

Chapter 4

The role of surveys in anti-corruption reform

Surveys to gauge public perceptions and opinions about corruption can generate essential input for the formulation of effective anti-corruption strategies. They are an important means to detect weaknesses that call for reform, and allow users to ascertain the general public's view, raise awareness, and facilitate public involvement in anti-corruption reforms. Where surveys have been widely used, citizens' viewpoints inform the formulation and implementation of policies and practices to fight corruption. In addition, surveys conducted at regular intervals give policymakers and the general public an indication of progress and trends. This chapter highlights how surveys can contribute to progress towards anti-corruption reform.

Surveys can be conducted by government, media, academe, and non-governmental organizations. Cobus de Swardt of Transparency International, a major NGO active both in assessing public opinion about corruption and advocating anti-corruption action, presents the diverse array of international and national survey instruments that have been developed and used over the last decade by the organization. These surveys are constantly being refined, improved, and adapted to meet specific needs. The introduction of national integrity studies has provided further assistance to governments in improving administrative systems to eradicate corruption.

Public opinion surveys can help define and frame the issue of corruption, advance reforms, raise awareness, and encourage public debate around corruption, as illustrated by David Zussman. The survey

instruments themselves are the fruit of careful research and planning. The conception and the creation of the survey instrument are challenging areas: the utility of the survey results depends on coherent formulation of the issues and questions to be raised and the target audience of the survey. Research into diagnostic indicators is essential to ensure an effective survey tool.

Many available instruments offer insight into public opinion about corruption and bribery, and the measures that should be taken to fight them. Abdul Rahman Embong, a scholar from Malaysia, shares recent experience where cabinet committees on government management were established to study public attitudes related to fighting corruption. A very large majority of those surveyed reported that they disapproved of bribery and neither gave nor received bribes; and that they would be willing to participate in a corruption control plan. These government-led surveys resulted in cabinet approval of a national integrity plan and generated public and political commitment for a set of interrelated reform measures. Other countries are considering this model in the medium term.

Another consideration in exploring public opinion about corruption is how the survey tool is to be applied. The Internet has greatly enhanced the range of methods to elicit and exchange views. In one innovative example, the supervision department in Liaoning, a province in the northeast of China, has developed an online tool that canvasses public views, opinions, and complaints about public services. This input is managed, and complaints are addressed and, where possible, resolved. The process and the results are posted on the website, and the issues raised and the agencies cited by citizens are analyzed as a basis for improvements in administration and management.

No one instrument or method can provide a complete picture. Each survey tool has its utility and its limitations. For instance, perceptions of corruption most often do not keep pace with the reforms and improvement in curbing corruption. Thus, perception indices may not reflect the most current state of progress. On the other hand, public perception surveys can be used by foreign investors to gauge the prevalence of corruption and public confidence in governance structures. Survey results can also be used by governments, civil society, and aid agencies in planning their anti-corruption work. Several member countries indicated strong commitment to developing or improving perception surveys and expanding their use as a part of efforts to fight corruption.

Transparency International's public opinion surveys

Cobus de Swardt

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Transparency International (TI) develops and conducts a variety of international survey instruments and studies related to corruption and to public opinion and perceptions of corruption. These surveys include the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), the Bribe Payers Index (BPI), the Global Corruption Barometer (GCB), and National Integrity System (NIS) Country Studies. In addition, several of the 70 national chapters of TI carry out other types of research and investigations. Among these are national household surveys, indices of public institutions, public sector diagnostics, political party financing monitoring studies, and private sector assessments. This chapter gives an overview of TI's main survey tools, highlighting their objectives, methodologies, and major achievements.

Corruption Perceptions Index

The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) measures the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials and politicians. The CPI is a composite index, drawing on 18 different polls and surveys from 12 independent institutions, carried out among business people, country analysts, and local experts. Source surveys cover the three previous years; and a minimum of three surveys are used per country. In 2004, 146 countries were listed in the CPI.

This international survey tool offers a snapshot of the views of business people, academics, risk analysts, and other decision makers who influence trade and investment decisions. It also creates public awareness of corruption and breaks taboos around corruption. The CPI contributes to creating a climate for change, putting corruption at the center of public debate. In addition, it stimulates the development of research into the relation between corruption and other issues such as foreign direct investment, gender issues, and economic growth. It is important to note, however, that the CPI is neither a diagnostic tool nor a tool for tracking changes over time.

In 2004, the countries perceived to be the least corrupt in the CPI were Finland, New Zealand, Denmark, and Iceland (Table 4.1). Bangladesh, Haiti, Nigeria, Myanmar, and Chad, on the other hand, were perceived to be the most corrupt.

Table 4.1: Corruption Perceptions Index 2004 (Extract)

Rank	Country	Score	No. of Surveys Used
1	Finland	9.7	9
2	New Zealand	9.6	9
3	Denmark	9.5	10
	Iceland	9.5	8
⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮
142	Chad	1.7	4
	Myanmar	1.7	4
144	Nigeria	1.6	9
145	Bangladesh	1.5	8
	Haiti	1.5	5

Bribe Payers Index

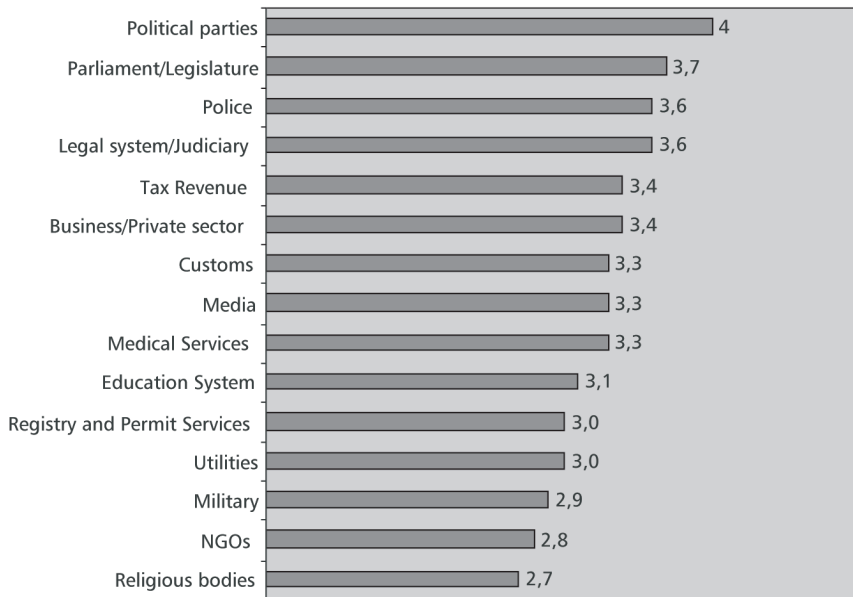
The Bribe Payers Index (BPI) ranks the 21 leading exporting countries according to the degree to which their companies are perceived to pay bribes to senior foreign public officials. It is based on answers to a questionnaire from over 770 respondents in 14 key emerging market countries. The BPI provides detailed reports on views of the propensity of multinational corporations to bribe and the business sectors that are considered to be most contaminated by bribery. It also illustrates the extent of awareness of the landmark OECD Anti-Bribery Convention among executives of major international corporations; the degree to which these firms are perceived to be acting in compliance with the Convention; and perceptions of the range of unfair business practices used by firms to gain contracts.

