

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR ETHICAL INITIATIVES TO COMBAT CORRUPTION IN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Today in Africa, there is a growing awareness that humanity is threatened not only by regional conflicts but also by continued injustices among peoples and nations, perpetuated through corruption. The root cause of corruption is due to lack of ethical behaviors by the leaders. Lack of respect for the poor has resulted into plundering of resources causing a progressive decline in the quality of life. The sense of precariousness and corruption that such a situation engenders is a seedbed for collective selfishness, disregard for others and dishonesty. Faced with the widespread corruption of the individual as well as of governments, people everywhere are coming to understand that we cannot continue to enjoy equality in sharing the national resources as we ought to. The public in general as well as political leaders are concerned about this problem. And experts from a wide range of disciplines are studying its causes. Moreover, a new ethical awareness is beginning to emerge which, rather than being downplayed, ought to be encouraged to develop into concrete programs and initiatives. Many ethical values, fundamental to the eradication of corruption are particularly relevant to the ethical question. The fact that many challenges facing Africa today are politically motivated confirms the need for carefully coordinated ethical initiatives based on a morally coherent world view. So what are Ethical Initiatives required by both the government and the private sector to combat corruption in Africa in the 21st Century? As has often been noted, an important step toward addressing any problem is accurate diagnosis. Corruption has many characteristics or dimensions. Corruption in Africa is characterized by lack of moral ethics, human exploitation, selfishness, greed as well as oppression and absence of good governance that is 'state failure'. The unethical governments are also faced with national economic mismanagement which leads to lack of justice and fairness. Such unethical practices interact and combine to keep individuals and at times governments in persistent corruption. So this paper intends to critically analyse unethical practices among individuals and governments that contribute to corruption, and how good initiatives could help in combating corruption. This paper will demonstrate that good ethics can cause profound changes in the politics of our times that could free the society from corruption.

Introduction

The entrance of the Christian gospel was a catalyst for change in the social order. And I take it for granted that we agree that there is inherent to Christianity a societal ethics. The church and the African religion present unique ethics which should cause profound changes in the management of our characters and behaviors in our times as well. George Carry former Archbishop of Canterbury and James Wolfensohn former president of World (2001: vii) argues that spirituality and material progress do not always go hand in hand. However, there is always a kind of unethical practice in Christianity that believes spirituality is not concerned about our political systems.

Avoiding spiritual issues, and describing them as ‘worldly concerns’ in Christianity produces negative effects in any given society (Botman 1997:72). The role of the Church goes beyond temporal concerns altogether. But there is an important conversation taking place between the public and the private sectors in order to improve our society. Two modes of ethical behaviorism can be deduced from these two institutions on the one hand there is public ethics (common public morality) and on the other hand private sector transformative ethics (individual morality). Unless Christianity and other religions present in Africa have differentiated these two, it becomes a problem rather than the solution it initially intended. The religious groups are in need of vying for the power to control the way society act once faced with corruption, crime as well as other realities.

We are not however here to elaborate on the merits and demerits of the tension existing between Christianity and the society. Neither will it serve the purpose of this gathering to engage in the old styles of ‘dispute about the relationship between Church and politics or faith and politics’ (Botman 1997:72). Our objective in this gathering is to make a choice and start a movement, the movement of the philosophers participating in ethical initiatives that leads to good policies in an African context. Obviously it has taken Africans more than five decades to get to this point as we struggle to find our legitimate orientation in ethical standards that are required to guide our morality. In order to make this choice and establish this movement we need to look for a new way of fighting impunity in Africa. The main problem of the debate on how and why the public and private sectors should or should not be involved in ethical initiatives is precisely the way in which the problem is formulated. The way we see impunity as a problem, is the problem. I do hope that you will all see how this presentation is also an attempt to subvert the way in which the problem of corruption is commonly presented among us in Africa. Some regard corruption as their personal opportunity to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor. Others work centrally with a conflict based presupposition that poses the corrupt leaders as their own sons and daughters (Tribesmen and women) who should not be touched once ethical standards are demanded. These stands are extreme and take such an uncritical position regarding corruption, as in contrast to their ethical requirements, that the unique character and integrity of the individuals is sacrificed in the interest of protecting the so called ‘our people’. This phrase ‘our people’ can almost be blamed for impunity in Africa.

