

#ACK CORRUPTION

Nepal April 2023

ARTIFACT 3



DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP TO CONSTRAIN CORRUPTION

Create solutions that increase civic participation to collectively solve problems, such as protecting digital civic space, enabling safe whistleblowing, or monitoring and ensuring the proper delivery of government goods and services.

Note: While the other two problem statements seek to increase transparency in government or the private sector, this topic is about empowering citizens to take action using digital tools and platforms. Hackathon teams are invited to investigate what tools and initiatives already exist and how existing digital citizenship can be harnessed and enhanced through a novel, technology-based solution. Teams are encouraged to develop solutions that address the needs of a specific audience and location, taking into account their specific use case(s) and pain points.

INTRODUCTION: DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

HackCorruption uses the term digital citizenship to mean citizens using digital technologies individually and as groups to (1) participate in and influence decision-making processes that affect them, (2) hold officials and government bodies accountable, and (3) report problems, errors, and corruption. Thus, while transparency is about empowering citizens to see what is happening, digital citizenship is about empowering citizens with tools to participate in the governance process in order to improve outcomes (like service delivery) and reduce corruption.

KEY CONCEPT: CORRUPTION

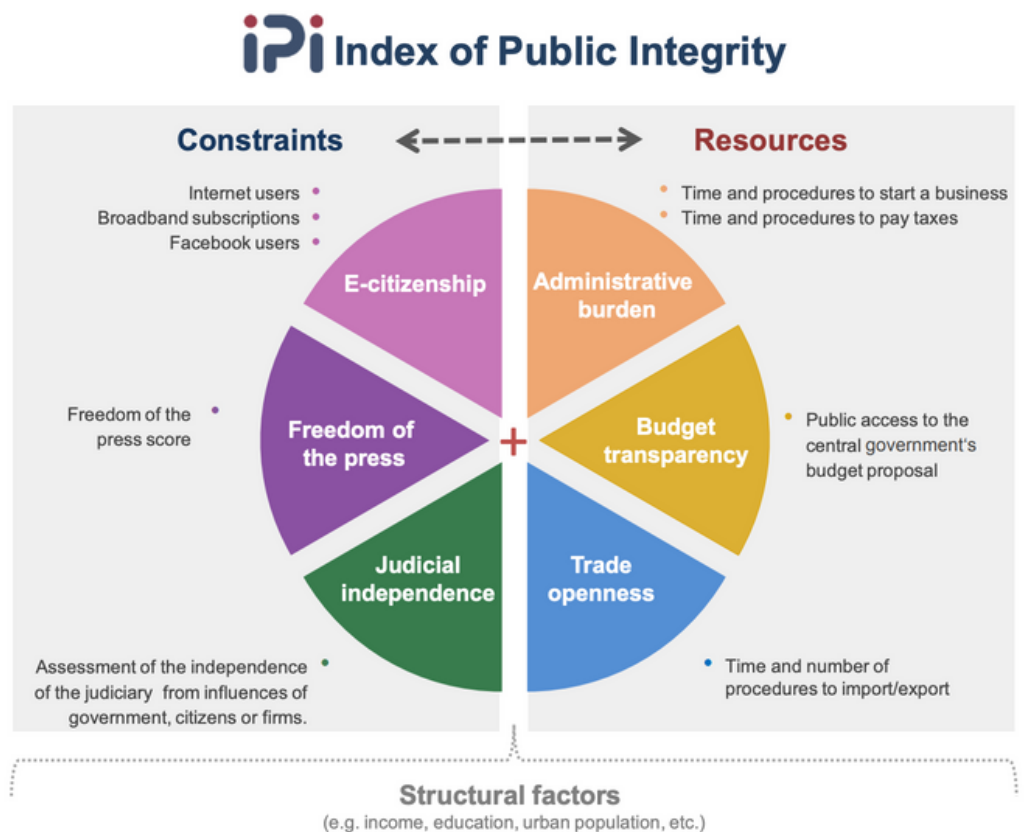
Corruption is what happens when individuals in positions of entrusted power make decisions that benefit them privately at the expense of the general public. For example, when government officials award lucrative government contracts to poorly-qualified friends or family members, or announce a construction project and then secretly receive a portion of its funding through a kickback, that's corruption. In innumerable ways, corruption hurts society, and minorities are disproportionately affected, including in South Asia.

Corruption also happens in the private sector. For example, when powerful interests, such as a large company or rich investor, evades a law using bribery, embezzles funds from a public contract, extorts a customer or a government official, or launders stolen funds, that's corruption. In addition to other social costs, private sector corruption hurts development and undermines free markets and fair competition.

