THE WAR AGAINST CORRUPTION AS A POVERTY REDUCTION AGENDA IN AFRICA

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Abstract

At independence, most African countries were presented with an opportunity to chart new directions in their development agenda to improve the livelihoods of their people. The policy agenda of all African states at independence was mainly to fight ignorance, poverty and disease. However, to date all African countries are still experiencing low levels of development characterised by high levels of poverty, unemployment, insecurity and general social and moral decay. All these developmental problems are partly blamed on bad governance and more particularly, misrule and high levels of corruption the continent is experiencing. Indeed, the case of Africa is one of a paradox in that although it is the richest in the world in terms of natural resources, it remains at the bottom of global governance and development prism.

In recent years, however, the situation has improved in a number of countries with various measures being taken to address the problem of corruption. Stakeholders in Africa’s development are increasingly utilising the concepts of corruption and governance as the basis of their actions. Similarly, policy makers and scholars are still actively seeking better ways to address these problems and deliver the continent to the earlier envisaged higher development path.

This paper explores the origins of corruption in Africa, its causes and effects and proposes practical solutions that can be considered to reenergise the fight against corruption to improve governance, renew growth and revert the continent on a higher development path.
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A. Introduction

Corruption is worse than prostitution. The latter might endanger the morals of an individual; the former invariably endangers the morals of an entire country.¹

Corruption is presently one of the major challenges facing the human race. The world over, corruption is increasingly being seen as a threat to human existence to the extent that some commentators have called for it to be recognised as a ‘crime against humanity.’² Indeed, corruption has been identified as the main obstacle to the realisation of good governance, sustainable development and Millennium Development Goals.³ It has monumental effects on the political, economic, social and cultural well-being of societies. In Africa, for instance, the Commission for Africa identified corruption as a central concern which negatively affects governance and development on the continent.⁴

Africa continues to lag behind other continents. The grim situation of Africa can be summarized in the words of Rwekaza et al⁵ who observed that ‘while other regions increased per capita income, raised literacy rates and improved healthcare, per capita income in Africa was roughly the same in 1990s as it was at independence in the 1960s. Africa’s development has stagnated and declined significantly over the years, with nearly half of the continent’s population living on less than a dollar a day, thus representing 30 percent of the world’s poor in the 1990s and even the first decade of 2000. Africa persistently ranks at or near the bottom in global comparisons of social

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² B Ilias ‘Corruption as an international crime and crime against humanity: An outline of supplementary criminal justice policies (2006) Journal of International Criminal Justice, Vol. 4 Issue 3, 466-486. See also the speech by Hon Kiraitu Murungi, Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs of Kenya during the opening of the 11th International Anti-Corruption Conference in Seoul, South Korea on 25th May 2003 titled ‘When corruption is a crime against humanity.’

³ See Transparency International ‘Millennium Development Goals are unreachable without commitment to fighting corruption’ Berlin, Germany, 14th September 2005.


indicators.\textsuperscript{6} This state of affairs is mainly attributable to the culture of impunity, corruption and bad governance.

The questions invariably confronting researchers, commentators and policy makers alike are; where did post-independence Africa go wrong in charting a new direction for her people? Can Africa reclaim its lost glory? Are political and other leaders in the continent committed and/or interested in addressing the vice of corruption?

The problem of corruption cannot be seen solely as an African problem. It is an import, nurtured, developed and entrenched in the continent of Africa. Therefore while corruption is a global challenge\textsuperscript{7}, its effects are more manifest in Africa and other developing countries. Corruption has `helped’ unseat governments in Brazil, Italy, Ecuador and India and led to a \textit{coup d\textsuperscript{e}tat} in Thailand in 2006.\textsuperscript{8} Consequently, it has been realised by stakeholders in the governance process that the cost of corruption is pernicious and that no society can survive its grip.

\textbf{B. What Is Corruption?}

Corruption is seen as a social, legal, economic and political concept. The definitions focus on one of several aspects of the phenomenon. Khan\textsuperscript{9} proposes that the various approaches of corruption can be placed into five groups, namely; public interest centred, market centred, public office centred, and public opinion centred and legalistic. Despite this proposition, corruption is defined in the context of a state-society relationship, where distinctions are made between political and bureaucratic corruption (petty versus grand); redistributive and extractive corruption (from below versus above). More particularly and for the purpose of this paper, corruption is used to mean the “use of public office for private gain”\textsuperscript{10}.

\textbf{C. Corruption In Africa: A Foreign Import?}

Even though debate around corruption has focused more on Africa in the last decades and present times, corruption itself is as old as human beings. There

\textsuperscript{6} Rwekaza M. et al (n 5 above)

\textsuperscript{7} Evidenced in global scandals such as the Enron case in the United States, Goldenberg and Anglo Leasing in Kenya, Lesotho Highlands Water Project, recent political awards in the UK and the Elf case in France.

\textsuperscript{8} For further reading see NA Lash ‘Corruption and economic development’ Loyola University Chicago, 2003.

