INTEGRITY
ACTION

# The Fix-Rate
## A Key Metric for Transparency and Accountability

# Contents

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# Fredrik Galtung

There is no commonly agreed unit of measurement for transparency and accountability work. Many organisations actively work around the world to promote these principles, but there has been no effective way of knowing if that work produces results. Integrity Action has developed an approach that achieves results that can be measured through a 'fix-rate'. The fix-rate measures the incidence with which transparency and accountability problems are resolved to the satisfaction of key stakeholders. Integrity Action's Community Integrity Building approach has delivered a fix-rate of up to 80 percent in terms of improving the quality of roads, schools and public services for thousands of people. This working paper makes the case for the fix-rate as a key metric for work in this field and it outlines some of the implications of this approach for other transparency and accountability work.

# Introduction[1]

The transparency and accountability movement took off in the early 1990s to become a diverse and highly innovative global movement of NGOs, governments, inter-governmental organisations, businesses and policy thinkers by the 2000s.

In its many manifestations, the movement now reaches into almost every country. One of its interesting features is how rapidly it became a global movement. Reformers and activists are working to achieve change in advanced industrialised nations, as well as in middle and low-income countries. The organisations working in this field address topics that include anti-corruption, access to information, judicial and corporate accountability, aid, construction, budget and natural resource transparency and accountability for public service delivery, tax justice, illicit financial flows, and the arms trade.

What unites this heterogeneous movement is a commitment to holding public officials and institutions accountable and a consensus that three of the core pillars of accountability in the liberal, democratic state – fair elections, an independent judiciary, and a free media – have in many instances disappointed public expectations and failed to do their job. No one suggests that we jettison these key levers of public accountability, but there is a widespread consensus that they need strengthening and that other tools and approaches must complement them.

In the public imagination and in many governments one key metric to gage performance in the transparency and accountability sector has dominated both public and policy discussions: Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). The CPI was first published in 1995 and over the years it has become one of the most influential indices for governance and development. It has been incorporated into many government plans and is a Key Performance Indicator for numerous anti-corruption agencies, who have been given the mandate to raise their country's score within a certain timeframe.

The CPI ranks countries on a scale of zero to one hundred, where zero represents complete corruption and one hundred an absence of corruption. I have argued elsewhere[2] that while the CPI had an instrumental role as a heuristic device in the early phases of this movement when the main agendas were awareness raising and advocacy for more effective legal norms, it has largely been unhelpful as a measurement tool for assessing policy implementation and corruption trends. Even at a 90 percent confidence interval 31 countries have estimates that vary by more than +/- 20 percent of the score value, with a number of countries reaching a variance above +/- 50 percent. Such a high variance could represent a difference of opinion about countries that are not widely known. It may also indicate that different phenomena are being assessed. After all, corruption manifests itself differently across the world: for example, countries with

a score between 38 and 41 in 2012 included Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, China, Liberia, and Tunisia. Sharing roughly the same score belies tremendous differences in the dollar value, types, entrenchment, human cost, prevalence of street-level corruption and the economic impact of corruption in these countries. Weather forecasts and electoral opinion polls can also be given within wide confidence margins, but they have the merit of measuring something specific: the probability of heavy rain showers, light snow or clear skies, or the likelihood that a certain candidate will win an election. With the CPI we have no idea what types of corruption are being assessed.

Many people in the transparency and accountability field are aware of the shortcomings of the CPI. An alternative could have been to develop a more objective or precise measure of corruption. But despite numerous efforts over the past twenty years, researchers and activists have failed to develop a methodology for measuring the incidence of corruption in institutions and services that is robust, replicable and scalable. Public perceptions and self-reporting of bribe payments or extortion demands remain the most common proxies. Such surveys, however, are not sufficiently robust to be a basis for perfecting policy. Despite its weaknesses, the CPI therefore remains the Key Performance Indicator of many anti-corruption agencies and continues to be cited in news articles on an almost daily basis[3].

The existence of right to information legislation or whistle-blower protection laws and the relative openness and accessibility of public budgets are undoubtedly important, but they mean little if they do not ultimately make people's lives better. Integrity Action has developed a simple approach - the fix-rate - as a key metric for transparency and accountability work. The fix-rate measures the incidence with which transparency and accountability related problems are resolved to the satisfaction of key stakeholders. Regular citizens, business people, politicians, public officials, journalists, and NGOs can be among those who identify the problems. An equally diverse range of individuals and institutions can be involved in the resolution of these problems. This indicator can provide a benchmark for those committed to reform that actually tracks progress.

Integrity Action was founded in 2003 with a mission to empower citizens to act with and demand integrity, actively taking part in building institutions to promote a state that is open, accountable and responsive to their needs and expectations[4]. Over the last five years we

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[2]Fredrik Galtung, "Measuring the Immeasurable: Boundaries and Functions of (Macro) Corruption Indicators," in Charles Sampford et al. eds., *Measuring Corruption,* Ashgate, Aldershot, 2006: pp 101-130.

[3]Turkey's Prime Ministry Inspection Board is one of dozens of examples around the world: In a report from 2009 it sought, by the end of 2012, to have achieved "at least 20% *improvement of Turkey's score in the Corruption Perception Index revealed by Transparency International every year."* The report also sought to achieve improvements on its Global Integrity scores.

[4]The organisation was founded as "Tiri: Making Integrity Work" and was re-branded as Integrity Action in October 2012.

have tested variations on a core methodology called Community Integrity Building to test what works in order to fix transparency and accountability related problems in several countries in Africa, Asia, the Former Soviet Union, and the Middle East. We reached a milestone in the past year because data we collected with our partners shows that the approach achieved a consistent fix-rate above 50 percent for problems of infrastructure identified by local community members and that a fix-rate of 30 percent could be achieved for public services like water, sanitation and social welfare.

The fix-rate focuses on measuring outputs, like the resolution of citizen complaints, or improvements in public service delivery based on problems identified by the stakeholders of this service. Inputs, in turn, are activities or policy changes, like public hearings, social audits, information portals, integrity pacts, or access to information laws. The fix-rate assesses whether these inputs empower citizens and public office holders, individually or collectively, to achieve a specific fix, and therefore an improved outcome that is in the public interest. When such fixes are achieved with some degree of consistency this can be interpreted as a signal that a policy, law or method of problem solving works and that it has the potential to become a routine practice of state-society relations.

The paper will show that Community Integrity Building is also very cost effective way to achieve fixes. It costs on average less than 1 percent of the value of the infrastructure projects and services that are being improved. Aid and government projects in developing countries can conservatively be estimated to lose on average between 10-25 percent of the value of a project to fraud, corruption and mismanagement.[5] The African Union estimated in 2002 that on average 25 percent of Africa's GDP (ca. $148bn) was lost to corruption every year. If 1 percent of a large project's costs are invested in Community Integrity Building and that has the result of reducing the loss rate caused by waste, corruption,

and mismanagement by even four percent this would represent a threefold net return on investment, making this approach in principle self-funding.

The adoption of the fix-rate as a key metric of the transparency and accountability movement can help to drive innovation, efficiency gains and help to highlight what works. If the fix represents the cure, the Community Integrity Building approach is a type of treatment. Different treatments may cure a patient more or less successfully, and while we now have confidence that Community Integrity Building works, it is not designed for every ailment or for every context. A fix could also be achieved with other methods, especially in settings where people who are generally trusted, principled and competent manage public programmes.

Using the fix-rate as a key unit of measurement makes it possible to compare the effectiveness of different treatments of intervention, and to assess whether the treatment is long lasting. In countries and government sectors where corruption and maladministration are widespread, the use of the fix-rate will also generate positive externalities as some of the examples given below will illustrate.

The working paper is divided into three parts: First, I present an overview of the findings and some short case studies from our Community Integrity Building work in six countries. Second, I describe in more detail how Community Integrity Building works and introduce two concepts that are key to understanding our method: closing the loop and organisational integrity. The third part sets out what is original about the Community Integrity Building approach and describes how Community Integrity Building is distinguished from other methods based on participation or confrontation. In the conclusion I outline some of the wider implications of Community Integrity Building and the fix-rate to transparency and accountability.

[5]When Oby Ezekwesili set up the new federal procurement control unit in the President's Office in Nigeria in the early 2000s she reduced costs by 40-50%. Similar reductions were noted in Italy after the Mani Pulite anti-corruption drive disrupted corrupt networks in the early 1990s. For a review of some issues related to construction, see Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "The Economic Costs of Corruption in Infrastructure," *Global Corruption Report 2005: Corruption in Construction and Post-Conflict Reconstruction*, Transparency International, Berlin: pp. 12-19. And for an excellent typology and analysis of corruption in global infrastructure see giaccentre.org/cost_of_corruption.php. Data from the US provides another benchmark for potential losses due to corruption and fraud: the US Department of Health and Human Services estimates Medicare fraud at 7 to 14 percent of all reimbursements in 2000, from David Becker, et al, "Detecting Medicare Abuse," NBER Working Paper Series, No 10677, August 2004. By 2010 such losses were estimated at $48bn in a single fiscal year (see US Government Accountability Office, *Medicare and Medicaid Fraud, Waste and Abuse: Effective Implementation of Recent Laws and Agency Actions Could Help Reduce Improper Payments*, Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services, and International Security, Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, US Senate, March 9, 2011).

# 1. Testing the Approach: The Fix-Rate in Practice

The main question that drives Integrity Action's work is *"How can we empower citizens to be the catalysts for fixing the integrity problems of infrastructure and key public services that are of highest priority to them?"*

By using what we call an integrity lens and engaging citizens in a constructive Community Integrity Building approach we can help to generate new fixes for what are often well-known and seemingly intractable problems. We facilitate a locally driven dynamic that helps to identify viable solutions to improve the quality of public infrastructure and services. The by-product of this work is often a reduction in fraud, corruption, waste, and mismanagement.

