

CORRUPTION

SERIES: TAKING A STAND

EXPLORING THE ARMY'S INTERNATIONAL POSITIONAL STATEMENTS

Members of the International Moral and Social Issues Council (IMASIC) reflect on The Salvation Army's International Positional Statements.

STATEMENT OF POSITION

The Salvation Army strongly condemns corruption in its entirety.

The Salvation Army is aware of and abhors the suffering that individuals, groups and nations endure because of corrupt behaviour by people in positions of power and those entrusted with the management of public and private resources. It accepts responsibility to work towards the eradication of corruption whether individual, organisational or institutional, resulting in a more equitable environment for all concerned.

The Salvation Army is committed in addition to prevent, identify and eliminate internal corruption.

Download the complete International Positional Statement on Corruption at salvationarmy.org/isjc/ips

The Salvation Army has a positional statement on corruption because corruption is incompatible with holiness. It is an evil that needs to be named and shamed. Shining a light on it is not enough, however. We should be able to witness to the fact that '[God's] divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness... having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires' (2 Peter 1:3-4). A holy Salvation Army needs to show that God-honouring, corruption-preventing accountability systems work.

One of the reasons Daniel is a hero in the Bible is that he was not corrupt. His rivals in the Babylonian King Darius's court tried to find fault in him, but 'they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him' (Daniel 6:4). Another of the Bible's heroes, the apostle Paul, writing from prison to the Christians in Corinth, urges them to 'make room for us in your hearts [because] we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one' (2 Corinthians 7:2).

From these two examples we can draw several conclusions. Firstly, that corruption is not a new thing; it's almost as old as humanity. Secondly, that the potential for corruption exists in the Church as

well as the godless world. Thirdly, that corruption is not inevitable. Fourthly, that freedom from corruption is not a *minor* good thing, it is a *primary* good.

While many equate corruption with financial or political rot, the attitude of the Bible is that corruption is wider than that – almost a synonym for sin – and that corruption is an evil that infects both individuals and systems. As the positional statement says, 'Corruption undermines good governance and the rule of law, leads to violations of human rights, distorts markets and erodes the quality of life... It hurts the poor.'

As the three following accounts show, although the evil of corruption is worldwide, what it looks like differs from place to place. As the manifestations of corruption are contextual, doubtless the ways to prevent corruption will be contextual also.

What possibilities of corruption lurk where you live?

What workable measures will combat it?

FOR REFLECTION

- * What can you do to raise awareness of corruption in your community?
- * What changes of behaviour or policy are necessary to resist corruption in the culture where you live?
- * How can The Salvation Army prevent corruption within its ranks?



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PERSONAL REFLECTION ON CORRUPTION IN SOUTH ASIA

'I will not let anyone walk through my mind with their dirty feet.'

Mahatma Gandhi

Corruption is a problem all around the world, including the great nation of India. Corruption prevents people from enjoying progress. People engage in corrupted practices in all levels of society. It is often excused as being part of culture and in Indian culture, customs such as bribes, tips, gifts, providing household items or paying the bills of people we hope to influence are common practice. Blatant forms of corruption are encouraged by people in positions of power who expect others to purchase valuable items for them and find ways to satisfy their desires. Giving excessive praise or exalting a leader in the hope of gaining favour are more subtle forms of corruption. This can extend to entertaining family members of the leader.

Sadly, corruption destroys peace and harmony also within the Church. Selfish motives, nepotism, leader worship, favouritism and superstition are destroying churches and Christian organisations. Some Christian leaders misuse offerings, tithes and funds by not recording them properly. Accountability and transparency are questionable.

The following factors can lead individuals and families into corruption:

- Insufficient income and increasing family needs. This is a particular problem in South Asia where multiple generations live together, but only one or two family members earn money. Salaries and allowances are insufficient to feed the whole family.
- Marriage is the most expensive family occasion in Indian society. Dowry (paying money to the groom's family), the cost of wedding celebrations and marriage gifts put families (both rich and poor) under extreme financial pressure. Families end up in debt. While there are many families who use their own money, some others are tempted to supplement their income through corruption.
- Educating children is very expensive. Higher education requires even more money. Such financial pressures can draw families into corrupt practices.
- People increasingly compare themselves with others in terms of their possessions and desire unaffordable items such as electronic gadgets, nice clothes and up-to-standard foods.

There are people who have been corrupted, who nonetheless preach anti-corruption. They pretend to be fighting corruption and blame

other people for being corrupt, but they do this to divert attention from themselves.

Fortunately, there are many truthful, loyal and faithful people in Indian society who are standing for truth and are fighting against corruption. They stand for justice by raising their voice strongly against all forms of corrupt practices. Many Christians in South Asia are standing on their own feet with great risk, but know they are joined by fellow-Christians around the world in the same fight.

