
The Relationship Between Citizens and Anti-Corruption Agencies in Vietnam: A Legal Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the relationship between citizens and anti-corruption agencies in Vietnam. As the owner of the state's power, citizens had rights and obligations to monitor and report corrupt activities, played a vital role in detecting and preventing corruption. However, an imbalance of power and the absence of adequate mechanisms to protect citizens' interests have limited the effectiveness of their participation. Anti-corruption agencies, such as the Government Inspectorate, the State Audit Office, and investigative bodies must work closely with citizens to enhance the overall effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts and promote citizen engagement. The article recommends establishing clear procedures for receiving complaints and denunciations, safeguarding citizens' rights, and enhancing the role of social organizations in monitoring and reporting corruption, by promoting the relationship between citizens and anti-corruption agencies, thereby establishing a more transparent and effective anti-corruption system.

KEYWORDS

Citizen, Anti-corruption agencies, Vietnam

Introduction

Anti-corruption efforts constitute a decisive factor in achieving sustainable development and social justice. Corruption not only undermines economic stability but also erodes public trust in government, fosters inequality, and impedes social progress. Consequently, combating corruption has become an urgent imperative for every nation, requiring resolute and effective implementation.

Citizens play a crucial role in anti-corruption efforts, holding both the right and responsibility to monitor, critique, and report corrupt activities. They are not just passive beneficiaries of public policies; instead, they are active participants in detecting and preventing corruption through various legal and social mechanisms. However, citizens cannot tackle this issue on their own. Effective anti-corruption initiatives require close collaboration between citizens and competent anti-corruption agencies.

These agencies, which include specialized state bodies such as the Government Inspectorate, the State Audit Office, investigative authorities, and the People's Procuracy, as well as socio-political organizations, are essential for detecting, addressing, and preventing corruption. The relationship between citizens and these anti-corruption agencies should be one of cooperation. Citizens can engage in oversight and criticism while also providing timely information to these agencies, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts. Such collaboration is crucial for establishing a

transparent and efficient anti-corruption system that safeguards the public interest and fosters equitable social development.

In Vietnam, the relationship between citizens and anti-corruption agencies is governed by various legal provisions that influence this dynamic. However, how effectively does this relationship function in practice? What legal frameworks currently regulate this interaction, and do these regulations facilitate or hinder cooperation between citizens and anti-corruption agencies? This article also examines the measures required to strengthen and enhance this relationship, ultimately contributing to enhanced anti-corruption efforts in Vietnam. To address these questions, the article is structured as follows: 1) Theoretical foundations regarding the relationship between citizens and anti-corruption agencies; 2) The current legal framework governing this relationship in Vietnam; 3) Achievements and existing challenges in the interaction between citizens and anti-corruption agencies; 4) Recommendations to strengthen and promote this relationship.

theoretical Issues Concerning The Relationship Between Citizens And Anti-Corruption Agencies

1) The Concepts of Citizens and Anti-Corruption Agencies

The term "citizen" refers to the legal relationship between an individual and a state. An individual recognized as a citizen of a particular country is entitled to the protection of their rights by that state, both within its territory and abroad, while also having certain legal obligations. According to Clause 1, Article 17 of the 2013 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, "A citizen of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a person with Vietnamese nationality." This means that the concept of citizenship is closely tied to the concept of nationality. Nationality establishes a stable legal connection between an individual and a specific state. Vietnamese nationality is the only legal foundation for determining whether someone is considered a Vietnamese citizen. This raises an important question in the context of anti-corruption efforts: Who qualifies as a citizen in the fight against corruption?

The term "citizens" can be understood broadly to include organizations, such as social or socio-political groups. However, in this study, it is used in a narrower sense to refer to individual persons specifically. In this context, "citizen" refers to individuals who actively participate in anti-corruption efforts. These individuals may act independently, as students, workers, producers, or participants in various professional and social spheres or as members of social or socio-political organizations.

Anti-corruption agencies are institutions designated by the State to specifically detect, investigate, and address corrupt activities, as well as to develop and implement preventive measures against corruption in the public sector. These agencies can operate at different administrative levels and include entities such as the Government Inspectorate, investigative authorities, the People's Procuracy, and internal units within ministries, departments, provinces, and municipalities. Furthermore, anti-corruption agencies collaborate with social organizations, the media, and citizens to establish a transparent and equitable oversight system. Their main responsibilities include uncovering and prosecuting corruption, as well as proposing policies and regulations aimed at preventing corruption at its roots. This helps ensure fairness and integrity in public administration. Each country, based on its institutional characteristics and legal framework, establishes specific anti-corruption agencies and corresponding mechanisms tailored to its governance context.

