



## **Private Sector and Civil Society Partnerships Against Corruption in Africa**

***Assessing the Medium- and Long-Term Socio-Economic Impact of the UNODC Civil Society***

***Team's Small Grants Scheme***

**Authors:**

Aizhamal Rakhmetova, The Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education

Lukács Hayes, Central European University Budapest

Muhammad Hamza Amin, University of Vienna

**Agency:** United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

**Mentors:** Viktorija Nesterovaite & Neil Wilcock

**Counsels:** Hakob Matevosyan & Elisa Orlando

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## **Abstract**

The primary aim of our study was to assess the medium- and long-term impact of the Small Grants Scheme. The SGS was a continent-wide initiative in which 26 African Civil Society Organizations received a small grant from UNODC's Civil Society Team in an effort to build awareness around corruption in partnership with the Private Sector. After resorting to the existing literature on the topic of corruption and anti-corruption initiatives, with particular attention to the role of African Civil Society as a driving force for political change, we develop the scope of our empirical inquiry. By using a mixed-method approach, we are able to assess both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the implementation and impact of the SGS by relying on the self-assessment of CSOs through a survey study. We find that immediate impact (and outreach) of the SGS was relatively significant, although differences in impact measurement make it hard to assess the overall impact comparatively. While the medium- and long-term impact of the SGS is only marginal, because of the limited nature of financial resources and limited time for implementation. Based on these findings, we provide recommendations as a conclusion of our study

Keywords: corruption in Africa, civil society, private sector, partnership, impact, awareness, UNCAC.

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## List of Abbreviations

Civil Society Organization	CSO
United Nations	UN
United Nations Convention against Corruption	UNCAC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	UNODC
Small Grants Scheme	SGS
Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises	SME's

# Private Sector and Civil Society Partnerships against Corruption in Africa

## *Assessing the Medium- and Long-Term Socio-Economic Impact of the UNODC Civil Society Team's Small Grants Scheme*

Aizhamal Rakhmetova, Lukács Hayes, Muhammad Hamza Amin

### **1. Introduction**

Combating corruption in Africa has gained domestic and international interest. The leading combatants in this battle, including the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU) and Transparency International (TI) amongst others, have recognized the vital role of non-state actors and civil society organizations (CSOs) in the fight against corruption. The UN, through its global anti-corruption instrument, the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), obliges parties to adopt suitable measures to promote the active involvement of persons and groups aside from the public sector in the continuous fight against corruption (see, in particular, article. 12, 13). Examples include the general public, non-governmental organizations, and local community organizations, alongside members of the private sector, which can play a fundamental role in raising public awareness regarding the cause, existence, and gravity of the crime and the threats posed by it.

According to the 2018 Corruption Perception Index, the majority of African countries are severely exposed to corruption. Thus, the question of effective anti-corruption policies is crucial for the African continent we consider within our research. The anti-corruption initiative that we focus on in this study is a project called "Small Grants Scheme" (SGS) has been conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) team between 2012-2019. This project has been providing funding support to African CSOs, at a local and community level, which work in the area of anti-corruption with the private sector to sensitize Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) on UNCAC and its implementation.

This question represents an important topic to study for several reasons. First, from a policy perspective, it can shed light on whether initiatives like the SGS are effective in terms of creating lasting impacts to achieve socio-economic sustainability. Second, it can help to understand how participating CSOs struggling against corruption themselves measure their

impact, and to explore what barriers they might encounter along with the implementation of the SGS project. Third, from an academic point of view, our research can contribute to the vast body of literature that investigates how external intervention can influence community-level socio-economic development (Nunn and Qian, 2014; Becker et al., 2018).

The focus of this research paper is to evaluate the impact and implementation of the SGS carried out by the UNODC Civil Society Team and its lasting impact on socio-economic sustainability in the participating African communities. To conduct the study, we designed a survey questionnaire for the participating CSOs that included both closed and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was conducted with the representatives of the CSOs that participated in the SGS. We used qualitative content analysis and quantitative descriptive analysis to understand the effectiveness of the SGS as an instrument in the fight against corruption.

Two indicators that we will use to assess the (medium and long-term) socio-economic impact of the SGS are: 1. The building up and expanding public awareness; 2. The establishment and maintenance of partnerships between civil society and the private sector. The paper is structured as follows. First, we review the existing literature on corruption in general. We will then explore the research on civil society in Africa through the works of academic scholars and regional experts, and by building on reports and policy documents. Later, we elaborate on the literature covering corruption in Africa and what role civil society and the private sector play in anti-corruption initiatives. Here, we will offer our theoretical framework. Second, we introduce the methodology that was used to analyze the medium- and long-term socio-economic impact of the SGS, elaborating on concepts and definitions, sampling, data collection, methods of analysis, and limitations. Thirdly, we discuss our findings, and finally, we conclude our paper by reflecting on the most critical aspects of our research.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Recognizing Corruption as an Insidious Plague**

The UNCAC opens with “Corruption is an insidious plague that has a wide range of corrosive effects on societies. It undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to violations of human rights, distorts markets, erodes the quality of life and allows organized crime,

terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish” (UNODC, 2004: p. 3). Corruption is a severe obstacle for countries at all levels of development to achieve viable economic, social, and political change. Businesses are sacrificing creativity and competition for patronage, whereas individuals across governments are diverting funds for their private use, which should be used to uplift society. Therefore, corruption has largely contributed to the sharp increase in income and wealth inequality that we have seen in recent decades (OECD, 2016c). Although corruption is an essential topic to study, the research in the area is complicated by the challenge of measurement and diverse fields of corruption.

Past literature demonstrates diverse factors facilitating corruption including, Economic, (such as artificial growth rates, unaccounted accumulation of wealth, trade transparency, sources of profits, illegal circulation, etc.) Political (For example, various political systems and social dynamics; accountability relations; meritocracy vs. patronage); and Sociological (socio-cultural rationale, gift-giving, networks of solidarity) (Zaum, 2013).

This illustrates the nature of corruption collectively rather than merely individually. Abuse goes far beyond the pursuit of private gain since those involved in it try to expand deeper interests and benefits (e.g. family, community, political party, etc.). It is, therefore, critical not only to conceptualize corruption as an issue between a principal and an agency but also as an opportunity for collective action. The relationship between various (formal and informal) financial, political, and social entities in (re)creating corruption and the incentive programs and constraints they generate is essential (Hanna, et al. 2011). Corruption in the public and private sectors is a crucial obstacle to the successful delivery of services and a barrier to economic growth and development. Therefore, practitioners, policymakers, and world leaders need to promote economic growth initiatives and corruption reduction efforts.

