

Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 33

April 2006

Combating Corruption in Tanzania: Perception and Experience

The Government of Tanzania has been battling against corruption since the early days of independence, and the efforts have been re-doubled in the last seven years with the adoption of a new and comprehensive anti-corruption strategy. Is the Tanzanian public rating these government efforts as a success? The Afrobarometer has been tracking public attitudes about the prevalence of corruption and their ratings of the government's efforts to combat this problem since 2001. This bulletin reports the findings of the most recent, 2005, Afrobarometer survey on a variety of issues relating to corruption, including public understandings of what constitutes corruption, evaluations of the government's anti-corruption efforts, the perceived extent of corruption among various individuals and institutions of government, how citizens respond to demands for illegal payments, the extent of corruption in the electoral process, and finally, the ability of the government to enforce its laws against corruption and other criminal activity. Overall, the findings suggest that the government may be achieving at least modest success via its current efforts; public perceptions of its efforts to combat the problem are improving, while reported experiences with corruption appear to be on the decline.

The Survey

Following previous surveys conducted in 2001 and 2003, a third Afrobarometer survey was carried out from July 18th to August 13th, 2005. It was based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,304 Tanzanians – 650 men and 654 women – above the age of 18, i.e., of voting age. The overall margin of sampling error for a sample of this size is +/- 3 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. The survey was conducted in all regions of the country, with the number of respondents in each region being proportional to the region's population size. Interviews were conducted in 69 districts on the Mainland, and 7 in Zanzibar. Around 94 percent of the respondents were from the Mainland, and 6 percent from Zanzibar.¹ Furthermore, 23 percent of the respondents were drawn from urban areas and the remaining 77 percent from the rural areas, this being representative of the national urban-rural distribution. Fifty-seven percent of respondents had completed their primary education, while another 16 percent had gone beyond primary school. The remaining 27 percent had either no formal schooling, or had not completed their primary education. Fifty percent were aged between 30 and 50 years, 32 percent below 30 years and the rest 53% above 50 years. All fieldwork was conducted by Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA) under the umbrella of the Afrobarometer Network. Wilsken Agencies Ltd., a Ugandan research and development consultancy firm, provided technical support during the preparatory and sampling stages.

Background: The Battle Against Corruption in Tanzania

The Government of Tanzania has committed itself to fighting corruption in all spheres of the economy. This commitment has come from both past and current presidents. During the inauguration of the current Parliament, the new president, Honorable Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, made

¹ Zanzibar was slightly oversampled, however any national statistics reported reflect a weighted sample.

it very clear that in strengthening good governance, the problem of corruption will be dealt with relentlessly:

“Serikali ya Awamu ya Nne itatimiza ipasavyo wajibu wake wa utawala na maendeleo, na . . . itaendeleza mapambano dhidi ya rushwa bila ya woga wala kuoneana muhali.”

Speech by Jakaya Kikwete to the Tanzanian Parliament on 30 December 2005

The intensity of the fight against corruption has increased as the corruption problem itself has escalated, particularly in the public sector. The efforts began in 1966, when the government established the Permanent Commission of Enquiry (Ombudsman) to check on the abuse of powers by government officials and agencies. To complement the work of the Commission, in 1971 the Government passed a Prevention of Corruption Act, which enabled the formation of the Anti-Corruption Squad in 1975. In 2001, the Permanent Commission of Inquiry was, through an Act of Parliament, transformed into the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRGG).

As corruption nonetheless worsened, an effort was made to strengthen the Anti-Corruption Squad by transforming it into the Prevention of Corruption Bureau (PCB) under the President’s Office. As the name suggests, PCB was to address itself to preventive measures including, among others, educating the public about the evils of corruption and how to combat it.

President Benjamin William Mkapa came to power in 1995 and was committed to battling corruption. He set up a Presidential Commission of Inquiry Against Corruption in 1996, known as the Warioba Commission, which undertook an in-depth diagnosis of the problem and made extensive recommendations as to how corruption should be prevented and combated. The Warioba Report has become the foundation for the new initiative to combat corruption in the country; as such, corruption has become a major component of the reform initiative in the country.

