



# WOMEN AND CORRUPTION : Root Causes and Impact on Women's Potential

## Parallel Event Summary

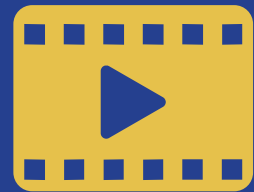
**Parallel Event organised on Friday, 19 March 2021  
as part of the NGO CSW65 Virtual Forum**



## Event Summary

The event focused on how corruption hampers the implementation of the 12 Critical Areas of Concern formulated within the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Panel examined how women can prevent victimisation by corruption, plus corruption interventions, individual and collective. Hereby, the event aimed to mobilise organisations into action, create support networks for those affected by corruption, offer methods to dismantle gendered corruption, and propose actions to address the multifaceted effects corruption has on women, families and communities. Furthermore, the event encouraged a robust discussion, as a platform of exchange for women activists as a means to interact with in-country peers to tackle corruption local to global.

**[Click HERE](#)**  
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**[the event](#)**  
**[recording](#)**



### Panelists

- **Jennifer Sarvary Bradford**, United Nations (UN) Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer
- **Lena Wängnerud**, Gothenburg University (Sweden), Professor in Political Science
- **Dr. Monica Kirya**, Senior Adviser, U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, Chr. Michelsen Institute
- **Lucia Bird**, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime, Senior Analyst
- **Emilia Berazategui**, Transparency International, Interim Head of Policy and Advocacy Secretariat

**Moderator: Stacy Dry Lara**, Graduate Women International, Executive Director; NGO CSW Geneva, President

**Organised by:** WUNRN, Graduate Women International and the NGO Committee on the Status of Women Geneva (NGO CSW Geneva)



## Concept Statement

Corruption is defined as dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power – typically involving bribery – often illegal or manipulative. This Panel will address the GENDERED dimensions of corruption, as women experience corruption in unique and specific ways. Adding to the disproportion of women as victims of corruption is the COVID 19 pandemic.

Corruption occurs everywhere throughout the world. There is documented evidence that corruption has been in existence throughout history. Yet, in the past 25 years, corruption has intensified, and received increased attention. The spotlight on corruption has brightened with COVID 19.

In all sectors of women's daily experiences, there is patriarchal power that can expose vulnerable women to corruption. Power, money, and privilege, are part of the male domain that enable corruption to be a definite dimension of gender inequality. This is especially true for women who experience compounded marginalization as indigenous women, elderly women and widows, ill or disabled women, and women who are migrants, refugees, or displaced.

Poverty, absolutely increases women's susceptibility to corruption. Even with the #MeToo Movement, women experienced corrupt demands for sexual favors as in exchange for money or work benefits.

Corruption is known for its negative impact on economics such as financial markets, businesses, income, and services. Yet, corruption varies in form and can include bribery, extortion, patronage, graft, and embezzlement. Corruption facilitates criminal enterprises such as drug dealing, money laundering, human trafficking and prostitution, illegal commodities, and more.

Existing social, economic, political, legal, and gender inequalities make women especially vulnerable to the consequences of corruption.

So, in today's complex and volatile world, corruption is everywhere. Women best be aware of ways to prevent victimization by corruption and understand corruption interventions. This Panel will consider tools and good practices for women to be alert to corruption and deal with corruption, individually and collectively, on personal, family, and community levels.



## Panelists



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Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer  
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## Moderator



### Stacy Dry Lara

Executive Director  
Graduate Women International (GWI)

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## Organisers



### Women's UN Report Network (WUNRN)

[Website](#)



### Graduate Women International (GWI)

[Website](#)



### NGO CSW Geneva

[Website](#)



# Presentation Summary



## Jennifer Sarvary Bradford

Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer  
United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime

### Women and leadership - More than a token of appreciation

While two World Bank studies at the turn of the millennium seemed to indicate that an increased number of women in power led to decreased corruption, this has since been refuted. While women are no less corruptible than men, women tend to be more risk-averse and have less opportunities to be corrupt. Being less empowered and having less access to power and decision-making, women are frequently excluded from the single-sex networks, which, consequently, tend to be predominantly male. A diverse environment is a more inclusive one – and one that therefore can disrupt such pre-existing networks.

The UNODC publication [The Time is Now – Addressing the Gender Dimensions of Corruption](#) highlights just how many of the gender dimensions of corruption are neither well understood nor sufficiently addressed worldwide. It also explores how gender equality policies can have a positive effect in preventing and countering corruption, and vice versa. With this departure point, the publication looks in closer detail how the gender dimensions manifest themselves in the private, public and political sphere, while charting past and potential future of promising measures and interventions to address the gender elements of corruption.

To address the gendered dimensions of corruption we should acknowledge that an inclusive society is a less corrupt society. We should build on the fact that gender equality and anti-corruption policies are mutually reinforcing. However, we must appreciate that national context matters – there is no one-size fits all when crafting gender-responsive anti-corruption measures. Finally, civil society has an important role to play to ensure outreach and awareness raising in order to ensure that gender is an agent for change in the fight against corruption.



