

Assessing Impact of Anti-Corruption Measures in Burkina Faso

Query:

"In Burkina Faso, the donors started late 2006 a high level political dialogue with the government about the need for tangible progress in the fight against corruption. Among some donors there is now a feeling that instead of focusing on technical issues and process indicators (e.g. "anti-corruption body in place and provided with adequate resources"), it may be better to leave the nuts and bolts to the government and focus on the overall result ("is corruption decreasing?"). Supposedly an overall result indicator would tell us more about the government's real political commitment and effort than ticking off process measures. For general budget support, a performance assessment matrix is used to trigger the release of funds. Currently there is discussion if one should leave the process indicator for corruption out of the 2008 matrix and instead use a result indicator for 2010 (or both). What would constitute a meaningful result indicator? Would the CPI do? Are there any alternatives?"

Purpose:

"The information is urgently needed to help arriving at a shared donor position on this issue, and pursue the dialogue with the Burkinabé government . "

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Summary:

In spite of increased empirical research on corruption, assessing corruption trends and impact of anti-corruption measures on actual levels of corruption continues to face major methodological, political and operational challenges. While comparative composite indexes such as the CPI or the World Bank Governance Indicators play an important role in raising awareness on corruption related issues, they are of very limited value to track change over time and measure impact of anti-corruption efforts. Looking at the respective advantages and limitations of existing corruption measurement tools such as national surveys, qualitative or quantitative assessments we see that there is no single valid and reliable indicator of progress in the fight against corruption. The alternative approach would be to use a range of indicators, data sources and methodologies - both qualitative and quantitative- to track progress and corruption trends over time.

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Date:

25 February 2008

Part 1: General Challenges Involved in Assessing Impact of Anti-Corruption Efforts

Methodological challenges

There is no ideal way of assessing trends in corruption as well as government performance against corruption. Attempts to assess the impact of anti-corruption measures on incidence of corruption are necessarily limited by the difficulty to measure actual levels of corruption in the first place. Measuring corruption faces major challenges of definition and quantification that have been documented in various papers and articles, including in a recent UN literature review of public governance indicators. (Please see: <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan027075.pdf>).

The first challenge consists in defining what to measure. As corruption is a very complex phenomenon that has many dimensions and covers a wide range of practices and behaviour, it is very difficult to develop a generic method of measuring corruption. There is an implicit conceptual definition of corruption that underlies each corruption indicator and measurement technique. Various sources cover various forms of corruption such as state capture or administrative corruption. Each measurement tool has its own strengths and weaknesses in capturing these various dimensions of corruption and none of them can pretend to cover all types and dimensions of corruption. As a result, all corruption indicators have limitations and make them imperfect proxies of actual levels of corruption. A good overview of definitional and methodological issues related to the various corruption indicators currently in use can be found in "Measuring Corruption in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: A Critique of the Cross-Country Indicators". (Please see: http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2006/07/13/000016406_20060713140304/Rendered/PDF/wps3968.pdf).

A further major methodological challenge lies in the difficulty to collect evidence on incidence of corruption and its evolution over time. By nature, corruption occurs behind closed doors. Relevant "hard" and objective data is difficult to obtain and incidence of corruption cannot be quantified precisely in an objective manner. The lack of satisfactory objective data has led many stakeholders to rely on subjective data such as public perceptions to measure corruption. Although this approach is the best possible solution in a situation where no relevant objective data is available, a gap is to be expected between perceptions and actual levels of corruption. Perceptions may be influenced by factors others than knowledge, experience or incidence of the various forms of corruption. The media, individual levels of information or even general attitudes with regard to the government in place may play a role in shaping perceptions. Even when objective data exist, "de jure" indicators covering the existence of anti-corruption commitments made by countries or process-indicators looking at laws or institutions in place to ensure that these obligations are fulfilled, may be poor indicators of their actual level of implementation and impact on corruption levels.

Hard data could potentially be collected on corruption at sector level such as in the tax and customs services to track changes in specific areas. But this implies first conducting a diagnostic exercise to identify what are the problem areas and what progress to monitor over time.