Without investing any funds directly in bricks, mortar, gravel, pipes or wells, how can communities get better school buildings, roads or access to water in settings where maladministration, incompetence, corruption or fraud are widespread? The Community Integrity Building work we have undertaken in six countries was implemented with NGO partners and public institutions, which are listed in Box 1. These NGOs were responsible for implementing the work on the ground and deserve enormous credit for the results obtained through this work. The first part of this section contains a few case studies that illustrate the work and its impact. The second part contains overall findings from six countries. The third part describes how the fix-rate is calculated.

## 1.1. Case Studies

Rubbish collection services across many cities in Kyrgyzstan have been transformed since Integrity Action's work in the country started in 2009. The remote glacial city of Naryn has led the way in the past four years in showing how an integrity-building approach can bring sweeping reform to local services. The city had a derelict solid waste management that only covered parts of the city. The council's rubbish collection enterprise has completely overhauled its procedures as a result of work that was initiated through Integrity Action, with the announcement that 126 collection points will be visited on the same two days each week. All residents can access this information through large maps that are displayed in the supplier's offices. Additionally, more than 250 rubbish containers have been installed around the city, and twice as many trucks are now deployed than they had previously.

Such transparency and accountability in the way a service is delivered – and dramatic improvement in the competency being displayed by a supplier – is proving

to be a model for other cities in Kyrgyzstan. Recently, officials and elected councillors from the cities of Batken and Isfana visited Naryn to learn from their experiences. Meanwhile, in Osh City, Integrity Action contributed to stamping out the illegal dumping of rubbish in public areas, and brought rubbish removal services for the first-time to one of the most deprived estates in the city.

Here is how this work got started. As a first step in its work in Kyrgyzstan, Integrity Action set up a think tank of university professors in Bishkek to conduct local scoping studies and to provide joint learning to public officials and community representatives. These academics recognised that a methodology was needed and that it would not be easy to find tools that would unlock better service delivery. Over several months they developed monitoring tools and training manuals with Integrity Action's guidance so that civil society activists had a framework for analysing service delivery, highlighting issues, and pushing for more transparency, accountability and competence. Professor Rakhat Bazarbaeva says, 'We developed thirty integrity indicators relating to services, transparency, openness, participation, and ethics. We then trained local activists on methods for monitoring services.'

A Joint Working Group (JWG) was established in 2010 to bring together local government officers, elected members, residents and Community-Based Organisations so that they could discuss issues and work together to identify and implement appropriate solutions. Known as the Naryn Coordination Council, this JWG considered whether public hearings and media campaigns could be used to improve rubbish collection services.[6] Integrity Action's country manager, Lilia Utiusheva, says, "Before, there was no system for rubbish collection in Naryn. There were no definitive routes that truck drivers would follow. The community monitors gathered photographic evidence that the trucks would just go around the city once a week, picking up rubbish wherever they saw it. In 2011 a plan was formulated by the Mayor's Office, city council, the architectural office and the community monitors, and a map was put up so different parts of the city got rubbish collection on the same days each week."

A media campaign to raise awareness of the need for rate collection led to a massive increase in the number of residents paying municipal taxes – which gave the

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[6]The JWG was formed from participants who had been trained by a combination of local academics and policy makers in Integrity Action's approach. Where structures similar to JWG's already exist, as in Kenya, we have given support to those structures. Community monitors can be identified through a variety of methods that ensure they have local legitimacy. In most countries this happens through local level elections. In practice, it often means that people who already enjoy a level of public confidence - for example members of a local Shura council in Afghanistan, or a board member of a respected CBO in Kyrgyzstan – are likely to be among the monitors. In Palestine, through an agreement with the Ministry of Education, school age youth have been active – and effective – monitors.

supplier the income needed to install the 250 bins across the city, and to deploy more trucks. Bilimbek Jakiev, a member of the JWG, says, "Through the campaign of the Coordination Council, the tax collection has increased from 118,000 Kyrgyzstani Som in 2008 [£1,600] to 1.9 million Som today [£26,000]. The community is now a lot cleaner, and the rubbish is collected regularly, and that is all down to the improvement in tax collection which only came about because of this project."

In the final stage, sustainability is at the top of the agenda. Nurjan Asanbekova, a lawyer from our partner, the Association of Attorneys in Kyrgyzstan (AAK), says, "Through this project we have discovered there is no benchmark for what the local supplier has to provide as a minimum. For instance, I couldn't score local rubbish collection quality in Naryn because I couldn't get answers to a simple question such as, 'How many rubbish bins should a city the size of Naryn provide?' The Coordination Council will ensure that standards are defined, agreed, and then adopted."

On-going interaction between residents and local councillors is also being embedded into Naryn culture through the use of community radio. A project partner, the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme, approached radio station 'Almaz' to see if it would be possible for the station to host a weekly 15-minute phone-in programme where residents could put their questions about local services – and highlight any issues they had noticed – to representatives from the Mayor's Office, local government, community monitoring CBOs, and service providers. This was established in December 2012 and is provided as a free public service.

Within the framework created by Integrity Action, Professor Rakhat Bazarbaeva says, "Step by step we have developed the methodology and indicators without using external consultants, and now other organisations have expressed an interest in using these, such as the Eurasia Foundation and the World Bank. The Ministry of Economy has approached us to assist them with their anti-corruption work, and we are now discussing what training we can help provide to Integrity Schools that are being piloted in the Spring [of 2013]. And if the Ministry of Economy establish regional platforms in their anti-corruption forum, we are hopeful that monitors trained under the project will be part of this."

In Timor Leste, Asia's youngest nation, which has suffered from years of conflict and mismanagement that have destroyed up to 70 percent of infrastructure and stifled efforts to alleviate poverty and food insecurity, Celestina de Jesus Correia volunteers as a community monitor for Luta Hamutuk. Luta Hamutuk is an independent Timorese organisation that is fighting corruption by building the long-term capacities of communities to demand accountability and participate in decision-making. Celestina says, "Before, I was a wife at home; my job was to serve my husband, my children, and other men that have meetings in the village office. I dropped out of school when I was in sixth grade, but now I have learnt how to write reports, I am more confident to sit together with men to discuss

## Box 1
## Integrity Action's Partners

**Afghanistan:**
Integrity Watch Afghanistan

**Kenya:**
Coastal Rural Support Programme, Federation of Woman Lawyers, International Commission of Jurists-Kenya.

**Kyrgyzstan:**
Academy of Management, Aga Khan Foundation, Association of Attorneys - Insan Leilek, Judicial Training Centre of the Supreme Court, Mountain Societies Development Support Programme.

**Nepal:**
Campaign for Human Rights and Social Accountability (CAHURAST)

**Palestine:**
Aman (the coalition for accountability and transparency), Applied Research Institute Jerusalem (ARIJ), An-Najah University Faculty of Law, Teacher Creativity Centre (TCC).

**Timor Leste:**
Luta Hamutuk



problems in my village, speak in public and support people in my village to resolve their problems like in the case of clean water projects. These are the most significant changes in my life after becoming a volunteer monitor."

Celestina inspects buildings and budgets, takes photographs, engages with the contractors, local government and the communities. The dedication of monitors like Celestina and Luta Hamutuk staff is paying off. In Bazartete, the monitors raised awareness that the

local primary school had no basic facilities such as chairs, tables and black boards. The students were on the floor during class, while teachers found it difficult to teach since there was no black board. They therefore, decided to send a letter to the Ministry of Education. Within six weeks, officers from the Department of Education visited the school and eventually delivered chairs, tables and chalk boards. This is another example of how local people become empowered to make real change to their lives and communities.

The City of Hebron located in the southern part of the West Bank suffers from constant water shortages, especially in its Old City. Most households have to buy water from water trucks at a significant surcharge because piped water may only be available once or twice a week. The water pipes are also in such a state of disrepair that a large percentage of the water is lost to leakage. The conditions in Hebron are made worse by Israeli settlements, which encroach into the Old City, and Israeli military control over large parts of the city. These factors make water administration and infrastructure renewal especially difficult. Nonetheless, after three years of persistent efforts to improve transparency in public information and accountability of public officials, residents and city officials report a threefold improvement in water delivery in the winter of 2012/13 over the previous 12 months.

In Nablus, in the northern West Bank, through a resident-led initiative, the city was able to double municipal tax collection after a year. The new revenues enabled the city to deploy 60 new street cleaners and to purchase several small trucks for improved solid waste collection, a

longstanding public demand. Outlying neighbourhoods, even hillside areas that were previously not served by municipal cleaning services, are for the first time included in a systematic manner.

In Lunga Lunga, in Kenya's coastal region, as a result of gathering evidence and photos, and using a Joint Working Group to talk to officials on an on-going basis, community monitors were able to get an operational water standpipe in a community that had not had running water for twenty years. The women and girls of the village had previously needed to walk for twelve kilometres every day and to spend hours bringing water from outlying areas.

## 1.2. Summarising the Results so Far

The table below contains a summary of the fix-rate for Community Integrity Building supported by Integrity Action in six countries over a two-year period (2010-2012). Through our approach and our work with partners on the ground, the rate at which problems in projects are fixed has reached over 83 percent in Afghanistan and over 50 percent elsewhere. Problems identified in government services are being fixed at a rate of 25-33 percent. Afghanistan stands out as the most remarkable case, both because of the high fix-rate and the number of projects they worked on. One can distinguish between project-level fixes and sub-fixes within a project. If a single water-point is repaired or a kitchen in a clinic is installed those are important steps in the right direction and will likely be experienced as empowering but they fall short of a project-level fix. The table below only reports on project level fixes.

