Research terms of reference:
‘Enabling and inspiring duty-bearers to act with integrity’

Introduction

Integrity Action’s goal is for societies in which all citizens can – and do – successfully demand integrity from the institutions they rely on.

Thanks to core funding received from SIDA and the Hewlett Foundation, Integrity Action is now commissioning this research into how such institutions can most effectively be enabled and inspired to act in the best interests of the citizens who rely upon them. We consider the answers to this question to be of great value, not only for our own programmes but for all others who seek to improve the responsiveness, inclusivity or transparency of duty-bearers in the global south.

Full details on this work are set out in the terms of reference below, and the deadline for responses is 17th May. We appreciate that the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic poses a number of challenges to research, but believe that there is still much that can be done if we are adaptive in our plans. The total available budget is £60,000, and it is expected that this work would be completed in six to nine months.

This is one of two terms of reference on the behaviour of duty-bearers for which Integrity Action is currently seeking applicants. Interested parties may respond to either or both terms of reference as discrete pieces of work, or we would also welcome joint proposals to address both pieces together.
Background

Integrity Action is a charity registered in England and Wales, and based in London. We help citizens to monitor the delivery of essential services, infrastructure, and development projects – and to solve the problems they find.

Using mobile technology, we enable citizens to report publicly, in real time, whether they are receiving the quality of services they were promised. Citizens then take a collaborative approach to securing improvements to those services.

We work with various partner organisations in places where the need for effective services and infrastructure is critical. Whether it is secondary school teaching in Afghanistan, water systems in DR Congo, or the reconstruction of homes after Nepal’s 2015 earthquake, essential services and projects impact every aspect of citizens’ lives.

Our approach involves three core components:

**MONITORING:** we enable citizens to become monitors of essential services and development projects. They learn how to access information such as infrastructure contracts, and then check that whatever was promised is being delivered.

**TECHNOLOGY:** when monitors find that a promise hasn’t been kept, they report this on Integrity Action’s easy-to-use and award winning website and app DevelopmentCheck. Their feedback is posted in real time and visible to anyone.

**SOLUTIONS:** monitors don’t just report problems; they are actively involved in finding solutions. Monitors convene the relevant stakeholders and work towards finding solutions that work for everyone. These fixes are also posted on DevelopmentCheck.

To date, citizen monitors have used our technology tools to monitor more than $1 billion worth of development spending – and so far they have found solutions to around 50% of the problems they have found.

We have recently reviewed and refined our organisational theory of change, which aims towards outcomes in three areas:

- The citizens themselves, in which we also include groups such as migrants and refugees who may not legally have citizen-status;
- The institutions upon which citizens rely in order to enjoy their rights and entitlements;
- The platforms that exist, or that we provide, through which citizens and institutions interact.

Through this process of review, we have identified the priority learning questions for us as an organisation. This research project is being commissioned in response to these, to provide evidence around the “institutions” side of our theory of change that will help us improve our future programmes.
A visualisation of our theory of change is provided at the end of this document, and a full narrative accompaniment is available on request.

**Research questions and purpose**

This research will address two primary related questions:

1. What conditions, both internal and external, are most important for enabling or inspiring duty-bearers to act with integrity?
2. What approaches have the most potential to create or strengthen these conditions?

Within these, the following sub-questions are to be addressed:

a. How do these conditions and approaches vary across different environmental, geographical and cultural contexts?

b. How do these conditions and approaches vary for different types of duty-bearer?

c. What is the relationship between formal rules and informal incentives, and what role do these play in encouraging integrity?

d. What value do duty-bearers place on different approaches to build integrity, and what benefit would they want or expect from an approach such as Integrity Action’s?

Our definitions of terms used in these questions may be found in Appendix 1.

The primary purpose of these questions is to improve our future work, through strengthening the evidence base that informs the design of our programmes and our interactions with duty-bearers and other stakeholders.

