

# **Local Level Perception of Corruption: An Anthropological Inquiry**

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## **Abstract**

*The underlying problem of corruption in Nepal at the micro level stems from the 'capture' of the sustainable number of the policies and implementing rules and regulations of the different laws by vested interests. The long standing collusion between political parties and government officials has resulted in a destructed economy that favors private economic interests over the broader public goods. The situation is compounded by the patterns of non transparent and illegitimate practice that sustain the culture of corruption. Sources of income for individual and employees are unregulated and often arbitrarily determined through the patronage system that is link to the culture of silence underpinning such patronage. The role of civil society is to controlling corruption by working at the grass roots political and bureaucratic, and legal judicial level.*

**Key words:** Civil society, problem, power, judicial

## **1. Prelude**

Corruption fighters are often confused over conceptualizing corruption. They are confused not just in defining corruption what it is. In preset situation corruption is a global agenda of discussion. Scholars analyze it in different ways like misuse

of power, of money, of time and others. But no doubt corruption has become a universal problem. There are no countries in the world that are not affected by corruption problem. Some are very highly corrupt like Bangladesh and some are less corrupt like Denmark. This is the reason why the movement against corruption has become a global agenda of development. In general two types of corruption are prevants in society; first type is known as petty, which takes place at the lower level of bureaucracy and society. People have to bribe to get essential services in line or development agency where corruption involves a little sum of money and consume time which is not legally necessary. The second type of corruption is known as grand corruption, which takes place at the higher level of decision-making. Usually, the money involved is substantial. Grand corruption takes place in term of kickbacks, commissions, and payoffs from awarding large-scale public procurement contract, construction works, and formulation of certain policies to benefit vested interest groups (Manandhar 2006:7). However, these both are interrelated to each other when nature of corruption flows from top to bottom in the bureaucracy. According to Manandhar, the responsible factor of petty corruption are, a) independence of the judiciary system from political pressure, b) the level of human development index, c) independent of civil servants from political pressure and the nature of the polity. In the case of grant corruption the causes are: a) enforcement of banking system, b) nature of polity, c) quality of bureaucracy, and d) openness of foreign trade.

Corruption has debilitating effects in the society. It undermines the efficient allocation financial resource for economic development and alters the composition of public expenditure. In addition to the detrimental effects on economic growth, a corruption jeopardizes free trade, distorts competitiveness and undermines the stability upon which the free market system is based. Corruption further jeopardizes

the credibility of the government and their institutions and provides a breeding ground for organized crime to flourish. Moreover, it is a phenomenon that transcends national boundaries, affecting public and private sector business and public officials can be either perpetrators or the victims of corrupt practice (UN Manual on anti –corruption policy).

In Nepal, the politicians' have never tried to profess dedication to the people welfare but pursued only their own narrow, parochial interest. They seek peoples mandate to rule the country and once get in power, they engage in minting money. A civil servant takes oath to serve the people whom he actually loathes. He thinks he is paid to while away his time in the office and works only when he is assured of extra benefit. A businessman is not satisfied with a fare margin of the profit and resort to unfair means to amass wealth. An industrialist does not believe in the development of his enterprise in real terms but uses it to make fast bucks by hoodwinking the consumers and the banks into financing bogus ventures. A farmer takes loans for farm inputs and to boost production, spends but the money on the weeding of his wards. The university teacher gets monthly pay but really works in out sides. The doctors go to the government hospitals only to catch new clients for their private clinics (Shrestha; 1999).

Most of the government emphasizes big projects in the country not only for development but also hidden interest of economic benefits. In this point Chamber (1993) said, big is beautiful, because big is blank able, pressure to spend aid funds are best overcome through large project ... they are usually highly visible and photogenic... They provide contacts for local professionals and civil servants, which may make it easier for them to join the brain drain to the richer world. Consultants find large projects a source of profitable employment. Implementation can be assured where necessary through the use of foreign skill. Nepal is not far from this statement, which is justified during the last 20 years

democracy practice. In the constitutional provision only four cabinets is enough for twenty years but in practice more than fifteen have been formed which have been failure it is because of not only political interest but also economic one.

## **2. Research area**

In 2007, I did the fieldwork in four different villages, Arthunge, Ghatan, Ratnechaur and Jamrukote VDC of Myagdi district for the purpose of baseline survey and training (in order to understand the ) for nature of corruption for Danida funded Anti-corruption project implemented by DYC( non Governmental organization . The study site, is not different among from other districts, located in the same other ecological zone. The people of the area have common socio-economic status had use more or less similar livelihood methods to cope and survive....The research area is located about 200 KM west from Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal, foot of Dhaulagari, bay of Hindu holy river Kaligandaki (important for holy stone, saligram).

