

**CORRUPTION:
A NEW THINKING
IN THE REVERSE
ORDER**

**Ajayi Crowther University Press
Oyo**

*When you see that in order to produce,
you need to obtain permission from
men who produce nothing — When
you see that money is flowing to those who deal,
not in goods but in favors —
When you see that men get richer by graft and by
pull than by work, and your laws don't
protect you against them,
but protect them against
you — When you see corruption
being rewarded and honesty becoming
self-sacrifice — You may know
that your society is doomed — Ayn Rand*

*No one writes an autobiography
in which he recalls the bribes
he has taken or the bribes he has paid —*

John T. Noonan, Jr.

Corruption: A New Thinking ⁱⁿ the Reverse Order

Edited by
Benson Ohihon Igboin

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Tapping into the Unexplored Power and Potential of the Youth in the Fight against Corruption

— ❧ —
Nathan Chiroma

Introduction

Corruption remains a major threat to the development of the African economy, and the youth in general have not been spared the consequences of this evil. Many stakeholders have fought against corruption in the past and even more are endeavouring to fight this unethical practice through various initiatives, but the power and the potential of the African youth in the fight against corruption are yet to be tapped into. Around the world, many young people are victims of corruption – direct or structural corruption – and they are being lured to become carriers of corruption. There is a strong tendency among politicians to underestimate the power and potential of the youth for solving the problem of corruption. Nonetheless, the youth have the power and the potential to contribute in the fight against corruption. Equally affected by various forms of corruption, the youth can act constructively towards building a corrupt free society. This paper

explores the power and potential of the youth in the fight against corruption.

Young people, as members of a dynamic group in society, play a crucial role in positively transforming any given society. This is documented in several statements and reports of governments, international inter-governmental organizations and non-governmental organisations (African Youth Charter, Manor River Youth Program, Big Brother, Big Sister, etc.).¹ However, there is limited data to support the involvement of the youth when it comes to public matters, particularly in the fight against corruption. Academic research has yet to focus on the power and potential of the youth in the fight against corruption in Africa.

With 200 million people aged between 15 and 24, Africa has the youngest population in the world. Africa is home to more people under 20 years of age than any other continent, and the continent's population is set to double to two billion by 2050.² These young people have the power and potential of developing into formidable players in the fight against corruption if properly guided. However, for that to happen there are certain African ideologies that limit the role of the youth in public matters, which must first have to be challenged. These ideologies could be illustrated by citing two African proverbs. The first is an Hausa proverb: "*Yarobamutumbasaiyagirma*," stating that "a young person is not a human being until he or she has grown into adulthood." The second proverb is found across Africa, espousing the view that "the youth are supposed to be seen and not heard." Contrary to these viewpoints, young people could be valuable partners in the fight against corruption.

Corruption remains a major threat to the development of the African economy, with the youth in general not spared the consequences thereof. Many stakeholders have fought against corruption in the past

¹Youth & the Millennium Development Goals: Challenges and Opportunities for Implementation, 2005. Prepared by the Ad Hoc Working Group for Youth and the MDGs available at <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/youthmdgs.pdf>

²Gerson Muhimi, *Youth Employment Summit 2014: The State of Youth Employment in Africa*, Nairobi, Longhorn Publishers, 2014.

³Hausa Proverb from Northern Nigeria (proverbs and wise sayings are part and parcel of the Hausa culture).

and even more are endeavouring to fight this unethical practice through various initiatives, but the power and the potential of the African youth in the fight against corruption are yet to be tapped into, as Kamble⁴ rightly states:

Neither children nor youth appear as important variables in the literature on the fight against corruption in Africa. Nor, authors of important UN reports admit, have adolescents been separately or well considered even in studies of public governance. A neglect of children and youth in the fight against corruption is short-sighted and counterproductive particularly in the crucial economic hardship that is raging the African continent.

Through meaningful engagement with youth young people that seeks to tap into and explore the power and potential of the youth in fighting corruption, young people could also be instruments of good governance and accountability in the management of public resources in Africa.

