



ACE
GLOBAL INTEGRITY

Anti-Corruption Evidence
Research Programme

GI-ACE 2.0 | Call for Expressions of Interest

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ABOUT GI-ACE

The Global Integrity Anti-Corruption Evidence ([GI-ACE](#)) research programme, funded by the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office ([FCDO](#)), supports research projects designed to generate actionable evidence that may lead to more effective anti-corruption initiatives. This entails moving away from national-level top-down technical and regulatory approaches towards operationally relevant, problem-driven, rigorous, and actionable research that takes into account specific context and the complexity of corruption.

GI-ACE is one of three strands in the Anti-Corruption Evidence (ACE) initiative, together with the Serious Organised Crime & Anti-Corruption Evidence ([SOC ACE](#)) Research Programme and the SOAS Anti-Corruption Evidence ([SOAS-ACE](#)) Research Consortium.

Over the last four years, GI-ACE has supported a total of 19 [research projects](#). Amongst the themes explored in those projects were anti-money laundering, beneficial ownership, cross-border trading, medical theft, procurement risks, and urban planning.

Projects have generated extensive outputs - producing over 85 policy briefs, reports, datasets, and working papers and delivering impact through over 400 engagement events (speeches, panel appearances, participation in workshops, and so forth). The research teams have provided concrete tests of anti-corruption interventions, with insights and findings that continue to be presented to a range of government representatives and other organisations around the world.

Our core focus in GI-ACE is on generating research and engaging in sustainable, practical change that will last longer than the completion of the project. For example, the [red flags project](#) on procurement-related corruption used large datasets to develop new proxy indicators of risk, based on 'red flags' in the tendering process, to then test how patterns of corruption differ across contexts and whether anti-corruption efforts work. This initiative has evolved into two parallel efforts with the World Bank and the IMF.

In another example from the first phase of research, one of our [research teams](#) engaged in survey projects around the world on the effectiveness of ethics training, then developed practical examples of enhanced training in Bangladesh and Nepal, tested through baseline and endline research. The team's commitment to connecting their research with non-academic partners also led to collaborations with the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and the World Bank as well as a project on Administrative Productivity in EU Member States.

Another GI-ACE project brought together key policymakers from the UK, US, Nigeria, and Malawi to discuss findings from research on the effectiveness of [law enforcement efforts](#). The findings informed policy and practice at the Anti-Corruption Bureau and the Directorate of Public Prosecutions in Malawi, as well as the Code of Conduct Bureau in Nigeria.

For more details on the reach and impact of previous GI-ACE research across a range of projects, see the report [From Research to Practice: The Journey of GI-ACE](#).

GI-ACE PHASE TWO

Three short-term projects were commissioned in 2022 to help provide the groundwork for phase two of GI-ACE. These projects summarised the state of anti-corruption research in the following key areas: [Global Finance and the Enablers of Corruption](#); [Crisis Responses and Corruption in Vulnerable Sectors](#); [Corruption Risks in Global Trade and Commerce](#).

To advance our programme, GI-ACE is now inviting research teams to submit an Expression of Interest (Eoi) to conduct further work that generates practical anti-corruption evidence in one of those three areas, described in further detail below under 'Themes'. The research projects should run for three years, from September 2023 until September 2026, within a budget of no more than £220,000. The research must focus primarily on [tackling specific corruption-related issues that affect ODA-eligible countries](#) and ensure that it encompasses a "nose-to-tail" policy approach in line with ACE research principles. We highly encourage proposals from researchers in the Global South or those working closely with Global South partners. We look forward to research proposing innovative approaches tied to concrete challenges around any of the three themes, including those that incorporate collaboration with practitioners who are directly dealing with these challenges. Research should be carried out in accordance with the [framing principles of ACE](#):

- Investigating anti-corruption (not just 'admiring the problem' of corruption).
- Being problem-focused (rather than proposing generic anti-corruption solutions).
- Focusing on real-world priorities in sectors where corruption is part of, but rarely all of, the problem.
- Taking politics seriously (by addressing the feasibility of reform proposals).
- Demonstrating impact (by measuring the effects of interventions on reducing corruption).
- Engaging practitioners from 'nose to tail' of the research process.

GI-ACE is an interdisciplinary programme and welcomes research from across a range of perspectives, including political science, economics, anthropology, sociology, and socio-legal studies. GI-ACE's research questions will require a combination of research methods, and substantial fieldwork to generate new data, as well as experimental methods where appropriate.