‘Impunity’ an ethical problem

This is a global problem and unethical issue that is proving hard to deal with particularly in our own African context. It is a problem that needs to be addressed quickly in our societies. This paper considers impunity as the main cause of ethical disintegration particularly in ethnicity intolerance, corruption and other stemming social evils in Africa. So our main concern is how can we eradicate the culture of impunity in Africa through the public and private sector partnership through ethical initiatives? According to a Un Special Repertoire Louis Joinet (2009:2) there is an urgent need to combat impunity because human rights violations thrive in a culture of impunity, and for that matter corruption flourish better in it. In the African continent impunity is simply the dictator’s potent weapon and obviously the poor people’s ultimate injury. According to Kimathi (2010:17) impunity is a behaviour that develops from a null expectation of punishment after wrong doing resulting into a

culture of corruption within systems of patronage. In such a case the judiciary and security are protected by special jurisdictions in the name of immunities.

So in Africa this unethical culture of impunity has resulted into Africa's own failure to hold senior government officials and political leaders accountable for evils like torture, murder, fraud, rape, land grabbing and other serious crimes against their own people that they ought to protect. This is ethically wrong and every serious citizen needs to speak against such behaviors both in public and private sector's pulpit. Majority of people who are caught on the wrong side of the law are able to evade the rule of law depending on their status. This means that there are people who will be punished and others who will enjoy freedom instead of punishment.

In the African continent, we have a number of nations where impunity and corruption are the order of the day. And if I mention a few, Libya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Northern Sudan, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Uganda and Kenya are some of Africa's' worst bleeding stations for impunity. Infact the International Criminal Court was formed in July 2002 as an attempt to deal with impunity in Africa, a disease that needs to be eradicated. In Africa the tussle for leadership positions has been a strong feature of governance. People compete for public office not because they need to offer service but to win positions of power and privilege. Such competition underplays the importance of the links between responsibility, authority (power) and accountability.

Our Kenyan situation is no different from the rest of Africa, 'a climate of impunity prevails' as reported by Philip Alston (2009:5) a Un Special Repertoire after 2007 Post Election Violence (PEV). For Kimathi (2010:12) impunity has a long history in our country and has become almost our way of life. This is backed up by the current Attorney General, who argues that Kenya has historically been dubbed undemocratic country characterized by a 'backward political culture' (Githu Muigai 1995:45). So we can argue that impunity is refined and sharpened as an art of oppression in the society and its end results is corruption. And for this reason the Kenyan old Constitution was amended for more than 30 times between 1963 and 1995 with an aim of 'consolidating the power' into an individual being (Kimathi 2010:17). Such amendments are the root cause of impunity and corruption.

The end result of this consolidation of power from 1963 to 1995 was bad governance which promoted repression, abuses of human rights, ethnicity, nepotism, patronage and widespread corruption. We ended up with institutionalization of the use of violence, manipulation of ethnicity for political and economic gain with concomitant deprivation and inequality distribution of resources, as well as the breakdown of state institutions (cf Mbai 2003:55). All these landed the country into a repeated failure to wipe out ethnicity, impunity, corruption as well as other immoral behaviors which have often resulted into cycles of violence, the worst being witnessed in January 2008. So there is need for dialogue through such forums to ask constructive ethical questions about the phenomena of corruption in Africa. More particularly we need to question whether African Religious ethical standards have been taken for granted in our context and if this had any role to play in constituting the prevailing culture of corruption in Africa. A conversation of this nature comes in as a hardy tool for public and private sectors reconstruction of ethical standards aimed at the eradication of corruption affecting our continent. So what is corruption?

Corruption in Africa

It is good to remember that corruption is a global issue. It is present practically speaking in every country and impacts on people's lives everywhere. What is different in these countries is the level of corruption.

Corruption thrives anytime systems have failed to be in place to ensure there is accountability in every sphere of life. The fight against corruption becomes easy when the desire and the will to establish and operate accurate systems of accountability are strong among the people. Corruption is simply the abuse of an influential position for personal gains. It is an exploitation of a system for securing unmerited advantage (Kolade 2001:79) and when systems are not in place agents of corruption increase. In the first place corruption is propagated by the people holding influential positions in public or private sectors, if they have access to the people's shared resources as stewards. Secondly corruption is enhanced by people who have the capacity to lobby those in positions for access to preferential or undue advantage. Such people are agencies of corruption.

The major cause of corruption is lack of accountability among leaders of both public and private sectors. A quick search at African situations portrays that even where systems for promoting accountability existed in the first place; they have deliberately been ignored due to the highly centralized system of executive power. Leaders tend to represent vested interests rather than peoples' interest, so that their presence either in Parliament or in high positions becomes an opportunity to siphon public resources into personal pockets. Such leaders will do nothing to correct the institutional weaknesses present in their systems. They will instead perpetuate public policies that generate economic rents. It would even be worse if the government was not elected into office like in the case of Somalia, because leaders suspend the constitutionality of the people and operate outside the controls by which a society normally runs itself. Such leaders obviously promote poverty, ethnic hatred, and make people dependent upon the good will and favour of those who allocate community resources.

