

# National Survey on Corruption and Good Governance, Mexico

## I Fact Sheet

**Name of the Tool:** National Survey on Corruption and Good Governance (NSCG)

**Brief Description:** The NSCG is an analytical tool that enables household experiences and perceptions of corruption to be measured in a single instrument. The NSCG records, among other things, the frequency with which acts of corruption were recorded in requesting or receiving 38 public services over the course of one year for each of the 32 federal states in Mexico.<sup>1</sup> With the database created by the NSCG, two indices were constructed, one related to the frequency of corruption in selected public services (38) and the other for all of the states across the country. The NSCG covers the whole nation and its target population is Mexican households. Each Mexican household had exactly the same chance of being selected for the study. In planning terms, and because of the nature of its contents, the survey was designed to be carried out once every two years.

The NSCG records the opinions and perceptions of the heads of household on topics such as the origin of corruption, the relation between corruption and public officials, the role of the government in fighting corruption, the evolution of corruption, interpersonal trust, and compliance with the law.

The survey measures experiences of corruption by recording the payment of a bribe in order to speed up, modify the result of, or hinder the provision of a public service. The NSCG identifies acts of corruption related to bureaucratic procedures and services of the three levels of government: federal, state and municipal.

The NSCG also enables monetary aggregates to be constructed to determine the cost of corruption for Mexican households and the share that this represents of their budget.

**Responsible Organisation:** Transparencia Mexicana (Mexican Chapter of Transparency International)

**Creation of the Tool:** Transparencia Mexicana (TM).

**Problems Addressed by the Tool:** The NSCG responds to the need:

- To generate reliable information on the scale of corruption in Mexico and

<sup>1</sup> Mexico is a federation divided into 31 states and a Federal District. The states are divided into municipalities.

contribute towards constructing a spatial and temporal reference point that will make it possible to watch its evolution over time.

- To construct a benchmark from which it is possible to monitor the activities of national, state and municipal governments in the fight against corruption in the 32 federal entities in the country.
- To encourage an environment of healthy competition between government agencies, federal entities and communities.
- To access reliable information on the costs of corruption in Mexican households (for this reason, acts of corruption were measured and not just the households' perceptions of the problem).
- To widen the citizen base for consultation to groups with low direct participation in public decision-making.
- To generate information to enable the responsible authorities to propose strategies for correcting the problems identified.

**Areas of Work:** Public policies, public administration, governance, political economy, institutional design, performance in public services, public opinion, strategic communication.

**When and Where the Tool was Implemented:** The tool was implemented in Mexico in 2001.

**Alliances:** TM formed a Technical Advisory Council (TAC) which remained in permanent session throughout the 11 months of the design period. The TAC members were specialists in surveys, in public opinion polls, political analysts and academics. The composition of the TAC was modified during the periods of the design, execution and the dissemination of results, depending on the technical requirements of each stage.

The principal allies in the development and the dissemination of the tool were:

- Five sponsors from the Mexican private sector: Cemex Central, Grupo Televisa, Banamex, BBVA-Bancomer and the Consejo Coordinador Empresarial [Business Coordinating Council].
- Experts in public opinion studies, political analysts, academics and representatives of citizens' organisations that participated in the Technical Advisory Council, because of their interest in the subject and without receiving any financial reward. The members of the TAC changed according to the technical requirements of each stage of developing the tool. Two members of the Council participated throughout all the development and dissemination of the project: Edmundo Berumen and Roy Campos. Among

other specialists who took part in the TAC were Enrique Alduncin, Miguel Basáñez, José Octavio López Presa, Rosa María Rubalcava, Julia Flores, and Antonio Puig.

- The media, which was the principal channel for disseminating the results to society.
- The Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE) [Centre for Economic Research and Teaching], with whom TM signed a collaboration agreement on March 18, 2002. This agreement allows the CIDE to administer and disseminate the database of the survey through its information centre.

**Financing:** The tool was sponsored by companies from the private sector: Cemex Central, Grupo Televisa, Banamex, BBVA-Bancomer and the Consejo Coordinador Empresarial [Business Coordinating Council]. This group of businesses provided \$5,680,000 pesos in total, just over US\$500,000 dollars.

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## II Objectives

The main objectives were to develop a tool with the following aims:

- To record the frequency with which acts of corruption occur in public services.
- To identify the attitudes, values and opinions of Mexican households about corruption.
- To identify a temporal benchmark to record progress in the fight against corruption.
- To create a map marking out responsibilities and competencies in terms of corruption in public services and for the federal entities (three levels of government and private parties).

