

Corruption in Governance of the Commons

Consequences and Reform Challenges

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Sundström, Aksel. 2013. Corruption in the commons: Why bribery hampers enforcement of environmental regulations in South African fisheries. *International Journal of the Commons* 7 (2): 454-472.

Sundström, Aksel. Corruption and violations of conservation rules: A survey experiment with resource users.

Sundström, Aksel. 2015. Covenants with Broken Swords: Corruption and Law Enforcement in Governance of the Commons. *Global Environmental Change* 31: 253–262.

Sundström, Aksel. Violence and the costs of honesty: Rethinking bureaucrats' choices to take bribes.

Sundström, Aksel. Exploring performance-related pay for civil servants as an anticorruption tool.

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Abstract

Research on governance of common-pool resources (CPRs) has discussed the design of regulations that govern the usage of CPRs and the need to enforce such rules. However, the focus on self-management in this literature may have led to a blind spot: States are frequently present in CPR governance as enforcers of formal rules and they are also quite commonly tainted with corrupt practices. Three knowledge gaps are identified in regard to 1) the consequences of corruption on compliance and enforcement, 2) the factors sustaining corruption in enforcement authorities, especially focusing on the role of violent intimidations and 3) the challenge of reforming corruption in such authorities, focusing on the role of performance-related pay (PRP) programs.

The thesis investigates these issues through studying the regulations governing South African fisheries. It uses empirical material obtained through survey experiments with fishermen affected by regulations and confidential interviews with key actors, including officials enforcing such rules.

The result from the investigation of compliance intentions illustrates the negative consequences of both petty and grand types of corruption. Moreover, the findings show the effect of corruption on compliance is moderated by resource users' support for such rules. The thesis also develops our understanding of how corruption affects enforcement. The investigation shows how inspectors receive bribes in the form of finance, food, or friendship, which they pay back through inadequate enforcement, information sharing, or involvement. Inspectors perceive it as futile to refrain from bribe taking when seeing corruption in other parts of the enforcement chain and among higher-ranking officers. This suggests that anticorruption reforms should target multiple sectors in the enforcement chain simultaneously and also scrutinize the conduct of senior civil servants at high-level positions.

The second focus in this thesis, the factors sustaining corruption, develops the argument that the presence of violent threats towards non-corrupt agents tends to make the refusal of bribes costly. The investigation shows that when citizens offer bribes to enable rule violations, this is a process of both temptations and threats: Officials that refuse bribes face intimidations by both citizens and colluding colleagues. This illustrates how violence may function as a mechanism to enforce corrupt contracts. Through reducing costs in such settings, bribe taking is partly a strategy of protection. These findings extend writings of what makes officials in government bureaucracies accept bribes, mainly focusing on incentives and expectations of others' behavior. Furthermore, this insight suggests that anticorruption policies should focus more on the security of officials in dangerous contexts.

The thesis also develops our understanding of the third focus of this project by providing insights into the challenges associated with reforming bribe taking in enforcement authorities. The investigation outlines how PRP bonuses are used as rewards from corrupt senior managers to colluding subordinates. Honest bureaucrats are instead isolated and receive no addition to their salary. These selective rewards make honest behavior increasingly costly and function as an incentive for civil servants to engage in bribery. In suggesting that PRP reforms are less suitable policy tools for reducing bribery in law enforcement organizations in contexts of high corruption, it contrasts influential authors that have proposed that such payment schemes are an efficient means to reduce bribery. This insight may inform future discussions on administrative reforms.

Keywords: Corruption, common-pool resources, institutions, public administration, bribes, South Africa.