\textsuperscript{9} Khan M M (2004): “Political and Administrative Corruption: Concepts, comparative Experiences and Bangladesh Case”, Transparency International

is ample evidence in the Holy Books indicating that corruption existed and God constantly kept on reminding his people against engaging in it. However, corruption as we know it today seems to have originated from the slave trade and the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century.\(^{11}\) According to Robb, the industrial revolution gave birth to a complex economy characterised by increasing dependence on finance and investment together with an increase of professionals such as lawyers and financiers that facilitated the expansion and potential for white collar crime.\(^{12}\)

Corruption increased progressively from one historical era to another with the complex nature of corruption involving finances being introduced in Africa through colonialism.\(^{13}\) This brand of corruption survived the struggle for independence in many African countries and has since been nourished by the weak institutions and leadership in post colonial Africa. The institutions were later emasculated to enhance concentration of state power in the hands of cabals of politicians thus creating an environment not conducive to participatory democracy and the development of an expanded economic role of the state.\(^{14}\) According to Waliggo, the pattern of evolution of corruption in Africa suggests that it has been increasing progressively from one historical epoch to another with an emerging trend of increasing levels of corruption with modernisation and ‘civilisation’ in all African countries.\(^{15}\)

### D. Corruption: A Victimless Crime?

Some commentators and practitioners have long considered corruption a ‘victimless’ crime that affected no particular individual. This view has, however, changed following the empirical and non-empirical studies on the relationship between corruption and economic and human development.\(^{16}\) Corruption adversely affects investments,\(^{17}\) increases and skews allocation of

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\(^{12}\) Robb (n 11 above)

\(^{13}\) Munyae & Gwen (n 5 above) 18


\(^{17}\) Investors will avoid environments where corruption is rampant due to increased cost of doing business and breakdown of the rule of law. Local investors seeking to invest outside their countries may find it difficult to win the confidence of potential business partners if they come from countries with high levels of corruption.
resources and expenditure on basic needs such as infrastructure, education and healthcare in addition to reducing productivity of public investment and infrastructure through misallocation of talent and other resources. It also undermines good governance, democracy and a country’s competitiveness and revenue base.

According to Dreher and Herzfeld, the effect of corruption on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth is so huge such that an increase of corruption by about one index point reduces GDP growth by 0.13 percentage points and GDP per capita by US$ 425. In Africa, the African Development Bank estimates that the continent loses in excess of US$300 billion annually through corruption, an amount that is 25% of its GDP and higher than donor and aid inflows. Indeed, the effects of corruption in Africa have been so monumental that one African commentator once observed that ‘currently corruption and HIV/AIDS are the two major killers in Africa.’

E. Causes Of Corruption In Africa

The root causes of corruption vary from place to place depending on the political, social, economic and cultural circumstances. In Africa, some of the identifiable causes of corruption include the negative colonial legacy, poor leadership, politics of the belly, omnipotent state, greed and selfishness, clientelism and patronage nepotism, absence of popular participation of the public in government, weak institutions of governance, lack of accountability and transparency, lack of political will, weak ethical values, centralist nature of the state and concentration of state power, weak judicial system and constant insecurity and conflicts.

Despite the myriad factors that contribute to or cause corruption, in the case of Africa, the deep seated governance problem seems to explain why the continent is viewed as very corrupt. At independence most African states, and by extension leaders, preoccupied themselves with ‘politics of survival’ using military coups or other means to consolidate power through de-jure or de-facto one party states which guaranteed them security of tenure but which they also used to propagate their so called development agenda for the nation. This only worked to perpetuate neo-colonialism, exploitation of the people and resentment of any dissenting voices. Nepotism, ethnicity, race and other factors became key considerations in the allocation and application of national resources. Individuals in high offices in both the public and private sector used their power and influence to amass wealth to the detriment of the

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20 Rwekaza M et al (n 6 above), 2006
common person. This coupled with insensitive donor programmes, created and sustained bad governance, entrenched corruption and impunity and increased poverty levels.

Generally, regardless of ideological persuasion, from the post independence era to date, Africa has produced few states capable of creating enabling environment for economic development. The states are not only guilty of unproductive interventions in the economy but also for retarded economic development through parasitic and corrupt activities that discouraged and made business success dependent on political connection. This led to the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) of the 1980s geared towards restoring economic growth, restructuring the political-economic patronage system of the post colonial era, pursuing economic and political reforms and improving infrastructure.

While the effects of SAPs on the poor and vulnerable remain controversial to date, they contributed to expansion of democratic space, increased agitation for transparency and accountability from government, reforms of key governance institutions and improved service delivery. The challenge to the full realization of the benefits of democratic governance remain weak systems and lack of political will among Africa leaders. Therefore effects of corruption and bad governance are far reaching.

**F. Effects Of Corruption In The Continent**

The words of Chinua Achebe are very clear on the effects of corruption in Africa, when he said:

> **Without doubt, corruption has permeated the African society and anyone who can say that corruption in Africa has not become alarming is either a fool, a crook or else does not live in this continent.**

There is abounding evidence in developing countries indicating that corruption negatively affects growth and development. In the words of Kofi Annan, the former United Nations Secretary General ‘corruption undermines economic performance, weakens democratic institutions and the rule of law, disrupts social order and destroys public trust, thus allowing organised crime,

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21 Through inappropriate taxation policies, misallocation of foreign exchange, the undermining of distribution networks and the redistribution of property.


terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish...And it is always the public good that suffers.  