## III Context

Each year Transparency International publishes the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). The CPI measures the perception of different social groups of the mag-

nitude of corruption in 90 different countries. As an analytical tool, the CPI enables comparisons to be made between countries, but it does not provide detailed information about the form and scope of the types of corruption that citizens have to face on a daily basis. Neither does the CPI work out the economic cost of these illicit activities.

The need for information about the different ways in which corruption manifests itself in a country led TM to design a tool to measure perceptions and to record the acts of corruption in which both citizens and authorities take part. The aim was to formulate a diagnosis of corruption in Mexico answering the following questions: Which services are most vulnerable to acts of corruption? Which segment of the population is most susceptible to paying bribes for services? How much does corruption really cost? Where are most acts of corruption being carried out?

As a universe of reference, TM selected 38 individual public services that are important for the population in general. The method used was that of four focus groups and a pilot study made during the design phase of the survey. These services are provided in Mexico by the three levels of government and, in specific cases, under public concession or by private parties. The services under concession or provided by private parties were included because of their public nature or as control variables for the exercise.

Acts of corruption were recorded by the NSCG when the interviewee stated that they had paid a bribe for a service (in Mexico this bribe is generally called a “ *mordida* ” – or “bite”). Based on the results of the NSCG, two indices were constructed, called the “Index of Corruption and Good Governance by Public Service” and the “Index of Corruption and Good Governance by Federal Entity”. These indices make it possible to distinguish variations in the level of corruption according to the political, demographic, social and economic characteristics of the population.

The tool has statistical validity for all of the federal entities in the country and in aggregate form for the whole of Mexico’s territory. The interviews took place during June and July 2001, in about 16,000 households selected at random across the 32 regions of the country.

## IV Implementation

In November, 2000, the President of the Governing Council of *Transparencia Mexicana* invited a group of statisticians, public opinion pollsters, and anti-corruption specialists to design an analytical tool that would provide reliable information about the state of corruption in public services in Mexico. TM decided to concentrate on public services, because corruption in this area worsens the plight of the poorest sectors of society and hinders overall develop-

ment. Various public services were chosen, including some under concession, because the quality of public services is the end outcome of government activity. TM aimed to contribute to the debate on corruption from the perspective of performance and results (outputs and outcomes) and with mere declarations and unqualified announcements.

From November 2000, meetings were held on what would be the basis of the Technical Advisory Council (TAC) of the National Survey of Corruption and Good Governance. The TAC served a dual purpose as the body responsible for designing the study, and for developing the methodology of the tool itself. In parallel, TM undertook a campaign to raise funds to cover the cost of the study and of generating the two indices.

Once the TAC was in place, focus groups were held to confirm that the problems identified by the experts coincided with citizens' demands. On this basis, the conceptual frameworks of the study were corrected and it was decided to choose a limited number of public services. A pilot questionnaire was designed and tested out in the Metropolitan Zone of Mexico City. The Metropolitan Zone of Mexico City includes the Federal District and a large part of the State of Mexico. The Metropolitan Zone also comprises towns neighbouring the country's capital. After analysing the results, the necessary corrections were made to the final instrument that would be used for the fieldwork. The instrument was calibrated linguistically and also in terms of the order in which the questions appeared in the questionnaire. Once the instrument was ready, the next stage was to select the survey companies that would apply the questionnaire to the nearly 16,000 households selected in 32 random samples, one for each federal entity in the country. To compete for the four fieldwork and supervision contracts, the survey firms had to meet the requirements and specifications laid down by the TAC. Three firms were hired to take charge of the application of the nearly 16,000 questionnaires and one firm to supervise the other three.

The implementation of the NSCG was divided into the following stages (for a brief summary see *Appendix 1*):

## 1. Design

In this stage, the methodology of the survey was defined and the questionnaire was drawn up. The methodology consisted of a sample of 16,000 households. From this total, 13,790 interviews were obtained nationally.<sup>2</sup> The size

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<sup>2</sup> In the NSCG 2001 13,790 interviews were carried out: 72 per cent were made with the head of the household, 20 per cent with the spouse, 8 per cent with an adult member, over 18 years of age, of the household.

of the sample was sufficient to break down results at federal entity level (between 388 and 506 questionnaires per entity). The head of the household was defined as the proper person to respond to the survey. The margin of error for the national results was less than 1 per cent. For monitoring and validating the methodology, an additional system of external supervision was set up. It was defined that the make-up of the sample, the field logistics, and the measurement instruments should be the same for all of the federal entities and the 38 most important public services.

