

THE ROLE OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION (CAC) IN DRIVING BUREAUCRATIC REFORM TOWARDS GOOD GOVERNANCE IN TIMOR-LESTE

Jaimito Soares¹, Patricia Baliana da Costa², Carolina da Cruz³, Simeão Fatima Martins⁴, Domingos Loe Soares⁵, Ana Maria do Rosario⁶

¹ Faculty Social Science and Political Science, Universidade Oriental Timor Lorosa'e (UNITAL), Dili, Timor Leste, jaimitomissa@gmail.com

² Faculty Social Science and Political Science, Universidade Oriental Timor Lorosa'e (UNITAL), Dili, Timor Leste, Patriciadacosta731@gmail.com

³ Faculty Social Science and Political Science, Universidade Oriental Timor Lorosa'e (UNITAL), Dili, Timor Leste, linacruz4492@gmail.com

⁴ Faculty Social Science and Political Science, Universidade Oriental Timor Lorosa'e (UNITAL), Dili, Timor Leste, Simeaofmartins94@gmail.com

⁵ Faculty Social Science and Political Science, Universidade Oriental Timor Lorosa'e (UNITAL), Dili, Timor Leste, lucreyaramania@gmail.com

⁶ Faculty Social Science and Political Science, Universidade Oriental Timor Lorosa'e (UNITAL), Dili, Timor Leste, Anarosario9@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: jaimitomissa@gmail.com¹

Abstract

Corruption is a primary obstacle to development and bureaucratic reform in post-conflict nations like Timor-Leste, where state institutions are still consolidating. In an environment characterized by a weak rule of law and strong patronage networks inherited from its period of struggle for independence, corruption not only harms state finances but also erodes government legitimacy and hinders human resource development. This study aims to critically and comprehensively analyze the role of the Anti-Corruption Commission (Comissão Anti-Corrupção/CAC) in promoting bureaucratic reform towards good governance in Timor-Leste. Utilizing a qualitative research method with a case study approach, data were collected through a comprehensive analysis of documents, including CAC annual reports, statistical data from the World Bank and Transparency International, national legal frameworks, and relevant literature. The findings indicate that the CAC plays a crucial and multifaceted role through its "Trisula Strategy": enforcement to create a deterrent effect and uphold the law, prevention as a catalyst for systemic reform, and education as the foundation for building a culture of integrity. Despite facing significant challenges such as resource limitations, uneven technical capacity, and alleged political interventions that test its independence, the CAC's enforcement actions in several high-profile cases have successfully elevated the discourse on public sector accountability. Concurrently, its systemic prevention and education programs, implemented gradually, have contributed to increased awareness and a paradigm shift in the bureaucratic culture, although implementation is often hampered by internal resistance. The CAC's effectiveness has not yet reached an optimal level and is highly dependent on strong political commitment from the governing elite and broader institutional reforms. This study recommends strengthening the CAC's institutional independence legally and financially, increasing results-oriented budget allocations, and fostering closer, more structured synergy with the judiciary, parliament, and civil society to accelerate the realization of sustainable good governance in Timor-Leste.

Keyword: Anti-Corruption Commission (CAC), Bureaucratic Reform, Good Governance, Corruption

1. INTRODUCTION

Timor-Leste, as one of the world's youngest nations, gaining independence in 2002, faces a dual challenge in its nation-building process: rebuilding physical infrastructure destroyed by conflict and establishing clean, effective, and accountable state institutions from the ground up. This post-conflict context creates fertile ground for corrupt practices. Fragile institutions, a not-yet-fully-established rule of law, and patronage networks formed during the independence struggle often transform into

corrupt networks within the new bureaucracy. In such a nation, corruption has a more destructive impact; it not only causes financial losses to the state but also directly obstructs essential public services like health and education, damages the fragile public trust in government, and slows economic development. The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) released by Transparency International consistently places Timor-Leste in a vulnerable position, reflecting a widespread perception of corruption among public officials and politicians.

