

Anti-Corruption Initiatives: Experience of Several Southeast Asia Countries

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Abstract

Corruption has a negative impact on political, social-economic, cultural development of the society. It is a fundamental social phenomenon to the governments, individuals, organizations and countries, including developed and developing countries. Transparency International highlights 3 important purposes of combating the corruptions which are: rule of law, higher life quality and conditions for societal development. As corruption is a true enemy of economic development in southeast asia countries. it is imperative for the anti-corruption measures to form the paramount part of ASEAN's agenda to ensure future growth and prosperity. A greater effort should be called for by ASEAN leaders to put transparency and anti-corruption activities in their inter-regional ministerial agenda and the ASEAN Community Vision 2025. This is to enable the promotion of greater transparency and the fight against corruption which could help ASEAN attain a smoother and more sustainable level of political, economic, and socio-cultural integration. Hence, this paper objectively focuses on identifying the best practice of anti-corruption initiatives among Asian countries. Consequently, this finding can bring positive impacts to the development of anti-corruption initiatives in Malaysia and may benefit the whole nation.

Keywords: Anti-Corruption, ASEAN ,Quality of Life,Societal Development

Introduction

The most common definition of corruption is as given by Transparency International (Transparency International, 2009): "abuse of public office for private gain". A more complete definition is given by Jain (2001) who defines corruption as: "... an act in which the power of public office is used for personal gain in a manner that contravenes the rules of the game". These definitions highlight three necessary conditions for corruption to exist which are discretionary power, weak or inefficient institutional frameworks and rent-seeking behavior.

According to Transparency International, with an average score of just 44 for three consecutive years, the Asia Pacific region is making little progress in the fight against corruption. Compared to other regions, Asia Pacific is on par with America (average score: 44) in its lack of progress and behind Western Europe and the European Union (average score: 66). Additionally, there have been concerns by policy makers mentioning that corruption can distort economic policy by protecting the interest groups that hold discretionary power, misallocate resources away from critical areas, and lower economic development. From South Korea's presidential scandal to Malaysia's 1MDB fund, not many Asian countries are able to avoid the smear of corruption. A survey conducted by Transparency International reveals that after talking to more than 20,000 people in 16 countries, regions and territories in Asia Pacific, the report found that more than one in four people have paid a bribe when using public service. This report comes at a key moment when many governments in the region are preparing their agendas to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs set out development priorities for 2030 which include, among others, reducing corruption and bribery in all forms. In addition, this report has underestimated the government's image as it captures public embezzlement or government theft.

Initial work on corruption was prevalent in the political science field in the 1970s and early 1980s. Leff (1964), Leys (1965), Lui (1985) argued that some corruption is good in a second-best market full of bureaucratic delays and red tape. Later in the mid-1990s, economists and international agencies turned their attention to the issues of corruption after seeing a worldwide fall in corruption levels from 1984 to 1993, and then a rise thereafter. During this period, several empirical studies concluded that corruption had negative impacts on growth and investment. As a result, in 1994 the World Bank announced that 'control of corruption' would be given "top priority" on its development agenda of donor countries.

National anti-corruption programs seeking to meet such a level of comprehensiveness were recently developed, for instance, in Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, and Thailand. In Korea, to cite another example, various stakeholders from the government, political parties, business, and civic groups have recently adopted a joint action plan that defines the specific goals and roles of each of these stakeholder groups in promoting transparency and combating corruption. The fact that a growing number of

countries are seeking to streamline their legislation with a view to replace formerly separate pieces of relevant legislation with a comprehensive anti-corruption law is a further indicator of this trend.

As corruption is a true enemy of economic development in this region, it is imperative that anti-corruption measures form the paramount part of ASEAN's agenda to ensure future growth and prosperity. A greater effort should be called for by ASEAN leaders to put transparency and anti-corruption activities in their inter-regional ministerial agenda and the ASEAN Community Vision 2025. This is to enable the promotion of greater transparency and the fight against corruption could help ASEAN attain a smoother and more sustainable levels of political, economic, and socio-cultural integration. Hence, this paper is objectively focusing on identifying the best practice of anti-corruption initiatives among ASEAN Member States. Consequently, this finding can bring the positive impact towards the development of anti-corruption initiatives in Malaysia and may benefit to the whole nation.

