Corruption in East Africa (a US perspective)

Introduction

The United States State Department's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* ("country reports") strive to provide a factual and objective record on the status of human rights worldwide. The 2021 country reports were published on 12 April 2022.

Section 4 of the country reports provides an assessment of Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government which addresses the extent to which a country's law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials and the level of implementation of these laws.

Scores for East African countries published by Transparency International in their 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) report demonstrate that East Africa was ranked second out of the five African regions in terms of improvements in CPI scores during 2012-2021. Individual country CPI score performance was mixed for East African countries in the 2012-2021 period. The country reports for East African countries reveal that only two East African countries were effectively implementing current criminal penalties for corruption by officials. Further discussion on corruption trends in East African countries is provided here.

Details of the overview comments for East African countries in the 2021 country reports are provided below.

Comoros

“The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. There were numerous reports of government corruption.

The National Commission for Preventing and Fighting Corruption was an independent administrative authority established to combat corruption, including through education and mobilization of the public. In 2016 the president repealed the provisions of the law that created the commission, citing its failure to produce any results. The Constitutional Court subsequently invalidated this decision, noting that a presidential decree may not overturn a law. Nevertheless, the president has neither renewed the commissioners' mandates nor appointed replacement members."

Djibouti

"The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, but the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials often engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. According to the World Bank's most recent *Worldwide Governance Indicators*, government corruption was a serious problem."

Eritrea

"The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively. Officials sometimes engaged in corrupt practices with impunity."

Ethiopia

"The law provides criminal penalties for conviction of corruption. The government did not implement the law effectively or comprehensively. The government enacted policies to hold government officials more accountable. There were isolated reports of government corruption. Officials sometimes engaged in corrupt practices with impunity.

On February 19, the HOPR issued the revised proclamation for the establishment of the Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission, which assessed that the revised proclamation would increase its capacity to implement the law. “

Kenya

“The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption. There were numerous reports of government corruption during the year. Officials frequently engaged in allegedly corrupt practices with impunity. Despite public progress in fighting corruption, the government continued to face hurdles in implementing relevant laws effectively. The slow processing of corruption cases was exacerbated by COVID-19 containment measures, with courts lacking sufficient technological capacity to hear cases remotely.”

Madagascar

“The law provides for criminal penalties for official corruption, but the government did not implement the law effectively. There were numerous reports of government corruption during the year.”

Mauritius

“The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials sometimes engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. There were isolated reports of government corruption during the year.”

[Rwanda](#)

"The law provides criminal penalties for conviction of corruption by officials and private persons transacting business with the government that include imprisonment and fines, and the government generally implemented the law effectively. There were isolated reports of government corruption during the year, particularly related to road construction projects. The law also provides for citizens who report requests for bribes by government officials to receive financial rewards when officials are prosecuted and convicted."

[Seychelles](#)

"The law provides criminal penalties for conviction of corruption by officials, and the government implemented the law effectively. There were isolated reports of government corruption during the year."

[Somalia](#)

"The law provides for criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government did not effectively implement the law. There were numerous reports of government corruption during the year."

[South Sudan](#)

"The transitional constitution provides for criminal penalties for acts of corruption by officials. The government did not implement the law. Poor recordkeeping, lax accounting procedures, absence of adherence to procurement laws, and a lack of accountability and corrective legislation compounded the problem. There were numerous reports of government corruption during the year."

Sudan

"The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government did not implement the law effectively. There were numerous reports of government corruption during the year."