Global Corruption Barometer 2004

The Global Corruption Barometer 2004 is a public opinion survey that was carried out in 64 countries among more than 50,000 people to assess perceptions about corruption, experience of corruption, and expectations concerning corruption levels in the future. It compares petty and grand corruption and compares corruption with other problems in society. It evaluates the extent to which public and private institutions are considered corrupt, determines where the public believes corruption's impact is greatest, and inquires about prospects for future levels of corruption. The Barometer is based on household surveys conducted by Gallup International as part of the Voice of the People Survey. This survey instrument is to be conducted yearly, allowing for an overview of trends

and changes over time. As a tool that focuses on the general public, it supplements expert views on corruption, by providing feedback on the credibility of anti-corruption efforts and on public perception of the extent of corruption across key institutions, as illustrated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Global Corruption Barometer 2004 (1 = not corrupt, 5 = extremely corrupt)



National Integrity System Country Studies

National Integrity System country studies examine the interrelated structures and systems in place to fight corruption and maintain accountability and integrity of public, private, and civil society organizations in a country and how they work in practice. These structures and systems include legislature, executive, judiciary, audit institutions, ombudsman, independent anti-corruption agencies, public service, local government, media, civil society, private sector, and international institutions. These studies provide baseline, factual assessments of national integrity systems, facilitating cross-country comparisons and comparisons over time.

Within each study, an exploration of the formal framework is followed by an assessment of what actually happens, highlighting deficiencies in

the formal framework itself or in its implementation. The studies therefore reflect both the formal (“legal”) position and what actually happens in practice. This “theory and practice” approach is a key aspect of the National Integrity System country study methodology.

The study consists of a narrative report and a questionnaire and the study design is uniform across all countries. Country studies are conducted by local organizations—mainly TI national chapters or independent researchers with the contacts and knowledge to reveal what formal elements of the NIS are in place, as well as how they work in practice. The studies therefore represent the experience and assessments of those researchers who are ideally placed to comment on the state of the fight against corruption, and are meant to reflect their unique voice. These studies enable a diagnosis of the overall state of integrity and provide anti-corruption stakeholders with points of entry for further efforts in several countries.

Country Examples

Important work in the development and use of public opinion surveys to guide and support anti-corruption reform is taking place in many countries. The TI Mexico Index of Corruption and Good Governance maps the general public’s perception of corruption among institutions in Mexico. The Index of Corruption and Good Governance (ICGG) is calculated on the basis of the data given by households, who are users of the public service. The ICGG is calculated at the national level, and lists results by federal entity and by each of the 38 services (see Table 4.3). It distinguishes variations in the levels of corruption according to the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the population. As a result, the ICGG has spurred healthy competition among the 32 Mexican federal states.

Table 4.3: TI Mexico: Index of Corruption and Good Governance Results 2003

Place in Table	Service Type	ICGG
36	Parking in public spaces controlled by particulars	45.90
37	Avoid being fined by a transit agent	50.32
38	Avoid the towing of a vehicle or get it out of storage	53.25

In Kenya, the Kenya Bribery Index, based on a survey conducted since 2001, captures the bribery experiences of the general public in both private and public institutions. The 2004 survey, conducted among 2,398 individuals, isolated six bribery indicators: incidence, prevalence, severity,

frequency, financial cost, and bribe size. It created an aggregate index based on an unweighted average of these indicators and ranked 34 organizations. The Kenya Bribery Index has allowed an assessment of trends of bribery over time and has had a strong impact on the public sector and sparked the creation of partnerships with some public institutions (Kenya Port Authority, traffic police, etc.). It generates public awareness about corruption and provides data that can be used to advocate and support reform in sectors perceived to be the most corrupt. It is also a tool for setting performance targets and monitoring reforms.

In Colombia, the Integrity Index for Public Entities provides solid information about the performance of a large range of public institutions yearly. The 2004 survey was conducted among 182 public entities (executive, legislative, and judiciary branches, and autonomous entities) and isolated 12 indicators in three categories: transparency, investigation and sanctioning, and institutionalization and efficiency. An index as the weighted average of the three categories was constructed and five levels of corruption risk according to index score were established. The Integrity Index for Public Entities provides the Colombian Government with a tool for assessing its anti-corruption performance and identifies areas at risk of corruption within each entity.

Challenges and Future Directions in Measuring Public Opinion about Corruption

In order for survey instruments to be used optimally, the right tool must be selected for the right purpose. Knowledge and familiarity with the available tools should be promoted, capacity to use the tools should be developed, and resources to process and communicate survey results and analyze the impact of the tool should be increased.

To improve the survey instruments themselves, research into diagnostic indicators needs to be strengthened. Action is also called for in the application of these tools: capacity to repeat survey tools over time so that performance targets can be set and anti-corruption efforts can be measured should be increased. The use of tools to measure perceptions of corruption should be extended to cover countries where data research has not been conducted so far.

Many available instruments offer insight into public opinion about corruption and bribery, and the measures that should be taken to fight them. Civil society, aid agencies, and governments should make the best possible use of this information and take public opinion survey results into account in formulating policy recommendations.