As in other parts of Africa, corruption remains a major issue in Nigeria. Various initiatives have been put in place to prevent corruption; however, the impact of the proactive initiatives and efforts by Nigerian youth in the fight against corruption is yet to be felt. For the purposes of this article, people between the ages of 15 and 30 years are considered youths, by which definition approximately 60% of the Nigerian population could be classified as youths.⁵ Corruption has always existed in different forms, and is not determined by politics or geography. It exists in rich and poor countries alike, it involves both individual states and international organizations, and its cost is borne by the citizens. It affects the proper running of governments, distorts the correct functioning of economic and political institutions and hampers transparency, exploits the human person for selfish interests, renders respect for rules obsolete and is a manifestation of structural sin.

⁴MusavuliKambale. "Youth Unite against Corruption," *Journal of Youth Studies*, 55 (2014): 87-112.

⁵African Youth Charter. Adopted by the Seventh Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly, Banjul, The Gambia, 2nd July 2006.

Operational Definitions

The definition of corruption for any one society holds much of the answer to the question on whether or not a corrupt-free generation is possible at all. Corruption is seen as a social, legal, economic and political concept. Definitions generally focus on one of the several aspects of the phenomenon. Khan⁶ proposes that the various approaches of corruption can be divided into five categories, it being centred on public interest, the market, the public office, the public opinion or legalism.

Cavill and Sohali⁷ define corruption as fraud, money laundering of corporate or private funds, and bribery (payments to benefit from an action or the prevention of private prejudice from a given transaction). Similarly, Tanzi's⁸ take is as follows: "Corruption is the intentional non-compliance with the arm's length principle aimed at deriving some advantage for oneself or for related individuals from this behaviour." The World Bank simply defines corruption as "the abuse of public funds for private gain."⁹ Gboyega¹⁰ says: "corruption involves the giving or taking of a bribe, or illegal acquisition of wealth using resources of a public office, including the exercise of discretion." In the same vein, Otite¹¹ posits that when two parties have interacted to change the structure of processes of the society, corruption has taken place. This practice, however, delimits the depth of the corrosive impact which corruption could effect on the system and inhibits in-depth analysis that could engender positive growth and development. Importantly, corruption as used in the Bible implies total moral, socio-political and economic decadence that permeates the entire system. A common consensus from an overwhelming majority of individuals is that corruption is something morally unacceptable; it is an evil that should be fought because its very

⁶Imran Khan. *Corruption and Development*, New York: Palgrave, 2012, 245.

⁷Sue Cavill and SohailMahmod. "Increasing Strategic Accountability: A Framework for International NGOs." *Development in Practice*, 17/2 (2007): 231-248.

⁸Vito Tanzi. "Corruption around the World: Causes, Consequences, Scope, and Cures," *Staff Papers* 45/4 (1998): 559-594.

⁹World Bank, *The World Bank Quarterly Business and Risk Review Quarter 4 FY12*, Washington DC: World Bank Group, 2012.

¹⁰Alex Gboyega. "The Federal Character or the Attempt to Create Representative Bureaucracies in Nigeria," *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 50/1 (1984): 17-24.

¹¹Onigutite, "Corruption against the Norms of African Life." In *On the Sociology of Corruption*, F. Otedola, ed., Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1986.

existence is against basic moral principles.

The definition of the United Nations¹² of corruption, widely used by social scientists and economists alike, will be used in this paper. Corruption is thus defined as the misuse of public office (public power, public interest, public authority) for private profit (private benefit, personal gain, family or group benefit). With reference to the UN's view on corruption as the misuse of power, Lambs Dorff¹³ draws attention to related forms of behaviours, including *bribery* (a specific improper action to gain some benefit), *extortion* (public officials using their power to influence citizens to pay for a service they would not usually have to pay for), and *embezzlement* or theft, which is illegal self-enrichment by a public servant, in the absence of another party. He further argues that corruption is:

The act of committing or inciting to commit acts that constitute an abuse of a function or an abuse of authority. As it is for any person intentionally to offer, promise or give any undue pecuniary advantage, directly or through intermediaries to a public official or private. This in profit of a third party for that third party to act or refrain from acting in the exercise of his official functions.¹⁴

This article is concerned, however, with how tapping into the power and potential of the youth can be maximized in the fight against corruption. From the foregoing definitions of corruption, it is clear that there is hardly consensus on the meaning of the term. Corruption in this article refers to the abuse of entrusted power by any individual for private, financial and non-financial advantage.

