

Forum: ECOSOC

Issue: Combating corruption as a step towards poverty reduction

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Introduction

The poverty experienced by many nations has been an international concern at least for centuries. Various factors contribute to such poverty, including war, exploitation and illiteracy. Corruption and poverty unfortunately also go hand-in-hand, serving as a barrier to successful poverty eradication. It could destroy the efforts of developing countries in order to get rid of poverty. In the public aspect, corruption are the main causes of weakening economic, political and social institutions. Therefore, combating corruption is an essential part in the poverty reduction process. High levels of corruption makes the living conditions of the poor worse and worse by disturbing the entire decision making process connected with public sector programs. Moreover, corruption deepens poverty by restricting the access of constructive programs such as education and health care at the expense of larger capital intensive projects, which can make better opportunities to take illegal incomes. Alternatively, social inequalities in poor countries make greater imbalances in the distribution of power and eventually encourage corruption.

Recently, understanding the roots of corruption and its influences on the economy, politics, and society has been seen more important to reduce poverty than focusing on building public awareness on corruption issues. The global anti-corruption movement, therefore, has moved towards researching the fundamental roots of corruption and numerous mechanisms have been developed through the cooperation of nations to study and monitor corruption wherever it takes place. In addition, efforts to combat corruption have moved from a phase from giving moral warnings to a more effective method in developing anti corruption strategies relating with the whole that are formed on equal ideas based on prevention, enforcement, and public education.

Background Information

Falling below a certain income line is not the only definition of poverty. Poverty is a complex phenomenon that is defined by numerous factors, including the access to essential services, fundamental civil rights, and human development. The United Nations should, therefore, recognise this broader concept of poverty and the reality that it must be considered beyond simple income measurements. It is worth noting the effort of the United Nations in promoting the values of freedom, equality, and tolerance for combating the main difficulties in reducing poverty. However, these development pillars, which define an individual's basic rights and the legal frameworks intended to protect them are undermined through corruption. In fact, unequal development and poverty are the consequences in countries where governments can pass policies and budgets without any argument or responsibility for their actions. As a result, people lose their power, authority, or influence (politically, socially, and economically) and, in the process, further reduced to poverty. Corruption also extracts the money and goods that were made to lessen poverty. These leakages compromise many development-related advances including a country's economic growth, investment levels, and poverty reduction efforts. Similarly, petty corruption takes the money of poor people by enforcing them to offer bribes in exchange for access to basic resources and services — many of which may be 'free' by law, such as healthcare and education. With few alternatives, poor people may be involved frequently or habitually to corruption as a survival strategy to avoid the isolation faced when trying to go to school, get a job, buy a house, vote or simply participate in their societies. To address these challenges, policies and interventions supported by the United Nations must coordinate initiatives that recognise how poverty, inequality and corruption are interrelated.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

The world wide problem of poverty is truly international and affects most of the countries engaged in the fight against corruption at the state level. Among the numerous nations who suffer from corruption, this trend of resulting in poverty can be seen especially in developing countries in Africa due to the lack of education and

protection of basic rights. As this problem regarding poverty and corruption affects the whole world, there are many organizations willing to resolve the problem including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank Group, and the International Association of the International Authorities (IAACA).

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Various countries are making great effort (directly and indirectly) to combat corruption through numerous organisations; including the ones mentioned above. However, it is noteworthy that the United Nations is also making great efforts through its conventions against corruption held all around the world. The Convention was adopted by the General Assembly by resolution 58/4 of 31 October 2003. The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/169 of 18 December 2002, accepted the offer of the Government of Mexico to host a high-level political signing conference in Merida for the purpose of signing the United Nations. However, actual achievements have not been productive in reaching expectations. In practice, instead of noticing poverty and corruption as an interrelated problem of the same strategy, donors and governments still regard poverty and corruption as two different subjects. From this, the continued lack of policy incorporation has eventually weakened the efforts made to fight both corruption and poverty. Therefore, poverty continues to exist among more than a half of the world's citizens, with almost three billion people living on less than two dollars-a-day.

Possible Solutions

Combating poverty and corruption have the definition of addressing and overcoming the obstacles that stand in the way of citizen involvement and a state's accountability. Taking into account all the problems above, anti-corruption strategies must look more closely at the larger context that limits opportunities for poor citizens to participate in political, economic and social processes. Many of these problems can be resolved with the recognition of the following three core principles of the PRS (Poverty Reduction Strategies) approach, which has been playing an important role in poverty reduction in over 50 countries for the last decade;

- **Participation:** Preventing corruption requires an effort from all members of society as a large monitoring, criticising or sanctioning the actions of governments and other public institutions, as well as those of individual public officials and holders of public mandates
- **Transparency:** Transparency is most effective in preventing corruptive actions as the government and other public institutions will have to not only clarify their general political methods to public debate, but also demonstrate how these agreed strategies are being implemented
- **Accountability:** Lack of accountability is one of the most significant reasons why stable development has not been shown in most of the world's poorest countries. Accountability will have to be brought out by a intermixture of political will from the top and public pressure from the bottom. Since, only two percent of the population in developing countries work for the government, this approach must include the education, involvement, and empowerment of the 98 percent of the population in order to be successful.

After the recognition of such fundamental principles, some key elements of combating corruption may include;

- Political commitment to fight corruption at the highest level of a state
- Coordinated anti-corruption strategy
- Anti-corruption institutions
- Improved, and especially transparent public finance management
- Coordinated donor strategy to fight corruption
- Active civil society that functions as a watchdog, and works to intensify the fight against corruption
- Strengthening of legislation to increase the risks and "costs" incurred by corrupt individuals

Reliable Useful Links

- *The Causal Relationship between Corruption and Poverty:* https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/24871/1/causality_between_corruption_and_poverty.pdf
<http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0708/DOC14285.pdf>
- *Necessary Steps to Combat Poverty and Corruption:*
<https://www.unodc.org/pdf/crime/gpacpublications/cicp2.pdf>
- *United Nations Convention against Corruption:*
<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CAC/index.html>
- *The Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) approach:*
<https://www.imf.org/external/np/pp/eng/2005/091905p.pdf>