How public opinion surveys can assist in the preparation of anti-corruption reform

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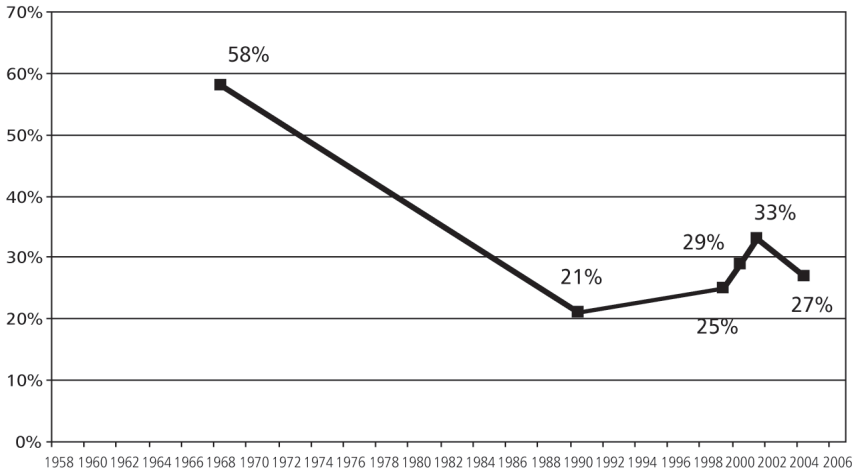
Corruption can take many forms. Recently, in Canada, corruption has been identified in the form of procurement fraud, improper outsourcing of government services, and the use of public funds for personal gain. The abuse of power and favoritism in hiring has also been observed. In Canada, and in countries around the world, anti-corruption efforts are fuelling major reform initiatives. These initiatives to fight corruption involve the entire range of stakeholders in a country—for example, in drafting legislation and developing measures for prevention and prosecution, some of the most essential elements of anti-corruption work. In order to be effective, these and other reforms require active public involvement. Understanding public opinion about policy reforms can be decisive in securing this involvement and mobilizing public support.

Public Opinion Research

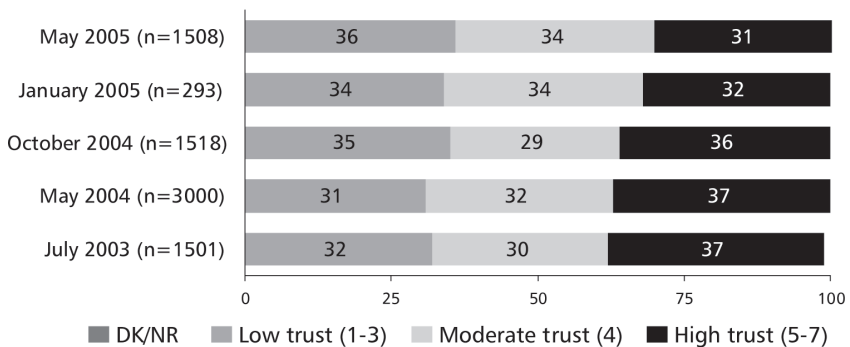
When launching new policies or pursuing old ones, reforming institutions or governmental delivery mechanisms, transforming public services or programs, or abolishing or creating agencies, governments can often benefit from citizen feedback. Surveys are important tools because governments need information on how their initiatives are perceived. People have opinions not only on what governments do but also on what governments should do. Not only do people express their views in the voting booth, but they are also willing to provide them to pollsters. Citizens have developed views about the economy and conditions of employment, about social programs and political institutions that influence and shape their lives. They trust certain institutions more than others, prefer certain social policies over others, have views on the extent to which they find the educational and health systems satisfactory. For example, views expressed about Canadians' trust in government and public institutions through surveys conducted by the Government of Canada are shown in figures 4.1 and 4.2 below.

Figure 4.1: Trust in Government

Question: "How much do you trust the government in Ottawa to do what is right?"



Source: Zussman (2005)

Figure 4.2: Trust in Public Institutions

Source: Zussman (2005). DK/NR = Don't know/no response.

Surveys help governments make the right policy choices. In conceiving and carrying out anti-corruption reform, opinion surveys can help to frame the issue, advance ongoing reforms, raise awareness, and encourage public debate on corruption issues. In researching public opinion and in developing a survey instrument, there are three fundamental issues: what to measure, whom to ask, and how to gather the data.

What to measure

Governments conduct surveys when they require information on people's attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and behaviors. While individuals differ in their beliefs, social science methods allow us to study opinions to find out whether, in the various groups to which they belong, people demonstrate similar views. Analysis of such data highlights the degree to which these opinions are shared (or not) by different socio-demographic groups. Over recent years, survey research has significantly developed, aided by the advent of information technology to store, analyze, and carry out empirical tests on massive amounts of opinion data. By repeating surveys at regular intervals, it can be determined whether such attitudes and beliefs change over time, and if so, how.

Whom to ask

Public opinion surveys include surveys that address the public in general, employees of public organizations, and the higher echelons or "elite" level within public administration. They can also be designed to address specific publics (e.g., clients of particular services). For instance, while some reforms touch all citizens, many of the changes proposed by governments have effects only on certain groups, which willingly or unwillingly become targeted by changes. Feedback from such interest groups is very important to government in designing or reframing policy.

How to gather the data

There are many ways of obtaining feedback. Citizens can be encouraged in diverse ways to participate in decision making. Governments use participatory mechanisms such as formal consultations and town meetings. However, opinion surveys have the advantage of being a more rapid, and often a less costly, means of gathering information. Opinion surveys allow the government to reach a broader audience, and if sampled correctly, to extrapolate the findings to the population. When additional feedback mechanisms are coupled with a survey, this often provides a better opportunity to delve deeper into issues and to further test some of the findings of the survey. Opinion surveys can be conducted using a variety of means, including using the telephone or the Internet.

Challenges in Public Opinion Research

In order for public opinion surveys to be accurate, they must be scientifically sound: the sampling method must be correct and the sample must be representative. The questionnaire and interview design and the data collection and analysis are of utmost importance. When conducting a public opinion survey, one always samples from the larger population. There is always a margin of statistical error in the data obtained, which must be factored into explanations of results.

Given the great strides that have been made in social and behavioral sciences, it is very easy to guard against flaws in survey design and the interpretation of results. However, when faced with results of an opinion poll, the reader should try to glean information on the study design, sampling method, and data analysis.