Literature Review

Anti-Corruption Initiative Among Developed Countries

•Singapore

The Transparent International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2018 ranks Singapore as the 3rd least corrupt country in the world. The move up three notches to third spot signs that the republic is serious about stamping out corruption. The Singapore Government through Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) is dedicated in ensuring Singapore to be consistently recognized as one of the most efficient and corruption-free countries in the world. Singapore's efforts to combat corruption started in the year 1959. On that year, corruption was rampant because of myriad of factors including inadequate laws, insufficient manpower in the anti-corruption agency, great disparity in pay between the public and private sectors and lack of commitment among enforcement officer (Nicholas, 2016). Strong political will to wipe out corruption finally led to the establishment of four pillars of Singapore's anti-corruption strategy which are effective laws, independent judiciary, effective enforcement and responsive public service. The first step in combating corruption is by strengthening the law. Singapore enacted the Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA) in year 1960 and the Corruption, Drug Trafficking and Other Serious Crimes (Confiscation of Benefits) Act or known as CDSA was also enacted. PCA, for example, is the primary anti-corruption law in Singapore. The key features of PCA are, beyond dollars and cents, no one is exempted, ensuring incorruptibility of the public service, within and across borders, identities of informers are protected and forfeiture of gratification (CPIB, 2017). The PCA offers no room for toleration and as a result, it reduces the corruption rate in Singapore. The next strategies to combat corruption in Singapore is by institutionalizing a robust comprehensive anti-corruption body. The PCA is

the primary legislation which has established the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB), empowers CPIB investigators, criminalizes corruption and provides punishment and penalties for corruption offences. CPIB is well-resourced and independent. It is empowered to investigate any person, even police officers and ministers, and to conduct public outreach to raise public awareness and shape social norms (Lee, 2016). The effectiveness of CPIB can be seen clearly through the Corruption Perception Index from 1995 to 2018 where Singapore is always ranked as the most least corrupt country. The Singapore Government is aware that corruption happens due to monetary reason especially among civil servants. In order to reduce corruption among civil servants, the Singapore Government pay public servants fair and realistic wages bench-marked to private sector earnings and in return, demand the highest standard of integrity and performance. This action shows that the government is capable in addressing the cause of corruption and in learning from the past experience (early independence). Besides, Singapore also consistently develops their society and culture to eschew corruption. According to CPIB report in year 2017, it is mentioned that there is an increase in the corruption complaints lodged by the citizens. The largest complaints received by the CPIB was from the e-complaints module on its website. The people could also lodge complaints via CPIB phone hotline, email, CPIB website (e-complaints) or by mail/fax. CPIB definitely take a serious view of all complaints with an undertone of corruption. Public participation in reporting the corruption in their organization shows that the government's efforts to encourage the people to be whistle-blowers is successful (CPIB, 2017).

•Thailand

As other ASEAN states member, Thailand also faces corruption issues. The example of corruptions are favoritism in high and low place, buying of votes to enter into parliament, sales of lucrative position in the public services, bribery of the authorities concerned to secure contracts for big state projects and non-compliance of good governance in both state and private corporate entities which entail fraudulent fraud commission and many more. In addition, the corruption problems have barred Thailand from developing and causes the development of Thailand to be inefficient. In order to combat corruption, Thailand enacted The Thai Penal Code and Organic Act on Counter Corruption, B.E. 2542 (Anti-Corruption Act). The Thai Penal Code covers the prohibitions on bribery and bribery related activity and primarily imposes criminal penalties on parties paying or offering to pay bribes to public officials, intermediaries involved in the payment of a bribe and public officials who require, solicit or receive bribes (Mancili, D& Panpilai, 2016). Meanwhile Anti-Corruption act prohibits any party from offering bribes to state officials – and, more recently – foreign and public international officials or “intermediaries” to solicit to use personal power to unlawfully perform their duties. Through the Anti-corruption act, in the year 1999, National Counter Corruption Commission (NCCC) was established and in 2008, NCCC name was changed to National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC). One of the key features in NCCC is it requires a person holding a political position or a state official to declare their assets to the Office of the National Anti-Corruption

