



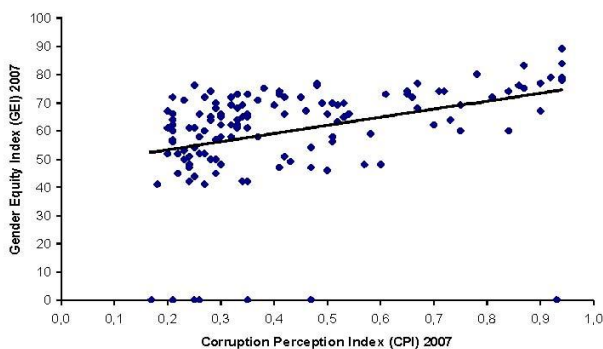
# Gender & Corruption in Development Cooperation

## Exploring the Nexus of Gender and Corruption

The importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women as a key to combat poverty and enhance aid effectiveness have been widely acknowledged. Corruption, by diverting resources, biasing decision-making processes, and undermining trust in politics and the economy, is a major stumbling block for achieving good governance and thus for sustainable development.

The nexus between both issues, however, has been rarely explored and established. But, as pointed out in GTZ (2004), on second glance, it becomes obvious that both are related to the distribution of power and the governance structure of society. Also, fighting corruption and enhancing gender equality both require quite similar policies, such as increasing transparency, fostering accountability, the rule of law and participation of civil society.

**Graph:** Gender Equity and Corruption



When comparing the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) from Transparency International and the Gender Equity Index (GEI) by Social Watch it can be shown that there is a strong correlation between both (see graph). Low levels of corruption are associated with greater gender equality, and vice versa.

However, a simple correlation does not equal causality. Is it a more equitable society that leads to lower levels of corruption, or are higher levels of corruption preventing women from participating in economic and political life, thereby making it more difficult for them to enforce or obtain their rights? But causality may also be explained by other factors, such as rule of law, democratic values, and freedom of press that all are known to have effects on both corruption and gender equality.

In November 2008, the GTZ and the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) organised a two-day international workshop that brought together academics, development agencies and NGOs to share knowledge, experiences, and their points of view on the nexus of gender and corruption.

The key message from a policy perspective (obtained both from the workshop and from existing research) is that there are potential synergies between promoting gender equality and fighting corruption. These are likely to be very specific and context-dependent, and are yet to be exploited in daily work of development cooperation. In a first step, this fact-sheet reviews the effects of gender equality on corruption. Then it exposes why corruption may undermine gender policy goals, and concludes by providing a look into specific sectors and some thoughts on a possible way forward.

## Gender Equality – Effects on Corruption

Can promoting gender equality reduce corruption? Early research suggested that women could be less corrupt than men. But there are reasons to doubt the effectiveness of the call for higher women's participation in the political, economical and social spheres of society in order to fight corruption. The overall institutional environment may be more important to explain observed gender differences in corruption. This underscores the pivotal role of good governance both for gender equality and fighting corruption.



Nevertheless, in certain specific contexts, promoting gender equality has had positive effects on anticorruption efforts. But this is not necessarily because women are inherently less corrupt than men, as is sometimes stated. It could instead be that:

- Fostering participation opportunities for women enables the participation of more stakeholders from civil society, private and public sectors in decision-making processes. This is likely to enhance the overall transparency and accountability, open further avenues for equality and thereby foster good governance.
- Conventional power structures in different spheres of society are usually male dominated. Enforcing gender equality and empowering women leads to a change in gender norms, behavioural codes and power mechanisms. Corrupt networks, mostly dominated by men, rely on these mechanisms and therefore may be weakened when women are introduced as ‘outsiders’ who do not belong to these corrupt networks.
- Research findings based on laboratory experiments presented during the workshop showed that women may act more opportunistically than men, thereby introducing higher risks into corrupt deals. That is, women may be more likely not to reciprocate the corrupt favour and instead to cheat the briber (Paper from B. Frank and J. Lambsdorff).

### Corruption as a Threat to Gender Equality

Achieving the goal of gender equality, like other policy goals, may be undermined severely by prevailing corrupt structures. More specifically, the implementation of gender equality standards and women’s rights may be subverted by corruption and remain an empty promise.

Corruption is a multifaceted problem. Each type of corruption has specific characteristics and impact gender in specific ways.

For instance, petty administrative corruption may take the form of sexual extortion or may impede the access of women to public services, as is often observed in the health sector. This does not affect only women, but may in fact impact the whole family since care-taking is usually a woman’s task.

Grand political corruption, in turn, may impede required legislative reform or the application of sanctions by obstructing the work of the judiciary. Also, powerful networks (usually male-dominated and corrupt) may use corruption as an instrument to circumvent rule of law and to restrict access to their positions.

Gender policies that do not take these structures into account are more likely to fail. Anti-corruption measures may be required alongside gender policies to enhance effectiveness of both reforms.

### Gender and Corruption in Sectors

As shown by the speakers at the workshop, there is a wide variety of evidence showing that corruption may particularly affect women. To analyze this connection, the discussions during the workshop suggested that it may be useful to look at sector-specific issues in order to make the gender-corruption nexus more practically relevant.

Besides two presentations on the health sector by Maaria Seppänen and Waly Wane, other sectors may be as interesting to look at.

