



How Ghanaians Rate The Performance Of The NPP Administration

Four rounds of Afrobarometer surveys have been conducted in Ghana since 1999. Round 2 was conducted in 2002 when the administration of President John Kufuor and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) had barely settled in office; Round 3 was conducted in 2005 when the government had recently renewed its electoral mandate. The current Round 4 survey (March 2008) coincides with the year in which the Kufuor-NPP administration is ending its second term in office and heading for the polls (in December 2008). The findings of Afrobarometer Round 4 make it possible to ascertain popular assessments of the performance of the President and the NPP government in the nearly eight years it has been in office and to analyze the implications for the party in the impending electoral contest.

The Afrobarometer is a comparative series of public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, markets and living conditions. The survey is based on a randomly selected national probability sample of 1200 respondents representing a cross-section of adult Ghanaians aged 18 years or older, which yields a margin of error of ± 2.5 at a 95 percent confidence level. All interviews are conducted face-to-face by trained fieldworkers in the language of the respondent's choice. Fieldwork for Round 4 of the Afrobarometer in Ghana was undertaken between March 4 and 27, 2008. Note that for purposes of cross-national comparison, the questions on the survey will be administered to random national samples in 19 other African countries before the end of 2008; comparative results will be presented in upcoming briefing and working papers from Afrobarometer Round 4.

Table 1: Sample Distribution, Ghana 2008

Variable	Categories	Percent/No.
Location Distribution	Urban	45%
	Rural	55%
Gender	Male	50%
	Female	50%
Age	Less than 35 years	50%
	36 – 55	33%
	56 +	16%
	Oldest Respondent	110
Education	Primary	37%
	Secondary/High School	30%
	Tertiary	8%
	No Formal Education	25%

Variable	Categories	Percent/No.
Religion	Christian	77%
	Muslim	16%
	Muslim	16%
	Traditional	3%
Region	Western	10%
	Central	9%
	Greater Accra	15%
	Volta	9%
	Eastern	11%
	Ashanti	20%
	Brong Ahafo	9%
	Northern	9%
	Upper East	5%
	Upper West	3%

Where applicable, 'don't know' responses are not reported

SUMMARY OF RESULTS:

- Large majorities of Ghanaians approve of the performance of the President.
- They also rate the performance of the NPP administration positively in many areas, especially in the delivery of healthcare and education services.
- Moreover, trust in the ruling party is high and has increased over time.
- However, the government's performance is rated negatively ("badly" or "very badly") in controlling inflation and narrowing income gaps.
- And perceived corruption at the presidency is also high and trending upwards.

PERFORMANCE RATING

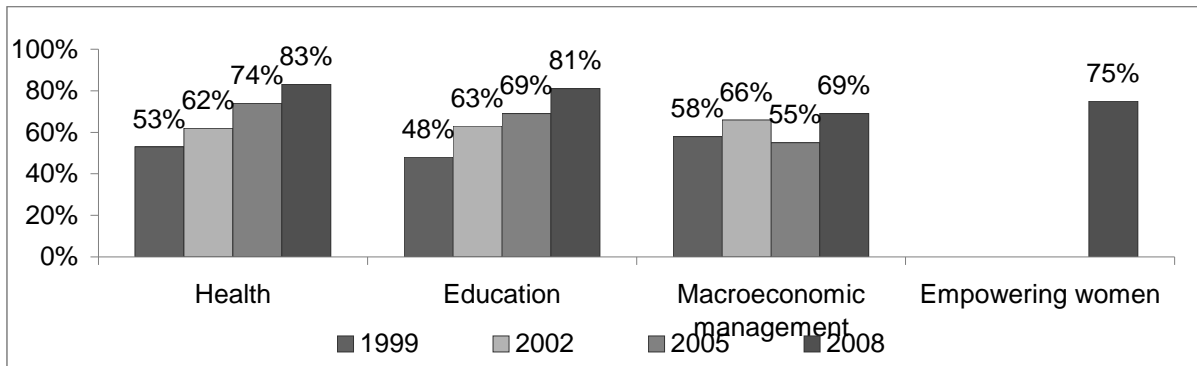
Overwhelming majorities of Ghanaians believe the NPP government is doing well in the following areas:

- improving basic health services (83 percent);
- addressing educational needs (81 percent);
- combating HIV/AIDS (78 percent);
- empowering women (75 percent) and
- managing the economy (69 percent).