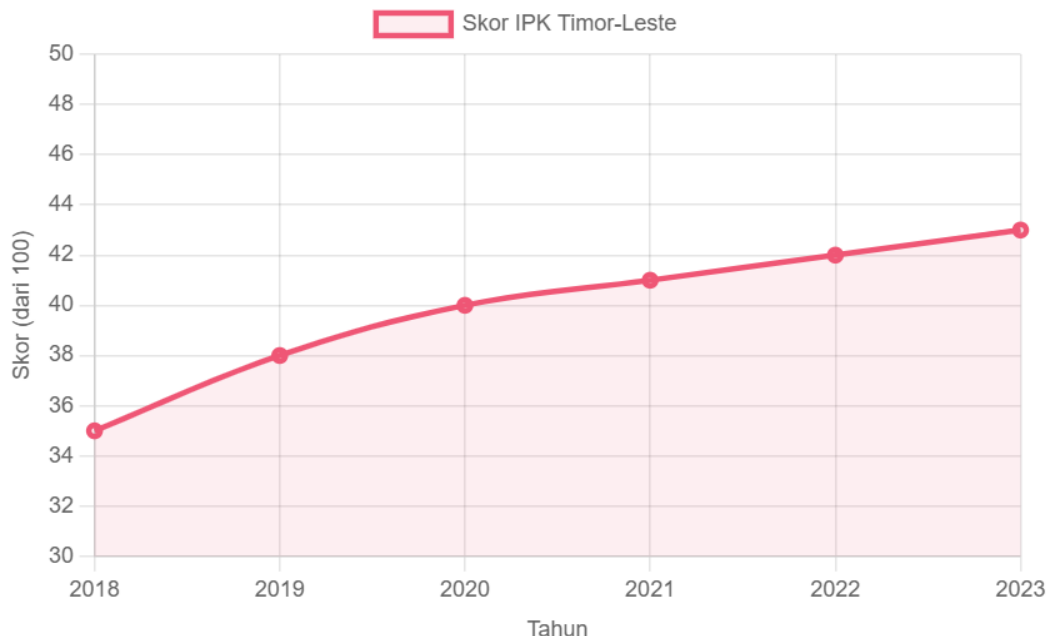


Figure 1. Corruption Perception Index (CPI) Timor-Leste (2018-2023)
 Source: Transparency International, 2025

The data in the chart above shows a positive but slow trend of improvement, with an 8-point increase over six years. The score of 43 in 2023, while showing progress, is still below the global and regional averages, indicating that systemic corruption remains a serious issue. This improvement reflects formal anti-corruption efforts, with the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission (CAC) being a major milestone. As the legal foundation, the National Parliament of Timor-Leste passed Law No. 8/2009, which officially established the CAC. This law, though a significant step forward, has several characteristics worth analyzing. Law No. 8/2009 grants the CAC a strategic triad mandate to conduct investigations (enforcement), prevention, and anti-corruption education. Specifically, Article 3 empowers the CAC to conduct investigations on its own initiative or based on reports. Furthermore, Article 4 mandates the CAC to recommend preventive measures, and Article 5 tasks the CAC with promoting public awareness. However, Law No. 8/2009 does not grant prosecutorial powers to the CAC, meaning it is heavily reliant on cooperation with the Office of the Prosecutor General. Additionally, the oversight mechanisms and the appointment process for CAC leadership are vulnerable to politicization, a weakness often highlighted in various studies. With this legal basis, the CAC has become the primary hope for driving bureaucratic reform—a process of structural and cultural change to transform the bureaucracy from a patrimonial model to one that is more transparent and accountable

Research on anti-corruption in Timor-Leste has been conducted from various perspectives. Some scholars, such as da Costa (2019), have focused their analysis on the legal framework, concluding that while regulations are quite comprehensive, their implementation is weak. Complementing this, Gusmão & de Sousa (2020) examined the institutional challenges of the CAC, highlighting issues of independence and resource constraints. On the other hand, a study by Pereira (2021) explored the role of civil society, which remains limited due to a lack of access to information. A more specific focus was taken by Martins (2018), who analyzed systemic collusion in the procurement of goods and services. A macro perspective was presented by the World Bank (2022), which concluded that public financial management reforms have not been fully effective. An analysis of these five studies reveals a fragmented focus. A research gap exists in understanding how the CAC's interventions, through the holistic integration of its enforcement, prevention, and education functions, tangibly affect the dynamics of bureaucratic change. Therefore, this research is urgent in its aim to analyze the multifaceted impact of the CAC's role, not only as a law enforcement agency but also as a primary catalyst for bureaucratic reform in Timor-Leste.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research aims to gain a deep and holistic understanding of the complexity of the CAC's role and its impact on the bureaucratic reform process, a socio-political phenomenon that cannot be adequately measured and explained through numbers and statistics alone (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study design allows the researcher to conduct an intensive investigation into a single primary unit of analysis: the Anti-Corruption Commission (CAC) of Timor-Leste. Data collection was conducted exclusively through documentary analysis. This method was selected based on the consideration that official documents tend to present data that has been (at least formally) verified and reflects an institutional position. The strength of this method is its ability to trace processes and policies over time. However, the researcher is aware of its limitations, namely that documents may present an overly positive picture. To mitigate this, primary data from the CAC (annual reports, press releases) were triangulated with secondary data from more critical sources, such as reports from the World Bank, Transparency International, scientific journal articles, and investigative news from the media. Data analysis was conducted thematically, a systematic process involving several stages: (1) familiarization with all data, (2) generation of initial codes, (3) searching for emerging themes, (4) reviewing and refining themes, (5) defining and naming the final themes, and (6) writing the final report interpreting these themes.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Good Governance