Youth

According to the United Nations, youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence, when an awareness of our interdependence as members of a community arises.¹⁵ That is why, according to this

¹³Johann GrafLambsdorff, *The Institutional Economics of Corruption and Reform: Theory, Evidence and Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 450.

¹⁴Lambsdorff, 452.

¹⁵United Nations, *Human Development Report*, New York: UNDP, 2013.

definition, youth as a category is more fluid than other fixed age groups. Yet, age is the easiest way to define this group, particularly in relation to education and employment, because 'youth' is often used to refer to a person between the ages of leaving compulsory education, and finding their first job. Furthermore, the definition of youth may change according to circumstances, particularly with the changes in demographic, financial, economic and socio-cultural settings; however, the definition that uses the 15 to 24 years age cohort as youth fairly serves its statistical purposes for assessing the needs of young people and providing guidelines for youth development.¹⁶

The Commonwealth defines youth as a bracket comprising of people between 15 and 29 years of age.¹⁷ The African Youth Charter, however, defines youth as "any individual between 15-35 years of age and seeks to resolve long-standing debates about defining youth within the African context and based on Africa's development realities."¹⁸ In the Nigerian context, the Nigerian National Youth Policy defines youth as anyone between the ages of 18 and 35.¹⁹

Generally, youth is understood in terms of the physiological development phase beginning from puberty until the body stops growing, from age eleven until eighteen. From a psychological perspective, youth can be regarded as different phases of growth. In some societies it lasts until the mid-thirties.²⁰ Social institutions, such as schools and the workplace, have their own social categories according to age and experience. There is also a culturally determined idea of what youth is, characterized by "strong interplay with musical visual and verbal signs that denote what [is] young in relation to what is childish or adult."²¹ From the perspective of advertisers, youth is seen as "the most meaningful time of life".²² One has to be 'young' in

¹⁶Pete Ward, *Youth Culture and the Gospel*. London: Marshall Pickering, 1992.

¹⁷F. Chigunta "The socio-economic situations of youth in Africa: Problems, prospects and Options <http://thecommonwealth.org/youth> Accessed on the 15 April 2017.

¹⁸African Youth Charter. Adopted by the Seventh Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly, Banjul, The Gambia, 2nd July 2006.

¹⁹Tunde Babawale, *Culture, Politics and Sustainable Development: Lessons for Nigeria*, Lagos: Concept Publications 2007, 68.

²⁰NikiCangia. "Community Service or Activism as an Identity Project for Youth," *Journal of Community Psychology*, 35/6(2007):711-724.

²¹Cangia, 712.

order to be considered beautiful, smart and vital.

In urban Africa, defining the category that can constitute youth becomes more complex, since marital, educational and job status also influence the concept of youth. For instance, an unmarried student in his thirties can be classified as a youth while a twenty-five-year-old married person may not be classified as such. Thomas Burgess²³ says: "A youth, very simply, is a person who is neither a child nor an adult, the age gap is said to be between sixteen and twenty five years, though at times pushed up to the early thirties. However, this discussion has shown that there are many ways to categorize youth.

The various definitions of youth can be problematic when designing youth programs. However, there is no standard global definition. Africa and the global south have long insisted that the concept of youth is not a range of ages but defined by a diversity of culturally defined social processes that mark the transition from child to adult. There is no standard way of defining youth. The concept is ultimately determined by culture and context. In a Western context, youth is broadly defined by age, beginning at thirteen and continuing to eighteen or twenty-one. Even this period is further divided into the stages of adolescence, teenage and youth.

Based on some of the literature reviewed and the author's own observations and interactions with various church youth groups in some African countries, 'youth,' in this chapter, is defined as a person who is in the age bracket of 15-30. Those from age 18 and above are considered as youth because they are beyond secondary school level. However, the discussion has made it clear that there are many ways to categorise youth. Generally, the term 'youth' is reserved for a person between the ages of 18 and 30. When there is a need for further distinction, it will be made clear through further explanation.

The Phenomenon of Corruption

Mbaku²⁴ distinguishes between three main categories of corruption, namely incidental, institutional and systemic corruption. Incidental

²³Thomas Burgess, "Introduction to youth and citizenship in East Africa," *Africa Today*, 51/3 (2005): vii-xxiv.

