

FESTUS KONGNYU NFOR

TOPIC: WORLD BANK ESSAY ON ANTI -CORRUPTION

**HOW DO YOU CONTRIBUTE TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF
CORRUPTION IN YOUR COMMUNITY**

Africa, and Cameroon in particular, has not always been corrupt and some African societies are not corrupt. Nevertheless, for much of Africa, the reduction of corruption is currently an important priority. In order to better understand how one could reduce corruption from the society, it is necessary and important to comprehend the meaning of the term 'corruption' and a briefing on the aspect of corruption.

Corruption is a moral and criminal practice that is of growing concern to donors, non-governmental organisations, governments and citizens in developing and industrial countries alike. Corruption has become a main barrier to sustainable and equitable development.

The ordinary man holds that corruption occurs when public agents demand money to users of public services, in exchange for their services that normally have to be for free.

A straightforward definition proposed by the World Bank in 1997 was '*Public service is abused for private gains when an official accepts, solicits, or extorts a bribe.*'

Bribes are one of the main tools of corruption. Bribery is the act of giving a promise or illegal and undue payment or other advantages whether directly or through intermediaries to, or for the benefit of, a public official to influence the official to act or refrain from acting in the performance of his or her official duties.

Public office can also be abused for personal benefit even if no bribery occurs, through patronage and nepotism, the theft of State assets, or the diversion of State revenues. The public official may be appointed or elected and the bribe

may be offered or extorted. Attempts by individuals or private agents to influence a public official, through the payment of bribes or an exchange of benefits or favours, in order to receive a special gain or treatment not available to others is also a form of corruption, even if the gain involved is sometimes not illicit under applicable law.

Corruption affects mostly Government structures like public administration, courts, parliament, police and army, tax and custom departments, councils and public sector. However, corruption is not confined to the public sector. It is not limited to the payment and receipt of bribes. It takes various forms and is practised under all forms of government, including well-established democracies. It can be found in the private sector activities. It is not exclusively associated with any ethnic racial, or religious group.

However, its level, scope, and impact vary greatly from one country to another and may also vary, at least for a while, within the same country from one place to another.

The fight against corruption is an indispensable battle in my community Cameroon. In order to effect a positive change in the community, it is going to begin with me as an individual to stop and avoid all practices of corruption. In other words, behavioural change should be the tool needed. In the plight of this, if I stop giving and receiving bribe, others will see this act and emulate when I preach to them about the ills of corruption. This goes in line with the normal adage that, 'Allah will curse those who give and receive bribe'.

Moreover, I will make sure that any unjust act in the field of education be published on newspapers, the internet or reported to the right administrative quota for action to be taken. Admission into schools, institutions and jobs, should be based on merit and not on financial or social status because even the poor need to be educated. That notwithstanding, cronyism should be stamped out!

Furthermore, being one of the elites and educated persons in my community, I am going to encourage heavy and severe punishment of all 'the big fish' of the community who are involved in the corrupt practices. By so doing, those lower according to social status and stratification, will take note, watch out

and learn a lesson that if they should indulge in corruption, things are going to turn out bad and blink for them in the future. Hence, the way we live today determines the footprints of tomorrow.

In addition, the increased spread of corruption in my community is as a result of moral decadence. I therefore see the need to teach good morals in my school and church, in order to boost and raise the moral norms of the community. In an honest society, the risk of punishment is much more higher than in a corrupt society due to this decay in morals. In honest societies, people expect other people to be honest. In corrupt societies, they expect other people to be corrupt. My community is not an exception or exempted from a corrupt society where we expect other people to be corrupt just because of moral decadence.

In continuation, the idea of cheating in examinations or at our job sides should be stopped. Research has shown and proven that cheating in examinations is not a learning tool. It only goes a long way to kill my intelligence and makes me a slave. Cheating here includes, showing your answers to your neighbour and also copying form him. These are practises that, if stopped at the level of individuals, the whole community will be affected due to the multiplier effect. Also, still in line with this, electoral corruption should be stopped. This starts from me not to vote because of drinks, food or money, neither for me to vote because of tribal lines, regional or family ties. But for what and who merits. In Abraham Lincoln's letter to his son's teacher, he said that, ' teach my son to know that it is far honourable to fail than to cheat'. What a lesson for mankind to emulate!

According to recent work and research done in our community, I understood and came to the conclusion that, women tend to be less corrupt than men. Of course, there are plenty of very corrupt women and plenty of very honest men. But on the average, women are less corrupt than men. Therefore, the greater the proportion of members of parliament who are women, the lower is the level of corruption in our community. I have therefore resulted to vote and encourage others to vote for many apt women to be represented in the parliament in view of the up coming legislative elections in my country Cameroon.