We also aim for our findings to be of value for other groups who have an interest in increasing the quality, responsiveness, inclusivity or transparency of public services or projects. All evidence will therefore be published and shared openly\(^1\), with target groups including:

- Citizens and civil society groups located in the global south, who may use our findings to more effectively voice their concerns, participate in decisions, or otherwise hold duty-bearers to account for promises that have been made.
- Duty-bearers themselves, including those who are already motivated to act with integrity but are constrained by organisational capacity issues and/or by the integrity of others around them. These individuals may use our findings to improve feedback loops or other citizen engagement methods in the services they manage, and/or to more effectively demand integrity from their peers or superiors.
- The international development sector at large, and particularly the field of social accountability. These groups may draw on our findings in their own work.

\(^1\) All communication of evidence will respect anonymity and confidentiality requirements of those participating in the research, as per our responsible use principles (see Appendix 2)
Research approach and principles

Integrity Action does not have a preferred methodology for this research, and so applicants are free to propose the most suitable approaches. Approaches must, however, consider our PICTURE principles on quality evidence, appropriate practice, and responsible use.

These principles mean that we understand quality evidence as that which is:

1. **Precise.** Claims are not generalised, but are specific about their context and have findings disaggregated according to relevant social and demographic differences.
2. **Inclusive.** The perspectives of communities and other stakeholders are clearly represented in all evidence, with space given to divergent views.
3. **Credible.** The data and methodology accurately measures what it is intended to measure, with sample size and composition being in proportion to the conclusions sought.
4. **Triangulated.** Data is collected consistently from multiple sources, with tools to capture both quantitative and qualitative information.
5. **Useable.** Evidence is fit for purpose and responds to users’ needs and timelines, with no data being collected unless there is a clear purpose or commitment to using it.
6. **Results-focused.** Evidence clearly demonstrates what (if any) changes have happened, and explores our contribution to these alongside the roles of other actors and factors.
7. **Ethically collected, analysed and used.** Quality evidence processes are ones that are appropriate and responsible, and that focus on improving the lives of participants.

As per the E of PICTURE, we view collection, analysis and use of quality evidence as an ethical issue, and the above principles set the framework for how we think about research ethics. ‘Appropriate’ and ‘responsible’ practices around evidence are further defined in Appendix 2 of this document.

In addition to the above principles, Integrity Action makes the ethical commitments also set out in Appendix 2, to which successful candidates would also be expected to commit. However, we understand that ethical practice can require more fluidity than just procedural compliance, and emergent issues are to be identified as they arise and will be managed by Integrity Action. Our policies on safeguarding and data protection are available at integrityaction.org/about/governance/, and would be applied.

Should a proposed research approach require formal ethical approval from any third-party government or body, this will be the responsibility of the applicant to obtain.

We estimate this work would take place over six to nine months.

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*Integrity Action’s PICTURE principles were developed to cover our monitoring & evaluation practices, as well as research, which is why they speak of ‘results’. It is not anticipated that this piece of research will seek to demonstrate change as a result of our work – although the principle should be borne in mind for research question 2.*
Available data

Integrity Action has programmes currently running in eight countries: Afghanistan, DR Congo, Kenya, Madagascar, Nepal, Palestine, Tanzania and Uganda.

We collect information from our programmes regularly, including through site visits, case studies, tracking of activities and output delivery, and narrative reports from implementing partners. Our citizen monitors also complete knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) surveys, including questions about their trust in, and interactions with, local authority figures. Much of the data that our monitors themselves capture using DevelopmentCheck is available online as soon as it is recorded, and can be explored at integrityaction.org/devcheck/

However, while any or all of this data can be shared with successful candidates as relevant, it is not anticipated that analysis of existing Integrity Action data form a substantial part of this research. A review of secondary data will likely be of more value, especially in exploring the successful features of other approaches. Since this research does not focus only on Integrity Action's approach, involving other groups and organisations will be key.

Addressing our research questions may involve travel to sites where we work, to speak with people who have participated in or interacted with our programmes. Where this is done, the sampling strategy will be agreed with Integrity Action in order to ensure the countries selected are representative of our programmes and to minimise any burdens placed upon our implementing partners through their involvement in other research activities or ongoing evaluations. Certain countries may also be deemed higher-risk, and work in these locations would be subject to approval.

