

Chapter 17

Rethinking Anti-Corruption Efforts in Algeria: The Role of Civil Society

Abderrahmane Benlahcene

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1743-5679>

Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

Hapini Awang

Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

Nurul Izaah Mohamad Ghozali

Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this chapter is to scrutinize the role of civil society in curbing corruption in Algeria. This chapter argues that the active engagement of civil society actors in the fight against corruption is likely to promote a better balance between prevention and enforcement measures in addressing the ill-effects of corruption. Moreover, effective and engaged civil society is key to the realization of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for sustainable development SDGs. The conclusions drawn from this chapter will generate valuable insights into the issues of anti-corruption and civil society involvement in sustainable development in Algeria and other countries of similar social and cultural settings. Also, the chapter attempts to draw the attention of researchers, policy-makers, and anti-corruption professionals to the significant role of civil society in the collective efforts of combating corruption and strengthening institutional accountability in the country.

1. BACKGROUND

According to the World Bank, the problem of corruption has been one of the greatest obstacles to socio-economic development which does not merely lead to a maldistribution of resources but also, the loss of

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-8903-1.ch017

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lives and properties. Corruption undermines development by destabilizing the economic foundations of institutions and weakening the rule of law (Owusu, Chan, & Darko, 2019). Moreover, corruption corrodes the fabric of society by generating environments that foster the violation of human rights (Luna-Pla & Nicolás-Carlock, 2020). Corruption also has a direct effects on human development by negatively influencing its dimensions (health, education, and poverty) and indirectly affecting the determinants of these dimensions such as investments and economic growth (Fhima, Nourira, & Sekkat, 2023). The global cost of this phenomenon is estimated to run up to 2.6 trillion a year, which represents 5 percent of the global gross domestic product (Bautista-Beauchesne & Garzon, 2019; Fayed, 2018).

The issue of corruption has been a major issue in previous literature, political and social discourses, law and public policy, religious and philosophical texts (Wedel, 2012). Studies on the phenomenon of corruption are dispersed and variegated across a wide range of scholarly disciplines (H. Alatas, 1990; Ceschel, Hinna, & Homberg, 2022; Enste & Heldman, 2017; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2013). The previous bulk of research has established the detrimental consequences of corruption on the development process in many countries (Lambsdorff, 2006; Murshed & Mredula, 2018). Corruption weakens economic growth, equality, increases government debt, and hinders the struggle against poverty (Cardona, Ortiz, & Vázquez, 2018). It also threatens the stability of institutions, erodes trust among the different socio-economic actors, and damages the social fabric of any society (Fhima et al., 2023). Given the grave consequences of corruption on the development and stability of social, economic, and political entities especially in developing countries, the study of mechanisms and tools by which the phenomenon of corruption, in all its manifestations, can be controlled and fought against is very important. In line with this, Ipadeola (2016) argued that any discourse on the phenomenon of corruption within developing nations in the current era is not to establish its existence, as this is well established. Rather, it is needed in order to discern the various proportions, manifestations, and patterns of corruption. Particularly, to ascertain means by which we can curb its prevalent threat to the process of development (Ipadeola, 2016).

In Algeria, the widespread corruption has resulted in delaying the process of development and led to social and political unrest (Haykal, 2017; Sissani, 2016). In line with this, Limam (2012) stated that corruption has become so prevalent that it has gone from what Algerians once called the “sport of the elite” to being the “national sport”. Also, corruption not only infiltrated epidemic proportions at all levels but also it has become a culture in itself (Limam, 2012). Corruption is the utmost challenge for companies intending or operating in Algeria. A large range of corrupt practices are criminalized in the legal framework in the country but means of enforcement remain a challenge and government officials engage in corruption with impunity (Integrity, 2016). Although, during the past six decades of independence, many political and social efforts have been made to make the country more immune to the problem of corruption. These efforts have proven to be futile in curbing the widespread corruption at all levels (Marwane, 2019). Syed Hussein Alatas, one of the pioneering scholars on the phenomenon of corruption in developing countries mentioned that the “determination to root out corruption is one thing and to find the means to do so another” (S. H. Alatas, 2015).

In light of the above, the argument in this chapter is that civil society in Algeria could play a significant role in combating corruption and contributing to the realization of a concrete process of sustainable development as set by the United Nations, especially SDG 16 which focuses on promoting inclusive and peaceful societies for sustainable development, build accountable and effective government institutions at all levels, and establish accessible ways to justice for all. However, civil society actors have been alienated in the process and implementation of anti-corruption efforts in the country (Guemar, 2021). Achy (2013) noted that Algerians frequently encounter political exclusion, and the country is deficient in open politi-

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