

World Bank Study Finds Major Africa Improvements

By Harry Dunphy, Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON – Several African nations are among those that have made great improvements in how their people are governed, with Botswana even on a par with many more-developed Western nations, the World Bank and the Brookings Institution said in a report released Monday.

Other African countries that have showed particular progress are Liberia, under the continent's only democratically elected woman leader, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf; Uganda; Angola; Ethiopia; and Congo.

In the Worldwide Governance Indicators project, the authors define governance as the traditions and institutions by which authority is exerted in a country. This includes how governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interaction among them.

Coinciding with countries that have done well, the report said, a similar number, among them Zimbabwe and Ivory Coast, have experienced deterioration in several areas of governance.

In many other countries around the world, "no significant change in either direction is yet apparent in recent years," the report said.

"The good news is that some countries are recognizing and responding to governance challenges and are showing strong improvements," said Aart Kraay, a ranking World Bank economist and the report's co-author. Kraay said the changes "reflect concerted efforts by

political leaders, policymakers, civil servants and the private sector," in the improved countries.

Daniel Kaufmann, Kraay's co-author from the Brookings Institution, a Washington-based policy research group, said, "We should not presume that rich and powerful countries have the very best levels of governance and corruption control; the financial crisis reminds us that the quality of governance in G-8 countries is not always exemplary." The Group of Eight includes the West's leading economies and Russia.

Using 35 data sources provided by 33 different organizations, including development banks, think tanks and private companies, the authors produced the eighth edition of the 102-page index, described as one of the most comprehensive international sets of indicators currently available. It covers 212 countries and territories.

The report says that where commitment to positive change exists, improvements in governance can and do occur.

Examples include Ghana, Niger and Peru in accountability and how much say the people have in the country's rule; Algeria, Angola and Sierra Leone in political stability and absence of violence and terror; China, Colombia and Rwanda in government effectiveness; Congo, Georgia and Libya in regulatory quality; Latvia, Liberia and Rwanda in rule of law; and Indonesia, Liberia and Serbia in control of corruption.

On the Net: Report: <http://www.govindicators.org>