Human Security and Development: Anti-corruption Solutions

Kemi Ogunyemi

Abstract: Human security is a component of human rights, as described in many articles and reports, and is a critical area of study in development ethics. It is clear that conflict of any kind diminishes it, since all conflicts generate fear and want. Corruption brings sociological and psychological conflict, affecting the infrastructure and systems in many ways that inhibit human development. Thus, health systems, ecological resources, transportation systems, power supply, food systems, and even physical security, just to name a few, are affected. This paper examines how human security is understood and how anti-corruption efforts could enhance it. The paper looks at the relationship between corruption and human security against the background of a developing country, using short narratives of the human experience in Nigeria. It is expected that the insights generated will emphasize the need to fight corruption more vigorously as well as provide further specific direction to the fight. The narratives of people in specific situations constitute an invaluable resource for understanding and resolving the challenges of corruption and human security. Such local engagement can make the quest for human security more attainable and sustainable.

Keywords: human security; development; anti-corruption; corruption; development ethics

Introduction

Human security is a component of human rights, as described in many articles and reports, and is a critical area of study in development ethics. It is clear that conflict of any kind diminishes it, since all conflicts generate fear and want. Corruption brings sociological and psychological conflict, affecting the infrastructure and systems in many ways that inhibit human development. Thus, health systems, ecological resources, transportation systems, power supply, food systems, and even physical security, just to name a few, are affected. This paper examines how human security is understood and how anti-corruption efforts could enhance it. The paper looks at the relationship between corruption and human security against the background of a developing country, using short narratives of the human experience in Nigeria and Ivory Coast. It is expected that the insights generated will emphasize the need to fight corruption more vigorously as well as provide further specific direction to the fight. The narratives of people in specific situations constitute an invaluable resource for understanding and resolving the challenges of corruption and human security. Such local engagement can make the quest for human security more attainable and sustainable.
Literature Review

It has gradually become understood on the African continent that human security is the establishment of socially and economically viable communities rather than freedom from military invasion and that it is therefore closely tied to development. Quoting the 2004 Non-Aggression and Common Defence Pact of the African Union (AU), these authors clarify the definition of security:

“[In Africa] security means the protection of individuals with respect to the satisfaction of basic needs of life; it also encompasses the creation of the social, political, economic, military, environmental and cultural conditions necessary for survival, including the protection of fundamental freedoms, access to education, healthcare, and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his/her own potential.”

Thus, we could say that human security is very much connected to human rights, a supposition supported in the academic literature. Conflict of any kind diminishes it, since all conflicts generate fear and want. According to Goldsworthy, “at its root, human security is about protecting and empowering all people to live their best lives every day, guaranteeing basic necessities, freedoms and dignity.”

Given that corruption tends to threaten the creation of conditions that favour development and foster fundamental freedoms because of its tendency to lead to rent-seeking, marginalization of the weak, and a culture of cheating, unfairness and inequity, human security is clearly a critical area of study in development ethics. It reduces incentives to work hard; those that find it easy to use corrupt means to get ahead do not need to work hard, while those who would not adopt corrupt means get discouraged because of the lack of fairness in the competitive space. All of these by-products affect the infrastructure and systems in many ways that inhibit human development and the vital freedoms. Thus, health systems, ecological resources, transportation systems, public infrastructure, power supply, food systems, access to water and sanitation, and even physical safety, just to name a few, are at risk.

For example, private individuals and the general public pay the costs of the poorly executed contracts and projects since efficiency and accountability cannot be enforced by people who have received questionable payments. Shoddy workmanship in different spheres of life and at different levels deprives people of what is due them in order to achieve an adequate standard of living.

In addition, countries with high levels of corruption struggle in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI).

