

## Corruption and Infrastructures in Africa: Challenges for Integrated Sustainable Development

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### Abstract

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Efficient and functioning infrastructure sector i.e. water, sewage, waste, telecommunication, energy and transport are imperative for an integrated sustainable development because they are fundamental for people daily life. Although corruption exists in all sectors of the economy, but its impact in infrastructure is much painful particularly in the African continent. Corruption commonly occurs because individuals are willing to use illicit means to maximize personal or corporate profit. Corruption in the infrastructure sector usually involves series of actors who take decision based on their self interest rather than public interest. In many African countries today, the absence of sustainable infrastructure as a result of corruption is a topical issue that needs to be brought to the front burner of academic discuss. Hence this paper adopting qualitative methodology involving personal interaction, face-to-face interview and Focus group Discussion (FGD) investigate whether corruption in the infrastructure sector actually pose any serious threat or challenges to integrated sustainable development in African continent. The study further investigates why incidents of corruption is still rampant in the infrastructure sector in the African continent in spite of various policies recommendation by stakeholders. The paper further discusses measures which have to be implemented at reducing the acts and consequences towards achieving a desired integrated sustainable development in the continent.

**Keywords:** *Development, Integrated, Sustainability, Corruption, Infrastructure*

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### **Background to the Study**

Efficient and functioning infrastructure sectors, i.e. water and sewage, waste, telecommunication, energy and transport are imperative for an integrated sustainable development because they are very fundamental for people's daily life. The absence of basic infrastructure in a society-particularly roads network, transportation, electricity, and water-no doubt is seen as defining characteristic of poverty (Narayan and Detesh, 2002).

The importance of infrastructure in the promotion of sustainable development growth and international competitiveness of a nation cannot be over emphasized. The World Bank landmark study on infrastructure (World Bank, 1994) highlighted the critical role of infrastructure in the development process of a nation. The evidence in the world bank report on the vital role of infrastructure on economic growth and sustainable development has been reinforced by subsequent studies (Estache and Fray 1995; Narayan and Detesh, 2002; Jerome, 2006, Kenny 2007 and Sorunke 2013.)

Corruption, i.e. the abuse of entrusted power for private benefits, comprising a wide variety of practices such as bribes, fraud embezzlement, extortion and collusion has undermine the efficient delivery of these sector in many African countries. Although corruption exist throughout the world, in industrialized and developing countries alike, but the impact on daily life is much painful in African continent than the other part of the world. The African continent presents a typical case of countries in the world whose development has been undermined and retarded by the menace of corrupt practices. In many African countries today, the issue of absence of sustainable infrastructure, and inability to maintain existing infrastructure as a result of corruption in the public sector is a topical issue that need to be brought to the front burner of academic discourse. Hence the primary objective of this paper is to provide an overview of corruption in infrastructure sector and its corrosive effects on sustainable development in African nations and societies. It also discusses measures which have to be implemented at reducing the acts and consequences towards achieving a desired integrated sustainable development.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are:

- (i) To find out if corruption in the infrastructure sector actually pose any serious threat or challenges to integrated sustainable development in African continent.
- (ii) To find out why incident of corruption is still rampant in the infrastructure sector in African continent in spite of various policy recommendations by scholars, World Bank, Transparency International and Regional groupings.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

Before proceeding with this study, some study constructs need to be defined in order to provide specific clarifications as to the context in which they are used as well as a basis for a clear measurement of the study variables. The three major constructs are infrastructure, corruption and sustainable development.

### **Concept of Infrastructure**

Infrastructure (“infra” stems from the Latin language, meaning below, thus “infrastructure” can be taken to express foundation). The American heritage dictionary, defines the term “infrastructure” as the basic facilities, services and installation needed for the functioning of a community or society, such as transportation and communication systems, water and power, sewage and public institutions including schools, post office and prisons.

According to Vaughan and Pollard (1984) infrastructure is defined as a wide array of public facilities and equipments required to provide social service and support private sector economic activity. These include roads, bridges, water and sewer systems, airports, port and public buildings such as schools, health facilities, jail, recreation facilities, electric power production, fire safety, waste disposal and communication services.