2) The Relationship Between Citizens and Anti-Corruption Agencies

In the fight against corruption, citizens—recognized as holders of public power—are not the only participants. Numerous other stakeholders are involved in this effort. Due to the imbalance of power and the complexity of corrupt practices, citizens alone cannot effectively combat corruption. Therefore,

citizen participation in anti-corruption activities can only reach its full potential when it is closely coordinated with other anti-corruption actors, particularly those within the state apparatus. Key anti-corruption bodies within the state structure include inspectorates, the police, the Public Prosecutor's Office, investigative agencies, the People's Courts, and the State Audit Office. In addition to these institutions, Vietnam's political system includes other entities with anti-corruption mandates, such as the Central Steering Committee for Anti-Corruption, the Central Inspection Commission, and various inspection commissions responsible for overseeing Party members and addressing corrupt behavior.

The relationship between citizens and anti-corruption agencies within the state apparatus and the political system is reciprocal, characterized by independence and mutual influence.

As the owner of the state's power, citizens have the right to oversee and monitor those who act on their behalf, including the anti-corruption agencies mentioned earlier. Citizens can supervise these agencies through various channels, such as reviewing published reports and statistics, engaging with media coverage, and participating in certain activities conducted by inspectorates, procuracies, courts, and other relevant bodies. Through these means, citizens can detect irregularities and report them, thereby promoting more rigorous oversight among anti-corruption agencies and contributing to the exposure of corrupt acts, even within these agencies themselves.

Moreover, anti-corruption agencies within the state apparatus, when working in close coordination with citizens, can contribute to building a stronger and more effective anti-corruption system. When citizens raise concerns even informally, without submitting official complaints if other anti-corruption actors pay adequate attention, investigate thoroughly, and provide explanations regarding these concerns, they may uncover violations or detect signs of power abuse. This, in turn, enhances the effectiveness of corruption prevention and control. Each anti-corruption actor has its distinct functions, and citizens serve as effective intermediaries that help ensure a more comprehensive and impactful anti-corruption effort one that curbs corruption and reinforces good governance. Conversely, when empowered anti-corruption entities fail to connect with citizens disregarding citizen feedback or neglecting public concerns it becomes challenging to foster meaningful citizen participation. As a result, the overall effectiveness of anti-corruption initiatives is unlikely to reach its full potential.

The relationship between citizens and anti-corruption agencies is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts. Citizens' rights to oversight, criticism, and reporting of corruption cannot function effectively in isolation; they require institutional coordination and support to be effective. Close cooperation with agencies such as inspectorates, law enforcement, prosecutors, and audit bodies not only strengthens mutual oversight among these organizations but also facilitates the prompt detection and resolution of corruption cases. When this collaboration works well, anti-corruption initiatives become stronger, more transparent, and more accountable. Conversely, if anti-corruption agencies fail to engage with citizens or ignore their feedback, public participation will decline, leading to a significant reduction in the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures.

The Current Legal Framework Related To The Relationship Between Citizens And Anti-Corruption Agencies In Vietnam

According to the 2018 Law on Anti-Corruption, the principal anti-corruption agencies within Vietnam's political system include the Government Inspectorate, the State Audit Office, the Ministry of Public Security, the People's Procuracy, investigative authorities, and the People's Courts. us levels of government. These bodies are responsible for supervising Party members, including the investigation and handling of corrupt acts committed by Party members.

The Central Steering Committee for Anti-Corruption plays a crucial role in leading and coordinating anti-corruption efforts in Vietnam. Its responsibilities include supervising the implementation of anti-corruption duties throughout the country and overseeing the handling of corruption cases that are characterized by their seriousness, complexity, and public sensitivity¹. Additionally, the Committee addresses misconduct that undermines the integrity and reputation of officials and public servants, collectively labeling these issues as “serious, complex, and socially sensitive corruption and misconduct cases.” In recent years, the Committee has taken direct command in investigating and resolving high-profile corruption cases, including those involving Viet A Company, AIC Company, Van Thinh Phat Group, and SCB Bank². These cases highlight the significant impact of citizen engagement and media discourse on the Committee's operations. Citizens’ petitions and reports act as catalysts for the Committee to initiate reviews and investigations, ensuring timely interventions when necessary. This involvement underscores the importance of public and community voices in holding officials accountable and demonstrates a collaborative approach to combating corruption in Vietnam. The active participation of citizens, particularly through media outlets, has proven essential in promoting transparency and integrity within the political system.

