Chapter 4

There Is an App for That Too: Citizen–Centric Approach to Combating Corruption in the Digital Age through the Use of ICTs

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ABSTRACT

Combating corruption is critical to the economic and social development of a country. Recent discussions surrounding strategies to combat corruption now include the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Currently, there is a growing body of research on the role of ICTs to combat corruption, however scholarly research on the use of these technologies by citizens in this regard is wholly lacking. The objective of this study is to address this gap in the literature as well as to popularize citizen-centric empowerment strategies to combat corruption around the world.

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INTRODUCTION

The insurmountable complex web of interrelated causes, consequences, and measures regarding the problem of corruption has for years been a critical area of research and policy interest globally (McMullan, 1961; Leff, 1964; Nye, 1967; Rose-Ackerman, 1978, 1999, 2008; Svensson, 2005; Akçay, 2006; Donchev & Ujhelyi, 2009; Ata & Arvas, 2011). Recent discussions regarding solutions to the problem of corruption now include the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Scholarly research related to the use of ICTs to combat corruption has largely been located within the electronic governance for development conceptual framework (Heeks, 2001). Such a framework, articulates how and in what ways ICTs can be used to enhance good governance and development. Within the context of combating corruption, this framework has typically focused on either:

1. The use of ICTs by the state to create an open government to facilitate transparency and accountability with the use of websites that allow citizens to access information about government related actors, issues and events (e-government related issues); or
2. The use of ICTs by the state to monitor and control government activities through the automation of state internal operations (e-administration related issues).

There exists a paucity of scholarly research on the use of ICTs by citizens to combat corruption. This I refer to as a citizen-centric approach to the use of ICTs to combat corruption. The present paper seeks to address this gap by making a unique contribution to the emerging scholarly literature on the use of ICTs to combat corruption. The following research question was used to guide this study (1) How and in what ways have citizens used ICTs to combat corruption?

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In the last five decades or so, there has been considerable interest in efforts to combat corruption (whether political, bureaucratic, or economic). Various disciplines and professions from all over the world have been committed to this project (Nye, 1967; Huntington, 1968; Akçay, 2006; Ata & Arvas, 2011; Donchev & Ujhelyi, 2009; Leff, 1964; Macrae, 1982; Mauro, 1995; McMullan, 1961; Myrdal, 1970; Nye, 1967; Rose-Ackerman, 1978, 1999, 2008; Andvig et al., 2000; Coolidge & Rose-Ackerman, 2000; Ades & Di Tella, 1999). Two main objectives of this project have been to address both developmental failures and democratic shortfalls associ-
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