Corruption is an impediment to political, economic and social development, it hinders administrative development and performance, impairs economic efficiency, leads to brain drain, discourages foreign investments, undermines effective utilisation of natural resources leaving the affected countries vulnerable and dependent on outside interests, subverts democracy, undermines the state legitimacy, leads to capital flight, increases and skews public expenditure on basic needs such as healthcare, education and infrastructure, leads to environmental degradation, erosion of social values, stifles local initiatives and enterprise and intensifies other social problems such as crime, unemployment, poverty and ethnicity.

Corruption also reduces the productivity of public investment and the county’s infrastructure through misallocation of talent and other resources, reduces government revenue due to tax evasion resulting in high taxation of the public and reduces a country’s competitiveness at the international level, particularly, with regard to trade, currency stability and investment. These consequences have the overall negative distortion on a country’s development.

The effects of corruption have been more evident in Africa more than any other continent, a fact that has made a commentator to state that:

**Few would quarrel with the assertion that corruption in Africa has damaged development objectives, undermined long term economic growth, increased poverty, and contributed to the continent’s declining position in world trade.**

The situation has deteriorated to the extent that whichever way one views corruption, it involves a violation of public duty or deviation from high moral standards in exchange for (or in anticipation of) personal pecuniary gains. Although the direct costs of corruption may be high in terms of lost revenue or

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25 Africa receives the lowest share of the global Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) inflows due to corruption. According to Bjorvatn (2000: 1) the whole of Africa receives less FDI than Singapore alone.

26 A report of the Global Financial Integrity titled ‘Illicit financial flows from developing countries: 2000 – 2009,’ released in January 2011 conservatively estimate that a total of US$1.26 trillion of which 21.9% (US$ 0.276 trillion) is from Africa was flown out of developing countries in 2008. The Report states that the amount of money that has been drained out of Africa is far in excess of the official development assistance to African countries.

27 Corruption would lead to collapse of public investments or massive losses and further reduce the quality of roads, telecommunications, housing and sanitation among others.

funds diverted from their intended use, the indirect costs of the economic distortions, inefficiencies and waste resulting from corrupt practices are more problematic over the long term and thus make more difficult to address\textsuperscript{29}.

\section*{a. Public Welfare Effects Of Corruption}

As early as the 1960s various schools of thought had attempted to explain the precise effect of corruption on people’s well-being. The classical school viewed corruption as an instrument for tackling problems in service delivery occasioned by the existence of cumbersome regulation, excessive bureaucracy or market restrictions. However, they went further to note that even in cases where corruption can be perceived to be good for the economy, certain negative externalities remained. While underscoring the existence of these externalities, this school of thought did not evaluate the influences of corruption on the economy especially, those economies which had undertaken aggressive reforms and removed bureaucracies and cumbersome regulations. These were the main arguments that informed the general understanding that reforms are better for the economy. Most governments have therefore in the last decade pursued aggressive public sector reforms as a means of tackling corruption.\textsuperscript{30}

From a different angle, corruption can be viewed to be as a result of bad governance hence the genesis of the Governance Model. Proponents of the Governance Model maintain that corruption causes poverty and hence public welfare by influencing governance factors, which, in turn, impact on public welfare. First, corruption reduces governance capacity, that is, it weakens political institutions and citizen participation and leads to lower quality government services and infrastructure.

The poor suffer disproportionately from reduced public services. When health and basic education expenditures are given lower priority, for example, in favour of capital intensive programs that offer more opportunities for high-level rent taking (such as defence contracts), lower income groups lose services on which they depend. Corruption is consistently correlated with higher school dropout rates and high levels of infant mortality. Secondly, impaired governance increases poverty by restricting economic growth and, coming full circle, by its inability to control corruption. Thirdly, corruption that reduces governance capacity may also inflict critical collateral damage: reduced public trust in government institutions. As trust - an important element of social capital - declines, research has shown that vulnerability of


the poor increases as their economic productivity is affected. When people perceive that the social system is untrustworthy and inequitable, their incentive to engage in productive economic activities declines.

Further analysis by Lambsdorff\textsuperscript{31} affirms that corruption renders the government unwilling or unable to maximize public welfare. He argues that this happens mainly through two channels. First is by distorting the agents’ decisions and limiting the contractual space available to agents and governments; and secondly by creating allocative inefficiencies, that cripples its commitment to policies and also opening the door to opportunism. Soreide\textsuperscript{32} concurs with this argument and states that the problem of corruption mainly occurs because of its tendency to replace public welfare as the fundamental concern of public institutions with the personal interest of public employees.

\section*{b. Economic Effects}

A common argument that has been advanced by academia and researchers alike is that corruption lowers investments, capital productivity, capital inflows and many other macroeconomic indicators that have a direct bearing on public welfare. Chetwynd et al, (2003), suggests that there is a direct causal link between corruption and economic growth. Corruption impedes economic growth by discouraging foreign and domestic investment, taxing and dampening entrepreneurship, lowering the quality of public infrastructure, decreasing tax revenues, diverting public talent into rent-seeking, and distorting the composition of public expenditure.

