Many definitions of corruption are possible, because a wide variety of activities and transactions are affected by it. Simply put, it is an act of dishonesty. For the purpose of this discussion we shall adopt a two-pronged definition that see corruption first as the abuse of an influential position for private gains and second as the exploitation of a system/person(s) for securing an unmerited advantage. The first part of this definition relates to holders of influential positions (in the public or private sector) who have access to the people’s resources because they are custodian and stewards of these resources. The second part relates to people who lobby such office holders for access to preferential or undue advantage. Both groups are agents of corruption.

In summary, corruption takes the following forms in Nigeria

- Bribery
- Gratification
• Nepotism
• Extortion
• Embezzlement
• Misappropriation
• Stealing or looting
• Inflation of contract value
• Falsification of official records
• Ghost workforce
• Absenteeism
• Examination malpractices
• Judicial corruption
• Election rigging
• Moral corruption often associated with education institutions
• Hoarding etc

EFFECT OF CORRUPTION
Although no society is totally free from it, the Nigeria situation is however monumental and frightening. In fact, the perception is that in Nigeria corruption has been institutionalized. It is not only that public officials are corrupt, but that corruption is official. Most Nigerians have come to accept it as a way of life. The corrupt man in our society is honoured and treated as the hero of society, the darling of musicians, recipient of all sorts of titles and recognized as men who have made it. On the other hand the hard working, honest and transparent individuals who manage to eke out a living out of the sweat of their brow, were sometimes treated with disdain and seen as failures. The result is the cat race for wealth acquisition by hook or crook. This cankerworm corruption, has eaten deep into the
fabric of our body polity, undermined and distablized our economic, social and political institutions, resulting in Nigeria’s stunted growth with huge external and domestic debts, despite being the 6th leading exporter of oil in the world. In 1999, according to the Transparency International (TI), Corruption Perception Index (CPI), Nigeria was the 2nd most corrupt nation in the world. In 2006, we were rated the 11th most corrupt nation, still a lamentable position. More embarrassing is the fact that Nigeria, even though an oil producing nation is classified among the world’s poorest nation with 90% of its population earning below $2 per day.

The reality is that corruption is mainly responsible for Nigeria’s being graded poorer than neighbours such as Ghana, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome, Niger, Benin Republic etc. Corruption threatens the very survival of a nation as it prevents the provision of basic social amenities like health, education, transportation, electricity, water and housing. Corruption therefore underscores good governance and rule of law.

Professor Adedokun Adeyemi described Corruption as “the most pervading and amorphous of all crimes which act as the catalyst to all other crimes.” Speaking in similar vein, Professor Akin Mabogunje said thus:-

“Apart from the fact that Corruption breeds all forms of social maladies including fraud and violent crimes. It undermines efficiency and business interaction countries.”

In sum Corruption----

(a) Breeds inefficient economic outcome.
(b) Impedes long term foreign and domestic investment.
(c) Reduces the ability of the state to generate revenue and thereby lead to high tax rates being imposed on fewer and fewer tax payer

(d) Promote inflationary trends

(e) Undermines and reduces efficiency of professionals and discouraging professionalism and in a way giving quacks a field day.

(f) Weakens the states ability to provide essential public goods and services.

(g) Creates social unrest, economic upheaval and political instability.

(h) Undermines good governance and rule of law.

It needs not be emphasized that where a nation’s wealth is stolen by corrupt elements, the resultant effects are hunger, squalor, deprivation, chaos and general insecurity as we have in Nigeria today.

**STEPS TO CHECK CORRUPTION**

Apart from legislations and legal frameworks put in place to check mate corruption and corrupt practices, several moves, several ad-hoc measures, panels and tribunals were at various times introduced for the purpose of ensuring public accountability, transparency and openness and help detect and penalize unethical behavior or corruption. Today, the institutions for combating crime are the Courts, Police, EFCC, ICPC, Customs, Code of Conduct Bureau.

It is unfortunate that inspite of all the legislation to fight the cankerworm, corruption still persists.