The Central Steering Committee for Anti-Corruption’s strong commitment to strict enforcement of anti-corruption measures has significantly bolstered public trust and encouraged citizen involvement in combatting corruption, particularly through the media and civic engagement. This relationship between citizens and the Committee is mutually beneficial; citizens, as holders of public power, play a vital role in monitoring law enforcement and identifying signs of corruption within the state. In this collaboration, the Central Steering Committee acts as the authoritative body responsible for organizing investigations, addressing corrupt practices, and safeguarding the rights of citizens, especially those who come forward as whistleblowers or complainants. However, a critical legal gap exists: the Committee currently lacks specific legal authority to receive direct opinions, petitions, reports, or denunciations from citizens or social organizations. As it stands, information must be funneled through functional state agencies, limiting direct communication. This absence of a mechanism for citizens to engage directly with the Committee presents a significant shortcoming in its operational framework, hindering the potential for a more transparent and effective anti-corruption strategy.

The State Audit Office of Vietnam plays a vital role in overseeing the management and utilization of public finances and assets. Its mandate includes assessing, verifying, and recommending improvements regarding these resources, which ties closely to its capacity to uncover corruption that can lead to significant losses in state budget resources. The 2018 Law on Anti-Corruption outlines the responsibilities of the State Audit Office and inspection agencies. Article 60 emphasizes their proactive role in detecting corruption while holding them accountable for their decisions. In addition, Clause 2 of Article 61 mandates units under the State Audit Office to audit cases suspected of corruption within organizations managing public finances and assets, as directed by the State Auditor General³. This framework establishes clear legal authorities and procedural guidelines, emphasizing the importance

¹ Communist Party of Vietnam. (2021, September 16). Regulation No. 32-QĐ/TW on functions, tasks, powers, working regulations, and coordination of the Central Steering Committee for Anti-Corruption and Negative Practices, clause 2, Article 3 Replace for Communist Party of Vietnam. (2019, December 25). Regulation No. 211-QĐ/TW on functions, tasks, powers, working regulations, and coordination of the Central Steering Committee for Anti-Corruption

² Online Government Newspaper. (2024, February 1). Several cases were placed under the Central Steering Committee for Anti-Corruption and Negative Practices. <https://baochinhphu.vn/dua-mot-so-vu-an-vao-dien-ban-chi-dao-trung-uong-ve-phong-chong-tham-nhung-tieu-cuc-theo-doi-102240201225211119.htm>

³ National Assembly of Vietnam. (2018, November 20). Law on Anti-Corruption 2018, Article 2, Clause 61

of the audit process. However, an essential question arises regarding the role of citizens in this auditing process. Citizens can serve as watchdogs, helping identify irregularities and contributing to the oversight of public resources. Therefore, understanding the relationship between citizens and the audit system is crucial. For effective participation, a mechanism is needed that allows citizens to express concerns or report suspected corruption directly to the State Audit Office, ensuring their voices are integrated into the audit process. Strengthening this relationship could enhance transparency, accountability, and the overall effectiveness of the anti-corruption efforts within the state apparatus.

Audit activities, given their specialized nature, often involve public authorities, making direct citizen participation in oversight challenging. Furthermore, limited access to information about audit processes adds another layer of difficulty for citizens wishing to engage. To address these challenges and enhance effectiveness and transparency, the State Audit Office was established as an independent agency under the National Assembly in 2005. This independence allows the office to operate without undue influence, ensuring its findings are credible. The results of its audit activities are required to be reported directly to the National Assembly, where members serve as representatives of the people. This reporting mechanism provides a layer of oversight and scrutiny, allowing National Assembly members to hold the State Audit Office accountable. Additionally, live broadcasts of National Assembly sessions related to the state budget provide citizens with a channel to indirectly engage in monitoring budgetary processes. Citizens can also contribute to anti-corruption efforts by analyzing data in audit reports to spot irregularities. When discrepancies are identified, citizens have the option to report their findings to investigative authorities, which can lead to deeper inquiries and potentially expose corrupt practices. For instance, in 2024, the State Audit Office performed 12 inspections focusing on citizen reception, complaint resolution, and handling of denunciations within its units. The inspections revealed that these units complied with regulations, demonstrating a commitment to effectively addressing citizens' concerns⁴. These mechanisms illustrate the various avenues through which citizens can participate in and support efforts to combat corruption, even if their roles are more indirect.

