

Understanding Collective Action: an updated typology to drive impact

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***Collective Action in practice: a game-changer
for business integrity. Stories, evidence
and inspiration from the Basel Institute on
Governance.***

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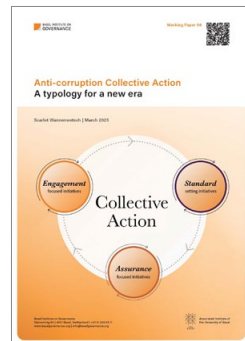


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As Collective Action continues to evolve globally, so does the need for a shared understanding of what it encompasses. On the one hand, all initiatives under this umbrella share common traits, notably a focus on anti-corruption and multi-stakeholder collaboration including the private sector. On the other hand, their approaches, structures and levels of formality can vary widely.

To reflect this diversity and provide clarity to practitioners, facilitators and partners, the Basel Institute has developed an updated typology, led by Scarlet Wannenwetsch. It is building on the definition of Collective Action provided by the World Bank in 2008 in its guide for business, *Fighting corruption through Collective Action*:

“Collective action is a collaborative and sustained process of cooperation between stakeholders. It increases the impact and credibility of individual action, brings vulnerable individual players into an alliance of like-minded organizations and levels the playing field between competitors. Collective action can complement or temporarily substitute for and strengthen weak local laws and anti-corruption practices.”



COLLECTIVE ACTION IN PRACTICE

The new Collective Action typology is based on an analysis of data from the B20 Collective Action Hub, the most comprehensive global database of Collective Action initiatives. The typology clusters initiatives into three categories, capturing the aim an initiative is particularly focused on:

- Engagement-focused initiatives
- Standard-setting initiatives
- Assurance-focused initiatives



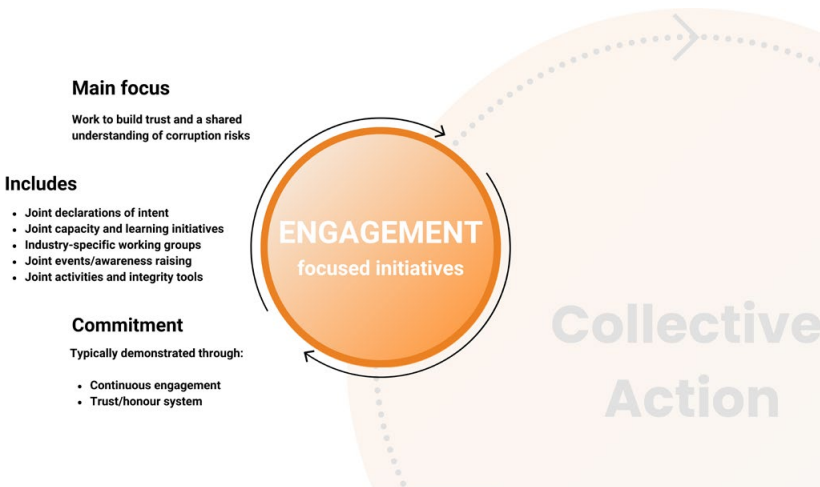
Visualisation of the new Collective Action typology.

Engagement-focused initiatives

At their core, engagement-focused initiatives are built on dialogue, awareness and trust building. They typically bring together diverse stakeholders to exchange perspectives, identify shared concerns and explore opportunities for collaboration.

These initiatives often take the form of coalitions and are built on joint declarations or knowledge-sharing platforms. They are especially valuable in building trust towards developing flexible and practical approaches to common issues related to corruption.

While their structures may be light, their impact can be far-reaching: helping to shift norms by creating a joint understanding of risks and finding common ground on how to address these risks collectively.

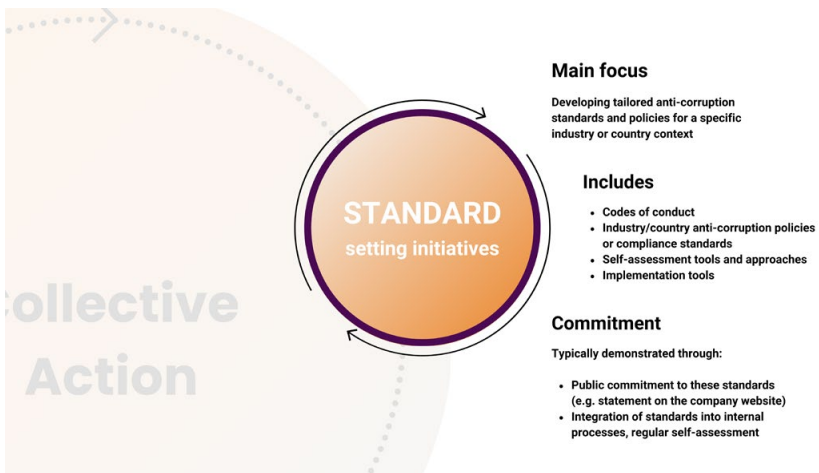


Standard-setting initiatives

Standard-setting initiatives aim to translate engagement into developing common standards and promoting common rules, such as codes of conduct or principles for business integrity. These initiatives are often tailored to the needs of a particular industry or national context, reflecting shared values and collective responsibility.