The concept of governance refers to the process of decision-making and the process by which those decisions are implemented. In 1997, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defined good governance as the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. This definition fundamentally broadens the understanding of government beyond the activities of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The concept

encompasses the roles of three main actors: the state, the private sector, and civil society. A synergistic, transparent, and balanced interaction among these three actors is the foundation for achieving good governance. In the context of a post-conflict country like Timor-Leste, the application of good governance is even more crucial. It is not just about administrative efficiency but is also part of the peace-building and state-building process itself. Failure to implement good governance can reignite social dissatisfaction and undermine the fragile peace process.

According to Osborne and Gaebler (1992) in *Reinventing Government*, this transformation requires governments to shift from merely following procedures to being results-oriented (outcome-based), from being rule-driven to mission-driven, and from serving the bureaucracy itself to serving customers (citizens). In a developing country like Timor-Leste, the implementation of good governance is a prerequisite for the effectiveness of development aid, investor confidence, and government legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens.

3.2 Principles of Good Governance

The UNDP (1997) identified nine main principles that characterize good governance. In the context of Timor-Leste, each of these principles holds profound relevance:

- a. **Participation:** Every citizen has a voice in decision-making. In Timor-Leste, where oral traditions and communal decision-making are strong at the village level, this participation must be realized in the national development planning process so that government projects genuinely meet community needs, not the desires of elites or contractors.
- b. **Rule of Law:** The legal framework must be fair and enforced impartially. For the CAC, this principle is the cornerstone of its existence. Selective law enforcement, where high-ranking corrupt officials remain untouched by the law, would destroy public trust in the entire judicial system.
- c. **Transparency:** Information about public policies, and especially the state budget, must be accessible to the public. In Timor-Leste, which is heavily dependent on oil revenues, transparency in the management of the Petroleum Fund is key to preventing the natural resource curse.
- d. **Responsiveness:** Public institutions must serve all stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe. This means, for example, that community complaints about damaged roads or absent teachers must be addressed promptly by the relevant agencies, not ignored.
- e. **Consensus Oriented:** Anti-corruption policies formulated through a consultative process involving traditional leaders, the church, and NGOs will be more readily accepted and implemented than top-down policies.
- f. **Equity and Inclusiveness:** Corruption often exacerbates inequality. When budgets for social programs for vulnerable groups are embezzled, the impact is directly felt by the most powerless.
- g. **Effectiveness and Efficiency:** Corruption is the greatest form of inefficiency. An infrastructure project whose cost is inflated by 30% due to corruption means the state loses the opportunity to build 30% more roads or schools with the same budget.
- h. **Accountability:** Decision-makers are accountable to the public. This accountability is realized through mechanisms such as audits by state audit institutions, hearings in parliament, and investigations by the CAC.

- i. Strategic Vision: Combating corruption is not a short-term program but part of a long-term strategic vision to build a nation that is integrated, economically independent, and prosperous.

Analysis of various documents shows that the CAC's role in driving bureaucratic reform in Timor-Leste can be categorized into three mutually reinforcing functions: enforcement, prevention, and education. These three functions are carried out simultaneously, reflecting a modern anti-corruption strategy known as the Trisula Strategy.

