



TRANSPARENCY
INTERNATIONAL
ZAMBIA

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

32/100

AVERAGE SCORE

CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX **2025**

Theme: “Democracy, Political Integrity and State Capture”

HIGHLIGHTS REPORT-ZAMBIA

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Summary Report: “2025 Corruption Perception Index Report: Zambia Highlights Report”

Author

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2025 Global Corruption Perception Index (CPI) average has dropped by 1 point for the first time in more than a decade to **42/100**. This is because most countries are failing to control corruption. Notably, 122 countries scored under **50/100**, while the number of countries scoring above 80/100 has shrunk from 12 a decade ago to just five in 2025. The highest-ranked nation was **Denmark (89)**, while only 15 countries, mainly in Western Europe and the Asia-Pacific, achieved scores above **75/100**.

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is the lowest performing region, with an average score of **32/100**. Only four of the 49 countries scored above 50/100, while 10 have significantly worsened since 2012. Transparency International is therefore calling on African governments to strengthen accountability institutions and increase transparency, protect civic space, support public participation, and ensure necessary checks and balances on power.

Zambia's CPI score declined by **2 points in 2025, from 39/100 in 2024 to 37/100**, and its rank fell by 7 places from **92/180** in 2024 to **99/182** in 2025. **This is the first time the CPI score for Zambia has declined in the past five years, indicating challenges in sustaining anti-corruption efforts.** The analysis of data sources indicates that **Zambia's CPI score declined** due to a **15-point** drop in the World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey score and a **3-point** drop in the Varieties of Democracy Project score.

The World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey measures bribery in business operations (the supply side of political corruption), while the Varieties of Democracy Project measures political corruption in the executive, legislature, and judiciary (the demand side of political corruption), including bribery, embezzlement, procurement corruption and grand corruption. **Therefore, TI-Z attributes the decline in the 2025 CPI score to increased abuse of office to facilitate the diversion of public funds through strategic business interests and political supporters, ahead of the 2026 Elections.**

In light of these findings, Transparency International Zambia calls on the Zambian government to prioritise the enactment of political party and campaign financing laws to strengthen transparency and accountability in political processes; and to strengthen enforcement of procurement regulations and eliminate undue influence in public procurement. Furthermore, the government should address the growing perception of corruption in social protection and empowerment programmes, particularly in the run-up to elections.

TI-Z also calls upon Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) to enhance investigations, sanctions, and protections to combat corruption and deter business interests from colluding with public officials in public procurement. LEAs should also take stronger action in response to publications from the Office of the Auditor General and the Financial Intelligence Centre.

1. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

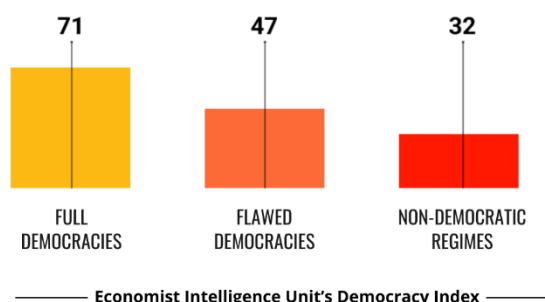
1.1 Global Highlights

- The 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), released by Transparency International, measures perceived levels of public-sector corruption in **182 countries and territories**, drawing on 13 independent data sources and using a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).
- In 2025, the global CPI average has dropped for the first time in more than a decade to **42/100**. This is because most countries are failing to control corruption.
- Notably, 122 countries scored under **50/100**, while the number of countries scoring above 80/100 has shrunk from 12 a decade ago to just five in 2025
- The highest-ranked nation was **Denmark (89)**, for the eighth time in a row, with a score of 89/100, while only a small group of 15 countries, mainly in Western Europe and Asia-Pacific, managed to get scores above 75/100.
- At the bottom of the index, the countries scoring below 25/100 are mostly conflict-affected and highly repressive countries, such as Venezuela (10) and the lowest scorers, Somalia (9) and South Sudan (9), which both score nine.

