fraud, and leakage of public funds in the education sector, (4) flawed tendering and procurement processes, (5) violation of admission procedures to colleges and

²² E.g. Banjeree et al -Wealth, Health, and Health services in rural Rajasthan, WB - Absenteeism of Teachers and Health Workers, OSI - Drawing the Line: Parental Informal Payments for Education across Eurasia, TT - Towards a Transparent and Quality Healthcare System: A Qualitative Study on the Causes, Perceptions and Impact of Informal Payments in Health Services in Vietnam

²³ CIET - Social Audits of Governance and Delivery of Public Services: Pakistan

²⁴ TI - Africa Education Watch

schools, and (6) inconsistent registration of schools²⁵. This approach has been adapted to the health sector in Kenya, where an assessment was conducted across three levels (donor level, ministry of health - from national to health centre level, and rural/community level). As with the above assessments a range of methods were used (key informant interviews, focus group discussions, review of integrity monitoring tools and assessment reports, and other existing literature/reports/studies) and findings were triangulated²⁶.

All tools referenced in this guide are accessible via the gateway tool database:

<http://gateway.transparency.org/tools>

²⁵ TI Kenya - Kenya Education Sector Integrity Study

²⁶ TI Kenya - Kenya Health Sector Integrity Study

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Date:

January 2012

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The GATEway project is co-funded by the European Commission and the United Nations Development Programme.

