



OPINION

Covid corruption a sad indictment for SA

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THE perpetual cycle of corruption during the Covid-19 pandemic in our country has reminded us that human ethics, a discipline that begun with philosophical abstractions, has been transformed for centuries into a frightening reality of human greed and corruption.

The widespread challenges facing society and modern states with regard to unmitigated corruption in both the public and the private spheres today require us to examine the material and societal roots of public ethics.

The dissection of human ethics has been transformed in today's era into an urgent necessity in policy formulation and implementation because of its significance in uncovering individual or collective acts of corruption in specific local or organisational environments.

Such analysis and understanding generates research-based knowledge rooted in this approach to produce a

clear understanding of ethics, values and interests within given environments both in the private and public sectors.

Such knowledge could possibly help us to answer the key question: Why is South Africa a society with one of the most comprehensive anti-corruption legislation, rules, regulations and agencies, considered one of the most corrupt societies in the world?

This question is particularly pertinent on International Anti-Corruption Day observed annually on December 9 to raise awareness about corruption and to urge people globally to fight it.

Policymakers and practitioners can only move forward in the struggle against corruption by consciously engaging in empirically and normatively informed debates and by making decisions that shape existing practices, functions, structures and realities.

A small number of senior politicians have commented in Parliament and publicly that corruption is

endemic in the country, both in the public and private sectors, and that if it is not dealt with decisively, it will not only have an impact on good governance, but could potentially distort our economy and ultimately derail democracy. This means that corruption with impunity must be brought to an end because its dominance in government and the private sector is destroying the moral fabric of society. We need urgent action and exposure to defeat it.

South Africans demands from the country's public and private sectors ethical standards of the highest level, incorruptible, fair, transparent, unbiased, accountable and equitable behaviour; effective and efficient usage of existing resources and ethical foundations regarding public participation and communication that will ultimately lead to a developmental public administration.

Hence, it is expected that the public sector as well as its political overseers operate within the confines of existing

legislation, rules and regulations; abide by, assess, monitor and evaluate all ethics requirements.

There is a need not just for a structure, plan and implementation of mechanisms that resolve ethical dilemmas, but also for the introduction of ethical guidelines in all processes and dynamics of decision-making.

Combination of internal and external initiatives in order to guarantee all aspects of high ethical compliance are necessary.

These imperatives demand changes in attitudes and in long-standing practices based on ethical principles and standards within organisations as well as direct and honest communication with the citizens through public participation, awareness campaigns, programmes and projects that target anti-corruption initiatives.

Public empowerment is imperative because the relationship between the government and the people is one of reciprocity as the expectations

for accountable, transparent, fair and incorruptible service delivery have common roots.

This implies that there is a need for two-way communication channel enforcing ethical leadership and behaviour to stop all violations of ethical codes of conduct.

We have all seen the serious negative repercussions corruption has for our country. It retards development, perpetuates and increases poverty, causes inequitable income distribution, economic decline and lack of investment. Unethical and corrupt state practices are the antithesis of good governance, a crucial element in the process of building citizens' trust in government. Such actions negatively affect people's trust, a sad reality in our country during these challenging times.

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