

Inside

- Religious Groups' Anti-Corruption Initiative In Religious Plural Society: Korean Experiences
- Corruption/Anti-Corruption News in Korea (May)
- NGO and Transparency in Local Autonomy

Religious Groups' Anti-Corruption Initiative In Religious Plural Society: Korean Experiences

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1. Introduction

- South Korea: A Religious Plural Society

In Korea, dominant religions are Buddhism, Christianity (Catholic and Evangelical) and Confucianism. Buddhism and Confucianism were transferred in the 4th century. Shamanism and Confucianism have deep roots in Korean people's mind. But both believers are not well organized. Comparatively speaking, Catholicism and Protestantism were very active in last century. Both have 5% and 16% of inhabitants as believers despite their short (two or one centennial) history in Korea. Of course, there are other religions (for example, Cheondo-Kyo, Won-Buddhism, Islamism and Bahaism).

- Solidarity of Religious Groups in Democratization Movement

In 1919, there was a big movement for the national independence from Japanese colonialism. There were 33 national representatives for that "1st March Independence Manifesto". Most of them were religious leaders. Thus, religious groups' leadership in democratization movement was naturally accepted in Korean society.

Religions	Share in population	Introduced in
Buddhism	20%	4 th c.
Protestantism	16%	1790
Catholicism	5%	1885
Confucianism	Not countable	4 th c.
Shamanism	Not countable	

(Source : Ministry of Culture and Tour, Korea, 2001)

In military dictatorial decades (from 60s to 90s), some religious groups had taken the most important role in human rights movement. Moreover, movements for democratization, human rights and labors were criticized as communist or pro-communist (so-called red) movement by the power. Thus religious groups were accepted as good shelters. But many religious leaders themselves were also put into jail. This oppression made solidarity among various religious groups and with civil society in Korea.

2. Initiatives of Religious Groups in Anti-Corruption Movement

- For the Formation and Operation of TI-Korea

After the first change of regime in 1997, some groups realized that for the movement social reformation should be included into the object with democratization and reunification. Also, they asked civil society to make a broad coalition for anti-corruption movement. The Anti-Corruption Network in Korea (now, Transparency International – Korea, in English) was the result.

It is a network of networks. About 850 organizations (including the branches) have participated in this network.

Religious leaders of each area are playing the most important role for the formation and operation of regional HQs and branches (18) of TI-Korea. For example, 9 of 19 board members are religious leaders. His Excellency Seong-Soo Kim, bishop of Anglican Church in Korea, was elected directly in the Annual General Meeting of TI-Korea as chairperson of this NGO. But the other 8 members were sent from various NGO's and regional HQ's.

- Voters' Campaign for Elections

As the formation of this network, ACNK had made a broad campaign for an amendment of the election law. Finally, the law was amended for revealing the criminal records of candidates with taxation and/or military service records. On the basis of this change, Korean civil society made a strong campaign against corrupted and problem candidates through Civil Coalition for General Election. There were Buddhist, Catholic and Christian (evangelical) Coalitions also. Because of non-naming policy, TI-Korea itself did not engaged in this campaign. Instead, it asked people for voting after evaluation on candidates. People could get evaluation sheets with some categories and allotment of marks.

- Anti-Corruption Education for Believers

Some religious groups made resolutions for that 'Evaluate and Vote' campaign. They gave the sheets for believers and requested them to participate in voting after evaluation on candidates.

Moreover, some religious leaders have been made some sermons/teachings on anti-corruption subject for the believers. In one evangelical church, for example, there was a sermon about 'whistle-blowing' that was based on the Bible text of Eph. 5,11. It says:

"Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them."(RSV)

- "We Will Pay the Lack of Your Living Costs!"

One religious leader in Korea asked his denomination to make an anti-corruption program. It says: "We will pay the lack of your living costs!"

If any public servants in believers ask to pay the lack of her/his/their living costs, then the group will pay it. In my congregation church, it was accepted. Despite no members asked yet, it would be one of the best practices for anti-corruption education in some communities rather than a failure.

3. Some Suggestions for Further Initiative in Anti-Corruption Movement

- 'Reformation of Religions': Acting Minority vs. Silent Majority

Did all religious groups in Korea participate in those movements for human rights, democratization and anti-corruption? Of course, no! More than ninety percents of them were and are silent. Participations were made by a small part of those groups. How can we make the major part to act?

At first, some supplementary education should be made for religious leaders (monks, fathers, pastors...). In that process, everybody can understand the importance of anti-corruption movement and ethics education for members.

Secondly, in religious academies, students should be able to take some education (curriculum) on corruption matters. It is a good training for anti-corruption leaders in advance.

Thirdly, some programs and materials are needed for lay members and for children also to be able to fight against corruption. Some information with learning materials can be sent to them periodically.

- 'Reformation and Religions': Anti-Corruption Initiative

In past anti-corruption policies, most of public officials were treated as corruption control objects. But corruption is not only a matter of one unethical or immoral official's behavior. It has deep roots in society.

Ordinary people or companies can take a part in corruption as a bribe-giving side. Thus not only public officials but also private sectors and people can take a part in anti-corruption movement. Firstly, business ethics system should be implemented in believers' companies.

They have to be established and enacted by all members of those companies.