In theory, a reduction in perceived or actual levels of corruption could indicate progress made in the fight against corruption and be used as a proxy for assessing the impact of anti-corruption measures. In practice, using such performance or result indicators faces the challenges of identifying a relevant baseline to track progress or lack of progress, assessing actual levels of corruption and monitoring corruption trends over time. Despite numerous comparative studies or surveys available, there are not many measurement tools indicating changes overtime in absolute terms. Some national surveys could potentially provide insights but very few of them have been repeated consistently with the same methodology to allow meaningful comparisons over time.

Political Challenges

A further challenge of measuring progress in the fight against corruption is that anti-corruption reforms cannot realistically be expected to produce meaningful results in the short term. As a result of this lag between policy implementation and policy impact, there are no valid and reliable indicators that can indicate year to year progress in the fight against corruption. Furthermore, even if changes have occurred, they may not be instantaneously reflected by indicators based on perceptions, as there may be a time lag before the public notices progress made.

As corruption indicators may not reflect the impact of policy reforms in the short term, there is a risk that they may be misleading for the various stakeholders and could even potentially adversely affect support for reform at country level. Anti-corruption reforms are usually politically costly. Apparent lack of progress is likely to frustrate any government committed to fight against corruption and may erode their political capital as well as undermine domestic support for reform. Policy makers can potentially overcome this issue by carefully selecting the time horizon to conduct the assessment and monitor progress. On the other hand, this “progress takes time” argument may also be misused by governments who are not genuinely committed to the fight against corruption.

Another key political challenge to take into account when dealing with corruption assessments is the issue of ownership. There is a growing consensus within the international community that successful anti-corruption initiatives need to be grounded in local ownership. Anti-corruption targets and standards of government performance should ideally be set through nationally driven processes to ensure engagement and commitment of local stakeholders. For the sake of sustainability, they should also ideally be assessed and monitored through nationally owned processes.

(Please see: Measuring and Assessing Democratic Governance:
http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/docs07/oslo_workshop_report.pdf).

Operational Challenges

Any corruption monitoring efforts are also limited by resource constraints, local capacity deficits as well as the need to be realistic on what data can be systematically collected and compared over time:

- Corruption assessments are costly. Adequate resources must be secured to be able to repeat the exercise using a consistent methodology on a regular basis to monitor trends over time in a sustained manner.
- Corruption assessments are complex exercises and require sufficient technical expertise and capacity to address the above mentioned methodological challenges.
- Another key challenge relates to the accessibility and availability of relevant data on corruption from reliable sources.
- Last but not least, the institution collecting the data and making the corruption assessment is crucial to ensure quality, integrity, trust, credibility, ownership and usability of the findings. Various actors have their comparative advantages in this process. Factors to consider in this regard are the level of expertise and technical capacity, method and access to data, credibility, territorial focus and desired impact of the exercise.

(Please see: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/62/50/37330934.pdf>).

Part 2: Existing Alternatives to Measure Progress in the Fight against Corruption

In spite of these various challenges, a variety of methods exist for selecting indicators for measuring corruption and governance. As there is no perfect indicator to evaluate public governance, corruption can be measured through a variety of contributions from various sources that approach corruption related issues from a different but complementary perspective. Key issues that arise in this regard relate to single source versus multiple data sources, subjective versus objective data, rule-based

versus outcome based indicators of governance and corruption. A review of the literature shows that no single indicator can capture the complexity and various dimensions of all forms of corruption in a reliable and objective manner. The golden rule in this regard is to use a combination of tools rather than single indicators to assess corruption and the impact of anti-corruption measures.

The examples reviewed below are not meant to provide a comprehensive overview of all existing corruption measurement tools. There are several useful summaries of different types of governance data. The UNDP Governance Indicators users' guide gives an overview of the governance data sources available and highlights their strength and weaknesses in measuring the various dimensions of corruption and their evolution over time.

(Please see: http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/flagship/governance_indicators_project.html). Measurement tools implemented in Africa have also been compiled in a mapping of local corruption diagnostics and measurement tools in Africa.

(Please see:

www.transparency.org/content/download/1595/8186/file/U4report_local_surveys_africa.pdf).

The above mentioned UN literature review on public governance indicators also presents the major corruption and governance indicators currently in use, with their respective advantage and limitations.