💡 KEY CONCEPT: ACCOUNTABILITY

In anti-corruption, transparency and accountability are often seen as two sides of the same coin. While transparency is about access to information, budgets, and processes, accountability is about action to hold leaders responsible. As Accountability Lab founder Blair Glencorse put it, “Accountability is about answerability. It’s about people who are in positions of power being accountable for the decisions and actions they take.” Moreover, when accountability exists, performance improves and corruption is reduced.

Digital citizenship (or E-Citizenship) is an important form of accountability that works hand-in-hand with transparency to constrain corruption in a country. When citizens possess accurate information about decisions, policies, and projects that affect them, they can self-organize to respond when wrongdoing or mistakes occur. You can see this illustrated in the graphic below, where “E-citizenship” is placed under Constraints.



Source: Alina Mungiu-Pippidi

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💡 KEY CONCEPT: CIVIC SPACE

Civic space, a term closely related to digital citizenship, means the extent that citizens can organize, speak out, and freely participate in public decision-making and, by so doing, influence and shape policies, governments and societies.



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This space – either physical or digital – increases when there are established norms, rules, laws, and rights that allow citizens to freely meet, communicate with each other, and make their voices heard by power-holders and policy makers. Civic space also supports [good governance and inclusive growth](#) and underpins effective and efficient open government policies. Moreover, since citizens benefit from public goods and services – and are often the first to be harmed by public mismanagement or corruption – citizens’ voices and concerns are essential to effective governance.

Digital technologies are important building blocks for civic space. Online tools like websites, web applications, and social media have created new opportunities for citizen-to-citizen as well as citizen-to-government connections and engagement. These tools can be used to help citizens organize, raise awareness, and launch campaigns that improve public policies, impact the priorities of government officials and ensure proper delivery of public goods and services. Moreover, effective ideas don’t have to be complicated. Examples range from simple and free – like a local accountability organization’s [Facebook page](#) – to more complex platforms, such as the Pan-Africa [iFollowTheMoney](#) website that raises awareness about local accountability initiatives by leveraging the social media presence of the entire network.

There are many initiatives in South Asia that use technology to build civic space and undermine corruption. In Nepal, local civil society organization [Freedom Forum](#) actively supports media freedom, government transparency, and citizen accountability initiatives through its blog, radio program, and reporting on citizen-led initiatives. In Nepal and Pakistan, [Accountability Lab](#) has built a digital network of leaders trying to strengthen transparency and inclusive growth through its Accountability Incubator. This database includes more than [40 initiative leaders](#) from Nepal and Pakistan. One of these leaders, Warda Noor, founded [Khudkaar](#), a poverty-fighting initiative that recently merged with [xWave](#) to help unemployed and underemployed Pakistanis acquire skills and literacy in the latest web technologies. Another local initiative leader, [Laxmi Paudyal](#), is developing an online public monitoring and accountability tool to track activities at a government assembly in Karnali province, Nepal.

In Bangladesh, U4 published a helpful [30-page review](#) in 2018 that lists more than 15 in-country social accountability and civil society efforts to counter corruption. One standout is Citizens for Good Governance, abbreviated [SHUJAN](#), which is an active, voluntary, non-partisan organization committed to empowering citizens through tools and information. With regular updates on its [Facebook page](#), SHUJAN provides voter awareness information, hosts candidate-constituency face-to-face events, and even converted the country’s electoral roll into an online database.

In India, civic space has faced [unprecedented challenges](#) in the last few years, including website shutdowns and reductions in press and internet freedom. At the same time, recent [academic research](#) spotlights “measures that that go beyond institutions and focus on effective participation of the people” (i.e. measures to strengthen civic space) as “a more effective way to ensure accountability and control corruption” in the country. Given both the risks

and opportunities, Hackathon teams working in India may want to consider addressing practical, non-political issues such as health, urban safety, WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene), or [social audits](#) that benefit from citizen participation and could be improved through a new digital solution, and are also less likely to spark political crackdowns.

KEY CONCEPT: WHISTLEBLOWING

Corrupt actors are enabled when those who would report them are silenced out of fear of reprisal or by a belief that nothing will be done about their report. Whistleblowing is when an individual reveals information about wrongdoing in a public or private organization that is considered corrupt, illegal, unsafe, or immoral. Enabling safe whistleblowing may be defined as using digital tools to protect the rights, freedoms and safety of online activists who blow the whistle. According to [Transparency International](#), “whistleblowing is one of the most effective ways to detect and prevent corruption and other malpractice. Whistleblowers’ disclosures have exposed wrongdoing and fraud [and] helped save millions in public funds.”