### **Anti-Corruption Initiatives & Role of Civil Society in Africa**

The UNCAC is an international instrument, promoted by the UNODC and negotiated by the UN itself, requiring state parties to implement several anti-corruption measures (UNODC, 2019). The instrument has 186 party signatories from countries all over the world, and it focuses on five main areas of fighting corruption: prevention, law enforcement, international cooperation, asset recovery, and information exchange (UNODC, 2019). The primary goal is to reduce various types of corruption, such as trading in influence and abuse of power, as well

as corruption in the private sector (Argandoña 2007, p. 483). Schatz (2013, p. 161) writes that donors and governments have been increasingly looking towards the civil society for fighting corruption in public administration. Other scholars address the importance of civil society by describing it as the 'Third Force' and the 'Third Sphere', a critical ingredient in the fight against corruption (Quah 2006, p. 940).

In the liberal political tradition, civil society is located in the public domain (Robison, 2016). In the late '80s, early '90s, several protests took place in many African countries, participants, and organizers being civil servants, students, trade unions, churches, etc., creating the basis for political opposition in undemocratic systems (Kew and Oshikoya, 2014). Since then, in the past years, the role of local (and international) CSOs grew significantly (Essoungou, 2013), due to increasing financial support from foreign aiders (e.g. UN), remaining very crucial in supporting civil society in Africa today (Robinson, 2016).

International funding for African CSOs is somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, it offers crucial financial means to sustain activities. It makes it possible for organizations to be independent of the state; on the other, they come at a cost: e.g., administrative burdens, and sometimes even the loss of autonomy due to differential goals of international and domestic actors (Kew and Oshikoya, 2014). International funders need to be careful not to undermine the autonomy and legitimacy of local organizations and actors (Robinson, 2016). Some complications related to funding: the CSOs are not always ready to effectively use large amounts of available resources; sufficient financing might not be the most important factor in reaching a robust civil society. It is hard to assess the impact these CSOs have on creating a plural society (Robinson, 2016). Yet CSOs in Africa are vital in holding governments accountable, and in several cases, in providing basic services (such as education, healthcare, humanitarian aid, etc.) when the local authorities fail to do so (Forje, 2013). Despite significant international assistance, these local CSOs face substantial challenges when they are fighting, e.g., against corruption, with harassment endangering workers of the civil sector (judicial and informal), sometimes even resulting in direct threats to their lives (Essoungou, 2013).

CSOs share many of the same goals in tackling social, political, and economic issues present in their countries (Forje, 2013). However, some governments in Africa cracked down on civil society workers in an attempt to silence them and limit their ability to carry out their activities. This has happened in recent years in countries like South Sudan, Burundi, Sudan, Niger,



Uganda, Gabon (USAID, 2018). According to Yeh (2011, p. 629), checks on corruption in the form of domestic laws and institutions have been ineffective in Africa. He warns that the experiences of Uganda and Tanzania suggest that African leaders are far too powerful to permit the establishment of genuinely independent anti-corruption commissions within their domestic governmental arrangements (Yeh 2011, p. 637). Accordingly, dialogue-based advocacy, and public awareness and a well-organized and empowered civil society with international and domestic legal freedom, resources, and links are expected to contribute significantly to the struggle against all forms of corruption in Africa (OECD, 2018).

There have been several instances in recent years where significant obstacles were lifted to let CSOs operate more openly. Governments of Ethiopia, Angola, Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Rwanda have all provided more freedom for CSOs than what had existed previously (USAID, 2018). A country where civil society has been quite strong for many years is Ghana, where democratic institutions are stable; thus, CSOs can flourish, although mostly lacking the influence to have an effect on governmental policy (Kew and Oshikoya, 2014). Furthermore, in the past two decades in countries like South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Tunisia (during the Arab Spring in 2011) and Senegal, anti-corruption CSOs have successfully stood up to respective governments in efforts to fight corruption (Essoungou, 2013).

Although the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating corruption under article 12 calls on African states to provide an enabling environment for civil society and the media to 'hold governments to be transparent and accountable in the management of public affairs', little progress has been recorded in this regard (Kaufmann, 2006). Yeh (2011) acknowledges that the UN inspectors should be appointed to investigate and prosecute corruption in Africa. It is understood that civil society is needed for anti-corruption, and there are some successful examples where CSOs have achieved excellent results. But, little progress has been made in these cases, some scholars suggest that further support by international or intergovernmental can be helpful.

### **The Effectiveness of Anti-Corruption Initiatives & Good Practices**

There is a body of scientific evidence, which focuses on the influence of organized civil society on corruption, indicating that mobilizing and engaging CSOs helps to reduce corruption.

However, the impact is not always clear and highly dependent on the circumstances under which they work (UKAID, 2015).

Coordinated civil society helps to reinforce structures of social responsibility by promoting direct action (Mansuri and Rao, 2013; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2013). They also act as intermediaries between government and public to create more productive relationships; increase public expectations about public officials ' performance and mobilize civilians to track the government (Chalmers and Setiyono, 2012; Peruzzotti, 2007).

Mungiu-Pippidi (2013) finds a strong statistical correlation between the per capita number of CSOs and the prevention of corruption. However, there has been some critique on the role played by modern civil society that it is exceedingly fragmented. As the group, it can be unliberal, anti-democratic, militant, or even progressive, democratic, and nonviolent. There are various groups, with broadly different agendas, that inhabit a systemic space that can be characterized as international civil society (Rana, 2016) (Wild, 2006). There are not always matching views of the civil society, but instead numerous, often profoundly conflicting views. More generally, there have been legitimate concerns whereby international CSOS have ambiguous decision-making methods or hardly make widely available records of their activities. There are several signs that bogus NGOs are increasing to reap the benefits of international development funds or post-disaster relief resources available (Wild, 2006). This is substantiated by the Development Research Center (2011) premised on case studies conducted in 30 countries, indicating that what matters is not only the presence or absence of CSOs but also what the organizations are doing and how they are doing it.

CSOs always could form alliances with other actors (including institutions of government, private sector, and other CSOs). Such coalitions are, in effect, critical for establishing strong networks of accountability (Baviskar, 2008; Chalmers and Setiyono, 2012). For instance, comparable to social accountability systems in particular, once implemented into formalized institutional structures, civil society is often more effective. That would include regulation that improves transparency, collaborative governance, and efficient institutions of horizontal accountability (e.g., lawmaking commissions or state prosecution). In addition, the role of civil society is influenced by the existence of these institutional structures, which must have rational authority and sufficiency to improve policy performance (UKAID, 2015).

