

Institutions Matter: Progress, Divergence and Democratic Resilience in Africa

This Evidence Brief presents a summary of the findings presented in Integrity Narratives 2026, the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP)'s flagship report on Round 13 of the Africa Integrity Indicators (All). Round 13 of the All assessed in-practice aspects across 58 indicators and its study period covered events which occurred between September 2023 and June 2025.

“Africa's governance problem is no longer missing institutions but institutions that do not work in practice”

Integrity Narratives 2026

Round 13 of the Africa Integrity Indicators in Context

African countries have made various continental governance commitments, including Agenda 2063, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), the African Governance Architecture (AGA), the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), and the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC), and most countries have domesticated these commitments into their constitutions and laws. However, most countries struggle with the implementation.

The All assess this gap by examining how institutions work in practice. The evidence is generated by more than 120 in-country researchers, specialists and thematic experts, and it is validated through double-blind peer review.

Between Round 2 (2014) and Round 6 (2018), the All dataset evaluated both the in-law and in-practice aspects of corruption and governance. The in-law aspect looked at the provisions of existing laws of countries, while in-practice explored what actually pertains on the ground. However, the need to focus on the practical experience became increasingly relevant over the years, resulting in a shift to focus mainly on the in-practice aspects of governance, starting from Round 7 (2019).¹ In 2024, an in-depth reformulation of the indicators resulted in the removal of two indicators^{2,3}, the addition of 6 new indicators and the reformulation of another 6 indicators. This resulted in a total of 58 indicators in the Round 13 (2025) dataset. Furthermore, the frequency of the

dataset release was changed from annually to biennially. With the change to a biennial release, the study period also changed. From Round 2 to Round 12, data were released annually, and each round covered September of one year to September of the next as a study period; Round 12, for example, covered September 2022 to September 2023. The study period for Round 13 covers from September 2023 to June 2025, continuing directly from the end of Round 12, and its data were collected between 2025 and 2026.

Furthermore, the inclusion of the Sahrawi Republic brought coverage to all 55 African Union (AU) member states for the first time. The newly introduced indicators assess national debt transparency, protection of immigrants from discrimination based on their nationalities, youth and disability representation in cabinet, passport access, and efforts to counter misinformation and disinformation. Thus, Round 13 is the first to have been run fully under AFIDEP's revised framework.

The period between September 2023 and June 2025 was turbulent. More than 20 national elections occurred, there were military-led transitions in Niger, Burkina Faso and Gabon, war in Sudan, contested authority in Libya and youth-led protests in Kenya. At the same time, falling development assistance and rising debt pressures have sharpened calls for self-reliance, debt justice, and transparent management of natural resources, including critical minerals.

¹ The analysis for this report focused exclusively on in-practice indicators from 2014 to 2025.

² Indicator 66: In practice, corporations observe labour laws and recognise and uphold human rights.

³ Indicator 97: In practice, there is a functioning safety monitoring system for air transport.



The Methodology of the Africa Integrity Indicators

The Africa Integrity Indicators (All) comprise 58 indicators grouped into Transparency and Accountability (32 indicators), and Social Development (26 indicators). Each indicator has three elements: a score, an explanatory comment and the sources that support them. Scores are assigned against clearly defined criteria set out in a questionnaire, on a five-point scale, namely, 0 (very weak), 25 (weak), 50 (moderate), 75 (strong), and 100 (very strong).

Scores are evidence-based rather than perception-based. In-country lead researchers triangulate information from legal and scholarly reviews, media reports and interviews with purposively selected thematic experts, and they must document the sources that substantiate each score. Lead researchers and peer reviewers are independent, country-specific experts drawn from civil society, journalism, development, or academia. A key requirement is that none of the contributors may have worked directly for the country's government in the previous three years.

Each country scorecard passes through four quality-assurance stages:

- ✓ The lead in-country researcher conducts the initial field research.
- ✓ The project management team verifies each indicator's sources and content, and carries out fact-checking and quality control.
- ✓ A second country researcher conducts a double-blind peer review, so that feedback is independent of who collected and scored the data and does not drift towards a peer-influenced consensus.
- ✓ Scorecards are edited, and the project management team reviews the indicators to ensure scoring is consistent across countries.

