

TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY INITIATIVE

A Funder Collaborative

Research and Learning during a Pandemic

COVID-19 Monitor

Transparency, Civic Participation, and Accountability (TPA) During and Beyond
COVID-19

Issue 3
November 2020



TPA Research and Evidence Staying Relevant During Pandemic

What We Listened for in this Issue

COVID-19 Monitor content, sourced by issue theme, addresses accountability relationships or actions, a non-U.S. region or country, and/or funder role or practice.

The “What”: Calls for and/or newly produced research or other evidence based on practice or experience.

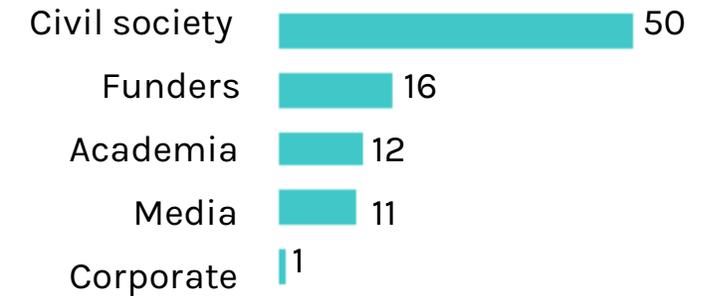
Headline

Development sectors referenced frequently in content (more than TPA specific subfields), indicating relevance of anti-corruption, accountability work to fields beyond TPA. Most referenced fields:

- Public health
- Finance (e.g., microfinance, access to loans)
- Economic relief packages

Who did we hear from?

Majority of content reviewed was produced by civil society



Defining the Terms

TPA = transparency, civic participation, and accountability

Research = Requests for proposals or other planned future or completed research or analysis based on primary, secondary, or experiential quantitative or qualitative evidence, including:

- **Hypothesis / question** = Hypotheses or learning questions addressed by the research or analysis
- **Finding / insight** = Finding, learning insight, or conclusion derived from analysis of cited research or other evidence
- **Recommendation** = Recommended action in response to finding / insight drawn from research or evidence referenced in the piece

Sources

How much content did we analyze?

90 pieces - produced between February and October 2020

What type of content did we read?

Analysis, research, governance data trackers

* Paywall restrictions limited access to some research that we did not include in the analysis

In what languages did we read the content? English

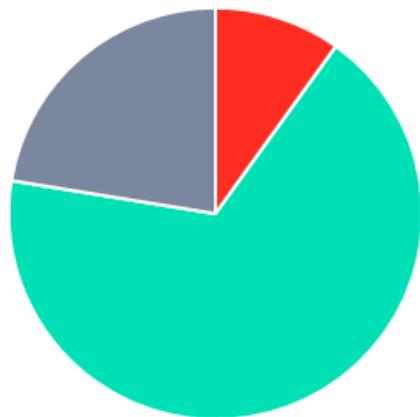
** While we are reading content mainly in English, we recognize authors are writing in other languages, too.

See resources we used for coding and analysis [here](#).

Learning Starts with Asking Questions But Very Few Questions Articulated



Overall, scarce mentions of learning hypotheses or questions



- Findings / insights
- Recommendations
- Hypotheses / questions

Signals detected in questions from greater to lower frequency:



Stronger: Exploring different approaches across unique contexts or changing environments (**adaptation**); some questions on unintended consequences, potential harm



Weaker: Values-driven questions (e.g., inclusion, access, or gender equality)

Weaker: Relationships (or expectations) among citizens or civil society and governments. An exception: check out this [pandemic democracy tracker](#)

About half of the questions and hypotheses made **explicit mention of the pandemic** while the other half did not.

What We are Hearing around TPA Sectors



Most referenced:

Open government
Public debt / budget management
Civic empowerment / participation



Some reference:

Natural resources / extractives
Independent media / journalism
Data privacy / rights



Least referenced:

Corporate governance
Tax systems

Corruption is a prominent cross-cutting issue. It is discussed in connection with economic governance and allocation of (COVID) resources, procurement processes, open access to information, media freedom, and natural resources.

In content reviewed, evidence building around corruption started from a hypothesis or a question followed by a host of insights and fewer recommendations.

Types of Questions (not mutually exclusive):

- Descriptive: documenting current state of affairs [e.g., *How expansive are restrictions on civil liberties put in place to tackle (COVID-19) and do they have sunset clauses?*]
- Comparative: exploring differences across groups or interventions; assessing change against a standard [e.g., *Which type of multi-site and -actor interventions are more likely to shift empowerment and accountability?*]
- Effectiveness: assessing intervention results or “what works” queries of existing evidence [e.g., *What makes [this approach] effective?*]

Many virtual convenings are posing forward-facing learning questions that could shape future field research.

Where Do Funders Fit in this Learning Landscape?