1. The Enforcement Role: Building a Deterrent Effect and Upholding the Rule of Law

The enforcement function is the CAC's most publicly visible role. Through a series of activities ranging from investigating public reports and conducting in-depth investigations to handing over case files to public prosecutors, the CAC strives to create a strong deterrent effect for public officials and their private sector partners. The case of former Finance Minister Emília Pires serves as one of the most significant empirical examples. The investigation and prosecution centered on alleged procedural violations in a contract for the procurement of hospital beds in 2011. The contract, valued at US\$813,333, was awarded to a company allegedly having family ties to Pires's husband. This case became one of the most high-profile corruption cases in Timor-Leste because it targeted a serving minister-level official, testing the CAC's independence and capacity to the fullest.

The CAC's investigation uncovered strong evidence of economic participation in business and conflicts of interest. Pires was accused of abusing her authority by approving the procurement contract without a competitive and transparent public tender process, a serious violation of Timor-Leste's procurement laws. The process was allegedly engineered to favor a specific company. The CAC played a central role from the outset. Its investigation team meticulously gathered documentary evidence, including approval memos, company registration data, and fund transfer records. They conducted forensic audits and interviewed dozens of witnesses from the ministry and the private sector. Facing political pressure, the CAC worked intensively with the Office of the Prosecutor General. Once the evidence was deemed sufficient, the CAC officially handed over the case file, which resulted in a guilty verdict by the Dili District Court at the end of 2016. The CAC's decisive action of bringing a minister-level official to justice sent shockwaves through all levels of the bureaucracy. This case set a precedent that no one is above the law. Indirectly, it forced the government to review and tighten the Public Procurement Regulations. Bureaucrats in procurement units became much more cautious in carrying out their duties, fearful of strict oversight from the CAC.

Table 2. CAC Enforcement Performance Statistics (2019-2023)

Performance Indicator	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of Reports Received	215	198	230	255	271
Number of Investigations Opened	45	40	52	61	65
Report-to-Investigation Conversion Rate	20.9%	20.2%	22.6%	23.9%	24.0%
Cases Handed to Prosecution	15	12	18	20	22
Number of Defendants Convicted	8	7	11	13	14
Conviction Rate from Investigations	17.8%	17.5%	21.2%	21.3%	21.5%
State Assets Recovered (USD)	1.2 M	0.9 M	1.5 M	1.8 M	2.1 M

Source: Processed from CAC Annual Reports, 2020-2024.

The performance data of the Anti-Corruption Commission (CAC) of Timor-Leste shows an improvement in anti-corruption enforcement efforts from 2019 to 2023. This improvement is evident in the increase in the number of reports received, cases investigated, and cases handed over to the prosecution. The most significant increase was in the number of reports received, from 215 in 2019 to 271 in 2023. This reflects growing public trust in the CAC. An increase is also seen in the value of state assets recovered, which rose from USD 1.2 million in 2019 to USD 2.1 million in 2023. This effort, while not directly preventing corruption, plays a crucial role in recovering state losses and sending a strong signal that corrupt acts will be dealt with firmly.

The increase in the CAC's enforcement performance has a positive correlation with efforts to create a deterrent effect on perpetrators of corruption. The rise in the number of convicted defendants, from 8 in 2019 to 14 in 2023, demonstrates consistency in law enforcement. Similarly, the report-to-investigation conversion rate and the conviction rate from investigations also show positive trends. The increase in the conviction rate from 17.8% to 21.5% indicates the CAC's effectiveness in building strong and convincing cases in court. This success instills fear and hesitation in potential perpetrators due to the certainty of legal consequences, thereby preventing future corrupt acts.

The CAC's enforcement efforts are also an integral part of upholding the rule of law in Timor-Leste. By prosecuting perpetrators of corruption, including public officials, the CAC affirms that no one is above the law. Firm and impartial law enforcement is in line with the principles of good governance, particularly accountability and transparency. By showing that public reports are taken seriously and corruption cases are processed to completion, the CAC builds public trust and reaffirms the government's commitment to fighting corruption.

The CAC's enforcement performance has a clear correlation with the upward trend of Timor-Leste's Corruption Perception Index (CPI). Based on the data presented, Timor-Leste's CPI has continuously increased from 2018 to 2023, in line with the improvement in the CAC's enforcement performance. The increase in the CPI indicates that public and international perceptions of anti-corruption efforts in Timor-Leste are improving. This is a positive sign that a strong and firm enforcement approach, as part of a good governance strategy, has successfully created a deterrent effect and increased public trust. The combination of strong law enforcement and increased public participation in reporting cases is key to creating a more transparent and integrity-driven environment.