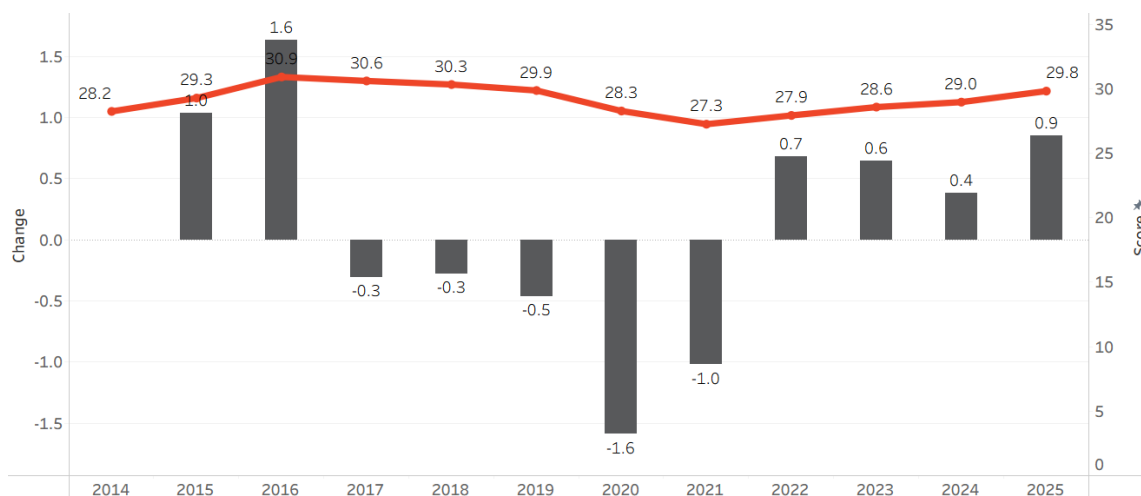
Provisional results are then published on the All website for a two- to three-month feedback period, during which stakeholders can submit comments and corrective information.⁴

Key Findings: Modest Progress, Persistent Divides

Transparency and accountability are stuck at a weak level

The continental average in the transparency and accountability category is stuck at a weak level fluctuating between 27 and 31 (out of 100) since 2014. It recorded its highest average score at 30.9 in 2016, fell to 27.3 in 2021, and recovered to 29.8 in 2025. Thus, it has never reached

the moderate threshold of 50, and only 6 of 55 countries in the transparency and accountability category have reached the moderate threshold. Only South Africa (68.8), Seychelles (60.2), Mauritius (59.4), Morocco (58.6), Namibia (54.7) and Senegal (53.9) reach the moderate threshold. Eritrea (1.6), Equatorial Guinea (3.1), Sudan (4.7) and South Sudan (9.4) score lowest.



Source: AFIDEP

✓ **Figure 1: Transparency and accountability average scores and yearly changes**

⁴This brief summarises AFIDEP, Integrity Narratives 2026 – *Institutions Matter: Progress, Divergence and Democratic Resilience in Africa* (Africa Integrity Indicators, Round 13, covering September 2023 to June 2025). Scores reflect expert, evidence-based assessment of practice, not perception surveys.

Strong performers share the same institutional features

Seychelles (67.2) and South Africa (65.5) lead overall across both the transparency and accountability and social development indicators; Sudan (5.2), Eritrea (8.6) and Equatorial Guinea (11.2) trail. Only 10 countries reach the moderate threshold of 50 in the overall integrity indicators. Across all the indicators, top 10 best-performing countries are Seychelles (67.2), South Africa (65.5), Mauritius (62.9), Namibia (59.1), Morocco (56.0), Cabo Verde (53.4), Senegal (52.2), Ghana (50.4), Kenya (50.4), and Rwanda (50.4), while the bottom 10 are Sudan (5.2), Eritrea (8.6), Equatorial Guinea (11.2), Somalia (16.8), Libya (16.8), Sahrawi Republic (18.1), Burundi (18.1), South Sudan (18.5), Congo (19.4), and Niger (20.3).