It is however note worthy that in recent times the hitherto “untouchable big man” former ministers, legislators, permanent secretaries, directors of banks, Chairman of councils, Judges, Governors, high and low are now being made to face the wrath of the law and sometimes treated as common criminal. Many are being compelled to cough out their loots. These are changing times. The rejection of the polls that unjustly installed some elected officers testify that it cannot be business as usual.
We wish the judiciary more power in their elbows. Only a fool will refuse to learn the lessons of history or refuse to mend his ways.

**EFCC AND THE POLICE**

There should be a collaborative effort between the police and other agencies like EFCC in the fight against economic and financial crime. The EFCC is the body whose primary assignment is to deal with cases of money laundering and economic crimes. The money laundering (Prohibitions) Act 2004 provided for the repeal of the Money Laundering Act 2003, which was the existing law when the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission was created in 2002. The money laundering (Prohibition) Act makes comprehensive provision to prohibit the laundering of the proceeds of crime an illegal Act. It also provides appropriate penalties and expands the interpretation of financial institutions and scope of supervision of regulatory authorities on money laundering. Basically the Act deals with questionable monetary transactions, sets limit to making and accepting of cash payment, imposes a duty to report international transfer of funds and securities, keeps surveillance on bank accounts and flow of money transactions and discernable fraudulent activities etc.

There is no doubt media reports have shown that the EFCC has always been engaged in aggressive drive to deal with money launderers and have prosecuted many in court, its effectiveness and success can be measured by the large number of “big men” who are now facing trial or have been jailed. Through the efforts of the EFCC, the ranks of advanced Fee Fraudsters, who otherwise are known as “419 men” have thinned. All told, however, in spite of the efforts of EFCC and ICPC, the struggle is not yet over.
ROLE OF THE POLICE IN THE DETECTION PREVENTION AND COMBATING FINACIAL CRIME

CHALLENGES

1. The scope, nature and dimension of financial crime is becoming sophisticated in view of the growing use of information technology, e-banking services, GSM communication, use of modern weapons, fast moving vehicles etc.
2. Relevant training programmes to enhance police job performance.
3. Computer training for data storage, programme management, data analysis, research, collaboration with international bodies (Interpol).
4. Poor remuneration of the police
5. Outdated equipment
6. Poor public image.

SOLUTIONS

1. Establishing and maintaining high standards of conduct for the honest, ethical and effective performance of policing functions.
2. Provision of modern equipment and facilities to detect and combat crime, fast vehicles, communication equipment, computers, effective weapons, helicopters.
3. Training and retraining of police officer in modern crime detection
4. Collaboration with international police (Interpol) organizations world-wide
5. Having and maintaining effective systems for the recruitment of police officers for integrity, honesty, ethical standards and expertise.
6. Ensuring that the systems for recruitment, posting, promotion and other employees of the police forces/services are not arbitrary but are based on fairness openness, ability and performance. Termination of police officers should not be arbitrary.
7. Good remuneration of police officers. The remuneration of police officers and other employees of the police forces/services must be such as to enable them and their families to maintain a reasonable standard of living without having to resort to other employment or to corruption.

8. Constant review of data on the fight against financial crime to reflect whether there is progress or not.

9. Incentive for good performance

10. Avoiding petty collections at the road side.

11. Compulsory computer training for all police officers.

12. Re-organization of the investigation outfit of the force to ensure prompt and timely investigation of cases.

13. Zero tolerance for corruption and indiscipline within the police

14. Cordial relationship between the police and the public to facilitate report on crime in the society.

15. Re-orientate the force Public relations department to focus on rebranding and improving public perception and image of the force.

**CONCLUSION**

As corruption impedes growth, development, peace, stability, rule of law, democracy and good governance it is necessary for all of us to join hands with the police in fighting this moral decadence. The die is cast, the challenge is thrown. There can be no retreat. History and our generation shall judge us according to the loyalty and devotion with which we fight corruption, the cankerworm destroying the fabric of our nation. Investors are unwilling to come to Nigeria because of the rampant economic crime. Nigeria can also rise to the level of Asian Tigers – Singapore, Malaysia and Japan who have proved beyond all reasonable doubt that if America and Britain can do it, they too can make it.
Thanks for listening.