



A YOUTH MAINSTREAMED ANTI - CORRUPTION MECHANISM

AS THE PANACEA FOR INCLUSIVE YOUTH ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The levels of corruption in Zimbabwe are deplorable. Such corruption has largely impacted the public finance sector. Grand corruption which is corruption that occurs at the highest levels of society and governance is the most telling kind of corruption in Zimbabwe. Grand corruption has been evident in the country since the 1980s with the famous Willowgate scandal heralding a spate of grand corruption cases to date. The gruesome

effect of grand corruption is that it harms the innocent and downtrodden citizens. The youth are particularly feeling the effects of grand corruption in Zimbabwe whose effects manifest amongst this demographic group in the form of unemployment, lack of adequate social services and general poverty. The answer lies in coming up with a youth mainstreamed anti-corruption body which has the zeal and impartiality to thwart all forms of corruption decisively.

INTRODUCTION

Broadly speaking, corruption is the abuse of office by individuals, for their private gain. Zimbabwe ranked joint 160th out of 180 countries in the 2019 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (CPI). On a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean), Zimbabwe scored a miserly 22 on the CPI. This marks an increase in corruption since 1999 when the country ranked 4.1 (out of ten).¹ The CPI scores and ranks countries based on how corrupt a country's public sector is perceived to be by experts and business executives. It is a composite index, a combination of 13 surveys and assessments of corruption, collected by a variety of reputable institutions.

The most visible form of corruption in the country is grand corruption. This is corruption that happens at the highest elite level or the highest political echelons of the country. The list of such corruption scandals on a grand scale goes back to the 1980s with popular scandals like the Willowgate scandal, GMB scandal, Telcel scandal, NOCZIM scandal, Airport Road scandal and the Command Agriculture scandal transcending generations. The ushering in of the new dispensation did not halt the inertia of grand corruption scandals. In a way, the grand corruption scandals have deepened with officials in the political system becoming more daring and brave. We have seen figures in the multi-millions of United States Dollars being embezzled by a trusted holder of public office. Figures like 95 million United States Dollars which was embezzled by a former Minister in the cabinet of the new dispensation are little in comparison to the real amounts being embezzled under the covers of political protection.

The effects of corruption are particularly worrisome for the youth because they pose an intergenerational threat to the economic

prosperity of young people. Embezzlement of public funds has the following implications on youth:

- the nation cannot repay its debt on time and therefore the country falls into a debt trap that the youth must pay for.
- Social services like basic and higher education suffer and the youth cannot get access to education grants and scholarships.
- The subsequent lack of education on the part of the youth ushers in a cycle of poverty.
- Youth owned and led businesses will suffer from lack of venture capital.

Although not entirely exhaustive, the effects of corruption on youth that have been outlined above result in a terrifying reality for the youth if the situation is not rectified.

POLICY IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

If the current trajectory of corruption and grand corruption in particular persists, future livelihoods of the youth will be severely ostracized. The new dispensation in Zimbabwe initially appeared to have a zero-tolerance stance against corruption as it reconstituted, strengthened and made functional the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC). ZACC was given arresting powers and this seemed like a step in the right direction as the commission previously had to depend on the police. However, the "catch and release" syndrome that has seen the likes of top political officials (names withheld) being released without any due and utter diligence being done has shown that ZACC is, in fact, toothless in the fight against corruption. Hence, what is required is a youth mainstreamed anti-corruption commission that will see new zeal and vehemence being injected in the fight against corruption by young people who have everything to lose due to

¹ Transparency International (1999). "The 1999 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)". Transparency International.

grand corruption. In a bid to move towards this revised policy direction the following recommendations are proffered;

- The Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) must have a youth desk or office by law which is responsible for giving information to various youth bodies and entities on the state of the anti-corruption drive by the commission.
- There should be a compulsory quota for youth commissioners in ZACC of about 30%. This is to say that 30% of commissioners in ZACC must be within the age bracket of 15 to 35.
- The Ministry of Youth, Sports, Arts and Recreation must engage pertinent stakeholders and craft a National Youth Corruption Barometer (NYCB) which will see the youth being able to track current cases on corruption and also churn out data on how corruption affects the youth. The NYCB will also take ideas from the youth on how to reduce and end corruption in the country.

CONCLUSION

Corruption has become endemic in Zimbabwe. The glaring intergenerational effects of corruption make it a youth-centred issue that must be rectified. To this end, the formulation of a youth mainstreamed Zimbabwe Anti Corruption and the setting up of a National Youth Corruption Barometer (NYCB) provides the starting point for a tougher youth-centred approach in the fight against corruption in Zimbabwe.