Through a systematic review procedure by EPPI-Centre, compelling evidence has been found that auditing and expectation-based interventions (both financial and non-financial) can reduce corruption by increasing the risk and cost of corruption involvement, at least in the short term. Besides financial incentives, it can also be a valuable incentive to reduce corruption by using media sources to publicize corruption activities (awareness efforts on corruption activities in the sample countries) (Hanna, et al. 2011).

Conclusively, scientific evidence is mixed on the types of anti-corruption measures, which efficiently help to reduce corrupt practices, as it is difficult to prove causal effects. Whereas many elements of the highly complex challenge of corruption have already been discussed in a variety of scientific studies by different stakeholders, the majority of these works leave out concerns such as the process for self-assessment of anti-corruption initiatives by CSOs in the UNCAC framework. These questions are highly relevant to the comprehensive picture of anti-corruption efforts around the world.

### **Important Concepts and Definitions**

To start building our research, we need to establish essential concepts and terms that we will use in our study. First, we define the term "Civil Society Organization". According to the 2007–2008 Advisory Group also adopted by the OECD: "[CSOs] can be defined to include all non-market and non-state organizations outside of the family in which people organize themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain. Examples include community-based organizations and village associations, environmental groups, women's rights groups, farmers' associations, faith-based organizations, labor unions, co-operatives, professional associations, chambers of commerce, independent research institutes, and the not-for-profit media." (OECD, 2018, p. 2)

A second relevant term that demands consideration is "Corruption". The UNCAC does not provide a particular notion of this phenomenon. Transparency International (TI) defines corruption as follows: "Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It can be classified as grand, petty, and political, depending on the amounts of money lost and the sector where it occurs" (Transparency International, 2019, p.1). It is a complicated, forceful, and multi-faceted phenomenon that is capable of taking different forms. Although, it has become possible to record the real experiences of people with corruption (mainly bribery)

through empirical research and provide accurate estimates of the theft of public funds and credibly measure some of the effects of corruption on, for example, private sector. There are still some major types of corruption that continue to elude accurate measurements, such as patronage and large-scale corruption (UKAID, 2015).

There are various approaches and literature concerning corruption in numerous academic fields. However, it is most widely referenced in political science, international relations, and micro-macro economics. In order to embed our research into existing academic and non-academic literature, and to familiarize ourselves with the challenges of fighting corruption in Africa, we will use a conceptual framework to research anti-corruption initiatives backed by empirical research.

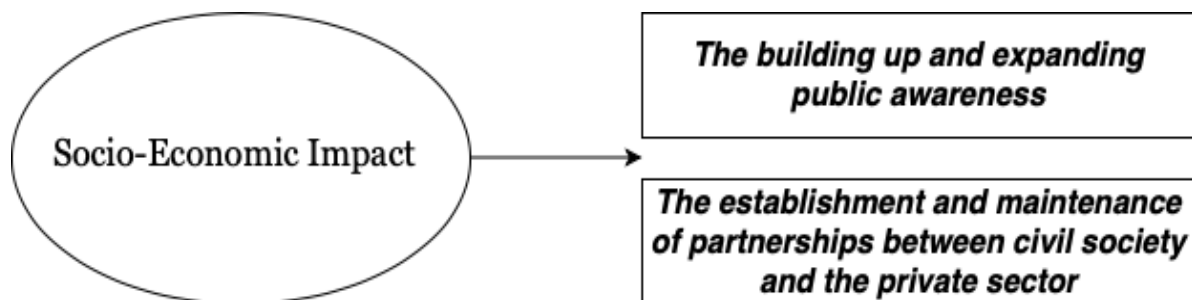
### **Conceptual Framework**

There is an inherent contradiction in fighting corruption on a domestic level, although practically all UN Member States have signed the (legally binding) UNCAC agreement aimed at tackling corruption in their respective countries; often, it is government representatives (politicians or bureaucrats) who are responsible for corrupt practices in the first place. This contradiction can only be resolved by independent actors who can act as checks on governmental authority in the fight against corruption (on every level). The two most important independent stakeholders of such kind are the civil society and the private sector.

These two actors could have sufficient resources (though resources are always scarce) and motivation to challenge corrupt behavior on all levels of government. They also have the potential to be balancing forces of power, countering arbitrary behavior. This is precisely why our research focuses on the anti-corruption efforts of these two-key stakeholders from the CSOs perspective. It is important to note that even if we observe institutions, the respondents that are representing these institutions are individuals. The main inquiry includes: How effective was the Small Grants Scheme? How were they able to use their resources respectively? How are they able to establish instances of cooperation? And in what ways can international actors (such as the UN) help them in building partnerships in the fight against corruption?

To answer these questions with an empirical inquiry, we attempt to capture the socio-economic impact of the UN SGS in Africa. To conceptualize, we inevitably have to outline what

is “impact”. Although several methodologies, such as the Poverty and Social Impact Analysis used by the United Nations Development Program, permit civil society participation, no efforts have been made to conceptualize the premise of anti-corruption impacts. Thus, the absence of an established research body evaluating the impacts of CSOs enables us to suggest an impact concept that would be meaningful to our analysis. For this study, we describe “impact” to achieve a certain anti-corruption goal as a result of a long-term and comprehensive activity (Themudo, 2012; Malena & Heinrich 2007). This study will consider the systematic and substantive analysis of the eventual outcome under the “impact assessment” in both a comprehensive way and in a way that seeks to understand the causal relationship between the action conducted and the outcome itself. Two indicators that we will use to assess the (medium and long-term) socio-economic impact of the SGS are the following: **1. The building up and expanding public awareness; 2. The establishment and maintenance of partnerships between civil society and the private sector.**



### 3. Methodology

#### Data Collection and Methods

The paper seeks to study the impact of the SGS and the approaches of different anti-corruption initiatives taken by the CSOs in Africa. The aim is to assess the CSOs effect on the fight against corruption in a given community. The political, demographic, and historical characteristics of the CSO participants are shared as they are all based in Africa. Therefore, our research assumes that CSOs are facing similar hurdles in these countries, which will improve the explanatory power of comparison and render it somewhat vulnerable to uncontrolled factors. With the support of our UN mentors, we reached out to 26 CSOs in Africa. UNODC made the initial contact over email, and we carried on the correspondence online once the organization responded.

Step 1. Designing a survey that included both open and close-ended questions.

We created a questionnaire that was sent to all participating groups. The questionnaire can be found in the appendix.

Step 2. Sending survey as well as consent forms to the twenty-six CSOs participated in the SGS via emails.

