

Column Corruption – A social disease • Part 129

What are the most critical drivers and focus areas to reduce corruption?

Leadership commitment is critical to reduce corruption. Namibia needs moral, transformational and visionary leaders to reduce corruption. Political leadership is most critical.

Corruption is inherently a developmental issue that is not possible to be addressed without addressing obstructions to development. These obstructions include obstacles in the economy (e.g. Government debt to GDP of approximately 38%); governance (e.g. the trend of conflict of interest in decision making of SOE Boards), knowledge, science and technology (e.g. the Mathematics pass rate of approximately 30% in the 2017 secondary certificate exam); ethics and morality (e.g. Ministers associated with Chinese criminals); and very limited innovation (Namibia is one of the countries with almost no patents registered annually), very limited inspiration (e.g. Parliamentarians are not beacons of respect), limited entrepreneurship (e.g. a school system that focus too much on memorising and not adequately on industry and technical application) and limited hope for a better future for all (e.g. the number of suicides and gender based violence annually).

Inclusive leadership is needed to include the most marginalised and vulnerable in society such as the former Koevoet fighters that are not recognised by Government for compensation, and the abject poor, of whom some have lost hope for a



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better future. Four systemic reforms driven by strong political commitment, namely in the United States of America and United Kingdom during the 1800's as well as the 1900's reforms in Singapore and Hong Kong took place over a period of approximately 40 years (Coetzee). Contrary to the four mentioned reforms, political will is mediocre in Namibia and not adequate for what is required to reduce corruption.

LACK OF CIVIL ACTIVISM

The next best approach is civil activism. Such activism can put pressure on politicians to reform strategic institutions such as the public sector. Based on Namibian perceptions about democracy and trust in Government (as found by all Afro-Barometer Surveys to date that measure perceptions about governance and corruption in 35 African countries) Namibians are satisfied with democracy and trust their leaders to such an extent that they do not see the need for a radical change in the quality of democracy and their leaders' style of leadership.

Very limited civil society activ-

ism in Namibia is not expected to put pressure on politicians to reform and/or transform Namibia's bloated (e.g. salaries are approximately 50 percent of total public expenditure and unsustainable) and inefficient public sector, e.g. some people waited eight hours at the Buitepos border post to enter Namibia via Botswana during the recent festive season.

The most appropriate strategic public units to intervene that can leverage the biggest change in the shortest possible time, are the Ministry of Finance (specific Inland Revenue, e.g. tax evasion and bribes), the Tender Board (e.g. the Walvis Bay petroleum port tender), the Ministry of Works and Transport (e.g. the Zimbabwean architects contract issue) and the Namibian Police (incomplete dockets).

These institutions should be transformed as a top priority into best practices and based on their successes, the rest of the public service can be transformed over time.

References

Coetzee, J.J. 2012. *Systemic corruption and corrective Change management strategies: A Study of the co-producers of systemic corruption and its negative impact of socio-economic development*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation. Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch.

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