Whistleblowing and complaint reporting platforms are becoming increasingly common in South Asia. For example, government-funded I Paid A Bribe reporting platforms exist in [India](#) and [Pakistan](#), and one is in development in [Nepal](#). These services provide a straightforward and anonymous way to report bribery requests by public officials as well as report honest behavior by government officers. In addition, nationwide citizen complaint and corruption-reporting tools have been set up by authorities in [India](#), [Pakistan](#), and [Nepal](#), and the Bangladesh chapter of Transparency International has set up a web and Android-based [corruption reporting app](#). [Whistleblowing apps](#) have emerged at the sub-national level too, including India’s [Kerala](#) and [Uttarakhand](#) states. However, many local governments still lack such services, and the connection between citizen reports and enforcement is not always clear.

Indeed, several factors are essential for whistleblowing to be effective: (1) individuals must have access to and be informed about anonymous reporting channels, (2) reports must be taken seriously and be meaningfully responded to by responsible authorities, and (3) individuals who blow the whistle must be protected from personal, legal, financial, or reputational consequences that may result from their reporting, ideally by [whistleblower protection legislation](#). Whistleblower protection laws have been passed in [India](#), [Nepal](#), and [Bangladesh](#), and a [whistleblower protection bill](#) is currently being considered in Pakistan but has [not yet been passed](#). HackCorruption teams that develop technology solutions to strengthen or complement the factors above will help increase the anti-corruption impact of blowing the whistle.

KEY CONCEPT: TECHNOLOGY TO CONSTRAIN CORRUPTION

Now that you’ve reviewed the concepts above, take a moment to remember

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your purpose at HackCorruption. Without recreating any tools that already exist (“re-inventing the wheel”), your hackathon team has been tasked with brainstorming, refining, and then building a basic prototype of a technology solution that strengthens digital citizenship and encourages individuals and communities to engage on public issues in ways that hold leaders accountable and constrain corruption. To help get ideas flowing, the following list (inspired by this [academic article](#) and [OECD report](#)) reviews how technology can help constrain corruption by...

- **Facilitating Discovery** by crowd-sourcing data points and leveraging groups of people to parse data and make discoveries (see [Bellingcat](#), [iFollowTheMoney](#), and [Shaasan](#))
- **Improving Monitoring** using scripts, algorithms, smart-alerts, machine learning, or AI to cut through noisy data and identify relevant risks, errors, and behavior.
- **Raising Awareness** by leveraging networks of citizens through SMS, messaging apps, and social media
- **Increasing Understanding and Engagement** by using easy-to-follow and interactive mediums like videos, animations, infographics, audio/podcasts, and chatbots
- **Sharpening Decision-Making** by using smarter data collection methods, gathering feedback through surveys and questionnaires, tracking trends and seizing on important moments in real time, or applying good practices identified by new generation AI like ChatGPT
- **Enhancing Security** by anonymizing the identities of private citizens who blow the whistle on wrongdoing in government or the private sector and who might otherwise be targeted for their actions
- **And more:** Drawing on the technologies you know and follow, what items are missing from this list? Take a minute to brainstorm and make your own addition(s).

KEY INFO: E-CITIZENSHIP DATA FROM SOUTH ASIA

The table below summarizes recent data about Internet, Facebook, and smartphone use, as well as a score for government E-Services, for the four South Asian countries participating in this HackCorruption event. Keep in mind that because South Asia is a very populous region, even a relatively small percentage of the adult population with access to online platforms amounts to tens and even hundreds of millions of people. Information about who digitally-connected citizens are [and where they live](#) can you as you design your project. (Note: Additional datasources can be found in the Appendix)

Country	India	Pakistan	Nepal	Bangladesh
Population	1,416,000,000	233,195,000	30,634,000	169,276,000
2020 E-Citizenship Score (%Facebook Users + %Internet Broadband Users / 2)	3.41 / 10	2.20 / 10	3.43 / 10	2.64 / 10
2020 Online Services Score	8.48 / 10	6.17 / 10	3.80 / 10	5.99 / 10
% Smartphone Users	46.5%	31%	Close to 100%	>30%

Sources: www.corruptionrisk.org/integrity, Newzoo

⚡ KICKSTART ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL):

Take a few minutes to investigate the following online: What are the most popular social media platforms in the countries or regions where you and your teammates are from? You can include global social media platforms like Facebook as well as messaging apps like Facebook Messenger or Telegram. Next, do a Google search to find social media accounts, groups, or websites created by activists, citizen groups, or civil society organizations in a particular city, district, or region in South Asia (if you want, you can start with your own). Can you find any examples of neighborhoods or city-wide movements to support a particular government policy area, initiative or project? Next, try looking at the national level.