Indeed, the NPP administration received a higher popular performance rating for the overall management of the macro-economy in 2008 (69 percent) than in any previous survey, a significant increase from 55 percent in 2005, and up slightly from 66 percent in 2002. (Note, however, that the increase between 2002 and 2008 falls within each survey's margin of sampling error).

The popular performance ratings of the NPP government for the delivery of health care and education services have risen significantly and consistently since 2002. In fact, popular approval for the delivery of healthcare services increased by 21 percentage points between 2002 and 2008, and by 18 percentage points for education. The administration's interventions, notably the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and the capitation grants and school feeding programs for basic schools are likely to have positively influenced the favorable ratings in these sectors.

Figure 1: Popular Ratings of Government Performance (percent saying “fairly well” or “very well”)

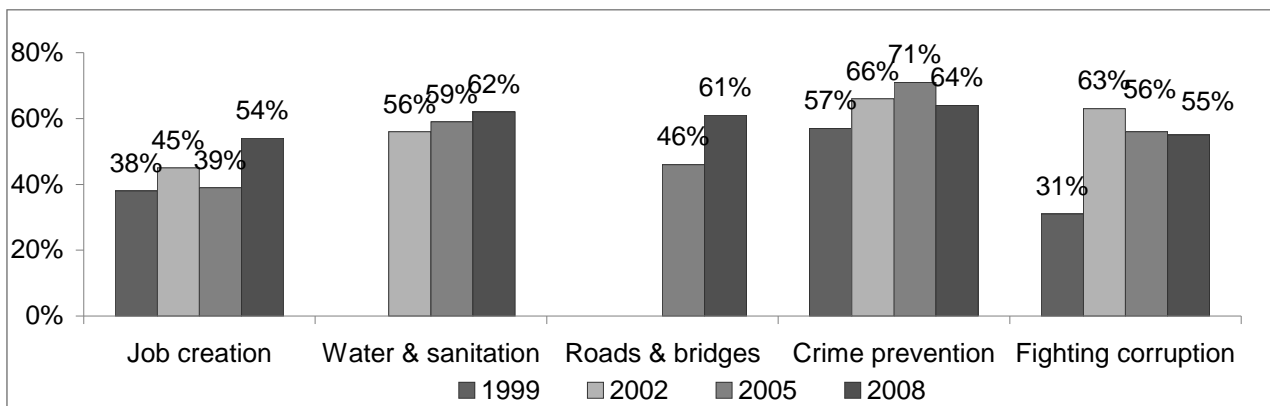


The question about empowering women was not asked in surveys before 2008.

Smaller majorities of Ghanaians rate the NPP government’s performance positively in the following areas:

- protecting rivers and forests (65 percent);
- reducing crime (64 percent);
- providing reliable electric supply (64 percent);
- providing water and sanitation services (62 percent);
- maintaining roads and bridges (61 percent);
- ensuring everybody has enough to eat (56 percent);
- fighting corruption (55 percent);
- creating jobs (54 percent) and;
- improving living standards of the poor (50 percent)

Figure 2: Performance Ratings (percent saying “fairly well” or “very well”)



*Questions about water and transportation infrastructure were not asked in early surveys.

It is also noteworthy that the government’s performance in job creation achieves majority approval (54 percent) for the first time since Afrobarometer surveys began in Ghana in 1999. No other African country surveyed in the Afrobarometer in 2005 could claim that a majority approved of its performance at job creation; in fact, on average, two-thirds *dis*approved. Ghana’s singular achievement on the employment front may be linked to the introduction of the National Youth Employment Program (NYEP) in 2006 to provide jobs and job training for the youth.

Moreover, government performance in the delivery of water and sanitation services increased from a small majority (56 percent) in 2002 to a solid majority (62 percent) in 2008, a possible reflection of the impact of the collaboration between a private sanitation services provider – Zoomlion – and government through the various local government authorities (district assemblies). The public’s rating for maintaining roads and bridges increased from a minority 46 percent in 2005 to a majority (61 percent) in 2008, reflecting the visible expansion of road networks in major towns and cities.

