

STRENGTHENING POLICY ADVISORY SYSTEMS AS A CORE ENABLER FOR THE G20 ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENDA

**Briefing note for the attention of the G20
Anti-Corruption Working Group**

**POLICY INNOVATION LAB
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This briefing note highlights the findings from a comparative study of Policy Advisory Systems (PAS) and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital tools for policy advice in Brazil, India, Kenya, and South Africa¹. The note emphasises the direct relevance of these findings to the priorities of the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group (ACWG). We find that robust, well-structured PAS are fundamental to building a culture of integrity and combating corruption. Effective PAS create the institutional architecture for transparency and accountability in the public sector. The use of digital tools within these systems enhances the capacity to detect illicit financial flows, thereby supporting asset recovery. Furthermore, inclusive and participatory PAS models strengthen collective action by mobilising civil society, academia and the private sector. By fostering transparency and providing secure reporting channels, these systems also create an environment conducive to effective whistle-blower protection. This note concludes with recommendations for the ACWG to champion the role of effective PAS in the global fight against corruption.

1 Access the consolidated PAS report here: <https://policyinnovationlab.sun.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Consolidated-Report.pdf>

1. INTRODUCTION

The Policy Innovation Lab at Stellenbosch University conducted an in-depth comparative analysis of PAS and the use of AI and digital tools for policy advice in four Global South countries: Brazil, India, Kenya and South Africa. This research reveals critical insights into how governments source, coordinate and utilise evidence and expertise to formulate policy, thereby shaping the integrity and transparency of the state itself. The priorities of the South African G20 Presidency's (ACWG) depend on the institutional capacity of member states to implement anti-corruption measures effectively. Our findings indicate that the quality, coherence and resilience of a country's internal PAS influence its ability to prevent and combat corruption. This note maps our key research findings directly onto the ACWG's four priority areas.

2. PRIORITIES FOR ADVANCING THE ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENDA THROUGH EFFECTIVE POLICY ADVISORY SYSTEMS



Priority 1: Strengthen the public sector by promoting transparency, integrity and accountability

A strong PAS is the institutional foundation for a transparent, ethical and accountable public sector. It provides the structures and processes that translate anti-corruption principles into government practice.

Our research identifies institutional models for embedding integrity in the public sector. Brazil's Office of the Comptroller General of the Union (CGU) is a ministry-level body that forms part of the Executive Branch, which is a dedicated internal watchdog. It is responsible for promoting transparency, accountability, integrity, and internal control within Brazil's federal government. The CGU audits federal agencies and programmes, investigates misconduct, and designs national anti-corruption strategies. Crucially, the CGU also manages the federal Transparency Portal, which makes the financial data, that is, the income and expenditure of the Federal government, publicly accessible. It oversees the implementation of the Access to Information Act, providing a clear institutional anchor for public sector transparency.

The digitalisation of government services is a powerful tool for reducing corruption. The Brazilian GOV.BR e-governance portal consolidates over 4700 public services from 460 entities. The portal has made government interactions more transparent and auditable for over 156 million registered users. In India and South Africa, the use of AI tools by revenue authorities to automate tax assessments and detect fraud has significantly reduced opportunities for corruption by minimising interpersonal interactions and creating clear data trails. These examples show how AI and digital tools can build more accountable public institutions.

Link to ACWG deliverable: The case of Brazil's CGU and the use of AI in revenue services in India and South Africa are prime examples for the *Compendium of good practices in promoting a transparent, ethical and accountable public sector*. They demonstrate how dedicated oversight bodies and digital transformation can be institutionalised.



Priority 2: Increase efficiency of asset recovery measures

While PAS are not directly involved in the legal process of asset recovery, they play a critical role in creating the conditions that enable it. Effective policy systems enhance the state's ability to detect illicit financial flows and investigate corruption, a necessary precursor to recovering stolen assets.

The use of sophisticated data analysis and AI within government can significantly improve the detection of corrupt activities. The Finance Ministry in India leverages AI to analyse vast datasets for tax evasion and integrate information from multiple databases, providing a more complete picture of financial flows. Similarly, South Africa's Revenue Service (SARS) uses AI to identify fraudulent activities and e-filing services, notably, without reducing its staff component. These capabilities can be shared with law enforcement and financial intelligence units to help identify and trace the proceeds of crime, thereby strengthening the evidence base for asset recovery cases.