The questionnaire discusses the statistical descriptions of the organizations, their legal structure, the number of employees, and the particulars of the anti-corruption initiatives during SGS and afterward. We also asked CSOs to expand on their presumed place in society and the key priorities. Most relevantly, it contains questions about how organizations evaluate their successes and how they interact with the private sector — their opinions on SGS and what can be improved.

Step 3. Re-sending survey and consent form to the CSOs that have not replied after a month.

Step 4. Systematically organizing the answers to the surveys in one database.

We have created clusters after analyzing data collected from our sample via CSOs completing our surveys. We aimed to acquire more in-depth data on the medium- and long-term effects of the SGS in the fight against corruption, and by focusing on representative cases for different regions and different types of CSOs, our inquiry could produce more comprehensive results. The theoretical background guided the survey questions.

### **Data Analysis**

To analyze the survey, we use the thematic content analysis as well as Microsoft Excel to categorize and statistically present the data. For the quantitative part of the study, we present the statistics from closed-ended questions that reflect the trends we observe in the data. The thematic content analysis approach helps us find shared commonalities in the data set. This procedure is especially useful to find patterns that are then identified, categorized, and coded to uncover themes. The data analysis for qualitative research follows the steps recommended by Creswell (2018). The author highlighted that qualitative data analysis should proceed from the specific to the general through a five-step approach. First being data preparation, second

is reviewing selected data, the third step is the coding of the data, the fourth step is generating themes from the coded data, and the final stage is building a representation of the theme. It takes the form of narrative passages to convey the results logically and coherently.

### **Challenges and Limitations**

Our main challenge was our geographical distance from the CSOs that participated in the SGS. All our data collection was conducted online, which could have potentially led to a high number of non-responders. However, our response rate is 50%, which is relatively high. Another challenge was that part of the SGS was carried out several years ago; thus, we could have faced a situation where people coordinating the project have already left their respective organizations. To contest this, we included a sub-questionnaire, which focused specifically on the respondent (representative of the CSO), making sure that we get to know whether responses are reliable or not. The vast majority of the respondents were present in the CSOs during the SGS. Another challenge from the SGS being implemented quite a while ago was that we have to build our study on the recall data, which potentially can be not precise. Furthermore, as our data collection relied entirely on self-assessment and participated CSOs received funding through the program, there is most likely bias involved; thus, we had to account for this when analyzing our findings and when reaching the conclusion of our study. Lastly, the sample of our study is small, which challenges the generalization of our results.

## **4. Findings of Empirical Research**

Our study uses a mixed-methods approach to be able to create a comprehensive picture of the subjects in our study. The more substantive part of our analysis is qualitative in nature, while the findings of the quantitative inquiry complement the substantive results of the former. This is because the size of our sample does not allow us to do sophisticated quantitative analysis; thus, we embrace the trade-off of less comparability, in turn for more in-depth information on various CSOs, and how they were able to utilize the grants received through the Small Grants Scheme (of UNODC) in their fight against corruption in their respective countries.



Figure: Countries that responded

### CSO Characteristics

Thirteen representatives of different CSOs in Africa took part in our study. The respondents were mostly males (12 out of 13), aged 30-61, all of them have managerial positions in the CSOs (coordinators, executive directors, presidents). The vast majority of the respondents were present in the organization during the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the SGS project. We had one respondent each from the countries highlighted in the above map except Uganda from where three CSOs responded and Cameroon from where two CSOs responded.

### Effectiveness of the Small Grants Scheme

Referring back to our literature, it is critical not only to conceptualize corruption as an issue between a principal and an agency but also as an opportunity for collective action. The relationship between various (formal and informal) social entities in (re)creating corruption and the incentive programs and constraints they generate is important (Hanna, et al. 2011).



Figure 1<sup>1</sup> demonstrates that more than half of the respondents strongly believe that the SGS was an effective method to establish a partnership between CSOs and the private sector to combat corruption. The rest of the responses stated partial effectiveness of the Small Grants Scheme. None of the respondents said that the Scheme was ineffective or could not answer.

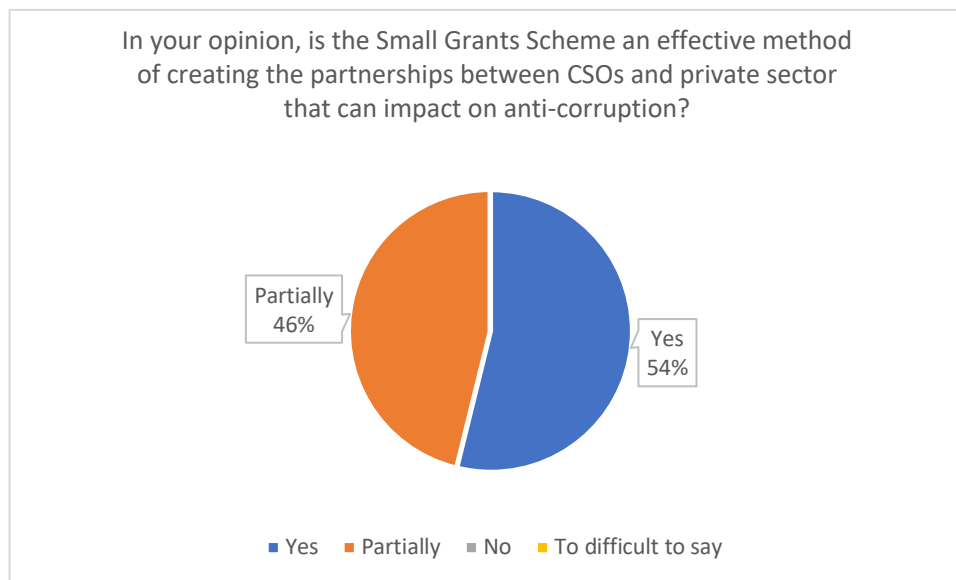


Figure 1 N=9

### Project Outreach

The literature revealed that using media sources to publicize corruption activities is a valuable incentive to reduce corruption by creating awareness (Hanna, et al. 2011). Grant recipient organizations were asked to quantify their project awareness and outreach: some of them also gave more detailed answers, which provided us with better insight in terms of who the CSOs were able to target and reach through the implementation phase of the SGS. Some organizations specified the stakeholder groups that they were able to reach out. Most often, these were representatives of other CSOs, government employees, or executives from the private sector (not executives exclusively, but they were more directly involved) whom they were engaging with through e.g., workshops. The wider public was also reached through public information campaigns aimed at raising awareness around the issue of corruption.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on authors' calculations

Corruption Trust of Southern Africa estimated to indirectly reach from 100 to 700000 people through the radio, television, social media, and print media with the help of Small Grants Scheme projects. The number of people that CSOs reached directly is significantly smaller.

