



VOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Overview

- Voice and accountability is the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media.¹
- Lack of voice and accountability leads to deprivation with respect to four key areas necessary for human development: sustainable livelihoods; capability-enhancing services; decent environmental quality; and physical security.²
- Accountability institutions are supposed to prevent the systemic abuses that lead to these deprivations. Failure of accountability institutions, therefore, leads to an anti-poor 'bias' in political and economic systems.³
- A free press and a thriving civil society play a key role in sustaining and monitoring a healthy democracy, as well as in contributing to greater accountability, good government, and economic development.⁴

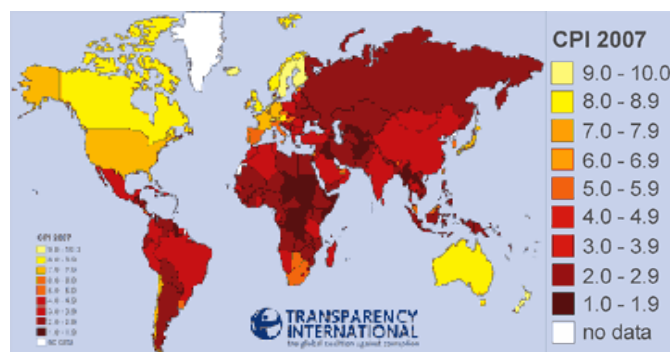
Freedom and Accountability

- According to Freedom House, "the year 2007 was marked by a notable setback for global freedom. The decline, which was reflected in reversals in one-fifth of the world's countries, was most pronounced in South Asia."⁵
- Over the last two years there has been a "growing 'pushback' against human rights organizations, movements and media advocating for democratic freedoms."⁶
- In 2007, the number of electoral democracies dropped by two to 121 out of 193 countries.⁷
- According to Freedom House, "the state of global press freedom declined in 2006, with particularly worrisome trends evident in Asia, the former Soviet Union, and Latin America."⁸

Corruption

- Ineffective institutional checks on power, obscure decision-making procedures, weak civil society and pronounced income inequalities encourage corruption.

- Corruption leads to the depletion of national wealth. Furthermore, it obstructs fair market structures and distorts competition, thereby deterring investment.
- Corruption curbs programs related to the poor's basic needs, from sanitation to education to healthcare. It results in the misallocation of resources to the detriment of poverty reduction programs.
- There is a strong correlation between corruption and poverty. In Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perception Index, forty percent of countries scoring below three, indicating that corruption is perceived as rampant, are classified by the World Bank as low income countries.⁹
- The World Bank estimates the global cost of corruption at \$1 trillion, whereas development aid totals roughly \$100 billion.¹⁰
- World Bank Institute research shows that countries that tackle corruption and improve their rule of law can increase their national incomes by as much as four times in the long term, and child mortality can fall as much as 75 percent.¹¹
- According to the African Union, 25% of the gross domestic product of African States - or \$148 billion is lost to corruption annually.¹²



Transparency International's Corruption Index ranks 180 countries by their perceived levels of corruption on a scale of 1 (least corrupt) to 10 (most corrupt), as determined by expert assessments and opinion surveys.

Source: Transparency International, 2007, CPI



Conflict Prevention

- Legitimate and democratic state institutions are key conditions favorable to approaching conflict prevention.
- Institutions structured so as to give real voice and space to the people and to hold the powerful accountable for their actions as well as an informed civil society, provide the foundations for deep, resilient and peaceful democratic governance.¹³
- According to global trends, most of the world's current armed conflicts occur in countries which are also the poorest in the world. Over half of the countries affected by conflict since 1990 were low income countries, an increase from one third in previous decades.
- A third of all violent conflicts from 1990 to 2003 have been located in Africa which is the poorest region in the world.¹⁴

Voice and Accountability & Development

Voice and accountability provide safeguards against poor governance and corruption. This in turn allows for a more stable political system, secure economic conditions, and institutional infrastructure – essential components for business to be able to operate effectively.

Notes

¹ The World Bank Institute, News, *Worldwide Governance Indicators Show Some Countries Making Progress in Governance and in Fighting Corruption*, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:21814712~pagePK:64257043~piPK:437376~theSitePK:4607,00.html>

² UNDP, Human Development Report Office, Background Paper for HDR 2002, *Voice, Accountability and Human Development: The Emergence of a New Agenda*, 2002, http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2002/papers/Goetz-Jenkins_2002.pdf

³ UNDP, Human Development Report Office, Background Paper for HDR 2002, *Voice, Accountability and Human Development: The Emergence of a New Agenda*, 2002, http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2002/papers/Goetz-Jenkins_2002.pdf

⁴ Freedom House, *Freedom of the Press*, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=16>

⁵ Freedom House, *Findings of Freedom in the World 2008 -- Freedom in Retreat: Is the Tide Turning?*, Arch Puddington, 2008, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=130&year=2008>

⁶ Freedom House, *Freedom in the World: selected data from Freedom House's Annual Global Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties*, 2007.

⁷ Freedom House. *Freedom in the World 2007: Freedom Stagnation Amid Pushback Against Democracy*, Arch Puddington, 2006 <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=130&year=2007> (accessed 3 July 2007)

⁸ Freedom House. *Press Freedom in 2006: Growing Threats to Media Independence*, 2007 <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/fop/2007/fopessay2007.pdf>

⁹ Transparency International, CPI 2007, News Room, *Persistent corruption in low-income countries requires global action*, http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2007

¹⁰ World Bank, News and Broadcast, *The Costs of Corruption*, 2004, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:20190187~menuPK:34457~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html>

¹¹ World Bank, News and Broadcast, *The Costs of Corruption*, 2004,

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:20190187~menuPK:34457~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html>

¹² U4, Anti-Corruption Resource Center, *Africa : Scale of Corruption and Impact on Poor*, <http://www.u4.no/helpdesk/helpdesk/queries/query20.cfm>

¹³ UNDP Oslo Governance Center, Governance and Conflict Prevention, http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/overview/governance_conflict_prevention.html

¹⁴ UNDP Oslo Governance Center, Governance and Conflict Prevention, http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/overview/governance_conflict_prevention.html