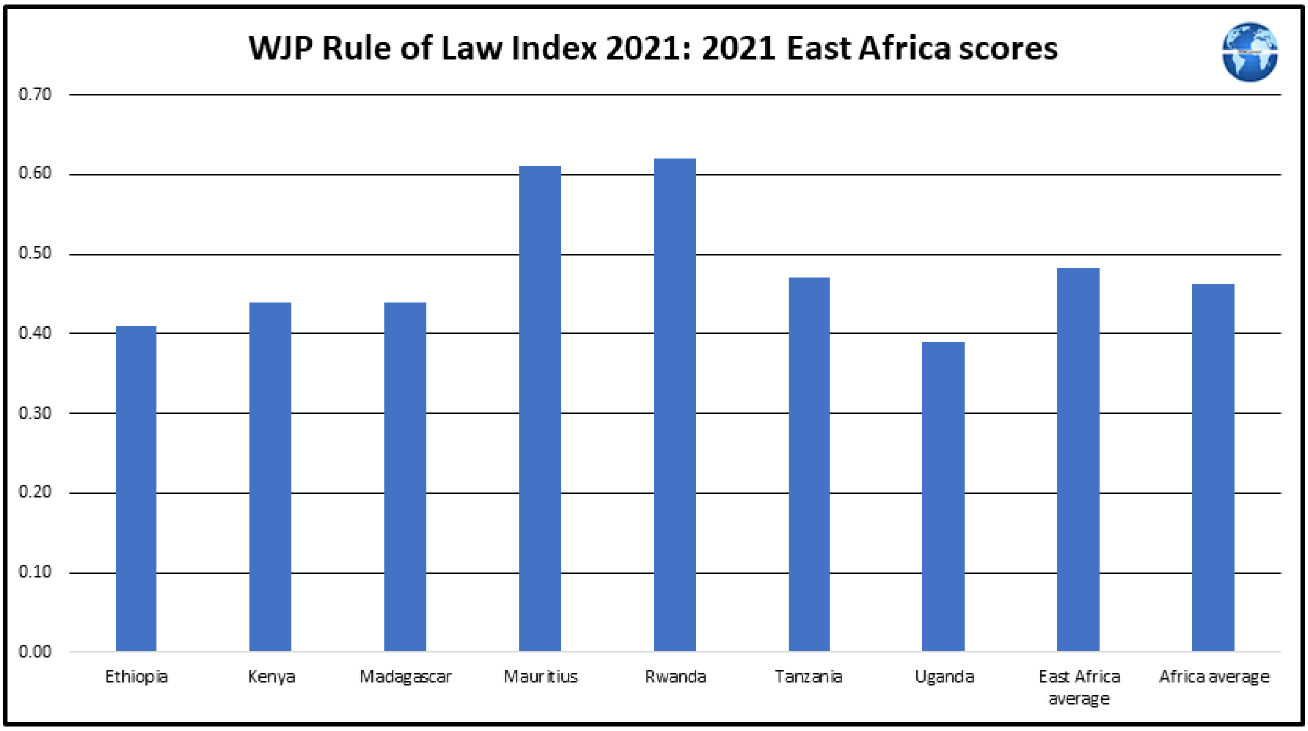
Tanzania

"The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively. There were isolated reports of government corruption during the year. President Hassan took several steps to signal a commitment to fighting corruption. These included surprise inspections of ministries, hospitals, and the port of Dar es Salaam, often followed by the immediate dismissal or suspension of officials."

Uganda

"The law provides criminal penalties of up to 12 years' imprisonment and confiscation of the convicted persons' property for official corruption.

Nevertheless, transparency civil society organizations stated the government did not implement the law effectively, and there were numerous reports of government corruption during the year. Officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity, and many corruption cases remained pending for years."



Conclusion

The country reports for East African countries demonstrate that only a small proportion of these countries are well placed to fight against corruption by officials.

Progress in combatting public sector corruption in East Africa is likely to be modest while the relevant authorities fail to enforce criminal penalties for corruption.

East Africa PFM digital transparency recent trends


LIBYA
SAUDI ARABIA
OMAN
SUDAN
CHAD
KHARTOUM
ERITREA
ASMARA
YEMEN
SANAA
RED SEA
ARABIAN SEA
Gulf of Aden
Socotra (YEMEN)
DJIBOUTI
DJIBOUTI
White Nile
Blue Nile
Nile
ADDIS ABABA
ETHIOPIA
SOMALIA
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
SOUTH SUDAN
JUBA
UGANDA
Lake Albert
Lake Kyoga
Congo
KAMPALA
KENYA
MOGADISHU
NAIROBI
RWANDA
KIGALI
Lake Victoria
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
BUJUMBURA
BURUNDI
Lake Tanganyika
DODOMA
TANZANIA
Dar es Salaam
VICTORIA
SEYCHELLES
Lake Malawi (Lake Nyasa)
COMOROS
MORONI
ANG.
MALAWI
ZAMBIA
LILONGWE
LUSAKA
MOZAMBIQUE
Zambezi
HARARE
ZIMBABWE
Mozambique Channel
MADAGASCAR
ANTANANARIVO
MAURITIUS
PORT LOUIS
St. Denis
Reunion (FRANCE)
BOTSWANA
GABORONE
PRETORIA
MBABANE
SWAZILAND
MAPUTO
SOUTH AFRICA
LESOTHO
MASERU
Orange
INDIAN OCEAN
0 400 km
0 400 mi