²⁴J.Mbaku, *Corruption and the Crisis of Institutional Reforms in Africa*, Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1998, 34.

corruption would cover individual acts of malfeasance such as petty (involving regular small payments), or grand corruption (normally involving one large payment). It could take a 'clientelist' form, where a person offering a bribe obtains a higher benefit, or a 'patrimonial' one where the person receiving the bribe obtains the higher benefit. Such corruption can also be political or administrative (bureaucratic), depending on whether the corrupt person is a politician or public servant.

Every day, all over the world, ordinary people bear the brunt of corruption. In many countries, corruption affects people from birth until death. In Zimbabwe, it has been reported that women giving birth in a local hospital have been charged US\$5 every time they scream as a penalty for raising false alarm.²⁵ In Bangladesh, the recent collapse of a multi-storey factory, which killed more than 1,100 people due to a breach of basic safety standards, has been linked to allegations of corruption.²⁶ Drawing on the results of a Transparency International's survey²⁷ of more than 114,000 respondents in 107 countries, this blog addresses direct experiences of people with bribery and their views on corruption in the primary industries in their countries. The findings were clear: Corruption is a very real burden, with more than one out of four respondents reporting having paid a bribe during the last year. When people are not in a position to afford a bribe, they might be prevented from buying a home, starting a business or accessing basic services. Corruption can, and often does, infringe on fundamental rights. For those surviving on less than US\$2 a day, and for women who are the primary caretakers of children around the globe, corruption and bribery are particularly devastating. For them, the additional cost of bribery can mean trade-offs between health and hunger, between school entrance fees and the shoes necessary to wear to school.

Not only do people pay the costs of corruption directly, but their quality of life is also affected by less visible forms of corruption. When

²⁵James G. Gann, "2012 Global Go to Think Tanks Index Report." Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program at the University of Pennsylvania, December 2012.

²⁶Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2016*

²⁷Transparency International *Corruption Index 2006-2011*.

powerful groups buy influence over government decisions or when public funds are diverted into the coffers of the political elite, ordinary people suffer. When there is a widespread belief that corruption prevails and the powerful in particular are able to get away with it, people lose faith in those entrusted with power. As the 2013 Transparency International's survey²⁸ shows, corruption is seen to be running through the foundations of the democratic and legal process in many countries, thereby affecting public trust in political parties, the judiciary and the police, among other key institutions.

It is important to note that respondents surveyed around the world do not view themselves as powerless victims of corruption. They believe that they can be part of the solution. In India, in 2011, millions of people marched to demand the establishment of an independent anti-corruption commission and the majority of the people that came out to march were young people between the ages of 15 and 30; similarly, in Brazil, a citizen petition led to the passage of a law which bans corrupt politicians from running for office. Citizen action can lead to the exposure of corrupt acts, the sanctioning of corrupt officials and pressure on reluctant governments to do more in the fight against corruption.²⁹

Fukuyama of Transparency International³⁰ identifies the serious nature of the global phenomenon of corruption from the perspective of an index of 178 countries. In 2010, approximately one third of the countries on a scale from 0 (no corruption) to 10 (total corruption) did not achieve a score of 5. According to Van Vuuren,³¹ the extent of corruption in Africa had amounted to \$400 billion by 2004, on a global level bribery within corporations had reached \$600 billion by 2002, and in 2009 stolen assets in circulation by way of protected tax had reached \$7 trillion.

²⁸Transparency International Corruption Index 2006-2011

²⁹Vishney Vital, "Corruption," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 108/3 (2011): 599.

³⁰Francis Fukuyama, *The Great Disruption. Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order*. London. UK: Profile Books, 2005, 13-17.

³¹Hennin Van Vuuren, "Apartheid Grand Corruption, Assessing the Scale Crimes of profit from 1976-1994," A report prepared by civil society in terms of a resolution of the second national anti-corruption summit for presentation of the national anti-corruption forum at the institute for security studies, Pretoria, South Africa, 2009, 3-4.

The phenomenon of corruption has a huge impact on the development of any country. The youth therefore need to be empowered with a psyche of neutrality that will help to make the country their first constituency. The fight against corruption must tap into the power and potential of young people to help them understand the importance of neighbourly love that transcends 'abstractions,' and to discover and embrace the 'person' as a vivid organic unity. Given the spate of youth involvement in various forms of development and transformations in history, there is a clear cut link between young people and their ability to fight corruption.

