



FOR CIRCULATION

## Youth in the Fight Against Corruption

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### Introduction

Since independence Botswana maintained a satisfactory track record of good governance and democracy, and perceptions of corruption had been relatively low in comparison with other countries in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>1</sup> A series of high-level corruption scandals involving senior officials in the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) erupted in the early 1990s causing public outrage. As a response to the scandals, the Corruption and Economic Crime Act (CECA) was passed in 1994, creating the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC).

In recent years there has been growing concern of the rapid growth of grand corruption in Botswana. This has been attributed to the lack of transparency, accountability, and integrity in our governance systems. There has been growing demand for a more open government that is inclusive, especially with stakeholders that tend to not have a say in governance issues. Amongst these stakeholders is the youth group, which tends to be left out of governance discussions, despite Botswana's obligations - under regional and international instruments, treaties and conventions - to promote and ensure youth participation. This position paper is aimed at highlighting the ways in which the government can facilitate Botswana youth's participation in the fight against corruption.

### Youth Participation in the fight against corruption

- The **Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)** released by **Transparency International** shows a decline in Botswana's rankings - from 35/180 in 2020 to 45/180 in 2021 - and a decline in her overall corruption score from 60/100 in 2020 to 55/100. The CPI ranks countries around the world,

based on how corrupt their public sectors are perceived to be.<sup>2</sup> These figures indicate that the level of corruption is rising in Botswana which necessitates increased participation of citizens in the fight against corruption.

- Youth constitute a significant part of the country's population (70% of the population is under 35 years old),<sup>3</sup> and as such have the potential to play a major role in the fight against corruption; however, they are generally not active citizens when it comes to participating in governance and anti-corruption issues.
- It is apparent that youth are apathetic about governance issues and believe existing institutions such as the DCEC should solve the current corruption challenges Botswana is facing, although they do not consider its anti-corruption efforts functional or effective. Youth apathy can be perceived through low voter turnout, for example 41% of youth voted in the 2019 general elections.<sup>4</sup>

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**"Youth in Botswana are apathetic about the country's governance and corruption issues"**

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- Youth in Botswana are non-participative in the country's governance and corruption issues, approaching these with a "re tla reng" or a "go tlaa siama" mindset. The former vernacular phrase means 'what can we do', which indicates the powerlessness that people experience in tackling an issue i.e. people feel powerless in fighting corruption because of its pervasiveness and they may feel that if institutions are unable to curb corruption, then individuals would not be able to make a difference either. The latter vernacular phrase means that in due time 'things will be okay,' which indicates that everything will be fine in the end. This phrase prompts inaction and results in not holding anybody accountable, in a general context.
- Botswana is a signatory to the **United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)**, which encourages society participation in states' anti-corruption efforts and activities. Thus, this instrument can be used as a guide to facilitate youth participation, along with DCEC, and civil society in the fight against corruption.
- Youth and civil society can be recognized as important stakeholders in preventative measures in anti-corruption under **Articles 13 and 5 of UNCAC**.
- Articles 13 and 5 create an obligation on countries to include youth and civil society in domestic anti-corruption efforts.
- Youth and civil society's capacity to build trust with the citizenry can increase the latter's willingness to join the fight against corruption

## Recommendations

### For the government:

- Meet and comply with anti-corruption obligations under regional and international instruments, mainly UNCAC, regarding promoting the participation of and cooperating with youth and civil society in anti-corruption initiatives

## United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)

### Article 13 – Participation of Society

1. Each State Party shall take appropriate measures, within its means and in accordance with fundamental principles of its domestic law, **to promote the active participation of individuals and groups outside the public sector, such as civil society, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, in the prevention of and the fight against corruption and to raise public awareness regarding the existence, causes and gravity of and the threat posed by corruption.**

Article 13 can be seen as the main enabler of youth and civil society participation in state-led anti-corruption activities under UNCAC, this article is preceded and supported by provisions in

### Article 5 which states:

1. Each State Party shall, in accordance with the fundamental principles of its legal system, **develop and implement or maintain effective, coordinated anti-corruption policies that promote the participation of society** and reflect the principles of the rule of law, proper management of public affairs and public property, integrity, transparency and accountability.

- Equip youth and civil society organizations with the (mainly financial) resources required to carry out activities that help fight corruption



- Strengthen coordination efforts to promote public integrity
- Government ministerial anti-corruption units and DCEC should cooperate with and harness youth and civil society platforms to reach wider grassroots and sections of society to communicate their intentions and activities around anti-corruption and to draw these sections of society into their efforts and initiatives

## For youth and civil society:

- Civil society organisations (CSOs) can collaborate with youth to facilitate dialogue, action and desired change. Synergy is required between youth groups/organisations.
- Collaborate with youth to expand on DCEC's corruption prevention intervention objective and educate the public on corruption.
- Civil society should make the public aware of their rights and train them to demand accountability and transparency from public institutions and government.
- Inform the public about the effects of corruption on the economy and how it affects their living conditions and their future.
- CSOs should acquaint themselves with the UNCAC, and other international and regional instruments, treaties and conventions, and Botswana's obligations to aid in determining how they can help the government in its anti-corruption efforts and to ensure that the government is complying with these instruments.
- Youth and civil society should acquaint themselves with the best anti-corruption practices, knowledge resources, experiences, and tools already in use by youth and CSO actors globally
- Youth and civil society can seek to create and maintain relations, platforms and regular communication and correspondence with the private sector and ministerial anti-corruption units (government) in order to foster a culture of proactive, multi-stakeholder engagement

and accountability on anti-corruption matters.

- There is a need to create a culture that wants change to good governance and zero corruption. Youth can be helpful in finding creative ways to incorporate governance and politics into popular culture such as through art, music, drama, theatre etc. This is an effective strategy to obtain organic engagement.

## Cited Works

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