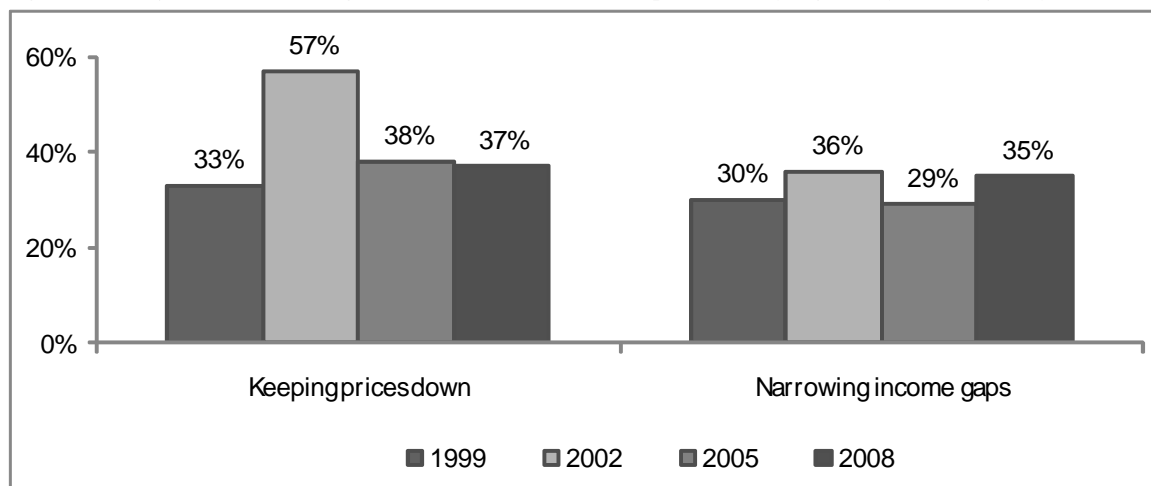
It should be noted, however, that public opinion about the government’s performance in the fight against corruption has been declining. In 2002, a solid majority (63 percent) said the government was doing well in fighting corruption. The declaration of a policy of “zero tolerance for corruption” by the NPP government upon coming into office in 2001 seemed to have captured the imagination of Ghanaians at that time. By 2005, however, government’s anticorruption performance rating had dropped by 10 percentage points to 56 percent and currently remains almost at the same level (55 percent in 2008).

The administration’s effort at crime control has also suffered a decline. In 2005, over seventy percent of Ghanaians positively rated the performance of the NPP government in fighting crime, reflecting the fact that the security agencies had intensified their campaign against armed robbery; and in the first quarter of that year, the most wanted armed robber in Ghana (Atta Ayi) and many others were arrested. The government’s perceived effectiveness at crime control has dropped to 64 percent in 2008, perhaps informed by the series of drug related cases uncovered in recent times.

The performance of the NPP government is negatively rated in the following areas

- keeping prices down (37 percent) and;
- narrowing income gaps (35 percent)

Figure 3: Performance Ratings in Prices and Incomes (percent saying “very well” “fairly well”)



Indeed, the NPP administration’s performance in these two policy areas has consistently been perceived by most Ghanaians to be bad, except in 2002 (Figure 3). At the end of 2000, inflation was around 27 percent, but the new NPP government managed to reduce it to about 15 percent by 2002. A majority of Ghanaians (57 percent) rated the government effort at controlling inflation positively in that year. After 2002, the public seemed unimpressed with the government’s efforts to reduce inflation. By 2005, only a minority (38 percent) of Ghanaians, representing a large and significant decline from 2002, felt government was doing well curbing price increases. This view has persisted in 2008 with only 37 percent of the population expressing approval for the government’s handling of inflation. The stagnation of government’s approval rating in this area of economic management may reflect the fact

that inflation rose in the first quarter of 2008 and had reached 15.3 percent by April 2008 (after recording a low of 10.2 percent in September 2007).

Income inequality has also remained a stubborn challenge for the NPP government. In no Afrobarometer survey has the government ever received majority approval from Ghanaians on efforts to narrow income gaps. The government’s worst performance rating occurred in 2005 when less than one third of Ghanaians (29 percent), said government was doing well in reducing income inequality. And by 2008, barely more than one-third (35 percent) felt this way.

