

Anti-Corruption in Adverse Contexts: A Strategic Approach

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Abstract : Developing countries are characterized by political settlements where formal rules are generally weakly enforced and widely violated. Conventional anti-corruption strategies that focus on improving the general enforcement of a rule of law and raising the costs of corruption facing individual public officials have typically delivered poor results in these contexts. Our alternative approach is to identify anti-corruption strategies that have a high impact and that are feasible to implement in these contexts. Our alternative approach identifies anti-corruption strategies from the bottom up. This involves identifying the characteristics of the corruption constraining particular development outcomes. By drawing on theories of rents and rent seeking, and theories of political settlements, we can assess the developmental impact of particular anti-corruption strategies and the feasibility of implementing these strategies. We argue that feasible anti-corruption in these contexts cannot be solely based on conventional anti-corruption strategies. In societies that have widespread rule violations, high-impact anti-corruption is only likely to be feasible if the overall strategy succeeds in aligning the interests and capabilities of powerful organizations at the sectoral level to support the enforcement of particular sets of rules. We examine four related strategies for changing these incentives and capabilities of critical stakeholders at the local or sectoral level, and we argue that this can provide a framework for organizing research on the impact and feasibility of anti-corruption activities in different priority areas in particular countries.

Keywords : anti-corruption, development, political settlements analysis, rule of law

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