EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OF PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY ON CORRUPTION IN ARMENIA

The public opinion survey ('Survey') on corruption was conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Center Armenia (CRRC Armenia), commissioned by "Transparency International Anticorruption Center" (TIAC).

The survey aimed at finding out:

- the perceptions of Armenian residents on the overall situation in Armenia, corruption and its manifestations;

- their personal experience with corruption phenomena;

- manifestations of public and individual behaviour towards corruption;

- awareness and evaluation of anti-corruption initiatives undertaken in the country;

- the main sources of corruption-related information;

- changes in the perceptions and behaviours of Armenian residents after the months of April and May 2018; and

- in the event of comparable data, the changes in the perceptions of corruption and related issues over the past nine years.

The survey sets the task of generating practical information that can be useful to the Government, the civil society and the private sector, in order to improve the public administration sector and develop anti-corruption policies and programs.

Methodology

The survey questionnaire was developed by the CRRC-Armenia Foundation and TIAC, drawing on previous survey questionnaires[1] as well as the current developments in anti-corruption policy.

The survey data were collected between 17 October and 2 December 2019, through face-to-face interviews. The survey participants included 1,500 RA citizens aged 18 and older (with 2.5 percent error tolerance at a 95 percent confidence level). The data of the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia on the regional distribution of the number of households was used for the sampling. The quality of the collected data was checked by callbacks to about 17 percent of the respondents.

Key Findings of the Survey

The perception of Armenia's overall situation and corruption among the problems of the country

- More than a quarter of the respondents believe that unemployment is the priority problem for Armenia. The citizens are also seriously concerned about poverty, socially insignificant salaries

---

[1] The previous surveys on public perception of corruption were conducted in 2008, 2009 and 2010 by CRRC-Armenia within the framework of the USAID Mobilizing Action Against Corruption in Armenia Project (MAAC), and by TIAC in 2002 and 2006.

and social problems in general, as well as emigration. Corruption was ranked sixth by 5.7 percent of respondents among the priority problems.

- 90 percent of respondents considered corruption a serious problem (36.5 percent, extremely serious; 28.3 percent, fairly serious; and 25.3 percent, somewhat serious), while their overwhelming majority (81.4 percent) agreed that corruption is an evil and must be eliminated.

- The respondents listed unsuccessful personnel appointments (26.4%), pressure from former authorities and sabotage of old personnel (14.4%) and lack of public administration experience (14%) among the problems in the public administration system. The problems related to public administration included problems related to the quality of laws and law enforcement practices.

Perceived Levels of Prevalence of Corruption and Its Trends

- 7.5 percent of respondents considered that there was no corruption under the current authorities. 46.5 percent of respondents mentioned that corruption was not widespread, while 36 percent said it was very widespread in some areas. As distinct from this, the overwhelming majority of respondents (83.7 percent) believed that corruption was of a universal nature before the months of April and May 2018. As perceived by respondents, the most common forms of corruption are currently reduced, with the exception of nepotism, with a share of prevalence currently some 22 percentage points higher than before.

- 43 percent of respondents noted that corruption was more widespread among middle-level officials, and 26 percent thought it was more common at lower levels. About 16 percent of respondents did not rule out widespread corruption also among top-level officials. Incidentally, according to the findings of the 2010 survey, 49% of respondents thought corruption was widespread at the top levels; 26%, at middle levels; and 6%, at lower levels.

- Perceptions of the size of bribes and the frequency of bribery cases changed after the months of April and May 2018. 82.4 percent of respondents thought that the size of bribes had decreased substantially or to some extent. About 91 percent of the respondents thought the frequency of bribes had decreased.

- Almost half of respondents (49 percent) thought that the courts of law were the most corrupt institutions in Armenia, followed by the mass media outlets (44 percent) and the Prosecutor's Office (43 percent). 75 percent of respondents considered the RA Prime Minister, and 57 percent, the RA President with his staff, "not corrupt at all".

- Almost two thirds of respondents considered the healthcare sector the most corrupt. When rating the sectors by the characteristics of corruption, the healthcare sector again ranked first (39.7 percent) and second (17.6 percent), while the traffic police ranked third (12.3 percent). Public utilities (water, gas and electricity) and community services (waste collection, land allocation and construction permitting, urban transport, etc.) were perceived as "not corrupt at all" by 63 percent and 46 percent of respondents respectively.

- Despite the general awareness of corruption, some manifestations of corruption seem tolerable to the respondents (such as presenting a gift or flowers to a teacher on March 8th, donations made by businesspeople to public foundations, giving a doctor a thank-you gift, etc.).

- Among the major motives for corruption, respondents specified speeding up the process (26.7 percent), the absence of a legitimate solution to the problem (16.1 percent) and avoiding larger payments provided by law (14.4 percent).