2. The Prevention Role: Fixing Systems and Closing Loopholes for Corruption

If the enforcement role is likened to firefighting, then the prevention role is the effort to build a sophisticated and comprehensive fire protection system. This function is proactive and long-term oriented, with the main goal of reforming a weak bureaucratic system and closing procedural loopholes that can be exploited for corruption. The CAC views prevention not just as a series of activities, but as a philosophy underlying bureaucratic reform. In a post-conflict country like Timor-Leste, where many systems and regulations are built from scratch, this role is highly strategic. Preventing corruption from the system's design stage is far more effective and efficient than chasing down corruptors after state losses have occurred. To this end, the CAC actively conducts corruption risk assessments, system analyses, and provides policy recommendations to government institutions.

One of the main pillars of prevention is promoting transparency through asset declaration by officials. The CAC is responsible for managing the Asset Declaration Reports of State Officials (LHKPN). Concretely, the CAC has developed and distributed reporting forms, provided technical assistance for filling them out, and built a digital database to house the submitted reports. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of LHKPN as a detection tool is still limited. The main obstacle is that the CAC does not have the legal authority to directly access banking and other financial data for verification purposes. In response to this limitation, the CAC has taken other strategic steps, such as publishing the LHKPN reporting compliance rates per ministry. For example, the CAC regularly releases a list of institutions with 100% compliance and those with low compliance. This step, while not addressing the substance of the reports, has proven effective in creating social and political pressure on institutional leaders to encourage their subordinates to comply.

In the public procurement sector, universally considered the area most vulnerable to corruption, the CAC has been a leading advocate for reform. The CAC concretely monitors large-value infrastructure projects. For instance, a team from the CAC's Prevention Directorate randomly visits road construction or government building project sites to conduct unannounced inspections, comparing the technical specifications in the contract with the on-the-ground reality. Findings from these monitoring activities, such as non-compliant material quality or insufficient work volume, then form the basis for recommendations for improvement to the relevant ministry or even serve as initial data for an investigation by the Investigation Directorate. Furthermore, the CAC consistently promotes the full adoption of an electronic procurement (e-procurement) system. The CAC has provided technical input in the development of the national procurement portal, recommending features that can increase transparency, such as open tender announcements, online submission of bid documents, and publicly accessible winner announcements.

Bureaucratic reform also touches on fundamental aspects of civil service human resource management. The CAC identified that recruitment, transfer, and promotion processes that are subjective and closed are the root causes of nepotism and the buying and selling of positions. As a concrete action, the CAC conducted an in-depth study of the recruitment process in several key ministries and issued very specific recommendations. For instance, the CAC recommended the use of a Computer Assisted Test (CAT) system for basic competency selection to eliminate assessor subjectivity. The CAC has also been actively involved in providing input on the draft law concerning the Civil Service Commission (Comissão da Função Pública), pushing for the commission to have the independence and authority to oversee the merit system across all government agencies.

The CAC has also expanded its system studies to public service sectors that have direct contact with the public and the business community. A clear example is the system study at the port and customs authorities. Through procedural analysis, the CAC identified dozens of hotspots for bribery and illegal levies, from the import document inspection process to the physical inspection of goods. Based on these findings, the CAC recommended a series of improvements, such as simplifying procedures, implementing a non-cash payment system for all official fees, installing CCTV cameras in vital areas, and regular rotation of officers. These recommendations aim to reduce unnecessary face-to-face interactions and eliminate officer discretion that could be abused.

An equally important pillar of prevention is building a protection system for whistleblowers. The CAC recognizes that information from "insiders" is one of the most powerful weapons for uncovering organized corruption. However, potential whistleblowers often fear retaliation, such as dismissal, demotion, or even physical threats. To address this, the CAC has concretely developed and operated secure and confidential reporting channels, whether by phone, email, or online application. Furthermore, the CAC has proactively drafted an academic paper and an initial draft of a Witness and Whistleblower Protection Law. This draft was then socialized with civil society organizations and submitted to the National Parliament as a legislative proposal to strengthen the legal framework for protecting those who dare to report corruption.

3. The Education and Campaign Role: Building the Foundation of a Culture of Integrity

If enforcement is the muscle and prevention is the backbone of anti-corruption efforts, then education and campaigns are its heart and soul. This role stems from a deep awareness that true and sustainable bureaucratic reform cannot be achieved through structural changes or punishment alone but must be rooted in cultural transformation and a change in mentality. The CAC positions itself as a social change agent aiming to build society's immunity to the virus of corruption. This effort is the most fundamental long-term investment, as it aims to form new social norms where integrity is valued and corruption is collectively rejected, both by state apparatus and by the citizens they serve. This strategy is implemented in a multi-layered fashion, targeting various segments of society with tailored approaches.