(Please see: <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan027075.pdf>).

Aggregated Governance Indicators

Several institutions have sought to combine the information from numerous sources into aggregate or composite governance indicators. The most famous index of this sort is TI's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). The World Bank has also developed a similar index to measure six dimensions of governance, including control of corruption. The major advantage of aggregating several sources is that it reduces the measurement error that may arise given the difficulties involved in measuring corruption. Single indicators from one source may also be defined too narrowly for certain purposes. The main critiques against composite perception-based indicators are that they lack transparency and comparability over time and do not permit a precise estimation of governance. There is also an inevitable loss of specificity in the information they provide. All-encompassing indices and indexes have therefore a limited value in helping developing countries identify how to improve the various dimensions of governance.

(Please see "Uses and Abuses of Governance Indicators" which is available for purchase from the OECD: http://www.oecd.org/document/25/0,3343,en_2649_33935_37081881_1_1_1_1,00.html).

CPI

The CPI is an "index of indices" composed from nine different sources that all provide a ranking of countries based on expert assessments and opinion surveys. Although it has proved to be a powerful awareness-raising tool, the CPI can not be used to track change over time or assess the impact of anti-corruption measures either in absolute or comparative terms, as changes in the ranking or scores may be imputed to factors others than changes in actual levels of corruption.

As mentioned in the FAQ accompanying the release of the CPI: "Year-to-year changes in a country's score can either result from a changed perception of a country's performance or from a change in the CPI's sample and methodology". The only reliable way to compare a country's score over time is to go back to individual survey sources, each of which can reflect a change in assessment. It is difficult to improve a CPI score over a short time period. The 2007 CPI is based on data from the past two years, relating to perceptions that may have been formed even further in the past. This means that substantial changes in perceptions of corruption are only likely to emerge in the index over longer periods of time".

The World Bank Governance Indicators

The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) produced by the World Bank Research Institute consist of six aggregate indicators of governance covering 200 countries, combining cross country data from 30 organisations including the sources used for the CPI.

The WGI presents the same weaknesses and limitations as other aggregate indicators. The standardisation methods used to aggregate different indicators on a common scale limit their ability to track changes meaningfully over time. As with TI, the World Bank acknowledges data limitations and margins of error of all its governance indicators and recommends taking these seriously when using these indicators to monitor progress on governance. It has warned on many occasions in the past against using such data to measure trends and/or determine and allocate levels of aid. (Please see: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWBIGOVANTCOR/Resources/wps4370.pdf>).

Other Aggregated Indicators

Other aggregated indexes include the recently released Ibrahim Index of African Governance (<http://www.moibrahimfoundation.org/index/acknowledgments.asp>) that uses an extremely broad collection of a variety of indicators or the OECD Governance Indicators that also look at governance from a broad perspective and is currently building towards the first publication of "Government at a glance" in late 2009. (http://www.oecd.org/document/37/0,3343,en_2649_33735_37688524_1_1_1_1,00.html)

Individual Governance Indicators

In view of the above-mentioned limitations, aggregated indicators cannot be used as a stand alone measure to track progress over time and assess government performance to combat corruption. They give a general, all-encompassing snapshot of the country's situation in a particular year. They should ideally be accompanied by smaller scale indicators that provide a more nuanced and specific picture of the situation, that are better suited to inform policy debate and reforms.

Such types of assessments measure quantitatively or qualitatively specific aspects of corruption or governance using a set of single indicators. The major strength of such methodologies is that they allow the collection of more specific data on the various dimensions of corruption that occur in different institutions, sectors or levels of society. Their potential in monitoring anti-corruption progress is that they relate to specific areas and not to a general estimate of corruption, the latter having little explanatory value in itself. As already mentioned, if repeated on a regular basis using a consistent methodology, they could potentially be used to track progress as they provide valuable hindsight on trends over time.

Nationally representative surveys of firms or households such as the one used for the TI's Bribe Payers Index are examples of such methodologies. The **UNECA Africa Governance Indicators** is another example of this type of methodology. It is based on surveys of elites conducted in 28 countries, including Burkina Faso, in 2003 and 2004 and covers corruption as well as broader governance issues.

(Please see: http://www.uneca.org/eca_resources/publications/books/agr/index.htm).