**Table. Community Integrity Building Supported by Integrity Action (2010-2012):**

| Period: 2010-2012 | Afghanistan | Kenya | Kyrgyzstan | Nepal | Palestine | Timor Leste | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of Monitored Infrastructure Projects | 281 | - | - | 8 | - | 26 | 315 |
| % Fix-Rate | 83% | - | | 100% | - | 62% | 82% |
| Est. Value of Monitored Projects in USD | $247m[7] | - | - | $26k | - | $1.60m | ca. $249m |
| No. of Monitored Public Services | - | 16 | 12 | - | 8 | - | 36 |
| % Fix-Rate | - | 25% | 33% | - | 25% | - | 28% |
| Total No. of Monitors[8] | 845 | 393 | 494 | 57 | 603[9] | 181 | 2,573 |

[7]Budget information was only available for 251 projects; contracts could not be obtained for 30 projects.

[8]Monitors include public officials who are part of Community Integrity Building Joint Working Groups.

[9]More than half the monitors in Palestine are school students.

Integrity Action has used this approach in contexts where governance is weak, the rule of law is often flaunted, and corruption, fraud and mismanagement are commonplace. Integrity Action undertook the work in these countries to test the Community Integrity Building approach and the fix-rate in settings that reflect different levels of literacy (98 percent in Kyrgyzstan and 92 percent in Palestine vs. 28 percent in Afghanistan); with fast growing economies (Timor Leste, Kenya), and some that are at the low end of the Human Development Index (Nepal, Afghanistan). Some of our work took place in the urban areas (Palestine), whereas in other countries it was mostly rural (in Afghanistan, Kenya, Timor Leste, Nepal). Some countries are heavily dependent on foreign aid (notably Afghanistan and Palestine) whereas others are almost entirely self-reliant (Timor Leste and Kenya). These countries do share three characteristics: (a) they have all experienced on-going or sporadic spates of widespread violence in recent years; (b) all the countries are in the bottom quartile of countries as far as corruption perceptions are concerned[10]; and (c), none of them have an entirely free press or an independent judiciary.

The fix-rate findings for these six countries represent a possible step-change for transparency and accountability work for four main reasons:

- First, the high fix-rate being achieved in some settings for projects and services positively affects the lives of thousands of people.

- Second, the outstanding work led by Integrity Watch Afghanistan shows that the work can be scaled up. Integrity Watch Afghanistan has achieved a ratio between monitors and projects of 3:1, which is an extremely efficient and effective deployment and engagement with community monitors.

- Third, the work is being implemented in countries where violence and intimidations through muscle power are frequently used. No local monitors or NGO staff partners have been killed.[11]

- Fourth, the work is extremely cost-effective, costing on average less than 1 percent of the value of the projects being monitored and improved, especially when it starts being scaled up, as it has been in Afghanistan, Palestine and Timor Leste.

[10]Palestine is not included in the Corruption Perceptions Index because of its status as an occupied territory.

[11]In April 2013 we became aware of the first case of a community monitor who was physically assaulted by workers from a construction company. Despite the harm he suffered he is continuing to volunteer as a local monitor. A partner in DRC, Floribert Kazingufu Kasirusiru, head of the Fondation Chirezi, has told us "As human rights activists, we often want to confront the government to demand justice. If it were not for the integrity approach of building trust and credibility, I would be a dead man."

The fact that thirty percent of communities in a given province have Joint Working Groups or that 88 percent of contracts are now openly reported would be considered important milestones - but not fixes.

The table above shows a clear frontrunner among Integrity Action's partners: Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA), the leading Afghan NGO in its sector. IWA achieves a consistently high fix-rate of more than 80 percent and they have been able to redress problems in 281 projects across five provinces over the past two years.[12] Integrity Action's partners in Nepal, Palestine and Timor Leste, have monitored 8, 13, and 26 projects respectively. These numbers are considerably lower but they remain meaningful results for organisations that have embarked on this approach more recently and with modest initial resources. Integrity Action worked with IWA from its inception in 2006 and the organisation has had a few years head start over the others. The multitude of new infrastructure projects being built in Afghanistan through foreign aid in the last few years also made this country particularly well suited to monitoring at scale, despite the challenges posed by the rampant nature of corruption in the country and the on-going threat of violence.

Construction work on the Bahram Shahdid high school in Mazar e Sharif, which was implemented by Unicef, began in March 2011. It was supposed to be finished after one year. However, under pressure from the local monitors, work was halted in October 2011 after the monitors discovered serious issues with the quality of the work. The constructor was using sub-standard bricks for the school building, as well as more than one hundred bags of poor quality cement. This would have serious implications for the long-term stability and safety of the structure. Floors inside the school building were far from the required contractual standard. In addition, there were gaps in the ceiling boards, and no doors or windows in the classrooms.

In December 2012, the local monitors, acting on the advice of IWA staff, wrote a letter, with details of their complaints about the construction process, to the local government educational department. After the educational department received the letter, the provincial council agreed to investigate the issue. In January 2013, a meeting was convened by the IWA Provincial Monitoring Board, which was attended by representatives from the local government Economic Department, the Educational Directorate, local Shura council members, Unicef, and the construction company. At the meeting, the construction company signed a guarantee, which was witnessed and signed by all those who also attended the meeting. The constructor committed to comply with its obligations to finish its work on the school to a satisfactory level.

## 1.3. How is the Fix-Rate Calculated?

The fix-rate is the incidence with which transparency and accountability related problems are resolved to the satisfaction of key stakeholders – in short, the percentage of resolved problems. What constitutes a fix needs to be defined and identified by people who have a stake in its outcome, even when it is a policy or system-level fix. A fix-rate can be phrased as a meaningful percentage. A one-off or singular solution – like the establishment of a sovereign wealth fund – would not, therefore, be counted as a fix. If local communities try to improve the quality of governance in basic healthcare services in sixteen localities and they experience an improvement that generally satisfies them in four locations, this would represent a fix-rate of 25 percent. If citizens file complaints using right to information legislation and receive satisfactory responses in fifty percent of the cases, that would be the fix-rate. Inputs, like the formation of a Joint Working Group, or passage of open contracting legislation may be solutions to a procedural or legal problem, but they would not be measured as fixes by this definition.

[12]A contrasting statistic for Afghanistan is that the High Office of Oversight, the country's anti-corruption agency, which has submitted a number of dossiers with evidence of grand corruption by high-ranked individuals in the Afghan government to the Attorney General for prosecution. Not a single case has been successfully prosecuted since the High Office of Oversight was established. While the state is failing to curb corruption at the top, it is apparently possible to make headway from below.

Haji Helaldin, a local monitor, told us "Without the trainings it would have been impossible to monitor what was going on. We did not understand anything about what our rights were." Likewise, Mohammad Afzal a fellow local monitor, and head of the local Shura council, said "Now we are able to monitor anything, this was not the case before." Although there is still work to be done, the school is now in use and the children are no longer taught in UN High Commissioner for Refugee tents as was the case over the last several years.

The Nongre Road is vital for residents in the Injil District of Herat Province. It serves the 5,000 families that live in the district, around 35,000 people, and also connects Herat and surrounding villages to Iran. Local monitor Kurbanali (35 years old) sums up why local monitoring is needed: "If the local government does not take control of the monitoring then we must take up this responsibility." Despite numerous challenges, this community used what local monitors had learned to successfully demand what they were entitled to.

Five months into the construction of the new road, community monitors discovered that there were serious divergences from what the construction company was supposed to provide and what they had done until then. The quality of the road was extremely poor. It had only been made five metres wide, instead of the eight metres that were stipulated in the contract. The road was also not the required thickness, which meant that it could easily be worn down and damaged, creating dangerous potholes for drivers. Furthermore, the road was not straight, it had many turns and bends, which made using it extremely hazardous.

The community monitors were able to halt work on the road. Then, they moved to mobilise the local community, contacting the local Shura council, in order to engage with local residents. The monitors first addressed their concerns to the construction company directly. However, this did not bring about any changes in their practices, and they refused to comply with what was required of them according to the contract.

With the assistance of IWA staff, Kurbanali, together with 200 local residents from six villages, wrote a letter to the provincial government, complaining about the construction company's failure to comply with the contract. Yet again, this did not produce the hoped for response. The Ministry of Public Works responded that they could not assist the community in this matter.

Kurbanali and his fellow monitors did not give up. Local residents, including many young people, got behind him. They decided to take this matter further to the provincial level, by organising and participating in a series of protests, from January to March, against the poor quality of the road and the construction company. These protests, which IWA helped to facilitate and promote through an advocacy campaign, were targeted at the provincial council and the governor's office.

These efforts eventually paid off. As a result of the protests, the construction company was forced to comply with the contract. The first 4.5km of the road is now being rebuilt according to the terms of the contract. It was widened to eight metres and layered with asphalt at the correct thickness of 5cm. The remaining 4km of road is in the process of being built correctly as well. The construction company also built a drainage system and an additional 3km of road, which they had previously failed to deliver altogether. Kurbanali explained the determination of the community in the following way: "The majority of the people living in this community returned from Iran when the war calmed down. Most of them worked in construction in Iran so we knew how to control the process and to expect the best results."[13]

The Bahram Shahdid high school and the Nongre road in Heart Province are examples of how two fixes were achieved. As these examples illustrate a problematic project usually reveals a multitude of problems. Furthermore, there is no standard operating procedure that can guarantee a fix. Communities, sometimes with external support, experiment and test until they find a solution that works and is implementable.

When calculating fixes one can distinguish between fixes that communities are able to achieve themselves, and those that require government intervention or NGO support. Genuine empowerment and sustainability would eventually come from the ability of communities to directly resolve their own problems with the immediate stakeholders in the process. Going forward, Integrity Action will start to collect such data with our partners. Finally, one can distinguish between what could be called incidental and policy- or system-level fixes. The examples given above and those covered by the table are what would be called incidental fixes, even if they have tens of thousands of beneficiaries. An example of a system-level fix is the effort currently underway in Kwale County in Kenya, directly inspired by the work supported by Integrity Action, for the County to devote 1 percent of its resources to Community Integrity Building. The provision of these additional resources would make Community Integrity Building independent of grant or donor funding and should be assessable through an increase in the volume of activity and higher fix-rates.