Whether a government commissions its own poll or takes note of a poll published in the media, it needs safeguards to ensure that sound polling practices have been used. Some governments put in place central units, often staffed by social science advisers, who can comment on the accuracy of a poll and, hence, on the validity of the information. Special units established in the office of the prime minister or another central agency to analyze poll results, comment on accuracy, and provide the government with updated poll information are not very costly investments when compared with the advantages they bring. Governments may establish special units to ensure that data are well collected, or to assess the degree to which independently collected data are useful. This is all the more important when using surveys to help in administrative reform.

Conclusion

Public opinion surveys are a flexible instrument that can be used for various purposes. They can result both in learning from the public and informing the public. Their use and design should be guided by established social science methodology. Surveys can and should be used in all phases of reform, anti-corruption reform, to name only one example. Before undertaking reforms, surveys can indicate citizens' perception of corruption and provide views on their degree of acceptance of proposed changes. During implementation, the opinions of those for whom changes are designed can tell the public administration how satisfied or dissatisfied they are. Once a reform is accomplished, opinion data serves as the basis for evaluating success and allows the government to plan further changes. Given the difficulties involved in attempting to reform complex systems,

it is always important to assess the views of clients (citizens, public servants, or enterprises) as the information can help to improve on delivery and reduce costs associated with reform. Well-collected data help to orient reforms before start-up, and facilitates the management of progress both during and after the reform. It must be noted, however, that while public opinion surveys can be very useful, they are not the answer to every political and organizational problem and are not a substitute for good policy.

Public opinion surveys and anti-corruption reform in Malaysia

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Introduction

Malaysia—currently with a population of about 25 million people—has been transformed over the last three decades from an economic backwater to an ASEAN powerhouse. Its economy has been changed from a primary producer to an industrialized one, whilst its society transformed from a rural-traditional to a modern urbanized society with 67% of the population living in urban areas. In terms of human development, Malaysia stands at number 59, measured on the UN Human Development Index (HDI) in 2004, achieving what is considered as medium human development, occupying second place in ASEAN after Singapore. In 2002, Malaysia’s literacy rate was 94%, while primary school enrolment stood at 97.8%.

Despite the economic downturns during various periods of its recent history, Malaysia has been able to record fairly strong growth, averaging 7.8% per year in the 1970s, 5.9% in the 1980s, and 6.1% in the 1990s despite the 1997/98 Asian crisis. In the first few years of the 21st century, it has been able to record around 5% growth despite the volatility of the international environment. With such growth, Malaysia has been able to increase its GDP dramatically. Malaysia’s GDP stood at RM 21.5 billion in 1970. It increased to RM 140.7 billion by 1990, RM 209.3 billion by 2000, and was projected to reach RM 299.8 billion by 2005¹ (USD 1 = RM 3.80). This means that in the three decades after 1970, GDP increased almost tenfold, and by 2005, it would have expanded almost fourteenfold. With such growth, Malaysia today has become a second-generation “economic tiger”, an upper-middle-income developing country, and the 17th-largest trading nation in the world. It is moving confidently towards becoming a developed nation by 2020.

Of course, rapid growth and development is both boon and bane; it has indeed opened up greater avenues and opportunities for corruption to take place. Recognizing the dangers of corruption to economic growth and to the nation’s progress generally, the Malaysian Government has

set itself the task of fighting corruption. In 1961, the Prevention of Corruption Act 1961 was passed by Parliament to replace the British-created Prevention of Corruption Ordinance 1950. Six years later, in 1967, the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) was set up. A decade later, the Prevention of Corruption Act 1961 was revised, and subsequently repealed and replaced with the Prevention of Corruption Act 1997. With the repeal, the ACA—under the Prime Minister’s Office—has been strengthened, and has contributed significantly towards combating corruption in the country.

Whilst strengthening the ACA, the Government had taken other steps to strengthen and reform the public sector. In 1998, it restructured the Special Cabinet Committee on Government Management, and renamed it the Special Cabinet Committee on Government Management Integrity, to reflect the renewed focus on integrity. The function of the Committee, which has been chaired by Dato’ Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, previously as Deputy Prime Minister, and now Prime Minister, is to ensure the integrity of government management, enhance the awareness of public servants of the dangers of corruption and abuse of power, and strengthen their resolve for, and commitment to, integrity. To ensure the fight against corruption reaches the grass roots and has their support, similar Management Integrity Committees have been established at all levels, from the federal ministry to the state government, and right down to the district office.

Malaysia’s Ranking on the Corruption Perception Index

However, the fight against corruption is an arduous, long-term task and cannot rely on the Government’s efforts alone. Despite the work of the ACA and steps taken by the Special Cabinet Committee on Government Management Integrity to eradicate corruption, this evil practice continues apace, leading to the public perception, particularly among foreign investors and risk analysts, that corruption is endemic in the country. A look at how Malaysia ranks on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) set up by Transparency International gives a not-so-happy picture.

TI’s Corruption Perception Index (CPI) over the last 10 years shows that whilst Malaysia was ranked 23 with a score of 5.28 in 1995, when the CPI was first introduced, it slipped to 33 with a score of 4.90 in 2002, 37 in 2003 (5.20), and 39 (5.00) in 2004. To enhance its global competitiveness, Malaysia clearly has to intensify its efforts to curb corruption and change such perception so that it would not only achieve a much higher ranking in the future but also improve the well-being of society.

Table 4.4: TI Corruption Perception Index Ranking for Malaysia, 1995–2004

Year	Score (max. score: 10)	Rank	No. of Assessed Countries
1995	5.28	23	41
1996	5.32	26	54
1997	5.01	32	52
1998	5.30	29	85
1999	5.10	32	99
2000	4.80	36	90
2001	5.00	36	91
2002	4.90	33	102
2003	5.20	37	133
2004	5.00	39	146

Source: Transparency International (various years); www.transparency.org.

Public Opinion Survey

It was against such a backdrop of increased awareness and concern about the prevalence and dangers of corruption, as well as the negative perception, that the Special Cabinet Committee commissioned a study titled “Public Perception of Corruption in Malaysia” in 2001.² This was the first comprehensive nationwide study of its kind, which built on a study conducted 10 years earlier by a research unit in the Prime Minister’s Department. This study of 2001, which was coordinated by the ACA and conducted by a group of five academics³ from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Utara Malaysia, was a very strategic first step towards formulating a benchmark for the public perception of corruption; assessing the level of corruption in various sectors; identifying attitudes, values, readiness, and willingness of the public to fight corruption; and formulating action plans to push forward the anti-corruption reform agenda.