Research teams will work under the overall guidance of the GI-ACE Programme Director and Technical Lead Paul Heywood and GI-ACE Deputy Director Elsa Peraldi, with operational and communications support from [Global Integrity](#), an independent learning-centred organisation



based in Washington, D.C. that supports locally-led efforts to address complex governance problems. More about GI-ACE here: <https://ace.globalintegrity.org/>



THEMES

- **Global Finance and the Enablers of Corruption**

In line with the first phase of GI-ACE, we aim to continue exploring the role played by enablers (such as bankers, lawyers, realtors, auditors and so on) in an expanding ecosystem, especially with regard to illicit financial flows (IFFs), and proposed responses. The continued focus on this theme reflects the growing worldwide momentum to pass new and enhanced anti-money laundering legislation, including on beneficial ownership registers — a trend that has received a boost with the Biden administration’s commitment to crack down on illicit finance.

However, recent research on the corruption challenges linked to global finance indicates that although some instruments and regulatory frameworks exist to counter global money laundering, their effectiveness at national, regional, and global scales has been distinctly mixed. Moreover, regulators and enforcement agencies have usually focused on going after those directly committing the crimes, rather than the enablers of their corruption.

Our recently commissioned research project reviewed evidence on how enablers become involved in these schemes, what instruments exist to steer them from acting as facilitators to being a first line of defence against money laundering, and how effective these tools have been to deter their participation in IFFs. One key obstacle to creating international standards is the existence of differing legal systems around the world; in addition, some sectors such as education and the art world have been largely overlooked as sites for money laundering.

Based on the identified knowledge gaps, amongst the research questions to consider are:

- In relation to existing global, national, subnational and self-regulatory frameworks, how effective are the various models at preventing money laundering within targeted risk categories and, importantly, how can they be improved?
- How might policy makers address differences between jurisdictions related to concerns over privacy protection, cybersecurity breaches, and potential areas of national security?
- How might regulators balance the relative costs and benefits of specific reforms; for example, does the scale of money laundered through educational establishments, art dealers and other similar routes, make them regulatory priorities?



- What measures can policymakers use to determine when the costs associated with new or additional layers of regulations outweigh the benefits – and at what point does over-regulation discourage compliance?

We are now inviting research proposals to explore these questions further, as well as any other related topics (the commissioned research report provided several additional suggestions [here](#), pages 45-49). Projects under this theme will also be expected to build on the findings of earlier GI-ACE research in order to inform the development of appropriate measures to protect those in the global south who suffer most from the connivance of professional facilitators in IFFs and other forms of money laundering.

- **Crisis Responses and Corruption in Vulnerable Sectors**

As the world faces growing threats from climate change, more frequent extreme weather events and health-related crises including pandemics, the risk of corrupt actors exploiting emergency measures taken to deal with such challenges also increases. Past health emergencies and natural disasters, such as the Ebola crisis in West Africa or cyclones in East Africa, saw the emergence of fraudulent charities, government and private-sector benefit fraud, identity theft, government contract and procurement fraud, and other forms of public corruption.

Indeed, when a crisis hits, emergency powers often allow for conventional scrutiny measures to be circumvented and thus open up potential risks for corruption. As demonstrated during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, more research is needed in order to better assess these risks and to identify effective practices to establish preventative anti-corruption measures before a disaster happens. In particular, there is a demonstrated need to examine feasible anti-corruption measures that can strengthen the resilience of vulnerable sectors, such as health and education.

Our recently commissioned research presented an analytic framework that examined regulatory and policy landscapes and practices, focusing on four dimensions: people, processes, challenges, and interventions. In that research, particular attention was paid to the United States, the United Kingdom, Hungary, South Africa, and Nigeria; along with the World Bank as a donor. We are particularly interested in further research that focuses on the impact of such issues more widely in the global south, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

Based on the identified knowledge gaps, amongst the research questions to consider are:



- What are the gaps between emergency procurement practices and regulatory frameworks, what are the particular corruption risks posed by these gaps, and how should they be addressed?
- How should selection criteria for direct awards in emergency procurement be best designed to minimise corruption risks?
- How do contract oversight and management operate in an emergency situation and what measures can be taken to improve their functioning?
- What is the relationship between political connections and procurement corruption, particularly in situations where successful businesses have close connections to government and politicians? What can be done to manage those relationships more effectively?