- **Education:** A typical form of corruption related to the education sector, for instance, is the phenomenon of ‘sex-for-grades’, where sexual favours may either be used as a bribe or be extorted by teachers (Lilian Ekeanyanwu used the term “body currency” in her paper). This specific form of corruption requires a gender-sensitive anticorruption strategy. For example, just sensitising parents may backfire: they might choose to withdraw their girls from schools because of fear, thereby undermining girls’ attendance rates at school.
- **Informal Sector:** Gender-specific aspects are likely to play an important role concerning efforts of formalization of the informal sector. Women are usually major players in the informal sector, particularly in agriculture and informal businesses. However, efforts to formalize and grow their businesses, and thus to create jobs and enhance productivity, is often hampered by means of



extortion in registration processes. But it is likely that extortion affects men's and women's enterprises differently. Looking at both together may thus yield more effective approaches.



- **Justice:** The problems of discrimination in the legal sector are worsened by corruption. The combination of discriminatory attitudes and institutional cultures in combination with the predominance of corrupt networks affects not only the development of an equal legal framework but also of law enforcement. Social repercussions for women are especially high: for instance, when bringing a private or social taboo issue like gender-based violence to court. Adding to this, corruption causes uncertain financial burden for those trying to claim their own right, which can affect women more severely.

### The Way Forward

While many questions remain and require further research, the lively debates and discussions during the workshop led to a number of preliminary policy indications:

- Both theory and practice show that there are potential synergies between promoting gender equality and fighting corruption that could be harnessed.
- These synergies seem to be particularly relevant where public services are delivered: for instance, in the sectors of education, health and water.
- Mobilization of civil society and support of change agents in institutions have been acknowledged by all participants as important entry points.

- Building and empowering networks (including different stakeholders such as women rights activists and anticorruption experts) will not only shed more light on the issue but also exert further pressure on pre-existing corrupt power structures.
- Gender-responsive budgeting may increase the transparency of money flows according to gender. Therefore it can contribute to accountability mechanisms.
- Participants discouraged one-size-fits-all solutions or checklists.

### Gender & Corruption in Development Cooperation Eschborn, 10-11 November 2008

#### Panel 1: Experiences of International Organisations

- Presentation: Roohi Metcalfe (UNDP, Bangkok)
- Presentation: Seta Iskandarian (OSCE, Armenia)

#### Panel 2: Gender & Corruption: Country Examples

- Presentation and Paper: Hon Ndo Evina, Justice Prudence Galega (Cameroon)
- Presentation and Paper: Victoria Pereyra Iraola (CIPPEC, Argentina)
- Presentation and Paper: Damilola Taiye Agbalajobi (Redeemers University, Nigeria)

#### Panel 3: Gender & Corruption in Sectors

- Presentation and Paper: Waly Wane (World Bank)
- Presentation and Paper: Maaria Seppänen (University of Helsinki, Finland)

#### Panel 4: Research Approaches to Gender & Corruption

- Presentation and Paper: Björn Frank (University of Kassel, Germany)
- Presentation and Paper: Abu Hena Reza Hasan (University of Dhaka, Bangladesh)
- Presentation and Paper: Ngotho wa Kariuki, Susan Awasa (University of Buea, Cameroon)
- Presentation and Paper: Lilian Ekeanyanwu (Technical Unit on Governance and Anti-Corruption Reforms, Nigeria)

The workshop papers can be found on the following website: <http://www.gtz.de/de/themen/politische-reformen/demokratie-rechtsstaat/10524.htm>  
Or: <http://www.gtz.de/en/themen/politische-reformen/demokratie-rechtsstaat/10524.htm>



### Suggested Readings

Alatas et al (2009): Gender, Culture, and Corruption: Insights from an Experimental Analysis. *Southern Economic Journal* 73(3): 663–680

Alhassan-Alolo (2007): Gender and Corruption: Testing the New Consensus. *Public Administration and Development* 27, 227-237

Dollar, Fisman and Gatti (2001): Are Women Really the ‘Fairer’ Sex? *Corruption and Women in Government*, *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 46(4): 423-9

Goetz (2007): Political Cleaners: Women as the New Anti-Corruption Force? *Development and Change* 38(1), 87-105

GTZ (2004): *Corruption and Gender. Approaches and Recommendations for TA. Focal Theme: Corruption and Trafficking in Women.* Eschborn

Lambsdorff, and Frank (2007): *Corrupt Reciprocity - an Experiment.* Passauer Diskussionspapiere, Diskussionsbeitrag Nr. V-51-07, Universität Passau

Mukherjee, and Gokcekus (2004): *Gender and Corruption in the Public Sector.* Transparency International Global Corruption Report 2004, 337-339

Nyamu-Musembi (2007): *Gender and Corruption in the Administration of Justice.* Transparency International Global Corruption Report 2007, 121-128

Sung (2003): *Fairer Sex or Farer System? Gender and Corruption Revisited.* *Social Forces* 82(2), 703-723

Sung (2005): *Gender and Corruption: In Search of Better Evidence.* Transparency International Global Corruption Report 2005, 296-298

Swamy et al (2001): *Gender and Corruption.* *Journal of Development Economics* 64, 25–55

Transparency International (2007): *Gender and Corruption.* Working Paper # 3

Vijayalakshmi (2004): *Rent Seeking and Gender in Local Government in India.* Transparency International Global Corruption Report 2004, 340-341

### Contact

Dr. Frédéric Boehm	Mareike Zenker
E frederic.boehm@gtz.de	mareike.zenker@gtz.de
T +49 6196 79-2433	+49 6196 79-1532
I www.gtz.de/anti-corruption	www.gtz.de/gender

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Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1-5  
65760 Eschborn, Germany  
T +49 61 96 79-0  
F +49 61 96 79-11 15  
E info@gtz.de  
I www.gtz.de