In addition to limiting economic growth, there is evidence that corruption also exacerbates income inequality; regression analysis has shown a positive correlation between corruption and income inequality. Explanations for this link are that corruption distorts the economy and the legal and policy frameworks allowing some to benefit more than others; leads to unfair distribution of government resources and services; reduces the progressivity of the tax system; increases the inequality of factor ownership; and that lower income households (and businesses) pay a higher proportion of their income in bribes than do middle or upper-income households. Economic growth and income inequality are important because they link corruption to poverty and subsequently lower public welfare.


\textsuperscript{32} Soreide T (2004): “Corruption and Public Procurement”. A presentation at the UNICEF conference organized by the Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry (NHO), Oslo.
Low level corruption like bribery has also been seen to affect public welfare. This is based on the Principal-Agent model which suggests that economic actions are restricted by legislation and regulation, while restrictions should be assumed to be exogenous and that corruption can enlarge the set of possible actions to be taken by the parties involved. Corruption is deemed to take place when an agent trespasses on the rules set up by the principal by colluding with the client and promoting his own benefit. He obtains a bribe that is hidden from the principal. The aim of a bribe is to loosen loyalty between agent and principal and induces the agent to bend the rules in favour of the client. It is this type of collusion between a client and the agent that distinguishes corruption from simple self-seeking behaviour among agents (Lambsdorff, 2001). In other words persons seeking public services are forced to pay bribes in order to obtain these services. This consequently affects public welfare due to “inaccessibility” of services, which should otherwise be free or charged at a lower fee.

It is imperative to note that empirical studies done in the past to determine the effects of corruption on economic growth and welfare have given mixed results. A study by Mauro,33 examines the impact of corruption using Business International’s (1984) corruption index and growth rates of per capita GDP from 1960 to 1985. Using these variables, Mauro shows that a one-standard-deviation decrease in the corruption index significantly increases the annual growth rate of GDP per capita by 0.8 per cent but after controlling other variables, including investment, the effect of corruption becomes insignificant.

Another study by Mo34 also uses long-term economic growth rates of per capita real GDP from 1970 to 1985. This study shows originality, albeit controversial, in estimating a “direct” effect of corruption, as well as “indirect” effects of various transmission channels (that is, investment, human capital, and political instability), through which corruption could affect economic growth and hence welfare. Specifically, Mo runs a regression using Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index, variables measuring the three transmission channels, and other control variables. By using this method he shows that a one-unit increase in the corruption index reduces the growth rate by about 0.545 percentage points (that is, the “total” effect) and hence with reduction in growth, welfare is also reduced to some extent.

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c. Evidence Of Economic Effects Of Corruption From Africa

i. Reduced Investment And Growth

According to Dreher and Herzfeld, the effect of corruption on GDP growth is so huge such that ‘an increase of corruption by about one index point reduces GDP growth by 0.13 percentage points and GDP per capita by US$ 425.35 This is well illustrated by the finding concerning the correlation between corruption and Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) and GDP for Kenya between 1991 and 1996 as shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>GDP US$ Millions (P/capita)</th>
<th>FDI US$ Thousand</th>
<th>FDI as % of GDP</th>
<th>Corruption as % of GDP</th>
<th>Total US$ Millions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>8,043</td>
<td>18,900</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>598.625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>8,002</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>36.99</td>
<td>2,960.418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>4,977</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>26.13</td>
<td>1,300.378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>7,148</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>25.08</td>
<td>1,793.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>9,047</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>12.53</td>
<td>1,134.135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>9,206</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>19.25</td>
<td>1,771.783</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(World Bank, *Africa Aid Indicators* (Washington DC: International Bank of Reconstruction and Development, 2001b). This table shows the correlation between corruption (as a percentage of GDP) and FDI between 1991 and 1996 which made Kenya a less attractive destination to potential investors.

The investment effects of corruption are seen on the form of capital flight associated with massive looting and siphoning of resources by African Leaders from the continent to other destination in the developed world. The fortunes of some African heads of state published by a French Weekly (May 1997) as presented by Ayittey36 are shocking. The table below presents this state of affairs based on information on some past and present leaders.

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35. Dreher & Herzfeld (n 18 above), June 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Fortune in USD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Sani Abacha (Late)</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>$20 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President H Boigny (Late)</td>
<td>Ivory Coast</td>
<td>$6 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Ibrahim Babangida</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>$5 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Mobutu Sese Seko (Late)</td>
<td>Zaire</td>
<td>$4 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Mousa Traore</td>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>$2 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Henri Bedie</td>
<td>Ivory Coast</td>
<td>$300 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Dennis N’guesso</td>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>$200 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Omar Bongo (Late)</td>
<td>Gabon</td>
<td>$80 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Paul Biya</td>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>$70 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Haile Mariam (Deposed)</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>$30 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Hissene Habre (Late)</td>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>$3 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### ii. Weak Political Systems And Attendant Bad Governance

Corruption undermines democracy and creates state capture by the political elite. According to Kramer,

**Corruption strikes at the heart of democratic polity, the rule of law and the twin principles that all citizens enjoy equal rights in a transparent political process and officialdom exists to promote the public will, not self-aggrandizement. In essence, corruption fosters the ‘privatizing’ of government in the service of specific groups at the expense of the public interest.**

The effects of corruption are felt more by the poor in society as has been documented in the World Bank Report of 2010\(^{38}\) and by Mullei and others when they state that:

**Corruption and corrupt leaders both deepen poverty and make it difficult for ordinary people to get ahead as a result of their own efforts. There is increasing evidence that costs of corruption disproportionately affect the poor, who do not only suffer from...**

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lack of services and efficient government, but who are also powerless to resist the demand of the corrupt officials.⁴⁹

This leads to public apathy, despondency and pessimism to the extent that in some African countries citizens have considered the possibility of their colonial masters recolonising them.

