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New Anti-Corruption Governments:
The Challenge of Delivery
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COUNTRY STORIES

Dr. Karuti Kanyinga: Kenya

The background to transition events is important in tracing the outcomes that have emerged and the obstacles that are being faced. Kenya has been characterized by economic decline, deepening poverty and weaker institutions for governance. These conditions are especially suited for grand corruption to proceed with little hindrance. It is also significant that prior to the election of the present government, Kenya had highly ethnicized politics on the one hand and weak political parties. In spite of their perceived weakness and the general lack of a democratic culture, the opposition parties were mobilized on the basis of political and economic reforms. Kenya's fight against corruption must therefore be seen against this background.

The Outcomes:

1. The promise of reforms created great public expectations and support.
2. Empirical evidence shows that there has been a reduction in petty corruption though the size of the bribe has increased.
3. There is a bridging of new and old corruption and this presents a difficult challenge for the incumbent government.
4. The main lesson is that the window of opportunity for ensuring that corruption makes a retreat is not only narrow but in the case of Kenya, it is closing down rapidly.

Anna Zhvania: Georgia

Georgia has recently undergone a comprehensive transformation that was supported by the public. The new reform process started after the revolution and so apart from the sudden change; there are few tangible results because of the new political administration. However, there is a new reality because of a weakened civil society after the revolution. The main directions of reforms require changes in the civil registry where there is still an avenue for corruption in issuing identity cards and passports. In the area of foreign policy, there is a challenge because long-standing tensions could result in active conflicts. All these provide peculiar opportunities and standing challenges for the government and citizens of Georgia. The present government has undertaken reforms in the military, the police and the office of the prime Minister as a manifestation of zero-tolerance to

corruption. Still, the vigilance of civil society is required as the opposition is much weaker and lacks credibility that a popular government is assured of.

Emmy Hafid: Indonesia

The fight against corruption in Indonesia is as political as it is in many transition countries. However, in Indonesia, the pervasive influence of the military in politics has made the reforms more delicate due to the involvement of former military officers in elections. The outgoing president Megawati Sukarnoputri was elected on a reform platform but faced attacks on the degree of her commitment to reforms. During the most recent elections, her main challenger was a former general in the army. She lost the run-off because of the perception among Indonesians that she was unprepared to clean up her government and decisively fight corruption. The civil society organizations in Indonesia are cautious about the election of a person with a history in the military but must respect the outcome of one of the fairest elections that has been held in the country. The lesson is that the pressure for the political administration to maintain the reforms must be kept. Vigilance from civil society organizations and the national chapter of Transparency international is important because the president elect is famous for indecisiveness hence must be pressured to allocate resources for fighting corruption.

Jose Ugaz: Peru

Peru's most difficult problem regarding reforms could be traced to the election of Mr. Alberto Fujimori as president in 1990. Together with his main intelligence officer known as Mr. Vladimir Montesinos, the Peruvian experienced the most blatant form of abuse of power and impunity in the exercise of corruption. Peru was effectively dealing with more than a conventional and corrupt regime as this was a criminal organization that had captured political power. Through their impunity and greed, they together foresaw the wastage and theft of public property and money over a decade until president Fujimori went to exile.

Since November 2000, the government of Peru undertook to actively pursue the corrupt people and to recover assets and public property. A total of two hundred criminal proceedings have been opened and over 2075 indictments made. It has also been shown that the regime and its operatives engaged in systematic corruption and other crimes. While a plan has not been implemented, the law provides for an institutionalized struggle against corruption through an investigative and prosecutorial office. In the mean time, the government of Peru is seeking the extradition of Mr. Fujimori in order to put him on trial for the economic and other crimes committed during his rule.

Discussions

- ***Financing Anti-corruption Initiatives***

Where governments have made an undertaking to tackling corruption, the lack of funds cannot be an acceptable excuse for inaction. All anti-corruption initiatives represent a public investment that definitely yields public benefits. The case of Peru shows that considered against the costs of recovery, the investment in institutions that curb corruption paid off by a wide margin. Significant reforms are also required in transition countries because systematic corruption could easily lead to state capture by organized criminals. This is why a reform government must take account to the narrow window of opportunity to ensure that political reforms are undertaken in time in order to disarm corruption networks.

- ***Extradition of exiled leaders***

International cooperation in fighting corruption is necessary because corrupt leaders often establish themselves outside their country to avoid arrest and prosecution for economic crimes. The existence of legal backing by the state is important because the relevant institution could take responsibility for the preparation of the papers and liaison with the foreign country. In the case of Peru, bureaucratic bottlenecks have delayed the possibility of his extradition but the Peruvian government is determined to let the matter be decided at The Hague if necessary. However, this would be the last resort as the government of Peru is aware that Japan is not only a signatory to the OECD convention against corruption but is also a signatory of the United Nation's convention against corruption.

- ***Political Reforms***

Because corruption is mainly driven by poor governance, the degree of political reforms that a government undertakes must be taken as an important indicator of its willingness to bear the cost of tackling corruption. In this respect, mere declarations of this commitment are unconvincing and the public relies primarily on systematic political reforms. Where a government of a country in transition opts to take this road, the effect of the reforms is that this will percolate and assist it in getting buy-in for further political reforms. Indeed, empirical evidence shows that sustained and dispassionate political reforms are the surest way of taking advantage of the narrow window of opportunity that a transition government faces.