



## Say **NO** to **CORRUPTION!**

Corruption is as old as human society itself, and it's among the most significant obstacles to socioeconomic development. The World Economic Forum estimates the global costs of corruption equals more than 5% of global GDP (or US \$2.6 trillion), with over US \$1 trillion paid in bribes every year.

According to the [2020 Corruption Perception Index \(CPI\)](#) report on Sub-Saharan Africa; with an average score of 32, Sub-Saharan Africa is the lowest-performing region on the CPI, with a score of 66, Seychelles consistently earns top marks, followed by Botswana (60) and Cabo Verde (58). At the bottom of the index are Sudan (16), Somalia (12) and South Sudan (12).

Based on the various information available on corruption, the informal sector intensifies corruption. Today, the informal sector is the primary source of employment and the backbone of economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa. Succeeding in the formal sector can become costly, even when the sport and household industries have the potential of becoming the new formal industry in Africa. There should be an incentive to shift production from the informal sector to the formal sector.

The results of the [2017 IMF Working Paper](#) suggest that the informal economy in Sub-Saharan Africa remains among the largest in the world, with informality ranging from a low of 20% to 25% in Mauritius, South Africa and Namibia to a high of 50% to 65% in Benin, Tanzania and Nigeria. In contrast, one extreme example of the informal economy in [Europe is Luxembourg](#), where the relative annual informal economy is only 8% of the GDP.

Beyond the ranking and statistics, the corruption we see persist over time arises from various factors, and despite the many attempts to address corruption, the problem and effects seem to worsen. The results of corruption are numerous, from economic development, equity, quality of life, justice, human rights, trust and conflict, to name a few. Corruption and the absence of good governance also undermine the delivery of quality essential health care services, making it expensive for the poor and disadvantaged, resulting in poor health outcomes.

There is a gradual improvement, yet when we look at the impact on the economy, development, poverty, conflicts and other elements, the significant destruction is felt on many levels of society. In particular, when one assesses the link between corruption and conflict, there is the need to identify efficient ways to disrupt the illegal transfer of funds by leaders and other entities that weaken State institutions, thereby making a country susceptible to conflict.

Corruption exists on all levels of the private, public, and nonprofit sectors; we even hear from small nonprofit organisations that donate to vulnerable children who have faced corrupt gatekeepers that deny access if they don't receive a bribe. The private, public and nonprofit sectors should train employees to report and objectively denounce and ensure business partners have best-practice methods and compliance in place that are fully supported and enforced by top management and employees.

Change begins with teaching, learning and education. Education has always been more than collecting degrees and diplomas; just as leadership is more than getting others to achieve their goals, the value lies in the quantifiable outcome one brings to humanity and the added value to the workplace. There are enormous unexploited potentials in schools, institutions, and organisations on how to combat corruption successfully.

Building a culture of integrity in society starts with educating youth and children. The knowledge, skills and attitude they acquire today shape their country's future and will help them uphold patriotism through public integrity to prevent corruption. Public integrity calls on governments to raise awareness of public integrity benefits that reduce tolerance of violations of its standards and carry out related educational initiatives wherever relevant. Engaging the educational system is critical to inspiring norms of public integrity for youth.

A growing trend worldwide involves governments using their educational systems to communicate the roles and responsibilities of public integrity to the youth. The educational system in African countries should engage youth in an ongoing dialogue and exploration of protecting public integrity as citizens, thus inspiring ethical behaviour and equipping youth with knowledge and skills to resist corruption.

Public integrity means doing the right thing, even when no one is watching. Around the world, societies pass on values and norms related to public integrity through community, school, and family life, but every so often, when corruption and unethical behaviour seem normal, we lose sight of what public integrity is and why it matters.

To strengthen public integrity at times like this, governments should emphasise more on the public good over private gain so that institutions deal with complex problems ethically and morally. Governments in developing countries have the moral obligation to introduce specific courses on public integrity where they instil anti-corruption, values and the rule of law.

As we also head towards the fourth industrial revolution in increased quality, speed, productivity, and flexibility, we should recognise the need for governments to commit and conduct extensive research and development surrounding futuristic skills. They might want to abolish obsolete degrees that will be less significant in the digital world while raising enrolment rates and increasing student learning options to improve living standards.

Bringing Africa's educational system to the twenty-first century requires experimenting and exploring modern formats to learning instead of clinging onto pre-and post-independent obsolete teaching methods because a lifetime debt is not worth paying if youth struggle to find jobs after graduation.

The 2011 article by Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences titled "Colonialism and Education" noted that colonialism and education were instruments used by European powers to dominate and subjugate developing countries and Africa in particular. Colonialism still impacts corruption in Africa, even though both grand and petty corruption existed before colonialism. The colonial context with its pre-colonial elites have set up the stage for corruption, and the post-colonial state construct hasn't changed much.

Corruption is a moral, ethical and legal issue that has changed over centuries from society to society. In previous centuries, many situations were considered moral ideologies, ethical codes, and legal standards, which today would be regarded as morally, ethically, and legally corrupt. We should have this in mind because most governments since the post-independent history that came into power pledged to fight political corruption, but many left power when accused of corruption.

Civil society organisations have done well in exposing corrupt activities, and we would think governments would be an ally in battling corruption, yet we continue to see activists against corruption abused by police, and the media doesn't report on corruption since some are very political in exposing corruption.

