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Research Article

Corruption in Service Delivery of Municipals in Metekel Zone Weredas Capital Towns; North West Ethiopia

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Abstract

Corruption in the public sector is often viewed as exacerbating conditions of poverty in countries already struggling with the strains of economic growth and democratic transition. Corruption is contemporary global issue that needs crucial attention. It should not be seen differently from HIV ADIS, Cancer, TB, poverty and the like that eroding the nations' welfare. This study was therefore targeted Assessing Corruption in Service Delivery of Municipal in Metekl Zone Towns (Benishangul Gumuz Region).The objectives of the study were; to identify the areas and types of corruption in municipals service delivery; To analyze the degree of corruption in Municipals service delivery through the perception of people. To achieve the intended objectives, data were collected in seven weredas of Metekel zone from the targeted population-local officials, elders and residents of capital towns of the weredas by means of structured and unstructured questionnaires. The questionnaires were supported by unstructured interviews. Self-administered questionnaire were distributed for 312 resident populations and 64 persons were interviewed. The finding shows that different types of corruption; nepotism, bribe, embezzlement and fraud are perpetrated in municipals in different service delivery process and the magnitude was at severe situation. This was manifested by employment of incompetent personnel on key positions under pretext of different mechanisms. in different service delivery process such as in revenue collection, in land allocation, land use planning, expropriation of private property rights, land dispute and conflict management, other social municipal services, construction of infrastructure, and in house related services corruption practice was also found to be shocking. Consequently, using community as a means of preventive tool trough uninterrupted awareness creation, prevention of undue influence, monitoring and increasing public administration's accountability through surveys, using religious leaders rigorously as means to shape their followers against corruption, and increasing the number of workers in municipals were recommended.

Keywords: Corruption; Municipals; service; delivery

Introduction

Popular belief suggests that corruption and poverty are closely related in developing countries. Corruption in the public sector is often viewed as exacerbating conditions of poverty in countries already struggling with the strains of economic growth and democratic transition. Alternatively, countries experiencing chronic poverty are seen as natural breeding grounds for systemic corruption due to social and income inequalities and perverse economic incentives (Eric *et al*., 2003).

Magnitude of corruption in Africa is severe. The annual cost of corruption on Africa is estimated to be US$ 148 billion which represents 25% of the continents annual GDP and have the effect of increasing the cost of goods by 20 % (FEACE, 2013). Other studies stress that without a doubt, it is a fact that corruption permeates almost every strata of public life in most African countries. Having reached pandemic levels in some countries, it is one of the leading causes of economic decline in those countries (Uneke, 2006).

Regarding Ethiopia, the issue of corruption should not be undermined. It is known that Ethiopia is experiencing decentralization governance in order to satisfy better the needs of local peoples. However, in decentralization system of governance corruption is believed to wide spread more: Corruption is more widespread at the local than at the national level, and then decentralization automatically increases the overall level of corruption within a country (Prud'Homme, 1995). The author justified that why it is likely to be more prevalent at the local than at the national level: Local politicians and bureaucrats are likely to be more subject to pressing demands from local interest groups. That might be a reason that government is striving to minimize corruption, throughout the country by expanding different strategies (FEACE, 2013).

Even though different mechanisms had been designed to minimize corruption in Ethiopia, it seemed that the provision of public service delivery was challenging. On the basis of experience it was noticed that the public service sectors in the study area were often criticized for deliberate delaying of services, lack of transparency and

accountability. Mostly people suspected and gossiped that these problems were emerged from existence of corruption in service sectors though not proved by researches. Among frequently condemned sectors municipals were the principal (Atnafu, 2011).

The suspicion of community could not be ignored because there must be a hidden issue that they in sighted behind. Personal observations of some incidences in the study area supported the communities in distrusting of their service providers. For instance, people were not volunteer /happy/ in contributing for establishment or improvement of certain social services though they had an interest and capability to afford it i.e. the community have no trust on service provider. The reason community did not trust their local leader/service providers/ was the great question that needed to be answered so far (Atnafu, 2011).

The rationale of the study was therefore communities suspect of the existence of corruption in service sectors, were to be justified and search solution, unless distrust of community on services providers could adversely affect the socio-economy and political development. Trust from community is indispensable ingredient for achieving development programs. In other expression, we could not talk about development without trust because trust is motive force for community participation and to realize desired level of development. Therefore, assessing corruption in these institutions would enable service providers, communities and the higher levels of governments to have a clear understanding on the nature of corruption in service delivery sectors (World Bank, 2012).