Two CSOs stood out from the others in terms of the outreach. Transparency Mauritius claimed to have reached 150 thousand people through corporate structures (by inviting 87 CEOs and Board Members to their workshops), in which case they added up all employees of the companies they have reached through their executives. They also reached an additional 100 thousand people through a media awareness campaign. Independent Advocacy Project (in Nigeria) also reported having reached out to about 500 thousand people through corporate networks of mobile retailers, 10 thousand through networks of spare parts dealers, and 5 thousand through networks of clothes producers with their anti-corruption campaign.

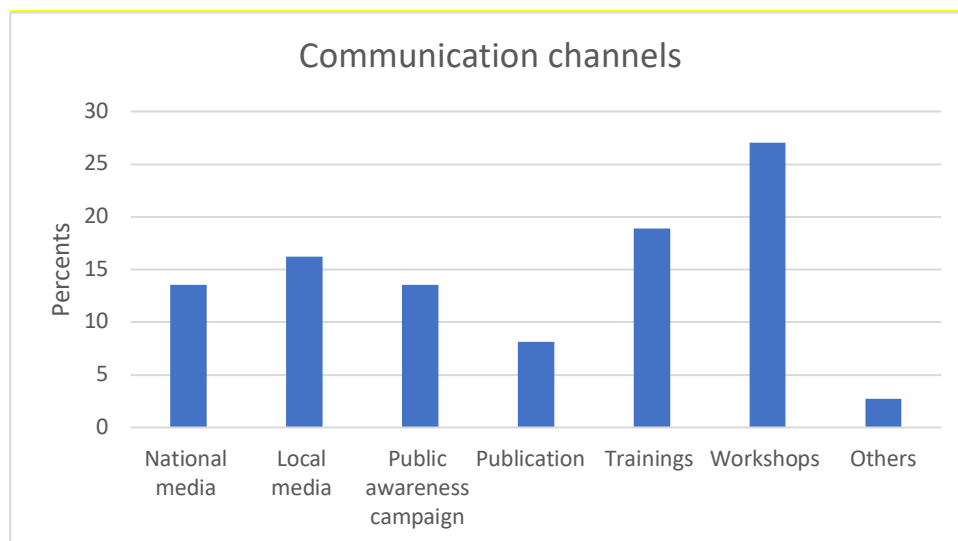


Figure 2 N=10

The most popular channels that CSOs used for communicating with the target group during the SGS project were workshops and trainings. National and local media, public awareness campaign were also popular channels for communication with the private sector stated by the CSOs. Publications were less frequently used as a communication channel. One CSO indicated another channel of communication that is employed to reach the private sector – questionnaire and structured interviews (Figure 2)<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Based on authors' calculations

### **Success of the Small Grants Scheme**

OECD (2018) suggests that dialogue-based advocacy, and public awareness and a well-organized and empowered civil society with international and domestic legal freedom, resources, and links is expected to contribute significantly to the struggle against all forms of corruption in Africa. In our study on the implementation of the SGS, the CSOs also gave a wide range of answers. Some saw key success stories from the beneficiaries and developed a beneficiary pact that was shared widely with key stakeholders. Government advocacy and workshops work was noted to have been the biggest success while carrying out the projects for almost all organizations. Association Mauritanienne pour la Transparence et le Développement (ATED) successfully pushed for anti-corruption and transparency legislation to be adopted by legislators in Mauritania and started the process of establishing a Committee Against Corruption (alongside Transparency Mauritania). Approches Locales pour le Développement Durable (ALDED) also advocated successfully for the establishment of the National Anti-corruption Commission in Cameroon. Anti-Corruption Trust of Southern Africa (ACT-SA) in Zimbabwe established an SME Anti-Corruption Form in cooperation with the private sector. Furthermore, the Independent Advocacy Project initiated the adoption of national whistleblower protection laws in Nigeria.

Many organizations saw as their biggest success in the implementation of the SGS the fact that they since consider the private sector to be a significant new ally in the fight against corruption. Many also reported that they successfully initiated in several cases of the adoption of internal whistleblowing protection policies within corporations. Further organizations operating in Uganda and the Ivory Coast (Africa Freedom of Information Centre and the Centre de Recherche et d'Action pour la Paix (CERAP)) named the successful setup of anti-corruption training programs, the work of which also continued after the SGS had ended. Further, individual accounts included: a successful undercover investigation, investigating, then reporting on corrupt public officials, streamlining a network of corruption (by Anti-Corruption Coalition in Uganda). Action Against Impunity for Human Rights (operating within the Democratic Republic of Congo) named as its biggest success the fact that all major political parties ran on anti-corruption messages in the run-up to the country's general elections back in 2018.

### **Focal Hindrances & Burdens**

Robinson (2016) warns of complications related to funding of the CSOs, as they are not always ready to effectively use large amounts of available resources as sufficient funding might not be the most crucial factor. In our results, most CSOs cited as the biggest hindrance during the implementation of the SGS the fact that it was not always easy to convince stakeholders (such as members of the private sector, public sector) that tackling corruption was in their primary interest in the long run. Further reasons provided for this were threefold: (1) some SME executives were fearful of government reprisals, (2) some governmental employees were also fearful of reprisal from higher ranking governmental superiors, (3) additionally, CSOs themselves were also often wary of governmental reprisal. These above-stated fears meant that in many cases, recruitment (e.g., for workshops, seminars, or cooperation in general) was a significant hurdle to pass for CSOs wanting to cooperate with different stakeholders in a combined effort to confront corruption in their respective communities.

Many organizations cited the limited funds of the SGS as being a significant difficulty when it came to carrying out the projects. As it is believed, corruption is a significant and reoccurring problem. While one organization from Mauritius named one country-specific issue that made the implementation of the project harder: There was no help with the implementation of the project provided by the UN. According to them, it would have been great to have the expert for a couple of days more for direct advocacy with the government and law enforcement or regulatory authorities.