Under this new approach, the government sought to adopt a coherent strategy, taking a more holistic and integrative approach to tackling corruption. In the late 1990s, the government prepared a framework paper on good governance – the National Framework on Good Governance – in line with the government’s good governance vision contained in Vision 2025. The paper emphasized a government system that was transparent, responsive and accountable, managed by officials who are accountable, efficient, ethical and professional. For implementation purposes, a National Anti-Corruption Strategy was prepared that was to guide all branches of the government in combating corruption. Essentially this entailed mainstreaming anti-corruption activities in the government ministries, departments, agencies and local authorities. Within such framework, each institution was to prepare its own Action Plan. The Action Plans prepared have been termed the National Anti-Corruption Strategy and Action Plan (NACSAP). To ensure effective implementation, the government established a coordinating organ, the Good Governance Coordination Unit, in the President’s Office, and put in place a monitoring system that produces quarterly reports from each Ministerial Department and Agency (MDA). Under this new strategy, many former government employees have lost their jobs (GGCU Quarterly Monitoring Reports).

Government Handling of Corruption in the Public Sector

We can begin by looking at the public’s broad assessment of how well or poorly the government is handling the battle against public sector corruption. In all three surveys, we have asked respondents “How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven’t you heard enough to say: fighting corruption in government.” Overall in 2005 the government gets relatively good marks, with 62% indicating that the government is doing “fairly” or “very well” at this task. This represents a considerable increase over ratings in 2003 and 2001, and negative evaluations of the government have dropped by an even larger margin (“don’t know” responses have increased). Urban and rural respondents have more or less the same responses to the

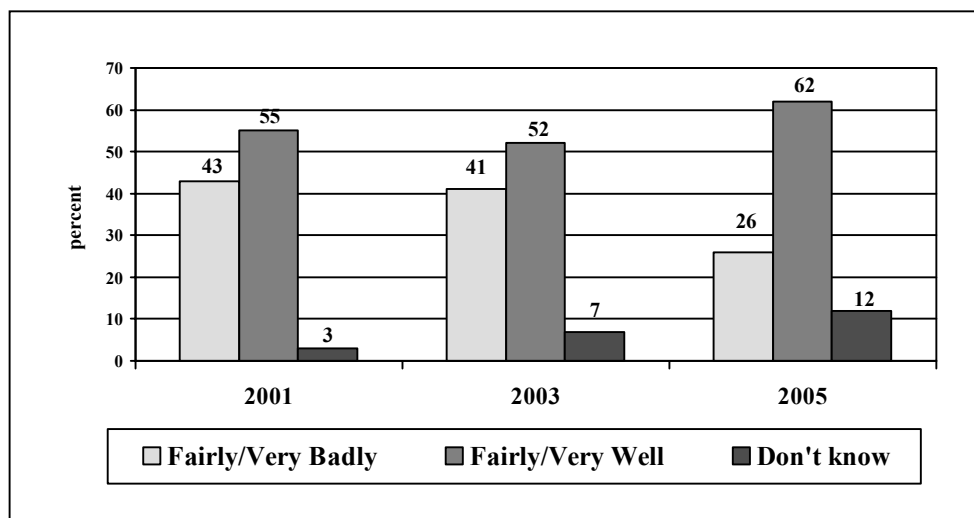
issue (Table 1). Level of education also has little effect, except for the fact that those who have less than a full primary education are less likely to have any opinion on the subject.

Table 1: Government Handling of the Fight Against Corruption

	Urban	Rural	Total
Very badly	17	11	12
Fairly badly	12	15	14
Fairly well	39	35	36
Very well	25	26	26
Don't Know	7	13	12

