

## I.

# The Meaning of Governance: Ranking Africa

All citizens of all countries desire to be governed well. That is what citizens want from the nation-states in which they live. Thus, nation-states in the modern world are responsible for the delivery of essential political goods to their inhabitants. That is their purpose, and has been their central legitimate justification since at least the seventeenth century. The essential political goods can be summarized and gathered under five categories: Safety and Security; Rule of Law, Transparency, and Corruption; Participation and Human Rights; Sustainable Economic Opportunity; and Human Development. Together, these five categories of political goods epitomize the performance of any government, at any level. No one, whether looking to her village, municipality, province, state, or nation, willingly wants to be victimized by crime or to live in a society without laws, freedom, the chance to prosper, or access to decent schools, well-run hospitals, and well-maintained roads.

This 2008 Index measures the degree to which each of these political goods is provided within the forty-eight African countries south of the Sahara. By comprehensively measuring the performance of government in this manner, that is, by measuring governance, the Index is able to offer a report card on the accomplishments of each government for the years being investigated—2000 and 2002 (for baseline indications) and 2005 and 2006 (the last years with reasonably complete available data for nearly all sub-Saharan African nation-states).

The Index is updated annually. Additionally, the sources of information for the indicators used in our Index are also updated constantly, both through our own efforts and through the efforts of other projects. Thus, in each year, we employ the best available data. Unlike many other projects, we also update the Index backward in each year, using all of this new information so that comparisons over time can be made. This allows the Index to be used to demonstrate how each of the forty-eight countries has shown progress or has slipped backward.

### **Categories and Sub-Categories**

This Index provides more than an overall ranking of countries. Within each of its five measurement categories, separate evaluations and report cards concerning the attainments of each of the forty-eight countries within each category are offered. Further, within each category there are sub-categories, which can again be compared, country against country. Under each sub-category are additional sub-sub-categories or indicators. The Index is,

The Ibrahim Index of African Governance is a project of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation. This publication was created and prepared under the auspices of the Kennedy School of Government's Program on Intrastate Conflict and Conflict Resolution under the direction of Robert I. Rotberg and Rachel M. Gisselquist.

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therefore, composed of fifty-seven separate markers capturing the performance of individual countries.

For example, Security is divided into two sub-categories. One is National Security—the degree to which a national government holds an internal monopoly on the use of force and no insurgent groups threaten that monopoly. All forty-eight countries can be compared, for example, according to National Security by showing their casualty numbers in civil wars. Kilometers of paved roads per 1,000 people is another example of a result that is capable of being arrayed across all nation-states, this time as one of the measurement areas (a sub-sub-category) within Arteries of Commerce, a sub-category under Sustainable Economic Opportunity.

### **Diagnostic Utility**

This method of measuring performance, as expressed meticulously in the Index, is explicitly diagnostic. It permits citizens (and civil society), country by country, to appreciate how the attainments of their governments compare to neighboring and other African governments. It permits governing authorities to make the same comparisons. In each, the numbers enable citizens, government, donors, and international organizations to visualize the areas that need improvement or at least more attention. If crime rates, for example, reduce a nation-state's score on the Security category, then enhancing Public Safety would be wise.

The makers of this Index, now in its second iteration, also note the lack of timely information available for assessing some important areas of governance—information that is either not collected regularly internationally or locally at all, or, for some reason, is not made available to the public by the nation-states themselves.

### **Objectivity and Outcomes**

In selecting measures of governance, the Index strives for transparency and simplicity. Thus, unlike other such indexes, it is not based exclusively on perceptions or the judgments of experts. Such data are often difficult to verify against any standard metric, and reasonable people may differ markedly in their perceptions and judgments. Instead, insofar as possible, the Index reflects objective data—the hard numbers available on each country. In the absence of such numbers, it seeks to use “objectively measured” data—systematically derived scores that could be replicated by other researchers following the same approach. Moreover, the Index measures outcomes, not inputs. That is, it asks under each heading: What has a government achieved? How well has it performed? It does not measure good intentions or official financial budgetary promises—both inputs that may or may not result in appropriate performance. In other words, it does not

concern the Index if a nation is spending high or low levels of budgeted outlays on, say, health services. The Index prefers to know what results have come from those expenditures. Have citizens benefited? Have their health outcomes improved, as measured by maternal mortality rates or by, say, access to clean water?

The makers of the Index realize that factors beyond government action in a specific year may affect the outcomes measured. That is why the Index provides more than single indicator assessments of the performance of African countries. That is why the Index is updated annually, to track changes over time. Conceivably, national resource factor endowments and baseline GDP compilations should be used to disaggregate our forty-eight African cases for purposes of ranking, in addition to the overall ranking method that we adopted in the 2007 Index of African Governance. However, we still need to compare the attainments of all countries in sub-Saharan Africa against their peers, irrespective of their wealth or size, or of other factors that might arguably affect the performance of their governments.