1.2 Corruption and Democracy

- The 2025 CPI shows the stark contrast in controlling corruption between nations with strong, independent institutions, free and fair elections, and open civic space, and those ruled by repressive authoritarian regimes.
- Full democracies had a CPI average of 71/100, while flawed democracies averaged 47/100 and authoritarian regimes just 32/100.
- We also note that persistently low or declining CPI scores usually go hand in hand with limited or eroding democratic checks and balances, the politicisation of justice systems, undue influence over political processes, and a failure to safeguard civic space.
- Furthermore, in almost two-thirds of countries whose CPI scores have significantly declined since 2012, there has been a worrying pattern of restrictions on freedoms of expression, association and assembly.
- In 2025, we saw a **surge of Gen-Z-led protests**, as young people in countries that score poorly on the CPI – such as Serbia (33) and Peru (30) – took to the streets to demand action and accountability from their governments.
- The broader picture shows that democracy and strong independent institutions are crucial for combating corruption fully, effectively and sustainably.

FIGURE 1: AVERAGE CPI 2025 SCORE FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF GOVERNMENT

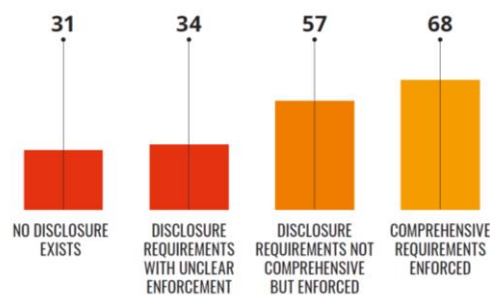


1.3 Democracy, Political Integrity and State Capture

- When competition for power is weakened and influence over policy is opaque, **public authority can be seized by private interests**
- Therefore, strong checks and balances that hold power accountable are crucial to uphold democracy and prevent corruption
- These include parliaments that scrutinise budgets, independent courts that can review government decisions, audit institutions with access to data, and electoral bodies that enforce fair rules.
- When these guardrails are constrained, people's voices can be drowned out by **moneyed interests and those with better political connections**
- This provides more opportunities for corrupt acts and pushes policies away from the common good
- Our research suggests that countries with **stronger oversight institutions and free and fair elections tend to**

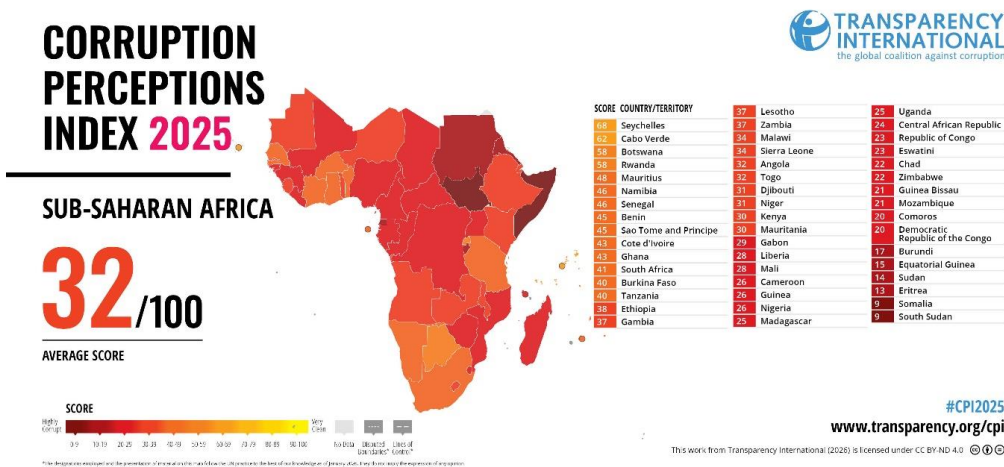
show greater resilience against corruption risks.

- In particular, transparency and caps on who funds political parties and how much is spent on election campaigns are needed to ensure that democracy is protected from undue influence.
- Alongside this, transparency about who is lobbying politicians is crucial to protect against conflicts of interest holding back policymaking in the public interest.