Corruption in developing economies has become a particular form of politics and authority. The resources taken for self-gains and used to build political networks, alliances or coalitions, could have been served better in supporting anti-corrupt initiatives to reduce the growth of criminal networks and avoid cases in which witnesses have lost their life.

Though corruption awareness and exposure exist, there is a lack of good governance from those in power not to interfere and conceal corruption. Poor governance also means governmental development initiatives lack compliance, funding, and systems to develop that area and manifest in corruption, conflicts, excessive borrowing, repression, constitutional violence, and a decline in domestic income. African countries should build upon good governance achieved since the mid-1990s, and perhaps this time, it may require an emerging black elite with middle-class values because the system of a group of politically and economically aligned individuals is outdated.

Transparency should be the norm with laws allowing access to information. Still, laws that give you the right to access information depends on the commitment of good governance aligned with an assessment apparatus enabling the identification and dismissal of officials guilty of corruption. Several studies find access to data directly correlates to the control of corruption. The 2019-2020 report by the South African department of justice and constitutional development stated that budget cuts negatively impact the sharing of information, thus negatively impacting transparency and the sharing of information in various public domains.

Weak integrity, transparency, and accountability hinder sustainability, prosperity, and human rights, which undermines socioeconomic development daily. Without integrity, no professional activity can be relied upon; without transparency, there is no accountability; without accountability, there is no detection, and when self-regulation is weak, trust diminishes.

While transparency and accountability may be more controlled with a decentralised approach, there is also the opportunity for corruption due to extensive access to resources and decision-making authority in a decentralised political system. For example, the Ministry of Education relies on frontline workers who can carry out tasks with integrity and transparency; however, there is limited hope for working efficient and effective to optimise reforms when corruption exists on many levels.

Today in many African economies, we see high levels of decentralisation from the national provincial to the municipal level; simultaneously, we find reports and researches showing the same economies with an increased corruption rate in the primary municipalities. When decentralisation occurs, people hope the corruption level ends but rather intensifies corruption at the lower level because elites at the local level support the higher-level executives.

Are leaders too influential, politically protected, and connected to be prisoned? How effective are the African law enforcement and justice system to independently prosecute corrupt systems, and does society have the capacity to demand justice without fear or favour? If freedom is in the constitution, why do corrupt activities occur and are people willing to turn a blind eye to it or act against corruption by voting out the corrupt?

Allowing former corruptors to nominate themselves means closing opportunities for capable people, clean and free from corruption, collusion and nepotism to run for office. Hence, if you are a criminal in some developing countries, you have an even higher chance of winning elections than an honest politician. It shows the ethics of corruption is not taken seriously as we also tend to see many regime's that have come into power recycle corrupt individuals. In some instances, politicians may even get arrested for misappropriating public resources and are later let free due to executive intervention or when the prosecution is weak, and no other alternative exists.

To move from awareness to action, citizens should recognise what they can do about corruption. When compliance and processes fail to minimise corruption, justice should prevail. Often a weak judicial system promotes corruption, and when the rule of being penalised is insufficient, the perception of

corruption intensifies into deep concern about the official who breaks the law. For this reason, we see many individuals pursue a political career in Africa with a purpose to govern less, "eat more", and gain personal wealth.

The motivation for individuals to run and gain personal wealth has empowered many in developing countries to win elections by buying their way into power because they rarely limit election spending in developing countries. After they bought their way into power, they don't care about corruption and the moral decline that has become the new cultural norm rather than an exception where corruption is now not condemned but glorified.

Making matters worse is when we hear about the millions in corruption cases where there is an immense amount of taxpayer money spent on managing assignments and inviting witnesses to determine the outcome of these charges. Impunity amongst corrupters is growing continuously and enforced by evidence of leaders remaining in power with a continuation of corrupt intentions of the past that restrict or intimidate anti-corruption activists, whistleblowers or hinders individuals performing the right job.

One growing factor of corruption in Africa is the procurement system. There is strong collusion between government officials and large corporations in exchange for resources to procure private goods for public services. Suppose legislation, systems and processes are in place to ensure that procurement quality and procurement officials meet high professional standards of knowledge, skills, and integrity; then why is corruption so high relating to procurement?

They are numerous suggested tools to improve procurement processes. However, there appears to be an absence of best practice procurement methods and government advisors who don't understand or recommend innovation and cutting-edge technology to solve pressing issues.

Combating corruption requires a multidisciplinary approach in enforcing compliance with incentives, penalties, and a monitoring system that intense the engagement between various institutions to exchange information and expose violations so processes can recover or freeze stolen assets that have crossed international borders. Barriers organisations face here are also the overlapping mandates between various institutions. These institutions may not understand which organisation takes the lead or should reportings go to more than one supervisor or what boundaries of independently reporting investigations of specific individuals and organisations to apply.

When contextualising existing research on forms of corruption happening globally, African countries might have to accept that using western constitutional strategies and definition of corruption hasn't worked well. We cannot continue to address corruption without assessing and questioning the lens used to examine it in Africa versus the rest of the world. Traditional measures to fight corruption have mainly been ineffective, forcing the demand for innovative thinking. It calls for more research on the African continent and globally to learn lessons on what approach works better in one country or continent over the other. Nevertheless, as an area of research, the critical role of governments in strategy, corporate culture, and theory is still assuring.

The road to a corrupt-free world is challenging, and it's a destination that does not yet exist, but what is unacceptable is the unwillingness to learn lessons from poor governance and be stubborn in the face of all rational socioeconomic practices.