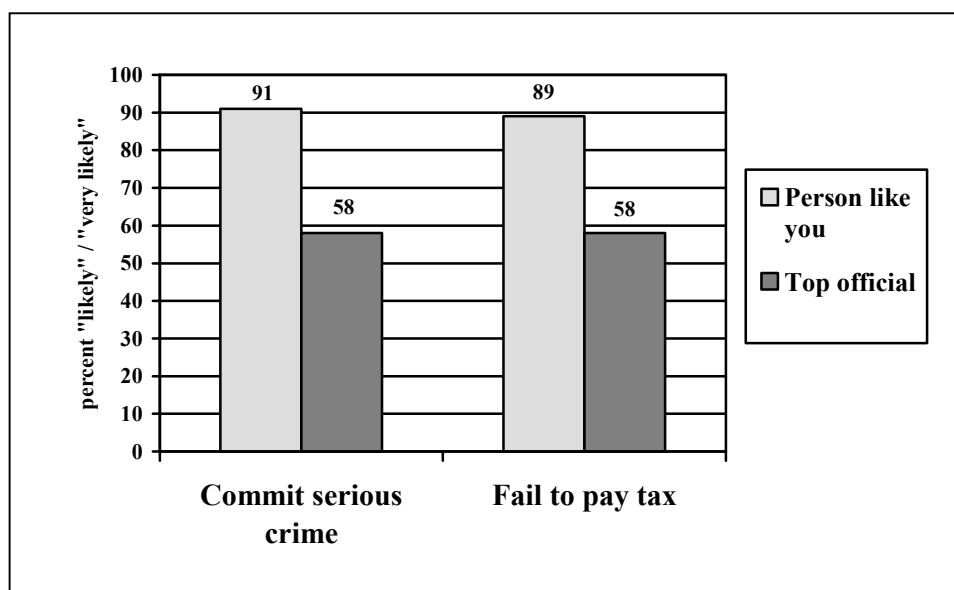
“How well or badly would you say the government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Fighting corruption in government.” (%)

Figure 1: Government Handling of the Fight Against Corruption, 2001-2005



Obviously, one important aspect of fighting corruption is enforcement of the law, and actual punishment for the individuals involved. How well – and how even handedly – do Tanzanians think the government is doing at enforcing the country's laws and holding both leadership and individuals accountable? Overall, Tanzanians think their government is highly capable of tracking down and punishing their own misdeeds. Roughly 90% think that the likelihood of punishment is high if they, or someone like them, commits a serious crime or fails to pay a tax. On the other hand, a considerable number still believe that top government officials may get away with such transgressions. While solid majorities think the government is likely to enforce the law even against the country's leadership, about one-third believe that influential individuals can still get away with flouting the country's laws.

Figure 2: Likelihood of Punishment

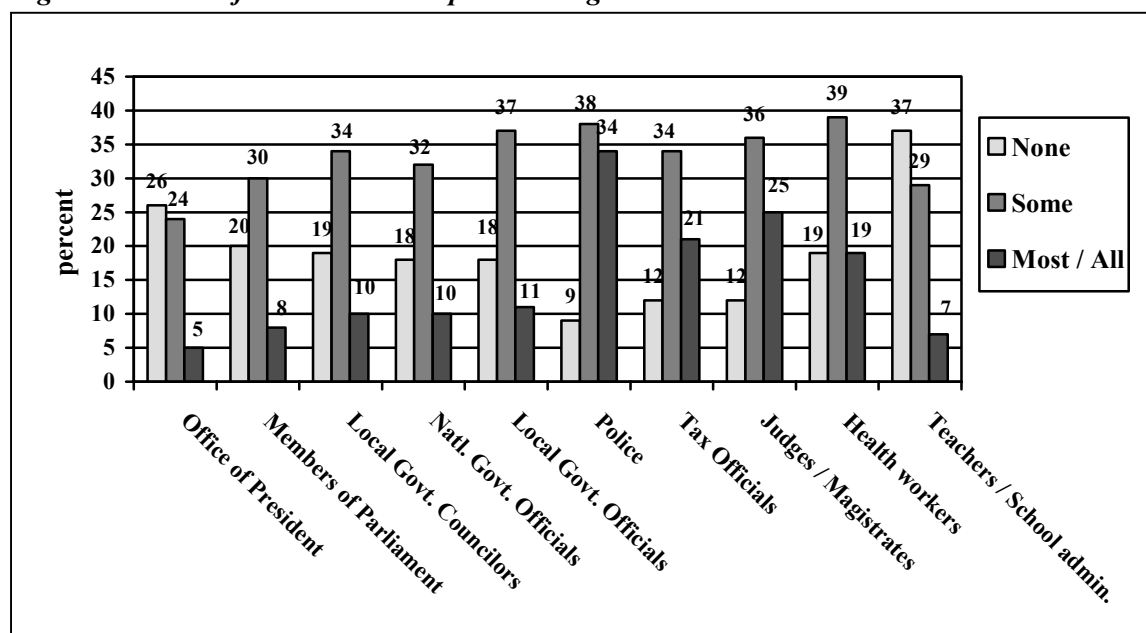


“How likely do you think it would be that the authorities could enforce the law if: a) a top government official committed a serious crime; b) a person like you committed a serious crime; c) a top official did not pay a tax on some of the income they earned; d) a person like you did not pay tax on some of the income they earned.” (percent “likely” or “very likely”)