1.1. Regional Trends – Sub-Saharan Africa

FIGURE 2: 2025 CORRUPTION PERCEPTION INDEX RESULTS-SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA



- **Sub-Saharan Africa (SAA)** is the lowest performing region, with an average score of **32/100**, on the 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). Only four of the 49 countries scored above 50; ten have significantly worsened since 2012, and only seven have improved over the same period.
- The **Seychelles** (68) remains the region's highest scorer, followed by **Cabo Verde** (62), **Botswana** (58) and **Rwanda** (58). The lowest scorers are Sudan (14), Eritrea (13), Somalia (9), and **South Sudan** (9).
- **Angola** (32) has gained 17 points since 2015, indicating that measures taken by the administration to combat

corruption are showing results. These range from high-profile investigations and prosecutions to new laws that facilitate the recovery of stolen assets.

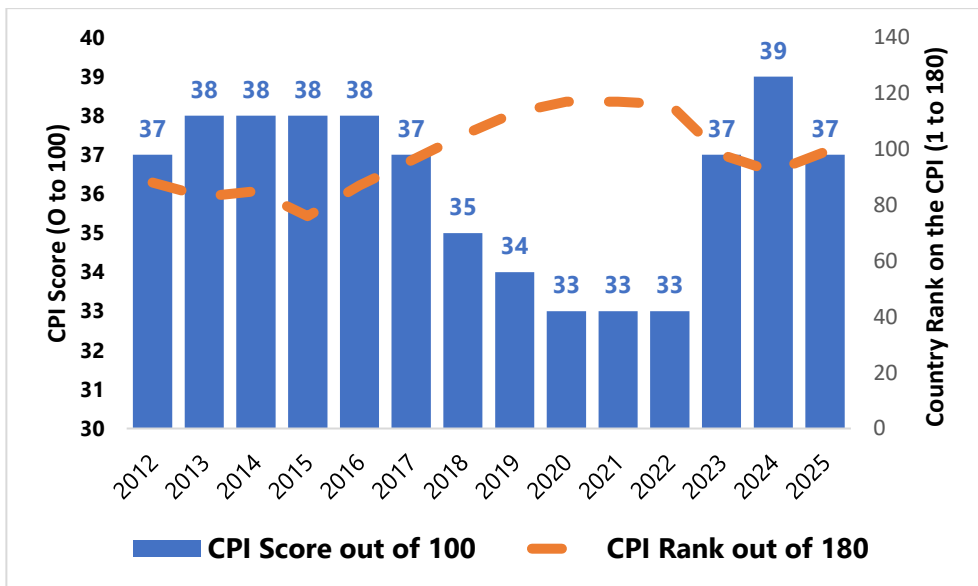
- **Seychelles** (68), the continent's top performer, has declined by four points in a year, reflecting gaps in its anti-corruption framework and delays in addressing them.
- Over the last decade, **Mozambique** (21) has dropped 10 points. Official figures show that corruption cases registered in the first quarter of 2025 cost the state about US\$4.1 million, underscoring the scale of the challenge.

- Weak democracy characterised by an increasing number of military coups, particularly in West and Central Africa, alongside armed conflicts and persistent insecurity in the Sahel and eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, continues to undermine governance, economic stability and development efforts on the continent. This is also having damaging effects on human rights and public freedoms.
- Transparency International is calling on African governments to step up efforts to translate their anti-corruption commitments into decisive action by further strengthening accountability institutions and increasing transparency, protecting civic space and supporting public participation, along with necessary checks and balances on power.

