



Africa after the Africa Commission:

What priorities for
the German G8?

Donors and Corruption in
Africa: Priorities and
Challenges for the G8

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Tackling the 'big issues' for donors and anti-corruption work

- Need for political sensitivity & a sense of realism
 - Fighting corruption is an internal activity, not an external one, and donors only have a very small, supportive role to play
 - Because of this, there is need for acceptance that donors are only capable, at best, of influencing the discourse in the short- to medium-term and that this in itself carries risks
- Need to deal with the 'elephants in the room' – issues everyone talks about but no one is quite sure how to handle



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Where are the 'big issues' coming from?

- Identified during 10 years of research on donors and anti-corruption work, as well as evaluation/consultancy/training in the field
- Issues that have come up consistently, year after year, and among a range of multi- and bilateral donors
- Purpose today is not to offer pre-packaged solutions but to stimulate a number of much-needed debates



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What are the big issues?

- What priority should fighting corruption have for donors?
- How can we measure political will to fight corruption?
- What role can women play?
- What role does culture play?
- Can civic education be used to fight corruption?
- What role should/can civil society play?
- What should donors do when corruption is uncovered?



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What priority should fighting corruption have for donors?

- Research suggests that corruption is a bigger problem in some countries/contexts than in others
- Aid as 'venture capitalism' → some countries will have higher 'risks' but hopefully also higher 'returns' (eg, Mexico vs. Liberia)
- The role of donor discourse in setting the prioritisation of corruption, rather than corruption setting the discourse
 - Need to acknowledge risk openly
 - Need to differentiate between a) corruption perpetuated by the poor against the poor, b) corruption that takes place in all countries, and c) the systematic rape of a country by its leaders/outsideers



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How can we measure political will to fight corruption?

- Political will defined as: 'the commitment of actors to undertake actions to achieve a set of objectives...and to sustain the costs of those actions over time' (Brinkerhoff & Kulibaba 1999)
- World Bank (1999) has said that political will is measurable by first, 'identifying key decision makers, their constituencies, and the potential political and financial costs to them of [a particular policy, in this case, reducing corruption]', and second, focusing 'on events...that might signal a commitment to fighting corruption'



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Political will (cont.)

- Easier said than done though
 - Requires extensive, in-depth, qualitative political analysis and knowledge of particular country contexts
 - ‘Champions’ can and do behave unpredictably and contradictorily
 - The political context may not allow for ‘champions’ to emerge, even as a result of democratic politics (ie, priorities for donors may not be the same for citizens)



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What role can women play?

- Empirical work (esp. by WB) suggests that increasing women's numbers in public office will reduce corruption
- More in-depth research suggests that this is very unlikely
 - Study by Alogo (2006) shows that men and women are just as likely to be corrupt (or not) as the other when women have the same access to corrupt networks
 - Justification for corrupt behaviour is different though → the characteristics that some suggest will make women less corrupt can actually contribute to corruption
 - Using increased participation to fight corruption is likely both to fail as an anti-corruption strategy and to undermine wider participation strategies



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What role does culture play?

- A big part of corruption studies in the 1950s & 1960s but fell out of favour in the late 1970s on
- Has started re-emerging as an issue in the late 1990s as the impact of culture on development, politics and so on has been put back on the agenda, although is still a very controversial area
- Definitions of culture vary widely and there has been very little research into this



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Culture (cont.)

- Will use 'religion' here as a proxy for culture, although I wouldn't advise doing this generally!
- Economics-led literature suggests that there is a strong correlation between religion and corruption → Protestants are the least corrupt, whereas Catholics, Orthodox Christians and, especially, Muslims are the most corrupt
 - What are the policy implications of this research?
 - As with gender, there is need for much more in-depth research, at both the country and comparative levels
 - DfID is funding research on 'Religion, ethics & attitudes towards corruption' that aims to do this in India and Nigeria



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Can civic education be used to fight corruption?

- Civic education aims to change the *political* culture of a country
 - Convincing the public to challenge corrupt activities
 - Convincing the public not to engage in corrupt activities
- As Gyimah-Boadi (2004) explains: 'It is difficult if not impossible to sustain anti-corruption reforms without...effective public/civic education'
- However, poses a real challenge for donors, that most don't seem to recognise/acknowledge



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Civic education (cont.)

- One-off campaigns aren't likely to have sustained impact, while wider programmes offer significant challenges
 - Balancing donor priorities, government priorities & civil society priorities is difficult (eg, Kenya's National Civic Education Programme)
 - Quality is extremely important, and evidence shows that poorly designed & delivered civic education is worse than no civic education at all
 - Evidence from USAID suggests that civic education undermines trust in *all* institutions & this can have a detrimental impact on new democracies particularly



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What role should/can civil society play?

- Donors often say that support for civil society is vital, and it is
- Lessons from other similar areas that challenge power structures & the status quo (eg, democratisation, women's rights, human rights etc) show us that a comprehensive and inclusive strategy from a wide-range of civil society actors, acting in unison through broad-based social movements, is more effective than any external activities could hope to be



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Civil society (cont.)

- In practice, social movements haven't emerged around corruption, and donors have to take some blame for this
 - The role of Transparency International – the worst thing to happen to anti-corruption??
 - TI as a global 'brand'
 - TI as an 'exclusive club'
 - TI as a monopoly concern



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What should donors do when corruption is uncovered?

- The only thing Wolfowitz got right was to put this question at the top of the agenda → in other words, what should donors do when a Head of State signs a HIPC agreement one day and then spends \$300k on hotel bills the next?
- There needs to be a more honest discussion among donors about when to cancel projects and even to cut off aid, in order to have a more honest and systematic approach to sanctions
 - If the use of sanctions isn't appropriate, this also needs to be discussed
- This needs to be a public debate → Wolfowitz has shown people the elephant in the room & it's not going to go away

