

**Anti Corruption Conventions in Africa: What Civil Society can do to make them work, A Civil Society Advocacy Guide by Transparency International, Transparency International, Germany, 2006 ISBN 3-935711-14-X, pp vii + 119**

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Corruption has been undermining countries in Africa economically, politically and socially for decades and the anti-corruptions that have been introduced in the last few years offer a real opportunity for change. Binding international frameworks are key to addressing the problem. Experience in Africa teaches that civil society organizations have a key role to play in promoting anti-corruption conventions in all phases from negotiation to follow-up reviews. Civil society groups can press their governments to give priority to convention ratification and implementation through research, analysis and advocacy work. They can help translate the off-putting legal terminology of conventions into language non-lawyers can understand and can explain to the public the usefulness of these conventions for addressing the corruption problem. They can keep track of their government's performance and make it public, adding an important independent perspective to the government's own assessment of its progress. Where they find deficiencies they can campaign for improvement, in coalition with supporters in government and the private sector. The more groups engaged in these activities, the stronger and more effective anti-corruption conventions and anti-corruption efforts in general are likely to be. Transparency International (TI), the leading global civil society organization devoted to the fight against corruption, has been actively engaged since its founding in 1993 in promoting the development, ratification, implementation and monitoring of international anti-corruption conventions and other international instruments. In particular, TI and its national chapters in Africa have played an active role in advancing the two main anti-corruption conventions in Africa. This publication is the outcome of the several studies carried out by TI and its partners in Africa. This publication focuses on the two principal treaties in Africa, the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption and Related Offences (2003, AU Convention) and the United Nations Convention against Corruption (2003, UN Convention or UNCAC).

The publication brings out very clearly as to why does corruption matter. According the study, corruption violates human rights, undermines representative democracy, acts as a barrier to economic development, becomes the cause of environmental damage, and promotes organized crime. A case for international cooperation among African countries has been made to thwart corruption based on the experience of Angola and Nigeria, Benin and Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Lesotho, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda. The study points out that anti-corruption conventions in Africa have been a very forceful antidote to corruption in these countries. The anti-corruption conventions have provided a framework for addressing cross-border issues. They have facilitated international cooperation in law enforcement by requiring countries to make the same conduct illegal, harmonizing the legal and institutional frameworks for law enforcements and establishing cooperative mechanisms. Unlike other continents, there have been multiple protocols on anti-corruption in Africa because such protocols represented a piecemeal approach. The two anti-corruption conventions under reference covered anti-corruption policies and practices, preventive anti-corruption body or bodies, public sector ethics and procedures, public procurement, public sector finance, public reporting, access to information, whistleblower protection, public education, private sector standards, including

accounting and auditing standards, and money laundering. The two conventions also provided for punitive measures in relation to bribery of national public sector officials, bribery of foreign public sector officials, embezzlement and misappropriation or diversion of entrusted property by a public official and abuse of functions of a public official to induce the performance an unlawful act. The volume incorporates the highlights of the AU convention in terms of the obligations of parties through preventive measures, international cooperation and follow-up mechanism. Stating the highlights of the UN convention, the book states the obligations to be met through preventive measures, non-occurrence of criminalization, international cooperation, asset recovery framework, technical assistance and information exchange, and implementation mechanism. The provisions that may curb corruption in private sector also form a part of the obligations. The book contains details of useful web links and reading material that has come out in the form of papers, published books, and reports. The book is a welcome addition on literature on anti-corruption especially pertaining to Africa – much less known continent in terms of published literature on anti-corruption. The case studies and the operative part of the various conventions on anti-corruption in Africa constitute the other high points of the volume. The book is more informative and lacks the desired research orientation as it provides ‘one-size fits all’ solution for the complex problem of corruption in Africa which has different socio-politico and cultural nuances. However, on the whole, the volume makes an interesting reading and raises the inquisitiveness of the reader on the African approach to handle anti-corruption.

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