The worst comes when such a government 'shifts goalposts' without notice to create uncertainty and instability resulting to an institutionalized corruption. With change of goalposts leaders are left with wide discretion with no accountability. The end results are that policies are poorly designed, articulated or communicated even if the laws were in place. In such a case informal systems are often given priority making sure that no one is interested with ethical code of conduct. Finally public servants are poorly enumerated, thus encouraging individuals to seek alternative means to make ends meet. At such a point people have a tendency of forsaking their religious obligations.

Religious ethical Presence Ignored

People of faith from all religions and in particular Christians are interested in being present. In Christian thinking absentee Christianity is never really an option, they want to be visibly present through behaviorism that stamps that presence. That is why we build churches, ring church bells as well as light candles in them because people want Christianity to be present as our own way of expressing our ethics. People will challenge Christians to behave well not because they want to go to heaven, but

because they were reassuring themselves that Christianity was still alive. So you will hear even somebody who never goes to church ask are you not a Christian?

Presence is what they want for it is core of Christianity; it is not our presence that matters but our behaviors in a given community. The Bible requires all Christians to be ethically conscious in season and out of season in order to communicate the mediated presence of the reign of God. Through an emphasis of ethical initiatives God is mediated, not only in the church, 'but also in courts of political power' (Botman 1997:73) in order to impact the world on every aspect of life. From a biblical perspective Christian presence is not a passive embodiment of God's presence. It is the presence of the reign of God among his people, both big and small. The presence of his reign makes him an actor in history. God searches for justice and peace. Our presence need to be felt through the way we act and behave in terms of values and principles. So ethically we have a particular way of presenting the reign of God to the public and as private witnesses in the arena of policy making.

Ethical initiatives are required both in our consciousness and in geopolitical relations. Our country Kenya waits to see profound changes as the new constitution is implemented and true democracy free from corruption is ushered in. Although the Bible may be seen to have informed the vice of the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor in Africa (Kiambi 2011:62), there is need to reflect on the role that the Bible plays in developing an ethical community that fights against corruption. Our presence need to be felt by all due to the fact that albeit Kenya being a secular state, Christians comprise 82% of our population. Owing to this reality our presence has ensured that the Bible is 'zealously taught and read' (Waweru 2007:84) making a central aspect of the populations' thought pattern. The end result here would be our people are faced with choices and opportunities to choose the right way of behaviour as the heartbeat of our nation.

However it is not only religious people who need to make informed choices. African governments must ethically make choices in the consumer markets, because turning their backs on this responsibility would be abdicating on their essential right to exist. So our ethical standards must inform the people to act, influence, eradicate and change until justice and togetherness are embraced. Such ethical initiatives need to be promoted by both public and private sectors as partners in a cultural way of life. For Africans culture is that which they apply to that which describes a wider variety of societies (Waweru 2010:8), hence the public must lead in the establishment of ethical standards.

Public ethical initiatives

Corruption is controlled only when people no longer tolerate it and encourages a dialogue between the people and leaders in the society as away of mutual exchange of information. The government must advocate a transformative policy guided by ethical principles thus empowering citizens and requiring accountability of leaders. A number of ethical initiatives are necessary by the public in order to combat corruption. The government has the sole obligation to institute transparency through activities such as seminars or conferences with public and private sectors participation. The African governments should also establish code of ethics in business which will ensure integrity both in public and private sectors. They should also effectively

mobilize the citizens to regain their voice in real decision making in the governance of their countries. The ethical standards are possible when the individual citizens are empowered, and the government becomes truly responsible and accountable in establishing:

→ Systems to facilitate the examination of decisions and actions of public officials in demanding an end to corruption as well as a public political life based on transparency, accountability, and equal opportunities.

→ A system of empowerment of citizens to develop skills to recognize and acknowledge their rights and hence fight corruption.

→ A system to improve performance by developing ethical leaders and a participation that is all inclusive in leadership and in addressing corruption based on ethnic and political affiliation.

→ A system to dissuade the public from either working or cooperating with leaders and elites who have a corrupt characteristics.

→ A system that reinforce and consolidate the common objectives of the society and making the citizens understand they are responsible for their conducts in obeying the rules.

