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How has the Resource Curse Affected the Development of African Countries?

African nations possessing certain mineral goods such as diamonds or oil tend to be classified as worse than other African nations in terms of their progress politically and economically. This paradox is known as the Resource Curse because despite African countries having access to expensive and lucrative natural resources they are still in a poorer state in comparison to other African countries. This issue can primarily be attributed in particular to the governance of the ruling elites. It is ultimately a lack of transparency in the processes of these governments that kills the possibility of African nations developing economically, and using their resources to the benefit of their people.

To begin with, in many cases due to corruption, the majority of revenue to be had goes directly to the ruling elites as opposed to the population of African countries. They then use the accrued revenue to further their purposes by, for instance, buying the loyalty of the military, suppressing attempts at greater political involvement by the people, and, overall, restricting the distribution of resources so that only the ruling elite has access, and the vast majority of the African population are excluded. The Resource Curse affects the methods that the ruling elites use to administer their rule, and can be attributed to African countries' failure to satisfy the pillars of good governance.

To describe the four pillars of good governance there is accountability, transparency, the rule of law, and participation. There is largely a lack of transparency as to how a government's

revenues are used, thus it is difficult to hold the ruling elites accountable for its misuse and poor distribution. This can be attributed to the lack of clear differentiation between the public and private sectors. There is a lack of an efficient framework of laws and rules. There is a lack of priority which should be to help the African nation develop, resulting in a misallocation of resources. Consequently, there is an overall lack of progress economically, and in administration.

In terms of economic and administrative development, resource-rich nations face other developmental issues as well. To begin with, due to the greed of the higher-ups in African societies people such as civil servants are so poorly paid that they must resort to petty corruption and theft. Furthermore, there is the issue of the “Big-Man Syndrome” in which many African leaders have established a network of corruption when it comes to mineral resources stemming from the bottom to the top of the social hierarchy and centered around directing these resources directly to the government leaders themselves and their cronies. People also turn to crime as a way to finance themselves as they often have no where else to turn for a reliable source of income.

That is not to say, however, that the issue of the Resource Curse is inevitable for all resource-rich countries. Resource-rich countries such as Botswana, for instance, have found success in governing themselves and successfully allocating resources to the benefit of the people. Overall, while the Resource Curse has been prevalent in many African countries this displays that it is not inevitable. There are African countries that have managed to evade this problem. These have genuinely worked for the betterment of their people as opposed to satisfying the greed and corruption that is very prevalent in African governments.