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WHAT IS CORRUPTION?

In Nigeria today, there are many unresolved problems, but the issue of the upsurge of corruption is alarming. Corruption is endemic in Nigeria. The damages it has done to the polity are astronomical. This menace has led to situations like slow movement of files in offices, police extortion of toll fees, port congestion, queues at passport offices and petrol stations, ghost workers syndrome, election irregularities, among others. Thus, many in the society sees corruption as the bane of Nigeria. Consequently, the issue kept reoccurring in every academic and informal discussion in Nigeria.

Nigeria is a country where corruption is rife and where greed for material acquisition and quest for political power had relegated to the background morals preached by various religions. This is because despite our claim to be religious, our quest for relevance had made nonsense of our self-acclaimed religiosity and nothing can be left undone by our elites and non-elites for the realization their self-desire. The end, it is believed, justifies the means.

Corruption is a global phenomenon, and has been with all kinds of societies; be it Advanced, Primitive, Modern or Traditional, as a global scourge. It is a universal phenomenon, which presents itself in different colorations and dimensions and, wide spread in terms of coverage. It is a wide held belief that corruption is a way of life in Nigeria and that it is responsible for broken promises and dashed hopes, which has characterized the lives of most Nigerians.

Corruption is the misapplication of public resources to private ends. Corruption is a cancer that has eaten deeply into the fabric of Nigeria polity, which includes bribery, or the use of unauthorized rewards to influence people in position of authority either to act or refuse to act in ways beneficial to the private advantage of the giver and then that of the receiver. The main reason Nigeria is not making progress we say authoritatively is that those in government are just stealing public money. Corrupt acts required a minimum of two individuals from one or more communities, and either exchange or the promise of an exchange of money. Thus, any transaction, which violates the duty of a public office holder, and aimed at acquiring resources illegally for personal advancement and self-gratification, is seen as an act of corruption.

Corruption also includes bribery, smuggling, and fraud, illegal payments, money laundering, drug trafficking etc.

**CAUSES OF CORRUPTION**

1. Giving and receiving bribes
2. Inflation of contracts
3. Kick back and payment upfront
4. Abuse of public property
5. Lodging government fund in private accounts
6. Examination malpractices
7. Adulterated food or hazardous drugs
8. Misappropriation and embezzlement of fund
9. Money laundry by public officers
10. Using proxy names to buy property.
11. Weak institution of government
12. Lukewarm attitude of the enforcers of the law (police, judges etc)
13. Some cultural and institutional factors could lead to corruption. For example, nepotism and strength of family values/ties are linked to the feeling of obligation.
14. Poor reward system, low remuneration for public servants and greed account for corruption related behavior or actions.

**EFFECTS OF CORRUPTION**

1. Corruption constitutes a major obstacle to democracy and the rule of law. In a democratic system, offices and institution lose their legitimacy when they are misused for private advantage. This is harmful to our democracy. Our democracy and Political leadership cannot develop in a corrupt climate.
2. Corruption leads to the depletion of our national wealth. It has led to the use of scarce public resources to finance uneconomic high profile projects such as power plants pipelines that cost billions whereas if these were channel towards building schools, hospitals and roads or the supply of Electricity and water to rural areas that are basic needs of life.
3. On the social ladder, the people have lost their trust in the political system. In its institutions and leadership, they have developed non-chalant attitude and general apathy towards government policies resulting in a weak civil society.
4. The non-enforcement of environmental regulations and legislation has led to the pollution of the environment in Nigeria. Careless exploitation of Natural resources from oil and minerals by domestic and international agents hassled to ravaged natural environments affecting the health of her citizens. Corruption also impacts negatively on efficient mobilization and management of human and material resources
5. Corruption also reduces economic growth, enhances inequalities and reduces the government’s capacity to respond to people’s needs.
6. Corruption distorts economic and social developments, by engendering wrong choices and by encouraging competition in bribery rather than in the quality and price.
7. Corruption leads to a grooving gap between the rich and the poor and deepens poverty by enriching a few at the expense of fellow citizens.
8. Corruption leads to cause of low investment with a resultant effect of reduced economic growth both at foreign and at the domestic level.
9. Corruptions causes reduction in quality of goods and services available to the public, as some companies could cut corners (thereby producing sub-standard goods to increase profit margins).
10. Corruption has a negative impact on human rights of the citizenry. A country with a corrupt government will have no regard for people’s fundamental human rights as guaranteed in the constitution.

**SOLUTIONS TO CORRUPTION**

1. The people should be given the right sense of values, which should be inculcated in the people so that they could respect others for their honesty and not just for their wealth.
2. The need for the establishment of anti-corruption court that will take charge of all criminal cases against corrupt politicians and administrators.
3. Government should go beyond the mere pronouncement of anti-corruption policies. It should rather provide good governance and an enabling environment for democratic ideals to thrive.

EFCC should be empowered and grant absolute autonomy in handling cases relating to corruption.

1. Economic growth: Nigeria government should embark on not just the deceptive increment in Gross Domestic Product, but real development in terms of standard of living. Health, education, food security, and infrastructural growth must be given prominence.
2. Introducing or launching national reorientation programmes to educate people on the negative impacts and the need to eradicate corruption in all facets of Nigerian's public life.
3. The government must introduce an equitable wages and incentive system and improve other conditions of work so that the level of poverty can be reduced and the quality of life improved.
4. Prosecution of erring individuals or people found to be involved in any corrupt practice and if found culpable should be punished.
5. Anti-corruption body and transparent monitoring unit should be established in all public and private institutions, empower them and make them functional in such a way as to detect and report corrupt officials for prosecution.
6. Increase awareness on the economic, political, social and legal cost of corruption and corrupt practices on individual and the society.
7. The country needs committed leadership, a re-oriented public service, a vibrant judiciary and an organized and vocal civil society.