Achieving fixes is not the ultimate aim or objective of a project. Improved roads, garbage collection and schools are the intended outcome. But the fix-rate is a powerful intermediate variable that signals why and how change is happening. Without such information it is nearly impossible to fine-tune policies or to assess whether they are actually contributing to meaningful change on the ground.

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[13]In this locality local residents who had done construction work in Iran were very well placed to undertake the monitoring. But without access to contracts and support from IWA, which assisted them in dealing constructively with the public authorities, it is doubtful that they would have been able to force the contractor to redo the work.

## 1.4. Validating the Approach

Over the last four years we have tested a number of variations on the core Community Integrity Building approach to see what might generate the best results. Below are listed examples to demonstrate the iterative country- and community-specific action-learning approach, which also emphasise Integrity Action's capacity to acknowledge and learn from initial weaknesses of implementation.

In Liberia, for example, our partner placed ads in local newspapers and over community radio stations to recruit monitors instead of identifying them through local level networks within the community or local elections as in Afghanistan. After some training the monitors uncovered evidence of projects that had never been implemented or that did not fulfil their contracts. Reporting on these failures through local media and the reports of local NGOs produced a negligible number of fixes. Despite this setback, the Government of Liberia committed to a rights-based approach and citizen feedback in the new Poverty Reduction Strategy, the "Agenda for Transformation". The donor we were working with in Liberia was disappointed with the results so the work was halted after a year. We have recently had the opportunity to restart work in Liberia based on lessons learned there and elsewhere.

In three countries we tested engagement with members of parliament at an early stage in the process, believing that they might provide valuable support when dealing with the bureaucracy. But even when they represented specific electoral districts, we found the parliamentarians generally to be unwilling or unable to help. Moreover, the involvement of parliamentarians politicised the work from the outset. Once communities have been empowered, however, and they have been able to achieve results

on their own steam, national elected representatives in several countries have been attentive and supportive - but generally not before.

Integrity Action also tested whether it was more effective to train community members and public officials separately or to bring them together from the outset. After testing both approaches in different contexts we found the latter, bringing public officials and community members together from the beginning, to be the best way of building trust and a working relationship between the parties.

Finally, we explored whether public interest litigation, which has been used to defend social and economic rights in some countries, might be a useful tool to promote improved standards of integrity in public services for the poor. We realised quite early that this was a non-starter in most countries we work in and that such a confrontational approach might have negative repercussions for our immediate work. We did, however, find that involving paralegal advisors as a source of support to be both empowering and cost-effective.

In these countries classic horizontal and vertical accountability measures – for example audits, post-construction inspection, or legal proceedings against contractors – tend to produce low fix-rates. While it is important to continue strengthening these traditional accountability mechanisms, we suggest that in the short to medium-term the Community Integrity Building approach is a cost-effective and socially beneficial means of improving the quality and effectiveness of public services and public infrastructure. It is also a method for fixing the state from below and of introducing what is often a new dynamic of constructive engagement between citizens and officials.

## 1.5. Caveats and Cautions

George Soros' principle of reflexivity dictates that the adoption of a key metric in any field will generate unintended consequences: some of them positive, and some of them negative.[14] At the most basic level one would expect the use of the fix-rate to prompt some actors to over-report fixes that did not happen or, in turn, to under-report problems that are difficult to resolve thereby boosting their achievement but perhaps ignoring those issues of greatest concern to local citizens. If Community Integrity Building is implemented collaboratively citizens and local public officials can crosscheck each other's findings, especially if they are openly reported through a site like DevelopmentCheck. org (see below). It may also be useful to have additional external spot checks and occasional independent validation of the results. Ultimately, Community Integrity Building can only be sustained for any length of time if it achieves meaningful results for a community. Both the community monitors and members of Joint Working Groups do their work as volunteers, with only basic transportation and communication costs being reimbursed. Unless the problems they are redressing are meaningful they would rapidly lose interest. The integrity of the process is in that sense directly linked to its outcome and should be self-reinforcing.

Some people may nonetheless object that the fix-rate is too reductive: it does not necessarily take into account the volume of things that need fixing. In a context where governance works only three things may need fixing and if two of them get fixed, that would give a fix rate of 66 percent. But in another locality there may be a hundred problems of which half get fixed, which would surely be a more impressive result. The fix-rate should, of course, not be reported in isolation from other data, for example the number of projects being monitored and the number of problems that were detected. On its own, the fix-rate does not mean that much. What is likely to remain tenuous, however, is a causal link between fix-rates and macro-level indicators and assessments, like corruption surveys or macro governance indicators. The latter are sometimes useful advocacy tools, but they are not sufficiently precise to be causally linked to any specific reforms.

Another argument against the fix-rate is that some problems may loom so large – for example an authoritarian, corrupt leader who has held power for decades – that merely conducting an in-depth exposé is valuable even if it does not lead to any discernible, short-term change. Moreover, some principles, such as access to information, open budgets, empowerment, accountability, or participation are values in themselves, even if they do not produce changes on the ground.

[14]See, for example, George Soros, "General Theory of Reflexivity," Financial Times, accessible at http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/0ca06172-bfe9-11de-aed2-00144feab49a.html#axzz2QoeSxqTE (accessed on 17 April 2013).

A fixation with fixes may seem to discount the value of such investigations, advocacy campaigns or policy breakthroughs.

There are two responses to these objections: First, investigations and exposés may in some ways be the antecedents of the transparency and accountability field, but they are actually not the essence of movement. This movement is interested in such revelations if they help to improve the quality of governance, rarely as ends in themselves. Second, this paper suggests that there should always be a close and meaningful connection between policy level changes and a fix-rate. The test of a right to information law could be whether it empowers rural mothers to get better access to maternal health provision; the test of an open aid database could be whether it is used by opposition members of parliament in aid recipient countries to hold the government in power to account more effectively; an open budget should be used by marginalised interest groups to defend their budgetary entitlements; an open contracting system will make it easier for local citizens doing Community Integrity Building to validate their findings of the infrastructure projects they are monitoring. Policy changes should, in other words, be assessed according to the fix-rates they contribute to. If the fix-rate is low, this should raise questions about the extent to which the policies were ill conceived, are being badly implemented, or whether they have been captured by well-placed interest groups.

Integrity Watch Afghanistan, found that they were able to interest heads of local Shura councils to join their efforts as local monitors. These people are the establishment of their local communities and they are invariably male. These traditional authority figures are a major reason why local monitoring has been so successful in Afghanistan. Another NGO may decide that they want to empower women and youth and that these traditionally marginalised groups should also be able to do their own community monitoring. Although they might be mirroring IWA's techniques in every other respect, this second NGO is likely to find that construction companies and local government bodies ignore the youth and female monitors. As a result, they only achieve a low fix-rate. The women and youth may nonetheless take pride in having given voice to their concerns and in the skills they have acquired through this process. The low fix-rate could be seen as secondary. To an advocate of the fix-rate these divergent results should be an invitation to explore the possibility of bringing the two groups together and of finding innovative ways of engaging the women and the youth in an effort that may be led by the elders of the Shura council.

Finally, a critic may argue that the fix-rate needs to be weighted, otherwise fixing small, relatively easy problems that only affect a few people might be given the same weight as the fix of a problem that affects thousands in a project costing millions. There are three ways of responding to this concern:

- First, there is self-reinforcing credibility test: fix-rates should always be reported in conjunction with other numbers, say the value of projects being monitored, the number of intended beneficiaries of a service, and the number of problems that were identified. The most important fix for an anti-corruption agency in a country where corruption is rife is likely to be the conviction-rate (it may also report on the size of financial settlements, or the amount of repatriated funds). If the anti-corruption agency only catches and secures sentences against 'small fish' it will not be nearly as credible as an agency in a neighbouring country that has secured a number of high profile convictions (all the more so if they are for people from or close to the political party in power). Similarly, an NGO that achieves fixes through Community Integrity Building for projects that affect tens of thousands of people will naturally be more credible than an NGO that only focuses on minor, easily repaired projects.

- Second, a bar can be set: An NGO or a government agency working on Community Integrity Building could decide that it will set a threshold and only tackle projects that reach at least ten thousand people or projects with a minimum value of $50,000. Such a threshold would have an immediate impact on scale. In anti-corruption agencies, such thresholds are quite common.

- Third, small changes do matter: In Kenya, for example, the rate of sexual abuse by male teachers of their students has become notorious. A volunteer Community Monitor trained through Integrity Action's work decided single-handedly that the time had come to confront and bring a teacher to justice whom the police and ministry of education had previously refused to pursue, even after several complaints from the community. Despite resistance from the local police who were relatives of the teacher, and the teacher fleeing from the community, the monitor was ultimately successful and the teacher was caught, tried and ultimately sentenced to several years' imprisonment. Changes that only affect a few people do matter, especially for the weak and marginalised. In fact, the basic test of the strength and integrity of a fix - and therefore of the methods and institutions that produce the fix - is that it empowers those who are weak and poor.

As the quality of public services and governance improves and corruption is reduced one would expect the fix-rate to rise. While this may sound counter-intuitive a high fix-rate is the hallmark of a system that works. It is the rate of problems that needs to be low, not the fix-rate.[15] One would not expect – nor wish - the public sector to be entirely error free, because of the dystopian connotations this would invariably imply, but the main point is that an improvement in fix-rates is generally a good sign. The next section describes how the Community Integrity Building method works both in theory and practice.

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[15]The extreme illustration of this point can be taken from manufacturing. Six Sigma is a set of tools and strategies for reducing errors in manufacturing, wherein over 99.9996 percent of products manufactured are free from defects.