Furthermore, past studies demonstrate that international funding for African offers crucial financial means to sustain activities and makes it possible for organizations to be independent of the state however, on the other hand, they come at a cost: e.g., administrative burdens, and sometimes even the loss of autonomy due to differential goals of international and domestic actors (Kew and Oshikoya, 2014). It seems that respondent CSOs differ in perception of the administrative burden that the Small Grants Scheme has placed on them. The number of responses in each category is almost equal to each other (Figure 3)<sup>3</sup>:

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<sup>3</sup> Based on authors' calculations

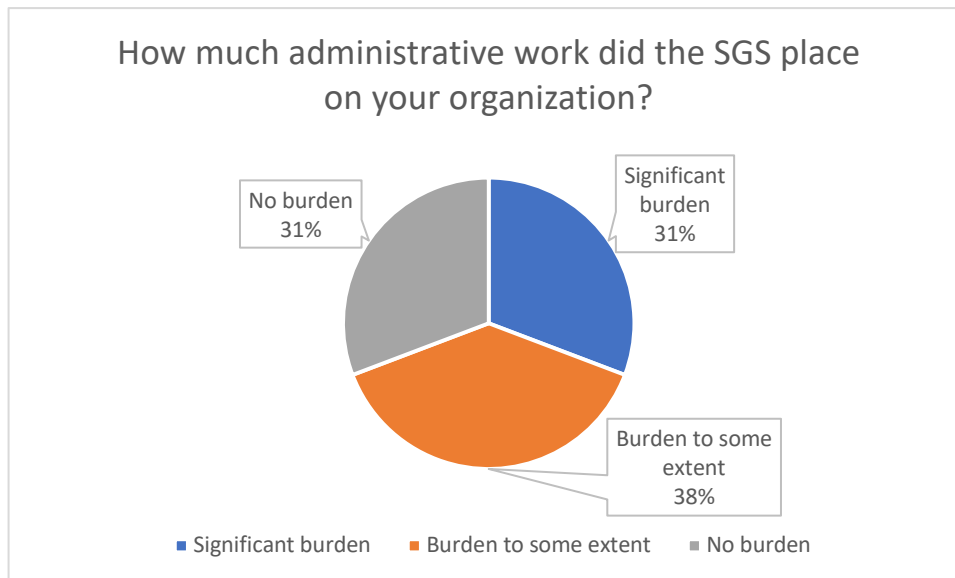


Figure 3 N=11

Some CSOs that responded that the SGS has put significant administrative burden mention, longer than expected project implementation period as well as the fact that organization has borne the entire administrative burden as the reason they chose this answer.

About one third of the respondent CSOs felt that the SGS meant a significant administrative burden for their organization, and few of them named additional issues that made it harder for them administratively. One organization claimed that the administrative burden came with the difficulty of persuading private sector executives to participate in their programs. One other organization said that the administrative burden was due to the fact that the project would have had lasted 6 months but ended up lasting 13 instead.

**Creating & Maintaining the Relationships with the Private Sector**

Scholarship demonstrates that CSOs always could form alliances with other actors (including institutions of government, private sector, and other CSOs). Such coalitions are, in effect, critical for establishing secure networks of accountability (Baviskar, 2008; Chalmers and Setiyono, 2012). When CSOs were asked about the success of maintaining relationships with the private sector after the SGS had ended, organizations gave varying answers. Some said that they were able to build relationships with members of the private sector during the project, but restricted financial means of the SGS meant that they were unable to maintain such relationships after the project had ended. Some, in turn, said that they kept some ties to the private sector, but not particularly in fighting corruption. Instead, other types of

cooperation, such as providing further training for SME executives (e.g., in entrepreneurship, financial management, business skills, or transparency), were present. Others said that although they did not manage to maintain the level of cooperation established through the SGS, they sustained lines of communication with members of the private sector (and other stakeholders) by sharing information and documents through e-groups, others through continued work and cooperation in the SME Anti-Corruption Forum (in Zimbabwe), or other national anti-corruption commissions (e.g., in Cameroon).

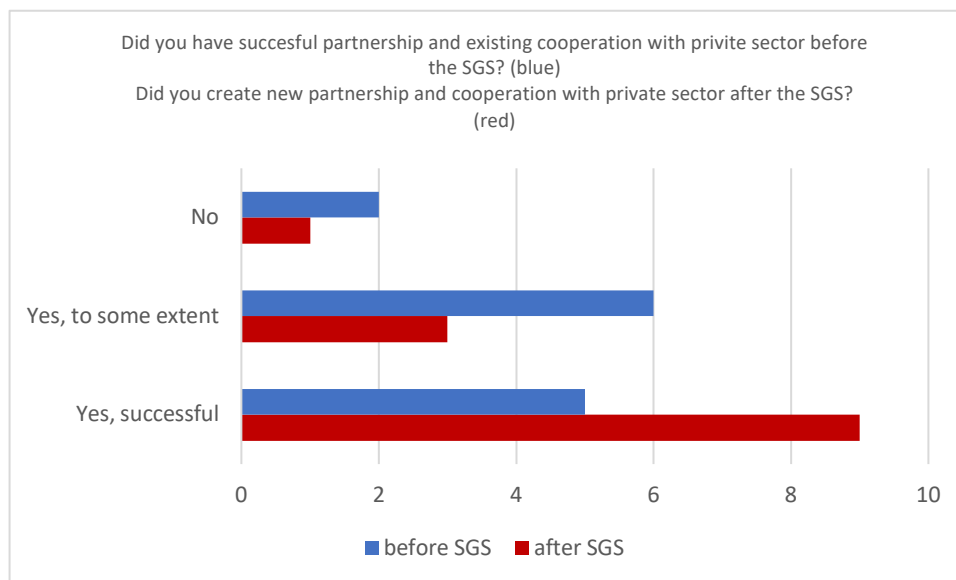


Figure 4 N=12

Figure 4<sup>4</sup> demonstrates how partnership and cooperation between private sector and the CSOs changed after the SGS. As it can be seen on the Figure 2, more CSOs indicated that they have succesful partnership and cooperation after the SGS than before it. Only one CSO stated that there was no change in relationship with the private sector after the SGS. The rest of the respondents answered that they were able to establish new partnership and cooperation with the private sector to combat corruption.

