

National Integrity System background rationale and methodology

Background and rationale

It has become recognised that corruption is rarely an isolated phenomenon found only within a specific institution, sector or group of actors. Rather, it is usually of a systemic nature, and therefore fighting it also requires a holistic and systemic strategy. In turn, a successful anti-corruption strategy is premised on the involvement of multiple stakeholders, including government, civil society, and other governance actors, since it requires both, supply-side political will as well as demand-side civic pressure for greater transparency and accountability. Here, Transparency International's NIS assessment tool, which combines evidence-based advocacy with a participatory multi-stakeholder approach, presents a unique contribution to the field.

The NIS assessment approach is targeted towards country-level civil society organisations, which work in the field of anti-corruption and good governance. It can be a relevant tool in a variety of contexts and for a wide range of purposes, such as:

Advocacy and Policy Reform: The most common ultimate aim of conducting an NIS assessment is to gather evidence which can be used for specific advocacy and policy reform initiatives. NIS findings point to specific weaknesses in the integrity system, and thereby assist in prioritizing advocacy and policy interventions. They also offer important positive lessons for policy reform by highlighting best practices. In order to ensure an effective link between assessment and policy reform, the NIS assessment embraces a participatory approach, providing opportunities for stakeholder input and engagement throughout the project.

Monitoring and Comparing: The information generated by the NIS assessment provides benchmarks for measuring further developments in-country and a basis for comparison among the NIS components. A look at the NIS indicators provides a quick indication of which areas possess high integrity and which are lagging behind. Comparing weak to strong areas will help generate competition for improvement and will provide incentives for positive change. If undertaken iteratively over time, the NIS assessment can be used as a monitoring tool to evaluate overall progress or regress of the entire integrity system as well as individual institutions, thereby offering useful information for advocacy efforts.

Planning: Due to its holistic and comprehensive nature, the NIS can serve as a useful planning tool for future work of an organisation. It detects priority areas for reform, cross-cutting problems, as well as helps to identify potential partners.

Building Coalitions: Due to its focus on wide consultation and debate, the NIS assessment can help a National Chapter to build its public profile and identify potential partners for advocacy campaigns and other follow-up activities.

Guide to More Specific Research: The NIS assessment provides a comprehensive overview of the functioning of the main governance institutions in a country. It is particularly useful to obtain a first holistic picture of the entire governance system, rather than an in-depth treatment of a specific institution. However, if a certain institution emerges as being particularly problematic in terms of its role in the integrity system, further, more detailed research work on this institution might be indicated.

NIS country assessments are unique in the anti-corruption field, with more than 70 such studies conducted since 2001 – many of which have contributed to civic advocacy campaigns, policy reform initiatives, and the overall awareness of the country's governance deficits. In 2008, a number of refinements and revisions in the NIS assessment approach

have been undertaken, which promise to make the tool even more relevant for independent governance and anti-corruption advocacy and reform initiatives. To find out more about the ongoing NIS assessments, contact Transparency International at nis@transparency.org.

Methodology and approach

The NIS assessments offer a comprehensive evaluation of the integrity system in a given country. They are conducted by local in-country organisations, generally TI national chapters.

At the outset of the project, the lead organisation defines a brief project purpose statement, which guides its planning and the overall implementation of the project. The organisation sets up an advisory group which provides guidance on the NIS assessment. It also works with an individual researcher (or a group of researchers), who is an expert on political-institutional analysis and transparency, accountability and integrity issues, in carrying out the NIS assessment. The researcher is responsible for collecting the data, scoring the indicators and drafting the NIS report.