Perceived Corruption Among Government Leaders and Institutions

Table 2 provides additional evidence that the government’s anti-corruption efforts may be meeting with some success. While we must be cautious in interpreting results because of differences in question wording and response categories, as well as in the individuals and institutions asked about, across the three surveys, it nonetheless appears that public perceptions of the extent of corruption among public officials, while remaining high, have declined noticeably. For example, in 2003, 80% thought that “some,” “most” or “all” police were involved in corrupt practices, but in 2005 this has dropped to 72%. Likewise, in 2003 58% thought some/most/all “elected officials” engaged in corruption, while in 2005 a much lower 38% think MPs are corrupt, and 44% say the same for elected local government councilors. Similar declines are evident in almost all categories.

Figure 3: Extent of Perceived Corruption among Public Servants



Nonetheless, it is obvious that there is still considerable room for improvement when even in the institution with the best rating, the office of the president, it is still true that nearly one-third (29%) of respondents think that at least some of the officials there are corrupt, and more than two-thirds believe this of the police. In this, Tanzanians' views are not different from those in many other developing countries. The Global Corruption Barometer finds that police were rated as the most corrupt institution in 6 out of 8 participating African countries, and they occupy more or less the same position in Central and Eastern European countries. Low rankings for judges and magistrates and for tax officials are also common in many countries around the world (2005: 4). In general, it would appear that – with the exception of teachers and school administrators – it is those officials who have the most contact with citizens in the delivery of services or other interactions with government (e.g., tax collection) that are viewed as most corrupt by the public, while more distant officials such as those in the president's office and MPs are perceived in a somewhat more positive light. Hence the saying, "it takes two to tango."

Table 2: Changes in Extent of Perceived Corruption among Public Servants, 2001-2005

	2005	2003	2001*
Office of the President	29	41	--
Teachers and school administrators	36	45	16****
MPs	38	58**	46**
National government officials	42	67***	62***
Local government councilors	44	58**	46**
Local government officials	48	67***	67***
Tax officials	55	--	--
Health workers	58	--	--
Judges and magistrates	61	71	44****
Police	72	80	80

"How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?"

**For 2003 and 2005, percentages reported are those responding "some of them," "most of them" or "all of them." For 2001, percentage responding "fairly common" or "very common" is reported.*

***In 2003 and 2001, the question asked about "elected leaders, such as parliamentarians or local councilors," rather than about each group separately.*

****In 2003 we asked about "government officials" generally, rather than national and local government officials separately, and in 2001, the question referred instead to "civil servants."*

*****In 2001, the question only asked about "teachers," not "teachers and school administrators," and about "judges," not "judges and magistrates."*