The first and foremost focus of the education strategy is the internal bureaucracy itself, namely the Civil Servants. The CAC proactively designs and implements various programs to instill the values of integrity as part of a bureaucrat's professional identity. One of its flagship programs is the workshop on gratuities and conflicts of interest. Concretely, the CAC not only provides theoretical presentations but also uses case studies relevant to the Timor-Leste context. For example, dissecting a scenario about an official receiving a gift of livestock after a project is completed, and analyzing when this can be categorized as an illegal gratuity versus a sincere cultural gift. The CAC has also developed and promoted the adoption of a Civil Servant Code of Ethics in collaboration with the Public Service Commission, and has facilitated the establishment of Gratification Control Units (UPG) in several pilot ministries as the front line of internal prevention.

Recognizing that instilling values must start early, the CAC places a significant investment in the younger generation. Through flagship programs like "CAC Vai à Escola" (CAC Goes to School) and "CAC Vai à Universidade" (CAC Goes to University), the CAC seeks to inject an "anti-corruption vaccine" into the future leaders of Timor-Leste. The concrete activities are diverse. At the school level, the CAC develops interactive teaching materials such as comics and anti-corruption themed board games for primary school students. For secondary students, the CAC has initiated the formation of "Student Integrity Clubs" whose members are trained to be agents of change, for example, by campaigning against cheating during exams and reporting illegal fees at school. At the university level, the CAC organizes seminars, public debates, and essay writing competitions on good governance, and encourages students to conduct research and thematic anti-corruption community service (KKN) in villages.

To reach the general public, the CAC employs an inclusive and multi-channel public campaign strategy, considering varying literacy levels and wide geographical reach. The CAC recognizes that anti-corruption messages must be conveyed in a language and format that is easily digestible for all. One of the most successful examples is the production of a radio drama series in the Tetun language, broadcast by the national radio station. This drama features fictional stories relevant to daily life, such as the impact of village fund corruption on the failure of an irrigation project. Additionally, the CAC also produces short animated videos distributed through social media, simply explaining various forms of corruption like nepotism, bribery, and extortion. For rural areas with limited media access, the CAC uses mobile information units to screen educational films and distribute posters and brochures with the slogan "Hamutuk Kombate Korrupsaun" (Together Against Corruption).

Combating corruption cannot be done by the CAC alone. Therefore, building strategic alliances with other pillars of society is crucial. The CAC actively collaborates with civil society organizations (CSOs) and religious institutions that have moral influence and broad reach. As a concrete example, the CAC signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with several leading CSOs to jointly conduct independent monitoring of public services using the community scorecard method. The CAC also works with church institutions, which are highly respected in Timor-Leste, to integrate anti-corruption messages into sermons or youth group activities, framing corruption not only as a legal crime but also as a moral sin.

The mass media is also seen as a strategic partner in the fight against corruption. A proactive and transparent relationship with the media is essential to keep the anti-corruption issue in the public spotlight and to build political pressure for reform. Concretely, the CAC does not just wait to be contacted but regularly holds press conferences to announce developments in important cases (as permitted by procedural law). Moreover, the CAC conducts special workshops for journalists on techniques for investigative journalism on corruption, how to read audit reports, and how to protect sources. By equipping journalists with knowledge and data, the CAC helps create a more critical media ecosystem capable of effectively performing its oversight function.

Although these various education and campaign programs have shown positive initial results in raising awareness, the challenges remain immense. Changing culture and mentality is a slow process, often taking a generation or more. Concrete challenges on the ground include high illiteracy rates in some rural areas, which render print media ineffective. Additionally, there are deep-rooted cultural practices that sometimes intersect with gratuities, such as the tradition of giving gifts to powerholders as a sign of respect, which is difficult to distinguish from bribery. Therefore, the long-term success of this education pillar cannot be measured solely by the number of workshops held or brochures distributed, but by the gradual change in behavior and the internalization of integrity values in the daily lives of the people and bureaucracy of Timor-Leste.

