

Afrobarometer | Making African voices count | 2020-2030

A. Executive summary

Imagine a world in which Africa's development thrives on the realities and preferences of its people. In which governments, thought leaders, funders, business leaders, and activists anchor their work in reliable and timely data on what African citizens really need and care about. Imagine a world in which ordinary citizens, knowing that their voices count, claim their stake in the making of policies that affect their lives.

Given the data deserts across our vast and varied continent, this was once almost unimaginable. Not anymore. This is the Afrobarometer (AB) story.

For more than 20 years, across 39 African countries, we have collected and published reliable and timely data and analysis on citizens' evaluations and experiences of democracy, governance, the economy, and society. As a non-partisan, independent, and pan-African research network, we have demonstrated that public attitudes research can be conducted even in fragile, post-conflict, and closed political environments on the continent.

The only survey organisation by, for, and with Africans, AB is now the leading data source on issues affecting African men, women, and children. AB has data to track progress toward 12 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and several of the African Union Agenda 2063 targets.

In a world increasingly dependent on data in every sector, AB is a significant contributor to African capacity in survey research and analysis. This is done through AB's capacity building program, which is of critical importance to the continent and holds huge potential for Africa's development. We intend to significantly expand our capacity building endeavours over the next decade.

Our vision is that ***African societies thrive when African voices count in public policy and development.***

Imagine what we can accomplish in the next decade with your support:

- Survey data deepen and update the world's understanding of African people.
- More African citizens are heard through expanding country coverage of our surveys.
- Timely, reliable data and analysis become available in more user-friendly formats, driving greater uptake by non-profit, public- and private-sector decision-makers and advocates, the news media, and ordinary citizens.
- Democracy and good governance are strengthened through strategic partnerships with stakeholders and like-minded organisations.
- Progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa is better monitored and targeted.
- The next generation of African researchers, analysts, and communication experts is trained to promote public voice in African policy and politics.
- A wider and more diverse collection of funders share our vision and enable our long-term sustainability by making multi-year contributions to our programs.

With support of \$37.81m over the next five years and \$86.9m for the next decade, we can make citizens' voices count in the democratic development of Africa and significantly contribute to capacity development on the continent.

B. Afrobarometer

i) Background

AB was founded in 1999 by three political scientists who recognized that the voice of ordinary African citizens was absent from think-tank, agency, and official reports on Africa, and thus from many policy-making processes.

Over two decades, AB developed a successful network of 35+ in-country partner organisations with a project management unit based at the Ghana Center for Democratic Development. In 2019, following an organisational development process, AB became an independent non-profit overseen by a board of directors.

The new structure retains the successful network of core partners, national partners, and support units, and these are being strengthened by professional staff and infrastructure to provide a robust platform for future success.

Three core partners oversee and support in-country surveys for their regions:

- Ghana Center for Democratic Development (West, Central, and North Africa)
- Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi, Kenya (East Africa)
- Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, South Africa (Southern Africa)

Under the aegis of the core partners, national partners conduct the surveys and analyse and disseminate findings. Technical assistance is provided by academic support units at Michigan State University (analysis and publication) and the University of Cape Town (data management, fieldwork, and capacity building).

ii) Methodology

AB survey "rounds" typically take two years to complete. Each country survey comprises a nationally representative sample of between 1,200 and 2,400 adult citizens. AB's Round 1 (R1) surveys covered 12 countries in 1999-2001. By R6, AB surveys covered 36 countries. In 2021, despite delays due to COVID-19, AB completed R8 surveys in 34 countries and launched R9.

Samples are balanced by gender and distributed across regions/states/provinces and urban/rural areas in proportion to their share in the national population, and respondents are *randomly* selected – every adult citizen has an *equal and known* chance of being selected. Interviews are conducted face to face in the respondent's preferred language. AB is also piloting telephone surveys for contingencies and rapid-response surveys.

AB's methods are recognized as state of the art for African survey research, widely adopted by survey organisations within Africa and by other Barometer projects around the world, with whom we meet regularly to share methodology and progress.

iii) Survey components

Standard questions in AB surveys allow for cross-country comparisons and trend analysis going back more than 20 years. Special modules focus on important or emerging issues, and each country team sets topical country-specific questions.

Every AB survey covers:

- Political, economic, and social issues
 - Democracy, governance, policy performance, tolerance, clientelism, corruption
- Cognitive sophistication
 - Education, news media use, political dialogue
- Citizenship
 - Social trust, civic membership, voting
 - Campaigning, mobilizing, participation, protesting
- Quality of life
 - Lived poverty, access to services
 - Quality of local development infrastructure
 - Safety and security
- Demographics
 - Gender, age, religion, education, occupation, ethnicity

In recent rounds, special topics have included:

- Gender equality
- Climate change
- Migration
- China in Africa
- Closing political space
- Inclusion
- State capacity
- Openness and access to information

The impact of COVID-19 on the continent has featured and will continue to feature prominently in survey modules.