### iii. Sectoral Perspectives Of Corruption

There is adequate evidence suggesting that corruption affects all sectors of the economy. Several case studies by the World Bank⁴⁰ indicate that corruption permeates all sectors, ranging from the healthcare delivery (procurement, distribution and use of pharmaceuticals), education (bribery, illegal fees, teacher absenteeism, preferential promotion and placement, infrastructure contracting etc), forestry (extortion, bribery, timber concessions, sanctions in change in land use leading to violations of protected areas, climate change, species loss), to electricity (theft of electricity, high costs, poor distribution) among others. These effects undermine the sectors’ contribution to the economy and stifles development and poverty reduction.

**In summary** Corruption gives rise to a number of economic distortions. These include:

i) Public infrastructure projects which give monopoly benefits to businesses and commission fees to officials and politicians are often of little public benefit and result in inflated costs to the taxpayer.

ii) Seats in parliament, ministerships and high bureaucratic offices are often bought in order to get access to this corruption revenue. Ordinary people have to pick up the costs of kickbacks, monopoly pricing, substandard goods and services, and misuse of public funds.

iii) Illegal super-profits are often laundered through speculative, if legitimate, markets in real estate, stocks and entertainment businesses, magnifying boom-and-bust tendencies in the economy.

iv) Honest business people are discouraged when faced by competitors who have access to large reserves of cheap funds. Saving, inflation control measures and the work ethic are further undermined when extravagant illicit profits are spent on luxurious consumption. This has therefore enhanced the wider understanding that a sustained fight against corruption would undoubtedly result in improved public welfare. Soreide (2004) expounds on this by arguing that the damage of

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corruption lies in its influence on choices and the introduction of inefficiencies. The author argues that in most cases, corruption tends to increase expenditures as prices are inflated; quality cedes for bribe, perhaps resulting in instances like roads full of pot holes and many uncompleted projects (white elephants); and affects the allocation of public resources, where projects more likely to produce opportunities to obtain bribes are preferred to those that may induce faster improvement in public welfare like education and health projects.

All the above factors lead to decrease in national budget resources and to expenditure cuts. More often than not, lower revenues lead to disproportionately lower levels of spending on education, health care, family benefits and other social services, which would be beneficial to the public.

G. Corruption: Redress Mechanisms

Fighting corruption requires multifaceted and multidisciplinary approaches and strategies which target its political, economic, legal, administrative, social and moral aspects. This calls for coherent, consistent and broad based approaches with long term perspective. It is argued that fighting corruption is fundamentally about addressing poor governance rather than catching the crooks\textsuperscript{41}.

a. Dealing with political corruption

One critical first step in addressing corruption in the countries of Africa is to closely examine how political parties are funded and managed. The fact that most African countries were governed by single parties for a long period of time after gaining independence is not in contention. The most recent classic example is the ANC, which has been the ruling party in South Africa since 1994 when the apartheid regime was crushed. William Gumede\textsuperscript{42} argues that the ANC is confronted with serious corruption challenges ranging from direct party involvement in the business sector, lack of transparency and accountability for funding of the party to the ‘bling leadership’\textsuperscript{43} style that has become the norm among the ruling class in the party. The ‘bling’ culture breeds corruption, dishonesty and builds a society based on relationships of


\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{43} Gumede argues that this is a leadership style characterized by the trappings of power where an individual's worth is now increasingly measured on whether one can afford the bling lifestyle – not on ones contribution to public service or doing the public good.}
patronage thus eroding the norms, values and practices of the party and the
broader society. In addition, the party leadership, rank and file are not willing
to confront corruption within their midst in the name of ‘...not embarrassing
the party’. It is noteworthy that the ANC through its financial arm, the
Chancellor House, engages in tendering for government contracts, bringing
into sharp contrast the role of the ruling party in the business sector\textsuperscript{44} and
governing in the broader public interest. The direct interest in the business
sector also influences sources and magnitude of party funding. This leads to
total erosion of values in the party and the inability for the party to generate
values that are indispensable in everyday life.