Introduction

Transparency of public finances is a key element of a public financial management (PFM) system enabling public scrutiny of government actions and intentions. From our September 2020 “Improving PFM digital transparency in African finance ministries” presentation we now examine recent trends in East Africa PFM from a digital transparency perspective by presenting data for twelve East African countries that was identified during our examination of 45 African ministries of finance (MoFs) current use of digital platforms to promote PFM transparency.

PFM transparency is important

Transparency of public finances is achieved by providing information on PFM which is comprehensive, consistent, and accessible to users. The World Bank’s September 2020 report “Enhancing Government Effectiveness and Transparency – The Fight Against Corruption” (link to be provided) has highlighted the importance of ensuring greater transparency in government operations.

Identifying PFM digital transparency trends

The following statistics were prepared to help identify PFM digital transparency trends:

- Country internet usage

- MoF website visits during May/July 2020 and projected annualised visits for 2020
- Domestic and non-resident visits to MoF websites
- Country Facebook usage
- MoF Facebook page follower numbers
- Country Twitter usage
- MoF Twitter follower numbers

Penetration levels for MoF website users, Facebook and Twitter followers were subsequently identified to demonstrate the level of usage of these digital platforms and key recent PFM digital transparency trends.

Key trends

Trends in the key PFM digital transparency indicators for the twelve East African finance ministries with websites during the period May/July 2020 are available. These can be accessed by clicking on to the country links below:

- Djibouti
- Ethiopia

- Kenya
- Madagascar
- Mauritius
- Rwanda
- Seychelles
- Somalia
- South Sudan
- Sudan
- Tanzania
- Uganda

A video showing East African country PFM digital transparency trends for key PFM digital transparency indicators is available here.

An additional video showing comparative results on a PFM digital transparency indicator basis across East African countries is available here.

Questions?

Please contact us at team@pfmconnect.com if you have any questions about this material.

Trends in African finance ministries' social media usage

We have prepared a SlideShare presentation that highlights the response levels achieved recently by African finance ministries in their social media activities. You can view the presentation at: http://www.slideshare.net/johnleo/african-finance-ministries-social-media-and-public-financial-management[African finance ministries, social media and public financial management](). This supplements the material presented in our recent blog. [African-finance-ministries-social-media-and-public-]()

financial-management

African Finance Ministries, Social Media and Public Financial Management

Posted by David Fellows and John Leonardo[1]

What contribution does the Social Media have to make to improving public financial management (PFM) and fiscal transparency? In a recent study, we found that 26 of the 34 OECD states had Twitter sites and 18 had a Facebook presence.[2] Further work on African countries revealed that 11 finance ministries have active Facebook accounts (Angola, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia) with four of these using Twitter on a regular basis (see table below). The number of African Facebook accounts stood at 51.6 million as at 31st December 2012 and more than doubled to 120 million by 30 June 2015. Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya accounted for a quarter of this total but other African countries have been gaining ground.Mobile-phones-driving-user-growth-in-africa There appears to be a moderate correlation between internet use and per capita GDP for the group (excluding Somalia).

Country	Proportion of Population using Internet (%)	Facebook Users as Proportion of Internet Users (%)	Twitter	UN's Human Development Index
Angola	23	15		0.53
Egypt	55	25	T	0.68
Ethiopia	2	47		0.44
Ghana	20	31	Ti	0.57
Liberia	5	–		0.41
Rwanda	9	18	T	0.51
Senegal	23	21	T	0.51
Somalia	2	79		unknown
South Africa	49	26	T	0.66
Uganda	22	7		0.48
Zambia	18	12		0.56

T = Finance Ministry makes regular use of Twitter

Ti = Ghana's Finance Minister has a personal Twitter account

A large number of Facebook postings in these countries has an economic or financial content. For instance, Zambia's Minister of Finance emphasises the importance of female employment, advocates the need for greater diversification into agriculture, manufacturing and non-extractive industries, and quotes a World Bank report on the need for major companies to support the development of small businesses. The Angolan finance ministry explains how falling oil prices have put pressure on public spending causing fuel subsidies to be reduced to maintain vital services, and stresses the importance of the linkage between economic stability, rating agency assessments and debt funding. Most countries provide details of budget spending proposals.

