

**TOPIC: IMPLICATION OF CORRUPTION ON THE PEACE AND
SECURITY OF WOMEN.**

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1. INTRODUCTION:

I am grateful to FIDA and all the organizers of this workshop for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts with this august gathering on the topic: Implication of Corruption on the Peace and Security of Women.

FIDA is one organization that commands a lot of respect globally. I personally identify with its goals and aspirations being a lawyer and a woman myself. So it is indeed a great honor to be invited to present this paper and it is equally with a deep sense of humility that I speak to you on a matter that is most pressing on the minds of any sincere African with particular reference to the way corruption impacts the female gender. Having regards to the caliber of audience for this workshop; the cream of seasoned female Lawyers from the African region, who I am certain are as concerned about the effect of corruption on women as I am, I am certainly not coming to lecture you on this important topic but my purpose is to provoke discussion, knowledge sharing and experiences on anti-corruption studies, since we all as women have experienced the negative impact of corruption first hand in our various countries.

2. WHAT IS CORRUPTION?

To effectively discuss this topic, it is important that we consider the question; “what is corruption” with a view to looking at its implication on the peace and security of women.

Apart from the definition proffered by statute, scholars of Economic and Financial Crimes have attempted to define corruption as follows;

Section 2 of ICPC Act 2000, defines corruption to include, “bribery, fraud and other related offences”.

Section 46 of the EFCC Act, 2004, defines Economic and Financial Crimes to include “...bribery and any form of corrupt malpractice”.

Furthermore, the Black’s Law Dictionary 8th edition at page 371 defines corruption as “...the act of doing something with an intent to give some advantage ‘inconsistent with official duty and the rights of others, a

fiduciary or official's use of a station or office to procure some benefit either personally or for someone else, contrary to the rights of others...an impairment of integrity, virtue or moral principles; especially impairment of public official's duty by bribery.

From the foregoing, it can be said without much fear of contradiction that one of the commonest manifestations of corruption is bribery. Again, the **Black's Law Dictionary 8th edition. At page 204, defines bribery as "the corrupt payment, receipt or solicitation of a private favor for an official action"**. The person who offers the bribe, the giver is called the briber; while the person who receives the bribe is called the bribee. It is important to note that in either situation, bribery is a felony and the offenders can be criminalized under the ICPC Act 2000 or the EFCC Act 2004 and also the Criminal and penal Code of most African countries.

3. CORRUPTION AS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

Studies have shown that corruption is not an exclusive African phenomenon. It is a global problem which manifests itself in varying degrees of pervasiveness depending on a particular country. Justice Chukwudifo Oputa, a retired Justice of the Supreme Court in Nigeria recently made a comment on the issue of corruption which I consider very apt as it relates to the global nature of corruption. As far as he was concerned, corruption is an English word, which did not emanate from Africa, meaning that it certainly does exist in the other nations, before they found a word to define it. Examples abound of the negative impact of corruption in all the nations of the world clearly showing that corruption has become a global challenge for all nations of the world.

It is certainly true that the negative impact of corruption is being felt in the nations of Africa where its current underdeveloped status is attributable to the problem of corruption, both at the private and public sector.

One action leads to the other they say. Poor, inept and greedy leadership soon lead to a gradual erosion of cultural values and morals of a people. With the actions of leaders and the inaction of the led, corruption seemed to

have held sway as the order of the day in many African nations. **Obviously it is a common fate of the indolent majority to witness their rights infringed upon by a corrupt minority.** Asking, giving, accepting bribes and I dare say watching indolently while bribes are being sought for, given or accepted makes it obligatory for the individuals and groups involved to behave in ways that negate due process and accountability. It became an issue of ‘if you cannot beat the majority corrupt people, then join them’.

It remains incontrovertible therefore, that the decline which we face today as a continent is the culmination of several years of erosion of our cherished values; with people more concerned with acquiring wealth by any means possible.

4. CAUSES OF CORRUPTION

It is necessary that we discuss some of the causes of corruption in order to determine how it affects women. There are presently arguments among scholars of economic and financial crimes as to whether **poverty** per se is the root cause of and justification for corruption. The classical scholars believe that poverty is the root cause of corruption and that corruption can be justified to fight poverty.

However neo-classical scholars believe that poverty of morals on the part of the people is the root cause of corruption and that corruption itself is the root cause of poverty for the masses of people in a country. This argument is strengthened by the theory that if poverty per se is the root cause of corruption, what justification has an Inspector General of Police, a Senator, a Minister, Governor, LGA Chairman or Bank MD who are not by any definition poor men and women, to steal from public coffers. These studies found as a fact that what underlies corruption is **greed**; that is why the rich ones keep stealing from public coffers.

Apart from greed, the **extended family** system has been identified as another cause of corruption in Africa. The system is retrogressive and breeds laziness as it encourages the culture of dependence. It is estimated that for every Nigerian in gainful employment, there are at least five far flung relations/dependents outside his/her immediate family who depend upon him for some sort of financial assistance. It is only to be expected that many people may out of the desire not to be considered a failure at home, bite

more than they can chew and cave into the temptations of corruption to meet extended family expectations.