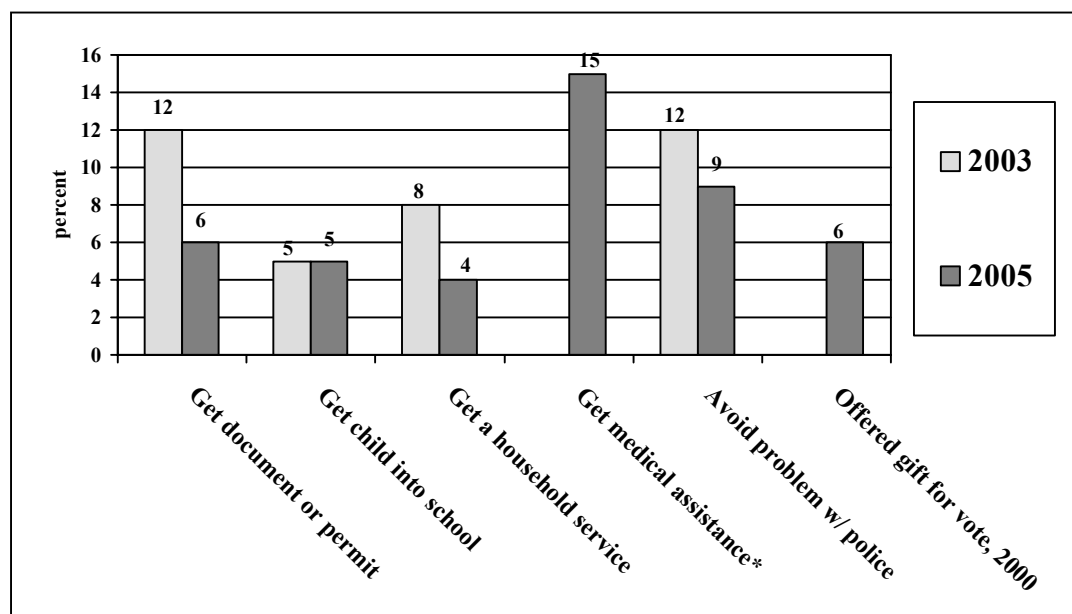
Personal Experiences of Corruption

What underlies these perceptions of corruption, especially with respect to the police? Is it respondents' personal experiences with these individuals and institutions? Or are their views perhaps formed in response to other factors such as popular rumor, media coverage, or donor interest in the issue? To explore whether perceptions are inflated, we asked respondents about their own personal experiences of corrupt practices as they go about their daily lives.

In fact the numbers of those who actually encounter corruption in their own lives are relatively low, and appear to be declining. In 2005, just 6% found themselves offering bribes, gifts or favours in order to obtain a document or permit, just half the number reported in 2003. Similarly, the number offering inducements to obtain a household service dropped from 8% in 2003 to 4% in 2005. All in all, the 2005 survey finds that 23% of all respondents report having to offer gifts, tips or bribes at least once within the past year to get government assistance, and 11% had to do so more than once. Although the shifts between 2003 and 2005 could be explained in terms of the margin of sampling error (+/- 3% in both 2003 and 2005, meaning that only differences larger than 6% indicate a definite shift), the consistency of the trend across four sectors suggests that these figures do in fact reflect an

actual decline in the experience of corruption. This lends further support to the argument that the government’s efforts are in fact having some effect on reducing corruption.

Figure 4: Personal Experience of Corruption, 2003-2005



“In the past year, how often (if ever), have you had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour to government officials in order to: a) Get a document or permit; b) Get a child into school; c) Get a household service (like piped water, electricity or a phone); d) Get medicine or medical attention from a health worker; e) Avoid a problem with the police (like passing a checkpoint or avoiding a fine or arrest)? And during the 2002 election, how often (if ever) did a candidate or someone from a political party offer you something, like food or a gift, in return for your vote?” (% yes, i.e., “once or twice,” “a few times,” or “often”)

**Question not asked in 2003.*

A second set of questions about the quality of education and health services, however, reveals more troubling results. On these questions, 29% report that they have encountered demands for illegal payments at their local clinic or hospital – compared to 15% who say they actually made such payments. The difference suggests that perhaps Tanzanians are also feeling increasingly empowered to resist such demands. Schools fare better, as just 11% were faced with demands for illegal payments. Just 5% actually went along with such demands specifically to obtain a placement for their child (though payments for other school-related requests, e.g., for passing marks, etc., were not asked about).

