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## **Africa in a league all of its own when corruption is the barometer**

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Reuters

AFRICA is the most corrupt continent in the world, with Chad the worst offender and Botswana its cleanest country, according to Transparency International.

The watchdog organisation says that out of 44 African nations covered in its 2005 corruption perceptions index, 31 of them scored less than three — “a sign of rampant corruption” — on a scale of zero to 10.

“Africa is the continent with the lowest average in the index,” it says, confirming widespread perceptions that the world’s poorest continent is also its most graft ridden.

Topping an expanded list on Africa this year as the most corrupt country in the continent — and the world — was Chad. It was followed by Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea and Côte d’Ivoire, all with scores of under two.

The continent’s least corrupt nation is Botswana, with a score of 5,9, followed by Tunisia, SA, Namibia and Mauritius.

Botswana makes the list of the top 20% of countries considered to be least corrupt. It is also ranked as the least corrupt middle income country in the world.

Tunisia scores 4,9, SA 4,5, Namibia 4,3 and Mauritius 4,2.

The list is closely watched by an international community that is increasingly impatient for improved governance and less graft in Africa in return for aid and debt relief.

Regional expert Richard Dowden notes that three of the four African countries scoring worst are oil producers, which indicates that not only locals are involved in the corruption and kickback trade.

“We shouldn’t just shrug our shoulders at this. Western oil companies should

be held to account as well," says Dowden, director of the British-based Royal African Society.

But the main responsibility for change is among Africa's ruling elites, he says. "The prime changes have to happen in Africa itself but it does seem to be getting worse."

Transparency International, which bases the list on perceptions of businessmen and analysts, urges the government of President Idriss Deby in Chad to follow up reports of corruption.

"The country is marked by political instability, human rights abuses and weak press freedom," the body says.

Transparency International says extensive research shows that foreign investment is lower in countries perceived to be corrupt, which further thwarts their chance to prosper.

When countries improve governance and reduce corruption, they reap a "development dividend" that, according to the World Bank Institute, can include improved child mortality rates, higher per capita income and greater literacy.

Despite its poor showing, Nigeria is singled out as Africa's most improved state, up from a score of 1,6 in 2004 to 1,9 now, thanks to a re-energised government anticorruption campaign.

At the launch of the corruption index in London, the watchdog's CE, David Nussbaum, says Nigeria's case shows the war against corruption is "a long haul — and not a quick silver bullet fix".

"It is encouraging that a poor and developing country can change its score and its ranking in our index," he says.

The index was released simultaneously in various capitals around the world, including Nairobi.

Burundi and Liberia appeared on the list for the first time, with low scores of 2,3 and 2,2 respectively reflecting their civil wars, Transparency International says.

"In the absence of real peace and security, the fight against corruption is an enormous challenge," the report says.

Kenya, which has been lashed for tolerating corruption by former colonial power Britain and superpower the US, had an unchanged score of 2,1, ranking it one of the worst in Africa and a dismal 144th of 158 nations around the globe.

(Additional reporting by Gideon Long in London and Guled Mohamed in Nairobi)

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