Since there was no significant study conducted in related with the nature of corruption committed in municipal service delivery in detail and its consequence on local development; thus it sounds to have research on the issue to contribute some.

Objectives

- ➢ To identify areas and types of corruption in municipals service delivery in Metekl zone wereda capital towns.
- ➢ To analyse the degree of corruption in Municipals service delivery through the perception of people in the zone.

Methodology

Inception of municipal in State of Benshangul Gumuze Region is a recent event. It is not more than age of ten year. Therefore, this study tried to explore illegal acts/ corruption/ practices in municipals since ten (10) years ago. It was found to be indispensable to consider information 10 years back to obtain frequently incidence and well-structured information.

The data was collected in seven weredas of Metekel zone from the targeted population-local officials, elders and residents of capital towns of the weredas by means of structured and unstructured questionnaires. The questionnaires were supported by unstructured interviews. In fact unstructured interview was time taking but was necessary to dig out data in depth. So, great effort was made to manage it. After each interview, summarizing the theme was undertaken as soon as possible.

Thus, the mixed research method was employed in this study because quantifiable questionnaires and open ended interviews were the source of the data. When we say mixed method it refers to either qualitative approach to mixed methods or quantitative approach to mixed method or concurrently /equally/ qualitative and quantitative data are used. Qualitative approaches typically employ a mixed methods design in which qualitative methods are primary or central to the research design and .Triangulation is the most commonly cited reason that mixed methods are incorporated into research (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

The collected data through questionnaire was tabulated and described by percentage. This was supported by interview and secondary data to generalize the finding for the whole population of the study area.

Sampling Techniques and Size

In Metekel Zone there are seven weredas; namely, Wenbera, Bulen, Debatie, Mandura, Pawi, Dangure and Guba. Now a day weredas have been given significant power by means of decentralized governance. As a result, major public services are being offered by weredas so that appropriate sample areas were wereda capital towns. All Wereda Capital towns (Debrezit, Bulen, Debati, GilgelBeless, Pawi, Manbuk, and Mankush) were purposely taken as sample because they provide services for larger number of population than none capital towns in the weredas.

Within each capital towns the target population were local elders, local residents, wereda representatives, the then Metekel Zone anticorruption officials, Municipals and wereda justice office. The local elders were those who were supposed to have known how the detail of service delivery of municipals. So, local elders were selected by snowball method because it was difficult to find such people without use of this method. Officials were purposely selected for interviewing while local residents were selected too by available simple random sampling method from the total population in each woredas. The local residents were those who reside for 5 and above years in the towns in order to obtain viable data.From the total sample sizeof 385, nine responses were rejected in the analysis because of inappropriate response.

Tools of Data Gathering

Structured and unstructured questionnaires and open ended interviewing were the principal sources of collecting data that feed this study. Self-administered questionnaire which was both objective and open ended questions were prepared and distributed for 321 resident population toassess the type, degree and effect of corruption. From local elders 42 people (7wereda x 6 elders from each wereda), 7 wereda representatives, 1 Metekel Zone anticorruption official, 7 municipal Mayor and 7 wereda justice office were interviewed to cross cheek the information obtained from self-administered questionnaires.Finally 64 Persons were interviewed.

Primary data were supported by secondary documents/document analysis/ such as -Municipals annual reports, urban proclamations and regulations and other previous research finding.

Finding

This research finding in line to pre stated objectives generally infers different types of corruption; nepotism, bribe, embezzlement and fraud were perpetrated in municipals in different service delivery process. And the magnitude was at severe situation. It also implies that the there were disproportional between the communities' high interest and demand for development and limited service delivery of civil servants to meet this desire. The gap appeared due to over aspiration to gain informal payment by civil servants and some officials. The limited know how of the local communities about their right and responsibilities, was also appeared as good opportunities for penetration of corruption in the study area.

Committing of corruption in Metekel zone municipals began at the stage of manpower employment on key positions. The foundation for assigning of manpower on key positions was bribe, kinship, friendship, and special relation with higher officials at wereda or Zone level. Usually the educational background and ethical consideration of competent were given less attention. Those who had firm relation with officials or those believed to be obedient for the interest of individual executives were deliberately assigned to key position. This invited unfit personnel to possess the position. Officials were happy of hiring non confident personnel because such persons obey and implement all orders either legal or not from their boss. Consequently municipals were suffering from absence of competent and responsible professionals. Illegally assigning and employing personnel on key position was to create favourable condition to perpetrate /commit/ corruption in advance in the way they favoured. This was due to the personnel easily cooperated what the officials suppose to do because they were the officials' instrumental.