Among the content reviewed, frequency of **funder actors** referenced ranged from:

 *Stronger:* Bi- / multilateral agencies (also prominent authors, commissioners of evidence by funder institution type)

 *Weaker:* Community foundations or intermediary funders

 Research questions focused most on bi- and multilateral agency **financial practices**, including:

- Aid transparency and effectiveness overall
- Financing, distribution of pandemic support (avoiding elite capture, funding havens)

 Much content focused attention on newly made **funder commitments** and need to monitor funder follow through

 Challenges noted in researching funder practices: limited transparency of practices; no access to project documentation

Noteable recommendations and opportunities for funders:

- Employ community-led funding or other **participatory grantmaking** practices
- Encourage **collaboration** between partners and CSOs and improve coordination with other donors through joint funding
- Support **national anti-corruption agencies or institutions** regardless of investment sector; can help with tracking social or environmental impact even when these goals may be beyond immediate funding scope

Near-term pandemic response and long-term research and evidence generation

Pandemic response funding may result in budget cuts or early conclusion for some work, as for [Global Learning for Adaptive Management](#) initiative and [Mobilizing Data for Anti-Corruption](#). Future content from ongoing multi-year initiatives, such as [Anti-Corruption Evidence \(ACE\)](#), [Global Integrity-ACE](#), [Action for Empowerment and Accountability](#), and [Leveraging Transparency to Reduce Corruption](#), can offer evidence and learnings on TPA-relevant pandemic adaptations or opportunities to influence recovery.

Resource Round-Up

Examples of **values-driven research and evidence** on [youth civil society responses to the pandemic](#) and testing [equitable learning partnerships](#) among funders.

Despite few references to **tax systems**, take note of this emerging field of evidence:

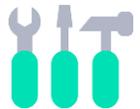
- Multi-country findings on [taxation and formalization](#) from Evidence in Governance and Politics [Metaketa](#) research initiative
- Center for Effective Global Action policy brief on [tax collection](#), featuring Senegal, India
- International Centre for Tax and Development has a [rolling call for proposals](#) on civil society efforts towards more equitable taxation

TAI's Take: Secretariat Reflections for TPA Goals and Sector



What We Fund - Optimizing impact of thematic portfolios

- Opportunity for open government and public debt and budget management evidence to inform national agendas re COVID relief and rebuilding social contract.
- Need to share findings (and questions!) to support a “[solutions in context](#)” approach to evidence use, test novel TPA approaches, and begin to understand impact of pandemic for TPA subfields.
- Promising connections between TPA and development sectors in near-term analysis. Opportunity (that will require resources) to document longer-term evidence of TPA applications as part of pandemic response in key sectors e.g. health or social protection.



How We Fund - Reinforcing effective grantmaker practice

- Encourage and support grantee partners to make learning / research questions clear and visible. Can enhance experience, especially [when learning with others](#), by prioritizing data needs, drawing on existing evidence, or finding partners.
- Opportunity to embed [TPA values](#) more explicitly in grantmaker and practitioner learning as pandemic has raised collective attention to disparities, from access to public services to equitable relationships in philanthropy.



Funder Landscape - Expanding and enhancing funder connections

- Value in joint anti-corruption learning efforts across sectors as pandemic exposes vulnerabilities of project reliance on single donors and given likely long-term disruption.
- Worrisome trend to extend emergency powers/restrict civil society under cover of pandemic merits coordinated donor response.
- Opportunity for peer learning - and accountability to grantee partners - for funders to share their actions, reflections, and learnings around pandemic commitments and responses.
- Opportunity to build on funder and practitioner interest in community-led and participatory approaches by connecting with community foundations or intermediary funders globally.

We Want to Hear from You

See resources we used for coding and analysis [here](#).

Read previous *COVID-19 Monitor* issues: [Governance Data Trackers](#) and [Funder Voices and Responses](#)

Tell us how you are using the *Monitor* on [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#)

TAI COVID-19 Monitor and Collaborative Learning

Why? Based on TAI strategic learning themes outlined in our [2020-2024 strategy](#), provide structured, bird's eye view of content for reflection and action on medium- and longer-term opportunities to advance transparency, participation, and accountability (TPA) during and beyond the pandemic.

What? Brief monthly synthesis of TPA-relevant responses to COVID-19 and emerging research and evidence from peers and practitioners, with Secretariat qualitative analysis and reflections.

Who? As a member-serving funder collaborative, TAI's primary audience is comprised of our members. We also aim for the COVID-19 Monitor to be a public good for other funders, funder collaboratives, and practitioners pursuing TPA outcomes.

Producing and Using the TAI COVID-19 Monitor

TAI works with a small team of researchers using an established [framework to code](#) public and grey qualitative content, including but not limited to blogs, articles, or event summaries. Analysis is based on the characteristics of content reviewed and the code frequencies, code co-occurrences, and qualitative data of the content reviewed.

Offering both opportunities and facing limitations, this information:

Aims to
Provide structure to disparate content and perspectives
Offer a starting point for learning and action

Does not aim to
Be representative of any one or collective voice or experience
Ensure rigid coding reliability or provide solutions for action



TRANSPARENCY &
ACCOUNTABILITY
INITIATIVE



www.transparency-initiative.org



[@TAInitiative](https://twitter.com/TAInitiative)



contact@transparency-initiative.org



[Transparency and Accountability Initiative](https://www.linkedin.com/company/transparency-and-accountability-initiative/)

COVID-19 Monitor

Transparency, Civic Participation, and Accountability During and Beyond COVID-19

Issue 3
November 2020