Psalm 15 inspires us for the fight against corruption:

Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? The one whose way of life is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart; whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbour, and casts no slur on others; who despises a vile person but honours those who fear the Lord; who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind; who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken. »



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» PERSONAL REFLECTION ON CORRUPTION IN AFRICA

When my husband and I were appointed to Kenya in 2010, our biggest challenge was getting our children admitted into public primary schools. Our children had to change education system from French to English. Although they were able to pass their aptitude tests in mathematics, Kiswahili and English were a problem. We visited many primary schools to find them a place.

Finally, one headmaster agreed to welcome them. Unfortunately, he was absent when the school opened. Our next-door neighbour, who taught at that school, openly told us that our sons would not be accepted unless we first saw the examination officer. She then spoke in code and told me 'a sick person needs to find the doctor'. In other words, we were expected to pay a bribe. She offered to be our mediator and negotiate a deal on our behalf.

My story highlights the way corruption obstructs a child's right to education. It does not only hinder access to education, but also affects the quality of education.

In Africa corruption often leads to the following:

- **Poor quality of service:** Employees don't provide a good service unless people pay bribes. This is experienced in many aspects of life such as municipality offices, electricity

providers and even disaster-relief organisations!

- **Lack of proper justice:** Corruption in the judiciary system leads to injustice. Evidence can be 'lost' and corruption in the police system can lead to investigations being dragged out for decades. The victims suffer.
- **Poor public services:** Corruption reduces the effectiveness of public investments and the infrastructure of a country. Corruption can reduce tax revenues by compromising the ability of the state to collect taxes and fees.
- **Corruption affects employment:** Jobs are not given to the most suitable or qualified person, but the one who is ready to pay for it or in any other way return the favour.
- **Sex-based corruption:** Men demand sexual favours which can result in unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/Aids. Young girls are at particular risk. Sex-based corruption can also lead to family conflicts, marriage breakdowns and girls dropping out of school. In 2013, Rwanda Transparency International shared a video with parliamentarians of people testifying to being victims of sex-based violence, including students, housemaids and employees who were allegedly asked for sexual favours by their bosses or teachers in

exchange for good grades, job placements or salary increments. In Rwanda, there is no specific law which bans sex-based corruption.

Isaiah 1:21-25 states that God chastises those who engage in bribery and treat the poor unjustly. That is why our positional statement clearly condemns this evil in its entirety. The Salvation Army is committed to preventing, identifying and eliminating internal corruption. Every officer, soldier, recruit, adherent, volunteer and employee of The Salvation Army should contribute towards this fight.

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PERSONAL REFLECTION ON CORRUPTION IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

The International Positional Statement (IPS) defines corruption as 'giving, obtaining or denying advantage through means which are illegitimate, immoral and/or inconsistent with one's responsibility towards other people'. It is tempting for Westerners to deceive themselves into thinking that corruption is not an issue in Europe and North America. Of course, it is an issue. Corruption is often less obvious, but its fruit are the same: the powerful gain an unfair profit over other people by rigging the system to their advantage.

Politicians in Europe and North America are regularly exposed for seeking personal benefit through their actions. Business people are regularly caught rigging prices, illegally using information to gain an advantage and using their positions for their personal benefit. This is not only an African or South Asian problem – corruption is everyone's problem.

We must also admit – with much shame – that corruption can also infect the Christian Church, including The Salvation Army. The IPS definition includes 'giving, obtaining or denying advantage ... inconsistent with one's responsibility towards other people'. This definition widens the understanding of corruption and brings it closer to home.

Christians are instructed by Jesus

to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Matthew 22:39). We are not loving our neighbour as ourselves when we take advantage of others. The bar is higher for leaders (like all Salvation Army officers) because we have a responsibility for those less fortunate than ourselves. We receive donations because people trust us to care for the lonely, poor and friendless. We must never betray their trust by using Salvation Army funds to unfairly benefit ourselves.

Former generations of officers in Europe and North America made great personal sacrifices. They rejected debt and lived simple lives. Today's Western officers are well provided for in comparison – and yet, the temptation to have more and more is ever-present.

The IPS on Corruption states that 'existing Salvation Army policies, procedures, orders and regulations must be followed to prevent corruption, bribery, cronyism and nepotism'. Many of us are rightly proud of generations of our family serving in the Army. However, this must never lead to cronyism and nepotism. Every officer should be promoted on the basis of their abilities and faithfulness – not on the basis of who they are related to. Corruption is an urgent challenge for all of us, in every part of the world.