

What evidence is there that anti-corruption campaigns are effective where they ar...



Topic: Anti Corruption Campaigns Lecturer: Presentation: Corruption is a practice that has continued to disgrace our society, by means of the people we put in administrative power to govern and act as custodians of our hard earned government resources. The common man and woman continues to cope with high levels of poverty, hunger and disease while the powerful and the mighty use their positions to increase their wealth through unfair means such as collecting bribes from the public, embezzling public funds as well as abuse of office (Lethbridge, 2005). This has led to massive public outcries calling for the assistance of anticorruption bodies to restore their hopes by upholding integrity in the public service departments, a fight that has had success in some societies and failure in others.

A state such as Georgia has had a long struggle to stem out the vice, through vigorous anticorruption campaigns some initiated by the citizens themselves. The political leadership in 2003, under the then president Eduard Shevardnadze may bear witness to this (Pupo, 2005). Citizens were treated to an unfair election, which was marred by cases of rigging by parliamentarians. However, intense campaigns forced Eduard to resign as the president, paving way for the election of Mikhail Saakashvili, who came into power with the promise to fight hard on corruption and to restore the lost glory. His rule saw the firing of rogue public officers, some who had been appointed through nepotism, as well as more than 5000 corrupt police officers (Pupo, 2005). Due to these efforts, Georgia has become one of the leading states with low corruption rate, a fact that has earned it assistance from countries such as US through their millennium challenge accounts.

Hong Kong was once described as a society that was drowning in deep waters of corruption but to the surprise of many, this vice has been dealt

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with accordingly over time, considerably lowering the rate of incidences. This can be attributed to the efforts of Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC), which invested a lot of efforts and time to create public awareness as well as educating private and government officials on the dangers of corruption through forums and the media (Lethbridge, 2005). The country may not be considered as being wealthy but it scores highly as compared to some of the developed countries such as Italy.

On the contrary, Italy's case has taken a different direction, whereby despite having almost won the war on corruption, through the infamous clean hands campaign, the corruption levels have continued to rise at an alarming rate of approximately 20% p. a (Burnett, 2002). It is estimated that the government loses close to 60 billion Euros on yearly basis to corruption, most of which is politically instigated. In fact, this country is ranked as the most corrupt among the developed countries (Burnett, 2002). The reason for such failures, taking Italy as an example, is the unwillingness of citizens to participate actively in politics more specifically in elections. It is true to say that the war on corruption cannot be won unless voters take it within themselves to remove corrupt leaders from power, as in the Georgian case. According to reports, the post war parliaments in Italy have had most of their members implicated in major corruption scandals yet the public has continued to re-elect them to power (Burnett, 2002).

In conclusion, it is necessary to stress that the war against corruption should be approached from both political and social perspective. Conducting campaigns without initiating political reforms may not bear any fruits as the political good will is necessary in prosecuting and punishing corrupt officials.

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