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CPI 2022 FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: CORRUPTION COMPOUNDING MULTIPLE CRISES

A regional average score of 32 out of 100 marks another year of stagnation on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for Sub-Saharan Africa. Forty-four of the 49 countries assessed still score below 50. Gains made by a few countries are outweighed by significant declines in others.

This year's CPI results underline how intertwined paths of democracy, security and development in Sub-Saharan Africa are eroded by corruption – particularly during a time of global crises. The region struggles to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and an increased cost of living. Extensive funds are needed to address the consequences of economic, ecological and healthcare challenges, and they must not be lost to corruption.

Seychelles continues to lead the region with a CPI score of 70, followed by **Botswana** and **Cabo Verde**, each with 60. **Burundi** (17), **Equatorial Guinea** (17), **South Sudan** (13) and **Somalia** (12) perform the lowest.

Conflict and security challenges have further weakened institutions and undermined states' capacity to decisively respond to corruption. This has also meant little to no action in preventing capital flight – estimated to be in [tens of billions of dollars each year](#) – from the region. Independent checks on power continued to take a hit too. Opposition figures or activists have been intimidated, smeared or arrested – at times under the pretence of anti-corruption crackdowns and enabled by heavily politicised judicial systems.

The pandemic has affected the livelihoods of people, deepened inequalities and increased graft risks across the region. It is no surprise that corruption was a core issue in many of the elections in 2022. Integrity of the vote itself also remained a concern. In **Kenya** (32), the election highlighted the urgent need for public scrutiny of political financing. The same issue will be in the spotlight during 2023 elections in **Nigeria** (24) and **Ghana** (43) in 2024.

Stability and reform: Best and worst performers

Botswana continues to be one of the top performers in the region due to a robust democratic system in which the legislative and policy frameworks have continuously been improved. The strengthening of opposition parties has allowed anti-corruption measures to be implemented, most notably the 2016 Whistleblowers Act followed by the 2019 [Declaration of Assets and Liabilities Act](#).

Public sector reforms have also kept **Cabo Verde** as a top scorer for the region. The country has implemented several measures to increase transparency in government and business transactions, in line with its [Open Government Partnership commitments](#).

At the other end of the table, **Equatorial Guinea** continues to suffer from relentless exploitation at the hands of its ruling family. The country's political, economic and legal systems have all been controlled by President Teodoro Obiang Nguema, his relatives

and cronies for close to four decades. In November 2022, Obiang – the world’s longest serving leader – was [confirmed for a sixth term](#) with 95 per cent of the vote. The election has been criticised by international observers as unfree and unfair. In January 2023, one of the president’s sons was [arrested for alleged corruption](#) for presumably selling a plane belonging to the country’s national airline.

South Sudan continues to face numerous challenges. The pandemic exacerbated economic problems and the humanitarian situation is dire: according to the UN, more than half of the population is facing [acute food insecurity](#). Corruption has a part in this. A [recent report](#) revealed that money meant for food, fuel and medicine was allegedly stolen in a massive fraud scheme through a network of corrupt politicians some of them with ties to the president's family. Politically, too, the country has been in turmoil. A period of democratic transition after 2019 was followed by a military coup.

Somalia is back at the very bottom of the CPI, both regionally and globally. The country has been mired in a circle of [violence and instability](#) for over three decades, with practically no means available to curb rampant corruption. In October 2022, the recently elected president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud dissolved two key anti-corruption bodies – the Judicial Service Commission and the Anti-Corruption Commission – via decree. Mohamud has been [accused of corruption and abuse of power](#) in the past. Meanwhile, economic and humanitarian conditions for Somalians are steadily deteriorating.

Curbs on executive power essential for improvement

Angola (33) has shown significant improvement over the past years, gaining 14 points on the CPI since 2018. President João Lourenço’s ongoing commitment to root out systemic corruption in the country is showing effects, including through [stronger laws](#). The public prosecutor recently requested for Interpol to [issue an arrest warrant](#) against Isabel dos Santos, daughter of the former president, and the Supreme Court ordered her assets to be seized. However, there continues to be a concern that corruption investigations are politically motivated and that the governing party might be [targeting the opposition](#).

Ethiopia (38), **Kenya** (32), **Seychelles** (70) and **Tanzania** (38) are other countries that have managed to significantly improve their CPI scores. Seychelles took a step forward by amending its Anti-Corruption Act in 2019, but its Public Officers’ Ethics Commission does not have investigative powers.

Several countries, on the other hand, have significantly declined on the CPI over the last years – like **Lesotho**, which has fallen from 49 to 37 points since 2014. This can be explained by executive interference in independent institutions, as demonstrated by the stand-off orchestrated between the police and military. While there has been a positive step towards the separation of institutions in the establishment of the National Reforms Authority, its effects are yet to be felt.