## 2. Bringing the Citizen in: Community Integrity Building

Community Integrity Building (CIB) is a collaborative method for local citizens and public officials to jointly work on improving the provision and performance of public services and public infrastructure.

This is achieved by:

- Jointly identifying the governance problems related to public services and infrastructure.
- Proposing practical solutions to redress these problems; and
- Working together to ensure that the solutions are implemented

These are the basic ingredients required to achieve a fix. Community Integrity Building focuses on redressing local community concerns and uses an analysis of integrity challenges such as corruption, a lack of accountability, incompetence and unethical behaviour as the starting point for designing solutions that satisfy local communities. By using this approach local citizens and public officials collaboratively engage in a constructive process. The initial focus will tend to be on those public services and infrastructure projects that local communities consider their highest priorities.

Community Integrity Building must seek to add value through the process of change. A key to how this is achieved is how it contributes to strengthening organisational integrity.

### 2.1. Operationalising Integrity

Integrity is sometimes defined by its opposite, as the absence of corruption. It is also defined by synonymous attributes, like honesty, rectitude, probity and morality. Neither of these approaches is particularly helpful for an operational approach, since they leave us none the wiser about the factors that might enhance

public or organisational integrity. Integrity Action views organisational integrity as the set of characteristics that justify trustworthiness and that generate trust among its stakeholders. Integrity creates the conditions for organisations to intelligently resist corruption and to be more trusted and efficient. Integrity Action has developed an approach that takes organisational integrity to be the alignment of four factors: accountability, competence, ethics and corruption control.

Accountability is both the ability of key stakeholders to check that we do what we say we do, and responsiveness to legitimate internal and external claims. Individuals may have integrity without accountability, but it is an inherent part of the social contract that institutions, especially public ones, are to a greater or lesser degree held accountable, both vertically and horizontally. Without such accountability they may be honest in the sense that they may not be deceiving or cheating, but are in effect acting with impunity. A precondition for effective accountability, in turn, is some level of transparency. Transparency does not have a value in itself; it has value when it improves accountability in meaningful and useful ways.[16]

Competence is the ability to do something well. Without competence an individual or organisation may have good intentions and be honest in the narrow sense of the word, but if an organisation doesn't deliver good infrastructure, healthcare or education, it would not, ultimately, be acting with integrity. Moreover, competence is a contextual norm. A doctor trained and educated in Germany may win accolades for competence in her native country, but might despite her best intentions not perform well in a refugee camp in central Africa - under duress, with limited access to medicines, and under poor sanitary conditions. Competence in one setting does not always translate into competence elsewhere.

We define ethics as behaving with honour and public purpose. Ethical norms are contextual and what constitutes a public purpose or public good will often be disputed, even within a small, seemingly homogenous community. Despite the inherent challenges of defining ethics, the willingness to engage with core values and issues that are in a wider public interest, such as the environment, access to justice, public infrastructure, etc. is inextricably bound with the question of organisational integrity. Without any reference to ethics, integrity can more simply be defined as "the full application of rules and laws"[17] or as "doing what I say I will do."[18] By the standard of this definition a judge who applied laws widely viewed as immoral – for example Apartheid South Africa's Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949), which forbade marriages between white people and people of other races – or a hired assassin who fulfils his contract would

be said to be acting with integrity. If those are acts of integrity then the notion itself becomes hollow.

The final factor whose widespread presence fatally undermines organisational integrity is corruption. Corruption, the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, is one of humanity's more resilient and adaptive phenomena. It will not be eliminated through traditional accountability measures, nor by raising standards of competence or even by having open dialogues or agreeing on a common set of ethical norms. A major lesson of the last twenty years of activism and institution building in the field of anti-corruption is that effective deterrence and enforcement of anti-corruption norms requires a set of dedicated and overt resources and institutional mechanisms, which must, in turn, be complemented by other institutions.

Integrity Action's approach to integrity can be summarised by the following formula, where I stands for organisational integrity, a for alignment, A for accountability, C for competence, E for ethics and c for corruption:

**I = a (A, C, E) - c**

In our approach integrity is not an absolute notion that you either have or totally lack. Such a black or white approach would, yet again, render the notion meaningless since no institution is without some blemish or the occasional rule that requires bending. Engineers have long had a more pragmatic approach to integrity than organisational ethicists. Engineering defines integrity as appropriateness within intended requirements, taking both internal and external factors into account. The structural integrity of a building in Kobe, Japan, which is earthquake prone, will be different to a similar looking structure in Washington, DC, where a major earthquake is forecast to occur only once every 55,000 years.[19] Organisational integrity should, similarly, be considered a feature of institutions that helps them to better respond to internal needs and external demands.

Community Integrity Building is a cycle that can be divided into five phases:
1. Context Sensitivity
2. Joint Learning
3. Evidence Base
4. Constructive Engagement; and
5. Closing the Loop.

We have developed and adapted a diverse set of tools to support each of these phases. The tools, in turn, can be divided into those that are geared principally towards enhancing accountability, competence or ethics, the core elements of our integrity definition.

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[16]Although transparency is a secondary value to accountability, it plays such an important role in this work that it is still entirely fitting to describe the movement Integrity Action and others are part of as the global transparency and accountability movement.

[17]Such a point is also made, for example, by TRS Allan, "Law, Justice and Integrity: The Paradox of Wicked Laws," *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, Vol 29, No, 4, 2009: 705-728.

[18]Tony Simons, The Integrity Dividend: *Leading by the Power of Your Word*, Jossey Bass, San Francisco, 2008.

[19]From the US Geological Survey, cited in Nate Silver, *The Signal and the Noise: Why So Many Predictions Fail* – But Some Don't, Penguin, London, 2012: Loc 2469 (Kindle Edition).

## 2.2. Context Sensitivity

Scoping studies help to assess and identify the community's environment and service delivery problems and to understand the local context. They should be conducted in each of the selected locations for proposed Community Integrity Building to assess and identify the community's environment and service delivery problems, including the role of potential spoilers.[20] The methodologies for scoping studies may include focus group discussions. Facilitators trained by Integrity Action lead discussions to identify different stakeholders' concerns and the local integrity challenges. The focus groups help to identify the locations where the projects could be implemented. The findings from these focus groups are then reviewed and discussed in a meeting with partners and other stakeholders to ensure that priority concerns and the selection of locations match their expectations and capacities. This stage may also include the collection of baseline data, for example through a survey of corruption perceptions or a scorecard for an assessment of local level institutional integrity.

After appropriate local consultations and if a joint decision is taken to proceed, a local level logframe can be developed that is uploaded in a monitoring and evaluation database.[21] The database contains up-to-date information on all aspects of the Community Integrity Building process, including pictures of site visits, training workshops, manuals, major findings and eventually the recommendations and whether they are implemented.

## 2.3. Joint Learning

During this phase we train trainers, working with them to adapt a variety of learning and monitoring tools to the local context. Relying as much as possible on local trainers, who might come from NGOs, universities or local civil service training institutions, we also provide training to the local community. The representatives of the local community can be elected or chosen through a consensual local approach, for example through community meetings. Some of them may also be retired school teachers or even school-age youth. During this training, community members who show a strong interest and some leadership will be among those asked to form Joint Working Groups, which bring together representatives from the public sector and civil society, on a voluntary basis. A Memorandum of Understanding may be signed to hold the participant organisations, rather than individuals, accountable and ensure the resolution of problems.

### Box 2
### Case Study of a 'Failure'

Maji Matone was a monitoring effort that sought to gather SMS reporting to identify and repair some of the estimated 46 percent of water points in rural Tanzania that do not work (around 30,000 in total). The initiative was widely publicised at the launch of the Open Government Partnership. Daraja, a local NGO, published a mobile phone number where people in rural Tanzania could send information via SMS on broken down waterpoints. The campaign was heavily promoted through leaflets, posters, and local radio. SMS's were directly forwarded to the mobile phone of the relevant District Water Engineer and Daraja established partnerships with local radio stations to follow up on the District Water Engineer's response. After six months of campaigning only 53 usable text messages had been received. They had aimed for 3,000 messages. When messages were received they were able to achieve some 'fixes', but they fell very short of the ambitions set for the project. Among the lessons Daraja draws from this experience are that a new technology is not a magic bullet, and that accountability is ultimately political, not administrative. [From "Why did Maji Matone Fail?", Daraja.org, October 2012]



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[20]This paper does not contain a section on dealing with or pre-empting spoilers. But addressing this issue is part of Integrity Action's current ongoing research that will be published later in 2013.

[21]An example is found here: http://ppi-mande.integrityaction.org/

The public sector participants do not necessarily need to be senior. Their level of commitment and at least the tacit approval from their superiors are the two most important success factors. If public service charters and codes of conduct or ethics already exist they can be useful guiding documents for the Joint Working Groups. Where they do not exist the Joint Working Groups will eventually advocate for them.

## 2.4. Evidence Base

In the scoping and joint learning phases, focus groups with a range of community members are excellent ways of identifying issues and prioritizing concerns. In Afghanistan, for example, the highest priority as identified by community members was to monitor the state of newly built schools. Road infrastructure was a close second. In the West Bank City of Nablus the major concern was solid waste management; in Hebron it was access to water.

In this phase hard evidence is needed to produce the leverage that will eventually lead to a fix. Once general priorities – like water and sanitation – have been identified, Community Monitors are trained to gather evidence on three dimensions of a public service or infrastructure:



a) Access to information: For infrastructure projects monitors try to access information from five project documents - the feasibility study, project plans, contract, budget, and bill of quantity. These documents are often not publicly available but community monitors and members of JWG's sometimes use creative methods and informal networks to access them.

b) Community engagement: Was the community engaged in the project design or implementation, or both?

c) Project effectiveness: Are problems identified and resolved? Is the community satisfied with the project? When the monitors are in doubt, for example about the quality of the materials used in a construction project they can sometimes call on the assistance of building engineers who may be retained as semi-voluntary advisors for the monitoring of public infrastructure projects.