The indicators show that better scores are linked to how institutions operate, especially:

- ✓ Independent courts that can overrule government, as when South Africa's Pretoria High Court overturned a 2020 coal procurement decision in 2024.
- ✓ Independent supreme audit institutions that are free of executive interference, as in South Africa and Rwanda.
- ✓ Open, competitive procurement, such as Namibia's eProcurement portal and Seychelles' public tender advertising.

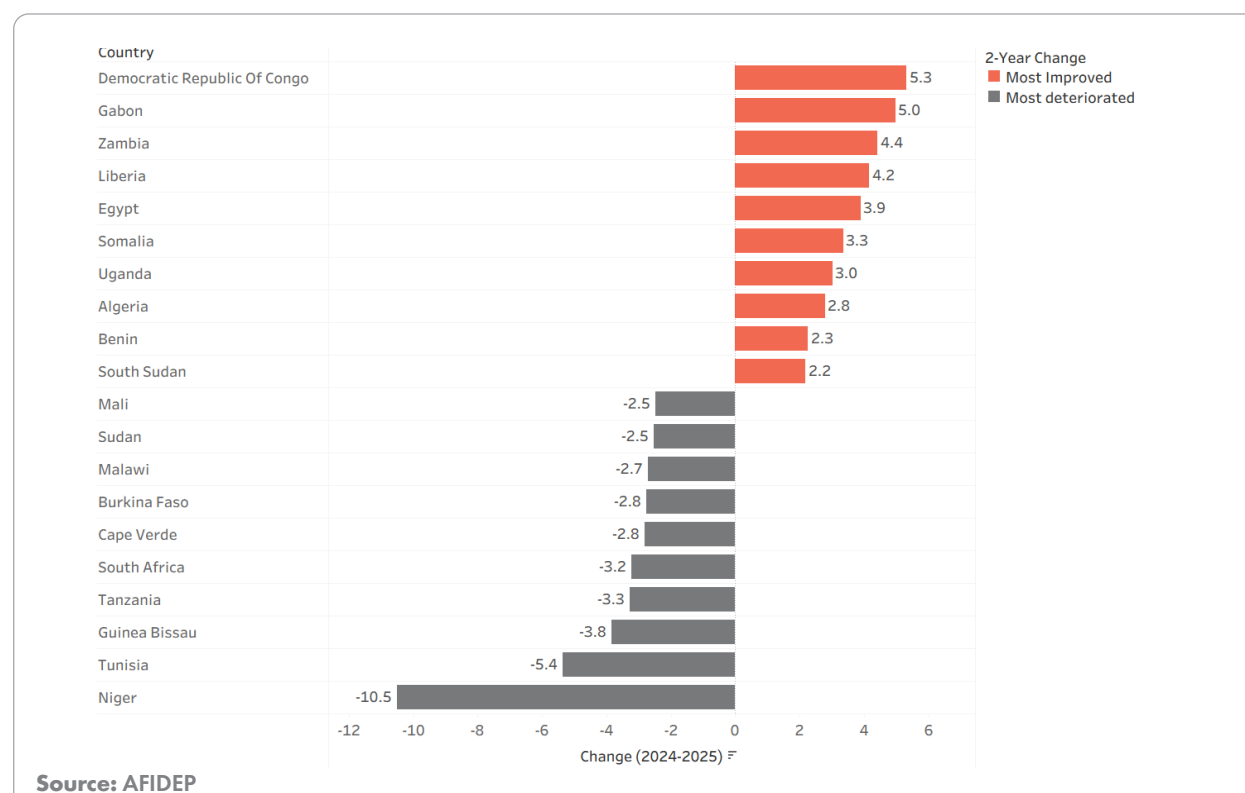
- ✓ Regular debt disclosure, such as Seychelles' quarterly debt bulletins and annual borrowing plans.
- ✓ Media ownership disclosure, common practice in Cabo Verde and Ghana.

The indicators associated with poor performance include undisclosed party donations, weak asset declarations, closed procurement records, political interference in the civil service, media censorship, and opaque state-owned enterprises. For example, Equatorial Guinea and Eritrea have scored 0 on disclosure of public procurement contracts every year since 2014.