2. ZAMBIA'S PERFORMANCE IN 2025

2.1 Zambia's Performance on the 2025 CPI

FIGURE 3: TREND OF ZAMBIA'S CPI PERFORMANCE, 2012-2025

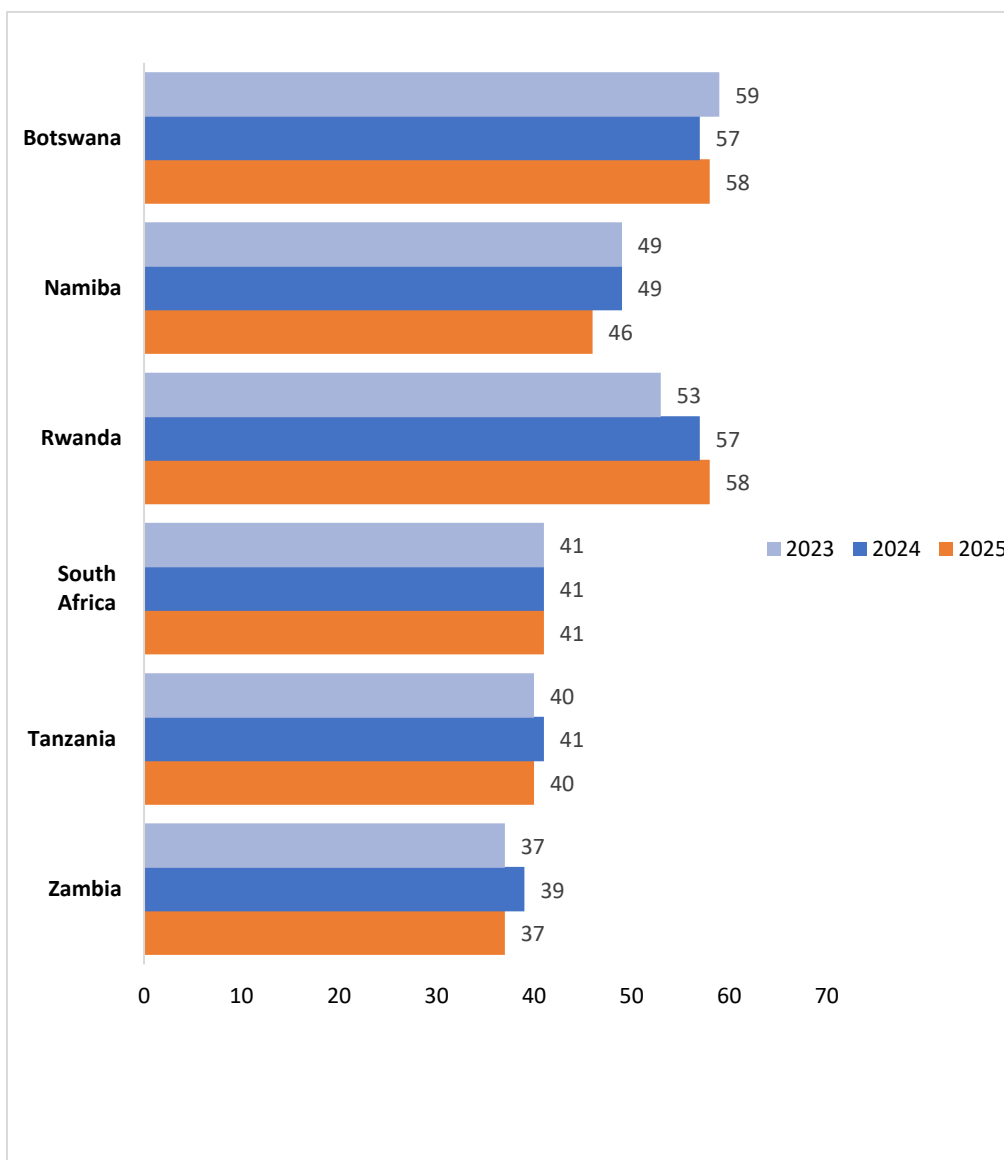


Zambia's CPI score declined by 2 points in 2025, from 39/100 in 2024 to 37/100, and its rank fell by 7 places from 92/180 in 2024 to 99/182 in 2025. This means 98 countries outperformed Zambia in 2025,

compared with 91 in 2024. Furthermore, this is the first time the CPI score for Zambia has declined in the past five years, indicating challenges in sustaining anti-corruption efforts.