When the physical safety or security of individual persons is at stake, all other kinds of security are endangered, and development becomes difficult to achieve. The challenges facing Afghanistan, Cote d’Ivoire, DRC (Congo), Iraq, Nigeria, Palestine, Sierra Leone, just to name a few, exemplify this problem. Unfortunately, the weaker the physical human security, the more corruption thrives. Of course, in developing nations, the very term human security would be primarily linked to physical security. People may tend to worry about the country’s
development only after they feel safe, engendering a kind of paralysis which slows down the progress of development. This vicious cycle is in line with Anand and Gasper’s framework depicting very strong bi-directional linkages between human security and development, and between these two and intergenerational equity (which is greatly damaged by corruption).¹⁴

According to Chikwanha, there are three approaches to achieving human security in a developing country: the statist approach, the corporate approach, and the development approach. Some people expect the government to take action, others look to business leaders, while a third category expects a united effort. The third approach is the most likely to be effective.¹⁵ Anti-corruption cannot be carried out solely with government effort alone, since many instances of corrupt action by government officials are below the radar and would not be known. In any case, there is also private sector corruption.

When dealing with physical security, the same three approaches are relevant. In particular, physical security is primarily seen as the responsibility of governments, suggesting that the statist approach is indeed proper.¹⁶ However, while it is common to find that the statist approach inadequate to ensure security in developing countries, it is also common to find individuals and corporate bodies adopting some kind of individualist approach akin to Chikwanha’s corporate approach. This leads to a widening gap between the haves and have-nots, sparks more corruption and conflict, and deepens the vicious cycle depicted in Figure 1 below. Anti-corruption initiatives are one method of breaking the cycle and catalyzing a joint development approach to unite both government and the private sector in this endeavor.

Figure 1: Relationship between anti-corruption, development and human security
Methodology

Individual, situation-specific narratives constitute an invaluable aid for understanding and resolving the challenges of corruption and human security. Such local engagement can make the quest for human security more attainable and sustainable. Thus, this paper uses a qualitative methodology by eliciting, through an online survey, short narratives of the human experience of corruption and security in Nigeria.

Twenty-seven executives in Lagos responded to four open-ended questions giving their insights on issues of human security and anti-corruption, from their personal experiences. The first question sought to ascertain the perceptions of the respondents about what human security encompasses. The second and the third looked into the connections people make between corruption and human security, and between human security and anti-corruption. The last question solicited possible solutions.

The demographic data of the respondents is given in Appendix 1.

Discussing the Meaning of Human Security

The research findings show that human security is understood by the man on the street, not only as state security but also as the freedom of individuals to live in peace, and the protection of lives and property, i.e. physical safety or physical security. For most of the respondents, security means safety from violence against their lives and goods. In fact, safety is used synonymously with security in most of the responses. According to one respondent, “human security is the ability to protect oneself.”

Descriptive words and phrases used by the respondents about the state of physical security include: “none,” “inexistent,” “appalling,” “abysmal,” “terrible,” “scary,” “unsafe,” “below expectation,” “deteriorating,” “below average,” “low,” “predictable,” “average,” “unpredictable and porous,” “collapsed,” “very poor,” “hopeless,” “can be improved upon,” and “not guaranteed.”

An overwhelmingly statist approach is revealed in the comments, as can be expected when the question is one of physical security distinct from other types of human security: government does not care about lives and property; individuals are left to provide their own security; “security of life and property is supposed to be one of the core responsibilities of the government;” national security agencies are not adequately “motivated, trained and equipped;” “our defective government and her security agencies are primarily culpable for this security anomaly.” The government is described as being “nonchalant” about protection of citizens’ lives. Respondents believe that, “…[government] could be made better if our leaders accept full responsibility;” and that currently their safety is “not guaranteed by the state” and “government has not done enough in this area.”

Respondents provided experiences of feeling unsafe: attacks on police barracks, e.g. in Edo state recently; growing crime rates; kidnappings; conflicts, unrest, and violence in the North; lack of closed circuit TVs (CCTVs) for surveillance; lack of accurate databases of citizens; etc.
A few of the respondents clearly see human security as essential to nation building and economic growth, agreeing with the literature, and attributing its absence to corruption, insincerity, incompetence, unemployment, and (perceived) unfair distribution of resources and opportunities.