Success factors

From our experience, the success of the survey in contributing towards anti-corruption reforms depends on a number of important factors. These include:

- Clear and realizable objectives;
- A good theoretical framework;
- Operationalizable definitions of key concepts (such as corruption and perception);

- Robust methodology and research instruments;
- An expert research team that is experienced and committed;
- A properly trained group of assistants at different levels, equipped with the necessary computer and social skills;
- Sufficient funding;
- Coordination and support by the relevant government agency, namely, the ACA; and
- Strong political will on the part of the Government to bring about reforms.

Whilst most of the factors that relate to the research team above are necessary to ensure the survey can be carried out successfully, they are not in themselves sufficient to ensure the latter will serve as catalyst for reform. Thus coordination and support by such agencies as the ACA, and, very importantly, the strong political will on the part of the Government, are extremely critical to pave the way for reform.

Methodology and sample

The main instrument used in the study was a survey conducted from October 2001 to March 2002. The survey used a set of structured questionnaires with both closed and open-ended questions, to capture, among others: attitudes, values, knowledge, and experiences of corruption, willingness and readiness to fight against corruption, and perception of corruption in a number of identified agencies and companies. To enrich the data, the study also used the qualitative method, namely, in-depth interviews with key informants and focus group discussions. Besides the field work, library research was also conducted to sift through the necessary literature and to obtain secondary data on socio-economic, demographic, and other variables.

In terms of sampling, whilst it is recognized that a proper randomized sample selection throughout the country is ideal, this study opted for a quota-stratification, multi-stage sampling method as it had to take into consideration important variables, namely, ethnicity, gender, age, area of residence (urban-rural), and the sectors the targeted respondents came from. To do so, the country was first divided into six zones suited to the geography and demography of Malaysia. These zones were: Central, Northern, Southern, and Eastern in Peninsular Malaysia, and Sabah and Sarawak in East Malaysia.

A purposive decision was made on the size of the sample by taking only those aged 21 and above as respondents. This methodology was

used because it was considered to be more robust and better suited to the objectives of the study. Whilst the targeted sample was 7,000, the actual sample exceeded the figure. The respondents and the sectors they were drawn from were as follows:

Table 4.5: Respondents by Sector

Sector	No. of Respondents	% of Total Respondents
General public	2,510	33.1%
Public sector – middle-level employees	2,032	26.8%
Private sector – middle-level employees	2,089	27.5%
Political parties – leaders and members	231	3.0%
NGOs – leaders and members	237	3.1%
University students	495	6.5%
Total	7,594	100.0%

The respondents from the general public were selected at random using Malaysia's regularly updated electoral roll provided by the Election Commission as the sampling frame. However, the selection of respondents from the public and private sectors was a bit more complicated. For the public sector, 46 agencies identified as frontline agencies (such as the Police, Customs, Road & Transport Department, Immigration, Licensing Boards) were selected, and respondents were then chosen randomly from their list. Those from the private sector were taken from companies identified as those with regular dealings with the authorities (namely, those involved in such activities as construction, supply, entertainment, chemical and toxic discharge). To ensure that the objectives of the study were met, the list of these agencies and companies was drawn up with inputs from the ACA. Respondents from political parties were drawn from membership lists of both ruling and opposition parties, whilst the NGO sample was drawn from among the major NGOs in the country.

The survey was conducted as follows:

- Visiting households, in the case of members of the public;
- Visiting workplaces, for employees of both public and private sectors;
- Visiting the offices of political parties and NGOs, for party and NGO leaders and members; and
- Visiting the universities, in the case of university students.

The sample was skewed towards urban areas, which made up 80% of the sample from the general public. This was purposively done, as it is assumed that corruption is higher in urban than in rural areas.

Study team, research assistants, supervisors, and enumerators

The study team consisted of five scholars: two senior development sociologists, two criminologists, and one psychologist who is also an expert in methodology and statistical analysis. The team employed two graduate students as research assistants, four field supervisors (also graduate students), and 238 trained enumerators recruited from among university students. To ensure that the desired quality of the data would be achieved, a compulsory training workshop was conducted for all supervisors and enumerators. Further debriefing and supervision were also made during the actual fieldwork.

Accuracy and reliability of data

All the necessary measures were taken by the study team to ensure that the data collected were accurate and reliable. For this purpose, an internal consistency reliability test was conducted, using the Cronbach Alfa and Kuder Richardson formula. The validity of the questionnaire was also examined with the use of correlation procedures in the components (sub-scales) used to measure perception.

Some survey results

Some of the main findings that can be highlighted here are as follows:

- 85.1% did not give or receive bribes (thus not involved in corruption)
- 86.8% were opposed to using bribes to get things done
- 80.0% were willing and ready to cooperate to eradicate corruption
- 84.4% were prepared to give information on corruption
- 81.3% were prepared to be witnesses in court*
- 81.8% were prepared to be informants of the ACA*

* The last two sets of responses were contingent on the proviso that the respondents would be accorded protection.

Two important conclusions can be drawn from the overall survey results:

- There is a “critical mass” in society consisting of citizens who maintain strong noble values, do not indulge in corruption, and in fact strongly oppose it. They are also prepared to work with the ACA in the fight against it. It is important, therefore, that this critical mass of citizens be strengthened and expanded, and their support mobilized in the fight against corruption.
- There is a small segment of the population who condone and indulge in corruption, and are not prepared to cooperate in the fight against it. Respondents from the private sector have a higher percentage of those in this second category. It is this small proportion that must constitute the main target of anti-corruption reforms.

Recommendations of the Public Opinion Survey

The study “Public Perception of Corruption in Malaysia” was completed by the end of 2002, and a three-volume final report was submitted to the Special Cabinet Committee in January 2003. The study team also made two presentations before the Special Cabinet Committee in early 2003. Among the highly significant conclusions with serious policy implications that were highlighted in the report and the presentations were:

- The integrity of front-line agencies must be enhanced, and their capability and capacity strengthened.
- The fight against corruption cannot be left to the Government alone. It is the responsibility of all sectors as stakeholders.
- To ensure the full participation of the public as stakeholders, a culture of whistle-blowing has to be developed, and protection provided to whistle-blowers.
- The fight against corruption cannot be addressed in a piecemeal and ad hoc manner. The Government needs a holistic, comprehensive, and long-term plan to address not just corruption per se but the all-encompassing problem of ethics and integrity, as corruption is a manifestation of the decline of ethics and integrity.
- There must be a mechanism to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the anti-corruption reform agenda in which all stakeholders, irrespective of their ideological and political inclinations, can participate.