2.2 Zambia's Comparative Performance, 2023-2025

FIGURE 4: ZAMBIA'S COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE, 2022-2024



In 2025, the CPI scores for **Botswana (58) and Rwanda (58)** both increased by 1 point, while **South Africa (41)** maintained its score for the third consecutive year. Meanwhile, the scores for **Tanzania (40)**

and Zambia (37) both dropped by 1 point, while Namibia's score dropped by **3 points**, from 49/100 in 2024 to 46/100 in 2025.

2.3 Trend Analysis of Data Sources

In 2025, Transparency International used nine data sources to compute Zambia's CPI score. Among the nine data sources, the World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey indicated the most significant change, while the Varieties

of Democracy Project also showed a significant change; the remaining data sources showed no significant changes. **Table 1** summarises the changes in the underlying data sources.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF CHANGES IN DATA SOURCES, 2023-2025

DATA SOURCE	2023	2024	2025	2024-2025 CHANGE
1 The African Development Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessment*	32	34	34	0
2 The Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index*	33	34	34	0
3 Economist Intelligence Unit Country Risk Service Ratings	37	35	34	-1
4 The Global Insight Country Risk Ratings	47	46	46	0
5 The PRS Group International Country Risk Guide	32	33	33	0
6 The World Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessment	27	27	27	0
7 World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey	-	53	38	-15*
8 World Justice Project Rule of Law Index	36	35	34	-1
9 The Varieties of Democracy Project	54	53	50	-3*
Corruption Perceptions Index (Average)	37.25	38.89	36.66	

Note: * In the first column indicates that the data source was not updated in 2025, while the * in the last column indicates that the change in the score is significant (i.e. greater than two points)

The analysis of data sources indicates that Zambia's CPI score decreased from 39/100 in 2024 to 37/100 in 2025, due to **a 15-point drop in the World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey score** and a **3-point drop in the Varieties of**

Democracy Project score. Two out of the nine data sources were not updated in 2025, while the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index recorded an insignificant drop (1 point), and all other data sources recorded no changes.

2.4 Thematic Analysis of Data Sources

In 2025, Transparency International introduced a multi-thematic analysis of the CPI results. This was to ensure clearer attribution, deeper analysis, and contextualisation of findings across regions. In response, Transparency International Zambia expanded the CPI country-level analysis to include graphical and thematic analyses of the data sources, guided by one of the CPI global themes.

To explain Zambia's 2025 CPI Analysis, TI-Z adopted the theme "**Democracy, political integrity and state capture**" because two data sources that showed significant changes indicate rising political corruption and a higher risk **of illicit financing of**

political parties ahead of the 2026 General Elections.

The World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey measures bribery in business operations (the supply side of political corruption), while the Varieties of Democracy Project measures political corruption in the executive, legislature, and judiciary (the demand side of political corruption), including bribery, embezzlement, procurement corruption and grand corruption.

Figure 5 presents the pathways of political corruption and the diversion of public funds to political parties.

FIGURE 5: PATHWAYS OF POLITICAL CORRUPTION

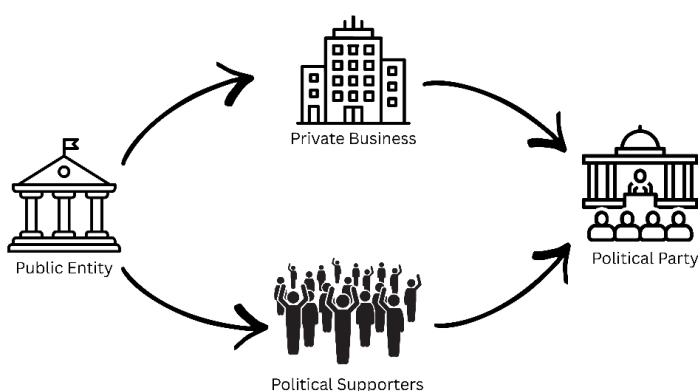


Figure 5 indicates that public funds can be diverted through politically connected **private-sector businesses** participating in public procurement, or through direct participation of **political party supporters** in vulnerable government programmes.