Work elsewhere in the global south may also be considered where there is a clear reason (for example, an interesting third-party approach) or where the context is deemed similar to our country portfolio. Beyond our current operations, Integrity Action has plans to start work in the Central African Republic, Iraq, Lebanon, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

It is also expected that options for remote data collection are explored; for example, surveys conducted within forums used by relevant target groups such as apolitical.co/home

Anticipated risks and challenges

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic poses a number of challenges to this research, with risks including:

- Inability to travel, either internationally or nationally
- Reduced capacity for Integrity Action and/or our partners to engage (for example, due to staff illness or need to provide family care)
- Reduced capacity or willingness for duty-bearers and/or other planned participants to engage
- Unplanned changes to our country portfolio as a consequence of an altered funding environment
It is expected that candidates use their proposals to explore options to address the first of these, with thought given to how activities may progress should international travel be unfeasible; for example, through remote data collection or by leveraging existing networks of local data collectors. Remaining risks will be managed by the research steering group in conversation with the successful candidates.

Further risks to be considered by candidates are:

- Burdening our local implementing partners or programme participants by requiring their intensive involvement in research activities. Our partners are typically small, local CSOs who may have limited funding beyond our programmes.
- Damaging our, or our partners’, existing or future relationships with duty-bearers.

**Expected timeline and deliverables**

The below outline is an indication of when key research outputs are due. The challenges associated with Covid-19 require flexibility in planning, but we believe this is best achieved through ongoing conversation throughout the inception period – for which dates here are indicative only.

Other outputs may be needed to more appropriately communicate findings with different audiences, and applicants are free to suggest these in their proposals or (if successful) at a later stage. These will be agreed, and may be developed in collaboration, with Integrity Action; and may include, but not be limited to, blogs, infographics, podcasts, and summary materials in all appropriate languages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output / Activity</th>
<th>Date expected</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closing date for tenders</td>
<td>17 May</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviews &amp; appointment of successful candidate(s)</td>
<td>w/c 1 June</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inception report drafted</td>
<td>5 July</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revised inception report submitted and approved</td>
<td>24 July</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final report drafted</td>
<td>TBC</td>
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<td>Key findings presented to steering group</td>
<td>TBC</td>
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<td>Revised final report submitted and approved</td>
<td>By end Feb 2021</td>
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**Budget requirements**

The available budget for this research is £60,000. This is inclusive of all costs, including professional fees, international travel, visas, in-country costs (including interpreters where appropriate), translation and printing of any materials, and all relevant taxes.

Payment will be made in instalments, according to the following schedule:

1. 30% on submission and approval of the inception report
2. 40% on presentation of the draft report and findings
3. 30% on submission and approval of the final report
Governance

This research has been commissioned by Integrity Action’s Head of Programme Development, and will be managed by the Evidence & Impact Manager. Regular updates are to be provided during the course of the research, on a schedule to be agreed by both parties.

Oversight will be provided by a research steering group, which will include thematic and technical experts external to Integrity Action. This group’s role will be to ensure quality in design and implementation of the research methodology, as well as objectivity in the analysis.

Final research outputs will be owned by Integrity Action, who will seek to make as much of it publicly-available as is responsible and appropriate.

Application details

Applications are welcomed from individuals or teams, whether belonging to an organisation or otherwise. Integrity Action is based in London, but applicants need not be. However, it would be an advantage to be based in a similar time-zone and to have a good internet connection.

The following skills and experiences are essential criteria for applicants:
- Strong understanding of appropriate research methodologies, their benefits and limitations
- Experience in conducting and/or managing similar or comparable research studies in the Global South (preferably East Africa, South Asia, or the Middle East)
- Excellent facilitation and communication skills, with experience of working collaboratively with civil society organisations and communicating complex concepts to non-specialist audiences
- Ability to travel to any countries required by the proposed methodology
- Ability to bring together a range of inputs into clear and concise summaries or recommendations

Knowledge of the social accountability field within international development would be beneficial, as would language skills appropriate to any relevant countries. Applicants should have appropriate levels of both professional indemnity insurance and public liability insurance.

