

Quiet corruption and its influence on society

Corruption comes in many forms. The World Bank has recently brought out a new form of corruption known as quiet corruption that affects the development efforts of Nigeria as well as other African countries. Quiet corruption or silent corruption refers to the failure of public servants to deliver goods or services paid for by the government. Quiet corruption is pervasive and seen in all departments of federal, state and local government offices affecting the poor people with negative long term consequences for the development process of Nigeria.

Silent corruption practices such as unauthorized absence, deviation from expected conduct and deliberate bending of rules for personal advantage have manifested in low levels of effort, efficiency, red-tapism, nepotism, favouritism, faulty implementation of government schemes and programmes impeding the development process of a developing country. Further, it also leads to inefficient and unproductive use of government expenditure on government staff. All three forms of corruption such as big corruption, petty corruption and quiet corruption are inter-related. Quiet corruption has resulted in negative expectation of service delivery systems, forcing the people and their families to ignore the system. Besides corroding the society, silent corruption leads to loss of confidence in schemes and programmes initiated by the government. Moreover, this would result in non-participation of people in nation building activities of the government affecting the progress of the economy. When compared to grand forms of corruption, quiet corruption is smaller in monetary terms; however, the effect is felt more among the vulnerable

sections of the society. Moreover, this segment of poor people due to their deplorable economic conditions essentially depends on government services for their most basic needs.

It is observed that silent corruption also leads to low level of economic development by denying the services to the citizens. For instance, teachers do not go to schools to teach on a number of days; although they are getting salary every month regularly. The absence of teachers in the classrooms leads to poor literacy rates and later manifests itself in anti-social activities indulged by the school drop-outs. World Bank report further pointed out that teacher absentee rates turned out to be 20% in Kenya during the year 2004 and 20% in Uganda during the year 2007 among the rural primary schools. The long term consequences of high teacher absentee rate will be denial of proper education to the child leading to low cognitive skills and weak health among children. Thus, silent corruption involving public servants absenteeism from the designated post has resulted in deteriorating living conditions.

Delivery of health and sanitary services are insufficient in Nigeria on account of quiet corruption indulged by health personnel such as doctors, nurses, pharmacists and sanitary workers. The drug inspectors should periodically inspect the available drugs in the medical store whether it is genuine or fake. Dereliction of duty on the part of drug inspectors has resulted in a number of deaths. Some studies have pointed out that nearly 50% of drugs sold in Nigeria were counterfeit posing life threatening dangers. The unauthorized absence of doctors, nurses, and pharmacists from the public hospitals has also compounded the health problems resulting in high mortality rate among pa-

tients.

Similarly in agriculture too, service delivery is abysmally poor. Fertilizers sold in West African countries lack the appropriate nutrients and as a result of which, farmers incur heavy yield losses in using ineffective fertilizers and pesticides in 1990s. In the long run as a result of quiet corruption, farmers have lost interest in using modern inputs such as fertilizer and pesticides as a consequence of which agriculture remained backward and not remunerative. Correspondingly, the farm yield, farmers' income, farmer's consumption levels and the welfare of the farmers' family have deteriorated.

Quiet corruption undermines economic development on a wide scale.

The onslaught of quiet corruption on the economy could be minimized by implementing a number of administrative reform measures along with transparency and accountability

For example in Chad, 37% children who start in grade one reach grade five, while in Mauritius 99% children reach grade five. Similarly access to safe water is around 29% in some areas, while it is 100% in Mauritius. Quiet corruption also resulted in distribution of less electricity in Ethiopia at the level of 38kw/hr.

Quiet corruption takes place across a much wider group of beneficiaries directly. This could be seen in the day to day happenings at public hospitals between doctors and the patients, at schools between teachers and pupil interactions. Quiet corruption that prevails among lower echelons of government staff may justify their practices by pointing out bad practices of their superior officers involved in big corruption. Quiet corruption also has its negative long term consequences on private households, business houses and farms.

The onslaught of quiet corruption on the economy could be minimized by implementing a number of administrative reform measures along with transparency and accountability. But the implementation of measures require the combination of strong political will, committed leadership and formulation of effective policies at all levels of the sector and institutions. Moreover transparency in the administration is essentially required along with accountability of government officials. Above all, people should be vigilant and take active part in the anti-quiet corruption measures initiated by the government.



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