



Corruption

Corruption is the abuse or misuse of public resources, power, and/or office for financial or other personal gains. It is the use of illegal and illegitimate means to acquire an advantage in private or public positions. Corrupt people lack the virtues of integrity, honesty, and moral principle. Corruption has greatly increased in the world since the late 1980s and early 1990s, with many post-communist countries in particular being greatly affected. There has been a lot of debate on the causes of corruption and the factors that have led to its spread and growth around the world.

Factors contributing to corruption

Neo-liberalism and corruption

One of the major factors that contributed to the apparent rise and spread of corruption, and which is a subject of ongoing debate, is the neo-liberalism that started in the 1970s and 1980s. Neo-liberalism is mainly about promoting free markets, trade, competition, and consumption as well as reduced state regulation, control, and other roles. More importance is placed on the end than the means. There is a lack of conceptuality and reduced emphasis on the rule of law in most corrupt societies where the process of liberalization has led to the weakening and delegitimizing of state power and control.

There have been many arguments about the relationship between neo-liberal measures, including policies of free trade and investment, and corruption—especially in post-communist countries (Holmes, 1999). Neo-liberalism has been highly credited with economic growth and increased investment; it is seen as an important factor for development in many countries. However, as globalization takes effect and local and international enterprises compete for new markets and business ventures, corrupt business practices are inevitable. There are restrictions, obstacles, and



barriers within bureaucratic systems of countries and international markets that can lead to these practices.

International quarters and trade tariffs, which lead to varying prices of goods and other special treatment, can result in enterprises bribing key players in order to take advantage. According to Williams and Beare (1999), the administration of exemptions and restrictions within countries involves complex, complicated procedures that only bureaucracies can perform. As a result, this complexity can encourage corrupt practices in government offices as well. Although there are organizations and agencies that act as watch dogs, without enough regulation and follow up, a lot must still be done to reduce the spread of this vice. Existing systems of corruption form a large web that includes local and international participants, and it is hard to completely trace its course, especially in developing countries where efforts to fight corruption are underfunded and not taken seriously.

Poverty

Another factor that leads to corruption in most developing economies is poverty. The prevalence of poverty leads to a lack of education, health care, and other basic necessities. This means that poor people do not have knowledge of their own rights and are not aware of the responsibilities of the authorities. Most impoverished people are apathetic toward economic and social developments in their countries because they have to first deal with their own domestic challenges.

In many communities where public infrastructure and service delivery are extremely poor, the mushrooming of private enterprise leads to the exploitation of the meager resources of the poor as they seek better services, especially in the health and education sectors. For example, a doctor in a public health center receives a salary at the end of every month but only comes on appointment because he also



has his own private clinic (Das, 2006). Most corrupt practices in poor countries take place without anyone reporting them, either because nobody realizes what is happening or the people who have the will to stop it are not strong enough to face the forces behind the vice.

Conclusion

The debate on the factors that lead to corruption and the ways through which it can be controlled continue across the world. Measures that have been taken to fight corruption include controlling the flow of foreign investment and reducing or completely withdrawing aid from developing countries that have corrupt systems in place. National and international media groups together with monitoring agencies like Transparency International have also played a big role in exposing corruption.



Reference List

Das, R. (2006) *Poverty and hunger: causes and consequences*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons.

Holmes, L. (1999) 'Corruption, weak states and economic rationalism in Central and Eastern Europe', *Central European University Joint Conference on Corruption*. Princeton University, Budapest, Hungary, 29 October – 6 November. Available at: http://9iacc.org/papers/day1/ws2/dnld/d1ws2_lholmes.pdf.

Williams, J. and Beare, M. (1999) *The business of bribery: globalization, economic liberalization and the "problem" of corruption*, crime, law and social change. New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.