Impact on Public Policy

The conclusions and recommendations synthesized above have been adopted by the Government and a number of reforms have thus been initiated and are bearing fruits. We shall highlight below some of these important reforms.

Formulation of the National Integrity Plan (NIP)

In response to the recommendation to formulate a holistic plan to enhance integrity, the Government entrusted the same study team⁴ with the task of formulating the National Integrity Plan (NIP). The work towards formulating the NIP went into high gear following the Prime Minister's directive in November 2003 and was completed by April 2004. As stated by the Prime Minister in his foreword to the NIP, Malaysia's problem is that of "managing success". For Malaysia to be more successful, it must manage its success effectively, openly admit its weaknesses and shortcomings, and overcome them so that the country does not become a victim of its own success.

The approach used to formulate the NIP was consultative. Views from stakeholders representing various branches of the public service, the private sector, civil society organizations, media, political parties (ruling and opposition), religious groups, women's groups, trade unions, youth and student groups, minority groups, and the poor and low-income groups in both urban and rural areas were solicited. Seminars and workshops were organized to gather the views and suggestions from representatives of these various sectors. At the same time, study visits to countries that scored high on the CPI, namely, Finland, Sweden, and Australia, were made in order to study their best practices in ethics and integrity. A special visit was also made to the headquarters of Transparency International in Berlin to exchange views and obtain feedback on Malaysia's plan to formulate the NIP.

The NIP was launched by Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on 23 April 2004 in the presence of the whole Cabinet, members of the diplomatic corps, top government administrators, leaders of the private sector, political parties, NGOs, students, and members of the public. The NIP's overall objective is to realize the aspirations of Vision 2020, which are "to establish a fully moral and ethical society whose citizens are strong in religious and spiritual values and imbued with the highest ethical standards".⁵ The NIP will be implemented in five-year stages, with the

first phase being the period 2004–2008. For the first phase, the NIP has set to achieve five targets, known as Target 2008:

- Effectively reduce corruption, malpractice, and abuse of power;
- Increase the efficiency of public service delivery and overcome bureaucratic red tape;
- Enhance corporate governance and business ethics;
- Strengthen the institution of the family; and
- Improve the quality of life and people's well-being.

Establishment of the Integrity Institute of Malaysia (IIM)

The study team that formulated the NIP was also entrusted with the task of preparing the blueprint for the establishment of the Integrity Institute of Malaysia (IIM). IIM was launched at the same time as the NIP, in April 2004. IIM is an independent institution whose function is to monitor and coordinate the implementation of the NIP, devise appropriate indices to measure performance in achieving the NIP's targets, prepare annual reports on the Malaysian integrity system, hold National Integrity Day, and organize conventions of stakeholders to debate integrity issues and to seek views about how to move forward.

Led and managed by professionals, the IIM is housed in an appropriate building in Kuala Lumpur, called Menara Integriti (Integrity Tower).

Full support for the ACA to take action against the corrupt

As pointed out in the NIP, efforts to enhance integrity and eradicate corruption cannot achieve the desired results without strong political will, manifested in the willingness to act without fear or favour including against those in leadership positions in government. The Prime Minister has shown that he has such will and the courage of his convictions.

The ACA has been given a free hand to initiate investigations and recommend the prosecution of any person involved in corruption, irrespective of his or her rank. With strong support from various quarters, the ACA has been able to act more aggressively. The two high-profile arrests made late last year of a cabinet minister and a powerful former managing director of the state steel corporation, Perwaja, on charges of corruption were seen as the beginning of a sustained campaign to combat corruption at the highest levels. Other ranking politicians and state leaders have also been charged for corruption recently.

Establishment of the Anti-Corruption Academy

As part of the move to enhance the capability and capacity of the ACA, the Government has announced the formation of the Anti-Corruption Academy. Located near the IIM, the Academy is placed under the training division of the ACA, and is expected to be functional by end of 2005. As a reflection of the Government's commitment to the anti-corruption reform agenda, the Public Services Department has approved 116 posts (officers and staff) for the Academy. The Academy, which is planned as a regional training centre for Asia-Pacific, will train officers from the ACA and their counterparts from neighboring countries in various sophisticated techniques and skills such as forensic engineering, investigations of money laundering and computer fraud, and audit trails. ACA's close proximity to the IIM will facilitate cooperation between the two institutions and the sharing of resources as a regional centre in their common endeavor to enhance integrity and stamp out corruption.

Witness protection program

The study "Public Perception of Corruption in Malaysia" concluded that Malaysians would be willing to cooperate in various efforts in the war against corruption if there were incentives for whistle-blowing and a witness protection program were instituted. To this end, the Government is working on a draft bill on witness protection to be tabled in Parliament soon.

Intensified fight against political corruption in the ruling party

Money politics or political corruption has been endemic in UMNO, Malaysia's ruling party. To combat this scourge, the Prime Minister, who is also UMNO President, has ordered tough action against political corruption within the ranks of his own party. Whilst earlier actions against the lower party ranks were seen as only acting against "the small fry", the six-year suspension from the party imposed on UMNO Vice-President Mohd. Isa Abdul Samad—a cabinet minister and the third-most-senior party leader—for breaching party discipline by indulging in vote buying in the September 2004 party elections indicates that Abdullah is keeping to his promise to root out corruption not only in the government but also in his party, and to act against "the big fish".

The impact of the action was best summed up by a front-page editorial in the UMNO-aligned mainstream daily, *Utusan Malaysia*, on 27 June 2005,

which stated that the action against Mohd. Isa showed “political courage” on the part of Abdullah, and gave new hope to efforts to root out political corruption within the ruling UMNO. It argued further that, “after action has been taken against Mohd. Isa, there is no stopping to effect further actions. This cleansing act cannot stop as long as the situation [in UMNO] is not fully clean.... The fight [against corruption] has to be waged to the finish”.

At the same time, the Prime Minister has also introduced the Key Performance Index (KPI), which is an instrument to measure the effectiveness of Members of Parliament from the ruling party in delivering the public goods.