Placing the State Audit Office under the supervision of the National Assembly is a progressive step, facilitating effective citizen involvement in anti-corruption efforts through their elected representatives. However, concerns persist about the integrity of the State Audit Office's operations, as incidents of misconduct have been reported within the auditing sector itself. In a National Assembly session in June 2024, a Member of Parliament posed a pointed question to the State Auditor General about these issues: *"Despite the efforts of the auditing sector, there are still instances of misconduct among some state auditors. A common pattern is that, upon discovering violations, auditors demand or negotiate a share of the misappropriated funds in exchange for overlooking the violations following a 'mutual benefit' principle."*⁵ The State Auditor General acknowledged these issues but referred to them as isolated cases. This highlights the pressing need for reverse oversight mechanisms that can monitor the State Audit Office's activities more effectively. In this context, the role of citizens, journalists, and the media becomes critical for overseeing the auditing process. By conducting press conferences and disclosing audit data, these entities can enhance transparency and enable public scrutiny of the audit system, thereby reinforcing accountability. Such engagement not only empowers citizens but also helps to hold auditors

⁴ Government Inspectorate. (2024, October 14). *Report on citizen reception and administrative complaint and denunciation resolution*, 2024 (No. 642/BC-CP)

⁵ Lao Dong Newspaper. (2024, June 5). The State Auditor General acknowledges that misconduct exists in the sector, albeit in limited form. <https://laodong.vn/thoi-su/tong-kiem-toan-nha-nuoc-thua-nhan-tieu-cuc-trong-nganh-co-nhung-rat-it-1349077.ldo>

accountable, ensuring that the fight against corruption remains a shared responsibility among all stakeholders involved.

The system of inspection agencies in Vietnam, led by the Government Inspectorate⁶, is fundamentally responsible for the proactive detection of corruption and conducting inspections in cases where signs of corruption are evident⁷. These agencies operate within the scope of their assigned functions and powers, working to support competent state authorities in managing inspection activities, as well as addressing complaints and denunciations. Specifically, state inspection agencies are tasked with executing inspections and resolving issues related to complaints, denunciations, and corruption cases in accordance with legal frameworks. This comprehensive mandate enables them to play a critical role in the country's anti-corruption efforts, ensuring that violations are identified and addressed effectively. Their activities are essential not only for maintaining accountability within the public sector but also for fostering public trust in the government's commitment to combating corruption.

The Government Inspectorate holds a vital role in the state management of inspection activities, addressing complaints and denunciations, and leading anti-corruption initiatives at the national level. This agency directly conducts its operations in accordance with established legal regulations, ensuring that its activities are both systematic and transparent⁸. As a key entity responsible for resolving complaints and denunciations, the Government Inspectorate makes a significant contribution to the protection of whistleblowers, particularly those who report acts of corruption⁹. By safeguarding the rights and interests of these individuals, the Inspectorate encourages more citizens to come forward with information about corrupt practices, thereby strengthening the overall anti-corruption framework. This protective stance not only promotes accountability within public institutions but also enhances public trust in the processes established for combating corruption. This role is reflected through a range of specific activities, including: Advising on and contributing to the development of legal frameworks and policies; Issuing regulations within their authority; Disseminating and promoting legal policies on whistleblower protection and anti-corruption; Protecting whistleblowers by keeping their identity and related information confidential during the handling of corruption reports; Clarifying the truthfulness of denunciation contents and determining the whistleblower's liability (if any) when a report is found to be untrue; Taking or recommending timely actions against retaliation or reprisals against whistleblowers; Reviewing and evaluating the implementation of laws on whistleblower protection in corruption cases.¹⁰ As the agency is directly responsible for receiving complaints and denunciations and conducting investigations into such cases, the Government Inspectorate serves as a key channel through which citizens can engage in anti-corruption efforts. Notably, the Law on Anti-Corruption requires that all denunciations, including anonymous ones, must be investigated, thereby further strengthening the position of citizens in the anti-corruption process.