The research exercise focuses on an evaluation of the key public institutions and non-state actors in a country's governance system with regard to (1) their overall capacity, (2), their internal governance systems and procedures, and (3) their role in the overall integrity system. These institutions are:

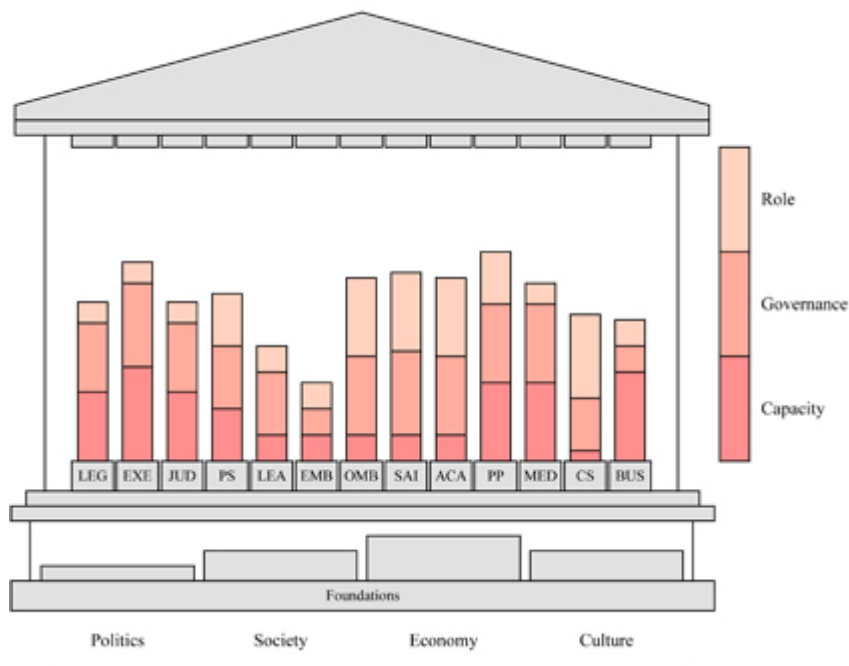
- Legislature
- Executive
- Judiciary
- Public Sector
- Law Enforcement Agencies
- Electoral Management Bodies
- Ombudsman
- Supreme Audit Institution
- Anti-corruption agencies
- Political Parties
- Media
- Civil Society
- Business

The assessment examines both the formal framework of each institution, as well as the actual institutional practice, highlighting discrepancies between the formal provisions and reality on the ground. This in-depth investigation of the relevant governance institutions is embedded in a concise context analysis of the overall political, socio-economic and socio-cultural conditions in which these governance institutions operate.

A thorough review of laws, policies and existing research studies constitutes the main data source for the assessment for the formal framework and the context analysis. To collect information on the practice of the relevant institutions, a number of key informant interviews are conducted with knowledgeable persons from the public sector, civil society, academia and other sectors. In addition, wherever feasible, field tests are conducted. This data is used by the researcher to score the NIS indicators, which provide a quick quantitative summary of the qualitative information assembled in the NIS report.

The overall results of the NIS assessment can be presented in summary form via the 'NIS temple', as shown in the example below. The temple is made up of the NIS pillars, which are composed of their composite scores for the dimensions of capacity, governance and role within the system.

National Integrity System



LEG.	Legislature	SAI.	Supreme Audit Institution
EXE.	Executive	ACA.	Anti Corruption Agencies
JUD.	Judiciary	PP.	Political Parties
PS.	Public Sector	MED.	Media
LEA.	Law Enforcement Agencies	CS.	Civil Society
EMB.	Electoral Management Body	BUS.	Business
OMB.	Ombudsman		

The draft NIS report and scores form the basis for a consultative National Integrity Workshop convened by the national chapter to discuss and validate the NIS findings, and, most importantly, to identify recommendations and priority actions for policy and advocacy activities. Participants include anti-corruption and governance experts drawn from government (including donors, where relevant), the private sector, the professions (e.g. lawyers, accountants), media and civil society.

The outcomes of the consultative workshop are added to the draft NIS report, which is then published by the national chapter as well as TI-S as a NIS country report. Most importantly, the outcomes of the consultative workshop are used to inform advocacy activities by the TI national chapter as well as other anti-corruption stakeholders in the country.

An [assessment toolkit](#) has been developed, which introduces the National Integrity System (NIS) concept and approach and provides users with the necessary information and tools to conduct a NIS assessment. An [annex](#) to the toolkit contains the indicators for the NIS pillars.

Please contact Transparency International at nis@transparency.org for further information.