The other finding in assessment of corruption in different service delivery process such as corruption in revenue collection, in land allocation, land use planning, expropriation of private property rights, land dispute and conflict management, construction of infrastructure, and in house related services was shocking.

Under the pretext of making intra-road asphalt, expanding electricity, and other social services capital was accumulated from government employees, government institution, merchants and other residents in the form of bazaar, biding and direct cash contribution- but no any proposed activity was found on ground. The other unjust work of municipals that residents condemn was inconsistency of tax collection throughout the town. Deliberate minimization or avoidance of charges on transportation loads, and taxes to get benefit through bribery, fraud and nepotism was also found to be very.

The prevalence of corruption in resource usage-particularly land resource are: Occupation of strategic (commercial or business, conducive to residence) by higher official- either wereda or zone, their relatives or those who able to pay the requested amount of bribe is found to be series problem. In urban land usage, bribe, nepotism, and sense of rent seeking are being spread. The other faces of prevalence of corruption in this respect are solicitation of extra benefit while providing service to residents and absence of loyal to their profession and work of ethics.

As concern to land use planning, land certification and land record perpetrate of corruption was also highly reflected. When urban plan was prepared, the planning body adjusts plans according to their interest and benefit. Here series corruption practices were frequently observed. Planners were most often criticized for their solicitation of informal payment. This happened when new plan begins in a town so that planners had potential and practical power to alternate designs as their want. The following demonstrations for the prevalence of corruption are found to be high:

- ➢ Manipulation of planning or land management process to create wealth
- ➢ Disregard of land management and land use planning controls
- ➢ solicitation of informal fee
- ➢ Incorrect certification of the land right(deceiving others) to benefit self and others
- ➢ Collusion with applicants to undervalue land being certified or transacted
- ➢ Refusal to process applicants in a timely manner

Expropriation of private property rights, and land dispute and conflict management were also another conducive environment for perpetrate of abuse of power. High

corruption was committed in expropriation of private property. Collusion with land holders to overvalue land being expropriated, misuse of expropriation process to acquire or extinguish the right of others through bribery or nepotism and solicitation of informal fee by officials was found to be a sign of misuse of power in towns. For the purpose of redevelopment of towns individual land possession; residence area and agricultural land of individual was taken away from them without compensation. Peoples perceive the reason was solicitation of bribe. On the other hand Municipals says the reason was not matter of corruption rather lack of capital that could be given as compensation.

Urban land disputes created favourable conditions to gain bribes. Bribery, fraud or nepotism in adjudication of disputes; payment of bribe to delay or influence the dispute resolution process; payment of bribes to officials or witnesses giving evidences and the use of dispute process to export an advantage from other party were found to be the manifestations of corruption.

House related services were another means of gaining informal benefit by municipal servants. House related service refers to house selling, permission to start new building, fencing and approval of plan/design of house plans. Regarding house selling and transferring of property, government income was misused in two ways: The first one was the buyers and sellers cooperation not to tell the exact cost of the transaction to municipals. The second was informal agreement between the municipal professionals/cost estimators/ and purchasers. While permitting new building, and repairing the existing construction, it was not obligation to have permission for parties that have relation with municipal bodies. They could construct what they need without any ups and downs. Conversely to this, for parties that want to get service in legal way and have no interest to "worship" to officials, procedures become highly bureaucratic to get permission. Deliberate Prolonging of procedure seemed punishment for not providing informal payment.

In the process of House plan/design/ approval there was also practice of corrupt activity. There were incidences you could not get your plan approved unless informal payment had to taken place. Degree of Corruption in house selling-estimation of house price by municipal, permission of construction and approval of house plans was very high.

Recommendation

Based on the finding it is easy to estimate the prospect/future/ of corruption will be sever and will creep/retard/ the development of towns easily unless it has to be minimized through different mechanisms intensively and extensively. The following is recommended based on the finding and the local situation and scholars comments:

❖ Using Community as a means of preventive tool by providing continuous trainingon , Procedures on Man power employment and assignment, Public bidding , Enforcement of codes of conduct, Urban Land Leaze proclamation and regulations
❖ Monitoring and increasing public administration's accountability through surveys
❖ Using religious leaders rigorously as means to shape their followers against corruption
❖ Increasing the number of workers in municipals
❖ Strengthening good governance activities, and capacity building for mayors and experts
❖ Since the issue of corruption is too broad and complex, it could not be concluded everything in this research was addressed. As any research, it could have gaps so that potential researchers are invited to fill the gap.

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