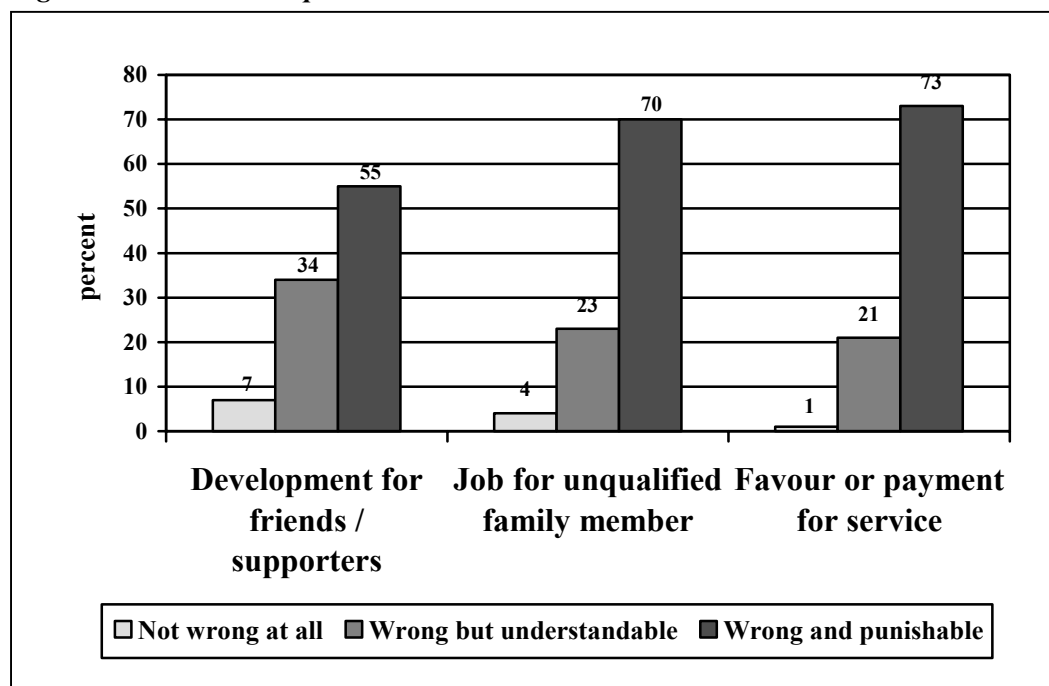
Tanzanians’ think that their politicians are actively engaged in corrupt electoral practices, with 48% reporting that they think politicians “offer gifts to voters during election campaigns” either “often” or “always.” But in fact just 6% say that they were actually offered such inducements during the run-up to the 2000 national elections.

What is “Corrupt”?

Where do Tanzanians actually draw the line when considering what behaviors on the part of public officials are corrupt? Is it true, as some contend, that practices that the international community might deem corrupt are seen by Tanzanians as acceptable cultural practices, e.g., of “gift giving”? Or is the definition of corruption more global? To answer these questions, it is useful to take a brief look at how our respondents define corrupt practices. We asked about three different potential acts by government officials, and whether respondents considered the acts “not wrong at all,” “wrong but understandable,” or “wrong and punishable.”

Tanzanians are most tolerant of a public official who “decides to locate a development project in an area where his friends and supporters lived.” Just 8% think such actions are permissible, but another 33% thinks that although wrong, they are “understandable,” and hence should not be punished. But even in this case, a majority (55%) finds the act not just wrong, but punishable. Even fewer accept the behaviour of a public official who “gives a job to someone from his family who does not have adequate qualifications”: 70% consider this a punishable action. And nearly three-quarters (73%) of all respondents think that an official who “demands a favour or an additional payment for some service that is part of his job” is violating his responsibility to the public. Clearly, Tanzanians for the most part share international perceptions of how public officials are supposed to behave in executing their responsibilities. Traditional cultural practices, whether of gift giving or other varieties, do not, in the eyes of the Tanzanian public, entitle government officials to take advantage of them.