The Government Inspectorate has guided the Prime Minister in issuing the Orientation for the 2024 Inspection Program, which mandates that inspection agencies at all levels enhance their oversight of responsibilities tied to the laws governing citizen reception, complaints, and denunciations. Additionally, the Inspectorate has initiated a nationwide thematic inspection campaign concentrating on the accountability of public officials in managing administrative procedures and delivering public

⁶ National Assembly of Vietnam. (2018, November 20). Law on Anti-Corruption 2018, Article 60

⁷ National Assembly of Vietnam. (2018, November 20). Law on Anti-Corruption 2018, Article 61

⁸ National Assembly of Vietnam. (2010, November 15). Law on Inspection 2010, Article 5

⁹ National Assembly of Vietnam. (2010, November 15). Law on Inspection 2010, Article 14

¹⁰ Trinh, T. X. (2014). Citizen participation mechanisms in anti-corruption efforts in contemporary Vietnam. National Political Publishing House – Truth

services. This campaign features a dedicated segment designed to ensure compliance with legal standards regarding citizen reception, complaint handling, and denunciation resolution. In particular, the Government Inspectorate established three inspection teams to conduct inspections at six ministries and three localities. It established a task force to oversee and guide inspection activities conducted by ministries, sectors, and local authorities¹¹. In 2024, a total of 61 corruption cases involving 107 individuals were detected in anti-corruption efforts. Specifically, 11 cases involving 19 individuals were identified through internal control activities; 36 cases involving 69 individuals were uncovered through inspection and examination activities; and 14 cases involving 19 individuals were discovered through the resolution of citizen complaints and denunciations.

The Supreme People's Procuracy is responsible for prosecuting corruption-related crimes and overseeing corruption investigations conducted by the Ministry of Public Security. The Ministry, through its Department for the Investigation of Corruption Crimes, is responsible for identifying and investigating corruption cases, as well as recommending prosecutions for corruption offenses to the Procuracy. A reciprocal relationship exists between the People's Procuracy and the investigative bodies of the Ministry of Public Security in their anti-corruption efforts. This relationship is essential; citizens cannot effectively combat corruption without the participation of specialized anti-corruption entities, such as inspectorates, audit agencies, investigative authorities, and the judiciary. At the same time, these institutions rely heavily on information from citizens, which is often provided through complaints, denunciations, petitions, and media reports. Information provided by citizens often acts as the catalyst for state authorities to initiate further investigations into potential signs of corruption. Recent significant corruption cases highlight the critical collaboration between citizens and anti-corruption bodies. Prominent examples include the "rescue flight" case, the Viet A COVID-19 test kit scandal, the Nhat Cuong Mobile case, and the Nguyen Duc Chung case, all of which underscore the crucial role of citizen involvement in exposing large-scale corruption.

In 2024, the People's Procuracies at all administrative levels conducted a total of 21 planned inspection missions¹² and 52 operational reviews¹³. These activities included evaluations of how citizen reception was handled, as well as the management of complaints and denunciations. The findings from these inspections and reviews indicated no violations in these areas.

Despite the close relationship between citizens and anti-corruption agencies in their efforts to combat corruption, significant limitations still exist, especially concerning the protection of citizens' rights. The current system for filing complaints and denunciations is hindered by procedural and institutional barriers, making it challenging for citizens to express their concerns effectively. Often, these complaints result in little to no meaningful change in outcomes, and the number of corruption cases identified through denunciations remains disappointingly low. Those who bravely come forward to report issues can find themselves in vulnerable positions; in some cases, individuals have faced criminal charges for

¹¹ Government Inspectorate. (2024, December 28). Summary of 2024 inspection sector activities and implementation of 2025 tasks.

https://thanhtra.gov.vn/xem-chi-tiet-tin-tuc/-/asset_publisher/Content/nganh-thanh-tra-tong-ket-cong-tac-nam-2024-va-trien-khai-nhiem-vu-nam-2025?6604221

¹² The Supreme People's Procuracy -03, eople's Procuracies of provinces and cities: Ho Chi Minh City: 02, Hoa Binh 03, Binh Phuoc 01, Hai Phong 04, Ninh Binh 01, Ba Ria – Vung Tau 02, Quang Binh 01; Lao Cai 03; Ben Tre 01.