C. Outputs and impact

In eight survey rounds and more than 200 discrete surveys since 1999, AB has conducted more than 325,000 interviews in 39 African countries.¹ AB data in recent survey rounds represent the opinions of more than three-fourths of the continent's population. Respondents' views have been communicated to policy makers, development actors, civil society, and the general public through hundreds of dissemination events and AB publications, as well as thousands of published news reports.

i) Increased data access and use

AB amplifies the voices of ordinary Africans through myriad briefings and publications and weaves public opinion data into the fabric of democratic discourse in Africa. In 2020, more than 160 publications (91% authored by Africans) and 45 presentations were produced. This resulted in 150,000+ website visits and 53,000+ publication and data downloads. Use of our free online data analysis tool has grown significantly (38,000+ users in 2020), as has AB's social media reach (more than 2.5m Twitter impressions). Our increased capacity in accessible visual media has helped drive traffic to our website and increased demand for AB data.

¹ Some countries may be excluded in a given survey round due to insecurity or lack of census data needed to ensure a representative sample.

International development agencies, funders, governments, academics, students, and NGOs routinely use AB data in country assessments, policy and program development, monitoring and evaluation, dissertations, and other analyses.

Global governance and development indices consistently use and cite our data when reporting on Africa, including:

- Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG's first use of citizen survey data)
- Economist Intelligence Unit
- United Nations Development Programme
- World Bank Governance Indicators
- Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer

Moreover, with the SDGs increasingly embraced as a global framework for human progress, AB provides valuable indicators measuring progress toward 12 of the 17 goals.

ii) Organisational development

With the enthusiastic participation of our core and national partners to sustain the network as a global public good, we undertook an organisational development process to strengthen our foundation for the next decade. In 2019, AB formalized its structure as a non-profit corporation based in Ghana, transforming AB from a pioneering project into a robust pan-African institution. In addition, we have established an independent governance board, chaired by E. Gyimah-Boadi; recruited a high-level International Advisory Council, chaired by Ambassador Johnnie Carson; and appointed our next CEO, Joseph Asunka, who took office in April 2021.

iii) Enhanced capacity across Africa

Contributing to African development through capacity building is a core part of our mission, not only as a vital resource for AB's work, but also to strengthen critically important but scarce skills on the continent.

While conducting our activities, partner organisations in more than 35 countries have been trained in questionnaire design, survey research methods, data management and analysis, communications, and financial management. Journalists, NGOs, and policy makers from across Africa have received training in data analysis and use.

Activities and achievements in capacity building include:

- AB Summer Schools (in English and French), workshops, and writing mentorships, producing new generations of skilled African quantitative analysts
- More than 90% of AB dispatches and policy papers authored or co-authored by Africans, including many by African women
- Institutional capacity building through technical support and training in financial management for national partners
- AB partners recognised as preferred providers for associated research because of the skills and credibility that AB has helped them develop

Capacity building needs identified through a recent network consultation include advanced quantitative analysis, data visualisation, and resource mobilisation skills for national partners.

D. Afrobarometer's vision for the future

Our vision is that *African societies thrive when African voices count in public policy and development*. AB's contribution to expanding the understanding of Africa beyond official and conventional views must not cease. We commit to provide ordinary Africans with a platform to express their views and to faithfully make those views heard around the world. In pursuit of this vision, we will ensure that our impact is felt as we:

- Deepen and update the world's understanding of African countries by sustaining our survey activity
- Extend our coverage into additional African countries
- Expand the provision of timely, reliable data and analysis, presented in user-friendly formats, for use by non-profit, public- and private-sector decision-makers and advocates, the news media, and ordinary citizens
- Broaden and deepen strategic partnerships with stakeholders and like-minded organisations to strengthen democracy and good governance and promote achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals
- Nurture the next generation of African survey researchers, data analysts, and communications specialists who will continue to promote public voice in African policy and politics and contribute to African development
- Ensure AB's sustainability by building a more diverse funder base that supports long-term commitment to a shared vision of the role of the experiences and evaluations of ordinary citizens in promoting Africa's economic, social, and political advancement

Specific activities will focus on several key areas:

- **Sustain and extend data collection and associated activities**

Given the critical need for both up-to-date and longitudinal data on public attitudes and preferences, it is vital to sustain data collection across the countries we have covered for more than 20 years. The value of these data sets will be enhanced as we expand our survey coverage into more countries to support a deeper understanding of the continent in its entirety.

We will introduce new survey topics of the greatest strategic importance for the continent and identify opportunities to conduct pre-/post-election, post-conflict, and other special surveys.

- **Enhance access to our outputs**

To fulfil our promise to our respondents in cities, towns, and villages across Africa that their voices will be heard, we will make access to our data and analysis simple, agile, and routine. This means making the data available to policy makers, civil society, journalists, scholars, as well as ordinary citizens in tailored formats that they will use with ease.

We also plan to launch new analysis tools and indicators (e.g. for political risk, social cohesion, resilience) and novel formats to reach new audiences.

- **Enhance capacity building**

AB operations have in themselves advanced survey research in Africa while identifying and developing talent along the way. We will build on this achievement to play an active role in the further development of African capability in survey design, data collection and analysis, statistics, communications, management, and other relevant skills for Africa's future.