Commission (NACC) and authorizes the NACC to investigate if state officials have accumulated “unusual wealth” in violation of Thai law (Mancili, D& Panpilai, 2016). Besides, the constitution also establishes Constitutional Court, the National Counter-Corruption Commission, the Electoral Commission, the Administrative Court, the Ombudsman, and the State Audit Commission. These organizations are independent in the sense that their structures and operations are beyond the formal control or influence of politicians and political parties (Nualnoi Treerat, 2005). Although Thailand has enacted the corruption law, corruption does not cease to exist. The government branches such as Judiciary, public service, police department images are tarnished with corruption issues. Almost four out of five Thais believe that most or all policies to be corrupt (GCB 2017). It is important for Thai Government to strengthen the law to raise public confidence towards government agencies. Besides, in 2014, Thai government started to educate the people on corruption through anti-corruption campaign and encouraged the public to actively participate in fighting corruption. NACC has received about 500 corruption-related petitions a month in the year 2017. This shows that the public has become more aware of the need to tackle corruption head on and that they trust the NACC to assist with cleaning out the pond (Dumrongkiat Mala & Taam Yingchaeroen, 2017). Thai governments, regardless of their shirt color, regularly put “fight against corruption” on their agenda and strive to ensure Thailand to be the least corrupt country in the world.

Anti-Corruption Initiative Among Least Developed Southeast Asian Countries

•Myanmar

Myanmar has a set of anti-corruption laws and since as early as 1948, and it is officially regarded as a crime that can carry a jail term. The most relevant laws and legal instruments against corruption related offences include Burma Penal Code Volume 8, Public Property Protection Volume 2, the Money Laundering Law and the Anti-Drug Law (Burma Lawyer’s Council, 2005). However, it is reported by Bertelsmann Foundation (2012) as cited from Marie that the law becomes irrelevant when the ruling generals misuse anticorruption laws as a mean of ousting political opponents by arresting the Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and many of his colleagues and family members for corruption in 2004. (Marie 2012). In addition, there is no fully independent anti-corruption institution in Myanmar. Until recently, the power of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) is still not balanced by the parliament or any other political institution. Literally, there was no formal separation of powers practices in Myanmar until 2011. This was when SPDC, which held the executive and legislative powers, exercised control over the Judiciary. In practice, however, the judiciary still faces political interferences (Anti Corruption Resource Centre, 2012). It also reported that Myanmar’s Judiciary is less independent, not equitable and ineffective. As a consequence, it allows officeholders to abuse their position without fear of judicial action. In addition, Myanmar also has a Bureau of Special Investigations which is in charge of any corruption offences such as financial crime related cases,

including cases involving trading, tax evasion and corruption of government officials. However, unfortunately, the information about the number of cases and investigations was not publicly announced to the people. Furthermore, Myanmar also enacted “Control of Money Laundering Law” in 2007 in order to detect any suspicious transactions such as cash transactions by banks and real estate firms. However, according to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), Myanmar did not make sufficient progress in implementing its action plan (Anti Corruption Resource Centre, 2012).