World Development Report (1994) divides infrastructure stock into economic or physical infrastructure and social infrastructure. Former includes services such as electricity, transport, road, water system, communication, irrigation etc. while later include education and health facilities. Other forms of infrastructure may be identified as institutional infrastructure such as banking and civil administration.

In the field of economics, Tinbergen (1962) introduces the distinction between infrastructure (for example road and education) and superstructure (comprising manufacturing, agricultural and mining activities). However, in recent time, Nijkamp (2000) speaks about infrastructure as materials public capital (road, railway, airport, ports, pipelines etc) and superstructure meaning immaterial public capital (Knowledge networks, communication education culture etc). This definition however and others like it, are broad and subject to interpretation. As a practical matter, what is considered to be infrastructure depends heavily upon the content in which the term is used. In the context of this paper, infrastructure is defined as the physical framework of facilities through which goods and services are provided to the public. The impact / linkages of infrastructure to a nation economy cannot be over-emphasized, as they are multiple and complex. According to Deepkia (2002), it affects production and consumption directly, creates positive and negative spillover effects and involves large inflow of expenditure. In a nutshell, the impact of infrastructure on sustainable economic development cannot be over-emphasized.

### **Concept of Corruption**

The word 'corruption' is originally from Latin verb *rumpere* which means to break (Abdul-Ismael N.D). Hence, corruption can simply be defined as the breaking of certain code or conduct for personal gains or benefit of the perpetrator. Corruption is generally understood as the abuse of public office for private gain. Corruption is the outcome of a systemic decay of state of institutions (Ndikumana 2006). In other words, corruption is a symptom of something gone wrong in the management of the state (UNOP 1997). Corruption covers various forms of illegitimate interactions between public sector officials and other agents. Sometimes, money is involved, such as in bribery or kickbacks for public infrastructure contracts. In other cases, private gain can be non-monetary as in cases of patronage or nepotism. This definition also covers acts where there is no interaction with external agents,

or where external agents are not explicitly implicated, such as the embezzlement of government funds or the sales or misuses of government property.

Corruption consists of the subordination of public interests to private aims involving a violation of the norms of duty and welfare, accompanied by secrecy, betrayal, deception and a callous disregard for any consequence, suffered by the public (Atlas 1968)

According to Charap and Harm (2002), corruption is the natural result of efficient predatory behaviour in a lawless world. While corruption may be harmful to society as a whole, it is beneficial to the individuals who perpetrate it. Therefore, corruption is not a behavioural pathology (Ndikumana 2006). However, its corrosive effect on the sustainable development of a nation is very overwhelming.

### **Concept of sustainable Development**

The concept of sustainable development appears to have captured the public and political interest more than any issue in recent time. The concept according to Pearce and Atkinson (1998) is intended to embrace the idea of ensuring that future generations inherit an Earth which will support their livelihoods in such a way that they are no worse off than generation today. While there are numerous precursors (see for example, Barry 1977: Page 1977), the most celebrated formulation of the concept is that given by the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission) in 1987: which defined sustainable development as “development that meet the needs of the present without compromising the need of the future generation to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987) In the words of Robert Solow “if sustainability is anything more than a slogan or expression of emotion it must amount to an injunction to preserve productive capacity for indefinite future” (Slow, 1999).

The concept is intended to embrace the idea of ensuring that future generations inherit an Earth which will support their livelihoods in such a way that they are no worst off than generations today (Pearce and Atkinson, 1998). Some previous studies have suggested a set of common views about sustainable development. The idea is that sustainability is about preserving and enhancing the opportunities, available to people in country around the world, and that these opportunities, depend on a nation accumulation of wealth. This wealth has three components: the stock of produced capital, the stock of natural capital, and the stock of human capital. The World Commission's definition of sustainable development made it clear that the emphasis on future generation was only part of the story: concern with the poor now but also important, indeed the highest priority (Pearce and Atkinson, 1998). For their well-being to be improved, then they must secure better education, better technology, better infrastructure, more man-made capital, better environment and a guarantee that development will be sustainable.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The adoption of theoretical framework in Management and Social Sciences greatly helps in the analysis and even understanding of concepts from some theoretical framework point of view and/or orientation (Kayode, Adagba and Anyio 2013). For the purpose of this paper, the

