GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH 2012

THE INTERNET AND CORRUPTION
Transparency and accountability online

Global Information Society Watch

2012

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people unlimited

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Preface

The theme for this year's GISWatch – "transparency and accountability with a focus on corruption" – is for some a difficult one. At least two country report authors withdrew from participating in this year's publication because of the consequences they could face locally from singling out specific acts of corruption in their countries. This is telling. It suggests that to consider ICTs and corruption directly is to put the spotlight more narrowly on what governments or businesses or state authorities are actually doing – and this can, as some authors contend, be risky. It is dramatically different from talking generally about e-government, and how this may usher in a new era of transparency – possibilities that are more abstract than concrete, and therefore much safer to discuss. This difficulty demonstrates the value of the theme and serves to provide a reality check – much needed in this era where governments and businesses from north, south, left and right are optimistically engaging in partnerships to "open" government and use the internet to enhance transparency. Talking about transparency is much easier than dealing with its consequences.

As the title of GISWatch 2012 *also suggests, "corruption" is often read through the lens of other conceptual concerns. This year several thematic reports assume different points of entry on the issue: whether directly, such*

as Transparency International's critique of e-government projects and the impact they have on corruption, or more indirectly, for instance, through considerations of transparency and privacy. The role of the youth in "activism online" is also discussed, while, in our mapping section, Tactical Tech looks at using visual evidence effectively to expose corruption.

As is usual with GISWatch*, the thematic reports published here form the bedrock for the country reports that follow, covering both developing and developed countries, such as the United States, Canada, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Argentina, Ethiopia, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Lebanon, China and even Vanuatu.*

The internet is a powerful source for increased access to information about corruption, and how, and by whom, it is perpetrated. But it cannot substitute for the role played by the media and civil society activists. We are pleased to present the sixth edition of the GISWatch *report. We believe it is essential for civil society networks to participate in and watch over ICT policy processes at global, regional and national levels.* ▪

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