These initiatives would succeed once the government has established professionalism in the public service and discipline in financial management. The implementation would be possible through oversight committees to ensure ethical standards are adhered too, particularly in enabling civil society to engage in participatory governance. Therefore the governments of Africa need to establish ethical standards which will help to eliminate corruption, political, economic, and social evils currently are facing the continent. By so doing the private sector will equally be encouraged to acquire ethical standards that will shun corruption and other evils affecting humanity.

Private sector ethical initiatives

Business enterprises have to recognize their role in combating corruption in the society. Ethical standards are a must in private sectors if the African continent is going to survive this evil haunting us everywhere. The companies need to establish ethical initiatives that are to be identified with their operations and its people:

→ There must be acceptable styles of management to which the cooperation's executives are required to subscribe.

→ There must be systems for monitoring actual practice in the management of the companies' affairs.

→ There must be systems of open and frank sharing of information which is relevant to fulfilling company's objectives.

→ There must be systems of ensuring social responsibility obligations are taken seriously particularly in offering support to the development of the society and that

companies do not participate in violating the values and norms reflected in the traditional culture of the people.

There must be systems to ensure that companies' top management 'walks the talk' and steps are taken against them if they violate the ethical standards of business integrity which the companies seek to promote.

The Public and private sector partnership

The public and private sector need to recognize in mutual respect each others role in addressing corruption issues. These two institutions share a common concern for the well being of the continent and its people and an ethical mission to fight corruption by raising accountability, opportunity and empowerment for all ethnic groups within the continent. The institutions require accepting the responsibility of inspiring the people to be the center of development. Also improve the ethical dimensions of life as an essential component of development in order to work with the people for a people driven development. Such would result to a commitment that would protect the natural environment, good governance and the fight against corruption.

This partnership should be active in promoting ethical standards necessary for development. But there is need to recognize that both institutions are limited in understanding and in carrying out their missions of eradicating corruption. Therefore there is need to seek an improvement in mutual understanding in order to hold each other to mutual accountability. To this partnership the public sector brings a wide and varied experience in dealing with corruption issues, while the private sector would bring a wide experience in research and information on how to combat corruption.

The private sector has access to both national and international skills to fight corruption, while the public has a global perspective, financial and professional sources for the same. Hence the private sector adds its ability to influence constructively, based on its role and position as the ethical conscience of the continent, its closeness to the business and its own accountability to the shareholders.

In this partnership the church will get a space as part of private sector in Africa and help in shaping of the people through biblical ethics. The church has been the center of liberation, transformation as well as improving human dignity for all people. Therefore the church as an institution seeks to hold forth humane and spiritual values to underpin social, political and economic development. Such values have kept the church close to the people in ways the public sector is not. The church is the voice of the society and can speak for it truthfully and forcefully against corruption. So the church needs to intensify and share with the public its own research on the voices of the people based on the church's understanding of corruption from a religious, family, ethical and a cultural perspective. By so doing the church will develop a community of responsible citizens.

Being responsible citizens

In Matthew 28:18-20 we encounter the great commission' Go and make disciples of all nations'. This is not a request but a command with political overtones concerning ethical initiatives. This is one of the most misinterpreted texts in the Bible; people are

not commanded to make disciples of denominations but disciples of nations which refer to the citizenship of a people. So our main interest should not be to baptize the individuals as a process of making them members of our churches but members of a political community free from impunity and corruption and as disciples of a nation or a state (Matthew 28:19).

Therefore in this text our political concern has been spelt out. Our interest is to make good disciples of the state rather than Christianize the state. We deal with politics as it affects the communities within the state, for unto us is given the authority in heaven and on earth to develop the discipleship of our continent (Matthew 28:18). This means that politics is part of the great commission whereby political theology will help to establish a discipleship that informs our identity. We are commanded to fight against corruption through making good disciples (28:20).

Good discipleship by public and private sectors becomes our identity

When we talk about identity, we refer to the cultural as well as sociopolitical-economic and religious way of life. Any attempt to avoid living under a collective social-religious canopy has serious repercussions to any given society. As a people of one nation, one continent and one world of Christianity we must be able to identify with our culture (faith), economy and politics. These three areas address our wholeness in such a way that any attempt to separate them fails to deal with our bipolar nature (roots question as well as material foundation of who-am I question), making us foreigners to ethical initiatives deliberated above.