Overall, this in-depth analysis shows that the CAC's role is highly strategic, yet its effectiveness is limited by various constraints. The challenges identified by Gusmão & de Sousa (2020), such as unsecured independence and limited budgets, are still highly relevant. Political intervention often hinders the investigation of major cases, which ultimately undermines the CAC's credibility.

4. CONCLUSION

The Anti-Corruption Commission (CAC) of Timor-Leste plays a crucial multifaceted role in driving bureaucratic reform towards the ideal of good governance. Through its enforcement function, the CAC strives to uphold the principle of accountability, creating a deterrent effect that has begun to erode the culture of impunity. Through its prevention function, the CAC acts as a catalyst for systemic change by identifying and recommending improvements to corrupt bureaucratic procedures. Finally, through its education function, the CAC makes a long-term investment in building a foundational culture of integrity. Although positive trends are visible, the overall effectiveness of the CAC's role is still hampered by serious structural challenges, including political interference, budget limitations, and bureaucratic resistance.

For the Government and Parliament of Timor-Leste:

1. Strengthen Independence: Amend Law No. 8/2009 to reinforce the CAC's independence, particularly concerning the leadership selection process and budgetary autonomy.
2. Increase Budget: Increase the annual budget allocation for the CAC to enable the recruitment of more experts and the adoption of modern technology.
3. Strengthen Follow-up Mechanisms: Create government regulations that mandate all government agencies to follow up on the recommendations from the CAC's prevention unit.

For the Anti-Corruption Commission (CAC):

1. Enhance Inter-Agency Synergy: Form a permanent task force with the Office of the Prosecutor General and the Financial Intelligence Unit.
2. Strategic Prioritization: Focus resources on sectors at the highest risk of corruption.
3. Strengthen External Collaboration: Reinforce collaboration with civil society organizations and the media.
4. It is recommended to conduct mixed-methods research to measure the perceptions and experiences of civil servants and business actors regarding the effectiveness of the CAC's programs.

REFERENCES

- Asia Foundation, The. (2018). *Tackling Corruption in Timor-Leste: A Political Economy Analysis*. The Asia Foundation.
- Bovens, M. (2007). Analysing and assessing accountability: A conceptual framework. *European Law Journal*, 13(4), 447-468.
- Bracking, S. (2007). *Political economies of corruption: A critical introduction*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Comissão Anti-Corrupção de Timor-Leste. (2023). *Relatorio Anual 2022* [Annual Report 2022]. CAC.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage publications.
- da Costa, H. (2019). *Legal Framework on Anti-Corruption in Timor-Leste: A Critical Analysis*. Dili National University Press.
- Feijó, R. G. (2016). *Dynamics of State Formation: The Making of Timor-Leste*. ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute.

- Gusmão, A., & de Sousa, L. (2020). The institutional challenges of an anti-corruption agency in a post-conflict nation: The case of Timor-Leste's CAC. *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 28(2), 161-178.
- Johnston, M. (2005). *Syndromes of Corruption: Wealth, Power, and Democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kingsbury, D., & Leach, M. (Eds.). (2011). *East Timor: Beyond Independence*. Monash University Press.
- Larmour, P. (2005). *Foreign Flowers: Institutional Transfer and Good Governance in the Pacific Islands*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Martins, R. (2018). Corruption in public procurement: A case study of the infrastructure sector in Timor-Leste. *Journal of Development and Governance*, 5(1), 45-62.
- Mungiu-Pippidi, A. (2015). *The Quest for Good Governance: How Societies Develop Control of Corruption*. Cambridge University Press.
- Osborne, D., & Gaebler, T. (1992). *Reinventing government: How the entrepreneurial spirit is transforming the public sector*. Addison-Wesley.
- Pereira, J. (2021). The role of civil society in promoting transparency and accountability in Timor-Leste. *Pacific Affairs*, 94(3), 515-536.
- Rose-Ackerman, S. (1999). *Corruption and Government: Causes, Consequences, and Reform*. Cambridge University Press.
- Scambray, J. (2013). *Conflict, Identity, and State Formation in East Timor 2000 – 2017*. Brill.
- Soares, D. (2012). The challenges of combating corruption in Timor-Leste. In D. Shoemith (Ed.), *Timor-Leste: The local, the national, the global* (pp. 123-145). Charles Darwin University Press.
- Transparency International. (2024). *Corruption Perception Index 2023*. Retrieved from <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2023>.
- United Nations Development Programme. (1997). *Governance for sustainable human development*. UNDP Policy Paper. New York.