Corruption risks are high in most humanitarian environments, but are exacerbated under acute crisis conditions and where large amounts of aid are delivered in resource-poor environments with weak institutions and integrity systems. In such highly challenging emergency contexts, humanitarian actors find it more difficult to ensure that aid is delivered for its intended purpose. While over the last few years the humanitarian community has become more aware of the risks of corruption in humanitarian responses, the need to enhance the integrity of humanitarian operations is not yet mainstreamed in the humanitarian strategic policy agenda. Transparency International (TI) has engaged with a range of humanitarian stakeholders to demonstrate how corruption can severely and adversely affect the quality, accountability and effectiveness of humanitarian operations since 2005. TI Kenya, leader of TI’s Humanitarian Aid Integrity Network, has carried out multi-stakeholder research and engagement to develop and pilot innovative solutions to enhance integrity and accountability in humanitarian responses in Kenya.

Bringing together TI’s anti-corruption expertise with the humanitarian research and policy experience of Humanitarian Outcomes and of Groupe Urgence, Réhabilitation et Développement, the Action will generate evidence-based knowledge of corruption risks and practical solutions in diverse but complex humanitarian contexts. Based on country-specific research and comparative analysis of corruption risks in complex emergencies with reduced humanitarian space (Afghanistan, Somalia), countries affected by massive inflows of refugees (Lebanon), and countries affected by large-scale public health emergencies (Guinea), the project will share good practice and lessons learned and develop recommendations and principles to enhance the integrity of humanitarian operations through multi-stakeholder engagement at the national, regional and global level.

Stakeholders engagement

The four case studies are conducted with the participation of a National Stakeholders group representing different actors (Governments institutions, donors’ agencies, UN agencies, Red Cross, International and National NGOs) involved in the humanitarian responses in those different contexts. Members of the National Stakeholders’ groups will be providing inputs and guidance to define the scope and recommendations of the case studies and comments on the findings through consultation forums and inputs to the draft reports.

A global stakeholders group including Donors agencies (DFID and ECHO, INGO networks (START, CaLP, CHS Alliance, ALNAP), UNOCHA, the Red Cross Movement, the Southern NGO network, the Inter Agency Standing Committee and Academia) will also provide inputs on the four case studies as well as to the comparative document. It will also advise the project team on advocacy opportunities and the dissemination of the research’s recommendations and findings.
Somalia Case Study Interim Findings & roundtable discussions

On 26th and 27th May, 2016 four separate roundtable discussions were held with members of the stakeholders advisory group to discuss the interim findings of the case study. The findings draw on 80 key informant interviews that Humanitarian Outcomes has conducted in Nairobi, Mogadishu, Johar and Baidoa, and in rural areas close to Johar and Baidoa towns.

Main risks identified in:

Staff recruitment: due to an over-reliance on ‘paper’ qualifications, and inadequate triangulated background checking.

Staff composition: due to pressures to hire within a certain clan.

Staff retention: due to decisions to continue to employ staff known for poor practice rather than risking possible reprisals.

Negotiating for access: due to regular requests for payment or some other form of concession.

Contracting in general and long chain contracting in particular resulting in possible acts of collusion or blackmail in the awarding of contracts between field staff and national partners and local authorities.

Working with poorly supported local partners: due to pressures to maintain under budgeted programmes local partners will absorb money from operational budget lines to run their organisations.

Targeting: due to the overall terms and conditions put in place by local authorities, militia or other powerful actors which seek to favour their interests rather than a needs-based approach.

Monitoring: due to collusion or pressure (in some cases bribes or extortion) to produce a positive monitoring report.

Good Practices identified:

Leadership which cultivates openness to dialogue on corruption and encourages an organisational culture to stand up to pressures and expectations of bribery.

Recruiting a diverse staff from various clan backgrounds

Operationalising anti-corruption policies through induction, and investing in ongoing training and capacity building.

Employing accountability officers (distinguished from M & E functions), using a rotation of staff from different regions to visit and monitor programmes.

Reviewing monitoring functions such as beneficiary feedback mechanisms, third party monitoring and auditing functions to assess which are able to capture and willing to consistently identify the risks, or actual cases, of corruption.

Lebanon case study on Syrian refugees response—kick off

Groupe URD, in partnership with Transparency International and the Lebanese Transparency Association (TI–Lebanon) started conducting an integrity study on the humanitarian response to Syrian refugees in Lebanon. A first stakeholders consultative meeting to agree on the scope and methodology of the study was convened on May 20th. A total of 22 participants from donors’ agencies, UN agencies, the red Cross Movement, International and National NGOS attended the workshop. The research will draw on desk review of secondary information and key informant interviews with international and national actors providing assistance to Syrian refugees communities. The study will analyze risks per modalities (in-kind, cash, partnership with public institutions and private sector, risks for specific sectors (e.g. food security, shelter, water). It will also analyze risks related to the legal and regulatory frameworks (e.g. registration, work permits), coordination, targeting of beneficiaries and issues related to obtaining legal documents for refugees.
Transparency International at the World Humanitarian Summit

Transparency International, in partnership with Development Initiative, the IATI Secretariat, Publish What you Fund, UNICEF and Development Gateway, organized a moderated panel discussion on “Transparent financing and integrity measures for effective and accountable humanitarian action” as a side event to the World Humanitarian Summit on Monday 23 May.

The session explored how the humanitarian community can achieve increased financial transparency, leading to improved operational effectiveness, accountability and integrity. Approaches and topics under discussion included:

- Sharing the experiences and views of humanitarian actors, implementing agencies, recipient governments and civil society partners on how transparency measures can improve humanitarian action – including through publication of data to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) Standard
- Consolidating political will and ensuring commitment and concrete actions and agreements on the part of representative organisations to improve the transparency, integrity and accountability of humanitarian financing
- Discussing the challenges faced regarding data quality and accessibility, and the measures available to ensure that data and information are widely published to show how funds are ultimately used.

What is next?

Integrity Study of the Ebola response in Guinea - Draft report

In July the first draft report will be shared with members of the national advisory group for comments. It is envisaged that the second stakeholders forum will take place in Conakry in August. This will provide an opportunity to present and discuss the key finding and to agree on joint recommendations to mitigate risks of corruption and diversion of aid in the context of the Ebola response in Guinea.

Afghanistan case study Draft Report

The inception report was circulated for comments by members of the advisory group in April following the first consultative workshop that took place in Kabul on March 15th. Humanitarian Outcomes is currently conducting key informant interviews and focus group discussions in Kabul, Nangarhar and Herat provinces and the first draft report shall be available for stakeholders comments in July. It is envisaged that the second advisory group consultative meeting will take place in Kabul in August 2016.

Somalia case study

In July, Transparency International and Humanitarian Outcomes will conduct the second stakeholders consultative workshops to discuss the findings and recommendations for the Somalia case study. Two consultative workshops will be conducted, one in Nairobi on 12th July and one in Mogadishu on 13th July. It is envisaged that the report will then be completed towards the end of September 2016.