¹³ Lang Son 03, Hoa Binh 02, Cao Bang 03, Hai Phong 14, Hà Tĩnh 16, Ba Ria - Vung Tau 02, Đak Nong 02, Binh Phuoc 06; Đak Lak 04.

"disturbing public order"¹⁴ while pursuing legitimate grievances. The judiciary's role in safeguarding citizens' rights is similarly constrained and underdeveloped. Most complaints are resolved within the administrative framework, such as through People's Committees or the Government Inspectorate, which typically function in a closed and insular manner. This situation has raised alarms about "*mutual protectionism*"¹⁵ where administrative bodies either at local or central levels protect each other from accountability, further complicating the fight against corruption. To promote meaningful and effective citizen involvement in anti-corruption initiatives, the role of anti-corruption agencies is crucial. These agencies should position themselves as partners alongside the public in the fight against corruption rather than merely functioning as rigid administrative bodies that create procedural barriers for citizens attempting to file petitions or denunciations. Furthermore, ensuring judicial independence is crucial, especially in resolving disputes involving state agencies, particularly in land-related matters. Strengthening this independence would play a significant role in developing more effective mechanisms for protecting citizens' rights and enhancing the fight against corruption. Judicial independence is particularly crucial when adjudicating disputes involving state agencies, especially in land-related cases. Strengthening this independence would significantly enhance the mechanisms available to protect citizens' rights in the ongoing fight against corruption. However, the current State of affairs suggests that collaboration between citizens and anti-corruption agencies is often superficial and ineffective, which undermines the overall effectiveness of anti-corruption initiatives. Despite the Party and the State's determined efforts in recent years, which have resulted in the successful prosecution of several high-profile corruption cases, public concern about corruption remains prevalent.¹⁶

Achievements And Challenges In The Relationship Between Citizens And Anti-Corruption Agencies In Vietnam

1) Achievements

According to current legal provisions and practical experiences related to the coordination between citizens and anti-corruption agencies, their relationship exhibits a significant degree of mutual support and positive interaction in detecting and addressing corruption. Several corruption cases have come to light as a result of citizen oversight, reporting, and public pressure. Concurrently, the investigative and prosecutorial efforts of anti-corruption agencies have successfully led to the prosecution of numerous corruption cases, the recovery of state assets, and a partial restoration of public trust in the anti-corruption system.

In addition, the relationship between citizens and anti-corruption actors within the state apparatus has also shown signs of increasing engagement. The active participation of citizens, particularly through the press and media, within the framework of a relatively tightly controlled administrative system has

¹⁴ La, K. T. (2024). Applying the principle of citizen participation in anti-corruption activities in Vietnam. In N. Q. Van, V. C. Giao, & N. V. Quan (Eds.), *Modern and effective national governance about anti-corruption in contemporary Vietnam*. Vietnam National University Publishing House. ISBN 978-604-43-1723-6

¹⁵ La, K. T. (2024). Applying the principle of citizen participation in anti-corruption activities in Vietnam. In N. Q. Van, V. C. Giao, & N. V. Quan (Eds.), *Modern and effective national governance about anti-corruption in contemporary Vietnam*. Vietnam National University Publishing House. ISBN 978-604-43-1723-6

¹⁶ Transparency International. (2019). *Vietnam Corruption Barometer 2019: Perceptions and experiences of Vietnamese citizens on corruption*. Page 6. Hong Duc Publishing House. ISBN 978-604-86-9916-1

contributed significantly to the exposure of corruption cases. Several newspapers have played an active role in reporting on corruption-related matters, and most online news platforms now maintain dedicated sections on anti-corruption, reflecting both public interest and civic involvement in monitoring and accountability.

The relationship between citizens and anti-corruption agencies significantly enhances transparency and openness while also improving the efficiency of the state apparatus. Additionally, cooperation between citizens and these bodies acts as a catalyst for encouraging public participation in anti-corruption initiatives, which in turn strengthens the overall effectiveness of efforts to combat corruption. In a broader perspective, such collaboration is crucial for building a clean, integrity-based, and resilient state.