Postings were largely silent on service delivery commitments, service delivery standards, budgetary control experience, efficiency measures, cost reduction initiatives, procurement process development, anti-corruption activities and audit findings. Economic strategies remained largely unexplained and public questions and comments remained unanswered.

Few opportunities were taken to use the medium for broadening the reach of public service employment or the pool of public works contractors (eg inviting women to apply for jobs and bid for contracts). Citizens were not invited to complain about public service delivery or report corrupt or unfair practices.

Social Media is highly image-related and most postings were accompanied by photographs but too many were of men in suits, headings lacked clarity and explanation was often in short supply. Accompanying text was usually taken verbatim from ministerial speeches. Some sites were too dependent for their message on web links that referenced complex reports and these could not always be accessed via mobile reception. This could not, for the most part, be regarded as user friendly.

Some finance ministries are becoming quite adventurous in their postings. Zambia, Uganda and Liberia refer to prosecutions for tax fraud and corruption and this news was well received by the public. Liberia refers to its Open Budget Initiative and encourages the public to access budget material online. Angola, Liberia and Zambia refer to their PFM reform intentions. South Africa requests ideas for budget preparation. Angola refers specifically to its intentions to improve tax collection and procurement practices. Egypt makes regular announcements about training courses, and is also a regular user of video clips.

Several countries receive a regular flow of public comments, ranging from appreciative to openly hostile. Zambia demonstrates a lively interaction. Its citizens clearly have the confidence to express both appreciation and scepticism depending on the context. Its site is varied in subject matter, photographs are often interesting and the postings are regularly updated. Not surprisingly it also has the most likes.

What applies to Facebook also applies to Twitter but with greater emphasis. With the limitation on characters links to official sites were simply overused. The personal account of Ghana’s Finance Minister was perhaps the most engaging. YouTube has specific explicatory uses but we feel it has not been shown to have general applicability.

Social Media is a hard task master. At best, it requires strong images and short explanations. Laborious text pieced together from formal speeches or official documents is not an ideal format. Further reading can be offered but should not be used to carry the initial message if the intention is to engage the casual browser. Attention must be won.

At present, finance ministry website visits originating from Social Media are very limited (Egypt at 11% being the highest but for most websites the traffic is negligible). On the other hand, given the rapid growth in Social Media use, particularly Facebook, there is huge potential for using this communication channel as a gateway to website-based information and online service delivery.

Governments can prepare for this by developing Social Media strategies as exemplified by Uganda’s guidelines.

Politicians in some countries have begun to fear Social Media for its capacity to spread discontent and inflame communities.

So why should finance ministers choose to use Social Media? Perhaps because it is one of the few ways that politicians can hope to reach the younger generation in significant numbers at a time when the general level of confidence in government appears to be low and decreasing. The OECD study referred to earlier found that only 40% of adults in OECD countries expressed trust in their governments. Should we expect the experience in developing countries to be different?

The same OECD study found that 30% of young people in Holland used Social Media to discuss politics and civic issues. This was the highest ratio of any country but it does suggest that Social Media is already a relevant political vehicle. If they choose to grasp this opportunity, finance ministers may find they can use Social Media to increase public understanding of public finance and budgeting, expand the opportunities for engaging the private sector in business partnerships with the government, and even improve the willingness to pay taxes.

If this is a reasonable supposition then perhaps development partners and even private sector investors will begin to take an interest in the potential relevance of Social Media.

Postscript

Just after this blog was published Facebook has announced a satellite system to extend its reach into areas of sub-Saharan Africa that were not previously served by the internet. Facebook plans satellite to boost sub-Saharan Africa internet. This makes the case for the use of Facebook, in particular, as an important medium of public service communication in Africa and reinforces the relevance of social media to the PFM agenda.

[1] The authors are Principals of PFMConnect. They have been engaged on projects in Africa, Asia and the Pacific funded by the World Bank, EU, ADB and DfID.

[2] OECD Working Paper on Public Governance, No. 26 “Social Media Use by Government”.OECD Working Paper on Public Governance No. 26

abridged version of this blog is available at http://blog-pfm.imf.org/pfmblog/2015/10/finance-ministries-social-media-and-pfm.html#morefinance-ministries-social-media-and-pfm