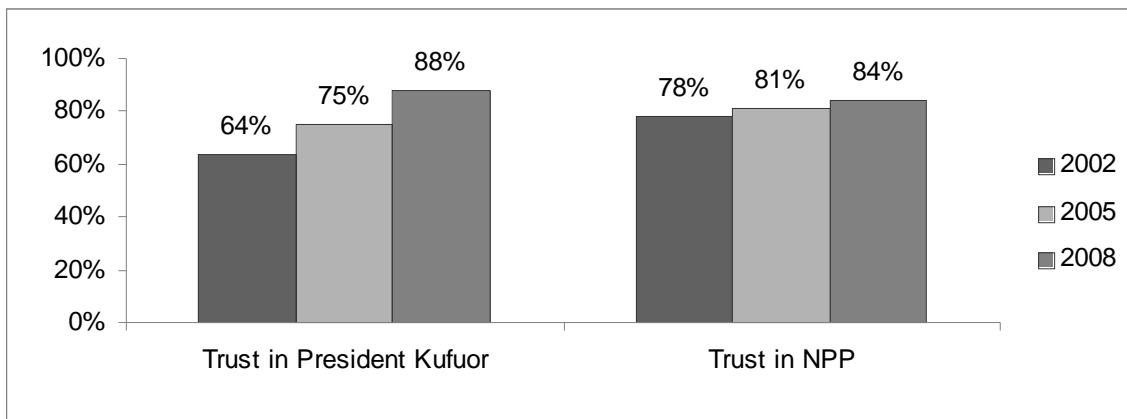
POPULAR RATING OF THE PRESIDENT AND RULING PARTY

Perhaps due to their generally positive perceptions of government’s achievements, most Ghanaians approve of President Kufuor. His job performance rating has increased over time. Almost 8 in 10 Ghanaians (78 percent) approved of the performance of the President in March 2008, a 2 percentage point increase over 2005. Given the margin of sampling error in Afrobarometer surveys, however, we conclude that President Kufuor’s job approval rating has essentially held steady over the past three years.

Popular trust in the President and the ruling party (NPP) is also very high and has remained so over time. Overwhelming majorities of Ghanaians (88 percent) express trust in the President and in the ruling NPP (84 percent). These ratings are the highest since 2002.

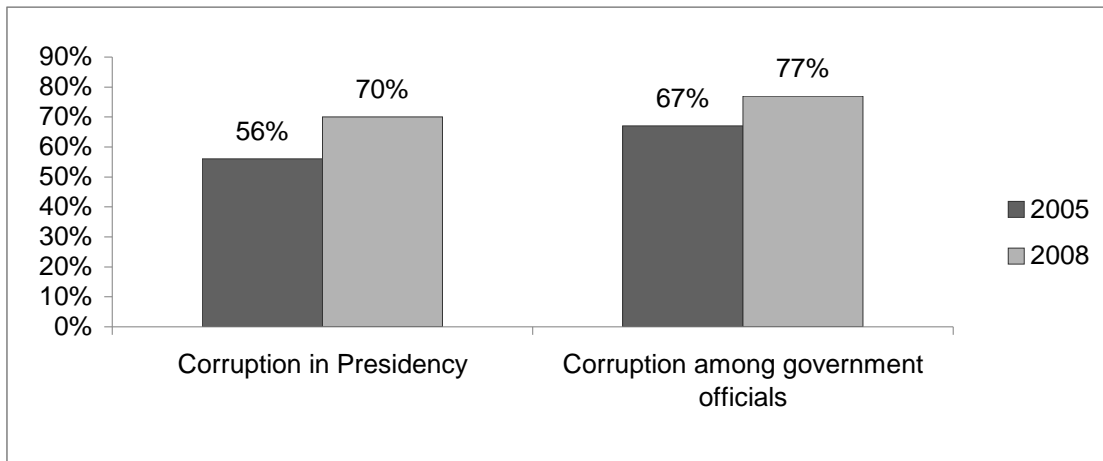
Over time, trust in the President has consistently increased, more rapidly so than for the ruling party: the President’s rating jumped 26 percentage points between 2002 and 2008 as against a 6 percentage point increase for the party over the same period. In fact, in 2002 and 2005, more Ghanaians expressed trust in the NPP than in the President. But this juxtaposition had changed in 2008, when more Ghanaians expressed trust in the President (88 percent) than in the ruling party (84 percent) (figure 4).