The gap between strong-performing and poor-performing countries remains wide, and gains can be lost

Only 18 per cent of the countries reach the moderate threshold overall (all indicators). Morocco is the standout success, gaining 30 points since 2014 (26.0 to 56.0). The largest 2024–2025 gains came from mid- and lower-ranked countries: DRC (+5.3), Gabon (+5.0), Zambia (+4.4), Liberia (+4.2) and Egypt (+3.9).

Gains can be lost as evidence by Niger, which fell by 10.5 points in one Round (30.8 to 20.3) following the Coup d' état.

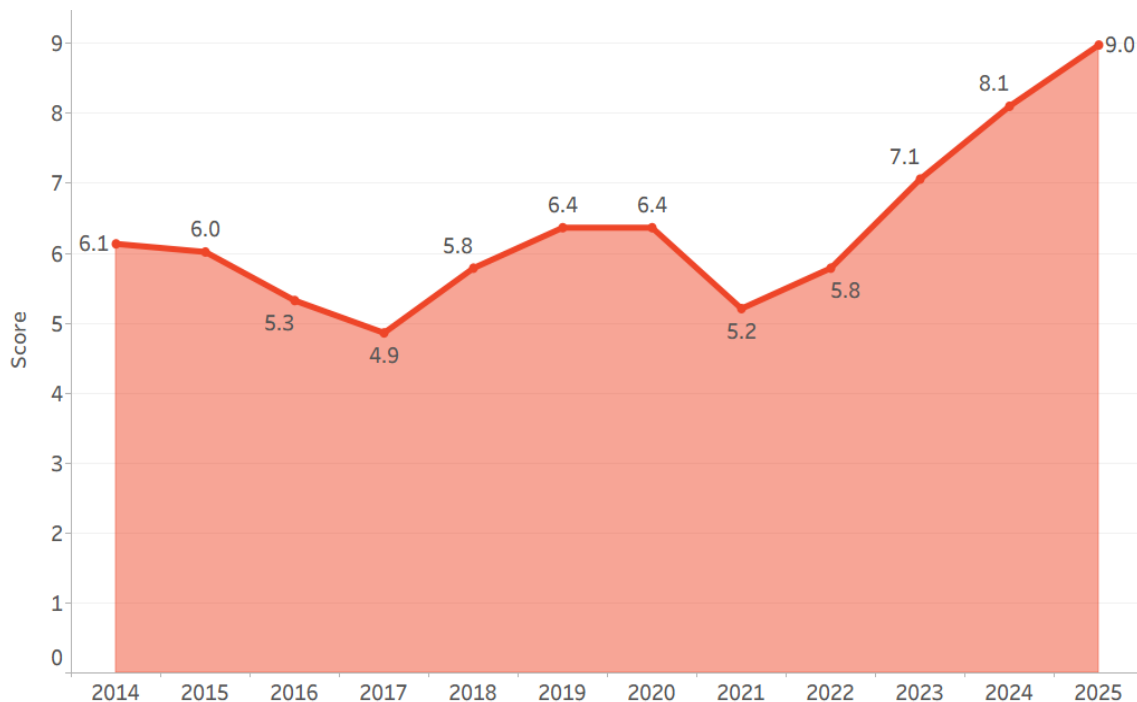


✓ **Figure 2: Most improved and most deteriorated countries in overall integrity performance between Round 12 (2024) and Round 13 (2025)**

Botswana dropped from 54.0 in 2014 to 41.4, and Tanzania from 35.0 to 24.1. Sudan (5.2) shows how war dismantles both governance and services: since 2020 it has scored 0 on judicial appointments, audit independence and electoral management.

Political finance disclosure is the weakest indicator

Transparency of political party funding remains the worst-performing indicator, having never averaged above 10 since 2014, though there has been an upward trend since 2021.