<sup>4</sup> Based on authors' calculations

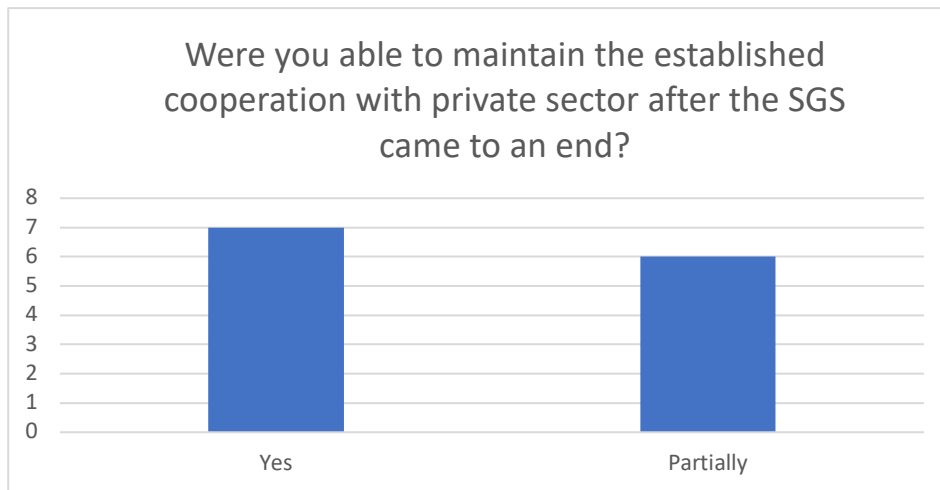


Figure 5 N=13

All of the CSOs were able to maintain the established cooperation and partnership with the members of private sector fully or partially after the SGS ended (Figure 5)<sup>5</sup>:

### CSO's Reflections on the Small Grants Scheme

EPPI-Centre found compelling evidence that auditing and expectation-based interventions (both financial and non-financial) can reduce corruption by increasing the risk and cost of corruption involvement, at least in the short term. To the question on what could be done differently in the future, if the SGS of UNODC would be continued, CSOs gave somewhat similar answers. Nearly all organizations wrote about the restricted financial recourses of the SGS. They outlined that, although it was a much-needed initiative in fighting corruption and in creating value for all stakeholders, the amount of the grant would need to be raised in order for it to produce more significant outcomes. Some also claimed that they would have appreciated more time for the implementation phase of the project. Others reported that they would have needed more support from UNODC in areas such as technical support in planning and implementation of project activities, and active state facilitation. Also, some said that technical assistance from UNODC would have been needed during the follow-up process (e.g., by creating follow up platforms for stakeholders). Finally, some said that it would be much better if organizations could receive these grants consecutively for several years (3-5), with which they would be able to create a broader impact – also good (reliable) partners could be identified and relationships maintained. One CSO said that the discontinuation of funding

<sup>5</sup> Based on authors' calculations

was discouraging for people working on the issue, as they are in the peruse of longer-term and more sustainable solutions in fighting corruption.

### **Self-Assessment Mechanisms**

Although the outreach and impact measurement were done differently by most CSOs, and most likely, the above stated two cases (in terms of significant outreach) can be derived from the fact that they used different measurements of outreach, there are valuable general lessons to be learned from these examples. Namely, that CSOs that were the most successful in reaching out to a large number of people used corporate networks to disseminate their messages. National media outlets were also often used by CSOs in spreading anti-corruption messages. Some respondents reported the number of collaborations by counting the number of people that participated in workshops (while as we could see in cases above, some went further and also counted the ripple effects of these workshops). CSOs also measured their impact by adding up the number of new initiatives that came about between CSOs and SMEs due to the SGS. CSOs also expanded on the instances when they gave expertise to SMEs on how to establish transparent staff requirement policies. Other CSOs reported among what they considered as an impact, the number of anti-corruption and transparency laws adopted due to their advocacy (and most likely, the advocacy also of different actors). Further organizations saw collaborations with the private sector continuing after the SGS as proof that the grants had a positive impact.

Although it was clear from the responses that there were varying ways to measure the impact of the SGS, several CSOs failed to account for how they have assessed their impact. Furthermore, some of the answers suggest to us that in many cases, the impact of the SGS itself could not be separated from the general activities of the CSOs. The responses show that the SGS contributed significantly to many realized initiatives; however, most organizations included elements of shorter-term impact within their work (e.g., Anti-corruption advocacy cannot only be seen the result of the SGS) but not long- term initiatives.

## **5. Discussion**

Corruption has indeed permeated the African system, and even if resources and time lost can't be regained, further harm could be mitigated if real efforts are employed across all



sectors against corruption. CSOs are useful tools that must be incorporated into this fight on a holistic basis alongside other devices that have been in use over the years. Throughout our study, we were engaging with the topic of corruption in the context of Africa and exploring how anti-corruption initiatives were and are driven, created, and implemented by CSOs. After exploring the existing literature on corruption, we formulated the scope of our study upon which we built the theoretical framework guiding our research. With our empirical inquiry, we were looking to answer the question of how much of an impact did the UNODC Civil Society Team's SGS have on the medium and long run, on fighting corruption in Africa by straightening partnerships between CSOs and the private sector. Our mixed-method approach helped us to acquire in-depth information about the successes and failures of the SGS. Our empirical study was carried out remotely through email. We relied on the self-assessment of previous grant recipient organizations whose representatives filled in a questionnaire that contained both quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) questions. The thirteen responses constituted the half all grant recipient organizations.

It was found that more than half of the respondent CSOs saw the SGS as an effective method to establish partnerships between CSOs and the private sector to combat corruption. Possibly due to the bias of self (impact) evaluation, CSOs saw the outreach of their SGS projects to varying degrees. The estimation of people reached through the project spread between 100 and 700.000. Two general lessons, however, could be learned. The CSOs that were the most effective in searching out to people used (1) corporate networks and (2) national media to disseminate their messages. Many organizations saw as their biggest success in the implementation of the SGS the fact that they since consider the private sector to be a significant new ally in the fight against corruption. Many also reported that they have successfully initiated the adoption of internal whistleblowing protection policies for local and international corporations.

As for hindrances associated with the SGS, CSOs gave valuable feedback for future reference (if UNODC decides to continue the grant scheme). Most CSOs, as the biggest, hindrances cited (1) SME executives were fearful of government reprisals, (2) Governmental employees were afraid of reprisal from higher-ranking superiors, (3) CSOs themselves were also often wary of

governmental reprisal. Finally, the majority of organizations claimed that the funds made available by the SGS were too marginal to really have helped to have a significant impact.

In the medium- and long-run, about half of the CSOs were able to maintain their established relationships with members of the private sector (though some of these relationships already existed before the project), with the other half only being partially able to maintain these relationships after the SGS has ended. Based on the responses, the SGS lacked significant impact on the medium- and long-run, because of three main reasons: (1) the already cited marginal amount of funds, (2) limited time for implementation of the projects, (3) and the lack of consecutive continuity of funding by the SGS.

### **5.1 Conclusion**

To conclude, we found that the immediate impact (and outreach) of the SGS was relatively large, although differences in impact measurement make it hard to assess the overall impact comparatively. Almost all participating organizations saw some difficulties in and hindrances in implementation, but more than fifty percent thought the SGS to have been an effective anti-corruption initiative. Here, we would like to emphasize several limitations that arise connected to our inquiry. Throughout our fieldwork, we relied exclusively on the self-evaluation and self-assessment of participant organizations. Thus, we have to consider individual biases that might prevail. Because we were conducting the research on behalf of the UNODC Civil Society team, respondents were most likely inclined to give positive answers in terms of the impact of their respective projects. They also have a vested interest in a potential continuation of the SGS. However, we see the fact that we did not only receive positive feedback, and that the organization also provided constructive criticism as an indication that respondents saw this as an opportunity to give honest feedback, in the hope of improving future cooperation with UNODC and improving a possible SGS in the future.