The **societal norms and value system** play a huge role in encouraging the growth of corruption in Africa. Attitude towards corruption play a critical role in the persistence of corruption in societies. A situation where a man is respected based on his bank account and not necessarily on the good will and integrity that he has been able to garner over the years, cannot be said to be helping the course of a corrupt free nation or people. Our value system must change if we sincerely desire to handle the problem of corruption in Africa. Also the quest for foreign clothes and jewelry also places a demand on our men to meet the refined taste of their women thus encouraging societal corruption.

Some of the loopholes in our legal system have not helped matters at all.

5. WAYS IN WHICH CORRUPTION HAS NEGATIVELY IMPACTED WOMEN.

Corruption affects men and women differently. Women are subjects and objects of different corrupt practices and behavior. Therefore, their specific needs, roles and experiences need to be taken into consideration. There is this debate that women are less corrupt than men, with the argument that there would be less corruption if more women were involved in politics. The other side of the debate argues that there are not enough women in politics to come to that conclusion. However, one thing that stands clear is that the African culture lends credence to the fact that women as mothers desire to set a good example for their children, so are more likely to be less corrupt.

The behavioral differences between men and women also play a major role in settling this matter as far as Africa is concerned. In Africa, men are religiously and culturally permitted to keep more than one wife which results to increase in the number of children a man has. Consequently, the financial obligations of men are generally higher than that of women, which predisposes them to look for some means to meet these financial demands. The role that Nigerian women have played in the fight against corruption is quite commendable. With the likes of Professor Dora Akuyili, Chief Mrs. Farida Waziri, Dr. Mrs. Okonjo-Iwela, Dr. Mrs. Oby Ezekwesili to mention but a few all proving clearly that women are indeed the fairer sex as it relates to corruption in Africa.

It is commonly known that women face all kinds of cultural, social, political and institutional discriminations; it is likely that women would face more regression in a corruption-ridden environment. Corruption makes it difficult for women to access goods and services in a nation. We shall be looking at the ways that women are affected disproportionately by corruption.

(i) ACCESS TO DECISION MAKING

Corruption undermines a level playing ground for women in decision making. When political parties can be bought and sold, when men are elected into political offices by vote buying and promotion in the civil service or corporate world is related to ones connection rather than merit, then there definitely would be fewer chances that women can increase their representation in politics or at management levels in the public and private sector. Corruption also affects the perception that the average man on the streets has towards women in politics. As far as he is concerned, every politician is corrupt and since women are generally more sensitive than men, most well meaning women would hardly desire to be categorized in that manner, so they tend to shy away from politics as a result and the goal of gender equality becomes difficult to attain.

(ii) PROTECTION AND ADVANCEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHT.

Corruption is often associated with endemic disregard for human right, where some can get away with practically anything for the mere reason that they can bribe their way out of any situation. Accordingly minority groups and indeed women and children suffer in situations where human right abuses are ignored by corrupt law enforcement systems and officials. Women civil rights which are often grossly inequitable as it relates to marriage/divorce, adultery/rape, custody of children, property rights and such is harshly impacted in a corrupt society where justice is available to the highest bidder and judges and prosecutors can be compromised to favor the privileged who in most cases are the men, as women in Africa generally lack access to resources when compared with men. It is also commonly known that the media is a veritable tool in the advancement of human rights, but when the state, political parties and private interest own the media or can buy the media, what hope can a woman whose rights have been trampled upon in such a system have to remedy human right abuses against her?

(iii) ACCESS TO SOCIAL AMENITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Corruption reduces the public revenue, thus negatively affecting the availability of social amenities and infrastructure, like education, health care, electricity, good water and other social amenities. The average woman in the village, where good water is not easily accessible, along with her many domestic chores would have to trek long distances to provide drinking water for her family or else face the negative health consequence of having her family consume bad water. The recent incident of cholera in Bauchi State in Nigeria is a glaring example of how corruption impacts women. One question that fails to leave my mind is this; how much does it cost to provide drinking water for a community in a nation such as ours in the light of the allocations given to local governments? Is it a case of the proverbial ‘living near the river Niger and washing ones hands with spittle’? Women dying, having to bury their children and husband for a disease that could have easily been avoided but for corruption. It is certainly true that the death of a spouse affects women more than men, who are more likely to pick up a wife faster than a woman, saddled with the responsibility of raising her children alone especially when her in-laws are hostile and unsympathetic to her plight.

(iv) THE HEALTH OF WOMEN

The health sector is one of the social amenities that suffer as a result of the negative impact of corruption. In such cases, women are worst hit as they are the ones who must necessarily require good medical care especially as it relates to child bearing and the care of their children. The incidence of infant and maternal mortality in Africa in this twenty first century is quite embarrassing in the light of the resources that are available to the nations of Africa today. It is sad to note that the resources that should have been used for such social amenities have been siphoned by corrupt political leaders.