Source: AFIDEP

✓ **Figure 3: Trend of political finance average score (2014-2025)**

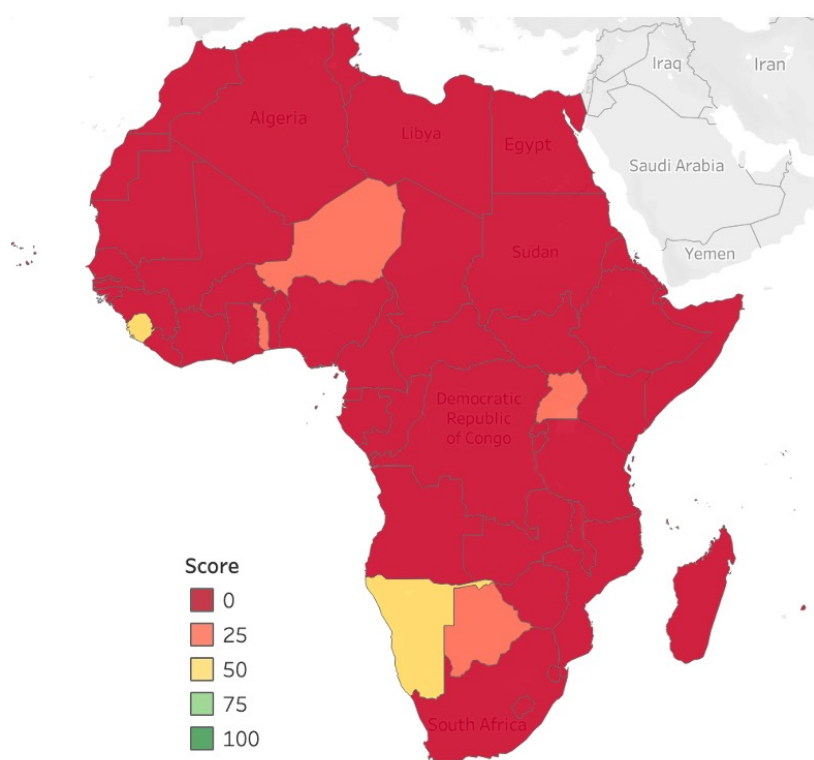
Social development improved, but inclusion beyond the representation of women is almost absent

Social development rose from 38.5 (2014) to 44.8 (2024). The 2025 figure of 41.6 is lower mainly because four new indicators were added, not because earlier gains reversed. Seychelles leads (76.0); Sudan is lowest (5.8). Progress in social development occurred due to responsive public

health systems, women in decision-making and sound civil registration. Weak poverty data, thin safety nets and discrimination against minorities hold it back.

Women's representation has been the strongest area of performance (67.4), above the moderate threshold of 50. Yet 52 of 55 countries scored 0 on disability representation in the cabinet, and 48 scored 0 on youth representation in the cabinet.⁵

⁵For the youth indicator, a 100 score is earned where at least a third (33%) of the members of the national cabinet are youth per the African Union definition of a youth, while a score of 0 is earned where only 5% or less of the members of the national cabinet are youth. For the persons with disabilities indicator, a 100 score is earned where at least 10% of the members of the national cabinet are identified as persons with disabilities, while a score of 0 is earned where only 1% or less of the members of the national cabinet are persons with disabilities.



Source: AFIDEP

✓ **Figure 4: Status of youth representation in the national cabinets**

Selected performance across themes

Theme	2025 average	Direction	Strongest	Weakest
Women's representation	67.4	First fall since 2016 (70.8 in 2024)	Rwanda, South Africa, Angola, Uganda	Comoros, Botswana, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea
Natural resource transparency	24.5	Slow recovery from 18.5 in 2020	South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, Tunisia	Comoros, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan (all 0)
Elections	26.8	Below 2014 level (29.0)	South Africa, Namibia, Ghana, Senegal	Eritrea, South Sudan, Sudan, Eswatini
Transparency on the operations of state-owned enterprise	20.5	Up from 12.5 in 2014	South Africa, Nigeria	Comoros, Djibouti, Sudan
Political finance	9.0	Never above 10	South Africa, Morocco	Cameroon, Djibouti, Eritrea, Libya
Youth in cabinet (new)	about 4.1	48 of 55 countries score 0	Sierra Leone, Namibia	48 countries
Disability in cabinet (new)	about 2.7	52 of 55 countries score 0	Djibouti, Lesotho, Uganda	52 countries

Two new 2025 indicators show wide spreads rather than low averages. On debt transparency, South Africa, Namibia, Seychelles, Somalia, Nigeria and Benin score 100, while nine countries including Burundi, Chad, Comoros and Eritrea score 0. On protection of immigrants, Rwanda and Chad score 100; Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Djibouti and Egypt are weakest, and the average is 40.5.