It is also clear from the findings that human insecurity emphasizes the gap between the rich and the poor, since the rich can afford to bear the financial burdens of ensuring their own physical safety, but the poor are left unprotected.

**Interrelationships between Corruption and Human Security**

Almost everyone saw a relationship between corruption and human security. Three people did not, arguing the level of human security is also low in developed countries with low corruption indices and that there are countries with high corruption indices and high levels of human security. These observations are understandable and are due to differences between the kind of human security that the respondents are focused on and the kind that exists in the countries to which they are comparing. A couple of respondents saw the relationship only in terms of co-occurrence: “every scenario of high level of corruption is always associated with high level of human insecurity, e.g., Kenya, Zimbabwe & Nigeria” and they “are like Siamese twins.” This, in itself, would not have been indicative of strong perceptions of a relationship. However, a majority clearly showed that they have in their experience found causal relationships between corruption and human insecurity, thereby giving a good indication that anti-corruption efforts would increase human security levels and therefore enhance development.

Among the causal relationships pointed out was the impact of corruption on systems of equity and justice, and the resulting effect on human security, once those who cheat or misbehave or trample on others’ rights can defy regulators and find ways to avoid facing legal penalties:

- “Corruption perverts justice.”
- “A society with weak judicial system cannot guarantee human security as criminals will always buy their way out of justice.”
- “A corrupt police officer will only be interested in what enters his pocket, forgetting to protect lives, jeopardizing human security.”
- “Corruption breeds insecurity.”
- “If a security agent who supposed to secure lives and properties is corrupt, he would not be able to discharge his responsibilities as expected therefore affecting human security negatively.”

In addition, it appears that even the protagonists of corruption only enjoy physical security at a high cost. Respondents commented that the higher the corruption, the less secure the corrupt individuals feel, and that this is evidenced by heightened physical security for those
involved. Since corrupt individuals tend to have the money to purchase the security equipment they may need, this aggravates the situation — aggrieved people react by suspecting that everyone who has money got it through corruption, and show their resentment passively and at times actively. Active resentment leads to higher levels of crime and violence, and therefore heightens insecurity for everyone.

Thus, the reactions from victims of corruption also contribute to higher levels of human insecurity, in the sense that sometimes people who are involved in activities that pose a threat to human security are (in a way) revolting against corruption: “the ‘have-nots’ get disgruntled and in a bid to access their portion of the "national cake" will go to any extent or use any means to achieve this aim (robberies, kidnapping, etc.); thus, the rich people are … not safe.”

On the one hand, “corruption leads to sectional deprivation which leads to crime and crime to insecurity.” Some people get richer using underhanded methods, while others get poorer, and the widening rich-poor gap is inimical both to security and to development. For example, “corruption led to underdevelopment of the Niger Delta where the nation’s major source of export income comes from. It led to the formation of many militant groups in the area which have caused hostility, insecurity, and constant lost of life.”

“Several times when driving in my status car along some areas of where I stay, you hear snide remarks of resentment (if you are courageous enough to wind down the windows). The average bus driver is aggressive against you on the road, and where he (bus driver) is even guilty of wrong driving, his passengers are willing to support him once his aggression is against the perceived "corrupt elites" of the society.”

Conversely, insecurity is also perceived as leading to more corruption. The example given is again the situation in the Niger Delta, “where human life is being threatened by oil spillage, illiteracy, and lack of infrastructure;” therefore, “the leaders of these communities have ‘truncated’ oil companies from developing these areas by their corrupt practices.” Again, this leads to further insecurity: “this led to the advent of MEND,”¹⁹ which also appears to depend partly on corruption for its survival — “the Niger Delta youths themselves are corrupt because of the sharp practices between them and other counties leading to exchange for oil for weapons of war.”

Respondents believe that, in general, “when security is enforced, corruption will find it difficult to survive.”

There is also the provocation for others to join the corruption bandwagon when they see the bad example of those who are already travelling that way: “When people see how leaders spend wastefully, they are prepared to do whatever they can to get their share of the loot.” This generally means that instead of working hard in the interest of development, others look for how to cut corners and for rent-seeking opportunities.