In tackling political corruption, political leaders must lead by example through
‘servant leadership’, avoid rhetoric, double-speak, and talking in codes.
Instead they should promote sound values and morals in the political system
and broader society and develop and implement sound policies that address
corruption and governance of the party and the state. The supply side of
corruption – the business sector – must also adhere to the set ‘integrity’
standards in pursuing contracts with government.

b. Busting The Myth That Corruption Is A Victimless Crime\textsuperscript{45}

As observed by Gumede in the South African case, it must be acknowledged
that corruption has disproportionate impact on the livelihood of the poor since
it undermines the delivery of public services (health, education, water,
housing and so on), diverts financial and other resources (that could have
been used for development, job creation and poverty alleviation), weakens the
capacity of the state to deliver effective services equally, undermines the
credibility of the democratic system (citizens’ trust in government and the rule
of law, government credibility in pursuing reforms in the wider public
interest). Therefore, it must be stated in no uncertain terms that corruption
has many victims, including the public, the poor, vulnerable and voiceless
people, institutions of governance and service delivery, and the growth and
prosperity of a nation and her people. It must also be stated very clearly that
corruption is a violation of human rights and a crime against humanity.

\textsuperscript{44} According to Gumede, the ANC’s financial arm, Chancellor House, owns a 25% stake in
Hitachi Power Africa. In addition, Hitachi was awarded a contract by Eskom, the
electricity utility, to supply and install boilers for power stations. The ANC’s stake in
the deal through Chancellor House was estimated in 2008 to be R5.8 billion.

\textsuperscript{45} Jack Selebi, the former police commissioner in South Africa, now convicted of corruption,
said he found it strange that he was prosecuted because there was no victim of his
corruption (William Gumede)
c. Reenergizing The Fight Against Corruption On The African Continent

Declare corruption a national disaster

One key strategy for engendering a collective national response to the vice of corruption is to declare it a national disaster that has undermined and will continue to undermine our development efforts to alleviate poverty and suffering among our people. All government in Africa must provide leadership by engaging a national, regional and international response to corruption through effective administration, prevention, education and enforcement. This could help to end the dangerous defensiveness, and in some cases denialism, within some government and political circles, over the levels of corruption.

Generate and demonstrate sufficient political will to tackle corruption

Political will is the ability to spell out clear anti-corruption policies and interventions and effectively implement them without fear, favour and regardless of who is involved. It is also seen in the ability, will and resolve of the political leaders to deal with the corrupt decisively whether allies, friends, families or colleagues. They must be able to set-up a special public enquiry to probe corruption scandals and act on the recommendations of the inquiry. This has a bearing on just how serious governments are when it comes to fighting corruption. Public confidence will only be restored when there is a proper investigation, prosecution and adjudication over corruption cases.

Strengthen the policy, legal and institutional framework to fight corruption

The UNCAC and the AU Convection on Preventing and Combating Corruption spell out clear benchmarks and measures for the effective, prevention, education and enforcement. It is the responsibility of state parties to ensure that these conventions are fully domesticated so as to tighten legislative gaps. Most countries have put in place some of these measures. Full implementation and citizens’ education, information, knowledge and engagement are of paramount importance.

Cleaning up the political party system and machinery: the power of setting an example

Political parties must be properly structured and well governed if they are to effectively champion the boarder public good. This requires that political parties adhere to established laws, rules and norms of society or a nation. Countries that have not put in place laws and systems to govern political parties to ensure fair and effective representation, regulate party funding, streamline party management, ensure transparency and accountability in managing party and national affairs
and foster public interest. They must do so with the urgency that the situation deserves.

According to Gumede, the parties themselves must punish bad behaviour by their leaders and members, legally, socially and politically, and reward good behaviour. Only if that is done publicly, will government restore its moral authority to deal credibly with transgressions from ordinary citizens. This will help compel ordinary citizens to follow the rules. The parties must consistently bring in a new calibre of leadership at all levels – more competent and more honest. A system of merit must be brought into the internal party elections. Candidates must be judged on the basis of competence, moral character and genuine commitment to public service. The active encouragement of a new class of leader, with a new value system – not solely based on struggle credentials – may help engender a societal change in values.

**Increase transparency, access to information**

‘Open access to information provides a basis for government accountability and raises the barriers against capricious, self-serving intervention. Without accurate and detailed information it is difficult to assess company and board performance, set targets and allocate capital efficiently.\(^{46}\) Therefore as William Gumede argues, more transparency from government departments, state-owned companies and other agencies about their activities is required. Private companies’ and SOE payments to elected representatives, public servants, political parties and government departments must also be made public. In the US an amendment to the Dodd-Frank Act, compels oil, gas and mining companies listed on an American stock exchange to disclose details of payments to governments.\(^{47}\) Therefore all government must put in place freedom of information legislation to ensure that the masses have access to information about official business and on corruption and other ills affecting the society. This will go a long way in improving transparency and accountability in the conduct of public affairs.


\(^{47}\) See The Economist. 2010. ‘Naming and shaming: the fight against corruption’. International Section. p 64
The importance of life-style audits and barring corrupt officials and business

The anti-corruption agencies in all countries must be vested with responsibilities to conduct life style audits of public officers – all members of parliament, all party leaders, and public servants – so as to name and shame the corrupt, expose corruption to the public and boost public confidence in the fight against corruption.

In addition, corrupt officials and politicians must be prohibited from employment in the public sector. Corrupt businesses and individuals must also be barred from doing business with the public sector. Civil society, trade unions, social movements and NGOs must also shame and put pressure on corrupt businesses, so that they can feel the reputational effects of corrupt activities.