During the design stage, four focus groups were held to assist in the creation of the questionnaire. Particular importance was given in this qualitative component to the relationship citizens have with corruption, to the relationship with the language and even to the identification of the most relevant public services offered by the three levels of government and by private parties. The focus groups represented different socio-demographic profiles. The participants in the focus groups were selected by the firm responsible, Alduncin y Asociados, and represented different economic and education levels.

A pilot survey was also carried out to select the public services to consider and to identify possible problems in the methodology. The pilot test was conducted by the company Berumen y Asociados in the Metropolitan Zone of Mexico City and it helped to adjust some terms in the questionnaire and to confirm others. An example of the importance of the focus groups and of the pilot test is the identification of common concepts for the citizens. A fundamental point for the NSCG was to identify one word with which citizens would comprehend the concept of corruption and the bribe paid for performing a public service. Thanks to the pilot test and the focus groups it was possible to define this term: “*mordida*”. They also helped to define the 38 public services most relevant to the exercise.

## 2. Conducting the Interviews

The interviews were based on a strictly random national sample of 13,790 interviews. The application was carried out during June and July 2001. Three firms were in charge of applying the questionnaires: Grupo de Asesores Unidos (GAUSSC), Pearson, and Pulso Mercadológico. Their supervisor in the fieldwork was the firm Estadística Aplicada.

The three survey firms went out to all of the different regions of the country and visited the selected households to conduct the questionnaire. The supervising firm also selected a sample and went out into the field to ensure that the survey was being carried out correctly. TM, together with the TAC, also received regular reports on how the survey was proceeding.

### 3. Analysis of the Results

All of the results were collated and analysed independently by a group of academics and specialists. Among other things, it was possible to determine how many acts of corruption were committed in the country in the 12 months prior to the application of the survey; how much the individual households devoted to paying bribes (“*mordidas*”) in order for a public service to be carried out; which public services were most vulnerable to corruption; and how frequent corruption was in the different federal entities in Mexico.

With these results, the National Index of Corruption and Good Governance by Public Service and the Index of Corruption and Good Governance by Federal Entity were constructed. The indices make it possible to distinguish variations in the levels of corruption according to the demographic, social and economic characteristics of the population. The indices were calculated using the following formulas:

Formula to calculate the National Index of Corruption and Good Governance (ICGG) by Public Service:

$$\text{ICGGs} = \frac{\text{Number of times a service was obtained using a bribe}}{\text{Total number of times which the same service was used}} \times 100$$

Formula to calculate the Index of Corruption and Good Governance by Federal Entity (38 services):

$$\text{ICGGg} = \frac{\text{Number of times a bribe was paid in the 38 services}}{\text{Total number of times that the 38 services were used}} \times 100$$

The analysis allowed TM to identify the attitudes, values and opinions of the heads of household on topics such as the origin of corruption, the relationship between public officials and corruption, the role of the government in fighting corruption, the evolution of corruption, interpersonal trust and compliance with the law.

### 4. Presenting the Results

TM began the dissemination of the results at a special press conference held in October 2001. At this conference, the first results of the NSCG referring to *experiences* of corruption were presented. The part of the survey related to *perceptions* of corruption was presented in November.

TM convened the media and published a press release. The communication strategy was designed so that the dissemination of results had a simultaneous

impact in the 32 regions of the country. With a single analytical instrument, TM was able to participate indirectly in local debates on levels of corruption.

During October and November 2001, there was intense coverage in the press, television and radio. The NSCG was presented in conferences, workshops, meetings and special presentations organised for government representatives, academics and members of civil society. The results of the survey are still being disseminated today by groups of students, analysts and the media.

### Challenges

The challenges that TM faced were chiefly related to cost and implementation. The NSCG is an expensive tool that has been difficult to finance. The NSCG in 2001 cost approximately US\$0.5 million. The implementation process is complex. It has been difficult to institutionalise the process year after year, given the high expense in terms of money, resources, methodology and coverage. For this reason it was decided to carry it out every two years.

## V Results

The NSCG has become a reference point for government in the creation and analysis of public policies against corruption. The results of the NSCG have been presented to civil servants who are concerned about the position of the various services for which they are responsible. Some regional governors also expressed interest in how the citizens perceive the various services.