## **2. Methodology**

Researcher conducted as many as five different focus group discussions with including the people of various caste groups, gender and age in different four-village centers and one district level interaction held in Beni Bazar. The number of participants in focus group discussion ranged from 20 to 30. The topic of discussion were; corruption cases in VDC, nature of corruption, development budget and formulation procedure, power and development access, misuse of power, formulation of user group and interventions upon community in participatory way. Therefore, researcher used different methods and techniques for data collection to fulfill the research objectives. The methods and techniques are described in later. In order to fulfill the objectives of the

study, various tools and techniques were used to collect information and understand general situation of the study area. The relevant information was collected by using observation, published and unpublished document, participating focus group discussion, baseline survey. Baseline survey was carried out in four different villages where minimum 5 people in each wards and all together 45 to 59 people were participated, across different castes and ethnic groups were participate. After establishing a good rapport, the researcher planned to get into better understanding of the community and the households there. For this study, household representative is the basic unit of analysis. Both quantitative and qualitative information on education, sources of economy, expenditure, land holding health and sanitation facility status, and try to understand the real situation of different social issues which are directly related to petty and grand corruption in school, health post, market and other development agency service delivery system where gathered. Here after, other one-baseline survey was carried out in district level and tries to find out service delivery system, perception of service provider.

After the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, interpretation of the findings had been made by looking at the relationships between and among the variables under consideration. Most of the results of data were analyzed for making inferences relevant to research questions and drawing conclusions about these questions. It seeks a broader meaning of the research relation obtained as well as their implications.

#### **4. Finding and discussion**

##### **4.1 Peoples Understanding on Corruption**

The notion of corruption is prevalent everywhere, and furthermore, it has always been with us. There are always exceptions but the mainstream tendency is such that people

with power are at discomfort by any serious talk about corruption. Every member of civil society, civil servant cannot follow the minimum rules and regulation. In this situation service beneficiary feel difficulty. Most of the respondents are victims of corruption but their understanding differs in different places. All together 160 respondents was participated in different five focused group discussion and discuss on different types of corruptions their understanding of the corruption. Among them 90% said bribery, and similar to misused of power in development project as a corruption, 70% said priority of kin person and same as used not proper things in development work, 61% replied misused public property for personal purpose, 53% buy and sell votes, 43% neglect time. Here people understanding are different, because of their education, nature of victim etc.

In research area most of the people depend on district headquarter *Beni*, they cannot get satisfaction from service provider, 43% feel difficulty but ratio differs in different VDCs, highest in *Ghatan* 53%, and lowest in *Ratnechour* 23%, because in *Ghatan* most of the people are poor and illiterate and other places economically strong and educated, because education is related to understanding procedure and developed bargaining power also. But here, government official defense, which they are providing service with follow the rules and regulation but political pressure makes obstacle on the one hand and people cannot follow the procedure is as well. I think political pressure is key obstacle first and hidden interest is second.

However, in exploration of this data, I have confronted some serious limitations. Most importantly, if I am to more fully understand the roots of public perceptions of official corruption I have need to devote larger portions of our questionnaires to these issues. We need to assess separately the extent to which individuals have been personally involved

in corrupt clientele relationships or victimized by corrupt officials (or know people who are, or have been).

## **4.2 Public Sectors Corruption**

Corruption on government office is regarded as very common practice where approximately 80% of all respondents said. It is considered the most serious problem by respondents ahead of unemployment and the poor state economy. Approximately 65% of respondent also reported actually experiencing corruption involving public official. Respondent were asked to rank at least 25 district level institution in terms of integrity from the least to the most honest. The Land Reform Office, District Administration Office, Physical Planning, Judiciary (Court), Police, Education, District Development Committee were ranked the most corrupted institutions, while the Health Center, Post Office was considered the least corrupt. The rank the least honest or most corrupt were also perceived to be the least efficient in terms of delivery of the public service, indicating a positive relationship between integrity and performance.

Public attitudes appear to be firmly against corruption with the majority of respondent (80%) regarding corruption as a serious problem, like to "a disease to combat denouncing every known case". However, in reality, when asked what their behavior would be in different situations, almost a third view of the respondents was "corruption as something normal and paid up" or accepted money and gifts. The situations ranged from bribing a Land Reform Office, to making up contract to accept money for vote. Respondent were asked for their views in two situations where they were offered gift and money, instead of having to pay for something. There appeared to be a perceptual differentiation between gift and money, with nonmonetary bribes such as material gifts not considered as bribes per se. Most of the people would not

accept money to the vote but two third of them wait long time or some time pay additional to do their work in *Malpot*, Judiciary, Police and District Administration Office. Here I would like to describe some local level corruption with people persecutions.