The Power and Potential of Youth in Fighting Corruption

The role of the youth in fighting corruption is crucial. Young people at different times and on different occasions have taken advantage of opportunities for leadership in both the private and public sectors and excelled beyond the expectation of the old. Despite this, Ban I moon³² aptly notes that:

In traditional African society, 'youth' were seen as 'children' and therefore, subordinate. This concept continues in many contemporary rural settings and influences the roles, expectations, problems and potential of youth in Africa. Young people, though a demographic majority, are marginalized in terms of the modern as well as traditional governance systems.

On a continent where the youth are the largest group, young people hold the power and the potential to propel good governance and accountability. In a range of countries moving at differing rates towards some measure of democracy, public participation, civic engagement and the like, it will be both increasingly difficult and counter-productive to ignore this majority or other large groups when assessing the problems and needs of governance and the fight against corruption. Sadly, the protracted political and economic crisis affecting Africa for more than a generation have left many of the continent's youth frustrated and disillusioned. They see little hope for the future through education or sustainable employment. At the same

³²United Nations Secretary General's message to the Global Forum on Youth and ICT for Development, New York, 24 September 2007.

time, they have the power and the potential, if given a chance, to contribute immensely to good governance and in the fight against corruption. Most political systems have a condescending attitude towards young people, relegating their concerns to the margins of the debate and bracketing them exclusively with such issues as school and sports.

Arguably, young people are a major human resource for development. Young men and women everywhere are valuable and committed partners in the global efforts to achieve good governance and fight against corruption. Young people, if empowered, will be at the forefront of the fight against corruption since they have the capacity to bring fresh thinking to longstanding development concerns and the transformation of any given country.

A cursory look at the demographics of contemporary Africa reveals the overwhelming size of the youth population. This makes it all the more important to resist common stereotypes about African youth – particularly young men – as, for example, a dangerous source of instability that foretells a chaotic and nasty future for African societies, but rather focus on the potential that we can see in the youth.³³ With significant amounts of energy, vibrancy, vision and passion, the youth are critical stakeholders in the fight against corruption in Nigeria. They are equal members of critical social movements that form integral building blocks of society: families, school communities, religious groupings, hobby groups, sports associations, resident associations, university groups, ethnic associations, professional associations and membership organizations, political parties, and citizens at large.

The involvement of the youth in the fight against corruption is likely to bring in new and fresh ideas that can replace older and outdated policies. It will also combine the high energy levels young people have with the professional skills and experience of the older generation to create new levels of enthusiasm and productivity. More young people are likely to be influenced positively as their fellows act as

³³ Anne Baxter, *Angry Young Men, Veiled Young Women*, Dorset: The Corner House, 2014, 43.

ambassadors of good governance, thereby giving credibility to the policies and programs targeting them. The power and the potential of young people could be seen on various platforms; this power and potential must be acknowledged and developed in order to equip young people in the fight against corruption.

First, studies have shown that young people are more open to change than adults. According to Dissel, “young people are searching for new ideas and are open to new challenges while adults have already formed their dogmatic discourses.”³⁴ Young people are not only the leaders of tomorrow, but are also making great changes to the world around them, right now, due to their willingness and openness to embrace change. Whether it is through social media or 'hashtag' activism, writing online or in a newspaper about a cause, or taking part in a protest, there are many ways in which young people have shown the world that they can 'be the change' and make a difference in the world. Current youth initiatives remind us how much more could be achieved if we harness more of young people's power and potential. Because young people are open to change, we should put them in the forefront in the fight against corruption. Often, adults have already made up their minds; moreover, they are not as open to change or new ideas, which makes it even difficult for them to see corruption as a challenge at all, since they are so used to it.

To benefit from the youth's openness to change, we certainly require a long-term vision. Therefore, the decisions we make today cannot simply keep young people out of governance. We should keep in mind that the decisions we make today will affect where we will be in the future. Young people should thus have an opportunity to participate meaningfully in the civic life of our societies and in the process of decision-making.