We are now seeking research teams to explore these questions further, as well as any other related topics under the broad heading of crisis responses and corruption. Projects under this theme will be expected to focus on identifying specific and feasible anti-corruption measures and interventions that strengthen the resilience of vulnerable sectors so that their functioning is not unduly distorted by the invocation of emergency powers.

- **Corruption Risks in Global Trade and Commerce**

Transactions between people and companies in an increasingly globalised world have opened new opportunities for corrupt exchanges (e.g. illicit cross-border trade, underground financial systems, trade diversion, transfer pricing, invoicing abuse), yet there has been little focus on how to address such corruption challenges. As outlined by the [U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre](#), commodity trading is a sector of strategic importance that is exposed to major corruption risks that are insufficiently understood. It affects the well-being of people around the world and carries implications for sectors such as health, technology, and housing. The sector is also notoriously opaque and poorly regulated, with low levels of transparency and accountability. A specific focus on trading in carbon markets, as well as vulnerabilities for corruption in major ports and large infrastructure projects, is of particular interest for further investigation.



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Our recently commissioned research in this area explored the pressing social and environmental challenges compounding the need for global accountability, especially for multinational businesses. The findings explored the potential and the possible downsides of cryptocurrencies in the fight against corruption, the complexities of supply chain touch points in securing against corruption at multiple stages (especially for international trade with variable prices such as food) and cautioned about the risk of green minerals mining suffering the same corruption risks as carbon offsetting for its fossil fuel predecessors.

Based on the identified knowledge gaps, amongst the research questions to consider are:

- How should legal records be used beyond anti-corruption enforcement, including commercial and trade litigation and industry-focused integrity databases, to build a more complete picture of corruption risks and develop anti-corruption measures?
- What are the patterns of corruption identified in the existing literature that should be checked against this fuller picture of corruption risks in trade and commerce and how should it affect the development of anti-corruption interventions?
- Drawing on broader sources in the fields of corporate misconduct and accountability, which has been insufficiently explored by corruption researchers, how can we use them to better inform the design of anti-corruption interventions?

We are now inviting research proposals to explore these questions further, as well as any other relevant topics under this theme. Projects under this theme will be expected to identify interventions to help reduce specific corruption risks (an example of an effective intervention is the action by the Maersk shipping group which managed to reduce facilitation payments at ports around the world by over 90% through using tracking software to map risks areas and working to support their ships' captains to counter demands via a phased approach).

Research for all the themes should have a primary focus on supporting anti-corruption interventions to benefit countries and territories covered by the OECD Development Assistance Committee list of Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding.

For more information on the commissioned research projects on these themes, see:

- [Global Finance and the Enablers of Corruption](#) (full report [here](#))
- [Crisis Responses and Corruption in Vulnerable Sectors](#) (policy brief [here](#))
- [Corruption Risks in Global Trade and Commerce](#) (full report [here](#))



DELIVERABLES

Throughout the project cycle, a schedule of publications will be expected from each research team. This schedule should include, as a minimum: policy briefs, working papers, peer-reviewed articles, blogs or press articles, and a final report. We also welcome proposals for longer monographs, though do not expect these to be completed during the period of funding.

Furthermore, we will also expect the researchers to be involved in various engagements of different types. These should include interactions, as appropriate, with government officials and/or international organisations; workshops, conferences, or other events where the research is presented; regional learning events, as appropriate, that share research findings and implications with FCDO country offices.

The deliverables will have an agreed schedule with the selected research team, within the timeframe of September 2023 to September 2026.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

We will require all teams to submit narrative and financial reporting on a quarterly basis. These reports should be brief and indicative of ongoing work throughout the project cycle.

The GI-ACE management team will provide templates for reporting, and work closely with researchers to ensure timeliness and accuracy.

We will also expect team members to attend at least three group meetings with all GI-ACE programme research teams and the GI-ACE management team. These events will take place at inception, mid-point, end-point of the projects, in person wherever possible and most likely in the UK or the USA. Project budgets should make provision for these meetings.

TIMELINE

2023 | Key start dates:

Dates	Description
May - 1	Research teams submit their EoI by May 1, 2023 at 5:00 PM ET.
May - 2-19	GI assesses submitted EoIs with the selection panel.
May - 22	GI invites selected teams to submit full proposals.



Dates	Description
July - 3	Full proposals to be submitted by July 3, 2023 at 5:00 PM ET.
July - September -	GI assesses full proposals and offers contracts to selected teams.
September - 11-15	The contracts are approved and work is set to commence.