### **4.2.1 Corruption in Education Institution:**

Education is a key factor of state and Government of Nepal also emphasis it. Large size of national and international budget is allocated every year, but result is not satisfactory. In the research area people were not satisfied in our education system. Respondents had said it is corrupted day by day. According to them, there are no rules and regulation followed in the time of teacher selection and posting one place to another. Teacher neglect time for teaching, and give emphasis on politic in local level. In recent time government provide *Anudan kota* (government provide teacher expenditure with the ratio of student but selection authority on school management committee and school) in different schools, but it is also most criticized in local level because it is a center of politically and *afnomanche* recruitment place. In study area 40% respondents said that regular classes were not running, 94 % said that District Education Office donot regularly monitor and supervise; it spends time to makes a document only.

There is direct political influence to making school management committee, and choosing who is going to be the headmaster. Headmaster is always powerful to make decision because of political party always save him or her everywhere. In school other areas of corruption is distribution of scholarships. Government provides different types of scholarships for students, but school misuses it and distributes non untransparent way. Altogether 30% respondents did not understand about the types of scholarships, rest 70% only

knew. Out of 70%, 14% in *Arthunge*, 17% *Ghatan*, 21% *Ratnachour*, and 27% *Jhamrukot* said that there was no proper and transparent distribute of the scholarship. Claver parents only claim it but ignorant people were always silent. It helps to increase corruption in education institution. The above result shows that petty corruption in rural society which is increasing and going too established as a custom.

#### 4.2.2 Development activities and corruption

In development process of Nepal, both government and non-government sectors are involving in rural and urban areas. In study area, main activities of the developments are construction road, building school, drinking water, irrigation and rural electrification. Project implementation procedures are also deferent depending on size of budget. Most of the projects are completed under the formation of users group and some are by tender.

Respondents are not satisfied with the procedure of doing such activities. Altogether 30% respondents said, they did not know the size of budget because of lack of public auditing, 95% respondents said political power always influenced formation of user committees and tenders. In some places, rural electrification was completed in progress report but not done any activities. People raised this question in the time of public hearing in *Beni bazar*. This evidence proves that nature of corruption and situation of development in Nepal is going fail soon. Other sector of corruption is construction of road and other infrastructure, 70% respondents said political influence of ruling party in the selection process of project, 67% said lack of quality, and 75% said give a chance *afnomancehe*, and *chakari* in the recruitment process. In this way, people in the backward societies always stay in the shadow because their voice cannot be listened anywhere.

#### 4.2.3 Corruption in VDC and Market

Now, after the introduction of democracy, government has developed decentralization concept in Nepal. In research area, there are different service provider institutions in all of four village development committee e.g. Health Post, Post Office, Village Development Committee, Veterinary and so on. According to the respondent, these offices cannot be separate from corruption on their perceptions. In health post, 60% time health assistants were outside the village, no proper medicine is available and mostly ignore in health post. He mostly gives priority in their private clinic same situation was found in veterinary and JTA also. Village development committee is a main office in village. Now government has directly provided large development budget also, but not proper utilization of it causes intervention of politics. There is also other income source but not transparent. One of the major sectors of corruption in VDCs is distribution of social security allowances (old, widow, disable etc). Village secretary has an authority to distribute it. According to 57 % respondents' secretary has made a chance to earn money in this huge budget, he cannot regularly update age, death, migration records etc. These situations shows that corruption is everywhere in our society. In market, there is also corruption found, 66.2% respondents said there is black marketing in basic goods. Approximately 43% respondents said that merchant only emphasis benifict and ignore people health.

#### 5. Conclusion

The findings from the research raise numerous question about social perception of corruption, as well as the extent, cost and causes of corruption particularly in local and public sectors. The findings, suggest that while corruption is widely known to be part of the society in reality, it is not approved of and is considered a serious social problem. In the survey,

respondents over pessimistic view on the state of corruption in society call for an urgent anti-corruption action plan to address this major social problem. Government sector corruption is widespread; with approximately two third of the household expressing public or local level corruption. Research also identified that there are urgently need reforms in five district level offices are Land Reform Office, District Administration Office, Physical Planning, Judiciary, and Police Office. Corruption has a clear impact on the public budget, and reduces not only quality of public service but also the credibility of the public institution.

The public does not appear to be well informed about corruption as the popular beliefs on the causes of corruption where not borne by the data. The finding also shows a discrepancy between attitudes towards the corruption. All together 75% respondents do not know where to report cases of corruption. Even (every) where channels exist, the perception is that they are lengthy and cumbersome and lacking in outcome. The sense of frustration and powerlessness in fighting corruption underline the harsh and somewhat unrealistic view that all corruption cases should be investigated. It is necessary to give short term priorities centered on understanding the causes of corruption, identifying method to control corruption, developing accurate public information and education on corruption, and supporting and strengthening the anti-corruption commission and boosting prosecutorial and judicial institutional capacity to fight against corruption. Likewise, other aspects are focused on the reconciling in public attitudes and actual behavior of corrupt situations, reducing procurement fraud, increasing certainty of delivery of public services, understanding the system and process difference between corrupt and non corrupt public institutions and individuals, as well as continuing to support prosecutorial and judicial capacity building.

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