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Poor families hit hardest by bribery, even in rich countries, finds new TI poll

Global Corruption Barometer 2007: Political parties and parliaments seen as institutions most compromised by corruption worldwide

Berlin, 6 December 2007 - Poor families are hit hardest by demands for bribes in developed as well as developing countries, according to Transparency international's Global Corruption Barometer 2007. The public opinion survey, published today ahead of International Anti-Corruption Day on 9 December, also found that citizens in countries across the globe continue to see political parties and parliaments as the institutions most compromised by corruption.

The Barometer, which surveys 63,199 respondents in 60 countries, offers a broad spectrum of data on common experiences of corruption, including which institutions most frequently demand bribes, where citizens see the greatest degree of corruption, and how they see both the future development of corruption and their governments' efforts to eradicate it.

"This year's Global Corruption Barometer has made it clear that too often, people must part with their hard-earned money to pay for services that should be free", said Transparency International Chair Huguette Labelle. "And they do not see enough commitment when they look to their governments and leaders. We are heartened though, that the public is increasingly demanding the accountability of the very institutions that most affect their lives, as this is a powerful driver of change."

Bribery: A tax on poor families everywhere

The TI Global Corruption Barometer 2007 finds that it is the poor who are most often confronted with requests for bribes, in wealthy and poor countries alike. Extortion hits low-income households with a regressive tax that saps scarce household resources.

More than one in ten respondents reported having to pay a bribe in the past year for access to a service. The countries with the highest level of petty bribery are Albania, Cambodia, Cameroon, FYR Macedonia, Kosovo, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Romania and Senegal, where at least 30 per cent of respondents reported having paid bribes.

When asked about dealing with services, telephone and natural gas utilities were the least likely to demand bribes, while law enforcement was the most frequent source (25 per cent of respondents who came in contact with the police were asked to pay a bribe) with courts the second most frequent source worldwide.

Corrupt police and judiciary mean rights denied

"The Barometer reveals that the police and the judiciary in many countries around the world are part of a cycle of corruption, demanding bribes from citizens," said Transparency

International Managing Director, Cobus de Swardt. "This troubling finding means that corruption is interfering with the basic right to equal treatment before the law."

Transparency International has been campaigning strongly this year against corruption in the judiciary, based on its [Global Corruption Report 2007](#). This report details how bribery affects the courts – judges and other judicial personnel accept bribes to delay or accelerate cases, to allow or deny an appeal, or to decide a case in a certain way. The [Global Corruption Report 2007](#) also includes data from a 2002 survey showing, for instance, that 96 per cent of respondents in Pakistan who had contact with the lower courts encountered corrupt practices, while in Russia, an estimated US \$210 million in bribes is thought to be paid in courts each year.

Bribes by sector: A regional perspective

Although globally the police are the institution most frequently reported to demand bribes, there are important differences across regions. In the countries of the greater EU region, medical services stand out as the most common source of bribe demands. In Latin America, Asia-Pacific and North America, petty bribery in the judiciary is a serious problem. In Africa and the Newly Independent States (Russia, Moldova and Ukraine), however, bribery was most prevalent in the education and health sectors, both vitally important to human development.

Petty bribery increased from 2006 to 2007 in some of the regions, such as Asia-Pacific (22 per cent of respondents reported paying a bribe to receive a service, up from 15 per cent) and South-East Europe (12 per cent, up from 8 per cent). Africa registered a slight decrease (42 per cent, down from 47 per cent).

"These sober figures underlie frightening real-world scenarios where money is extorted from innocent citizens in very vulnerable situations, such as during medical emergencies or when they are the victims of a crime," said Huguette Labelle. "Entrenched bribery inflicts deep and lasting wounds on a society, destroying belief in those who govern."

Political parties remain most affected by corruption

The Barometer also asks citizens which institutions they see as most affected by corruption. Year after year, political parties and parliaments – the very institutions entrusted to represent the public interest in political decision-making – take in first place.

"Our experience has shown that it is commitment at the top that will make or break efforts to fight corruption," said de Swardt. "These troubling numbers show that government faces a crisis of legitimacy, with the potential to undermine democratisation, stability and the protection of human rights."

The institutions which fared best in the eyes of ordinary citizens were religious bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Although still relatively clean, the perception of NGOs has worsened globally in comparison to 2004 survey results, as did the perception of private enterprises, indicating that these two sectors are under increasing public pressure to demonstrate transparency and accountability.

Public ready for a change

Public expectations about the extent of corruption in the future have become gloomier when compared to the Barometer 2003, with 54 per cent of respondents feeling that corruption would increase in the coming years – up from 43 per cent four years ago. In 2007, only one in every five respondents expected the level of corruption to decrease in the near future.

The Philippines and India stood out as the most pessimistic countries, with more than 79 per cent of respondents expecting an increase in corruption. Among the most pessimistic countries are Germany, Senegal, South Africa, Netherlands and the United Kingdom. But the negative outlook was not universal: interviewees in Bulgaria, Ghana, FYR Macedonia, Nigeria and Singapore were decidedly optimistic, believing that future levels of corruption will fall.

Governments not doing enough

Attitudes towards government anti-corruption efforts were similar to future expectations of corruption, with over half of all respondents rating their government as ineffective. Only one in three of those polled felt that their government was effective in battling corruption.

The general public was most sceptical, on average, in North and Latin America, the greater EU region and Asia-Pacific. That North Americans and Europeans see government efforts so negatively (with 19 and 28 per cent average approval ratings respectively), despite low levels of petty bribery, suggests that they are concerned about problems of grand corruption and the gap between the major graft that has been exposed and commitments to do something about it. The lack of an explicit approach to tackling corruption in the countries of the north may further aggravate this public uneasiness.

Notably, some of the African countries surveyed showed evidence of far greater optimism than that seen in the countries of North America and Europe. Wealthy countries in particular need to listen to what their citizens are saying and adopt the kind of comprehensive approaches to anti-corruption at home that they have demanded from aid recipient countries for years.

Women more pessimistic

Detailed analysis reveals that women are slightly more pessimistic than men about future levels of corruption. This contrasts with another finding of the 2007 Barometer, namely that women were less likely to pay a bribe than men, although this may be attributable to gender-based differences in the frequency and type of institutional contact.

The Barometer v. the Corruption Perceptions Index

The findings of the 2007 Global Corruption Barometer show a strong correlation (0.66) between the experience of bribery among ordinary citizens and the perceptions of corruption by experts, which are the basis for the Corruption Perceptions Index, TI's flagship measurement tool. Those countries where business people, country analysts and experts perceive corruption to be widespread are the same ones where, on average, a higher proportion of citizens pay bribes for access to services

Conclusion: It is not just government that must work harder

"Turning promises into action is essential if anti-corruption efforts are to have an impact on the lives of ordinary people. Governments are key to making good on commitments to fighting corruption. But governments are not alone in their responsibility. We need to see concerted action from civil society and the private sector too," concluded TI Chair Labelle. "People are punished by bribery and disgruntled by the corruption they believe plagues key public institutions and services. They deserve a future without corruption. The Global Corruption Barometer 2007 is a wake-up call – a reminder that people around the world are increasingly demanding an end to corruption and its terrible cost."

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Note to editors:

The **Global Corruption Barometer** reflects the findings of a public opinion survey that looks at perceptions and experience of corruption. This year 63,199 people in 60 countries and territories were interviewed for the survey between June and September 2007. The Barometer survey has been carried out on an annual basis since 2003 on behalf of Transparency International by Gallup International Association as part of its Voice of the People Survey.

The full Barometer report and Frequently Asked Questions are available online at: http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/gcb/2007