Figure 4: Trust in President and ruling NPP (percent saying just a little/somewhat/a lot)



Importantly, most Ghanaians continue to hold the belief that government officials are corrupt. Large majorities of Ghanaians perceive corruption in the presidency (70 percent) and among government officials (77 percent). The current levels of perceived corruption represent large and significant increases over 2005 when only a small majority (56 percent) perceived corruption in the presidency (a 14 percentage points increase) and 67 percent perceived corruption among government officials (a 10 percentage points increase) (figure 5).

Figure 5: Perceived corruption among government officials (percent saying some, most, or all of them)



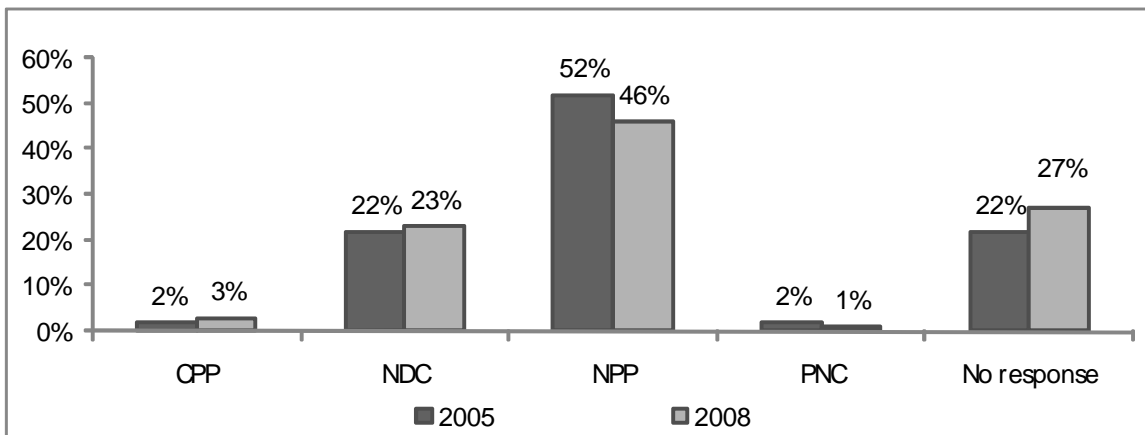
THE NPP’s ELECTORAL APPEAL:

Notwithstanding the largely positive evaluations of President Kufuor and his administration, electoral support for the ruling New Patriotic Party has dropped from 52 percent in 2005 to 46 percent in 2006. Nevertheless, the NPP recorded a nominal lead in the partisan preferences of eligible Ghanaian voters in March 2008 when the survey was conducted.

When asked, “which party would you vote for if elections were held tomorrow?” the NPP recorded the highest share (46 percent), followed by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) (23 percent). The Convention People’s Party (CPP) attracted just 3 percent of prospective voters and the People’s National Convention (PNC) just 1 percent.

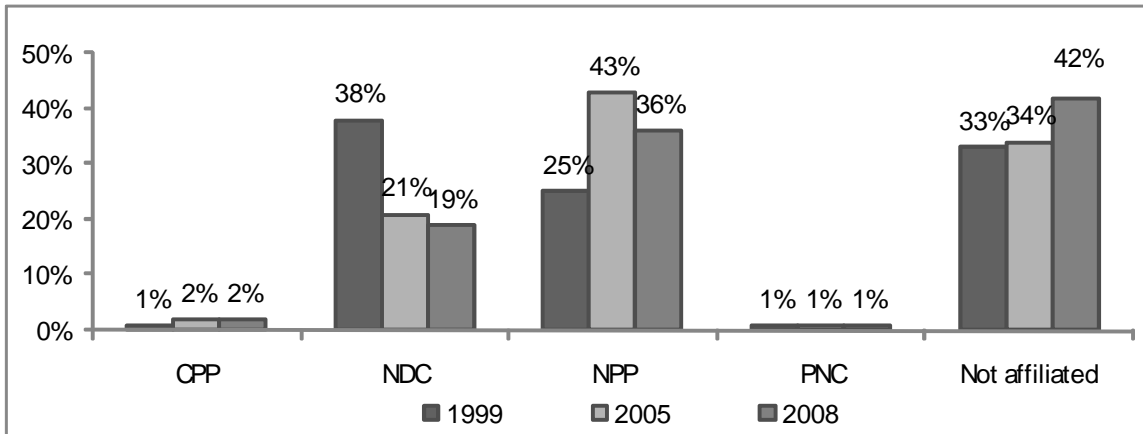
Even though the ruling party is positioned to do well in Ghana’s first-past-the post elections in December 2008, the figures also suggest electoral challenges ahead. First, the opposition NDC (and CPP) recorded marginal increases, while the NPP (and PNC) recorded declines in the proportion of voters who express intentions to vote for them. More significantly, close to 3 in 10 Ghanaians (27 percent) refused to disclose their voting intentions, a result that reflects the politically sensitive nature of the question. Many respondents (59 percent) thought the survey was being conducted on behalf of government, which might have prevented them from disclosing their voting intentions and thereby might have biased their responses in favor of the ruling party (figure 6).