•Vietnam

The Global Integrity Report in 2009 reported that the anti-corruption legal framework in Vietnam is considered strong and regarded among the best legal frameworks for anti-corruption in Asia. However, corruption issues become one of the greatest challenges for Vietnam to overcome due to lack of implementation, weak enforcement of the laws and the lack of information regarding the work conducted by the anti-corruption agencies. Vietnam has enacted Anti-Corruption Law in 2005 and the National Strategy on Anti-Corruption 2020, which were set up as major steps forward. The law enacted purposely focuses on public sector and private sector corruption in terms of passive and active bribery, abuse of office, money laundering, extortion, and bribing of foreign officials. Besides, the law also sets out the rules for politician for asset declaration and civil servants and requires all ministries, sectors and localities to develop specific rules and regulations to encourage public participation in anticorruption activities. The law also included whistle-blowing protection, whereby the civil servants must report it directly to the head of their agencies, and whistleblowers must give their name and address, detail the corrupt practice and submit documentation to support it (Maira, 2012). In addition, Vietnam also adopted the National Anti-Corruption Strategy Towards 2020, which explicitly recognizes the role of openness and transparency in reducing corruption and it includes an action plan (World Bank, 2010). It contains five (5) measures to fight corruption issues which are enhancing transparency of authorities and agencies, completing the economic management regime, building a fair and competitive business environment, improving supervision, surveillance, investigation and prosecutions of corruption cases, and raising society’s awareness of its role in the fight against corruption. Other than that Vietnam also establishes a compulsory corruption training at all educational levels as an important step to raise corruption awareness to the society. Moreover, Vietnam also set up a Central Steering Committee against Corruption to overcome corruption issues at the local level, but it became ineffective due to lack of funds and weak enforcement capacity. Vietnam also implements many programs and activities in order to curb the corruption issues such as Anti-Corruption Dialogue that allows participants to discuss corruption issues and solutions in different sectors and “Vietnam Anti-Corruption Initiative Program 2011” which provides an innovation grants, innovative ideas to minimize corruption, strengthen transparency and to bring a better living environment for people (Marie, 2012).

•Laos PDR

According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2017, Laos PDR was ranked as one of the most corrupt ASEAN Member States. However, there were some efforts done by Laos PDR in order to combat corruption in their country. One of the efforts is by sending about 70 officials from PDR's Government Inspection and Anti-Corruption Authority (GIAA) to the anti-corruption training conducted by ABA Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI), in partnership with the United States Embassy. The training focused on the techniques in identifying and investigating the best way to fight corruption. It also addressed international anti-corruption standards and best practices to be followed such as from the *United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)* and the guidelines of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) (www.americanbar.org). In addition, due to the high number of corrupt public officials in Laos by 1999, Laos started to implement the State Inspection and Anti-Corruption Authority that was responsible to directly answer to the nation's prime minister. In 2003, Laos also obtained support from the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in promoting the use of this law's manual, in hoping to create public awareness and understanding of the law. Regardless of all the efforts, Laos PDR still lacks experienced human resources, modern technical devices, and budget in handling the corruption issues (Souphavong.V & Vilavong P, 2017). Moreover, Laos PDR has also enacted the Anti-Money Laundering Intelligence Unit that is placed under the direct supervision and leadership of the National Coordination Committee for Anti Money Laundering and Countering of Financing Terrorism, as part of the Bank of Lao PDR from which it received its budget. They were to collect and analyze information relating to money laundering and report such incidents to the National Coordination Committee for Anti-Money Laundering and Countering of Financing Terrorism for its review and consideration (Dino.S, Gibbins & Tilleke, 2017).

Method of stamping out corruption in Malaysia

In the 1970s, when the New Economic Policy (NEP) was installed, the government intervened actively in economic activities, setting up large numbers of agencies to regulate and control every aspect of commercial and industrial life. Licensing, in particular, was the key instrument used to enforce the new requirements of the NEP. As early as 1988, the government recognized the need for a high-level national body to address weaknesses in public service financial administration. For this purpose, a Special Cabinet Committee on Government Management was set up under the chairmanship of the Minister of Finance. Matters highlighted by the

Auditor-General, the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) and the Treasury, are given serious attention, and remedial action taken. The Anti-Corruption Agency was set up in 1967. Its main function was to combat corruption, previously handled by the police. It was thought that with the growing sophistication of the economy, specialists were required to deal with white-collar crimes, including corruption. Time goes by, corruption was securitized as a threat at the global level and in Malaysia. Hence, in order to combat with various methods of corruption Malaysia in 2008, the Parliament and the government unanimously approved the formation of an independent anti-corruption commission to be known as the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and replacing the ACA Act 1982 to the MACC Act. The MACC Act 2009 came to effect on 1 January 2009 which led to the official establishment of the MACC as an independent, transparent and professional body to effectively and efficiently manage the nation's anti-corruption efforts. The MACC was modelled after top anti-corruption agencies, such as the Independent Commission Against Corruption of Hong Kong and the Independent Commission Against Corruption in New South Wales, Australia .