Interested parties should submit a proposal to Integrity Action, to include:
- A brief cover letter demonstrating how you or your team meets the essential criteria above, as well as any reflections you may have on these research questions or changes you would propose. This should be no more than two pages
- An outline of your proposed methodology, including explanation of why it is suitable for these research questions as well as any associated risks and proposed mitigations. This should be no more than three pages
• A draft work plan and associated budget, to include the daily rates of all individuals involved and a description of the roles they each play within the team (if applicable)
• CVs for all individuals, including references (references would be contacted after interview)
• Maximum two examples of previous work that demonstrates skills or experiences relevant to this research. These may be provided as links, or if unpublished then they may be attached and will be reviewed in confidence

If you are submitting a joint proposal to address both of the research projects we are currently advertising, you should ensure that your proposal meets the criteria of both terms of reference. No preference will be given to either joint or individual proposals, and Integrity Action reserves the right to ask applicants who submit joint proposals to re-purpose their proposal for just one project.

Please send your complete proposals to daniel.burwood@integrityaction.org by the end of 17th May 2020. Proposals will be scored and assessed against their understanding of the terms of reference (20%), appropriateness of the proposed methodology (35%), expertise and experience of the team (35%), and quality of work planning and financial/HR organisation (10%). Consideration will also be given to a proposal's value for money.

Please note that we will not be able to give feedback on unsuccessful applications.

Appendix 1: Definition of terms used in this document

In addressing the research questions, the following guidelines should be applied:

• **Duty-bearers** can be any actors upon whom citizens rely in order to enjoy their rights and entitlements, although our focus in this research is primarily upon:
  o Individuals on the frontline of delivering services or goods that are accessed directly by citizens in the global south; such as teachers, nurses, helpdesk personnel, or building contractors responsible for delivering community infrastructure
  o Managers of such services or projects; for example, head teachers
  o The authorities directly responsible for oversight of the above; typically local government officials
  o International development agencies, where these are filling gaps in governmental service provision

• **Acting with integrity** is when there is consistency between a duty-bearer’s words and actions, both in public and in private, and when these actions reflect the best interests of the citizens who rely upon them. It includes keeping promises that have been made to citizens, and responding positively to citizens’ feedback – which may include changing or retracting a promise where citizen feedback suggests this is appropriate.
• **Internal conditions** relate to an institution’s own features, such as its hierarchy or policies, in contrast to **external conditions** such as national laws or the society’s cultural and political norms. Our theory of change recognises that broken promises may be due to a lack of capacity or opportunity to fulfil them, and not just lack of commitment.

• **Approaches** are the processes, design features, methodologies, or implementation strategies of any efforts that may be expected to influence a duty-bearer’s integrity or the associated conditions.

• In question (a), **environmental, geographical and cultural contexts** is not intended as a comprehensive list; the question is intended to explore how similar approaches or conditions may be associated with differing outcomes depending on the wider system and society in which they operate.

• In (b), **different types of duty-bearer** will include looking across both organisational variables, such as governance structures and sectors, and individual variables such as personal roles and demographics.

• In (c), examples of **formal rules** include internal policies and external laws, while **informal incentives** may include social and cultural norms.

• In (d), the **benefits** sought by duty-bearers may cover the whole range of what duty-bearers consider valuable. These are expected to include both material benefits, such as increased institutional efficiency or personal career advancement, as well as social benefits such as feelings of fulfilment or attaining a higher standing in the community. Certain duty-bearers, such as frontline service providers who already wish to provide quality services but whose ability to do so is constrained by institutional or systemic barriers, may also find a value in being able to hold other duty-bearers to account.

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**Appendix 2: Responsible use, appropriate practices, and Integrity Action’s ethical commitments**

Integrity Action’s **PICTURE** principles state that all data must be collected, analysed and used appropriately and responsibly.