This project aims at measuring and monitoring progress in governance on the African continent using 83 indicators and combining three complementary research instruments, with three different research techniques: expert surveys, household surveys and desk research. The data collected is complemented by objective information on important governance inputs, processes and practices using desk-research. The project has been ongoing since 1998 and is meant to be repeated with a 4 to 5 years frequency. (Please see: <http://www.metagora.org/html/aboutus/showinitiative.php?ID=97>).

Further examples of this type of measurement approaches include initiatives such as the **Kenyan Urban bribery Index** (http://www.tikenya.org/documents/urban_bribery_index.doc), the **Afro-**

barometer (<http://www.afrobarometer.org/newsupdates.html>) or Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer

(http://transparency.org/content/download/27256/410704/file/GCB_2007_report_en_02-12-2007.pdf). Burkina Faso was not included in the Global Corruption Barometer 2007 but will be included for the first time in the 2008 round of the Afro-barometer.

These measurement tools can be strategically selected according to what the problem was found to be in the initial diagnostic of the situation of a particular country in order to monitor changes. For example, if petty bribery was identified in service delivery as a major problem, results from score cards could be used to monitor progress over time.

However, some experts also question the validity and reliability of such tools to capture trends in corruption control. For example, national surveys and international comparisons suggest that Tanzania has been performing relatively well in terms of corruption control over the past years. At the same time, other sources such as the media denounce unprecedented levels of corruption among party and government officials. In a paper presented at the Annual Research Workshop of the Norwegian Development Research Association, Brian Cooksey questions both the validity and reliability of the various corruption sources, arguing that they may capture petty but not so much grand or political corruption. (Please see: <http://www.cmi.no/nfu/2007/?workshop-13-measuring-corruption>).

Rule Based versus Outcome Based Indicators

Rule-based indicators of governance provide detailed information on the institutions and regulatory framework governing public sector accountability and transparency. By nature, such indicators are relatively straightforward and progress could potentially be measured relatively easily. Such methodologies look, for example, at de jure indicators such as the commitments made by countries through their constitutions or ratified treaties and inputs such as the laws and institutions in place to fulfil these obligations. However, the existence of legal provisions or anti-corruption institutions obviously provides little information on their actual effectiveness, outcome and performance on levels of corruption. As such, although they provide useful information on a country legal and institutional environment, they are not reliable indicators to track progress and outcomes of anti-corruption reforms.

Outcome based indicators provide information on the de facto outcome of the rules in place, in other words, how they are being implemented in practice, by capturing directly the views of relevant stakeholders. There have been attempts to link rule-based indicators to their outcome, by looking both at the regulatory framework in place and its effectiveness and level of implementation in practice.

TI's National Integrity System Country Studies go a step further, for example, by providing a detailed and nuanced assessment of national anti-corruption systems and highlighting their strengths, weakness and effectiveness. The Global Integrity Index uses a similar approach to track corruption and governance trends worldwide by assessing the existence as well as effectiveness of national anti-corruption mechanisms. The Investment Climate Assessments of The World Bank and the Executive Opinion Survey of the World Economic Forum that survey firms about their interactions with the state also fall in the category of outcome based indicators. The main weakness of such indicators is that it is very difficult to link them back directly to the policy intervention that may have triggered this outcome. It is also difficult to link them directly to changes that may be observed in actual levels of corruption.

(Please see: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWBIGOVANTCOR/Resources/wps4370.pdf>)

Conclusion

Analysing the comparative advantage and limitation of each corruption measurement tool shows that there is no ideal source of information to track progress and impact of anti-corruption measures on actual levels of corruption. Using just one indicator to monitor progress is unlikely to reflect the full situation and runs the risk of providing a perverse assessment of the situation. A common-sense solution would be to combine strengths and weaknesses of the various instruments and assess progress made by using a combination of methods and indicators rather than a single one. Only careful and comprehensive national case studies, reviewing all data sources including qualitative studies, may provide a realistic picture of corruption trends over time.

Part 3: Data and sources of Information on Burkina Faso

There are a variety of sources that provide information on Burkina Faso.