Figure 6: Voting intentions (percent saying they will vote for party)



Yet another reason for the NPP to be concerned is that the percentage of Ghanaians who express affiliation with the party has declined from 43 percent in 2006 to 36 percent in 2008. Eligible voters who are uncommitted to any political party – sometimes called “floating” voters because they are primed to potentially switch partisan allegiance – are concentrated in the Greater Accra (45 percent), Central (30 percent), Brong Ahafo (27 percent) and Northern (27 percent) regions.

Figure 7: Political Party Affiliation (percent saying they “feel close to” this party))



WHAT IS DRIVING THE DECLINE?

What factors are driving the apparent decline in ruling party support in an epochal election year? We offer four possible explanations.

The first is a fear of declining standards of living among a segment of the voting population. People who anticipate a worsening of their own future personal living conditions are disinclined to vote for the NPP. Only a quarter (25 percent) of Ghanaians in this category say they would vote for the ruling party, while 4 in 10 (40 percent) of them claim they would vote for the opposition NDC.

Second, the perceived poor performance of government at reducing crime and fighting corruption also impact negatively on the vote prospects of the NPP. More than 4 in 10 respondents (43 percent) who say government is doing very badly in reducing crime will vote for the NDC while less than a quarter (22 percent) of those who hold this view will vote for the NPP. Similarly, close to 4 in 10 respondents (39 percent) of those who say government performance in fighting corruption is very bad would vote for the NDC, while only 18 percent of them would vote for the NPP.

Third, much depends on voters’ perceptions of the president’s trustworthiness and job performance. Although President Kufuor attracts positive ratings from most Ghanaians, others would rather vote for the opposition NDC. A solid majority (64 percent) of respondents who do not trust the president *at all* say they will vote for the NDC; only about 10 percent of them will vote for the ruling NPP. Similarly, over six in ten respondents (61 percent) who strongly disapprove of the job performance of the president will vote for the NDC compared, with only 10 percent of them saying they will vote for the NPP.

Additionally, lack of trust in the ruling party swings votes in favor of the opposition NDC. Majority (52 percent) of respondents who do not trust the ruling party *at all* say they will vote for the NDC whereas less than a fifth (13 percent) of them say they will vote for the NPP.

Finally, popular perceptions about the freeness and fairness of the 2004 elections also have an impact on the distribution of votes. A solid majority (60 percent) of those who see major deficits in the quality of the 2004 elections will vote for the NDC, compared with only about a quarter (26 percent) of them who would vote for the NPP.

CONCLUSION

The NPP seems to be running ahead of its rivals as the December 2008 elections approach. However, the ruling party's electoral appeal has suffered some setbacks in the last couple of years while that of the main opposition party, the NDC, has inched up. Clearly, the NPP has more work to ensure a solid margin of electoral support, suggesting that in a democracy, even strong public approval of most aspects of government performance is no guarantee of automatic re-election.

This Briefing Paper was prepared by CDD-Ghana (<http://www.cddghana.org/>).

The Afrobarometer, a cross-national survey research project, is conducted collaboratively by social scientists from 20 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa), and the Institute for Research in Empirical Political Economy (IREEP, Benin). Several donors support the Afrobarometer's research, capacity building and outreach activities, including the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Department for International Development (UK), the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the U.S. Agency for International Development. For more information, see: [**www.afrobarometer.org**](http://www.afrobarometer.org)