Since the 14th general election victory, the new Malaysian government has continued to aggressively pursue its anti-corruption agenda through the establishment of the Special Cabinet Committee on Anti-Corruption (JKKMAR) and the Governance, Integrity and Anti-Corruption Centre (GIACC). Time to time corruption has undoubtedly been one of the most deep-rooted, pervasive problems that has crippled economies around the world. Even in advanced economies, authorities have not been able to quell corruption completely. In moving towards convincing the public the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr Mahathir Muhammad has newly launched National Anti-Corruption Plan (NACP) 2019-2023 to replace the National Integrity Plan (PIN) and it was decided at the Cabinet's Special Committee on Anti-Corruption (JKKMAR). This specific plan was developed to set a practical goal based on initiatives to be taken by every government and private agency to address corruption, integrity and governance issues for the next five years. It is to prove that the commitment of government to tackle this problem head-on. As said by Tun Mahathir ,fifteen per cent or 17 initiatives out of the 115 initiatives outlined in the National Anti-Corruption Plan (NACP) have already been implemented which involved nine initiatives in the field of political governance, two for public sector administration, three for the legal and judicial sector, one for law enforcement and two for corporate governance.According to study by National Governance,Integrity and Anti

Corruption Centre (GIACC), the NACP had shown positive reaction especially in terms of public confidence, including those of the international community and on the seriousness of the present government in tackling the problems of corruption, integrity and governance. The JKKMAR had been informed that public perception on the seriousness of the government in the matter rose by 11 per cent from 59.8 per cent in 2016 to 70.8 per cent in 2018. Consequently, by 2030, Malaysia aims to be one of the top 10 cleanest nations in the world.

The 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal is an ongoing political scandal occurring in Malaysia. In 2015, Malaysia's then-Prime Minister Najib Razak was accused of channelling over RM 2.67 billion (nearly USD 700 million) from 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), a government-run strategic development company, to his personal bank accounts. The event triggered widespread criticism among Malaysians, with many calling for Najib Razak's resignation – including Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, one of Najib's predecessors as Prime Minister, who eventually defeated Najib to return to power after the 2018 general election. The reopening of 1MDB case has convinced the public that there is no room for tolerance when it comes to corruption issue. There are other cases related to the corruption that have been discovered by MACC, for example Pewaja Steel, Malaysia Airline Berhad and others not mentioned here.

That is precisely what Malaysia has been doing since the ACA was first established in 1967. The seriousness with which the government views corruption is evident in the range of legal and administrative measures and resources that it has put at the disposal of the ACA. The political apparently there, but it is important for the Government to accept that corruption is not just about bribery, corruption is about the abuse of entrusted power for personal profit, a definition widely used by Transparency International. Corruption thrives in the absence of transparency and accountability. A grave shortcoming in the Malaysian anti corruption mechanism is that the ACA is not an independent commission. It is a government agency, and members of the public suspect its impartiality, reporting as it does to the Prime Minister

Reforming Anti-Corruption Among ASEAN Countries

The fight against corruption remains high on the political agenda of Asian and Pacific countries. Citizens and governments alike are increasingly aware of the

evils of corruption and are alert to the necessity of taking effective actions against it. Therefore, in order to address the issue of corruption more effectively, 27 countries have joined the Asian Development Bank (ADB)/ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia and the Pacific. These countries are committed to reform their legal and institutional frameworks to strengthen safeguards against corruption and to implement internationally recognized standards. Enhancing integrity and transparency in the public sector has been identified by all of the Initiative's member countries as crucial to successfully prevent and combat corruption and as such, has remained a cornerstone of their anti-corruption policies. Over the past few years, a number of parallel measures have been implemented to strengthen the safeguards against corruption in the public sector. Such measures are often sought to bolster the integrity and competence of public officials by introducing regulations for staff selection and human resources policies.

