

Anti-corruption authorities (ACAs)

The case of Indonesia

While the literature consistently points toward the lack of effectiveness of ACAs in developing countries with poor governance and high levels of corruption, some argue that the perceived failure of ACAs could be related to issues of measurement or design, rather than actual outcomes and impact (Johnson et al. 2011). Reasons typically invoked for this relative lack of effectiveness include uneven or insufficient financial support, political interference, weak institutional mandates, lack of political will, among others.

However, a recent study argues that ACAs can be successful provided they have strong internal controls and accountability mechanisms, build strong alliances with government and non-governmental actors, and focus on preventive and educational efforts in hostile environments (Kuris 2014; DFID 2015). The Corruption Eradication Commission of Indonesia (KPK) seems to have emerged as an exception and is considered one of the only cases of a successful ACA, succeeding in convicting untouchable high-profile perpetrators, recovering stolen assets, and enjoying a higher degree of public trust and support than the other Indonesian law enforcement agencies (Bolongaita 2010; Schütte 2012).

Reasons for the success of the KPK are attributed to its jurisdiction and autonomy, powers and authority. It has been provided not just with prevention and investigation powers, but also with prosecutorial authority. It has the authority to investigate any public official for corruption, including members of parliament and judges, with the exception of the military, and has all the investigative powers of a law enforcement agency. Institutional arrangements also allow the KPK to establish an independent process to hire and pay the agency's managers and staff according to merit and market, while its collegial leadership allows it to spread workload and to foster internal checks and balances and an environment of greater transparency and accountability in operations (Bolongaita 2010).

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