- The overwhelming majority of respondents (80.6 percent) mentioned it was possible to reduce corruption, while 12 percent mentioned it was possible to eliminate it completely.

- 16.8 percent of respondents mentioned non-observance by the public of the laws, followed by imperfect laws (14.2 percent), as factors contributing to the spread of corruption. The respondents indicated economic hardship and poverty (12.3 percent) as an economic factor.

- The respondents most often specified mass media outlets (36.9 percent) and rumors (28.8 percent) as major sources of information for forming a perception of corruption.

- Over 30 percent of respondents trusted Shant TV for information reliability, followed by Armenia TV (18.3 percent) and H1 Public TV Company (13.8 percent).

Personal Experience with Corruption Phenomena

- Few people experienced real corruption cases in various sectors. Thus, albeit 72.7 percent of respondents reported that they or their household members had been dealing with healthcare facilities in the past year, only 7.6 percent had paid extra (the largest share of respondents, 37 percent, indicated a range of 10,000 to 30,000 AMD).

- After the months of April and May 2018, 87 to 98 percent of respondents did not encounter corruption when dealing with government officials. By comparison, nepotism was noted most often as a corruption phenomenon.

Individual Anti-Corruption Behaviour and Actions

- 73 percent of respondents said they would neither take nor give a bribe.

- The respondents see their contribution to corruption reduction in refraining from acts of corruption, especially avoiding giving bribes for public services (37.6 percent), as well as refusing to do a "favour" to officials or their relatives (12.1 percent).

- The main reason for not reporting corruption was public criticism, because, according to 74.6 per cent of respondents, reporting or whistleblowing about corruption cases is viewed by the Armenia public as a reprehensible phenomenon.

- The respondents rather tend to turn to the police (19.3 percent), the RA Prime Minister (10.9 percent) and the Human Rights Defender (about 5 percent), to report a corruption case or conduct. Only 0.2 percent of respondents said they would turn to the electronic platform for whistleblowing anonymously at www.azdararir.am.

- In the past year only 1.5 percent of respondents reported corrupt conduct by public officials. Such reports were mainly directed to the RA Prime Minister (26.2 percent) and the Police (17.3 percent). 62 percent of those who reported on corruption cases felt protected. The respondents were rather dissatisfied than satisfied with the actions taken. A major reason for dissatisfaction was that the competent authorities' approach to the problem was merely a formality (44.2 percent).

Perception of Anti-Corruption Actions of Government Agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations

- 39.3 percent of respondents said they were aware of the anti-corruption activities of government agencies. Almost three-quarters of the respondents perceived that the National Security Service was the most effective government agency in terms of anti-corruption activities.

- The level of public awareness of key institutions with an anti-corruption mission was low. Only 2.2 percent of respondents were aware of the Anti-Corruption Policy Council, and 1.1 percent were aware of the Ethics Committee for High-Ranking Officials / Corruption Prevention Commission.

- The overwhelming majority of respondents (94.3 percent) were unaware of non-governmental organizations operating in Armenia with an anti-corruption mission.

- 56 percent of respondents expressed willingness to seek help about a specific corruption fact. Over 3/4 of them said they would turn to government agencies in the first place.

Perception of Anti-Corruption Actions of the Government

- The Government / the ruling political force was deemed to be responsible for fighting corruption by 35.8 percent of respondents, while the Government / ruling political force, the citizens, the anti-corruption institutions, the NGOs and the international organizations taken together were deemed to be responsible by almost 30 percent.

- A rather low level of public awareness was observed of the programs / actions planned and implemented by the Government. Respondents more often (56 percent) noted they were aware of the hotlines of different government agencies.

- Only 16 percent of respondents had heard about the RA Anti-Corruption Strategy 2019-2022.

- Respondents mainly favoured the Government's anti-corruption intents such as declaring property and incomes universally (64 percent), checking the judicial officials' integrity (58 percent), return of illegally obtained property and possessions without criminal prosecution (56 percent), as well as the transitional justice measures (55 percent).

- The overwhelming majority of respondents (81.6 percent) rated the Government's anti-corruption actions as effective.

Based on the key findings and conclusions of the survey, as well as the observations and experience of TIAC and CRRC-Armenia, a number of recommendations were developed which, on the whole, are aimed at:

- reforming the public administration system, including the public service, human resource management, the remuneration system, integrity, quality of services and fight against corruption;
- raising public awareness of corruption and anti-corruption tools, strengthening public oversight and the whistleblowing system, and shaping more intolerance of corruption; and
- carrying out more surveys in sectors with widespread corruption, in an attempt to identify the problems and propose solutions.