Studies show that the promotion of integrity through the creation of norms against certain behavior can have an effect on corruption levels (Gaitonde, 2016) , especially in countries where the rule of law is implemented. In Southeast Asian countries, however, the exchange of favors is deeply rooted in how social networks and relationships are built, and the power of codes of conducts and regulations to shape behavior is diminished by social expectations on how social interactions should take place. For example, in the case of Indonesia, the anti-corruption campaign *berani jujur, hebat* (be honest and be great) promoted by the government is disempowered by popular beliefs such as *bagi-bagi rejeki* (sharing the fortune) and *utang budi* (debt of deed) which are used to describe the practices of showing gratitude for a service provided or sharing one's fortune (Pertiwi, 2018). Hence, informal payments, gifts and favoring some at the expense of others respond in part to the value given in Indonesia to preserve relationships.

However, nowadays, the challenges of corruption are becoming more complex and wider as it does not only involve individual acts of deviant behavior, but it is also acknowledged that corruption can become institutionalized as informal rules and routines, hence putting great pressure on individuals to perform according to these norms (Hellmann, 2017). It is very interesting to discover those principal actors around whom corruption is organized. These principal actors can be categorized into three types namely 'elite cartel' corruption, 'oligarch and clans' corruption and 'office moghuls' corruption. For 'elite cartel' corruption, it is organized around

networks of colluding elites. It can be seen in Singapore, the politicization of the state bureaucracy by the dominant People's Action Party (PAP) and anecdotal evidence that high-ranking party officials use state-owned enterprises (the so-called government-linked companies, GLC) as a source of rents (Haggard.S & Low.L, 2002). The dominance of PAP causes them to be treated preferentially over opposition-held districts when it comes to distributing the allocation of certain government programs for example housing subsidies and infrastructural upgrades. Meanwhile, the second principal actors which is the 'oligarchs and clans' type of corruption is 'big man' networks that specialize in the large-scale theft of public resources. Meaning to say, they protect corruption profits from competitors in business and in the government. The best example of this type of corruption can be seen in Thailand where the most effective 'big man' networks have evolved around the so-called rural godfathers (chao pho in Thai). It can also be described as 'mafioso-like politician capitalists who, by the use of violence, political connections, and control of local markets and rackets, become feared 'provincial bosses'. In the case of 'official moguls' corruption, the example can be seen in Indonesia as it is different from 'oligarchs and clans' corruption. The principal actors will be the inner circle or the so called 'owners' of corruption networks. They face very little legal or political restraint when fueling their networks with public and private assets (Hadiz, V.R,& Robison.R, 2013).

In realization of these current challenges, Southeast countries are stepping up their efforts to another level when ASEAN Member States ratified the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) which includes the requirements to introduce these norms. Recently, there was a Regional Seminar on the Effective Measures for the Private Sector to Prevent Bribery which was organised by UNDOC together with the National Anti-Corruption Commission, the Thai Institute of Directors and the American Bar Association on the 2nd-3rd of August 2018. This convention was held in Pattaya, Thailand with approximately more than 190 participants including private sector actors and anti-corruption agencies from ASEAN, Hong-Kong, Singapore and the Republic of Korea. These agencies shared their latest developments in combating foreign bribery and in introducing the prevention of corruption mechanisms. Their main discussion for the seminar was the urgency to have a joint venture from public private action to address bribery which involves the companies in the ASEAN. In addition, the seminar became the platform to disseminate local business community about the new

guidelines developed by NACC in Thailand on legal requirements and appropriate internal control measures to combat bribery (UNODC, 2018).

In order for the effort to be truly effective, the strategies to combat corruption must be built on the joint actions of States, private sectors and civil society. Alongside this aspiration, UNDOC supported the ASEAN Responsible Business Forum organized by the ASEAN Corporate Social Responsibility Network on the 27-28th of August 2018 in Singapore. This forum provided a platform for key stakeholders, governments, ASEAN bodies, the private sector and civil society to engage in practical discussions about the future of businesses and their role in fighting corruption. With more than 200 delegates from ASEAN and beyond, the discussions illustrated the business case for companies to operate in an ethical way and the pressing needs for action. For example, in the case of Myanmar, Thai companies cut down trees and relocated the population without proper compensations. Therefore, according to Dr. Seree Nonthasoot, Thailand's Representative in the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) mentioned the importance to start with big companies listed in the Stock Exchange Commission (SEC) of Thailand to have clear anti-corruption policies (UNODC, 2019). This is due to the scale and the principal actors that have become wider and uncontrollable. Therefore, every lesson for the context cases of corruption should be comprehended in every citizen's mind. The process of understanding corruption must be organized collectively either formally or informally so that the reforming anti-corruption initiatives are not only seen as propaganda, but it must be highly immersed at all levels of citizens.