What were the contents or evaluation system on ethics education? Ethics was treated as a part of knowledge set. Is it acceptable that good marks of ethics education can be gained even from cheat, but nothing from ethical behavior of students. Isn't ethics knowledge of knowledge? If then, evaluation of ethics education should be made not about knowledge on ethics but about ethical behavior. There is one Korean saying: "green beans sown area gives only green beans, and red beans sown area gives only red beans." Secondly, total reformation of ethics education and its evaluation system are needed urgently.

Lastly, religious groups have to participate in anti-corruption movement with their believers as corruption watchdogs, whistle-blowers, and constructors of anti-corruption infrastructure. There is no border among believes for anti-corruption efforts. In so far as they are participating to make clean society and global prosperity, every religion can be a good partner for each other. ■

Corruption/Anti-Corruption News in Korea (May)

Best 3 Anti-corruption News were:

1) Government's prescription for making Database of corruption cases and tentative code of ethics for public officials **2)** One teachers union adopts the case of corruption of another superintendent of education in Chung-buk Province one of texts for their anti-corruption class, **3-1)** SBS-TV, one broadcasting company, reported a close connection between merrymaking place owners and public servants in Kangnam District of Seoul and **3-2)** The new CEO of Hyundai Construction Company declared that anti-corruption programs, including strengthening of audit department and package audit with related companies, will be adopted in the company.

Worst 3 Corruption News were:

1) Exposure of large scale corruption cases in public companies under the ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy, **2-1)** Lower payments of tax and premium for medical care insurance in in Kangnam District of Seoul, in spite of the most rich area in the country and **2-2)** Poor progress in the investigation of military service corruption cases. ■

NGO and Transparency in Local Autonomy

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1. Introduction

The Anti-Corruption Network in Korea (ACNK) was launched as a network of (sectional and local) networks in 1999. But its root can be found in the democracy movement of Korean people in the past few decades. It was accepted as the national chapter of Transparency International (TI) in Korea in 2000. Now its English name is Transparency International-Korea (TI-Korea).

TI is politically non-partisan. On this point, there can be no questions. But all chapters of TI, including TI itself, don't name "names" or publicize individual cases. Instead of exposing cases, TI is focusing on building systems that combat corruption at national and international level. It is very popular in Korea that NGOs attack some government bodies, including municipalities. TI-Korea could not do in that way. Are there any other paths for NGOs in anti-corruption movement than criticizing, investigating and accusing cases?

In so far as NGOs are concerned only about the *ex post facto* approach, any other factors cannot be adopted. But NGOs can take part in making transparent public administration in government and in local autonomy. Participation, cooperation and traction also can be the alternative paths for NGOs in prevention of corruption.

2. Some Effective Ways to Increase Transparency in Municipalities

OPEN system of Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) is not a kind of panacea. It means that we need not only OPEN system itself but also other factors to improve transparency in public administration. I would like to introduce some examples in Korean NGOs' activities with public sector.

1) Integrity Pacts

Integrity Pact (IP) is a device that was designed to safeguard public procurement, privatization, government license or concession from corruption. It is a multilateral and mutual pact against corruption among government office and companies submitting a tender for specific projects (bidders). Moreover, NGOs are invited to monitor the process. SMG adopted IP in Jul. 2000. Public Procurement Service (PPS) of Korea also began to apply IP from Mar. 2001. SMG and several municipalities have IP ombudsmen system. Adopting this concept in each municipality can make a strong impact onto bribery and graft in public business.

2) People Ombudsperson Network

To make 'participation infrastructure' of civil society, TI-Korea is organizing 'People Ombudsperson Network in Korea (PONK)' now. It was one of the main objects in making broad national coalition, ACNK. One of three civil ombudsmen of SMG was recommended by TI-Korea. And the Mayor appointed him. And two of five IP Ombudsmen were recommended by TI-Korea, as well as three were from People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy. But in municipalities in general, most of commissioners or ombudspersons were to be appointed only by the executives. Without the participation of NGOs, it is very hard to promote transparency through those committees. The concept of PONK is to prepare a kind of human resources pool before the request of recommendations from municipalities and government bodies, including public companies.

3) Monitoring and Recommendations

Last year in October, TI-Korea had carried out a research on the civil use of OPEN system in Seoul Metropolitan city. (Please see the attached report.) Monitoring of NGOs on public administration can be one of the useful ways to find some problems in it. And from the findings, government bodies and municipalities can take helpful recommendations not only from professionals but also from civil society. TI-Korea is giving special advices to PPS and Chunggu District Office of Seoul.

4) Clean Korea 21

In 2000, some municipalities, government bodies, public companies and one private company made an anti-corruption fair with TI-Korea. Now, 2001 Fair is being prepared. Private and public sectors and civil society can participate in that fair. Governmental bodies, private companies, economic organizations, as well as civil society organizations will exhibit their most effective practices for corruption prevention. This exhibition will promote possible benchmarking among them, including municipalities.

3. Conclusion

In local autonomy, NGO's participation is a crucial factor to increase transparency and reliability in public administration. Thus municipalities should invite civil society to monitor and watch themselves and to get recommendations or consultations.

And NGOs should organize 'participation infrastructure', like People Ombudsperson Network of TI-Korea. But participation, cooperation and traction approach shall not be confused or neutralized with criticism, investigation and accusation approach.

Furthermore, it should be referred that we cannot replace municipal councils or audit / inspection bodies in government with such watchdogs, like NGOs and media. The efforts of public servants themselves will be the most essential factor to curb corruption. Civil participation can only be a kind of facilitator or partner with those responsible posts. ■

Impressum

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