A general overview of corruption challenges faced by the country as well as public and private corruption initiatives can be found in the Burkina Faso country profile provided by the Business Anti-Corruption Portal (<http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/normal.asp?pageid=152>) as well as in a U4 expert answer specifically dealing with this country. (<http://www.u4.no/helpdesk/helpdesk/queries/query81.cfm>)

Further sources on corruption related issues for the country include:

UNDP National Human Development Report 2003 (French)

The Burkina Faso report 2003 is the first NDHR on corruption that used national perception data for corruption instead of global indicators such as the CPI or the Opacity Index. The use of national indicators allows for data to be disaggregated and provides policy makers with information on sectors where corruption is most prevalent. (<http://www.pnud.bf/FR/RNDH.HTM>)

Rapports 2004 et 2005 sur l'Etat de la Corruption au Burkina Faso (French)

The REN-LAC is the Burkina Faso nationwide anti-corruption network of more than 30 civil society organisations that has close links to Transparency International. They publish regular reports on the state of corruption in Burkina Faso. (www.renlac.org)

Global Corruption Report's Country Reports on Burkina Faso 2006 and 2005

In the Burkina Faso Country Report compiled each year by a country expert for publication in the Transparency International Global Corruption Report (GCR), legal and institutional changes that have taken place in the past years are described. The GCR 2005 and 2006 update institutional changes that have taken place in the country with regard to anti-corruption policies and reforms. http://www.transparency.org/publications/gcr/download_gcr

UNECA Africa Governance Indicators

The UNECA report "Striving for Good Governance in Africa" published in 2005 measures and monitors "Progress towards Good Governance in Africa," in 28 countries including Burkina Faso. http://www.uneca.org/eca_resources/publications/books/agr/index.htm

Further Sources of Data and Information on Burkina Faso

The Heritage Foundation: Index of Economic Freedom 2007
(<http://www.heritage.org/research/features/index/country.cfm?id=BurkinaFaso>)

The Bertelsmann Foundation: Transformation Index 2006

<http://www.heritage.org/research/features/index/country.cfm?id=BurkinaFaso>

Transparency International: CPI 2007

http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2007

World Bank Governance Indicators

<http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi2007/pdf/c19.pdf>

Freedom House: Countries at cross roads: Burkina Faso 2007

L temporarily unavailable at time of publishing. Please try: <http://blog.freedomhouse.org/>

Part 4: Further reading

Uses and Abuses of Governance indicators (Available for purchase at the OECD)

This study helps both users and producers of governance indicators understand the strengths and weaknesses of the best and most widely used indicators, helps them find their way through the jungle of the hundreds of existing governance indicator datasets, and shows how governance indicators tend to be widely misused both in international comparisons and in tracking changes in the quality of governance in individual countries.

http://www.oecd.org/document/25/0,3343,en_2649_33935_37081881_1_1_1_1,00.html

Governance Indicators: A users' guide

This UNDP report provides a useful summary of different types and sources of governance data available, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses in measuring the various dimensions of corruption and their evolution over time.

http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/flagship/governance_indicators_project.html

Assessing Trends in Corruption and the Impact of Anti-Corruption Measures

This paper aims to grasp the state of the art in measuring corruption and assessing governance performance against corruption.

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/62/50/37330934.pdf>

Governance Indicators: Where Are We, Where Should We Go?

In this paper, Daniel Kaufmann reviews progress to date in the area of measuring governance using a simple framework focusing on two questions: I) what do we measure? and ii) whose views do we rely on?

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWBIGOVANTCOR/Resources/wps4370.pdf>

Is it Right to Rank?

This paper emphasises the importance of collecting information on corruption, while stressing critical aspects of cross-country composite corruption indices.

<http://www.cmi.no/publications/publication/?1973=is-it-right-to-rank-limitations>

Measuring Corruption in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: A Critique of Cross - Country Indicators

This paper discusses definitional and methodological differences among data sources and concludes that, depending on one's purpose, it may be more appropriate to use data from single source rather than a composite index because of the loss of conceptual precision in aggregation.

http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=923275

General Governance Indicators Literature

UNDP compiled a bibliography of governance indicators literature last updated in September 2006.

http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/docs06/Bibliography_of_governance_and_democracy_indicators_resources.pdf