

# ONE OF THE SOLUTIONS TO NIGERIA'S CORRUPTION PROBLEM

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I recently ran into one of our Nigerian "government officials". This "government official" is extremely well educated, and he actually lived in the US before returning to Nigeria not too long ago. I knew this man quite well before he became a "government official" and I felt I could attest to him being a man of conscience and sound ethics. However, I recently heard and saw how corrupt, power hungry and vicious he has become, quite like his cohorts in office.

I have since been forced to wonder what makes a decent, upright and ethical human being corrupt once they get into office in Nigeria?

There was a release by Transparency International, i.e. Corruption Perceptions Index 2002, in which Nigeria scored less than 2 out of 10, gave me a good inkling on what issues leads a country to be perceived as more corrupt than another.

Out of the 102 countries studied, the most corrupt countries had a pattern where *"Political elites and their cronies continue to take kickbacks at every opportunity. Hand in glove with corrupt business people, they are trapping whole nations in poverty and hampering sustainable development...."* Approximately 9 out of 10 developing countries scored less than 5 out of 10,

As I studied, roughly, the possible correlation between corruption, socio-economics, and other indicators I noticed a pattern forming.

Countries which had more societal cushions were less likely to score below 5 on the Corruption Perceptions Index 2002 scale, i.e. more equitable societies were less corrupt. In other words, countries with solid social programs were less likely to be corrupt. Finland, for example, which ranked as the most transparent country has one of the best social benefits in place for their citizens.

This leads to the conclusion that the root of corruption in Nigeria and the reason it has reached such an alarming scale, might not be as a result of our "culture", but might very well be because of the inequity in our society.

Our systems do not allow for solid retirement benefits, for solid programs for youth, for subsidies for farmers, for compensation for the pollution cause by oil exploration, for disability benefits, etc.

Corruption therefore trickles from top-bottom, bottom-top, left-right, right-left.

The government official is corrupt to save for his kids', grandkids and his "rainy" day.

The fisherman in the village can't get enough fish because the waters are polluted. He therefore cannot make enough money to feed his family. His pregnant wife is in hospital and does not have money to pay the bills. He thus seizes any "opportunity" to obtain money, regardless of method.

Female university students are forced to have "sugar daddies" or other dubious means to enable them complete school.

Some who cannot keep up with the corrupt cycle end up becoming economic refugees in places most can't even find on a map...

To end the corruption cycle, Nigerians must be willing to lose something...!

Nigerians must be willing to lose their flair for exhibiting exaggerated opulence, they must come to terms with the fact that they will not be able to get "easy money", they must develop a collective will, they must realize they will no longer get "easy" females to prey on, they must realize that with a transparent society comes accountability and with accountability comes discipline and a good work ethic...

Problem is, most Nigerians do not seem ready to give up on the "fringe" benefits that come with being the second most corrupt country in the world.

Some of us who vehemently condemn "government officials" will become even better than them at "reaping" the fringe benefits of our corrupt society when given the "opportunity".

Fact is, until we are ready to give up on these, "fringe" benefits, the vicious corruption cycle in Nigeria will continue to thrive...