The desire for the security — perceived as being only within the reach of the rich — leads some people to adopt corrupt means to get it. “People are ready to amass money so they can conveniently provide their own security-employ escorts, escort cars, CCTVs, etc.”
“False security – the desire for human security – is what prompts people to embrace corruption; a belief that once you are rich, you can command influence which puts you in the corridor of power and relevance to get whatever you want in our society to ensure you and your family are secured from societal ills.”

The words and phrases used to describe the influences of corruption on human security and vice versa include the following: “interrelated,” “strong relationship between the two,” “corruption endangers human security,” “interwoven,” “corruption makes human security impossible,” ”the more corruption we have the less human security.”

Regarding the way corruption results in heightened human insecurity, the respondents described the effects of corruption as “unfair distribution of resources, underserved privileges, strangulation of creativity and entrepreneurial development, unhealthy competition among people for survival, etc.” — all of which eventually lead to an increase in crime, conflicts, violence, and (in a few cases) war. This occurs because corruption causes “disaffection and enmity within the society,” and increases “poverty, underdevelopment, and vices.” In summary, “the relationship is that corruption brings instability in a country which directly affects the safety of its people.”

The statist approach continues to be strongly evident when examining the security-related effects of corruption; for example, “successive regimes and their agencies have not live up to expectations in the discharge of their constitutional duties and obligations,” thus indicating that the statist approach may also encourage people to take responsibility for anti-corruption efforts. Thus, in stating that corruption provokes insecurity, one respondent explains that, “the high level of corruption from the leaders leads to the formation of different militant groups, kidnapping gangs, and Islamist fighters due to the level of unemployment of youths.” He or she is putting the blame for corruption squarely on the state, on the government.

Finally, the perpetuation of the status quo engenders the continuation of corruption: “corrupt leaders who want to remain in power or want their stooges to remain in power at times sponsor the activities of the militants. They have access to arms and ammunition which end up in the hands of criminals.” In this example, the mismanagement of weapons distributions endangers human security in one of the worst possible ways.

In sum, the different ways in which corruption depletes human security are depicted in Figure 2 below.
Possible Benefits of Anti-corruption Efforts:

Effective anti-corruption measures would definitely enhance human security in a very direct way. If the measures were undertaken, respondents predicted that the following effects would occur:

1) Reduction in rates of murder and kidnap, e.g. Boko Haram in Nigeria.

2) Stronger criminal justice system: “where corruption thrives, justice is bought by the rich… the poor are denied their rights;” “where offences that enrich perpetrators are not punished, more people will be drawn to the crime.”

3) Stronger accountability: “funds voted for security may be diverted;” “the funds allocated for highways maintenance are embezzled by government officials and people are dying of road accident daily.”

4) Better, more effective behavior from “the rulers in a country.”

5) Strengthened ability to procure appropriate equipment and tools to combat crimes.

6) Efficient functioning of security systems, especially the police: anti-corruption police will be more effective in protecting the populace against crime, and less at risk for graft. Take, for example, a situation where “approval has been given to install CCTV
all around Lagos metropolis and someone, somewhere pockets the bulk of the funds and only installs CCTV in highbrow areas.”

7) National focus on development: “A country whose leaders are more interested in amassing wealth without providing necessary infrastructures — such as good roads, security cameras, resources for electronic government databases, and equipment for law enforcement agents with adequate protective gadgets and sophisticated weapons to wage war against terrorism and armed robbery — would continue to expose her citizen to insecurity matters.”

8) General increase in development activity: “high level of corruption has negative effect on economic and social developments;” “eventually, individuals would resort to illegal and anti-social means to survive or get even with the society.”

9) Effective and efficient use of resources: this reduces unfairness in wealth distribution and enhances accessibility of viable economic activities to majority of people. This, in turn, lowers the likelihood of incidences of civil unrest, communal clashes, lack of employment, etc.