One way to reduce the incentive for corruption is to strengthen the incentive to inform on corrupt acts. There are various ways of doing this. A particularly simple and effective way is to exploit the fact that corruption involves two or more people making a deal, which by its nature they cannot enforce legally. The astute local authorities can therefore design a penalty system, which encourages one or other party to break the deal. For example, in some communities, there is now a rule that the first party to a corrupt deal to inform the authorities is automatically granted immunity from prosecution. Because of this, deals are much more dangerous to make and so there will be fewer of them.

Another possibility is by advising the authorities of my community to reward whistle-blowers: that is, people who are not directly involved in the corrupt deal but who have knowledge of it. Whistle blowing is dangerous and so such people need to be rewarded. This situation of ‘watch me as I watch you manage your community’, will go a very long way to keep everybody on his or her toes.

As a matter of fact, praying fervently for my community will help in the fight against corruption. This is so because, *when we work, we work. But when we pray God works.* The corrupt practices of our community has eaten so deep into the nooks and crannies of the community that one now thinks and beliefs that it has become an epidemic and only the timing ‘*Divine Intervention*’ would rescue us from the plague. After all, there is the adage that, ‘*Prayer is the Master Key*’.

In our prestigious Community Meeting in which I am a member of the Executive Committee, I make sure that all the activities especially those that concern finance management to be open, transparent and having an accountable management in public affairs. By so doing, every member has now placed hands-on-deck to watch out and be alert for any defaulter for necessary measures to be meted. Moreover, the promotion of staff should not be done in any other way or not unconnected to performance but solely dependent on performance. This idea will curb corruption and encourage hard work.

In line with the above, there is the need for an ombudsman. As ombudsman is such an institution that should be put in place. Some people in my community argue that creating the office of an ombudsman could strengthen the fight against corruption. The role of the ombudsman is to receive complaints both internal/external about acts or practices that appear to constitute an abuse of authority such as: procedural problems, rudeness, negligence, invidious political/personal favouritism or bias, dishonesty, corruption in dealing with grants, applications, partner organisations and the general public.

Therefore, based on the above discussion and points postulated, there is a great need for the sensitisation (via means of seminars and workshops) of the local and traditional authorities on the ills of corruption both as individuals and as a community. The community and its inhabitants also need to be shown how corruption affects human rights and hampers development both human and material.

For retrospect therefore, corruption is a problem, which has afflicted many societies/communities at one time or another. There is little that is particularly African about African corruption. Above, I have reviewed several approaches to the problem of reducing it. What they have in common is that they are based upon recent research. In turn, research is based on quantification. Once we can measure corruption, however approximately, we can discover that it tends to reduce it. Hence a key step in the fight against corruption is measurement. Of course, measurement does much more than guide our interventions: it provides a benchmark against which we can measure progress. With benchmarks we can find out which of our interventions are most successful and intensify them. Further, once corruption is measurably on the decline, this will itself be reinforcing as it changes expectations. The policies, which I have suggested, are not alternatives, they are compliments. Each on its own may well fail, but together they can empower Africa and our community's coming generation to rid the continent of corruption.

HOW DO YOU INFLUENCE THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS?

Influencing the decision making process of a country where democratic principles are being practised behind the screen or curtain, not an easy pill to swallow. It is pretty difficult is not impossible but where there is a will, there is a way! Looking at the ways and means in which one could influence the decision making process of my community, one sees that numerous but not exhaustive.

First of all, by voting for the right, able, competent and capable person who will be that 'machinery' where the interests of the people could be articulated in the decision making process just in the required and right way. This will influence the decision making process of the community.

Secondly, by means of writing poems, sketches, films, dramas etc with messages of anti-corruption displayed in the various domains exposing the effects, ills and subsequent consequence of the practice of corruption in the community. An example of an anti-corruption message could be, '*How Corrupt Are You?*'

As a third point therefore, via means of music and songs, still carrying and embodied with the said message of anti-corruption such as, '*Corruption, Deadly Than Malaria*'. These messages could be song by choristers, individuals or Acappella groups of various sorts.

Moreover, the use of the media and publication of posters, flyers, banners etc portraying the society and how corrupt it is and littering them in and around the community will consequently be seen and heard by those involved in the decision making process of the community. This will affect their thinking and reasoning and when you change, things are bound to work for the better. This is so because, once the mind of man is conquered, he accepts what conquered the mind and tends to prune his/her life to work in that direction.

Another sensitive and important means of influencing the decision making process of the community is by Organising workshops, seminars, debates and conferences on Anti- Corruption methods with most if not all of the members of the government invited and taking part in it either by means of lectures, contributions or feedbacks on how they function.

Coming to us young people who are often referred to as '*The Youths are the leaders of tomorrow*', youths need to come together and form groups or organisations that will be a channel for their interests into the political system and with the voice of one man and not some other person talking on their behalf since they are the leaders of tomorrow! Such a youth group should be one of order and respect, integrity and dignity, not one of disorder for it shall surely not work if this is the case.

From the above propounded points, which I strongly believe if implemented to the brim in our community without fear or fright will surely bring forth a positive influence on the decision making process if given the chance to implement. These points are not totally exhaustive, but very important in a dispensation like our community.