The following are the key drivers and evidence sources for this system of political corruption:

(1) Evidence of Collusion among business entities, public officials, and

gatekeepers. Reports by the Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC)¹ indicate collusion among business entities, public officials, and gatekeepers, including lawyers and real estate agents, to exploit procurement processes and gain access to public funds. Limited access to and use of beneficial ownership registers exacerbate these risks.

(2) Existence of Vulnerable Government Social Programmes. These include the Citizen Economic Empowerment Commission (CEEC) loans; the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP), now incorporated in the Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme (CASP); the Cash for Work programme and the Constituency Development Fund (CDF). The CDF continues to receive increased budget allocations² despite recent programme audits indicating financial irregularities, including failures to recover loans, with the majority concentrated in the ruling UPND's political strongholds.³

(3) Lack of transparency and high risk of illicit financing. Despite civil society advocacy to enhance transparency and accountability in political party and campaign financing, and the existence of Article 60 of the Constitution, which provides for the regulation of political party financing, there has been little progress in enacting a political financing law in Zambia. Recent studies indicate limited financial transparency among political parties and a high risk of illicit financing. The majority of political parties in Zambia conduct no due diligence on their sources of financing and accept donations from companies participating in public procurement.⁴

Therefore, TI-Z attributes the drop in the 2025 CPI score to increased abuse of office by public officials, who are diverting public funds through strategic business interests and political supporters ahead of the 2026 Elections.

¹ Financial Intelligence Centre (2025). Trends Report 2024. <https://www.fic.gov.zm/79-fic-news/124-trends-report-2024>

² Ministry of Finance and National Planning. (2021 to 2025). National Budget Speeches from 2022 to 2026. https://www.mofnp.gov.zm/?page_id=3949

³ Transparency International Zambia (2025). Analytical Brief: 2023 Auditor General's Report on the Constituency Development Fund for the year

ended 31 December 2023.

<https://tizambia.org.zm/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Analysis-of-the-2023-CDF-Audit-Report.pdf>

⁴ Transparency International Zambia (2025). Assessing the level of transparency in political party financing and the risk of Illicit Financing in Zambia. <https://tizambia.org.zm/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Transparency-and-Illicit-Financing-Report.pdf>

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) released by Transparency International shows that, for the first time in more than a decade, the global average has dropped to **42/100** from **43/100** in 2024. This underscores the disturbing fact that most countries are failing to control corruption. In the 2025 CPI, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) had an average score of 32/100, down from 33/100 in 2024 and remaining the lowest-performing region globally.

In 2025, Zambia's CPI score declined by 2 points, from 39/100 in 2024 to 37/100,

and its rank fell 7 places, from 92/180 in 2024 to 99/182. The drop in the CPI score was due to a 15-point decline in the World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey score and a 3-point decline in the Varieties of Democracy Project score. TI-Z attributes the drop in the 2025 CPI score to increased abuse of **office by public officials, who are diverting public funds through strategic business interests and political supporters**, ahead of the 2026 Elections. In light of these findings, Transparency International Zambia makes the following recommendations:

TABLE 2: 2025 CPI RECOMMENDATIONS

Stakeholder	Recommendation
Relevant Government Ministries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise the legislation of political party and campaign financing laws to strengthen transparency and accountability in political processes. • Strengthen enforcement of procurement regulations and eliminate undue influence in public procurement. • Address the growing perception of corruption in government social protection and empowerment programmes, particularly in times leading up to elections.
Law enforcement agencies and oversight institutions (ACC, DEC, DPP, ZPS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance investigations, sanctions and protections to combat corruption and to deter business interests from colluding with public officials • Take more decisive action following the publication of the Auditor General and Financial Intelligence Centre Reports to halt the continued trend of abuse of public funds
International organisations and Cooperating Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote transparency in political party and campaign financing, and transparency and accountability in political processes.
Local Anti-Corruption Actors (NGOs and CSOs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerate monitoring and advocacy efforts aimed at combating political corruption to influence future improvements in Zambia's CPI score • Initiate and upscale comprehensive assessments of vulnerable public empowerment and social welfare programmes to reduce the risk of patronage