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The role of civil society and business community towards developing comprehensive and effective anticorruption approaches

It is common knowledge that tackling corruption is a complex task that requires a sustained approach and time. This is true for corruption in all kinds of organisations and sectors: private sector and public sector organisations alike. It is, however, not a helpful statement at all for organisations that want to change and improve. Because it does not tell them anything about what they could and should be doing; indeed, it tempts people to ignore the problem.

[Transparency International UK's Defence and Security team](#) has worked with the private and public sector on building integrity and tackling corruption risks in defence and security since 2004. We are working with armed forces and Ministries who share our belief that reducing corruption and increasing transparency in defence and security organisations is necessary and desirable. More and more governments and defence companies are acknowledging the problem of corruption and its consequence: [wasted money, sub-standard equipment, reduced trust from citizens, and low morale in the forces and ministries](#).

Reducing corruption risks is particularly important in defence and security for two reasons: First, because defence and security often have a disproportionate importance in governmental frameworks in post-conflict/failing state situations. But it can also have a disproportionately positive effect: when the defence and security sectors can be persuaded to set an example, other sectors often follow. And if civil society can be empowered to take a meaningful role in defence and security that can be disproportionately helpful too. Second, because reform in these areas is important in meeting the criteria for e.g. EU and NATO membership. Building integrity in this sector thus helps in promoting the integration of countries into the community of nations.

What we like to stress in our work is that corruption is a systemic, an organisational, issue: it is not primarily about the misconduct of General X or Official Y. Corruption is built into a system, into processes, and this is where change needs to start. Tackling corruption risk starts and ends with people in the organisation changing the organisation little by little, every day, in lots of little steps.

What then makes an organisation successful, or indeed unsuccessful, in tackling corruption risks? Three actions can help organisations initiate progress to tackle corruption risks:

- 1) Making the subject *discussable* at senior levels
- 2) Training a cadre of change agents within the Ministry
- 3) Measuring and monitoring

Making the subject discussable

In our work with the military, we generally find that officers are very well aware that corruption is wrong. They know this from their values and training, *and* because it risks the safety of the troops in

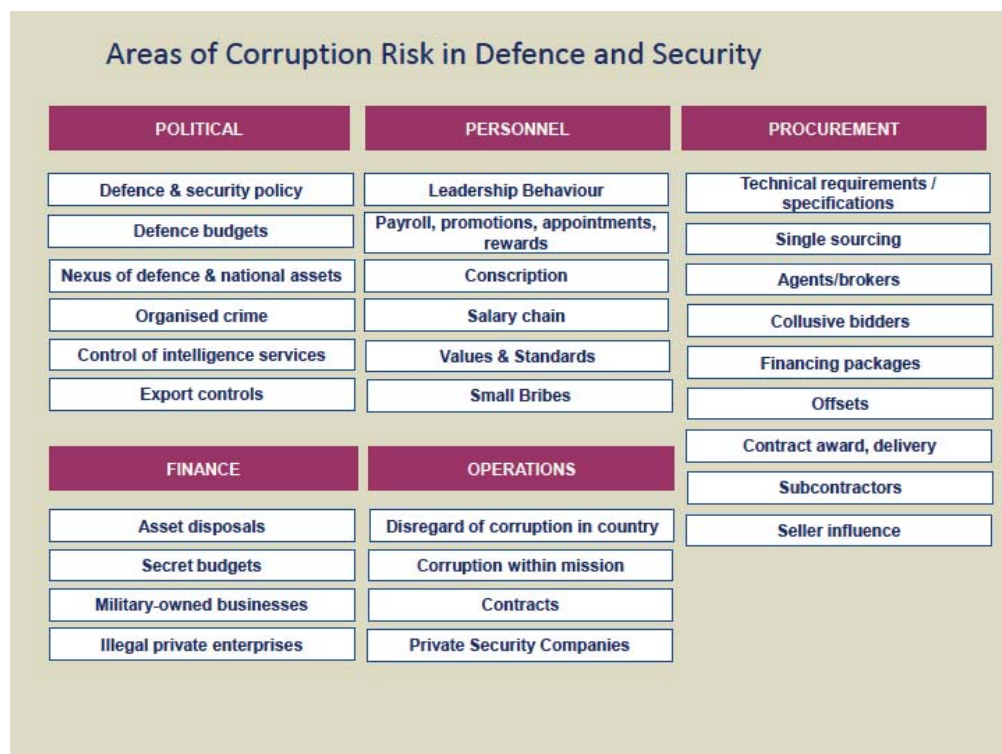
their charge. We find this to be true all the way from ‘clean’ societies through to those with very high levels of corruption. Officers easily recognise that corruption is both a systemic issue and one that is morally and professionally wrong. People recognize corruption when they see it. Where organisations differ significantly is whether they are ready to acknowledge problems in public or whether it is just behind closed doors.

The first step in successfully reducing corruption risks is through making corruption discussable at leadership level. We have found across numerous countries that the subject is just not at all on the leadership agenda. People consider it too sensitive, or too big, or worry that a discussion will lead quickly to personal attacks. This is a wrong perception. Corruption is a systemic issue and so must be tackled like any other similar issue – through prevention, changes to systems, and training. Focusing on the systemic aspect and not on the personal aspect is the key to making it discussion. We have helped defence leadership in several countries to have such discussions in day-long workshops.

