

Corruption a Man-Made Phenomenon

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Corruption is one of the biggest challenges of our time and has in the past decades emerged as a global issue and the principal cause of a myriad challenges around the globe. Its significance in the present-day world cannot be underestimated.

Zooming our lenses closer home to Zimbabwe, corruption has proved to be a major threat to humanity as a nation. This evil has largely contributed to the suffering of people particularly on the continent of Africa at large, with effects leading to extreme poverty, unemployment, the rising cost of food and energy which is linked to high levels of corruption. The effects bear a massive negative impact on the lives of the ordinary people as alluded to in Proverbs 29:2 which says, “When

the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan”. This is manifest around the world where the care for the other person has been superseded by greed and selfishness.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, corruption entails dishonest or illegal behaviour especially by powerful people, whereas Transparency International Zimbabwe describe corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, classified as grand, petty and political, depending on the amounts of money lost and the sector where it occurs. Transparency International further explains grand corruption as acts committed at a high level of government by distorting policies, enabling leaders to benefit

at the expense of the public good. Petty corruption refers to everyday abuse of entrusted power by low- and mid-level public officials in their interactions with ordinary citizens, who often are trying to access basic goods or services in places like hospitals, schools, police departments and other agencies. In addition, political corruption is described as manipulation of policies, institutions and rules of procedure in the allocation of resources and financing by politicians who abuse their position to sustain their power, status and wealth.

Africa is blessed with an abundance of resources, yet its people on the continent remain poor and vulnerable to different types of economic shocks caused by corruption. Governance and policy

should be people centred in order to create an enabling environment for economic growth and development.

If we apply the Singapore paradox, it becomes apparent that challenges faced by Africa today are a result of bad governance exacerbated by corruption and self-aggrandisement.

The Singapore Paradox is interesting in that it explains how issues of good governance and policies impact positively on development in contrast to bad governance. Based on this approach, Briguglio (2004) identifies four possible scenarios into which countries may be placed according to their vulnerability and resilience characteristics. These scenarios are termed as “best case”, “worst case”, “self-made”, and “prodigal son”.

Countries classified as “self-made” are those with a high degree of inherent economic vulnerability but are economically resilient through the adoption of appropriate policies that enable them to cope with or withstand the effects of their natural vulnerability. The countries that fit best in this category are such as Singapore, South Korea and Botswana. These countries have made great strides in elevating their economies and the lives of their citizens through implementation of good policies and systems although they do not possess tremendous natural resources or wealth.

The “prodigal son” category

applies to countries that have a relatively low degree of inherent economic vulnerability but whose policies are detrimental to economic resilience, thereby exposing themselves to the adverse effects of economic shocks. Like the prodigal son in the parable in Luke 15:11-32, these countries have plenty of resources which in most cases are abused for personal use. Most African countries fall in this category. Given good practices, responsibility, and stewardship of these abundant resources, Africa would have been celebrated as the most advanced continent economically.

Countries that fit the “best case” category are those that are not inherently vulnerable and which at the same time adopt resilience-building policies. Such countries are those which possess a favourable number of natural resources as well as implementing good policies and systems that promote the development of people and the nation at large. Countries like the United States of America best suit this category. These countries have managed to use their resources well while at the same time continuously developing best policies and good practices.

The direct opposite of the “best case” category is the “worst case” category which refers to countries that compound the adverse effects of inherently high vulnerability by adopting policies that run counter to economic resilience. Somalia best describes this scenario of countries faced with a myriad of problems while at the same time

lacking resources to sustain their livelihoods.

Compared to Africa, Singapore is not privileged with a huge natural resource base, yet this island nation has managed to register high economic strides through the implementation of good and sound policies that restrict the survival of corruption.

Therefore, Africa should broaden its horizons, rise above this obvious evil and take a clear position against corruption so that the continent can be spared of the vice.

During a visit to Cesena, Italy in October 2017, Pope Francis blasted corruption as the “termite of politics” because it does not permit a society to grow. Good politics, according to the Holy Father, is “not subservient to individual ambitions or powerful factions and centres of interests.” What is required, the Pope added, is a type of politics which is “neither a servant nor an owner, but a friend and collaborator ... neither fearful nor reckless, but responsible and therefore courageous and prudent at the same time” (<https://cru.xnow.com/2017/10/every-good-politician> accessed 28 March 2020). Pope Francis described every good politician as a kind of “martyr” to service because he or she must be willing to set aside their own ideas and desires to seek the common good. Such are the people who can certainly help to combat corruption. Without this type of martyrdom corruption will neither dwindle nor end.