

Column Corruption – A social disease • Part 126

Are business leaders accountable for the level of corruption in Namibia?

The Transparency International (TI) trend for 1998-2016 demonstrates that perceptions about Namibian governance and anti-corruption initiatives are negative. With an average rating of below five out of 10, Namibia has not improved its rating over 19 years, despite numerous initiatives. For example, the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Act, Act No 8 of 2003; a Code of Conduct for Parliamentarians in 2015/16; and three Declarations of Assets by Members of

Parliament. We have implemented the NamCode that is a watered-down version of King III. The NamCode of Namibian Corporate Governance is relatively unknown as was found during an unpublished study done on behalf of the Institute of Public Policy Research (2017). However, the NamCode is a baseline to improve upon and a stepping stone to improve corporate and good governance. TI indices are compiled based on perceptions

of Namibian business leaders. Such leaders support politicians with financial donations in order to campaign for elections and with the expectations of receiving tenders in future. No elections are possible without money from business. In *The Namibian* of 15 November 2017, it has been reported that the ruling party allegedly requested donations from Public Enterprises (PEs) for its Congress. However, the alleged requests were denied by Central Committee members. According to this newspaper previously MTC and other companies contributed N\$ 130 million via Kalahari Holdings, owned by SWAPO. Based on donations as reported in newspapers prior to previous elections, numerous PEs contributed to the ruling party's Congress.



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CONCERNS

How PEs can be allowed to make donations to political parties is a concern, because PEs should, according to the NamCode, operate in the best interest of all citizens, and not favour any political party. Why are Chief Executive Officers of PEs not being held accountable for such donations? From the discussion, it can be deduced that business and politics, and also business leaders and politicians

are intertwined, two sides of the same coin that cannot be separated. Political parties and individual politicians are also funded by private and public companies, and small to medium enterprises. Although it is the prerogative of such companies to make donations, business leaders need to start demanding from politicians a transformation of the public sector and systems supporting the public private interface where corruption is at play. For example, hot spots of this interface include Inland Revenue (tax evasion), Customs and Excise (bribery to speed up the clearing of goods at border posts), Works and Transport (kickbacks in tendering), the Namibian Police (under-resourced and below standard dockets to prosecutors) and the Fisheries sector

(favouritism in allocating fish quotas).

DEMANDING CHANGE

It is probably appropriate to pose the following questions: Are business leaders accountable for corruption in Namibia? What are business leaders going to do about corruption? Are they going to put their money where their mouth should be, namely to reduce corruption? Should business leaders not demand a transformation of the public service when they make donations? What will be business leaders' legacy? Will their legacy be profit and strengthening corruption? The golden key to gain political commitment for reducing corruption lays with businesses leaders. Could it be that the TI ratings of Namibia is an indication that Namib-

ian business leaders, academics and economists perceive The Land of Brave as The Land of *U-ingilingi/Korruption*? Who will be the game changers? Will it be Enterprise Namibia?

References

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