Anti-corruption, peace and security

On top of global crises – from climate change to the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crises – that directly affect the region’s prospects, a number of countries across Sub-Saharan Africa have struggled with security challenges in the form of military coups,

extremism, terror attacks and increased crime. Many of these contexts demonstrate how conflict and corruption are linked.

According to the Institute for Economics and Peace's Global Peace Index 2022, the **Central African Republic** (24), the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** (20), **Somalia** (12), **South Sudan** (13) and **Sudan** (22) are five of the [ten least peaceful countries](#) globally. The CPI also places them among the bottom 30 countries in terms of perceptions of public sector corruption.

Poorly governed national defence forces across the region struggle to contend with such security challenges and their vulnerability to corruption undermines state responses. Amid an unstable political context in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), for example, deeply embedded corruption facilitates the activities of illegal armed groups, including through [mineral and wildlife trafficking](#) posing a risk to human security and facilitating the plundering of resources. Armed groups destabilise countries and the region, as exemplified by the March 23 Movement and the so-called Islamic State, which has formed links with [Mozambique Al-Shabab militia](#).

Mali's (28) CPI score has declined seven points from its peak of 35 in 2015. While corruption is not necessarily an active driver of the conflict, divisions at the heart of the violence have been reinforced over years of mismanagement and indifference to the plight of certain groups in Malian society. The grievances that terrorist groups have proved adept at exploiting stem largely from corruption.

However, the absence of armed conflict does not necessarily mean political stability. In several countries not affected by war, governments still consider anti-corruption activists public enemies. This can be seen in **Madagascar** (26), where the executive director and board chair of Transparency International's national chapter are [facing criminal charges](#) after calling for investigations into companies involved in the Malagasy lychee trade.

Such cases demonstrate the enormous risks that anti-corruption activists and whistleblowers take when they speak up against corruption in many countries across Sub-Saharan Africa. Whistleblower protection legislation is weak throughout the region, with many countries, like **Kenya**, not having a standalone law on whistleblower protection. In countries that do have such laws or policies, like **Nigeria**, these have loopholes or [implementation is seriously lacking](#).

There has been good news, too. There was a pause in the devastating war in **Ethiopia's** Tigray region, which started in November 2020. More leaders in the regions have stood up for democracy, and the African Union has spoken out against military takeovers while continuing to promote Africa's economic, security and political integration.

Country to watch: South Africa

While **South Africa** (43) scores above the regional average of 32, public sector corruption is a serious problem in the continent's southernmost country, too. Most recently, this has been underscored by a series of corruption scandals involving the former and incumbent presidents.

In June 2022, a judicial commission led by Chief Justice Raymond Zondo delivered the final findings of a [three-year inquiry](#) into deep-rooted corruption in South Africa. The

roughly [5,000-page report](#) implicated the country's former president Jacob Zuma, but also found fault with the way the current president Cyril Ramaphosa handled allegations of misconduct. In October, the [president issued a response](#) to the recommendations and findings, in which he announced that the government will put forward and consult the public on a "comprehensive proposal on an effective and integrated anti-corruption institutional framework".

Yet, Ramaphosa is currently dealing with his own corruption scandal, known as [Farmgate](#). He is accused of covering up a 2020 theft in which between US\$500,000 and millions were stolen from his farm, allegedly to avoid scrutiny over the large sums of cash. The president, who won election on an anti-corruption platform in 2018, has denied any wrongdoing. Despite initial indications that he might resign, Ramaphosa dodged the impeachment vote in the parliament and was even re-elected as the African National Congress party leader in December 2022. He [remains under investigation](#).

Way out of the polycrisis

Most states in Sub-Saharan Africa have signed or ratified the UN Convention Against Corruption, showing some commitment to anti-corruption, but leaders have to go further. To make meaningful progress, they need to prioritise outstanding good governance reforms, including measures to protect basic freedoms. Integrity in politics is also crucial to ensure that public resources are used for the common good. States must also protect civil society so that they can hold governments to account.

Amid multiple crises, governments in the region need to place special attention on anti-corruption measures during emergencies, such as those linked to conflict, public health or natural disasters. States must therefore urgently make their public procurement systems more transparent, and sanction and prosecute any abuses of COVID-19 recovery funds.

Countries in the region must also do more to stop the billions of dollars being siphoned offshore each year. Transparency International's chapters in the region raised these concerns earlier this year when they [called on the African Union](#) to step up to their anti-corruption commitments, protect anti-corruption activists and accelerate strategies to combat illicit financial flows.