

Column: Corruption – A social disease • Part 147: The Bribe Code of Nigeria and its potential

The objective of Nigeria's Bribe Code is to address the contract between government and companies as one of the potential key strategies to reduce corruption.

The interface between the public and private sectors is an area that is conducive to corruption in Namibia (Coetzee). Nigeria is no different. However, the scale of this interface in Nigeria, with approximately 200 million people (the largest market in Africa), and the magnitude of corruption in this oil endowed country, are enormous compared to Namibia.

The Bribe Code has been developed by Chuma Nwokolo, a well-respected barrister, academic and publisher. The code includes compensation, reward and protection of whistleblowers. If a company is convicted of serious corruption, above a threshold of e.g. N\$100 000, the directors will face a penalty of liquidation, with a no fine option, and with 1% of its assets going towards

rewarding the whistle blower(s). This approach can overcome current challenges in Nigeria and Namibia because corrupt companies can no longer depend on partners in government to side-line justice.

A NEW CULTURE

The Bribe Code will make the penalty for corruption unacceptable to company directors and shareholders and create a private sector with minimum tolerance for corruption. A new anti-corruption culture can develop that will grow through self-regulation by the private sector and civil society. It will change the propensity for officials in the public sector to request bribes and for the private sector to offer bribes.

The Bribe Code requires political commitment to amend the Anti-Corruption Act and the more recent Whistleblower Protection Act. In order to popularise the Bribe Code, a strong marketing initiative and civil advocating mechanism(s) are needed to create awareness, education and support for implementation. Roleplayers can include the Institute of Corporate Governance, the Citizens Trust and the Institute for Public Policy Research.

This code has the potential to change the structural basis and legal bureaucratic circumventing of corruption. The two

countries can compare notes and sign a memorandum of understanding and cooperation which can include other countries. It can be broadened in scope and application to SADC and the rest of Africa.

At www.bribe.org the public can ask questions, volunteer and express their support.

The code is not the only option to reduce corruption but it is an innovative African alternative developed by an African and promoted by African interest groups that need the support of Africans. This code can change perceptions about corruption in Africa. As

proud Africans we have an individual and collective accountability to take the disastrous effect of

corruption personally and respond collectively.

If you support implementing the Bribe Code in Namibia, let me know at jcoetzee@nust.na. You are also welcome to provide critique about the Bribe Code, to ask questions, raise concerns and propose new innovative ideas how to reduce.

References

The Bribe Code. 2018. Rethinking Corporate Corruption.
Coetzee, J.J. 2018. The role of the private sector in tackling corruption. The Institute for Public Policy Research, 9 May 2018.

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