Link to ACWG deliverable: The innovative use of data analytics and AI by G20 members represents a key area of technical assistance. A *Follow-up report on technical assistance support* should include a focus on building the capacity of developing countries in data-driven governance to help them better detect and investigate corruption domestically.



Priority 3: Enhance and mobilise inclusive multi-stakeholder participation

An open and inclusive PAS is a powerful defence against corruption. By bringing in a diversity of voices from outside government, it increases scrutiny and builds a broad-based coalition for integrity.

Our research highlights effective models for multi-stakeholder collaboration. The development of Kenya's National AI Strategy was a highly participatory process involving government, academia, civil society and the private sector through a series of co-creation workshops and public consultations. Also in Kenya, sectoral research bodies contribute specialised evidence that feeds into policy, for example, the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) and the Kenya School of Government (KSG). The Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) directly advises the Office of the President and was institutionalised to increase public policy research capacity and facilitate dialogue with think tanks. In Brazil, there is a high level of cooperation between the government and external think tanks, such as the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (FGV), and research centres, like the Institute for Technology and Society (ITS Rio) and the Climate Policy Initiative, which are frequently commissioned to provide evidence input the policymaking process. In India, think tanks and research institutes are called upon to provide evidence-based input into the central government's policy advisory function, for example, the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) and the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER).

Digital tools can facilitate public participation on a massive scale. Brazil's Participa+Brazil is an open data portal that contains 14,000 datasets that are human and machine-readable formats. The datasets are daily updated and cover a wide variety of sectors, including agriculture, education and health. Citizens can provide feedback, suggestions, and criticism through a link on the portal, contributing to public policymaking, improving transparency and public services. The portal regularly publishes citizen engagement statistics, and initiatives are implemented to increase the participation of vulnerable groups. Participa+Brazil creates a transparent channel for public input, making the policy process more accountable and responsive to citizen concerns about corruption.

Link to ACWG deliverable: The participatory models from Kenya, India and Brazil provide excellent case studies for the *Compendium of good practices on the role of multi-stakeholders*. They show how to systematically integrate external expertise and citizen voices into the policymaking process as a means of preventing corruption.



Priority 4: Enhance whistle-blower protection mechanisms

Effective whistle-blower protection depends not only on legal frameworks but also on an institutional culture that promotes integrity and provides safe channels for reporting. A well-functioning PAS contributes to this environment.

The existence of strong independent oversight bodies within government provides a credible recipient for reports of wrongdoing. Brazil's CGU is tasked with implementing integrity programmes and overseeing whistleblower protection mechanisms within the federal government. By having a mandate to investigate and act on reports of corruption it creates a trusted institutional pathway for reporting persons.

Transparent digital platforms can serve as accessible and potentially more secure channels for citizens to report corruption. While not a formal whistle-blowing mechanism, platforms like Participa+Brazil build a culture of open feedback and give citizens a direct line to government. This reduces the barriers to reporting concerns and contributes to an environment where transparency is expected.

Link to ACWG deliverable: The institutional design of Brazil's CGU, with its specific mandate for integrity and protection mechanisms, is a key example for the Accountability report, with a focus on effective protection of whistle-blowers. It highlights the importance of creating dedicated institutional capacity to support and protect those who report corruption.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE G20 ANTI-CORRUPTION WORKING GROUP

- 1. Promote the link between PAS and Anti-Corruption:** The ACWG should champion the understanding that strengthening a nation's PAS is a core anti-corruption strategy. Effective PAS are a prerequisite for the transparency, accountability and evidence-based governance that underpin integrity.
- 2. Facilitate knowledge exchange on institutional design for integrity:** The ACWG could consider creating a platform for sharing best practices on institutional models that combine oversight, transparency and anti-corruption functions within the executive.
- 3. Showcase digital tools as anti-corruption measures:** G20 members should consider highlighting the use of digital government platforms and AI in revenue services as tangible good practices in reducing corruption. This includes supporting capacity building for G20 partners in digital governance.
- 4. Advocate for participatory policymaking:** The ACWG should encourage the adoption of inclusive policymaking models that involve civil society, academia and the private sector as a standard practice for increasing transparency and building a whole-of-society approach to fighting corruption.