**Appropriate practices** mean that:

- **Our data is collected and quality-assured**
  - With the active and informed participation of affected communities, including those at risk of exclusion.
o By teams with appropriate skills and characteristics to capture the voices of different groups
o Using justifiable methodologies, relevant to the purpose and context
o Using reliable tools, neutrally worded, that produce consistent and meaningful results
o In alignment with existing programme management and organisational needs, capacities and timelines

Our data is analysed and reviewed
o Collectively, through ongoing dialogue with participants and other stakeholders to sense-check and validate conclusions
o Sensitively, with understanding of the local power dynamics and their importance
o Systematically, with clear logical links between data collected and conclusions reached
o Transparently, so that methods are protected from intended or unintended bias
o In comparison to other relevant data sources, such as through use of baselines to show whether a change has occurred

Responsible use means that:

Our evidence is presented and used
o In accordance with what was communicated and agreed with participants
o In accessible formats for all appropriate audiences, including consideration of language and literacy. One piece of evidence may need to be shared in multiple formats
o With acknowledgment given to everyone who contributed significantly (unless anonymity was requested), and with references provided for all sources used
o Without assumptions, especially regarding any unidentified changes or causal links between identified changes and the programme
o With aggregation of people avoided wherever possible, and with real case studies presenting the real stories of real individuals

Communication of our evidence is open about
o The tools and methodologies used to collect and analyse data, and any associated limitations
o The questions and audiences that drove the collection and analysis activity, and how the evidence responds to these needs
o The results and changes identified by the analysis, whether intended or unintended, negative or positive
o The sources of quotes or judgements, with any conflicting perspectives clearly presented and explored3
o The independence, or otherwise, of everyone involved in data collection, analysis and presentation; including explanation and justification of any potential bias

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3 This should not breach anonymity, but a reader should be able to distinguish between (for example) the views of a community member and those of a government official
Integrity Action makes the further following commitments to ethical research practice:

- We will respect the dignity, privacy and agency of all who contribute to, or are affected by, our research. We will work within all international human rights conventions and covenants to which the UK is a signatory, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as all relevant local and national laws.

- We will recognise the burdens and costs for all stakeholders in participating in our research, and will only conduct such activities when the benefits can reasonably be expected to outweigh the risks. This includes aiming for evidence of a sufficiently high quality that it can be used for its intended purpose.

- We will pursue objectivity, while recognising that all stakeholders will bring their own agendas. We will not use tools or methods designed to produce misleading results or misrepresent findings, and our communication of evidence will be clear about the roles of authors and participants. We will encourage and enable all stakeholders to follow appropriate procedures if they feel under pressure to provide inaccurate results.

- We will take reasonable precautions to ensure our design and application of tools, methods and methodologies do not cause harm to participants; such as stress, loss of dignity or self-esteem. This includes consideration of the extent to which methods or questions are intrusive or sensitive, and applies to the wellbeing of the data collectors as well data providers and subjects. This requires consideration of local behaviours and norms, and the ways in which risk of harm may vary based on each individual's gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, marital status, social position, sexual orientation, level of education, physical and mental health, and more.

- We will maintain confidentiality of information, and store all records in line with our data protection policy. Identifiable data will not be shared or used without consent, but any publication of evidence will include publication of anonymised primary data alongside a description of the methodology to allow validation of findings.

- We will ensure voluntary participation in our research is based on informed consent, with each individual being accurately informed of the purpose and what the method involves – including their right to refuse or withdraw. Where feasible and appropriate, this information should be provided in advance (e.g. before potential participants have travelled to the venue). It also includes providing participants with contact details should they later wish to make a complaint, withdraw their consent, or simply find out more about the activity. In the case of children, informed consent should be obtained from both the child and their parent or guardian. In the case of vulnerable adults, a judgement should be made about their capacity to give consent; if it is deemed that such capacity does not exist then the individual's participation should be reconsidered, and only proceed if there is a justifiable purpose and with the informed consent of a guardian or next of kin.