Reform of the police force

The study “Public Perception of Corruption in Malaysia” also proposed that the Government enhance the integrity of front-line agencies and strengthen their capability and capacity. In this regard, to improve and strengthen the Malaysian police force—the foremost law enforcement agency that has been criticized for abuses of power, violations of human rights, and corruption—Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi, who is also Minister for Internal Security, proposed the setting up of the Royal Commission to Enhance the Operation and Management of the Royal Malaysia Police. The proposals of the perception study were a catalyst. The Royal Commission, which came into effect on 4 February 2004, is headed by the former Chief Judge, Tun Mohammed Dzaiddin Haji Abdullah. In its tour of duty, it traveled the length and breadth of the country to hold public hearings where the people could air their views on the police, and submitted its report to the Government in early 2005.

The report takes note of the changes in the political and social environment governing policing, namely, “the rapid development and empowerment of civil society”, “greater consciousness regarding issues affecting human rights”, as well as rights of women and children; “expectations of better service from public agencies including the police”; “demands for greater transparency and accountability from government”; as well as “the trend towards engaging civil society and the private sector in policy making and governance”.⁶

The Commission hopes that the recommendations in the report will achieve the strategic objective of transforming “the Royal Malaysia Police into a world class, twenty-first century organization that is efficient, clean and trustworthy, dedicated to serving the people and the nation with integrity and respect for human rights” (p. 8). A number of the

Commission's recommendations are now being implemented by the Government.

Integrity in national planning

In line with the objectives of the NIP to strengthen the foundation of the society and nation, integrity must become a culture and be embedded in the activities and programs of the Government and also of various sectors of society. It is therefore historic that for the first time in Malaysian history, a chapter titled "Good Governance for Development" is being included in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006–2010), which is in the final drafting stage. This proposal by the IIM to include such a chapter in the Plan will ensure that development planning takes good governance into account.

Conclusion

All the above measures, namely, the launching of the NIP and the IIM, as well as the Royal Commission's report on reforming the police force, have been received with great enthusiasm by various quarters, have captured the imagination of the people, and have affected public policy. The accolade given by the president of the Malaysian Institute of Business Ethics to the NIP, calling it "the best document to have emerged since Malaysia's independence", may sound a bit exaggerated. However, it does reflect the "feel good" mood and the high expectations the people place on the NIP and various other reforms the Government is undertaking.

The various reform measures undertaken by Malaysia have also attracted positive responses from international agencies including Transparency International. As TI Asia and Pacific director Peter Rooke said in an interview with the *New Straits Times* (23 August 2005, p. 2), the country has made much positive progress lately. "We always stress that leadership is essential in fighting corruption, so we are delighted that Abdullah has made curbing corruption a priority issue for his administration." He also welcomed the establishment of the Integrity Institute of Malaysia and the Anti-Corruption Academy as positive developments.

Bearing all the above in mind, we can say with certainty that the public opinion survey on corruption in Malaysia and its recommendations have fulfilled its objective of generating commitment to set in motion a train of interrelated reform measures that will have far-reaching consequences

for the country's progress. We are confident that all these measures will contribute positively towards combating corruption and enhancing integrity in Malaysia, and towards improving its global competitiveness.

Notes:

The author served as adviser on the team that did research on public perceptions of corruption in Malaysia, in 2001/2002. He also headed the team that formulated the National Integrity Plan and the blueprint for the setting up of the Integrity Institute of Malaysia referred to in this paper.

- ¹ Eighth Malaysia Plan, 2001–2005. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers. Page 35.
- ² Public Perception of Corruption in Malaysia. 2003. Final report in three volumes submitted to the Special Cabinet Committee on Government Management Integrity.
- ³ The team consisted of Professor Rahimah Aziz (development sociologist/team leader), Professor Abdul Rahman Embong (development sociologist/adviser), Associate Professor Rokiah Ismail (criminologist), Associate Professor Iran Herman (psychologist), and Mohamad Zaki Ibrahim (criminologist). All are from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, except for Iran Herman, who is from Universiti Utara Malaysia.
- ⁴ The team consisted of Professor Abdul Rahman Embong (leader), Professor Rahimah Aziz (deputy leader), Associate Professor Rashila Ramli, and Mohamad Zaki Ibrahim. Associate Professor Rokiah Ismail from the earlier team participated in the beginning stages but then withdrew from the team for health reasons.
- ⁵ National Integrity Plan. 2004. Kuala Lumpur: Institut Integriti Malaysia. Pages vii, 18.
- ⁶ Report of the Royal Commission to Enhance the Operation and Management of the Royal Malaysia Police. 2005. Submitted to the Government of Malaysia.

The Minxin website: Connecting government and the citizens in the People's Republic of China

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The Minxin website (literal meaning: a website that reflects people's aspirations) is a website platform on the internet set up by the Liaoning provincial government to release the results of the settlement of cases reported by the people, to answer the people's inquiries, to correct wrongdoings that impair people's benefits, to make government affairs public, and to create a good environment for economic development. Since the Minxin website was officially opened to the public on 21 May 2004, more than 500,000 people have visited it, more than 32,000 items of information have been issued on the site, and 8,767 reports and appeals have been accepted through the site. It has proved to be a strong information link between the government and the public.

Characteristics of the Minxin Website

The website combines supervision by special supervision agencies with public supervision. It provides the public with a convenient, fast, and efficient way of supervision. By filling appeals and sending in email and comments through the "Appeal Window and Comments" box, citizens can raise their problems at the "Minxin Forum". Under each item of information, there is an "I Want to Appeal" button, enabling people to send in reports and appeals easily. They can also click on the "Contact Us" button for the address and contact details of the relevant governmental agencies. "Open Government Affairs" lists the responsibilities, mission, and contact details of all provincial agencies. All the submitted reports and appeals are entered into the working programs of the supervision agencies, which, in turn, give feedback on the Minxin website as to how the reports and appeals have been handled.

The website aims to solve problems, and has helped to set up a coordination mechanism between government agencies. An appeal submitted through the Minxin website is handled in five ways: (1) direct handling or referral – the government discipline office investigates and

handles serious complaints, passes other complaints to the relevant departments, and sets deadlines for settlement; (2) concentrated handling – the departments that handle the various complaints hold coordination meetings; (3) oversight of the case – the government discipline office directly supervises the handling of specific problems; (4) direct referral – for some problems, the government discipline office gives direct instructions to the relevant departments and supervises their progress; and (5) follow-up supervision – for cases that were not satisfactorily handled, the relevant departments are asked to re-examine them until they are satisfactorily dealt with. Once every season, the Minxin website holds a herald meeting of all relevant departments to exchange information, discuss problems, and find solutions. The website has now established a system of acceptance, referral, rectification, feedback, solicitation, and follow-up supervision.

