

# How to combat corruption?

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Initiated by WATHI, the West Africa citizen think tank, the first debate of 2016 (January/February) was about the fight against corruption. WATHI5 presents five recommendations in order to guide collective action to reduce the extent of corruption in the countries of the region.

## OBSERVATIONS

- ✔ Both the cause and the consequence of bad governance and weak institutions, corruption is a costly scourge that does not seem to spare any country of the WATHI zone.
- ✔ Despite the feeling of powerlessness that corruption creates among populations, there is no reason to see it as a fatality.
- ✔ Corruption is not specific to a region or a culture in particular. It is primarily the result of political, administrative, economic, and social systems that encourage it. These systems can be changed.

## AVENUES FOR ACTION

- 1** Recruit civil servants at the most corruption-prone positions on the basis not only of their competence but also their presumed integrity and establish a human resources management policy based on incentive measures
- 2** Undertake a review of the vulnerability of public institutions to corruption and, on this basis, strengthen the transparency of decision-making processes and the effectiveness of administrative, financial, and accounting procedures
- 3** Generalize, in all countries of the region, information systems that will allow any citizen victim or witness to denounce allegations of corruption and contribute directly to the work of the national anti-corruption institutions
- 4** Change the attitude of the people regarding corruption through the introduction or reintroduction of civic and moral education in school curricula, regular seminars on ethics for civil servants, and public information campaigns on the economic, political, social and cultural consequences of corruption
- 5** Promote the training of investigative journalists and implement legal frameworks for the protection of journalists and whistleblowers

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

- ✔ Analyze the costs and potential benefits of the different forms of corruption that exist in each country to identify the most harmful forms, which should be addressed primarily.
- ✔ Let's not forget that anti-corruption measures create financial, economic and political costs that must be analyzed and compared to the benefits of a reduction of the level of corruption in order to choose the most appropriate reforms to be implemented at a given time.
- ✔ Identify the categories of actors who benefit most directly and indirectly from corruption in each sector in each country, anticipate their actions aiming to block anti-corruption measures and consider realistic options to overcome the deliberate obstruction
- ✔ Seek political support for the fight against corruption by mobilizing categories of actors and the population who would benefit the most from a reduction in corruption, and highlighting the political benefits that some policy makers could derive from their support to this fight
- ✔ Establish, or strengthen where they already exist, national anti-corruption institutions, ideally under the constitutional texts, inspired by anti-corruption agencies which have proven their effectiveness in the definition of their specific missions, internal organization, and relation to political and judicial powers.
- ✔ Create a large informal coalition of organizations and citizens committed to the fight against corruption in each country and an informal network at the regional level to exchange information, learn from the experiences of different countries, develop and compare strategies to make them more effective

The ultimate goal of an anti-corruption strategy should be to change behaviors and attitudes so as to create a collective climate that will be hostile to corruption. For the countries of the WATHI zone, where corruption is both widespread and largely publicly denounced by all citizens, WATHI<sup>5</sup> suggests avenues to initiate a decisive and realistic collective action.

You can send your comments, reactions, recommendations to refine the proposals and the means to implement them to the following address: [ledebat@wathi.org](mailto:ledebat@wathi.org)

### WATHI

WATHI, the West Africa citizen think tank, is a participative and multidisciplinary think tank which aims to contribute to the sharing of knowledge and the production of ideas on the crucial political, economic, social and cultural issues for the present and the future of the countries of West Africa.

The geographical area of WATHI includes 15 countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as well as Cameroon, Chad and Mauritania. Freely inspired by «waati», which means «time» in Bamanankan language of Mali, WATHI expresses both the urgency of a collective mobilization and the need for long-term commitment.



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