Some Anti-corruption Recommendations

The work of Chikwanha²¹ suggests that valuable insights may be derived from local engagement mediated by a survey instrument. The present results appear to give credence to this, as the following anti-corruption recommendations came from the respondents

“Strict laws and a healthy justice system;” “people should be made to face the full weight of the law;” and there should be “effective punitive laws.” Respondents felt that penalties for corruption should be “stiff”, and “imposed without sentiments.”

Strong, honest, transparent, and sincere leadership were characteristics echoed by a couple of respondents who felt strongly enough to call for a revolution in order to establish good governance. In general, the consensus was that, “corruption free government or leadership can achieve” anti-corruption, but “it can only succeed if it starts from the top.” “Good governance,” “openness[,] and accountability” are considered to be essential among the executive, legislative, and judiciary arms of government if anti-corruption efforts are to yield optimal fruit.

“Self-discipline:” this implies a need for integrity education and training at all levels so that people can resist corruption.

“Improved standard of living nationally” and infrastructural “development:” this would mean greater human security, which in turn would decrease the anxiety that tempts or even drives some people to corrupt action. “When the leadership ensures that all basic necessities of life are provided and accessible without struggle,” corruption will decrease and human security will improve.

Whistle-blowing systems: “a reliable medium where people with information on corrupt officials can give such information anonymously.” This would aid the effectiveness of the
justice system and would also raise the perceptions of fairness and justice among individuals and reduce conflicts due to people feeling marginalized or cheated.

Development approach (Chikwanha, 2009) – a joint effort between the State and its citizens to eradicate corruption: a “revolution of accountability and integrity;” “a few committed Nigerians who can rise up and influence …” “trusted and respected people” to “motivate” the others.

Education: “more awareness about the destructive aspect of corruption;” “continuous enlightenment and mobilization of the masses;” “anti-corruption and its consequences should be taught in all schools.”

“Ethno-religious” inclusion: some respondents suggested that initiatives that encourage more unity and solidarity among the numerous ethnic and religious persuasions in the country would also be a strong and effective anti-corruption weapon.

Reward systems: “honest citizens should be identified and rewarded,” supporting the idea that one gets what one pays for.

Employment: “creating job opportunities to our youths,” along the same line as improving standards of living and improving infrastructure, would reduce the levels of desperation that push some people to engage in illicit and illegal actions.

Conclusion

The discussion of the survey results show how much the propositions from literature are supported in reality by countries that face challenges from human insecurity and corruption. The insights generated emphasize the need to fight (and how to fight) corruption more vigorously. According to the survey results, the causal relations were made clearer, confirming the assertions of Gasper and Truong (2005) that the discourse on human security would be served by emphasizing ethics. There will never be a single solution to the problems of human security; however, it is possible to identify which courses of action that can be taken to ameliorate these problems. Applying the same idea to issues of anti-corruption, bottom-up solutions can be very effective both for the country from which they originate and for others around the world facing similar challenges.

About the Author

Kemi Ogunyemi holds a degree in Law from the University of Ibadan and MBA and PhD degrees from Lagos Business School. She teaches business ethics, managerial anthropology and sustainability management at Lagos Business School while also functioning as Academic Director of the School’s Senior Management Programme. Her consulting and research interests include personal ethos, work-life ethic, social responsibility, sustainability and governance. After leaving Law School, Kemi worked as director, team lead and mentor in various projects of the Women’s Board (Educational Cooperation Society) before she joined Lagos Business School in 2006. She has also developed, directed and taught in management and leadership programmes for Nigerians of all ages aspiring to impact their country and the
world. She is a member of BEN-Africa, and of the EBEN, and was part of the team that developed the PRME Anti-Corruption Toolkit.

Notes

5 Id., Chikwanha, 2009.
7 Id., Poku, Renwick, and Gomes Porto, 2007, 1158.
11 Id., Gasper and Truong, 2005.
15 Id., Chikwanha, 2009.
18 Id., Chikwanha, 2009.
19 Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)
20 A militant organization in Northern Nigeria
21 Id., Chikwanha, 2009.
Bibliography


Appendix I

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