Even if you have done this kind of searching before, see if you can find new information by investigating a region or a topic that you haven't investigated before. Feel free to note down any citizen, community, or civil society initiatives you found that you hadn't heard of before. Afterwards, consider this: Given the groups or initiatives that you found (or failed to find), can you imagine a new digital tool or initiative that could bring more citizens together to engage on public issues, or to strengthen initiatives that already exist?

APPENDIX

Note: Use this appendix to dive more deeply into the tools and initiatives that already exist in South Asia, as well as similarly themed work that has been done in other contexts. While the goal is to avoid re-creating the wheel, your team may find that existing ideas and initiatives can be usefully applied to a specific context in your region.

🎯 Existing Dashboards, Digital Tools, and Initiatives in South Asia

<p style="text-align: center;">India</p>	<p>Transparency International Report - Overview of Corruption and Anti-Corruption Developments in India, 2022</p> <p>Academic Article - Anti-Corruption Measures in India: A Democratic Assessment, 2019</p> <p>Global Anti-Corruption Blog - Lessons from Scaling Up Social Audits in India, 2022</p> <p>India Government - I Paid a Bribe, India, LOKPAL 'Lodge a Complaint' Online System, LOKPAL Corruption Complaint Statistics</p> <p>India Government - Aadhaar unique identification system</p> <p>Uttarakhand Mobile App - 1064 Anti-Corruption Mobile App</p> <p>Kerala Mobile App - Whistle Now!</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Pakistan</p>	<p>Pakistan Government - Prison Management Information System</p> <p>Government Initiative - I Paid a Bribe, Pakistan</p> <p>Mobile App - Report Corruption app</p> <p>Pakistan Government - Citizen Feedback Monitoring Program</p>

<p>Nepal</p>	<p>Nepal Government - I Paid a Bribe, Nepal (in development) Nepal Government Complaint Submissions - Hello Sarkar Accountability Lab - Accountability Incubator & Accountapreneur Network NGO - Freedom Forum (Works for the institutionalization of democracy, protection and promotion of human rights, press freedom, freedom of expression and right to information)</p>
<p>Bangladesh</p>	<p>NGO Report - U4: Social Accountability Initiatives + Anti-Corruption, 2018 NGO Report - U4: Overview of corruption and anti-corruption efforts, 2019 NGO - https://www.ti-bangladesh.org NGO - Citizens for Good Governance (SHUJAN), SHUJAN Facebook Page</p>

Digital Citizenship Tools and Examples from Around the World:

- [USAID Learning Lab: CivicSpace.tech: Citizen Engagement in a Digital Age](#)

USAID’s Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) Center and the Strengthening Civil Society Globally created the [CivicSpace.tech](#) resource to help the DRG community better understand the upsides and potential pitfalls of using digital technology in civic engagement.

- [Centering Youth Voices Online to Build a Democratic Digital Future, Esther Mwema, Zambia](#)

At the age of 23, Mwema collaborated with other youth leaders in the Internet Society Youth@IGF program to establish Digital Grassroots (DIGRA). One participant from Nigeria chose to create a guidebook to help young people navigate the online space in safer and more meaningful ways, while another from Benin conducted trainings on software development.

- [Guatemalan Youth Fed Up with Spectating Become Protagonists in their Country’s Future](#)

Cincoen5 (Five in 5) is a new organizations helping Guatemalan youth demand more from the government through protests and various other channels is Cincoen5 (Five in 5). Cincoen5 works to improve development in Guatemala focusing on five key areas: education, security, nutrition, infrastructure, and employment.

- [CIPE Open Internet for Democracy Leaders Program](#)

CIPE is launching projects in countries around the world to empower civil society to engage with policymakers on the governance of digital spaces, and ensure accessibility, transparency and respect for digital rights.

- [TCS Report on Technology as a Catalyst for Empowering Communities](#)

This report explores the unique and innovative ways in which technology is being tapped to create value for communities and to drive social impact by uniting the ingenuity and resources of the private sector, the innovative capacity of technologists, and the collective assets of governments, NGOs, and civil society