Although the voices of courageous individuals, who are sometimes themselves victims of corruption, may face risks, they nonetheless generate a meaningful impact. In recent years, notably, corruption cases have garnered widespread public attention, especially as major corruption scandals have been exposed and prosecuted, reflecting a growing societal engagement and demand for accountability.

2) Challenges and Limitations

The representatives of citizens and anti-corruption agencies still primarily operate within a management and administrative framework rather than adopting an independent and inclusive approach that truly aligns with the interests of citizens. The connection and responsiveness between citizens and state-based anti-corruption actors remain limited. Citizen participation lacks the binding authority or enforceability over state agencies. In practice, citizen involvement in anti-corruption activities is often restricted to consultative or advisory roles rather than being fully recognized as a central and influential component alongside institutional anti-corruption actors. The voice of the people has yet to be fully integrated as a decisive force within the anti-corruption system.

Citizens often show limited enthusiasm or engagement in anti-corruption efforts and in cooperating with anti-corruption agencies. This is because their voices in this dynamic are not genuinely valued. Additionally, the procedural requirements for citizen participation in interactions with these agencies are too complex and burdensome. These barriers further discourage meaningful collaboration and diminish the potential of citizens as active stakeholders within the anti-corruption framework.

Mass organizations and socio-political associations, which are intended to represent citizens in the fight against corruption, have largely been passive in their roles. They have not actively engaged in essential activities such as oversight, denunciation, reporting, and addressing corrupt behaviors. This limitation in proactive engagement has resulted in a weak and underdeveloped role for these organizations in providing crucial feedback and participating in public conversations regarding anti-corruption efforts. This situation highlights a broader issue: the relationship between citizens and anti-corruption actors is fragmented and lacks cohesion. Public authorities and citizens should work together as a unified force driven by shared interests and a common purpose. However, in reality, they often end up functioning independently, with differing objectives and paths.

This disconnection hinders the improvement of relations between citizens and anti-corruption agencies. Consequently, it weakens the effectiveness of citizen involvement in anti-corruption initiatives and undermines the overall success of the State's anti-corruption strategy.

Recommendations For Strengthening The Relationship Between Citizens And Anti-Corruption Agencies

As previously discussed, citizens cannot independently carry out anti-corruption efforts to their full extent. While citizens, as sovereign individuals and overseers, have both the right and the responsibility to monitor their representatives and demand accountability in cases of corruption, the ultimate authority to investigate corruption offenses and implement anti-corruption policies remains with state institutions. Therefore, the key issue is to strengthen the relationship between citizens and anti-corruption actors within the state apparatus. When this relationship is reinforced, the overall effectiveness of anti-corruption activities is likely to improve. Based on an analysis of the current engagement between citizens and anti-corruption agencies, this paper provides several recommendations aimed at enhancing this relationship to improve the overall effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts in Vietnam.

First and foremost, it is necessary to supplement the legal framework with provisions that explicitly govern the relationship between citizens and other anti-corruption actors, thereby clarifying the legal effectiveness of citizen participation mechanisms in anti-corruption activities. The current Law on Anti-Corruption outlines the agencies involved in anti-corruption efforts within the state apparatus; however, it lacks concrete provisions on coordination and accountability between anti-corruption bodies and citizens—particularly regarding the obligation of anti-corruption agencies to receive and consider citizen input, especially from inspection and supervisory bodies. Currently, most corruption cases identified by citizens are only acted upon by anti-corruption agencies when irregularities are reported through the media, and the number of citizen complaints that result in formal action remains low. Therefore, establishing binding legal provisions on the responsibilities and interactions between citizens and anti-corruption entities is essential for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of the legal framework governing citizen participation in anti-corruption processes.

Second, citizen participation must be coordinated with anti-corruption actors within the state apparatus to achieve comprehensive and effective prevention of corruption. Agencies such as the police, inspectorates, audit bodies, the Central Steering Committee for Anti-Corruption, and the Party's Internal Affairs Commission should adhere to more detailed legal provisions regarding how they receive and handle complaints and denunciations from citizens. Currently, the regulations governing citizen reception and complaint resolution are general and vague. Therefore, it is essential to establish more specific procedural regulations outlining how anti-corruption agencies should receive and process complaints and denunciations. Such measures would enhance efficiency and legal effectiveness while fostering stronger institutional connections between citizens and anti-corruption entities.