Community monitors work constructively with service providers, contractors and local authorities to obtain access to project documents, such as budgets and contracts; they also survey affected communities and photograph project delivery.

Starting in 2012, the data and photos gathered by our monitors was uploaded onto the developmentcheck.org website. This pioneering online monitoring platform ensures that the voice of people is heard and that such views can be gathered on a proactive, representative and statistically significant basis. Most online tools are reactive, relying on voluntary participation. As such, they are self-selecting and prone to social biases. The people most likely to use such tools will be in their 20s and 30s, male and educated. This was one of the problems of Maji Matone (see Box 2), an initiative in Tanzania to gather SMS reports from citizens on failed water points.

DevelopmentCheck relies on trained community monitors and an approved sampling method to ensure that a representative sample of the population is heard. Because it relies mostly on volunteers the cost of collecting the data is low. It is currently being used in nine countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East and will shortly be expanded to other countries. It uses International Aid Transparency Initiative norms of reporting making it compatible with aid transparency databases; it's also one of the only tools that provides real-time citizen feedback on aid project delivery and implementation. DevelopmentCheck can be augmented by other methods, including public hearings, SMS feedback, Facebook, Twitter and call-ins on community radio or TV programmes.

## 2.5. Constructive Engagement

During this phase the stakeholders meet and discuss the evidence from the community monitoring and they propose possible solutions – fixes – to the problems they have identified. In several countries we have tested the use of paralegal advisors in this phase and found it to be very useful.

During the constructive engagement phase some needs may seem obvious: "a poorly built school must be rebuilt"; "a partly built dispensary must be finished"; or "a new road that does not comply with the contracted specifications for width or quality of materials should be rebuilt." But the means of obtaining this redress may not be self-evident, especially if the community suspects that corruption, fraud and/or complicity from public officials were involved.

The Joint Working Groups lead the process of gathering inputs and suggestions for how to redress the problems that have been identified by the monitors. Public hearings may sometimes help in this process although we have tended to avoid them in fragile and volatile countries. In these settings a closed hearing with key stakeholders has yielded better results. Starting shortly, the Joint Working Groups will have access to an online Integrity Helpdesk that more than one hundred international experts from forty countries have agreed to contribute to. The paralegal advisors of the Joint Working Groups, where we have used them, are an important source of support and advice at this stage. They are paid a modest fee for their services. Integrity Watch Afghanistan has forged trusted ties to major donors and senior government officials, who are able at times to exert the pressure that is needed to obtain a fix.

## 2.6. Closing the Loop

The final phase is the closing of the loop when the solutions put forward by the Joint Working Groups are actually implemented. Closing the loop is when a feedback mechanism is integrated into a process so that it triggers an intelligent response. An automated sprinkler that waters a lawn every morning at 6:00 am is an open loop. But if the sprinkler includes a sensor that measures the humidity in the soil, for example from the rainfall of the previous evening, and can therefore autonomously remain switched off that morning if additional water is not needed that would constitute a closed loop. An even more intelligent sensor would measure humidity levels and provide just the right amount of water required for the grass.

Another example is the difference between the first generation of GPS-based car navigation systems compared with smartphone-enabled applications, like Waze, which collect live data from thousands of drivers and can therefore detect traffic jams in real time, advise a driver to take an alternate route to work, or provide a more accurate estimate of the time of arrival than an open loop navigation system. A closed loop system like Waze is more useful to drivers and therefore ultimately also a better business proposition. All the most famous websites are predicated on integrating closed loop feedback mechanisms.

In the transparency and accountability field a complaints system that does not trigger a reliable or systematic response is an open loop. The Indian NGO Janaagraha, based in India's IT centre, Bangalore, created an innovative website some years ago called ipaidabribe. org. Through this site any citizen can report an extortion demand or bribe payment, giving details on the amount paid and the context in which it happened. Thousands of users from 500 Indian cities have self-reported such acts over the years. This is a remarkable tally and it gives far better insights into the types of extortion demands Indians face every daily than an opinion survey or a corruption index ever could. But it remains an open loop: to avoid libel risks the public official making the bribe demand is not named and the person making the report also remains anonymous. A stream of negative stories may embarrass government officials, but corrective action is rarely undertaken as a result of the reports. The fix-rate in other words is very low.

FixMyStreet.com in the UK, as the name of the site indicates, enables citizens to self-report local level problems like "graffiti, fly tipping [illegal waste dumping], broken paving slabs or broken street lights." The site has what could be characterised as both a closed and an open loop option: the website sends these reports, usually accompanied by a picture, directly to the local council to the person or persons in charge of addressing these problems. This is an open loop, but so targeted that it often leads to fixes. They also have a second option – a closed loop - wherein the organisation behind FixMyStreet.com, MySociety, signs a contract with a city council so that the latter publishes fixes on the homepage of the city council's webpage, and actively encourages its residents to report problems. 30 British city councils have signed such agreements so far.

A high fix-rate in the transparency and accountability field can only be achieved by closing the loop. In the UK, infrastructure and services generally function so a city council may be quite pleased to get reports of this kind from their residents. FixMyStreet.com saves a city the time and effort needed to identify problems proactively. In a country where public services generally work one should expect the fix-rate for such problems to be high with or without the website. But not in a country where potholes are omnipresent, street lighting is sometimes non-existent, illegal waste dumping is commonplace – and thousands of people experience bribe requests daily – a reporting system will not close the loop on its own.

If the Community Integrity Building fails to implement a solution to the satisfaction of the main stakeholders a fix hasn't been achieved. Yet an 'intelligent response' may nonetheless be prompted, which may, for example, escalate the problem to involve the provincial government, a paralegal advisor from the capital or Integrity Action. Community Integrity Building is therefore an iterative process and the closing of the loop is not synonymous with achieving a fix on the first try.

Activities that can support the closing of the loop include:

1. Putting forward smart, locally sensitive policy recommendations.

2. Engaging potential spoilers or pre-empting the actions they can take where possible.

3. Making it clear that fixes are a joint achievement and not the credit of civil society, or an NGO, but a genuine collaboration between public officials and local citizens.

4. Close working ties to key public institutions and selected senior government officials.

5. Sharing and disseminating best practices, for example through local media, public hearings and social media.

6. Public hearings inviting all stakeholders, peer organisations, civil society and the media to present the main successes, challenges and lessons learnt.

Figure 1 illustrates the five phases of the Community Integrity Building cycle and the use of tools and interventions that are oriented towards enhancing accountability, competence and ethics.

The timeframe required to close the loop varies significantly and averages are not a useful guide. While some problems can be fixed within a matter of weeks, other problems persist and Joint Working Groups are still trying to implement solutions to problems two years after they were proposed. The solutions tend to be low-cost and some of them are very innovative.

**Figure 1: Five Phases of Integrity Action's Community Integrity Building Approach:**
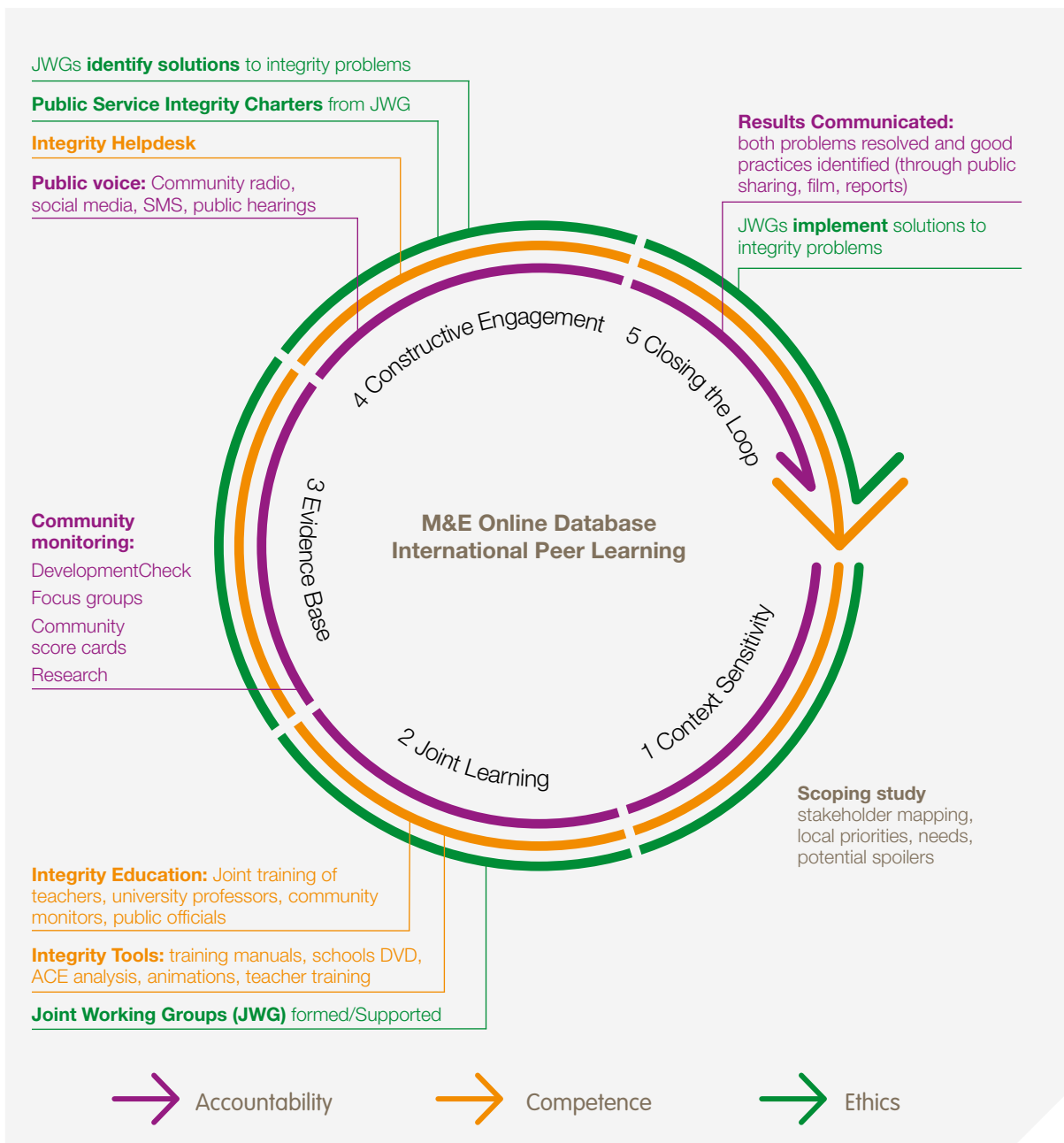
## 2.7. Designing out Corruption?