Protection of whistle-blowers, witnesses and anticorruption fighters

As is attested by Gumede in the case of South Africa, to be a whistle-blower of corruption, whether in the public or private sector, is life-threatening in most countries in the continent. The perception is that whistle-blowers are more likely to be prosecuted than the corrupt individuals. This must change. Proper whistle-blower protection legislation must be put in place and more official action should be taken on the information provided by whistle-blowers – otherwise the system will lose credibility.

Increase citizen activism and engagement in the fight against corruption

All countries should introduce citizens’ or community forums directly corresponding with departments to keep a watch over corruption and service delivery in departments and monitor the progress of complaints. In Kenya for example, the Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI), a community-based organisation, monitors the use of the budgets given to MPs to distribute as grants to their constituencies48. There has to be a grassroots campaign against corruption: the masses must know the extent of corruption, the impact on public service delivery; and how to monitor and report it, and the importance of holding their elected leaders and public servants more vigorously to account.

Set up independent anti-corruption institutions across the continent

Some countries already have dedicated agencies spearheading the fight against corruption while others do not. It is imperative that all governments set up independent anti-corruption agencies with sufficient

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powers and capacity to fight corruption. There is also need for effective oversight mechanism over such institutions to ensure that the ‘watchers are also watched’. The civil society, the private sector, and other watchdog bodies such as parliament have a responsibility to demand transparency and accountability from the anti-corruption agencies on the implementation of their mandates.

It is also impetrate to strengthen the corruption fighting capacity of existing institutions dealing with corruption. This includes improving co-ordination and integration of anti-corruption work across government. All public institutions have a responsibility to fight corruption within them. This means they should mainstream and institutionalize corruption prevention and enforce public service codes of conduct and ethics and the anti-corruption laws. A multi-stakeholder forum should be created to bring on board all actors in the fight and to ensure that everyone engaged has adequate information, appropriate plans of action and reporting and feedback mechanisms.

In addition, all governments should improve the enforcement of internal anticorruption controls within the state. This would include managing conflicts of interest better, improved screening of personnel, better performance evaluation and making procurement systems more transparent.

Foster values that reject corruption

In the long-term, the best antidote to corruption is to foster the values of the constitution. The new value system must reward honesty and discourage dishonesty. Importantly, political leaders must also be seen to adhere to these values. Civil society will have to play a role in shaming those leaders who maintain corrupt values and encouraging those who behave with integrity.

Introduce merit into political system

Merit-based appointments to jobs in the public service, and in politics, will go a long way to reduce the patronage system of jobs for pals, which fosters the environment for corruption. It would be important to professionalize the public services of all countries where this has not been done. Performance agreements across government must be enforced. More transparent methods for appointments should be introduced, including making outcomes of decisions publicly available.

De-ethnicise and de-racialise the corruption debate

The debate on corruption is often ethnicised –which undermines the fight against it. These tendencies must be eliminated to ensure that when leading public figures are charged with corruption, the process of investigation and prosecution are devoid of ethnic or sectarian
accusations such ‘my tribe or race is being finished’. Shouting ‘my tribe or race is being finished’ for self-enrichment at the expense of the public good, or to deflect attention from individual wrongdoing is aiding corruption. What we should not do is, in our bid to debunk outrageous ethnic or racial generalizations, defend individual incompetence, wrongdoing and even corruption, just because the person happens to be from my tribe or race.

d. Widen And Deepen Anti-Corruption And Governance Reforms Across The Continent

Some of the practical approaches and strategies would include the following:

**Governance Structure:** There is need to establish a governance structure that promotes good governance in Africa. The structure must conform to the dictates of the principles of constitutionalism, separation of powers and the rule of law. The structure should provide for checks and balances including the independence of the judiciary as this is one of the surest ways of ensuring transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs, law enforcement as well as good governance.

**Policy Reforms:** African countries need to develop policies to guide the anti-corruption legislative and administrative actions and processes which would ultimately promote good governance. It is worth noting that many African countries are yet to develop anti-corruption policies or review the existing policies to bolster the fight against corruption.

**Legislative and Institutional Reforms:** The African countries should strive to review their legal and institutional frameworks in order to make corruption a high risk venture with negative returns. The institutional reforms must target all institutions especially within the public sector to ensure that their operations are streamlined to enhance good governance.

**Political Reforms:** Political reforms are critical if Africa is to address the problem of corruption and bad governance. This would entail putting in place measures to deal with the political structures and processes including the political parties. It is instructive to note that political parties remain the most popular and determinate method of capturing state power worldwide, Africa included. However, recent studies have shown a direct relationship between the management of politics especially funding and the level of corruption. Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer of 2010, for instance, found that political parties were viewed as the most corrupt sector. Given the role and place of political parties in the democratisation process in any country, there is need to initiate reforms to streamline their operations and ensure that they embrace good governance from the party level. This would also provide the
much needed impetus to the anti-corruption process by assuring political will and leadership.49

Establishment of Institutions Promoting Good Governance: These are institutions established to buttress the tripartite configuration of government with the goal of enhancing transparency, accountability and the rule of law, and hold the duty bearers accountable. Some of these institutions in the contemporary world include the anti-corruption agencies, human rights institutions and election management bodies among others. Accordingly, African states could take advantage of the recent global trends by establishing and operationalising these bodies and clothing them with the necessary powers and independence to promote good governance.

