



Through the Professional Eye

APSL Publication Series, No.1: **Corruption**

Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the United Kingdom (APSL-UK)

1.0 Introduction

As part of APSL knowledge transfer programme, a series of educational articles will be produced and widely published. The first subject unanimously selected by APSL membership is “Corruption” and the strong belief is that through education, these issues can be effectively tackled by our modern society. During a recent APSL Event held in Wakefield, in the U.K., the participants discussed, debated and brainstormed the causes, effects and ways to reduce, if not eliminate corruption. This article summarises the discussion that took place for wider circulation, publication and implementation in the future by interested countries. This publication is also a starting point for further discussions on this subject.

During the debate and brainstorming sessions, the participants had access to the recent data published by Transparency International (“TI”).

Anti-corruption activities carried out by TI has been appreciated and accepted globally. TI is a global civil society organization founded in 1993, and carries out research and surveys on corruption. TI has defined a Corruption Perception Index (CPI), and ranked 180 countries according to the CPI-score. In this scale, CPI-score of 10 means the lowest level of corruption and CPI-score of zero means the highest level of corruption.

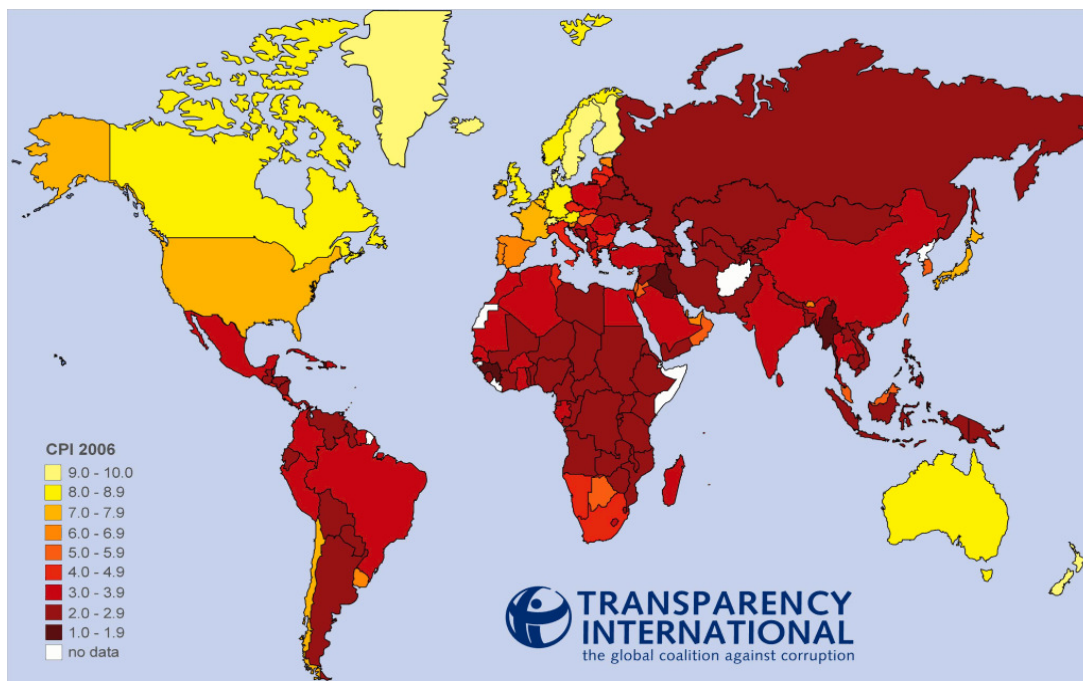


Figure 1. The world map imaged according to the CPI-scores for year 2006. CPI-score 10 (light yellow) = Least corrupt and CPI-score 0 (dark red) = Highest corrupt regions.

Figure 1 shows the world map with respective CPI scores for year 2006, and Table 1 summarises some of the countries ranked according to CPI-scores for year 2007.

Table 1. Ranking of countries according to CPI-score published for the year 2007.

Country Rank	Country	CPI Score	Country Rank	Country	CPI-Score
1	New Zealand	9.4	61	Cuba	4.2
2	Denmark	9.4	75	India	3.5
3	Finland	9.4	91	Thailand	3.3
4	Singapore	9.3	-----	-----	-----
5	Sweden	9.3	95	Sri Lanka	3.2
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10	Canada	8.7	110	Egypt	2.9
11	Australia	8.6	138	Pakistan	2.4
13	United Kingdom	8.4	146	Russia	2.3
16	Germany	7.8	148	Nigeria	2.2
17	Japan	7.5	151	Kazakhstan	2.1
20	United States	7.2	162	Bangladesh	2.0
43	Malaysia	5.1	-----	-----	-----
45	South Africa *	5.1	172	Afghanistan	1.8
57	Namibia *	4.5	178	**	1.5
58	Seychelles *	4.5	179	Iraq **	1.4
				Somalia **	

A few clear conclusions can be drawn from this comprehensive work.

