

family. It would make more sense for government to create new housing cooperatives designed for large extended families.

In the future, Canada stands to make a lot of money in the north from natural resources and shipping routes that will become newly accessible as Arctic ice melts. The stakes are high for Nunavut's fledgling government, and as more money flows out of Canada's north, they're only going to get higher.

## OTHER NATIONS

## Mobile Monitoring

**THE SOURCE:** "Mobile Phone Diffusion and Corruption in Africa" by Catie Snow Bailard, in *Political Communication*, July-Sept. 2009.

THERE'S BEEN A LOT OF BUZZ about how cell phones are making it easier for Africans to do business. A woman who catches and sells fish for a living can take orders by phone, ensuring that she doesn't end up with rotting, unsold fish. Business owners in remote areas can manage bank accounts with text messages.

Catie Snow Bailard, a professor at George Washington University's School of Media and Public Affairs, says cell phones have another, less noted effect—reducing corruption.

From 2000 to 2007, the percentage of Africans with a cell phone ballooned from under two to 30, and demand is still strong. When mobile service providers

were slow to expand coverage in the Congo, villagers built 50-foot-high tree houses in order to get a better signal. But service is rapidly improving; in 2007, nearly two-thirds of all Africans lived in an area with cell phone reception. That could be good news for corruption fighters.

Corruption can flourish when aid dollars flow into a community where there is so little transparency that local officials can siphon off money without detection. One 2004 study found that only 14 percent of funds designated for school fees in Uganda actually got to the schools. Without cell phones, it was difficult for aid donors to communicate to school leaders how much money they should be receiving. Kept in the dark, the educators didn't know when money went missing. Now, equipped with cell phones, school leaders are kept in the loop and middlemen cannot pocket money undetected.

Using data from Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, the United Nations, and the Afrobarometer survey, Bailard finds trends pointing toward lower levels of "perceived corruption" as cell

In Africa, cell phones help reduce corruption by making it easier to spread the word about malfeasance.

phone use increases. (Because corruption is impossible to measure, scholars use data on perceived corruption as a proxy.) In Cameroon, the expansion of cell phone use from almost nothing in 1999 to 24 percent of the population in 2006 correlated with a nationwide drop in perceived corruption of seven-tenths of a point on a 10-point scale. Moreover, Bailard observes a drop not just in perceived corruption, but in experienced corruption as well. In one comparison, residents of Namibia's Oshikoto province, which has very good cell phone reception, were 15 percentage points less likely to pay a bribe for municipal services than people living in Kavango, a neighboring province with terrible cell phone coverage.

Bailard raises a caveat: Corruption that directly and immediately benefits "the masses" may actually increase as a result of cell phone use. For example, at election time, villagers who sell their vote can make quick use of the small amounts of food or cash they receive in return. Such schemes may be easier to orchestrate when more people are reachable by phone.

Of course, cell phones do not by themselves make for cleaner politics. Someone has to be "on the other end of the line committed to the fight against corruption. If there are no concerned citizens, aid agency representatives, reformers, or journalists 'dialing in' in the fight . . . phones alone will likely make little difference," Bailard writes.