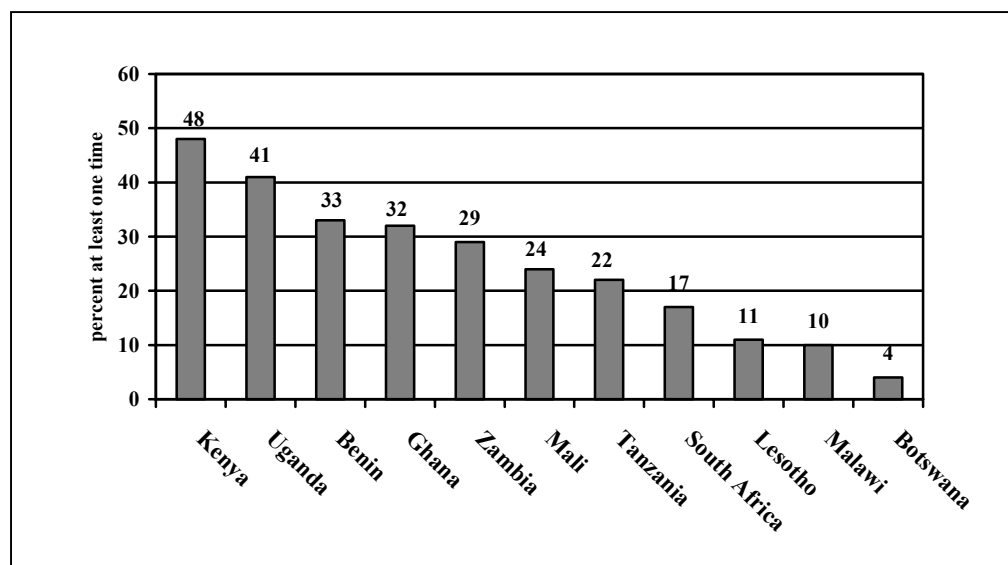
Figure 5: What is Corrupt?



Tanzania in Comparative Perspective

Finally, how do perceptions and experiences of corruption and the government’s handling of it in Tanzania compare to other countries in Africa? We currently have data from recent Afrobarometer surveys in ten other countries. Overall, Tanzania fares relatively well in comparison to others. For example, as mentioned, 22% of Tanzanians have had to pay a bribe at least once in the past year to obtain basic government services. This falls just below the mean across the other ten countries of 25% (Figure 6).

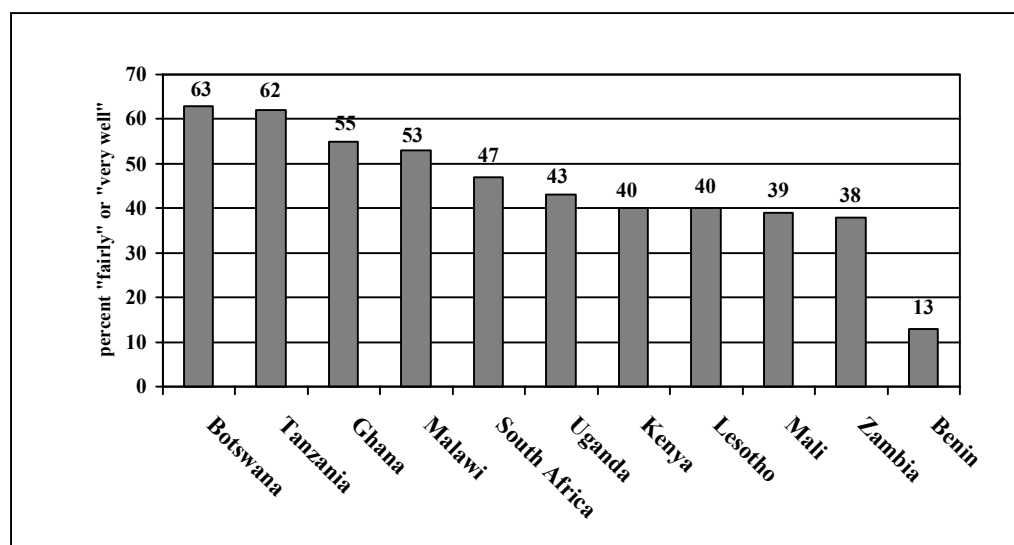
Figure 6: Personal Experience of Corruption, across Countries



% who had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour to government officials at least once in the past year to obtain services indicated in Figure 3.

Moreover, Tanzanians give their government one of the highest ratings for its performance in battling corruption, as shown in Figure 7.