In the Community Integrity Building cycle there isn't a circle for corruption or corruption control and yet it is part of the integrity formula. Why is it missing? If there is significant corruption in public works or services, the monitoring tools deployed by the community monitors and the Joint Working Groups will uncover what will amount to strong circumstantial evidence of corruption, mismanagement and fraud. Community Integrity Building is not an anti-corruption drive, however. The first priority of this work is to fix and resolve problems that affect local communities.

Pursuing or denouncing specific cases of corruption is not an effective objective for local communities. The pursuit of incidental corruption cases is ultimately a state responsibility or at best something the media should take up. On a case-by-case basis, community monitors or Joint Working Groups may decide to alert the appropriate authorities and/or the principal donor of a project of the evidence they have uncovered so that these bodies can take the necessary and appropriate steps. Moreover, the data collected on DevelopmentCheck is open, and therefore accessible to senior decision makers and enforcement agencies. If there is a prima facie case for an investigation it will be possible for these public authorities to pursue this further without implicating members of the community as whistle-blowers.

The Joint Working Groups communicate a consistent message that their primary objective is problem solving, not retribution or justice. But they have sufficient evidence to make their case with other external or higher levels of authority if needed. The reason corruption remains part of the integrity formula and a tacit element of the Community Integrity Building approach is that uncovering even circumstantial evidence of corruption and mismanagement gives the monitors and Joint Working Groups leverage, which is beneficial when it comes to closing the loop.

# 3. What's Innovative About Community Integrity Building?

The Community Integrity Building (CIB) approach is significantly different from other approaches to transparency and accountability for a number of reasons.

## 3.1. What CIB does not do

CIB is not an anti-corruption initiative. If it were motivated in the first instance by the goal of deterring corruption it would use the evidence gathered by the community monitors to bring cases of wrongdoing to justice or at least to the media's attention. Furthermore, it would need to draw a line between administrative incompetence, on the one hand, and corruption or fraud on the other hand. While the latter is a criminal offence, the former is far more difficult to pursue but often causes just as much damage. Finally, an anti-corruption drive based on direct, 'smoking gun' evidence of wrongdoing is incompatible with collaborative, constructive engagement with public authorities. It may work once or twice but it is not an approach that can be scaled up or repeated. Government officials will get wise to the risks and will ensure that the work is undermined before it starts.

CIB does not limit itself to identifying wrongdoing or discrepancies between plans, pledges, budgets or public commitments with actual delivery, and thereby make public office holders more accountable for their actions. Only the evidence-gathering phase in the CIB process is purely oriented toward accountability. CIB recognises that a purely accountability based approach, which may work in an advanced industrialised country, is less likely to succeed in settings where malpractices are widespread and where the levers of external accountability are often fleeting.

CIB is not an approach based on naming and shaming, nor is it an approach that is driven by an information and communications technology (ICT) solution. ICT is a precious ingredient in the CIB process (ref. DevelopmentCheck), but we recognise that people and institutions close the loop. The technology merely supports the process.

Community Integrity Building does not require prior consent to be initiated or for it to ultimate be effective. Thus it distinguishes itself from traditional participatory approaches in that, while it may appear to be similar to participatory development or participatory budgeting, there is one important distinction: participatory budgeting and participatory planning require a priori enlightened leadership from public authorities. If a mayor is uninterested in calling for a public consultation or in engaging the citizens of his city in budget decisions, it will not happen. A mayor could in theory also stack the deck by limiting participation to residents of a similar political persuasion.
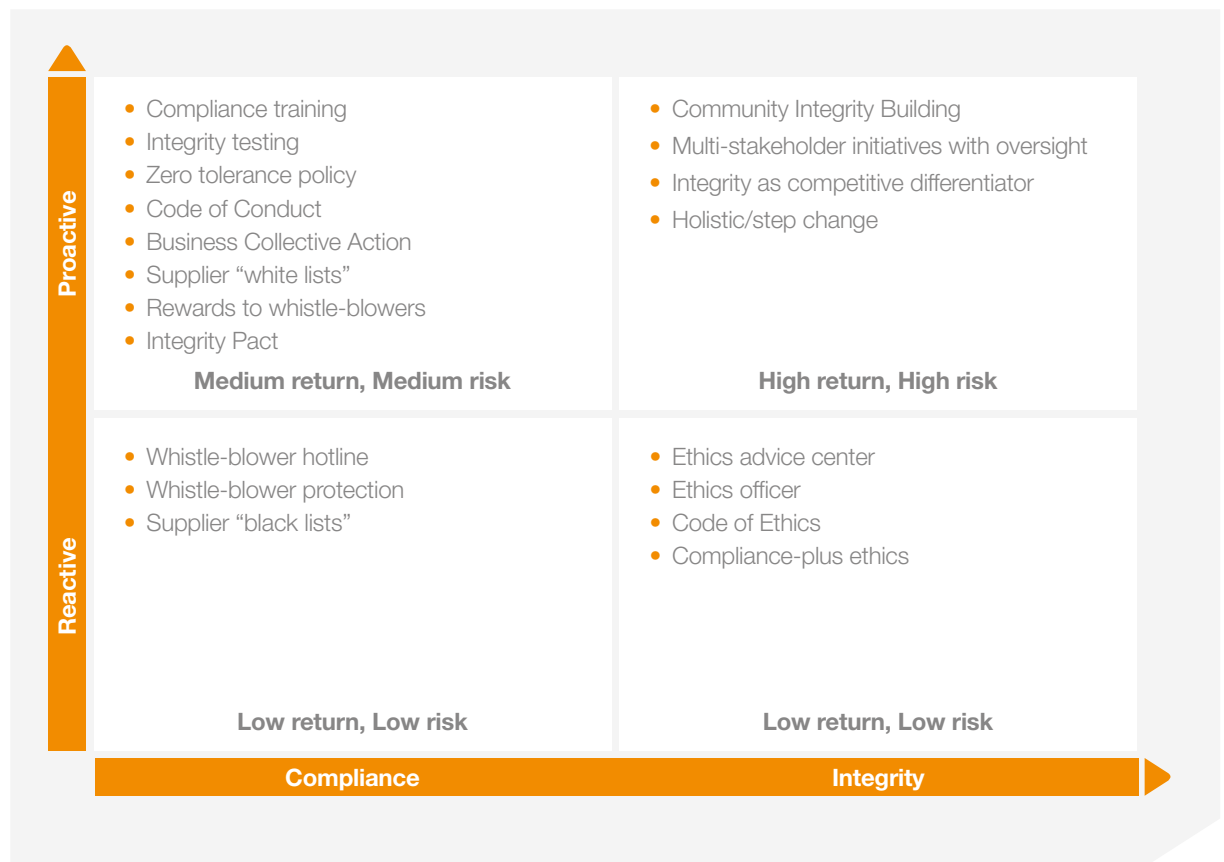


## 3.2. What CIB does do

CIB is a collaborative approach that citizens can start on their own initiative. In other words, it is a proactive approach that arises from the citizens; they begin, develop and own the approach. Governments and implementing agencies (like the UN or a big NGO that is a service provider) can also take the initiative for CIB, but the approach does not make it ultimately reliant on them.

Figure 2 illustrates what distinguishes a proactive approach based on integrity from approaches that are compliance driven or more reactive. The vast majority of multinational enterprises currently invest in a mix of reactive/compliance and what we would call reactive/integrity. Some businesses also invest in proactive/compliance, but proactive/integrity remains a poorly articulated aspiration for most companies and organisations. Figure 2 also suggests that there are different levels of risk and return for each of these approaches. While reactive strategies are generally low risk they also produce low returns. The proactive strategies for compliance are medium risk and generate

Figure 2: Integrity versus Compliance

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Proactive** | • Compliance training<br>• Integrity testing<br>• Zero tolerance policy<br>• Code of Conduct<br>• Business Collective Action<br>• Supplier "white lists"<br>• Rewards to whistle-blowers<br>• Integrity Pact<br><br>**Medium return, Medium risk** | • Community Integrity Building<br>• Multi-stakeholder initiatives with oversight<br>• Integrity as competitive differentiator<br>• Holistic/step change<br><br><br><br><br><br>**High return, High risk** |
| **Reactive** | • Whistle-blower hotline<br>• Whistle-blower protection<br>• Supplier "black lists"<br><br><br><br>**Low return, Low risk** | • Ethics advice center<br>• Ethics officer<br>• Code of Ethics<br>• Compliance-plus ethics<br><br><br>**Low return, Low risk** |
| | **Compliance** | **Integrity** |

medium returns. The proactive integrity strategy is high risk – at least in the beginning - but it also produces the highest return. Ultimately, the biggest return would come from a comprehensive "Integrity and Compliance" strategy of a business, organisation or government agency that implements action plans in all four categories. Although it may seem counterintuitive our evidence suggests that the fastest route to a comprehensive strategy might be to start in the upper right-hand quadrant, with a proactive integrity approach and work backwards to incorporate the other three.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the CIB approach is also linked to the question of legitimacy. Governments derive legitimacy when they are democratically elected or in the case of the seemingly popular rulers of some Gulf States or China, when a large majority of citizens give their consent to this form of unelected government. Two of the three pillars of accountability in liberal democratic states – the judiciary and the media - are unelected but they derive legitimacy from traditions developed over numerous generations.[22]

In Community Integrity Building the legitimacy derives from four key components:

• First from the means by which the community chooses monitors and members of Joint Working Groups. The most effective monitors are those who are chosen by democratic or consensual means directly from their community.