- **Secure the future**

To ensure that our work continues way into the future, we need to safeguard the conditions for consolidation, continuity, and growth of AB as a vital resource for Africa's future. Our organisational development processes have resulted in solid organisational and management structures, a progressive human resource strategy, robust performance management processes, and succession planning.

Importantly, this process includes identifying and nurturing talent within the network as well as sourcing fresh skills in areas where there are gaps. Moreover, attracting long-term advocacy and funding support is fundamental for our sustainability, given our reliance on philanthropy as a global public benefit, and growing our pool of funders incrementally is central to our strategy.

- **Promote Africa's development**

We know that democracies are on average better able to generate development than other types of political systems. We subscribe to the belief that we contribute to the democratic quality of Africa's political systems by measuring and widely disseminating the views of ordinary Africans.

As former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo told British parliamentarians and thought leaders,² AB's work is "central to the fortunes of the African continent as its leaders struggle to bring it into a new era of growth and democracy. By observing the progress – and unfortunately, sometimes the retreat – of democratic practices in Africa, AB empowers those who want to see more transparency, more accountability, and more free, open, and inclusive societies."

Former Liberian President and Nobel Prize Laureate Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, one of our International Advisory Council members, stressed at a gathering of funders and advocates that "Afrobarometer's claim to give ordinary Africans a voice in political and policy-making processes is justified. The 200+ discrete surveys and 325,000+ face-to-face interviews that Afrobarometer has conducted over the past 20 years have contributed significantly to empowering the only people who can safeguard democracy – the ordinary people on the street who want a better life for themselves and their families. Afrobarometer has my full support and associated best wishes for continued growth and expansion."³

Over the years, policy actors have used AB data for a variety of purposes, from assessment of government policies and justification of development programs to strengthened advocacy for policy change. Examples include governments in Ghana and Sierra Leone citing AB findings as impetus for enhanced anti-corruption initiatives and contributions to debates on presidential term limits in Burkina Faso, Burundi, and Togo.

Beyond the use of our data and analytical products in Africa's governance and policy processes, new demands and opportunities are emerging. For example, AB data can be used as an empirical tool to track major new policy initiatives with direct relevance to Africa's economic growth and development potential, including the Global Goals.

² In his keynote address to the University of Strathclyde/Afrobarometer Conference on "Public Opinion, Democratic Governance, and Inclusive Development in Africa" in Glasgow, Scotland, 11 October 2019

³ In her video message of support during an AB development roundtable hosted by the Open Society Foundations in Washington, D.C., 13 November 2019

We will continue to make Africans' evaluations and experiences of democratic governance and quality of life known and accessible as a global public good to encourage democracy where it is limited or absent, and to celebrate and learn from democracy where it is strong.

E. Finances

i) Previous support

Funders who share our vision of thriving African societies have provided us with \$45,133,835 over the past 13 years. Leading funders and grant makers who value the independence and quality of AB data include:

- Sida (Sweden)
- William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- Mo Ibrahim Foundation
- Transparency International
- GIZ (Germany)
- DFID (UK)
- European Union Delegation to the AU
- Duke University China Research Center
- RDMFA (Netherlands)
- CIDA (Canada)
- JICA
- U.S. State Department
- Open Society Foundations
- USAID/U.S. Institute of Peace
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- National Endowment for Democracy
- World Bank
- Royal Netherlands Embassy (Uganda)
- Institute for Security Studies
- DANIDA (Denmark)
- Mastercard Foundation

ii) Funding the future

We now seek partners who can make multi-year commitments, ideally funding for five years. This will enable us to continue to produce high-quality independent data; to expand the number of countries surveyed; and to increase urgently needed capacity on the continent in data collection, interpretation, and dissemination. An illustrative budget to advance our mission over the five years is provided here in US\$ millions.

CORE INTERVENTIONS	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
Surveys	3.15	3.45	3.48	3.50	3.55	17.13
Capacity building	0.54	0.77	0.58	0.85	0.63	3.36
Engagement	0.96	1.04	1.14	1.27	1.40	5.82
Network management	1.16	1.16	1.16	1.18	1.18	5.83
Analysis and publications	0.45	0.47	0.50	0.53	0.56	2.51
Indirects	0.57	0.62	0.61	0.68	0.67	3.16
TOTAL	6.83	7.51	7.48	8.01	7.99	37.81

F. Conclusions

With testimonials on the use of our findings, policy actors and thought leaders from global to local levels attest to the value they attach to the reliable, timely data – and the critical reality check – that AB has provided for more than 20 years and must continue to provide.

If the world falls short of the one our founders imagined – in which African development thrives on the realities and preferences of its people – we take that as a challenge, to us and to all committed to democracy and progress in Africa.



We stand ready to help meet this challenge. Building on more than 20 years' work, we are taking strategic and concrete steps forward, toward the world we imagine.

We invite you to imagine – and to walk – with us.

For additional information and/or clarifications, please contact Bruno van Dyk, Director of Engagement, bruno.v.dyk@afrobarometer.org.