Second, young people are future-oriented. Young people hear about the past from older generations. In many cases, they have not witnessed corruption directly; it is either parents or schools that have passed down stories about corruption. They will have to live in the world that

³⁴ Amanda Dissel, *Street Culture and Urban Violence in Africa*, Abidjan: Papanga, 2009, 407.

others have built. Since they have more time ahead, they are willing to try alternatives and are more bound to 'forget' the past than those who have been directly involved in a painful moment of history. McEvoy³⁵ also points out the success of fighting corruption largely depends on whether the next generations accept or reject corruption, how they are socialized during the fight against corruption, and their perceptions of what the fight against corruption could achieve. Child and youth dimensions are central to the structural issues of the fight against corruption.

Young People are Idealistic and Innovative

Many revolutions were started and led by young people (The Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2016 Arab revolution in North Africa, the Soweto uprising in South Africa, the black lives matter in the USA, just to mention a few).³⁶ The youth often have more time to think, read, meet colleagues and develop ideas. They also have more time to engage different activist groups. Nadali³⁷ argues as follows:

Young people historically have always been in the vanguard of social change. So if you're looking for that pillar of support in the fight against corruption, it doesn't take nearly the amount of resources to get them up to where you want them and in some cases, like in the Burma movement in 1988, the youth were mobilized and active well before any of the other institutions of society were. So when it came to the crisis point, the other pillars of support were not ready to support them.

The youth have the capacity and the ability to create ideas that solve old problems in innovative ways. If the power and the potential of the youth could be harnessed effectively, it could contribute to dealing with the old problem of corruption as well.

³⁵McEvoy Higgins, *Youth as Social and Political Agents*, Cambridge: Polity, 2011, 587.

³⁶J. P. Brits, *The Concise Dictionary of Historical and Political Terms*, London: Penguin 1995.

³⁷AngomaNadali. *Youth: From Warriors to Peace Builders*. 2005, 76.

Young People are Courageous

The late poet and activist Maya Angelou wrote the following on courage: "One isn't necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential. Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous or honest."³⁸ Young people are less experienced and therefore willing to try new adventures. This risk-taking nature combined with a belief in a cause and a situation that cannot get worse pushes them to be courageous, particularly when they believe that change is impossible. Three decades ago young people may have been more apt to take to the streets in order to get things done. This is not to say that they do not still go that route, but today many young people use technology to fight their battles. Making a change or making a difference can now mean sending an email, setting up a website and spreading the word across the information superhighway. The issues may be the same, but the means are different. This courageous power and potential that the youth possess could be a powerful tool in the fight against corruption.

Young People are Knowledgeable about their Peers' Realities

Young people possess valuable knowledge of the needs that exist among their peers, based on their own experiences and close contact in their age group. Adults often are or seem to be clueless about young people's behaviour, language and ways of communicating. The youth's ability to relate with each other can be a great advantage in the fight against corruption. Policy makers need to tap into this power and potential in order to enhance the fight against corruption. The youth set priorities different from those of adults and this diversity of perspectives should be appreciated and embraced.

Young People have the Tools to Act

In a digitally connected world, social media platforms enable young people to promote, causes and hold institutions to account directly. Technology has given young people the ability to do many things they were not able to do before. It is possible now to meet people of the same mind-set all over the world and band together on an issue, start a

³⁸ "Maya Angelou" from *Women of Hope: African Americans Who Made a Difference* by Joyce Hansen, 1998.

business or even just exchange ideas simply by sending an email. Technology has made all of the difference in how young people today use their courage. It might seem to some that young people do not have as much courage, but if one pays attention to all of the things young people are doing, it becomes clear how courageous they are. It takes courage to speak out on an issue, to go up against someone else's beliefs, make a statement, go to school, find a job, and just to make a living. At this point in history, young people have more tools with which to do all of these things – and they use them: the same battles, the same courage, but different weapons. Hence, involving young people in the fight against corruption will certainly make it possible to harness their tools and their power to bring a new dimension in the fight against this scourge.

The Potential of Youth in the Fight Against Corruption

There are several ways to ensure greater participation by the youth and the consequent utilization of the power and potential of the youth in the fight against corruption that youth workers across Africa need to explore. They include the following:

Educate and Sensitize

The youth need to be informed about corruption. It is not enough to state the fact that corruption exists; we must understand its ramifications and the legal structures guiding it. This is the only way of reacting successfully to corruption. Knowledge is power: one can only fight that which one knows. Knowledge of the issues at stake will allow creativity and flexibility in understanding and effectively fighting corruption.