social infrastructure theory is adopted for the theoretical framework analysis. The social infrastructure theory posit that social infrastructure influence the development of a community by means of availability of quality healthcare, the safety of investment, the quality of school system, the parks, recreational and cultural opportunities, the availability, affordability and quality housing. This view is reinforced by Teriman, Yigitcanlar and Mayere (2011) who perceived that social infrastructure meets the basic needs of community and enhances the quality of life, equity, stability and social well being. The authors further posit that social infrastructure projects and sustainable development are two interrelated concepts. Social infrastructure of a community can provide a crucial information about the strength and the weakness of a community, the resources which community members are likely to place importance on as well as the setting in which community members are most likely to congregate. The Niger delta Community in Nigeria is a case in point where there is a lot of environmental degradation over the year as a result of oil exploration in the area has led the community members (Particularly Youth) to embrace militancy as a way of life.

The bottom line of social infrastructure theory is that social infrastructure of a community such as the quality of housing, the quality of healthcare, the quality of education, the affordability of living in the area, the parks and recreational facilities available to member of a community is to a large degree affects the way the community members connects and invest in their community and in turn the degree to which a strong sense of community within the environment can develop.

### **Empirical Review**

Corruption is a multi-sectorial problem that can be found virtually in all sectors of the economy, however, the infrastructure sector is often regarded as the most devastating. According to World Bank (1994), corruption in the infrastructure sector is a supply and demand-driven problem. Supply represents the behaviour and motivations of a supplier (who offers or pays a bribe) and a demander (who requests or is willing to accept a bribe). Consistent with global research findings, corruption in African nations' infrastructure sector are related to irregular practices during procurement processes by means of bid rigging and kickbacks.

According to Sorunke (2013) in a survey on the economic and social implications of corruption on infrastructural development in Nigeria, It was discovered that to get infrastructural project contract in the Nigeria, the contractor or senior member of the bidding firm must be a card carrying member of the ruling party or major financier of the party programmes. This is so because according to Simon (2010) political consideration in the most predominant determinant in the contractors selection process in many African countries. Where the contractor / the bidding firms are not party loyalist, between 30-45 percent of contract value are paid as bribe to top government officials to secure such (Sorunke 2013). These findings were given credence by Agwu (2006) Who declared that competence based competition and merit were discarded as the fundamental criteria for the award of public contracts.

The scenario above is not peculiar to Nigeria alone; it is a common practice in many African countries. For example, in Tanzania, a large power supply contract signed in 1995 between the IPTL Company and the government is a celebrated case of grand political corruption in the infrastructure sector in Africa. IPTL was a Malaysian Consortium backed by Tanzanians well connected with the CCM (the ruling party). Competing with it was a company called Songas, who offered a cheaper supply price to the Tanzanian Electricity Supplier TENESCO. From the evidence reported in Cooksey (2002), it is clear that despite the fact that it soon emerged that the agreement was clearly not in the economic interests of the country and despite the facts that other competitors with better offers were available, the top leadership were not able to override the networks within the party who supported the deal. The eventual outcome was that Tanzania now has one of the highest electricity tariffs in Africa.

In a study of the political economy of conflict in Burundi, Ngaruko and Nkurunziza (2000) showed that the allocation of public infrastructure was solely motivated by political interests and how corruption and patronage generated a skewed distribution of resources in favour of the Southern region that controlled power since independence.

