

# THE ROOTS OF CORRUPTION: THE GHANAIA ENQUIRY REVISITED

**Joseph Atsu Ayee (PhD; FGA)**

**Professor/Adjunct Senior Fellow, Institute of Economic Affairs, Accra**

# OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

- Introduction
- Methodology
- Brief Literature Review on Corruption
- Findings from Fieldwork on Corruption
- Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

# Introduction

- Corruption attracts attention because of its debilitating and corrosive consequences on politics, governance, economy, society and security.
- Strategies to curb corruption have largely failed.
- Understanding the root causes of corruption is key in dealing with corruption.
- Paper contributes to the debate over the root causes of corruption with special reference to traditional values and practices.
- Use IEA SEGS of 2015 to establish: (i) opportunities and causes of corruption; (ii) perception of corruption; and (iii) combating corruption.

# Methodology

- A combination of data from field work and desk study.
- The Institute of Economic Affairs' Socio-economic Governance Survey (2) conducted in November/December 2015.
- A regionally disaggregated representative sample of 1,500 respondents aged 18 years and above from the 10 regions of Ghana was selected.
- Some quality control measures such as: (i) use of probability sampling design whereby each person aged 18 years and above has a known non-zero chance of being included in the sample; and (ii) use of structured questionnaire.
- Survey is about perception and therefore findings sometimes not taken seriously. Should be taken seriously because of controls.

# Brief Literature Review

- Publications focus on the “value chain” of corruption: definitions, forms, types, causes/determinants, consequences, strategies, measurement, cases studies (country and sectoral).
- “As a people, do we frown upon and resist bribery and corruption or do we tend to regard them as natural and inevitable?”
- “Do we draw a line between the ‘customary drink’ under our traditional practices, and bribery and corruption of public officers and others holding positions of trust?” (Mr Justice P. D. Anin 29 June 1970).
- Causes of corruption: (Werlin 1972; Price 1975; LeVine 1975; NACAP, 2015-2024; Ninsin 1984; Ayee 2000; 2002; 2016)

# Findings from Fieldwork (Opportunities)

**TABLE 1: In your opinion, which of the following are the main motives behind corrupt practices?**

	Frequency	Percent		
a. There is no other way to get things done	23	1.5		
b. To avoid punishment/sanctions	343	22.9		
c. To avoid higher official payments	302	20.1		
d. To speed up the processes/procedures	100	6.7		
e. To be treated (served) appropriately	279	18.6		
f. To get preferential treatment/privileges	71	4.7		
g. To have alternative source of income	94	6.3		
h. The practice of obligatory (illegal) “payments” to supervisors	177	11.8		
i. Other, specify..... [Record answer as said]	38	2.5		
j. Don't know	19	1.3		
k. Refused to answer	3	.2		
<b>Total</b>	<b>1449</b>	<b>96.6</b>		

# Causes of Corruption in Ghana

**TABLE 2: What do you think are the factors causing corruption in Ghana?**

	First	Second	Third
1. Low salaries	23.4	19.1	18.6
1. Lack of ethics	5.9	12.3	8.8
1. Get rich quick	24.0	23.2	24.6
1. Socio-cultural demands	1.6	2.2	2.5
1. Lack of clear rules and laws	4.1	7.5	9.3
1. Lack of punitive and deterrent sanctions	5.2	4.9	7.2
1. Abuse or mal-use of power in the public sector	3.6	4.4	6.4
1. Excessive bureaucracy	1.9	4.1	4.6
1. Greed and selfishness	27.9	21.1	16.8
1. Other	2.4	1.2	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

# Some Comments on Socio-cultural Demands being the least factor causing Corruption

- The notion of good personal character traits occupies a central place in Ghanaian ethics.
- Some maxims extol moral worth or virtues which are valued. They include honesty, truthfulness, humility, moderation and hard work.
- This is shown by the following maxims:
  - “To own only a few things is better than to be a thief”
  - To pursue virtue is better than gold”
  - “When virtue founds a town, the town thrives and abides”
  - “The decline and fall of a nation begins in its homes”



# Most Common Form of Corruption

TABLE 3: What is the most common form of corruption in Ghana?