We are a cultural society (religious) on one hand always seeking for identity and meaning. Oppressed people will continuously seek ways to establish roots which informs their identity. On the other hand there is need to acknowledge the existence of an inherited identity which cannot be divorced from a constructed identity. This means that identity is not only informed by roots but also by Christianity and it is also strongly rooted in politics and economy. Identity sprouts not only on the roots of religion but also within the fundamentals of rights and resources. It is not ethical enough to have a private religious identity only but also to be able to access as well as control shared resources and human rights in order to identify yourself. In philosophical ethics this is the area of our concern as we engage in the business of making 'disciples of good ethical standards'. This means that to have a private Christian identity is not enough, but rather having to have access and control to shared resources and human rights becomes our key identity (Botman 1997:76). In other words we become ethical people when we share as Christians in politics, economy and cultural standards as determinants for our political morality.

Identity makes us understand the political community

Addressing the issue of the political community requires that we overcome the church sectarian view in which it places itself when dealing and expressing its role in political processes. So serving the Lord by doing justice and working for a society free of corruption requires that we understand the nature of the political community. My assumption here is that we all live in a political community. The church which is part of the private sector in this country is part of the community as a witness of the rule of God. The political community has a property which we call public. This

public as the government is represented in all levels of administration. The church joins this political community with an interest of entering into dialogue with the government as the authority of that political community. But we do so as we initiate the reign of God, at the same time church function in that community not only in critical solidarity with it, but also with private sector.

We really need to avoid corruption and opt for a democratic government ruled by the 'will of the people' rather than the will of the individual which is often the source of impunity. So the community ethics informs the people 'to will' something, ethics shapes the will of the people. It is commonly believed that if people can access power through parliamentary representation, judicial appeals and public hearings, then their political community is responsible and accountable. This is not true and Christians must hold a different view. If we are to obey laws then we need a legitimate framework for participation in the process whereby laws are made, as an ethical process. The church ought to have a legitimate, unique and ethical role in the processes of the political community.

The political community must take the responsibility as an instrument of justice and peace in the society. The church should not join the interest groups' politics which are so rampant in Africa today. We know that such groups' politics endangers the true responsibility of government, which is to serve the public and the common good of the society. Sometimes individuals are allowed to possess so much power over the government that it effectively made unable to combat impunity that leads to corruption. Discipleship both from public and private sectors is the mode of Christian participation in politics that allows the Christian to practice ethical standards. From a Christian philosophical point of view public justice rather than national interest ought to serve as the highest ethical standards. Hence we need a paradigm shift into a new movement.

Africa is enigmatic. An enigma is something that is hard to explain or understand. It is said that Africa is the centre of Christianity and is full of resources yet her people are the poorest, corrupt and the mother of impunity. Ethical initiatives established by both the public and private sector partnership should influence the political community and assist it in performing its official responsibility of fighting corruption as well as eradicating poverty as a process rather than an event. There should be an understanding in the process of action taking place on an issue to issue basis, and the church thus is more likely to be reactive rather than proactive. When systems are wrong the government will act and the church is left to react after the action has taken place. Political parties, special interest groups are left to make the rules, set the agenda and dictate the nature of the game.

True Christian experience must be comprehensive and sustained. We require comprehensive and sustained participation in the political community. The church needs to be active in the full process setting the agenda, making the rules and critically examining the outcomes.

Conclusion

The Christian society can no longer boast the final word on the formation of the community whether political or social-economic. It joins the political-social economic

community in all its diversity. No clear cut lines are to be drawn between public metaphors and private sector metaphors. There is need for a new language to evolve which should be understood by those in public as well as in ecclesial settings. Christians are called to speak against corruption as well as other evils affecting the society without favour or fear. The word of the reign of God should be spoken in all aspects of the society in such a way that the world should be changed by it. Let us develop a new and more responsive style of leadership that is corrupt free, poverty eradicating, and one which is against ethnic hatred. People should be encouraged to exercise not only their rights but to meet their obligations within the rule of law, while ethical standards (justice, honour, integrity) that have fallen in disuse are being reestablished. Everyone must be reminded that individual accountability is necessary, desirable and inescapable (Romans 14:12).

Of course such a move will disturb the people, but they will obviously surrender to the self-validity enshrined in the gospel of Christ. People will then experience a Christianity of motivation and action. The church becomes a forum for both leaders and followers in the society where nobody will feel threatened with loss of authority or integrity; here we all become ethically motivated in action as Disciples of Christ and good citizens at our very best? The quest for dignity depends on how successfully Africa's people manage to struggle out of this dehumanizing behaviour of corruption which afflicts the community. Through the help of the church Africa must reaffirm, in words and ethical action, that the goal of leadership is first and foremost the promotion of the well-being of the society rather than of an individual.

Both the public and the private sectors should strengthen democratic leadership to ensure that its people live in freedom and peace by establish ethical standards based on the principles of transparency.

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