

PRESS RELEASE

Phnom Penh, 24 November 2020

A report released today by Transparency International reveals that citizens across 17 countries in Asia report stagnant or rising levels of corruption, undermining equitable access to public services and trust in government.

The report, **Global Corruption Barometer – Asia**, finds that three-quarters of respondents believe that government corruption is a big problem in their country, with nearly one in five people (19 per cent) paying a bribe when accessing public services in the previous year. This is equivalent to about 836 million people.

The GCB is one of the largest, most detailed surveys of citizens' views on corruption and experiences of bribery in 17 countries across the region. The GCB surveyed nearly 20,000 people in Asia from March 2019 – September 2020.

In Cambodia, the survey was conducted via telephone interviews from June to July. The results of this GCB 2020 show the improvement of public perception toward corruptions in comparison with the previous report, released in 2016. However, the 2020 report also reveals that most of the people still believed corruption exists within the judiciary, the police and government institutions. In addition, the results indicate that bribery remains prevalent within certain key public services of the country.

In the 2016 GCB, for example, only 28 per cent of respondents thought that the level of corruption in Cambodia had decreased while 66 per cent believed it either remained the same or had increased. In the 2020 GCB, on the other hand, 55 per cent of respondents perceived the level of corruption to have declined while the other 41 per cent believed it remained unchanged or had risen. Although public perceptions toward corruption in Cambodia have improved, the results of the survey demonstrate that the judiciary, the police and government officials continue to be viewed as the most corrupt institutions or groups. For example, 89 per cent of the respondents believe corruptions exists among police officials, followed by government officials 72 per cent and Judiciary 72 per cent.

As far as experience of corruption is concerned, the results show that bribery continues to be widespread within some public services. For instance, 37 percent of respondents who used public services in the past 12 months said they had paid a bribe to access the services. Of those who said they had paid a bribe, 40 percent said they had bribed to get documents or ID cards, and 38 percent said they had bribed the police.

From the public involvement standpoint, 68 per cent of those interviewed believed ordinary people can make a difference in the fight against corruption. Nevertheless, the results of the survey suggest that there exist significant barriers preventing and discouraging people from participating in such activity. For instance, only 2.5 percent of those who paid bribes to access public services said they had reported corruption. In addition, only 38% of respondents believed that citizens could provide information about corruption without fear, while 57% think that they were afraid of possible retaliation.

“Corruption continues to undermine the rule of law and access to justice. It is also a major impediment to investment in Cambodia,” said Pech Pisey, Executive Director of Transparency International Cambodia. “As the country is experiencing multiple crises caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the partial withdrawal of EBA, and a sharp contraction in the economy, reducing corruption in the public sectors is a prerequisite to increasing effectiveness in public service deliveries, promoting investment, and maintaining economic stability as well as enhancing access to social justice,” he continued.

Transparency International Cambodia continues to call upon Government to accelerate efforts to eradicate all forms of corruption in the public sector, to empower and enhance citizen participation in the fight against corruption, and to ensure that they can report corruption without fear through the adoption of the Law on Access to Information and the Law of Whistleblowers Protection that meet international standards.

Transparency International 2020 GCB interviewed 1,000 telephone interviews on their perceptions and experiences of corruption in Cambodia from June 19 to July 25, 2020.

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Transparency International is the civil society organisation leading the fight against corruption