Help Young People to Adopt the Right Values

In a country where miracles and testimonies are celebrated, it is necessary that the values of the youth are right. Instead of waiting for their own brand of miracles, the youth can stand up and say: "As for me, I choose not to be corrupt." The chain effect of such a declaration will contribute greatly to realizing a corruption free generation.

Supply the Right Role Models

The youth need to choose the right role models in life. Role models are

a driver in life and a determining factor for conduct. With the right role models, the youth will strive to keep away from corruption. Having the right models and the right tools for coping with life is a huge advantage that will help young people in the fight against corruption.

Say No to Corruption at a Professional Level

Apart from having integrity at a personal level, the youth need to be encouraged to say no to corruption at a professional level. Whether within institutions or in business of any sort, we need to have integrity.

Train the Youth

Young people should have access to training opportunities that will help them to fight corruption. To bring about transformation, they need to learn all the skills required to act as responsible citizens. Young people must be trained to use their power and potential to fight corruption. They need to understand that corruption is not only a moral menace, but also evil. They need to be equipped with mediation and negotiation skills, project and organisational management skills. Also, they need to learn how to facilitate group decision-making processes to prepare them for standing up against corruption. Support to gain insight into other themes relevant to their social contexts will further strengthen their resilience.

Enhance Peer Education

One of youths' major contributions can be through the non-formal education of their peer group. Young people – teenagers, in particular – spend a great amount of time with their friends, and on many occasions they would listen more to them than to their parents or teachers. In view of this, peer education and group strategy must be put to work to help young people fight corruption. Young people also have a greater flexibility and openness towards new ideas, as mentioned already, and with this openness and flexibility they can forge bonds and build relationships with other young people to overcome old barriers such as corruption. The key to success in the

fight against corruption is to allow the youth the space, time and trust to take initiative in this endeavour.

Encourage Participation

Youth participation in the fight against corruption should be encouraged at all levels of social interaction, from the neighbourhood, school and local community to national and international levels. The power and the potential of the youth should be harnessed and they must be encouraged to use their tools and ability to innovate to participate in the fight against corruption. Young people should be given responsibilities according to their capacities and be taken seriously.

Encourage Advocacy

Young people should be encouraged to learn from other movements' histories and achievements. In this respect, the efforts that led to Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council of 31 October 2000, which recognises the role of women in peace-building,³⁹ is an example to follow. A similar resolution would help to raise awareness and develop processes towards the inclusion of young people in the fight against corruption.

Foster Inter-generational Mainstreaming

Processes and decisions with regard to fighting corruption should be analysed, taking into consideration how different generations are involved. Different generations have different opportunities, roles and needs, and thus political decisions affect them differently. This analysis should not be restricted only to how young people are able to fight corruption, but rather focus on how they are treated in general in the society. Partnerships between adults and the youth should be fostered to enhance the intergenerational fight against corruption.

Use Information and Communication Technologies

Young people are attracted by information and communication technologies (ICT) and easily learn to use ICT to

support and improve their work and extend their scope. Young people often create networks, mutual support structures and common platforms for advocacy, thereby sharing resources, know-how and ideas. Young people should be encouraged to use such platforms to strengthen the fight against corruption at all levels.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the phenomenon of corruption and discussed how the power and potential of young people could be harnessed in the fight against it. It was argued that young people have what it takes in their own way to be important players in the fight against corruption. It was proposed that young people be regarded as having the power and the potential of bringing about positive change. If young people are perceived only as the 'devil in demographics,' or as helpless and powerless actors, their power and potential to stop corruption will not be realised. Corruption is now recognised to be one of the world's greatest challenges. It is a major hindrance to sustainable development, with a disproportionate impact on poor communities, and it is corrosive to the very fabric of society. The youth are an important part of the population of any African country—hence tapping into young people's power and potential will be of great advantage in the fight against corruption. The importance of the youth to development is widely recognised. Without young people there will be little sustainable development and possibly little reason for it. For the fight against corruption to be successful at all levels, the inclusion of the youth must be made a priority and therefore youth workers must be in the forefront of equipping young people in this venture.

³⁹Lisa Schirch, "West African Network for Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation Programme," at Eastern Mennonite University, 2004.