Policy Implications: Making Institutions Work in Practice

Reform must target how institutions function

The difference between stronger and weaker performers lies less in whether institutions exist than in whether institutions such as national courts, supreme auditing institutions, electoral management bodies and statistics offices can act independently, are funded predictably, and publish their work.

Electoral integrity is at risk

The decline to 26.8 in election indicators is driven partly by political interference in appointments to electoral management bodies. Eritrea and Sudan have no functioning electoral body at all, and South Sudan's president bypassed the legislature when appointing commissioners in November 2023. Where appointment rules are weak, the bodies struggle to publish timely reports or guarantee equal access to state-owned media outlets.

Opaque political money undermines everything else

With political finance averaging 9 out of 100, most political parties fail to disclose private funding. This opens space for patronage and lets donors buy influence. South Africa shows the fix where there is a funding law, a disclosure threshold, an electoral commission that publishes

information on funding to political parties, and courts that enforce it. When a 2024 amendment briefly removed disclosure duties in South Africa, civil society litigation restored them within months.

Fiscal transparency is now a development priority, not a technical one

Rising debt and falling aid mean citizens need to know who borrows, how much and on what terms, and what governments earn from oil, gas and minerals. Somalia, a fragile state, scores 100 on debt transparency through quarterly bulletins, which suggests that fragility need not prevent disclosure where there is a mandate and the will to publish.

Gender progress offers a template for an inclusive Africa

Women's representation improved because of constitutional provisions, explicit targets and sustained advocacy. Africa has the world's youngest population, yet youth and persons with disabilities are almost absent from cabinets. Without comparable commitments they will remain excluded.

Discrimination against migrants threatens regional integration

Weak protection of immigrants in several North and Central African states undercuts free movement and trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Fragile and post-coup states need distinct support

Niger, Sudan and Burkina Faso show that conflict and unconstitutional change can erase years of gains quickly. Standard reform programmes assume functioning institutions these countries no longer have.



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Source: CANVA



Recommendations: Closing the Implementation Gap

National governments

- ✓ **Protect and resource oversight institutions:** Shield judiciaries, electoral management bodies, supreme audit institutions, anti-corruption agencies, procurement authorities, national statistics offices and social protection agencies from political interference. Provide predictable funding and the staff, skills and technology needed, empower the institutions to enforce rules, and require them to make information accessible to citizens.
- ✓ **Make disclosures routine:** Publish party funding (both private and public) and enforce relevant political financing laws, publish public debt, state-owned enterprise accounts, and natural resource records.
- ✓ **Protect civic space:** Safeguard the watchdog role of the media and civil society.
- ✓ **Broaden representation and protect migrants:** Widen the participation of women, youth and persons with disabilities in decision-making, and protect migrants from discrimination.

African Union and Regional Economic Communities

- ✓ **Shift from adopting norms to implementing them:** Focus on implementing and enforcing existing commitments, including Agenda 2063, AGA, ACDEG, APRM and the AUCPCC, at national level, and comprehensively monitor how they translate into practice.
- ✓ **Use peer learning:** Spread approaches that work from stronger to weaker performers.
- ✓ **Target support where deficits are big:** Direct support to countries facing fragility, conflict, instability or democratic erosion.

Parliaments, civil society, media and development partners

- ✓ **Track delivery with All data:** Use the indicators to monitor whether institutions deliver in practice.
- ✓ **Press for disclosure:** Push for the release of information where it is withheld.
- ✓ **Support oversight bodies:** Back the institutions that make accountability possible.

This brief summarises AFIDEP, Integrity Narratives 2026 – Institutions Matter: Progress, Divergence and Democratic Resilience in Africa (Africa Integrity Indicators, Round 13)

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