Security is one basic need that women have. It is commonly known that women and children suffer most in cases of war, natural disasters and the like. As a result women have the tendency to become apprehensive and unsettled whenever there is a suggestion of any event occurring which may affect their sense of peace and security. This explains the rising rate of hypertension, diabetes, heart attacks, ulcers and other stress related diseases among women. Most of these diseases are life threatening and have the capacity of shortening the life span of women. We have also witnessed a

rising level of infertility among women, which can be traced among other factors to stress and the sense of instability associated with corruption.

(v) **THE NEXT GENERATION.**

Corruption affects the moral values and societal norms of every society which impact the youth negatively. Women have to deal with the moral issue of teaching their children the proper values in life, when everything the children witness and experience is a direct contradiction of the values that mothers desire their children to uphold. This is directly reflected in the educational system. As corruption reduces the money available for the proper development of the educational sector, leaving children to learn in very un-conducive environments. More so are cases where children who merit gaining admissions into schools are denied their right of place because their parents are not rich enough to buy them a place in the secondary or tertiary institutions of their choice or are unwilling to do so. This places pressure on women who desire good education for their children and do not have the money to bribe corrupt government officials or those who are unwilling to do so, to seek alternative means to see their children through school. This explains why many parents of African origin have to spend huge sums of money for their children to obtain foreign education. This of course impacts the family budget negatively. Similarly, as a result of the effect of corruption on the educational system, and the need for quality education, many also involve in corrupt practices to meet the high cost of foreign and private education.

(vi) **MORAL DECADENCE**

Corrupt political and leaders in other spheres of life often acquire riches through their illicit enterprise and are quite prepared to use these ill gotten riches as a bait to lure ladies to do their carnal biddings, thus increase the rate of prostitution in the society. The incidence of prostitution in our institutions of higher learning is certainly on the increase, especially with corrupt lecturers demanding sex from female students in order to give them good grades in their examinations. The larger society is not spared from the moral decadence associated with corruption. Sometimes women are required to bribe corrupt leaders in the public and private sectors with sexual favors

in order to have what is legitimately their due, like promotion, foreign courses, juicy postings and the like. Corruption gradually erodes the moral fabric of the society leaving in its wake, a people that are so morally bankrupt that anything is acceptable and in fact permissible for a man who has money to throw around no matter how he acquired it.

(vii) UNEMPLOYMENT

Corruption affects the economy of any nation and hinders public and private sector development resulting in unemployment. School leavers who have the necessary qualification are unable to get employment, while the less qualified get juicy jobs because they are well connected to important personalities in the society. There are also cases where job seekers are made to bribe some officials before they are given employment. It is sad to note that corruption dulls the ears of leaders to the need to provide employment opportunities as they engage in their rave for more riches with a near maniac intensity. Mothers watch with a broken heart as the children they sacrificed to see through school remain unemployed several years after they have graduated from school and they have to apportion their meager financial resources to cater for a child who should have been long independent. They are equally saddled with responsibility of counseling children who have become frustrated as a result of their unemployed status.

(viii) SECURITY, WAR AND CRIME

With the resultant effect of a society plagued by the malaise of corruption and the consequent fall out of unemployment, it goes without saying that crime rate would be on the increase. Corrupt leaders breed corrupt followers. The effect of corruption on the values and norms of a society is far reaching. The message appears to be the moral question: why would you permit some to rob with their pens and positions and imprison others who have been so denied of what is legitimately theirs from forcefully taking some of the bootie? It is certainly true that the thugs that some political office holders employed to distort election figures and harass their political opponents have grown to become the kidnapers and armed robbers that are a menace to the society today. With the increase in crime rate is the increase of rape incidences against women. It is commonly known that kidnapers prefer to abduct women, because they believe that their husbands should be left to source for the ransom which they require. The misery that these abducted women face in the hands of kidnapers is beyond words and the associated

psychological trauma affects the society negatively. It is commonly said that the hands that rock the cradle rule the world, so what happens when the hands rocking the cradle has become emotionally feeble and traumatized? The armed robbers, kidnappers and fraudster are some mother's sons, a woman's husband, daughter, niece or nephew. As these miscreants are imprisoned or killed, one or more women cry, and many lives are broken. As they go on rampage, the peace and security of women are threatened and as they go into hiding, an uneasy calm reigns.

CONCLUSION

The implication of corruption on the peace and security of women has far reaching consequence and cannot be captured conclusively in any paper. I do believe that I have said enough to awaken every woman here from docile and lethargic acceptance of corruption as a way of life. The lioness is a more ferocious hunter than the lion, because she has to provide for her needs and that of her children. As mothers and learned ones at that, we must rise up and fight this monster that is robbing us of our values as a people. There is a need for positive action and we must all start from our little corner and sooner than we know it, the difference will be felt.

Thank you for listening.