We find in our sector that breaking ‘corruption’ down into its shapes and forms helps. We have developed a [typology of defence and security corruption](#) (see picture 1 below), and are working on a similar one for police corruption, that show what defence corruption is: anything from non-transparent [defence budgets](#) to corruption in [single source procurement](#) and corrupt [salary chains](#). Breaking the subject down helps to make it more discussable. It also gives people the confidence that they can actually DO something about it: a procurement officer can help identify identify intransparent procedures. A minister, parliamentarian or civil society organisation can stand up for more transparent defence budgets. A General can initiate better salary chains.

Picture 1:

Transparency International UK Defence and Security Programme ‘Typology of defence and security corruption risks’



Training a cadre of change agents

A combination of strong political will, a clear anti-corruption message from the leadership, and enthusiastic 'change agents', in combination with a sectoral anti-corruption approach are an ideal basis for sustainable reduction of corruption risks.

Life is rarely so ideal though. In particular, political will to tackle corruption comes and goes. Our work is therefore tailored to making progress even where political will is not especially strong.

Whilst compliance with the law is a requirement, the motivation to effect change comes from this normative behaviour to build a better society. This is important: anti-corruption reform requires what the private sector calls 'tone from the top': leaders that are committed to the cause, and keep driving change. This is true for the top leadership of an organisation, but almost more important at the level below. Even the most determined and enthusiastic leader will not be successful if he does not identify people in his organisation – at all levels – that are as determined and enthusiastic as he/she is. From our experience, most officers and defence officials will actively support systemic ways to address the problem and reduce corruption risks through values, processes, practices – even though they themselves may have been actively engaged in corrupt acts to survive, or to rise to their present position. Thus, even where political will from the top is missing, corruption risks can also be tackled on the 'mid-level' of an organisation. We have worked with a number of officers and employees of government and defence companies who found external pressure helpful in their work of reducing corruption risks. 'Change agents' as these people are sometimes called need support networks, and it is civil society's responsibility to create and offer this support and networks for sharing best practice. This can be done through workshops or through training, for example. Our team has developed a [five-day training course for defence officials in building integrity and reducing corruption risks](#). Many countries are enthusiastically sending mid-level officers to this course, and a network of 300+ defence officials from around the world is constantly growing. This illustrates another point: Sector-specific approaches in tackling corruption often work better than cross-government initiatives. One reason for this is that people develop more enthusiasm for targeted approaches in their own organisation or ministry.

One aspect that is often found in anti-corruption work, and which from our experience does not work, are grand anti-corruption plans. This is not to say that organisations do not need these plans. They do. But change does not happen through big programmes and plans. Change happens in small steps, continuously. Unlike what is often put down in anti-corruption plans, there is no definite 'freeze, analyse, change, unfreeze' sequence to reducing corruption. What is often more important than a 3-year plan is to convince people in an organisation to set their own goals, and to reduce risks on a daily basis.

This leads to the last point: the need to identify, measure and monitor corruption risk and the progress in reducing it, and the positive impact reforms have on tackling these risks.

Measuring and monitoring

All organisations differ in their status of addressing the points above. As such, bringing about 'change' to build integrity is not a linear affair: it needs continuous engagement, re-assessments, re-adjustments, and improvements. There is no 'start' button for change, and no 'end point' in tackling corruption. However, there is a need to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to measure progress.

Civil society organisations have developed frameworks to analyse corruption risks across the whole of government, such as Transparency International's [National Integrity Systems](#). In the defence and security sector, we like to deploy sector-specific tools.

A very basic first step for organisations is to do staff surveys on corruption and corruption risks. This is an approach that was first developed in the private sector but has been increasingly used by the public sector and international organisations as well. The underlying assumption is that an organisation's staff will, in most cases, have already identified the risks. But oftentimes this internal knowledge is not collected appropriately, and thus not followed up. Staff surveys can help bring general perceptions of an organisation's risk to light, as well as actual risks. Done regularly, they can also measure progress in changing the organisation's way of dealing with these risks.

A perhaps slightly more technical approach to measuring corruption risks in an organisation that was developed for defence and security ministries is a so-called [Self-Assessment Process](#) that Ministries can undergo to help them analyse their risk areas. It consists of questions covering nine risk areas ranging from national anti-corruption laws to anti-corruption policy and procurement. A number of countries have done this assessment already, some of them twice like Bulgaria and Ukraine, and it can be combined and followed up with an external visit by civil society or other sector experts.

Another tool, also specifically for the defence and security sector, will be published later this year: a comparison of 80 countries and their defence corruption risks. It will provide an expert assessment of 5 main corruption risk areas, and will allow countries to compare their own results with other countries. It also allows for an in-depth analysis and follow up by countries, and the opportunity to comment on the assessment is given to Ministries of Defence during the assessment stage already.

Furthermore there are other practical tools that can be deployed by civil society, the business community and governments in building more transparency. For the defence and security sector, these are [defence integrity pacts](#) to monitor public procurements, for example. But they can also be more basic tools such as industry, government and civil society [roundtables](#) to discuss corruption risks and their potential solutions.

There is a role for the international community to play in this as well: instead of focussing solely on wider governance questions, it often helps civil society if corruption risks and building integrity are prioritised and tackled as such, and are not subsumed under general governance reforms. Also, international organisations can make strong use of international comparisons, and foster their development.

Lastly, if there is one conclusion we have found in our team's eight year work on tackling corruption risks in defence and security then it is that this *is* a problem that can be solved, and that many signs are showing that government and private institutions are increasingly aware of the need and

possibility to do so. Corruption is not a subject that is too big to tackle, and positive results can be seen in a reasonable amount of time. This should encourage governments, the private sector, and civil society to continue their work on building integrity in defence and security, and other sectors.

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