(a) A large number of countries round the globe are severely affected by corruption. Least corruption indicates an economically developed country with less internal conflicts. Highest corruption indicates a poor nation with various problems within the country. Therefore, there exists a strong correlation between corruption and economic development.

(b) Countries torn apart by conflict (e.g. Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia) pay a huge toll and are more corrupt. The governing institutions are not functioning and therefore provide the right conditions for corruption.

(c) Recent anti-corruption efforts in Africa (e.g. South Africa, Namibia and Seychelles) have shown considerable improvements achieving high CPI-scores as shown in Table 1. This is a good example for other affected countries, and they should take immediate and appropriate actions in order to reduce corruption, by economically developing and alleviating poverty.

At the brainstorming session the cause and effects of corruption were analysed as follows and the participants unanimously agreed on a common form of action to be recommended to people in authority in preventing and minimizing corruption for the benefit and improved life of the society.

2.0 Causes of Corruption

It is appropriate to define corruption before moving into discussing the details. Although it can have many definitions, **“the misuse of entrusted power for private gain”** is the TI’s chosen definition. During the brainstorming session, one of the three groups involved spent time analysing the causes of corruption.

The most important amongst the causes of corruption is the relatively lower salaries of those working in the Public Sector. As a result, people take bribes to supplement low wages in order to improve their standard of living (housing, children’s education etc.). This sounds like poverty breeds corruption, but the real reason is the individual’s greed. One can find many honest people in poor communities and they live peaceful and happy lives within their communities. In fact, the corruption breeds poverty creating the collapse of infrastructure as well as moral and cultural values.

The loopholes in the law are another reason for corruption. In this environment, Individuals, Institutes and the State engage in systematic corruption. After a while these mal-practices become embedded into the process. Then there will be no transparent systems to report and no protection for ‘whistle blowers’, thus allowing the perpetrators to get away with impunity. As a result the corruption is classed as being institutionalized and according to some studies, even the honest people will be forced to resort to corrupt practices such as bribery in order to survive and get anything done in these societies.

Research also shows that corrupt leadership at all levels, breakdown of the social fabric and the economy have been the main causes of corruption.

3.0 Effects of Corruption

The main effect of corruption is that it retards economic growth and social development of a country and entraps the poor in poverty. The most vulnerable (including women, children, elderly and sick people) will suffer, while a very small fraction of the society will enjoy un-imaginable comforts and rich life styles.

Over a prolonged period of time ‘learnt helplessness will set in disempowering the national psyche’ corrupt practices will be accepted as the norm, the code of conduct will suffer leading to many detrimental results. Low morality and ethics, poor perception and credibility of the organization/society, poor reputation of the country, low efficiency, loss of equal opportunity and hence brain drain are some of the detrimental effects.

Knock-on effects on the society and the environment are enormous and far reaching. For example, the misuse of power in a corrupt society is an inappropriate precedent for future generations, corruption delays the most needed processes resulting in the growth of bureaucracy. The costs will be extremely high in government institutions and misuse of foreign aid in national disasters will take place.

The essential integrity of the judiciary systems will deteriorate and the sectors most affected by corrupt practices will be the Police, Customs, Importers/Exporters, thus reducing the Tax revenue needed to run the country. At the end, the general public will suffer.

4.0 Recommendation for Reduction/Minimizing Corruption

Corruption has a severe detrimental effect on social development. Therefore the following actions on a broad front must be taken to eradicate corruption:

1. Develop and maintain consistent high standard schools/education in all areas of the country. Modify the curriculum to suit the developing needs of the country as well as individuals.
2. Empower the general public with appropriate information, methods and routes for reducing corruption. Develop a culture so that each individual can set a good example to reduce corruption.
3. Educate and empower people to vote for their country's benefits rather than short term personal gains. Make arrangements to select honest and sincere leaders with integrity, through a democratic system. Create patriotism within the country.
4. In developing countries, societies based on sound institutional foundations must be built. The governance institutions should be strengthened and social development programmes should incorporate strengthened integrity and prevention of corruption.
5. Establish a clean and capable Judiciary to maintain law and order. Judicial proceedings should be completely independent without political influence. Rules should be applied equally to all regardless of wealth and power.
6. The representatives from government, business and civil society should work together to set standards and procedures, and these should be implemented with highest discipline in every sector.
7. Transparency should be improved in every administration decisions, business transactions and charitable work. The activities of civil servants, managers and trustees should be visible, predictable and understandable.
8. Establish mechanisms or policing bribery and corruption (eg. bribery commission) with full powers to investigate cases independently. Make everybody accountable for their actions and establish a good whistle blowing policy.
9. Developed countries must enforce regulations of their financial institutes more strictly. This will help in anti-money laundering and securing of stolen public funds from poor nations in corrupt countries.
10. Meritocracy must be encouraged in all forms of bureaucracies/systems in both Private and State Sectors.

In the case of Sri Lanka, corruption is not only prevalent, but is also on the rise. The Sri Lankan community needs to wake up and take urgent action to redeem Sri Lanka from corruption.

References:

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APSL Website: www.apsl.org.uk

APSL Publication Series, No.2: Discipline on the Roads