By co-creating ethical standards, participating organisations commit not only to compliance, but to raising the bar for responsible conduct in their sphere of influence.

Such initiatives can reshape expectations, improve public trust and serve as reference points for broader reform efforts. They can also strengthen the regulatory landscape by consolidating the common ground between public and private sector priorities.



Assurance-focused initiatives

For assurance-focused initiatives the focus lies on the implementation of common standards developed through Collective Action. In addition to shared standards, they include mechanisms for external verification and accountability, such as certification schemes, third-party audits or monitoring bodies.

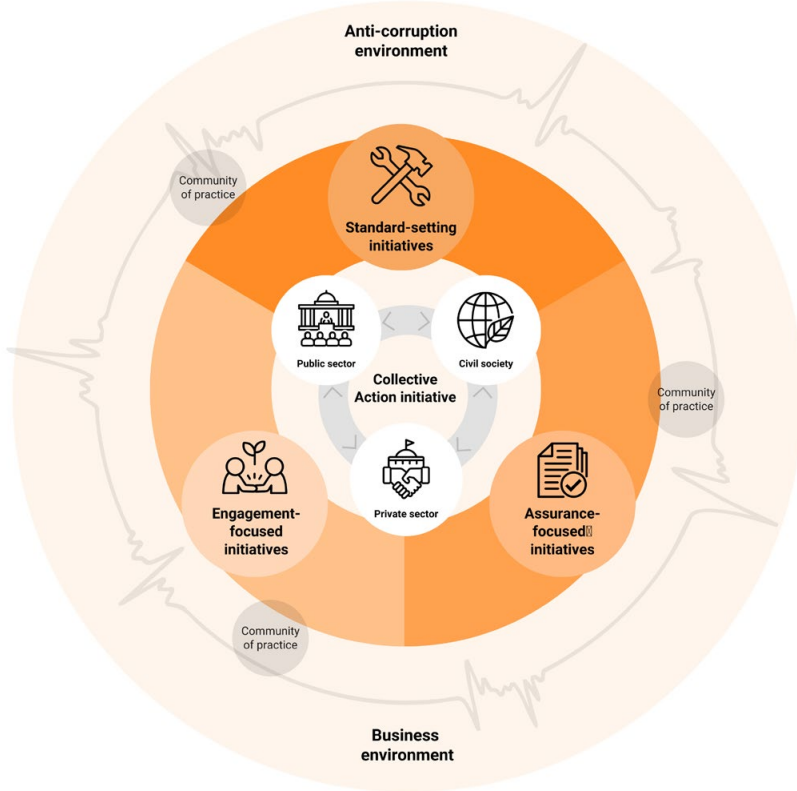
These initiatives typically require significant commitment and capacity from all involved, but the rewards are substantial: increased credibility, improved business integrity systems and tangible contributions to systemic change.

They offer stakeholders, including governments, investors and the public, confidence that commitments are being upheld and progress is being measured.



The Collective Action ecosystem

Collective Action initiatives are not isolated. They are integrated into a larger “ecosystem”. The graphic illustrates how Collective Action initiatives interact with their broader environment.



At the core, Collective Action brings together the private sector, public sector and civil society in joint efforts to promote integrity and tackle corruption. Each initiative type reflects different strategies, structures and objectives, but all contribute to strengthening the anti-corruption landscape and fostering a more responsible business environment.

The initiatives are embedded in a “community of practice” – informal or formal networks of practitioners who exchange knowledge, support one another and promote the continued evolution of Collective Action.

The ecosystem highlights the dynamic and interdependent nature of Collective Action, showing how collaboration across sectors and continuous learning are essential to achieving lasting impact.

A framework for action and reflection

This typology is more than just a new way of categorising Collective Action initiatives. The typology embraces the flexibility of the Collective Action approach. It enables practitioners to better understand the range of options available when designing or strengthening an initiative. It helps stakeholders assess what type of Collective Action best suits their context, and how different models may complement or build on one another.

Importantly, the typology and its circular visualisation also recognise that Collective Action is not static. Initiatives may evolve over time, transitioning between categories as they mature, respond to new challenges or deepen their engagement with stakeholders. This dynamic nature is essential to the relevance and longevity of Collective Action efforts. The typology provides a framework to understand and guide that dynamic.

The typology acknowledges that impact does not depend on institutional complexity alone. Each type of initiative can make a difference, whether by starting a conversation, shaping sectoral standards or reinforcing integrity through structured oversight. What matters is the ability to engage relevant actors, respond to specific risks and foster long-term commitment to change.

By providing a shared vocabulary and a structured lens for analysis, the typology contributes to more consistent and credible implementation of Collective Action across the globe. It strengthens the foundation for evidence-based approaches and supports the development of initiatives that are both context-sensitive and results-driven. 🌟