	Frequency	Percent		
Money	1295	86.3		
Material (cars, houses, etc.)	14	.9		
Favours	7	.5		
Others (specify)	23	1.5		
Total	1339	89.3		

# Some Comments on Money being the most Common Form of Corruption

- Money being the most common form of corruption shows the acquisitive or materialistic nature of the Ghanaian.
- There are some Akan maxims which underline Ghanaian attitudes towards wealth or money.
- “Money is sharper than the sword”
- “One does not cook one’s nobility and eat it; it is wealth that counts”
- When wealth comes and passes by, nothing comes after”
- Fame of being nobly born does not spread; it is the fame of riches that spreads”.
- Money must be acquired through genuine means.

# Institutions to Contact to Report a Corrupt Act

**TABLE 4: Which institution(s) in Ghana would you contact to report a corrupt act by an official?**

	No	Yes
Community Leaders	72.6	27.4
District Chief Executives/ MMDCE's	91.1	8.9
Police	12.6	87.4
EOCO	93.1	6.9
Attorney General	98.4	1.6
Courts	89.0	11.0
CHRAJ	94.3	5.7
Office of the President	99.5	.5
National Parliament/your Member of Parliament	98.2	1.8
Political party leaders	99.1	.9
Independent NGO working on anticorruption (e.g. Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition)	96.9	3.1
Would not contact any institution	99.6	.4

# Overall Assessment of Corruption in Ghana

**TABLE 5: What is your overall assessment of corruption in Ghana?**

	Frequency	Percent		
Very High	1082	72.1		
High	292	19.5		
Low	61	4.1		
Don't know	62	4.1		
Total	1497	99.8		
Missing System	3	.2		
Total	1500	100.0		

# Information Source from which Assessment of Corruption was based (TABLE 6)

Response(s)	Frequency	Percent
Personal experience (you have had to provide cash, gift or favour)	295	20.8
Talk with relatives	206	14.5
Talk with friends and acquaintances	133	9.4
Information on corruption given by NGOs (corruption awareness)	30	2.1
Information provided by the media (TV, radio, newspaper, internet, etc.)	744	52.4
Other (Please specify)	13	.9
Total	1421	100.0

# Personal Responsibility to Reduce Corruption

TABLE 7: In your opinion, what can you personally do to reduce corruption in Ghana?

Action	No	Yes
A. Abstain from paying bribes for public services	35.7	64.3
B. Report corruption in the press	78.3	21.7
C. Refuse to make favours to officials or to their relatives related with my job	86.8	13.2
D. Report corrupt behaviour of public officials to NGO anticorruption centre	92.7	7.3
E. Report corrupt officials behaviour to complete authorities	72.7	27.3
F. File lawsuit against the corrupt official	92.7	7.3
G. Participate in awareness campaigns against corruption	84.9	15.1
H. Participate and supporting an anticorruption educational campaign	87.1	12.9
I. There is nothing I can do	93.9	6.1

## Attitudes of Respondents Towards Taking a Bribe (TABLE 8)

Background Characteristics	I would take	I would not take it	Other (Specify)	Don't know	Refused	Total	Number
Sex							
Male	19.1	77.6	0.8	2.0	0.5	100.0	598
Female	19.4	77.1	0.1	3.1	0.2	100.0	901
Age group							
18-24	21.4	76.4	0.3	1.9	0.0	100.0	369
25-59	19.4	77.0	0.4	2.7	0.4	100.0	936
60+	14.4	80.4	0.5	4.1	0.5	100.0	194
Total	19.3	77.3	0.4	2.7	0.3	100.0	1499

# Reducing Corruption

**TABLE 9: To what extent do you think corruption can be reduced in Ghana?**

	Frequency	Percent		
Corruption cannot be reduced at all	363	24.2		
Corruption can be reduced to a limited degree	660	44.0		
Corruption can be substantially reduced	292	19.5		
Corruption can be completely eradicated	70	4.7		
Refused	3	.2		
Don't know	81	5.4		
Total	1469	97.9		
Missing	31	2.1		
Total	1500	100.0		



# Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

- “Go back to basics” and inculcate in children and young adults to appreciate, internalize and display moral virtues.
- Traditional practices *per se* do not support corruption; individuals misinterpret some of these practices for their own selfish needs.
- Information is power: “Sunlight is the best of disinfectants... and electric light the most efficient policeman” (Louis Brandeis).
- Bipartisan approach.
- Transformational leadership.
- Effective anti-corruption institutions.
- Enforcement of laws and use of smart technology.