The assisting mechanism was set up to improve the performance and decision making of the Government with the support of a software analysis system. By developing and employing the “Minxin Web”, we collected and analyzed various messages, and put forward methods and suggestions for improvement to the Government and relevant authorities to solve the problems. The analysis of those messages provided a relatively objective basis for general decision making and detailed administration. For example, from a comprehensive analysis of appeals and other messages sent in during the second quarter of 2005, we found that property management problems accounted for most problems in the construction industry. The 70 property management cases brought to our attention through the website represented 19.4% of all complaints related to the construction industry. Twenty-four cases were about unreasonable charges in higher education; these made up 16.9% of all cases concerning unreasonable educational charges. Illegal medicare advertisements were the most serious problem mentioned in complaints about the medicare system. On the basis of these findings, the provincial government decided to focus on the improvement of the three areas in the second half of 2005.

To involve the public, we collected evaluations of government and relevant authorities from people from all walks of life through “Minxin Web”, and obtained quite meaningful results. Direct feedback from the public, through open evaluation, helped us to understand people’s aspirations in a timely manner. We could also sense their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the performance of government, and pass on our findings to the relevant authorities. So far in 2005, we have collected more than 1,200 evaluation messages on various issues, including about 400

expressing satisfaction with the work of government, more than 200 suggesting improvements, and more than 600 complaining about certain problems. These messages were of great help in standardizing the activities of government and improving its work style.

This mechanism of communication between government and the public was established with the goal of forming a more harmonious society. The Internet boasts the advantages of wide coverage, strong interactivity, and long life of messages. "Minxin Web" is therefore a good platform for government to communicate and interact with the public. It provides opportunities for the public to express their opinions and thus ensures their right to participate, give suggestions, and make choices. The relevant authorities, after some investigation, reply directly to the complainant if he or she can be reached, and the results are publicized on the Web so the public can evaluate them and make comments. If the results are not satisfactory to the complainant and the general public, the authorities go over the issue another time. This kind of interaction is based on equality between the government and the citizens, and they share all the information available. It especially reflects the mission of the government, that is, to govern for the people. "Minxin Web" has changed the concept of supervision from a one-way process to consensus building and cooperation in solving problems.

Effect of the Minxin Website

Under direct public scrutiny, problems detrimental both to the interests of the citizens and economic development have been rectified effectively and on time. In one case, the Department of Communication in a certain county was accused of abusing its contractual and temporary workers. The provincial government immediately sent staff to investigate, and imposed disciplinary punishment on five people who were held accountable. In another case, someone complained about the unreasonable fees charged at one middle school. The complaint was verified through inspection. The staff responsible for overcharging was removed from office. In still another case, some people reported that civil servants had embezzled the money collected from the sale of "World Expo" postcards. After the charges were substantiated, the civil servants who were found guilty were removed from their positions, and were required to give back the money they had stolen. "Minxin Web" has so far received 5,095 complaints on infringement of people's interests, 1,135 of which have been solved. Eighty-five percent of the people declared themselves satisfied with the handling of these complaints. We have sent

621 feedback messages through the feedback column on the website, and have replied directly to the complainants in 85 cases. We reported the results of 329 cases to the provincial government and relevant authorities as requested, gave feedback on the rectification of 651 complaints, imposed punishment on 42 civil servants for violating the discipline of the Party. We punished 61 people for violating political discipline, removed two of them from their function and fired four others. The illicit money confiscated reached RMB 964.000, while CYN 6174.000 in unreasonable charges was returned.

More prominent problems were resolved through the regular analysis of complaints. After the opening of "Minxin Web", complaints pertained mainly to the following: poor services from administrative departments (762 cases, or 37.13% of the total), abuse of power in law enforcement departments (531 cases, 25.87%), unreasonable charges in education (396 cases, 19.30%), poor services in service departments (101 cases, 4.92%), and corruption in medicine procurement and medicare (86 cases, 1.70%). We also adjusted our emphasis from time to time. From March to April 2005, many citizens complained that commercial and industrial departments charged membership fees from private enterprises. We received 58 complaints of this kind. The Rectifying Office of the provincial government suggested rectifying this problem immediately after careful analysis. The Industrial and Commercial Bureau of Zhejiang Province held several meetings to solve the problem, and decided to let businessmen join the association on a voluntary basis. Authorities should not force individuals to join the association or require them to pay membership fees. In the first quarter of 2005, we focused on the rectification of the following four problems: private companies being forced to pay membership fees in industry associations, overcharging for the processing of ID cards, unreasonable charging by Public Security authorities, and unreasonable charging for tutoring by teachers. All these problems have been basically solved.

The Minxin website has fully played its role of educating, guiding, and setting an example. The Department of Construction is a model entity for handling complaints. The head of the department personally took charge of rebuilding the department's work style by discussing a suggested solution with supervisors and formulating a system for the quick, high-quality, and satisfactory handling of complaints. The Rectifying Group was led by the director of the Public Security Department and leaders of other departments, whose serious attitude and honest working style set a good example for other departments and industries. At present, the rectifying network and administrative revamping at the provincial,

city, and county levels, under the leadership of the provincial government, have been established in construction, environmental protection, and public security systems.

The connection between the government and the citizens has been strengthened by the well-run channel for complaints. One citizen in Jinzhou sent a letter of thanks to the Rectifying Committee of the province. He wrote: "I complained about a hospital in Jinzhou on the web in July, and the hospital and Sanitary Bureau of our city called me two days ago. They promised to inspect the issue carefully. I had never been expecting any reply simply by complaining on the Net before that, and they did report my complaints to relevant authorities. I want to say 'Thank You!' to 'Minxin Web'. That hospital called me today, and told me the inspection result solemnly, and they even asked to apologize to me in person. From this experience, I know this web is not established in name only. It is established to serve the people."

A company in another place also sent an appreciation letter, which read: "The anti-corruption activities of the provincial Rectifying Committee, and the Technology Supervisory Bureau of Liaoning protected the legal rights of businessmen from elsewhere. We are very confident in continuing our business here."

The letters of thanks and the warm remarks clearly reflect people's belief in the government and the close relations between them.