

The perception and response of the church to Corruption in Latin America and the Caribbean

What is corruption?

Corruption is any dishonest or illegal behaviour that benefits a few people at the cost of many.

It causes economic loss and increases inequality and poverty in our countries. It erodes trust and accountability and disempowers communities, often causing the most harm to the most vulnerable.

‘Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another.’
Lev 19:11, NVI



Our investigation:

At the end of 2020, Tearfund undertook some research to understand better the prevalence, causes and effects of corruption; the situation of churches in the face of this social scourge; and possible strategies and programmatic responses to combat corruption adequately and effectively.

The research highlighted that the church generally lacks a voice with which to denounce corruption; it silences it, justifies it and renders it invisible, to the point of normalising it within the church itself and contributing to its prevalence in society.

‘We cannot content ourselves by saying that corruption is a natural part of politics because that same corruption affects the church. In some cases, the churches have focused only on aid, such as providing medical care and feeding the hungry. As Christians, we all have this moral and ethical duty, but fighting corruption is also part of it.’
(Interview ET-3)

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What can we do?



Work within our churches to bring about internal transformation.

- Reflect on theologies that place restrictions on the church's mission to speak out and act against corruption.
- Implement training in civic education.
- Review internal practices related to transparency and accountability.
- Produce Bible studies and materials on corruption and faith, including liturgical material.



Exercise its prophetic role as a church to denounce injustice and corruption.

- Form networks of church leaders and pastors engaged in humanitarian work.
- Re-educate from a biblical perspective for social activism and advocacy.
- Recognise the work of other anti-corruption efforts outside the church.
- Provide pastoral accompaniment to individuals and groups of Christians engaged in anti-corruption work ('a citizenship ministry').
- Identify and implement practical models of social accountability and work with civil society.



Implement a multi-faceted approach in each country to fight corruption.

- Create a prayer movement.
- Widen the understanding of corruption as seen from the worldview of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples.

- Conduct a detailed and in-depth analysis of the situation of the churches: their history, theology, and the characteristics of their members.
- Review the impact of, among others, prosperity theology on the understanding of certain terms: well-being, blessing, prosperity, development, responsible stewardship, integrity.
- Maintain a critical attitude, seeking different avenues and reflective approaches rooted in the immediate context. Alongside this, retain a regional and global focus and a commitment to the poorest and most excluded groups.
- Mobilise Christian youth in Latin America and the Caribbean to take part in anti-corruption efforts and, from the perspective of their faith, become a prophetic voice.

Corruption is an epidemic. But it doesn't have to be this way.
As Christians, we are called to love one another, to seek life and justice.

For more information on how the church can help fight corruption, write to us at:
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