### **5.2 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of our study, we would recommend:

1. The continuation of the Small Grant Scheme in the future, with the following improvements for UNODC to consider.

2. The amount of funding offered by the grant scheme (5000 USD in the past) should be raised slightly to help increase immediate impact (could be anywhere between 100-250 USD). CSO's highlighted a grant of \$5,000 is a good starting point, but more impact would be made if the maximum grant is increased.
3. It is understood that the scheme gives small grants that are non-recurrent (once-off), but in the event that a project is overwhelmingly successful, UNODC should consider availing more resources for replication/upscaling. For there to be a more sustainable socio-economic impact and to ensure continuous engagement, the length of the projects would need to be extended, or consecutive funding offered.
4. Some CSO's noted the implementation indicated how sensitive the issue is for Small business in obtaining contracts. It would be helpful for the CSO's to have a "Charter of Integrity" or a similar charter provided by the UNODC to guide the rules and procedures.
5. UNODC should also incentivize other stakeholder groups (members of the public and private sectors) to participate more willingly in such initiatives, though this to us seems like a rather sizeable structural challenge but could be successful if the right incentives are offered.
6. UNODC should assist in the functioning of the specific goals and plans of the CSO's to understand the impact assessment. The subsidy program should have also involved technical assistance in the planning and implementation of project activities.
7. Further research would need to be done, focusing more specifically on how to measure impact and incentivize different stakeholder groups (e.g., private sector) to more readily participate in such anti-corruption initiatives in the context of Africa.

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## Appendix

### CSO Questionnaire

#### Socio-economic Impact of the UNODC Civil Society Team's Small Grants Scheme

Small Grants Scheme is a project conducted by the UNODC Civil Society Team in 2012-2019 that provided funding support to African Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), in particular NGOs at national and community level, working in the area of anti-corruption. This study aims to assess Socio-Economic Impact of the Small Grants Scheme. We would appreciate your participation in this survey since your answers are very important, this is why we kindly ask you to share some minutes with us. The interview is confidential. Your name will not be disclosed anywhere. Thank you in advance for devoting your time and for your sincerity.

#### Who is involved in this research project and why it is being conducted?

Graduate student researchers working with the Civil Society Team of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Vienna, are carrying out a research project on "Lasting impacts of Small grants scheme and the Partnerships against Corruption in Africa to achieve socioeconomic sustainability". Upon empirical research, recommendations for improvement in the anti-corruption efforts in Africa will be drawn and presented at the annual RAUN conference in Vienna in January 2020.

#### If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?

A paper-based survey of 11 Questions has been sent you accompanied with the email. It should not take you more than 30 minutes to fill it out. It should be completed by you or a representative of your organisation, should you agree to participate. The survey will be conducted and saved only with your consent and if you may wish to refuse to answer any questions during the survey you can. If you are interested in participating in the research project, please complete the Interview Question Checklist as well as the Consent Form which you are required to sign and send back to us. The materials will be summarised and available for your review.

#### Personal information about respondent

Sex:

1. Male
2. Female

Age:

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Position at the CSO:

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Were you present at the organization at the time of the Small Grants Scheme?

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1. Yes
2. No

Did you participate in the planning process of the Small Grants Scheme at your organization?

1. Yes
2. No

Did you participate in the implementation of the Small Grants Scheme at your organization?

1. Yes
2. No

Did you participate in the evaluation process of the Small Grants Scheme at your organization?

1. Yes
2. No

### **Organization**

Q1. General information

What is the name of your organization? (Please, write down the full name below)

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How many people (paid and unpaid) are working for your organization? (Please, write down the number)

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### **Small Grants Scheme**

Q2. Why did your organization initially apply for the Small Grants Scheme?

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Q3. Did you have existing partnerships and previous cooperation with the private sector **before** you entered into the Small Grants Scheme? (Please choose one answer you feel describes your opinion the most)

1. Yes, we had successful partnership and cooperation with the private sector before the Small Grants Scheme
2. Yes, there were some previous initiatives in cooperation with the private sector
3. No, we did not have any relationship with the private sector predating the Small Grants Scheme

Q4. Did you create new partnerships and cooperation with the private sector **after** you entered into the Small Grants Scheme? (Please choose one answer you feel describes your opinion the most)

1. Yes, we had successful partnership and cooperation with the private sector after the Small Grants Scheme
2. Yes, we had some initiatives in cooperation with the private sector
3. No, there was no change in relationship with the private sector after the Small Grants Scheme

Q5. What channels did your organization use for communicating with the target group during the Small Grants Scheme project? (Please choose answers you feel describe your opinion the most)

1. National media
  2. Local media
  3. Public awareness campaign
  4. Publication
  5. Trainings
  6. Workshops
  7. Others (Please specify)
- 

How many people would you estimate to reach with the Small Grants Scheme project?

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#### **After the Small Grants Scheme - effects**

Q6. Please specify how you have measured the impact of your Small Grants Scheme project (statistics, success stories, collaborations, etc.)

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Q7. Could you, please, indicate what was the biggest success in terms of the implementation of the Small Grants Scheme project? (A new legislation passed? more funding received to continue activities? Etc.) – short/medium/long term, please specify

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Q8. Could you, please, indicate what were the biggest hindrances in implementation of the Small Grants Scheme project?

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Q9. How much administrative work did the Small Grants Scheme place on your organization? (Please choose one answer you feel describes your opinion the most)

1. Significant administrative burden.
2. An administrative burden to some extent.
3. No administrative burden.

### **Mid- and long-term effects of the Small Grants Scheme**

Q10. Were you able to maintain the established relationship with members of the private sector after the Small Grants Scheme had come to an end? (Please choose one answer you feel describes your opinion the most)

1. Yes
2. Partially
3. No
4. Never had established cooperation

Q11. Could you, please, briefly explain your answer to the previous question?

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### **Disclaimer**

We do not disclose the gathered information to any third party, except for the UNODC and the Regional Academy on the United Nations (RAUN). The RAUN is an inter-disciplinary educational program for students and young scholars where the participants work on issues related to the United Nations and international cooperation. We will only use this for scientific and educational purposes. Personal data will not be disclosed or disseminated, except with the explicit consent of the individual concerned.