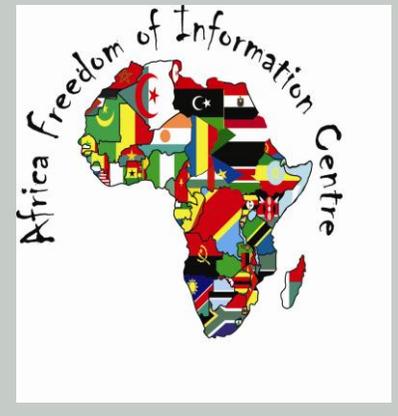


# POLICY ANALYSIS

JULY 2015, ISSUE 1



## FOCUSING ON THE VITAL ISSUES AT THE G20: ACCESS TO INFORMATION FIGHTS CORRUPTION WHICH IN TURN REDUCES POVERTY

Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe will represent Africa, through the African Union (AU) at the next summit of the Group of Twenty (G20). Mugabe has been accused of political intolerance; arresting human rights defenders, muzzling free speech and freedom of expression.<sup>i</sup> Meanwhile some sections of the African media, have presented Mugabe's role as a great victory for the continent and a further step in its total liberation, economic as well as political.<sup>ii</sup>

While the issues being raised regarding Mugabe's chairmanship and role at the AU are important, it would be imperative not to then lose focus on other dire issues that can make an impact on the lives of African citizens; for instance; citizen's access to information (ATI) to combat corruption.

A significant discussion for the G20 summit should be Africa's biggest challenge; corruption.<sup>iii</sup> The African Freedom of Information Centre has

revealed that corruption is spurred by a poor access to information for African citizens.<sup>iv</sup>

Corruption across the African continent is rife partially due to a failure to implement or create mechanisms that foster accountability and transparency; fundamental to fighting the vice. Accountability, or the lack thereof in Africa, has gravely hampered G20 development goals, particularly poverty reduction.<sup>v</sup>

## Recommendation

African representatives at the G20 more so on the Anti-Corruption Working Group (ACWG), should be focused on promoting access to information at a national level



THE DISCUSSION FOR THE G20 SUMMIT S SHOULD BE  
AFRICA'S BIGGEST CHALLENGE; CORRUPTION

“It is therefore the duty of Africa’s representatives to drive the African anti-corruption agenda via access to information as one of the very possible means to achieve African development.”

The G20 has an agenda with considerable relevance to corruption in Africa mainly through the Anti-Corruption Working Group (ACWG) established by G20 Leaders at the Toronto Summit in 2010.<sup>vi</sup> However, the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group (ACWG) has not quite comprehended that access to information is vital to combating corruption.

While the work of the ACWG has been guided by commitments by G20 countries to ratify and implement the United Nations Convention against Corruption, The ACWG should also encourage African states to ratify, domesticate and implement regional access to information treaties. Robust

implementation ATI policies have the potential to reduce corruption, which in turn enables poverty reduction and ultimately spurs development.

The African Union Commission should also establish a G20 coordinating committee to represent Africa at the G20. It could work with other relevant organizations, such as NEPAD and the African Development Bank all of which have policies directed towards implementing Anti-Corruption. Pragmatically, these committees should not only include anti-corruption experts but also freedom of information experts as well; to provide guidance.

Turkey has now taken over the presidency of the G20 and is expected

pay attention to Africa's interests. <sup>vii</sup>

This would however, be indirectly through Turkey's already stated priority of 'buttressing sustainability,' which focuses on development of the low-income developing countries – 24 of which are in Africa.

If the Turkish's G20 presidency agenda is anything to go by, access to information is not on the foreseeable agenda. It is therefore the duty of Africa's representatives to drive the African anti-corruption agenda via



access to information as one of the very possible means to achieve African development.

“The G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group (ACWG) has not quite comprehended that access to information is vital to combating corruption”

“Corruption across the African continent is rife partially due to a failure to implement or create access to information (ATI) mechanisms which are fundamental to fighting the vice. ATI can ignite transparency, which in turn reduces the ability to engage in corruption.”

## END NOTES

### Website links:

- i. Mugabe to be AU Chairperson <http://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/Mugabe-to-be-AU-chairperson-but-there-are-questions-20150430>
- ii. What Mugabe is up to <http://newafricanmagazine.com/african-union-will-mugabe/>
- iii. Corruption <http://www.thelondoneveningpost.com/africa/corruption-remains-africas-biggest-challenge/>
- iv. State of Right to Information in Africa <http://www.africafoicentre.org/index.php/resources/reports-publications/139-state-of-right-to-information-in-africa-report-2014>
- v. Transparency in Africa <http://www.one.org/us/press/the-g20-fail-to-bring-full-transparency-to-the-fight-against-global-corruption-and-tax-evasion/>
- vi. G20 Plan [http://star.worldbank.org/star/sites/star/files/g20\\_acwg\\_2015-16\\_anti-corruption\\_implementation\\_plan\\_australia\\_2014.pdf](http://star.worldbank.org/star/sites/star/files/g20_acwg_2015-16_anti-corruption_implementation_plan_australia_2014.pdf)
- vii. TurkeyG20 Plans <https://g20.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/2015-TURKEY-G-20-PRESIDENCY-FINAL.pdf>

## ABOUT AFIC

AFIC is a pan–African network and resource centre consisting of 35 civil society organizations in 22 African countries, promoting access to information in Africa through comparative research, coordinating regional advocacy, facilitating information-sharing and capacity building. AFIC promotes democratic rule and socio-economic justice for African citizens through fostering a culture of increased transparency, integrity and accountability among governments, regional and international bodies.

In authoring this policy brief, AFIC intends to support efforts geared toward the promotion of the right to information in Africa. This policy brief intends to effectively advocate for freedom of information in Africa.



AFIC is grateful for support from the following partners who have supported AFIC in promoting access to information across Africa.

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