• Second, because they are all volunteers. If the participants in the process were paid an allowance or per diem their motives could be questioned.

• Third, the ability to bring citizen representatives together with public officials is recognised as an accomplishment in itself in many places.

• Fourth, CIB work is most effective when it is undertaken in response to local needs and priorities. People are more likely to be mobilised and be willing to volunteer when they are addressing issues that are important to them, like schools, roads, water, electricity, sanitation and health services. These are the problems for which they are more likely to come up with innovative solutions.

[22]The election of judges in the USA is a rare exception.

While external actors – a national NGO or Integrity Action - have a role in the beginning of the process, this role decreases the closer the process comes to the closing of the loop. By the time the process reaches the final stages it is almost entirely locally driven and owned. Local communities and stakeholders are the key to producing the alignment that is part of the organisational integrity "formula". When there are setbacks, or spoilers in the system fight back, and fixes are not achieved, external support can be welcome and helpful.

Community Integrity Building can also produce positive externalities. We have numerous examples of projects and integrity initiatives that have been started by trained community monitors without any external support or intervention from our NGO partners or Integrity Action. In several locations, for example, communities have fixed, repaired or started health clinics, nurseries and schools

and subsequently put forward 'integrity plans' to convince public bodies to fund the staffing needs and running costs of these facilities. Self-financing of CIB (as opposed to donor or grant funded work) is being considered in at least two countries as a result of local-level initiatives. In several locations in Palestine and Kenya, local communities were emboldened by their experience and have registered or started the process of registering themselves as Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in order to have a formal working relationship with the state.[23] Another positive effect is that several community monitors and members of Joint Working Groups entered into politics for the first time after their positive experience with Community Integrity Building. In the West Bank one community monitors was elected to a seat on the city council of Nablus in the local government elections of 2012. In another country, an activist became Deputy Minister of Social Affairs and another became deputy mayor.



[23]Our partners in Kyrgyzstan were already well established CBOs.

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## Conclusion

Community Integrity Building requires three things at a minimum: capacity building to introduce the concept of an integrity lens, the formation of Joint Working Groups (or their strengthening where similar arrangements already exist) and the evidence base against which solutions are measured and the leverage for change is created.



In a functioning state or in a high trust setting, a reporting mechanism like FixMyStreet.com may be sufficient to generate a fix. But where state capacities are low and trust is weak, an investment in an approach like Community Integrity Building may be required.

While Community Integrity Building as a method is still undergoing refinement and continual testing, going forward, it has reached a point where, over the course of the coming years, it should be tested in five different ways:

First, can CIB be conducted at a national scale or at a scale that really impacts on some key national priorities? Of the six countries where the method has been applied Afghanistan has by far been the most successful in terms of the numbers of projects covered. But even in this case, the scale is not yet national. Very large countries, countries with violent internal conflicts, and countries with particularly challenging geographies (like Indonesia with its thousands of islands, or Pakistan with its topography), evidently pose special challenges and one should be inherently cautious about scaling up a new methodology too rapidly in such complex settings.

One option might be to do Community Integrity Building as a for-profit business, which may be better equipped and managed to reach scale faster than an NGO. The risk, however, is that a profit motive might clash with the involvement of volunteer community monitors and the public spirit of Joint Working Groups. Another option, which we have tested successfully in Palestine, is to engage teenagers as volunteer community monitors as part of their civics lessons. We are also exploring whether such a model could be extended to undergraduate university students. The involvement of numerous youth volunteers through schools and universities would help to put feet on the ground to scale up community monitoring. It would also inject a real-life, constructive experience for youth for them to contribute to improving integrity in public services. In Kyrgyzstan case studies from Community Integrity Building – for example the Naryn garbage disposal case – are taught at the National Academy of Management to public officials. Exposing officials to such experiences can also contribute to scale up the work if it is emulated elsewhere.

Second, can CIB be used to successfully improve public service delivery? It has been more successful with public infrastructure than with basic public services. The latter involve more stakeholders and do not have the well-defined start and end-point of a new road, school or irrigation system. In infrastructure delivery a contractor can be held liable; in public services, it is the government that must be held accountable. Moreover, infrastructure is visible and tangible, whereas a service like social protection, primary education and basic healthcare is more abstract. The fix-rate for public services in fragile and developing countries remains low. We are confident that the methodology can be improved to be implemented more consistently, and thereby achieve a higher fix-rate. But the intangible, long-running nature of public services will always make it more challenging.

Third, the CIB method has largely focused until now on the 'last mile' of infrastructure and public service delivery, but what about the budgets that were allocated for infrastructure that was never built? What about budgets for services that were never rendered or policies that were only half implemented? The only way to find out about phantom infrastructure and services is to get access to budgets and plans at a higher level and to follow both the money and the decisions. In Afghanistan, Palestine, and Timor Leste, our partners are already involved in national and provincial-level oversight and monitoring of budgets. But the combination of CIB and budget monitoring – at least in our own work – is still in its early days. Tackling a problem upstream could affect more people, but we

would still argue based on our experience that one should never lose sight of the importance of citizen feedback and monitoring in the 'last mile'. This will always remain the final litmus test and critical to closing the loop on any problems. For budget monitoring work more generally, reporting on the fix-rate would demonstrate a clear focus on outcomes and a commitment to closing the loop.

Fourth, in addition to producing a high short-term fix-rate are the solutions put forward by Joint Working Groups sustainable? A single fix - like the cure of an illness - is no guarantee that the same problem will not recur sometime in the future, or that other problems might not replace them. Are the Joint Working Groups able to renew themselves over time without extensive external support in order to provide support to further community monitoring? An integral part of that question is whether there are any innovative funding models that can ensure that the few resources this approach requires can be accessed over time.

Fifth, could Community Integrity Building be managed and facilitated at the initiative of an enlightened provincial government, municipality or line ministry, like a Ministry of Health or Education? Or could a major development service provider, like the World Bank, the World Health Organisation or UNDP, implement it by setting aside 1 percent of a project's budget for Community Integrity Building to improve the integrity of its service delivery? We think this well worth testing and that it could be a step in the right direction for a proactive, integrity-based strategy for organisations.

Numbers have the power to simplify and communicate to a wide audience what may otherwise be a poorly understood or daunting set of problems. In some cases the key metric describes a problem. In other cases, it is the measure of an innovation. The use of the fix-rate as a key metric for the transparency and accountability field may have the power over the coming years to drive policy and innovation in our field. The five sets of questions outlined above could be the basis for an international Community Integrity Building reform agenda for the years to come. They would require some investment as well as third party validation of the findings for this method to enter the mainstream. If a high fix-rate is a mark of excellence it is also a benchmark and it may be the basis for a goal or aspiration. The transparency and accountability field is starting to contribute to the notion that people at different levels of government can contribute to fixing the problems they encounter - and that they can do even better if they are willing to let external stakeholders help them.

**INTEGRITY ACTION**

Integrity Action is an organisation and an active network of committed NGOs, universities and policy makers, working closely with governments, media organisations, businesses and our peers to identify ways of making integrity work in some of the world's challenging settings.

Integrity Action believes that integrity offers the single largest opportunity for the advancement of equitable and sustainable development worldwide. We view organisational integrity as the set of characteristics that justify trustworthiness and that generate trust among its stakeholders. Without integrity, measures to safeguard human rights, protect the environment, strengthen democracy, promote social equity and reduce poverty are compromised. In the absence of integrity, the corrupt flourish.

**Fredrik Galtung is the Chief Executive of Integrity Action**

## How Integrity Action can Help You

If you are interested to explore how to implement Community Integrity Building in your country or in implementing a governance reform programme that uses the fix-rate as a key metric we will be happy to see how we might be able to assist you.

Integrity Action can support the integration of Community Integrity Building into existing programmes by:

1. Providing leadership training and advisory work to support a shift from a compliance-based programme to a proactive integrity strategy built on Community Integrity Building. We can also work with stakeholders to establish consensus around the key fix-rates.

2. Training on the use of DevelopmentCheck and adapt it to use in a local context so that fix-rates are published online.

3. Providing access to the Integrity Action Helpdesk to connect global expertise to local-level integrity builders.

4. Conducting independent validation through spot-checks that validate the integrity of the data as well as the integrity of the approach.

Where programmes don't already exist, Integrity Action would start by conducting due diligence of prospective partners, training and support and potentially providing re-granting where needed.

## How You can Help Integrity Action

- If you are a donor, help us to expand Community Integrity Building and our provision of training resources, monitoring tools and peer-to-peer support and learning among organisations in this field.

- If you are an expert in any of the sub-fields related to Community Integrity Building (organisational integrity, anti-corruption, budgeting, engineering, construction, contracts, etc.) volunteer your time as part of the Integrity Helpdesk.

- If you are an academic or field practitioner and you think that you can help to develop training resources or provide training of trainers.

- If you are a policy maker or business leader and you can help to make the case for a proactive integrity approach in your organisation, country or sector.

- If you are a donor, help us to deepen and expand our Integrity Education Network so that we can engage thousands of young people as community monitors and introduce them to ways in which they can improve integrity in their professions, workplace and their societies.

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