

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ANSWERED TO INSIGHT MAGAZINE 2016

Herewith I wish to ask you to assist me with answers to the following questions.

Briefly, I am part of a **Commonwealth Secretariat project** around anti-corruption. Namibia has been identified as one of six countries on the continent that is considered something of a success story on anti-corruption. The project seeks to identify the success factors across the six countries and to have these serve as lessons for others on the continent.

That said, please answer the following questions as best you can:

1. How would you describe Namibia's anti-corruption fight since 2004?

During 2004, the ACC was established. Based on a survey done by the ACC in 2011/12, the ACC does not seem to be effective in bringing corrupt officials to the book as opposed to ACC's of Hong Kong and Singapore. To illustrate, the highest ranking official that lost his position as result of an ACC investigation was a Deputy Director, Mr Sacky. The big fish is not brought to book and 'petty corruption' seems to be scope of the ACC.

If one analyses the trend of TI ratings since 1998 until 2014, the trend is negative, however what is positive is that since 2004 as the 'darkest year' with a rating of 4.1 out of 10, the trend improved slowly but surely with a rating of 4.9 in 2014. Namibia has always been one of the top five countries rated by TI in Africa. However, with a rating since 2004 of constantly below 5 out of 10, we are mediocre internally, not good not bad, just 'hanging in there'.

Major corruption scandals that negatively affected Namibia's rating since 2004 include the OCD, fish quotas, Social Security Commission (2nd round of corruption), the NDF and insurance company's corruption, AVID, and more recently corruption with oil exploration licenses, e.g. Knowledge Katti, TransNamib, the Ministry of Works and Transport, the National Housing Enterprise (2nd round of corruption) and the Neckartal Dam tender, to mention a few.

Public spending on defense and national intelligence increased since Independence, similar and during some years more than spending increases in comparison with spending on social services, e.g. Education and Health. The increased spending on Defense and National Intelligence budgets, increased budget secrecy. In Parliament, no answers to any question related to the latter budgets are allowed. Such a situation increasingly open up the opportunity for corruption due to lack of public accountability. Corruption in NDF is illustrated in catering tenders in which some generals and other leaders of NDF were (are) involved, and the mediocre explanation about it by the Minister, Honourable Nahas Angula.

Namibia's fight against corruption since 2004 is ineffective and scattered with ad hoc successes. Corruption seems not to be perceived by leaders as a developmental issue. Until such time that obstructions to development are addressed, the fight against corruption will be canvassed with limited success.

2. Would you say there is adequate political will in Namibia to fight corruption?

No Presidential Commission of Inquiry Report about Corruption Investigations have ever been released for public consumption. With almost every presidential speech, corruption is mentioned but nothing radical is undertaken (partly due to protection of vested interests) to embark on a systemic and holistic approach to reduce corruption. The declaration of Parliamentarians have been undertaken 3 times, with the latest characterised with secrecy and very limited transparency, because it is not open for public scrutiny. Perceptions in the media, as illustrated by President's Pohamba's daughter that received a bursary from the Chinese government as well as allegations of political influence in securing major construction tenders do not auger well with some public perception that conflict of interest is at play at the highest leadership level. What is important to realise is not if these allegations are true or false, but the damaging effect of such allegations on the public's trust in leaders

if such leaders do not provide proof in order to refute such allegations with facts and clear their names with absolute certainty.

The executive dominates the legislative. Most parliamentarians are also cabinet members, creating the situation that the executive is accountable to themselves and ultimately to the President that appoints them. The proportional representative system is as such that the whole country is one constituency, with parliamentarians representing all voters and no one voter in particular. The quality of Parliamentarians is illustrated in the limited public debates about draft legislation, legislative oversight, e.g., years of delay in the sorting out of legislative minefields and creating inefficient regulations that can be implemented.

The President appoints the Regional Governors and this situation is not conducive to political decentralisation, weakening further the capacity at local level to run their own affairs.

President Pohamba has been awarded the Mo-Ibrahim prize for a retired African president that at best encouraging good governance. This is extremely positive for Namibia in terms of the perception of Namibian leadership as opposed to Zuma of South Africa. However, President Pohamba's reign are perceived by some as mediocre, a maintainer of the situation that he inherited from President Nujoma, without any radical change in public sector corruption. The failure of the mass housing project undertaken by him is an example that national issues during his presidency were not addressed. Under his reign the urban land issue escalated to such proportions that since the end of 2014, it stimulated radical perspectives and the illegal occupation of urban land.

President Geingob has recently been awarded an international prize for his leadership. This is very positive for an African leader an specific Namibia given the context of weak leaders in SADC.

There are very limited incentives for politicians to reduce corruption in Namibia. The ruling party does have a two-thirds majority and if they reduce corruption, they risk losing their political support. The safest approach is to continue business as usual, e.g. favouritism, patronage, nepotism and revolving door.

Any opposition to strong party discipline is labelled as enemies of the state. The latter does not encourage tolerance of diverse views and harnessing national capacity in order to solve issues of national importance. Any criticism of the President is seen as completely unacceptable as opposed to the USA President where such tolerance is no exception. The fact that Namibian politics is practiced mainly on an ideological basis, limited the quality of political debates and any workable solutions that can be sought. Such inflexibility is indirectly reflected in the limited creativity and innovation to address national and social diseases such as corruption.