In some states, the publication of the study led to an acceleration of the introduction of special measures designed to curb corruption. Predictably, the Head of Government of the Federal District (the region suffering from the highest levels of corruption in the provision of public services in 2001 according to the survey) expressed a negative reaction towards the NSCG in the media. Nevertheless, a group of experts from his government, headed by the Secretary of the Comptroller's Office of the Government of the Federal District, held a meeting with TM to analyse and interpret the results. Partly as a result of this tool, the Government of the Federal District (GDF) has concentrated its efforts on areas that result in high risks for the relationships between government and citizens. The GDF and the Legislative Assembly have made reforms to the system and to traffic-control mechanisms.

The survey showed that Colima was the federal state with the lowest level of corruption in public services in 2001. The contrast between states, and the need to look for a deeper explanation of the results, prompted TM to organise, together with the Government of Colima and the State University, the "Conference to Make Good Governance a Reality in Mexico". Some 32 specialists took



part in this event. Eight discussion groups were held covering a range of topics related to the fight against corruption and good governance. The forum attracted the presence of the President of the Republic, the Federal Secretaries from the Comptroller's Office, Education, Tourism, Defence, as well as state and municipal authorities from the areas of education and control. The forum also enabled a frank dialogue between civil society organisations, private companies and other experts.

The NSCG alerts public opinion to the scale of the problem of corruption and generates useful information. For this reason, the coverage given by the media to the results of the survey was crucially important. Thanks to this coverage, the problem of corruption and the application of measures to fight it now receive greater coverage in the media.

The survey has stimulated the development of new tools for measuring corruption. The NSCG has since been repeated in other countries, such as Peru, where TM advised on implementation. The NSCG has also raised the interest of other institutions in calculating the cost of corruption in other sectors, for example, the Survey on Governance and Business Development carried out by the Technological University of Monterrey in 2002 and a survey on public servants currently being developed by the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

The NSCG also provides valuable raw material for knowledge generation. Through an agreement made with the Centre for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE), the database of the NSCG is available for use by researchers and students of corruption. Many other topics are covered by the NSCG, including a whole set of variables in human values and beliefs, which further develops previous research carried out by the World Values Survey (the University of Michigan, USA) and some previous local research on the Culture of Legality. As a whole, the NSCG is an integrated model with other relevant tools for measuring public opinion.

The only negative results have been the reactions of those responsible for the states or services that scored low ratings.

## VI Recommendations

From the outset, TM sought to create a new tool to measure citizens' perceptions and experiences of corruption. The aim of the project was clear enough but it was necessary to consult the experts in order to develop it further. A Technical Advisory Council was created to monitor each and every stage of the project. The council was composed of experts with an interest in the subject, who donated their time and knowledge at no charge. In all cases, the TAC

was isolated from financial considerations and, when participating in the council, their members were not allowed to participate in the national field work.

For the first time in a single instrument, the NSCG measured experiences and perceptions of corruption. It was necessary to discuss, develop and monitor a complete and solid methodology. Throughout this process, the Technical Advisory Council was fundamental in providing support and advice.

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## Appendix 1

### NATIONAL SURVEY OF CORRUPTION AND GOOD GOVERNANCE (NSCG) 2001 TRANSPARENCIA MEXICANA

#### I. METHODOLOGICAL SOLIDITY

- Strictly random sample of 13,790 interviews at national level
- Large enough sample to break down results at federal entity level (between 388 and 506 questionnaires)
- Additional external monitoring
- Margin of error for national results less than 1 per cent
- 72 per cent of the interviews carried out with the proper informant, the head of the household; 20 per cent with the spouse; the remaining 8 per cent with an adult household member.

#### II. FIELDWORK

The firms selected to carry out the fieldwork were:

- Grupo de Asesores Unidos (GAUSSC)
- Pearson
- Pulso Mercadológico
- Estadística Aplicada, as external supervisor of the other three

The fieldwork was carried out between June and July 2001

#### III. TOPIC

- For the first time, experiences and perceptions about corruption were measured with a single instrument.
- The survey records corruption in public services provided by the three levels of government and by private parties.
- The 38 most important public services were selected.
- The acts of corruption were recorded when the interviewee declared having paid “*mordida*” in exchange for a public service.

#### IV. TECHNIQUE OF MEASUREMENT

- To measure the experiences with different services, questions were based on the periods of time within which each of them was carried out:
  - a) last twelve months (e.g., school registration)
  - b) last six months (e.g., vehicle certification)
  - c) previous month (e.g., water supply tanker)
  - d) previous week (e.g., garbage collection)
  - e) at some time (e.g., building permit).
- The survey records the cases in which a service was requested and, in order to receive it, it was necessary to pay a “*mordida*”.
- The sample design, the field logistics and the measuring instruments were the same for all the federal entities and the 38 services.