Public Service Reforms: The public service in Africa including the operational framework should be reviewed in order to improve service delivery and enhance good governance. This would entail reviewing the terms and conditions of work, development and enforcement of governance instruments such as codes of conduct, and introduction of sanctions and rewards.

Citizen Empowerment and Participation: Empowerment entails giving a voice to the people to determine issues that affect their lives. It enables citizens to expand their authority and control over resources and decisions that affect them. The key to empowerment and participation can be found in building a knowledge base and skills for more effective participation and organisational capacity. In order to enhance governance in Africa, there is need to enhance citizen participation in governance and also institute and nurture social accountability mechanisms such as civic education, participatory budget making and analysis, participatory public expenditure tracking, citizens advisory and oversight boards, social audits, community scorecards, citizens’ charters and lifestyle audits.

Civil Society Activism: Civil society has had profound impact on the political, social and economic development the world over. Nowadays, civil

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49 The African Development Bank has noted that leadership is critical in fighting corruption especially the political leadership. They must set example and demonstrate the will to fight corruption and respect for the law. See the African Development Bank Proceedings for the Regional Learning Workshop on Combating Corruption in Africa, African Union Conference Centre, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, January 2003, 10.

See Greg Mills (2010), Why Africa is Poor and What Africans Can Do About it", (Penguin Books) (South Africa) when he opines: -

[That] the main reason why Africa’s people are poor is because their Leaders have made this choice because record shows that countries can grow their economies and develop faster if leaders take sound decisions in the national interest (page 1).

See also Dambisa Moyo, 2009, Dead Aid “Why Aid is not Working and how there is Another Way for Africa", (Penguin Group, London), pg. 50-68.
society not only delivers development assistance, but also provides an alternative voice on various issues that affect human development. Indeed, civil society has developed ‘soft law’ through formulations of guidelines and recommendations which in some cases have crystallised into hard law thus influencing domestic and international legal regimes. A study by Alexis De Toqueville, for instance, credited the strength of democracy in the United States to the proliferation and advocacy of many citizen oriented associations in the country. Similarly, a recent study on the relationship between civic participation and governance found high public conscientiousness and compliance with the rule of law by the governors in societies with active civic participation.\(^{50}\) Civil society resolve is informed by the statement of Woodrow Wilson that it is the citizens and not governments that can remove the shackles to the realisation of individual and collective liberties. In order for civil societies in Africa to accomplish their goal, they need to be vigilant and proactively engage with the governors and the governed and formulate new approaches to promoting good governance, for example, through monitoring and evaluation of public projects and activities.

**International Co-operation:** The transnational nature of corruption necessitates cooperation within and outside states. In the case of Africa, the member states have to cooperate to develop and enforce anti-corruption and good governance strategies and processes to make it difficult to engage in corruption or hide corruptly acquired wealth. In addition, the developed countries especially Western countries must cooperate with African countries and where appropriate assist in not only repatriating the looted wealth stashed in their countries, but also make it difficult for the corrupt to hide their loot in their countries.\(^{51}\) In addition, they must develop and enforce strict anti-corruption rules for their multi-national corporations operating in Africa.

**Stakeholders Synergy:** The fight against corruption requires the involvement of every stakeholder in society. Accordingly for African countries to succeed in addressing the problem of corruption, they need to harness the available resources and synergise the efforts of all stakeholders in the process.

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\(^{50}\) RD Putman in *Making Democracy Work*, 89: citing Democracy in America by Alexis De Toqueville, 513 - 514

H. Conclusion

In conclusion it cannot be gainsaid that the corrosive effect of corruption needs urgent and sustained action which demands that Africa strengthens governance as a way of curbing systemic corruption. The menace of corruption cannot be permitted to be hidden under the carpet of wavering and equivocal political will and legal technicalities.

In many African Countries the ugly head of corruption is seen in all critical areas including the Extractive industry, Agriculture, Health and Education sectors. Paradoxically, amidst the rot, many African (Mis)leaders like the proverbial Ostrich continue to bury their head in the sand by paying lip service to the fight against corruption.

To capture the malaise of corruption, the words of a former British envoy to Kenya, Sir Edward Clay, in 2004 regarding Kenya during his tour of duty are germane, he said:

...that Kenya’s corrupt ministers were ‘eating like gluttons’ and vomiting on the shoes of the foreign donors. In February, 2005 (prodded to make a public apology for his statements given the political maelstrom his earlier comments had made), he apologized – saying he was sorry for the ‘moderation’ of his language, for underestimating the scale of the looting for failing to speak out earlier.52

These words spoken regarding Kenya ‘summarise’ the situation in many African countries; they sound the clarion that if African (Mis)leaders do not change their ways, then the Continent will continue to be the ‘Basket case’ of the world while its resources can make it the ‘Bread basket’ of the world.

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52 See Dambisa Moyo 2009 supra at page 48.
About The Author

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