

## Risk and reward

Corruption occurs most frequently and pervasively where there is a "culture" of corruption, when the risk of exposure, for example a scandal or court case or being black-listed, is lower than the reward for corrupt behaviour.

Firstly, this is because of the mutual acceptance and mutual interdependence of corrupt behaviours between corrupters, as initiators, and corruptees, as participants. Both initiators and participants are engaged in a corrupt relationship of mutual benefit.

Jackie Selebi, the former National Commissioner of the South African Police Service and Chief of Interpol, for example protected Glen Agliotti, a drug boss, calling him "my friend finish and klaar".

Secondly, the risk of exposure can also be less than the reward for corrupt behaviour, because of a very low probability of being detected and punished. In countries where a backlog of court cases exists, justice deferred is justice denied. Generally, laws not implemented, especially in some developing countries, reduce the risk of exposure and punishment and encourages corruption.

It is thus possible to say that corruption is the outcome of rewards exceeding the risks.

### Isolated and systemic corruption

Corruption and its impacts are major challenges in developing, and specifically Southern African, institutions. The World Bank in 1997 defined corruption as "the abuse of public office for private gain". This is one of the most commonly used definitions in the



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public domain. In 2007 the Bank maintained this definition, but when read in the context of the whole publication, the definition acknowledges the complex nature of the phenomenon. The expanded definition of the World Bank replaced "public office", with "trusted office", and distinguishes between "isolated" and "systemic" corruption. By implication, the role of the private sector is also acknowledged by this modification.

Isolated or accidental corruption is described as "rare, consisting of a few acts, it is straightforward, (though seldom easy) to detect and punish". In this case, non-corrupt behaviour is the norm, and public and private sector institutions display integrity. Both formal and informal systems are strong enough to return the system to a "non-corrupt equilibrium". Corruption in Norway and Denmark are examples of isolated corruption.

### • References

World Bank Report. (1997). *The Economic and Social Consequences of Corruption in Transition Economies*.

World Bank. (2007). *The Many Faces of Corruption: Tracking Vulnerabilities at the Sector Level*.

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