3. What sort of activities have you initiated or been in involved in around anti-corruption?

A PhD in Business Management and Administration, on Systemic Corruption and Changing Management Strategies (short title). One of the stakeholders of Afro-Barometer Surveys and ACTION Namibia. Weekly articles in Die Republikein and occasionally in other newspaper. Articles in Namibia Perspective, academic articles in NAWA, SAAPAM and NCRST. Other initiatives include radio talks, presentations to USB Alumni Namibia about Business and Corruption and anti-corruption strategies. Developing a Bachelor in Public Management Honours in which the subjects Good Governance, Regional Economic Governance, International Public Management, and Environmental Issues in Regional and Rural Development focus strongly on governance, corruption and developmental issues.

4. What, in your opinion, are the positive aspects in the national fight against corruption and what are the negative aspects?

See previous reference to TI ratings with reference to long term trends. The judiciary seems to be one of the beacons of relative independence from the legislative and executive. However, the recent combining of the High Court and the Supreme Court, the executive encroached on the independence of the judiciary. The ACC and the Election Office are not independent, they should report directly to Parliament and not to a political office. The recent constitutional amendments without adequate public consultation do not encourage transparency and open debate. The central government is very

much in control and the capacity of the public sector is weak and characterised by weak institutions and weak leaders as illustrated in terms of the waste of public resources by SOEs and mismanagement of TransNamib, Air Namibia, and local municipalities.

The central government do not have the capacity or inclination to monitor the performance of the escalating SOEs of which the number stands currently at 85. Public service employees run taxi businesses and do moonlighting openly and the esprit de corps of such a nature that a radical transformation of the public sector is required to reduce the effect of corruption. AA and BEE are practised without any timelines or targets, creating an atmosphere of unchallenged abuse of power and ignorance. Public oversight mechanisms exist, but they are uncoordinated and rarely effective. Central government does not encourage public engagement with civil society institutions in order to stimulate open debate about national issues such as poverty and housing. What is very positive is the current President's concerted effort to focus on the latter national issues. If these issues can be alleviated, corruption will also reduce, because corruption, housing and poverty are interrelated issues that cannot be addressed separately. The corrupt environment must be changed to reduce corruption, making corruption impossible to occur.

5. How would you describe the media's attitude towards corruption related issues?

The media plays an extremely important role in exposing corruption and making people aware of it. The number of media institutions increased since Independence and within this context, the media's role in exposing corruption also increased. MISA's regional office is in Namibia and this illustrates the freedom of the Namibian media in terms of the regional media within the SADC. Namibia has recently been rated as the African country with the most media freedom. The media mainly focuses on corruption incidents and do not practice investigative journalism on a large scale. The media practice mainly bread and butter business, covering incidents and rarely provide an insightful an overall perspective about issues of national concern. Where investigative journalism is practiced, it is on an ad hoc basis and limited to the Insight magazine and NGO publications such as the IPPR and the Namibian Institute of Democracy.

6. How would you describe the public's attitude towards corruption?

Very tolerant. The public perceive the Police and the National Revenue Office as some of the most corrupt public offices, as illustrated by the previous two Afro-Barometer Surveys. The President's Office is perceived as the least corrupt public office, which is positive from leadership perception perspective. Surveys such as of TI, Afro-Barometer and ACC reflect the perceptions of the public about corruption. See part of the answer to this question in the answer to Question 7.

Namibia does not have whistle-blower protection legislation, and this hampers the public in reporting corruption. Whistle-blowers are perceived as troublemakers, they are harassed, intimidated, and even murdered. Namibia does not have freedom of information legislation, making it a public right to seeking answers about public activities. The absence of the mentioned legislation is negatively affecting the public's willingness and propensity in reporting corruption.

7. Is there anything else you wish to say on this topic?

The most effective driver of reducing corruption is leadership commitment. Namibia needs moral, transformational and visionary leadership to reduce corruption. Corruption is inherently a developmental issue and corruption cannot be addressed without addressing the obstructions to development such as obstructions in the economy; governance; knowledge, science, and technology; ethics and morality; and creating innovation, inspiration entrepreneurship and hope for a better future for all. Inclusive leadership is needed to include the most marginalised and vulnerable in society such as the unemployed, abject poor, and orphans of whom some have lost any hope of a better future.

Since political will is mediocre in reducing corruption, the next best approach is civil activism to put pressure on politicians to reform institutions such as the public service. Based on Namibian

perceptions about democracy and trust in government (all the Afro-Barometer Surveys to date) Namibians are satisfied with democracy and trust their leaders to such an extent that they do not see the need for a radical change in the quality of democracy or their leaders. Public trust in leadership is a proxy for corruption. Because of these deductions, no dramatic civil society activism is expected in putting pressure on politicians to reform and/or transform Namibia.

The places to intervene that can leverage the biggest change are the Ministry of Finance, (specific Inland Revenue and the Tender Board), the Works and Transport, and the Namibian Police. These institutions can be transformed in best practices and based on those successes, the rest of the public service can be transformed.

If you could answer these questions and send back to me by Monday, 26 October 2015, I'd greatly appreciate it.

Thanks and best,

Frederico Links
Editor of Insight Magazine 2016