Moreover, the way every government tackle corruption and its impacts are very crucial. One of the positive initiatives can be reflected since the first review cycle of the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism (IRM) in 2010 which covers the chapters of the Convention on Criminalization and Law Enforcement and International Cooperation. The purpose of the Implementation Review Mechanism is to assist States parties in their implementation of the Convention. The Mechanism promotes the purposes of the Convention, provides the Conference of the States Parties with information on measures taken by States parties in implementing the Convention and the difficulties encountered by them in doing so, and helps States parties to identify and substantiate specific needs for technical assistance and to promote and facilitate the provision of such assistance. In addition, the Mechanism promotes and facilitates international cooperation,

provides the Conference with information on successes, good practices and challenges of States parties in implementing and using the Convention, and promotes and facilitates the exchange of information, practices and experiences gained in the implementation of the Convention (UNODC,2019). IRM is progressively being introduced in ASEAN and significantly shows that three countries namely Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand are the most prominent examples so far. The challenge and experience are important to other ASEAN member states to always be alert and well-prepared especially because peace and security is a precondition to achieve a safe and sustainable community.

Conclusions and recommendation

With the exception of a few of the top scorers in the Asia Pacific, most countries are failing in the fight against corruption and need to do far more. Governments must intensify their efforts and keep in mind the following issues when tackling corruption in their countries since there is no single solution to a deep-rooted and complex issue like corruption. Hence, a diverse national strategy is the key to resolve this problem. Governments should integrate anti-corruption targets into all Sustainable Development Goals including hunger, poverty, education, health, gender equality and climate action, and develop mechanisms to reduce corruption risks.

Many countries are implementing reforms that aim in the right direction such as improving access to information laws and stronger anti-corruption agencies while other countries are strengthening the prosecution of corrupt individuals. However, a glaring gap exists for most countries throughout the region: a robust and comprehensive strategy that focuses on the entire anti-corruption system including legal infrastructure and punishment, proper enforcement of rules, prevention mechanisms and engagement of citizens. Legislatures should adopt and enforce comprehensive legislation to protect whistle-blowers based on the prevailing international standards including those developed by Transparency International. While some countries are captured by an undemocratic political elite or institution may make small strides against corruption in the short-term, they cannot fight corruption effectively in the long-term. Low performing countries on the CPI share several undemocratic commonalities that hinder any long-term progress in anti-corruption. These include weak democratic institutions, laws, regulations and enforcement mechanisms. While a few authoritarian countries may

show some incremental progress in fighting corruption, this is unsustainable since any progress depends on the attitudes and mood of those dictators in power, as opposed to a healthy democratic system led by the people. Democracies have the necessary checks and balances, like judicial independence, which is the key to the sustainability of any anti-corruption enforcement plan. Without these and other democratic institutions and practices, countries cannot expect to tackle corruption effectively.

Based on the discussion above, it shows that a lot of strategies have been implemented by all the countries to cope with the corruption issues. These issues contributed to the most significant effects when they are not resolved and prevented. The discussion also shows that all the countries either developed, developing or least developed countries have their own policies in mitigating corruption issues. Therefore, the ASEAN Member States should have a comprehensive strategic planning and policies on corruption. The planning should provide the short-term and long-term planning and the most important things are education. The government should strengthen the existing education programs by identifying the weaknesses that can be improved. The element of ethical values should be inculcated starting from primary schools. The educators including the parents should show the best examples to the children and explain to them what is wrong and right. Besides, the agencies that are responsible to monitor corruption need to strengthen their powers so that they can do their job efficiently. These agencies should be independent and free from any influence or control from the government or political parties or decision maker

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