### **Underlying Epistemology**

Methodologically, we are aware that our definition of governance plows new ground. Many economists prefer to limit governance to rule of law and participation (broadly conceived), and argue against using all of our five categories to measure governmental delivery of services (political goods) and to equate that delivery with governance. They argue, further, that the causal relationship between the actions of governments in power and all of the indicators that we include is problematic; outcomes may be caused by the actions of previous governments, underlying resource endowments, levels of wealth, ethnic heterogeneity, and so on.

We argue, however, that our attention must be focused on *citizens*, and citizens tend to measure governmental performance in the manner that we do. A variety of factors in addition to government policy may contribute to governance outcomes, but citizens nevertheless have a right to expect their governments to adjust accordingly, to provide at least a minimum level of political goods in their countries. They can and should hold their governments to account for providing security, rule of law, economic opportunity, educational opportunities, health care, and social safety nets. They can and should expect to participate in government and to have their basic rights respected by their governments. Thus, to decide whether governments in Africa are fulfilling their full responsibilities, we need to extend our measurement of outputs to include all five of our categories, and the sub-sub-categories (indicators) that compose those five categories.

We are aware that governmental actors do not constitute the only determination of some of our outputs. In the human development area, in particular, other factors in addition to

governmental attention and action clearly influence literacy, school persistence, child mortality, and so on. But governments do play a major role and have an influence that we attempt to capture. We see our Index as a useful guideline that other scholars might employ to examine these factors further. Indeed, as many scholars know, there are complex processes behind each and every indicator, in each and every country, in each and every year.

Because this Index represents a methodological departure from other attempts to measure governance, especially for Africa, and because it contains many entries and embodies such conceptual complexity, the Index represents a work in progress. The makers of the Index hence will welcome all suggestions and constructive criticisms. The ultimate goal of the Index and the efforts of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government are to bring governance out of the closet—to strengthen governance in Africa in order to improve the lives of Africans everywhere.

### **Index Contents**

This 2008 Index has three main sections. The first section gives the overall 2006 country rankings and scores for each of Africa's forty-eight nation-states, along with an essay describing those rankings. Those scores comprise the average sum of the five categories by which governance is measured, on a 0–100 scale. Rankings follow straightforwardly from the scores; the country ranked first has the highest score, and the country ranked last has the lowest score. Rankings are provided for ease of comparison, but should always be read along with the country scores, which provide important information about the magnitude of differences in performance between countries, some of which may be virtually indistinguishable.

The overall scores for 2000, 2002, and 2005 and overall category scores for 2006 are also presented and described in this first section of the report. In addition, this first section includes two additional essays regarding the Index's methodology and its approach in comparison to that of other projects.

The next section, divided into five sub-sections (one for each category), gives the rankings for the same years across each of the five categories in turn. Each category is explained in a detailed introduction, which is followed by a display of the results in each category, listed in ranked order and alphabetically for the years 2000, 2002, 2005, and 2006. Additional tables at the beginning of each sub-section provide the comprehensive statistics ("raw" data and Index scores) for 2006, showing all major and minor categories (sub-categories and sub-sub-categories) and illustrating the calculation of the category score.

The remaining pages in each sub-section focus on each sub-sub-category (indicator) in turn. For each indicator, there is a descriptive note and table providing comprehensive statistics and scores for 2000, 2002, 2005, and 2006. Descriptive notes range from one to eleven pages, and provide detailed information and discussion about the sources of our data, methods, and specific points. Our aim is to be fully transparent.

In several sub-sections, we include selected “researcher’s reports,” which are descriptive notes prepared by our researchers as background material for the Index. Most of the researcher’s reports in this year’s Index present additional research on our indicators—on small arms, inequality, and the measurement of corruption. An additional researcher’s report included in the Human Development category focuses on tertiary education, discussing data we chose not to include in this year’s Index.

This Index is the fruit of a partnership between the Program on Intrastate Conflict of the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation. It has been greatly strengthened by consultations with members of our Index Advisory Council and with the Board of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation.

The makers of the Index have also benefited from and are very grateful for the collaborative assistance that we have received from several divisions of the World Bank, UNDP, Transparency International, the Economist Intelligence Unit, the Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) Human Rights Data Project, the trustees of the World Peace Foundation, and the Harvard University Library. A fuller list of warm acknowledgments is contained in an additional paper under that title.