Research phase: September 2023-September 2026 (3 years).

APPLICATION PROCESS

Proposals will be solicited using a two-stage bidding process, as follows:

1. Through this EOI, GI-ACE is soliciting innovative, feasible, and realistic research ideas in response to the three anti-corruption themes of interest – as described above.
2. Successful applicants will be chosen by a selection panel based on the quality of their research proposal and how it scored against the evaluation criteria - as listed below.
3. Once the selection panel has assessed all EoIs, we will proceed to invite the shortlisted candidates to submit full proposals by 3 July, 2023.
4. We expect to commence research activities in September 2023, once the assessment, approvals, and due diligence are completed.



EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evaluation Criteria	Score (max)	Description
<i>Research</i>		
Quality of research proposal	50	<p>Describe your research proposal in brief and explain its <i>potential</i> to expand the existing evidence on one of the selected themes, deepen the research findings generated by GI-ACE thus far, and make valuable contributions to the overall anti-corruption sector.</p> <p>Amongst key questions to consider are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does your project focus on issues that have not yet received sufficient attention? - Would the research generate new and actionable anti-corruption evidence? - How does your team plan to collaborate with practitioners? <p>Please note that the research must focus on tackling corruption issues that affect ODA-eligible countries.</p>
Overall approach	15	Describe the research methods that you plan to utilise. Do they have demonstrated potential to facilitate a practical application and engagement with practitioners and development partners in ODA-eligible countries?
Plan for research uptake	10	Describe your plans for the research to be taken up by policy practitioners. Comment on issues of feasibility and practical application.?
Deliverables	5	Briefly outline the planned deliverables. What kinds of publications and engagements do you envision during this project?



Feasibility	5	What is the overarching timeline to complete the project satisfactorily and on time? You may wish to include an outline Gantt chart.
<i>Operational Capabilities & Team</i>		
Capacity of team	5	Briefly outline the academic credentials of the team members. Does the Principal Investigator (PI) have relevant experience, including having led research teams?
Track record	5	Briefly describe how the Principal Investigator (PI) and the team delivered research in the past. Is there anything in particular that showcases the track record or the potential of the research team?
<i>Financial Cost</i>		
Budget and value for money	5	Describe how this project would present a good value for money based on the planned budget & deliverables.
Total	100	The total composite score will be a significant factor in the decision over who is invited to submit a full proposal by May 22, 2023.

EOI SUBMISSION MATERIALS

1. Proposed **research team**:
 - Name and affiliation of the principal investigator (email required)
 - Name and affiliation of each team member (emails optional)
 - CVs of all research team members (no longer than 2 pages each)

2. **Letter of interest** (maximum 5 pages) in line with the Evaluation Criteria (table above):
 - *Research scope of proposal*
 - A proposed title of the project under one of the three themes
 - A summary of research methodology



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- 3-5 research questions for the selected theme
 - Planned outcomes
 - Plan for research uptake (policy impact)
 - Deliverables (provide 2-3 examples)
 - Feasibility (a timeline overview)
 - *Operational Capabilities & Team*
 - A paragraph about team capacity
 - A paragraph about collective track record (1-2 examples of previous work)
 - *Financial Cost*
 - A paragraph with a narrative description of the budget (estimate).
 - A paragraph that refers to expected value for money.
3. Proposed **budget** of no more than £220,000 over three years (September 2023-26).
- A fully detailed breakdown of the budget is not needed at this stage, just an estimate under broad headings.

PLEASE SUBMIT ALL MATERIALS VIA [THIS FORM](#) (as visible below) using the link.



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GI-ACE EoI form (submissions)

Please submit all required information for this Expression of Interest (EoI), and attach the Letter of Interest and all CVs below.

Theme *

Proposed title of the project

A working title is OK.

Name of Principal Investigator *

If more than one, please note this below.

Affiliation of Principal Investigator *



Contact email *

Lead researcher's preferred email.


Names & affiliations of team members

Please list all associated researchers below.

CVs *


Drop multiple files here - one for each research team member, starting with the lead.


 Attach file

 Drop files here

Letter of Interest *

Drop one file here with all required contents outlined in the EoI. There can be an appendix including an outline of the budget.

 Attach file

 Drop files here

Budget *

in Pounds Sterling

Submit



For more details on what we are looking for and how we will score the assessment, please see the Evaluation Criteria table above.

Website link: <https://ace.globalintegrity.org/eoi-2/>

Questions? Contact gi-ace@globalintegrity.org.