Third, it is essential to establish dedicated channels for citizens to provide feedback on anti-corruption issues, directly connecting them to the relevant agencies. Such channels allow for timely and effective communication, thereby strengthening the bond between the public and anti-corruption institutions. Utilizing information technology, especially artificial intelligence (AI), is essential for processing, classifying, and managing citizen reports, petitions, and complaints. AI can help ensure that submissions are handled confidentially, objectively, and efficiently. Additionally, citizen feedback models, such as those used in Brazil and India, should be tailored to fit Vietnam's legal and institutional framework, particularly by integrating with Vietnam's Central Steering Committee for Anti-Corruption, to enhance connectivity and responsiveness in anti-corruption efforts.

Fourth, to effectively combat corruption in Vietnam, it is essential to establish a specialized anti-corruption body that brings together key anti-corruption agencies. Currently, the Central Steering

Committee for Anti-Corruption exists, but its operational framework is unclear and lacks sufficient institutional support. In practice, the Committee primarily focuses on large-scale corruption cases, often neglecting smaller, everyday cases that directly impact citizens' interests. Consequently, the communication channels between citizens and the Committee are fragmented and ineffective. To address these issues, a dedicated anti-corruption agency should be established, comprising representatives from the Government Inspectorate, the Ministry of Public Security, the People's Procuracy, and the State Audit Office. This new agency should operate under an interdisciplinary model, ensuring broad participation and multi-layered oversight, which will enhance transparency and accountability in managing public information. At present, the activities of anti-corruption agencies lack coordinated collaboration. As a result, the handling of citizen complaints, reports, and denunciations often involves avoidance or shifting responsibility. Therefore, a unified institutional framework is crucial for improving efficiency and rebuilding public trust in anti-corruption enforcement.

Fifth, it is essential to enhance the legal framework by including provisions that define the responsibilities of anti-corruption agencies towards citizens and civic organizations. Specifically, when these agencies receive feedback, reports, or denunciations from the public, they should be required to follow clear procedural obligations. This includes the necessity to respond transparently and substantially. Implementing such provisions would help establish accountability, build trust, and ensure that citizen engagement leads to meaningful and timely actions rather than vague procedures or silence.

Sixth, it is essential to develop and establish civil society organizations and professional associations that represent citizens and act as intermediaries between the public and authorities overseeing anti-corruption efforts. These organizations should have legal recognition and serve as bridges that facilitate communication and coordination between citizens and anti-corruption agencies. They could relay citizen information and petitions to the appropriate authorities, provide legal support for individuals filing complaints or reports of corruption, and organize dialogues and forums that bring together state agencies and citizens, thereby promoting transparency and accountability. Additionally, these civil society organizations could function as independent monitoring channels, complementing the work of state anti-corruption agencies. To operate effectively and genuinely represent citizen interests, a clear legal framework is necessary to define their roles, rights, and responsibilities within the anti-corruption system. Furthermore, they must be supported by independent financial mechanisms that do not rely on the state budget, and their operations should be conducted democratically and autonomously. The establishment of such intermediary organizations will significantly enhance the participatory space for citizens in the fight against corruption and promote a more inclusive and pluralistic anti-corruption environment.

Finally, it is essential to organize forums and dialogue conferences between citizens and anti-corruption agencies to facilitate the reception, acknowledgment, and discussion of citizen feedback and proposals. These forums should serve as open and democratic platforms where citizens can directly express their concerns, difficulties, or recommendations related to corruption and misconduct they encounter in their daily lives. At such events, relevant authorities must provide public explanations and responses to citizen inquiries and reflections, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability within state institutions. Dialogue forums should include mandatory participation from key anti-corruption bodies, such as the Government Inspectorate, the State Audit Office, the police, and the People's Procuracy, to ensure that citizen input is fully received, appropriately processed, and guided by clear procedural instructions. These conferences would help strengthen ties and institutional obligations between

citizens and anti-corruption agencies, enabling early detection or prevention of corruption at the grassroots level and reducing instances of misdirected or escalated complaints and denunciations. To ensure that these forums are genuinely effective and draw active public participation, they should be held regularly, with broader representation, including civil society organizations and the press. Dialogue minutes must be publicly disclosed, and clear commitments must be made regarding the resolution of citizen petitions. Citizens should also have mechanisms to monitor and track the follow-up process, such as updates posted on official government portals or notice boards at public offices (e.g., People's Committees)

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