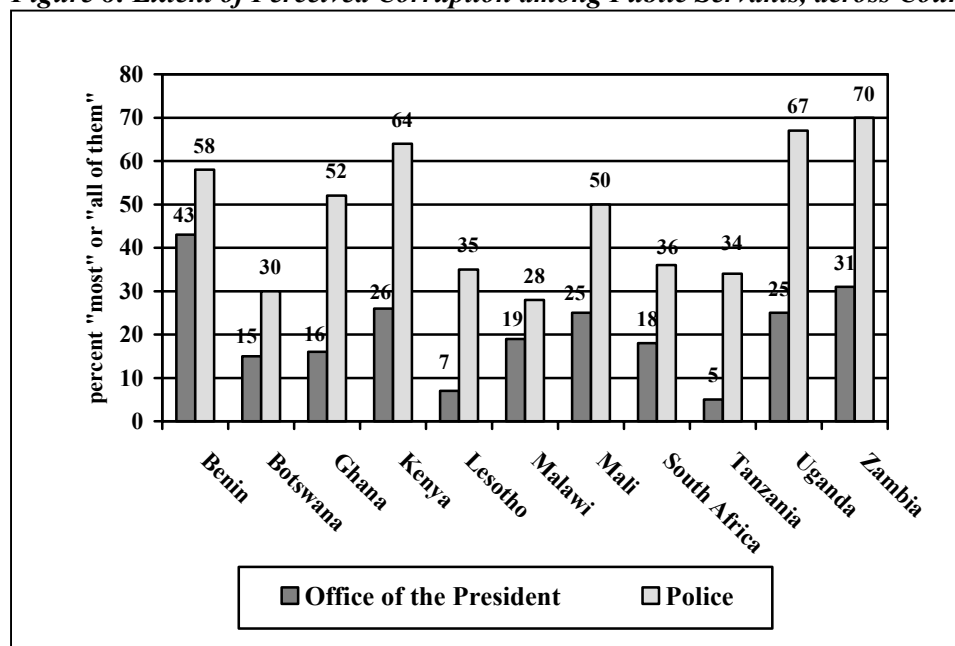
Figure 7: Government Handling of Corruption, across Countries



"How well or badly would you say the government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Fighting corruption in government." (% "fairly" or "very well")

Finally, comparing perceived corruption levels just for officials in the Office of the President, as well as police, we see that Tanzanians' perceptions of the behavior of their president and officials in his office are better than in all of the other countries (Figure 8). Just 5% think that most or all of these officials are corrupt, compared to a mean across the other 10 countries of 23%. Levels of perceived corruption with the country's police force, while less exceptional, also fall well below the mean for the other 10 countries of 49%.

Figure 8: Extent of Perceived Corruption among Public Servants, across Countries



“How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven’t you heard enough about them to say: a) The President and Officials in his office; b) The police?” (% “Most of them” or “All of them”)

Synthesis

Overall, these findings suggest that while Tanzania still has far to go in combating corruption, particularly among the police, tax officials, the judiciary, and health workers, the country is making some gains under its new comprehensive strategy. The public is giving the government better marks for its handling of the problem now than in the past, and perceptions of the extent of corruption, while still quite high, are clearly on the decline. It also appears that actual individual experiences with corruption may be on decreasing as well.

It is worth noting, however, that while corruption is an issue of great concern to the international community, this battle is given fairly low priority by Tanzanians themselves. When asked to identify up to three of the country’s most important problems that the government should address, just 3% of all responses named corruption as a priority problem. It thus falls ninth on the list of Tanzanians’ priorities, well behind water supply (15%), health (14%) and infrastructure and roads (12%).

The public perception that corruption is declining identified in this Afrobarometer survey is corroborated by other external observations. The World Bank Institute’s governance indicators, which look at changes in the quality of governance in Africa from 1996 to 2004 with respect to control of corruption, voice and accountability, and governance effectiveness, place Tanzania among countries that have experienced significant improvements. In addition, the country’s score on Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) has improved from 2.5 in 2003 to 2.9 in 2005.

Thus, the government may indeed be on the right track in tackling this vexing issue. If President Kikwete can maintain his commitment to this issue, the country can hope to see still further improvements in future.

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This Briefing Paper was prepared by REPOA.

The Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists from 18 African countries. Coordination is provided by Wilsken Agencies, Ltd. in Uganda, the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa), the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) and Michigan State University. REPOA should like to thank Wilsken Agencies, Ltd. and Michigan State University for their technical support during the third Afrobarometer survey (2005) in Tanzania. Several donors support the Afrobarometer's research, capacity building and outreach activities, including the UK Department for International Development (DFID), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). REPOA thanks DFID and USAID for financial support in Tanzania. For more information, see: www.afrobarometer.org.