



Transparency and Accountability Forum (TAF)

Role of culture in combating corruption in traditional South Sudanese Societies

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Report compiled by Benjamin Gabriel Apai (Ph.D.)¹

Introduction:

This report sequences the public lecture on the role of culture in combating corruption in traditional South Sudanese societies, the contributions of the panelists and the recommendations.

Opening Session

Dr. Lual A. Deng, the Managing Director of Ebony Center for Strategic Studies in his opening remarks welcomed all the participants. He noted that the best way to start the New Year is to discuss an elusive topic such as corruption. He also pointed out that the role of Ebony Center is to provide scenarios and policy options to the develop

ent policy community in general and the Government in particular. But it is up to the decision makers to decide what to do. He then briefly introduced Prof. George Bureng Nyombe who was the team leader of the SPLM Technical Committee of Intellectual (TCI) during the period 2000-2005; Minister in GONU of Sudan of: a) External Trade (2005 -2008); b) Higher Education and Scientific Research (2008 – 2010) and; c) Investment (2010 -2011); and currently Chairman of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Committee, TNLA.

Prof. George B. Nyombe on his remarks expressed his gratitude to Ebony Center for organizing this event. He pointed out that such events are necessary to raise awareness to the citizen and help the decision makers to take necessary actions to improve the good governance in the country. He then introduced the panelists as mentioned below:

¹ Dr. Benjamin G. Apai, TAF Program Coordinator, ECSS

Main speakers:

1. Prof. Abednego Akok Kachuol, National Election Commission, Presenter.
2. Hon. Mary Ayen Majok, MP, Council of States, TNLA, Discussant
3. His Majesty King Wilson Peni, King of Azande, Discussant

Summary of the discussion:

The presenter, Prof. Abednego Akok Kachuol, presented the paper on the role of culture in combating corruption. In his paper, he stated the causes of corruption considering poverty as the main reason in the case of South Sudan. He emphasized the role of culture in combating corruption at the individual level by cementing the good values and norms of the society in them. He explained why is it important to prepare younger generations at individual level before they join institutions later.

After the presentation, panelists discussed his paper. Most of them agreed with the presenter on the role of culture in combating corruption stating that attitudes and values are directly affected by culture. However, although Hon Mary Ayen agreed with the presenter on some points, she disagreed with him on some points emphasizing that some cultures do not see a state as a conciliator that need protection and promotion, instead, it's assets are considered to be nobody's properties (an alien entity).

His Majesty on his intervention mentioned that there is no link between culture and corruption. He insisted that there is no culture in South Sudan that permits theft/ stealing which in other words can be referred to as corruption. He also emphasized on issues of child marriage which he referred to as an equivalent of corruption.

Other participants raised issues related to corruption, lack of accountability and political culture. There was an apparent consensus that people of South Sudan should go back to their traditional cultures, which promote self-esteem, dignity, and integrity.

Key issues raised and consensus that emerged:

- There is a correlation between corruption and culture (corruption is an offense which should be handled through legal procedures and it's a crime in every culture and a part of human behavior)
- In traditional South Sudanese societies, there were strong systems to punish corrupt individuals or groups – punishment is very smooth!
- Culture is dynamic; could change over time! There is a need to select what is best - all the time.
- Role of culture in combating corruption in modern settings may not work well some instants; it may rather reinforce corruption or nepotism
- The role of traditional and cultural leaders in combating corruption is critical
- There is a need for South Sudanese to search for national identity

- South Sudanese are socially more dependent on their social norms which can be the root cause of this corruption; dependency and extended families style of living.
- An institution with no culture will not work
- South Sudan all along has been at conflict as such our societies are at transition; hence our culture is in conflict with itself
- During the conflict, South Sudanese introduced a new culture of dependence on humanitarian assistance.
- The long years of violence in South Sudan have created negative attitudes towards violence and dishonest.
- The years of war and violence did not only annihilate properties and people, but it affected the traditional norms, values and culminated in the current situation of violence and atrocities among traditional communities.
- Owing to the current culture of violence corruption is institutionalized, and gradually integrating into traditional culture.
- South Sudan needs a ture revolution to establish a radical system of governance to save its culture heritage from corruption.
- Political differences amidst the politicians and elites emboldened the rift and chasms among South Sudanese communities.
- There is a need for a national project that could bring on board all traditional communities which should be based on diversity, democracy, and development.
- There is a need to transform the citizens of South Sudan into a viable nation through transforming and reforming political and economic systems and to ensure good governance and gender equality.
- In a condition in a place like South Sudan where public sector wages are too low, employees may find themselves under pressure to supplement their incomes in “unofficial/ corrupt” ways especially when they have “big families”. This is in addition to a dearth of appropriate and stringent measures of fighting corruption and lack of accountability in the public sector.

Policy recommendations:

- After discussions, there was an apparent consensus on the following recommendations:
- Preparation of individuals should start first at the family level before they join the institutions
- South Sudan should work to create a uniform political culture
- Rebuilding the mindset of South Sudanese to see no different between theft from the government and a neighbor.
- The use of readily available or new technologies to encourage more of an arms-length relationship between officials and civil society

- The government must introduce and implement strong laws in place that to be used to deter corruption.
- Payment of salaries; improvement of wages especially for public sector
- To introduce civic education in primary schools; to introduce to students how to love the country.
- During the election, people should elect individuals who are honest, integral and transparent.
- There is a need to raise awareness, civic engagement and education about corruption among South Sudanese communities.
- Ensuring the rule of law in all institutions including private and public sectors; nobody should be above the law.
- There is a need to separate political issues from legal issues and ensure freedom of judiciary from political interference.
- There is a need to incorporate fighting measures in public policy and education to alert and educate people how to surmount and tackle it
- For building a nation in South Sudan, there is a need for the inclusive, cohesive and national project which could bring on board South Sudanese communities regardless of their tribes, regions, religions, and culture.
- Taking corruption as a national duty and project in combating it is a way forward.

Conclusion:

Most of the participants agreed to the speaker's view that the traditional South Sudanese societies have good cultures that can be used to combat corruption. The presenter had argued that one of the causes of corruption is the lack of values as most of the people decided not to follow their culture. Young generation minds must be inculcated with values such as honesty, integrity, and selflessness