In Angola, since 1996, more than a billion of dollars of oil revenue earmarked for infrastructure development have disappeared. At the same time, one out of four Angolan children dies before the age of five as a result of insufficient nutrition and health care. Similar cases of embezzlement are frequently identified in other oil rich African countries such as Republic of Congo and Equatorial Guinea (La Moustique, a November 2005). In 1995 the government's Chief Executive for the Lesotho Highlands water project was prosecuted and found guilty for receiving up to two million pounds in bribes from multinational companies involved in the project. Some of these companies included British Corporations that has received up to 66 million pounds of loan guarantees from Export Credit Guarantee Department of the British Government (New Statesman, 16 September, 2002)

The plundering of African resources is a tragedy to African sustainable development. While the continent hosts some of the most destitute households in the world, it also counts some of the wealthiest individuals on the planet. Former Zairian dictator, Mobutu once held assets abroad that exceeded his country's external debt (Ndikumana and Boyce 1998). The former dictators of Nigeria amassed wealth in several billions of dollars by milking the country's oil reserve in connivance with International oil Corporations. The anti-corruption Commission in Kenya unmasked billions of dollars stashed abroad by former President Moi and his collaborators. Even when these sums of stolen money are uncovered, they are difficult to repatriate because of the complexity and complicity of Western Financial centres (Ndikumana, 2006).

### **Material and Methods**

The research work employs a qualitative methodology, involving personal interaction and dialogue between the researcher and the researched. It employs a combination of semi-structures, face-to-face in-depth interview, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and a case study scenarios. The respondents are carefully selected among eminent scholars, researchers, senior political analyst and journalist from various institutions and organizations across African Continents.



Secondary data from media reports in newspapers, libraries, periodicals and Academic Journals help to conceptualize issues, discuss and analyses some of the issues, as well expand, interpret or collaborate the views of the respondents. The case study scenarios in particular were applied after taking the respondents through the various lines of questions in the interview guide essentially as control or to check for consistency or contradictions in their responses. In all, 20 interview and 4 FGDs were planned. However only 12 interview and 3 FGDs were conducted. This means that the study achieved 60 percent of the targeted number of interview.

### **Results and Discussion**

The survey investigates whether corruption in the infrastructure sector in African continent actually pose any serious threat or challenges to integrated sustainable development of the continents. The survey also investigates why incident of corruption is still rampant in the infrastructure sector in the African continent in spite of various policy recommendation by scholars, World Bank, Transparency International and Regional groupings. The responses from the respondents were summarized below: 75% of the respondents agreed that corruption is a way of life in many African countries 88% of the respondents agreed that corruption in the infrastructure sector in Africa pose a serious threat and challenges to integrated sustainable development of the continent. 62% of the respondents posit that previous efforts at curbing corruption in the infrastructure sector did not yield the desired result because the generation of leaders in many African countries are “Fantastically corrupt” hence many of them paid lip services in their so called fight against corruption. 79% of the respondents were of the opinion that some alien culture and practices such as pled bargain give room for corruption to thrive in the continent. 58% of the respondents agrees that there are several lacuna and lop holes existing anti-corruption laws in many African countries, thus making it possible for many corrupt leaders to escape justice. 62% of the respondents also agreed that corruption fights in many African countries are selective and biased.

### **Conclusion and Policy Recommendations**

This paper has revealed that corruption in the infrastructure sector in the African continent pose a serious threat and challenges to integrated sustainable development of the continent. The paper also revealed reasons why the incident of corruption is still rampant in the infrastructure sector in the continent in spite of various recommendations by scholars, World Bank, Transparency International and other Regional grouping.

Based on the findings, the following policy recommendations are made:

1. There should be ethical re-orientation and attitudinal change across African continents, to commence from home, religious bodies, professional bodies, political parties and the society at large.
2. Heavy sanction of corrupt public officials irrespective of political affiliation
3. African leaders should show leadership by examples.
4. Some borrowed concept like plea bargaining should not be allowed in the continent of Africa as it only encourages corruption.
5. As a matter of policy, any African leader accused of corruption or related practices should be asked by other African Union (AU) leaders to step down from his/her exalted offices to

give room for proper investigation and prosecution.

6. Special court on Corruption and Related practices should be set up by African Union (AU) to try corrupt cases in the continent.

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