## Monica Kirya

Senior Adviser, U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, Chr. Michelsen Institute

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### EDUCATION SECTOR CORRUPTION AND ITS IMPACT ON ACHIEVING SDG 4 – INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

According to the United Nations, progress towards achieving SDG 4 is too slow and over 200 million children, mostly girls, will still be out of school by 2030. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities, with 90% of children out of school in 2020 due to school closures.

In many developing countries, education is chronically underfunded despite substantial development assistance to the sector. UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring report says that the world faces an annual funding gap of 148 billion United States Dollars needed to achieve SDG 4 by 2030.

Even before COVID corruption in education was draining resources and hampering inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

The education sector is huge - comprising early childhood, primary, secondary, and tertiary educational institutions, as well as administrative structures, accreditation agencies, examination boards, and an array of licensing, inspection, and regulatory authorities. It employs hundreds of thousands of staff, consumes enormous amounts of supplies, and requires a vast infrastructure. The sheer size of the sector makes it susceptible to corruption, given the large sums of money allocated to it and the difficulty of supervision, inspection, and monitoring. Furthermore, education is a high-stakes endeavor, valued by both governments and parents, who recognise that education outcomes determine the futures of individuals and the nation. This creates incentives for providers of education services to demand bribes, and for parents and other users of the system to pay them in order not to miss opportunities.

Corruption in the education sector is wide-ranging and takes many forms. It includes: Policy capture: this is when policy decisions consistently and repeatedly serve private interests rather than the public interest. For instance, building schools in areas that already have many schools for political reasons, leaving poor areas underserved. This worsens inequality and undermines equitable development.



**Procurement corruption and financial mismanagement:** Corruption in procurement affects the acquisition of educational material (curriculum development, textbooks, library stock, uniforms, etc.) as well as meals, buildings, and equipment. As sales volume is guaranteed and the monetary value of such transactions is high, bidders eagerly pay bribes to secure the contracts. This results in poor quality products, wastage and loss, depriving schoolchildren of the materials they need to learn.

**Licensing and accreditation:** The liberalisation of education since the 1990s has led to a proliferation of private schools and colleges across the developing world. Institutions sometimes they pay bribes to get the necessary permits and authorisations. Negligence of duty by school inspectors is also widespread. The results are potentially devastating to learning outcomes, as schools with poor facilities and unqualified teachers abound.

**Corruption in admissions and examinations:** The imperative of obtaining good grades and competition for places in favoured schools and creates incentives for corruption. Those who cannot bribe to gain an advantage lose out the most.

**Corruption in Teacher management:** Recruitment decisions may be based on favoritism and nepotism, sometimes resulting in the appointment of unqualified teachers. The implications for teaching and learning are disastrous. Placements in rural schools tend to be unpopular and can be avoided by bribes, resulting in skewed distributions of teachers that leaves some schools overstaffed and others in crisis.

Ghost teachers are teachers who are perpetually absent and rarely show up to teach, or teachers who simply do not exist but are nonetheless paid salaries. They may be “created” by unscrupulous officials to siphon money from the system or occur when teachers die or migrate.

Teacher absenteeism is a form of corruption that is widespread problem in many countries. A World Bank study found that absenteeism was as high as 45% in Mozambique and 15% in Kenya. However, even some teachers who were present at school did not carry out their duties. The cost of these lost hours of learning to students is immeasurable, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds for whom school is the only avenue to social and economic advancement.

Private tutoring, known as the shadow education system, can be a form of corruption because it may reduce teachers’ motivation in ordinary classes. Some reserve compulsory topics for the private sessions, to the detriment of pupils who cannot pay.

Gender and corruption in the education sector

Research by the U4 Anti-corruption Resource Centre showed that female students, teachers, and parents are affected by corruption in both direct and indirect ways.



Direct effects occur when students face sexual extortion and favours – such as sex for grades. Sextortion or sexual corruption is abuse of power to obtain a sexual benefit. It is a type of bribery and extortion in which sex, rather than money, is the currency of exchange. It is also a form of sexual and gender-based violence. UNESCO uses the term ‘school-related gender-based violence’ (SRGBV). According to the centre for global development, across 10 developing countries’ data they analysed in 2020, a total of nearly 400,000 girls reported sexual abuse in school in 2019, and most of it was perpetrated by teachers. In Uganda, 4.6% of girls were abused at school in 2019, in Botswana – 3.2%. Millions of adult women today report having been raped by a teacher when they were younger.



## **Lucia Bird**

Senior Analyst

Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime

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It is widely recognized that men and women are affected by organized crime in different ways and that their reactions to organized crime are also different. There has been less focus on the foundational factors and institutions that have shaped these differing responses. A better understanding of the gendered aspects of resilience to organized crime can enhance the effectiveness of support provided to community organizations.

Failing to take into account gender considerations in community resilience programming can expose women to greater risks and vulnerabilities, and perpetuate or exacerbate inequalities. To start to address this gap, the GI-TOC conducted research throughout 2020, drawing on engagements with a wide range of stakeholders, and most importantly on relationships with a large network of resilience actors in communities across the world characterized by high levels of criminal governance, built through years of partnership and collaboration under the umbrella of the Resilience Fund. This included a series of long, semi-structured interviews with women activists and leaders of resilience movements in areas of high criminality, and a survey conducted with resilience partners across the world.

This presentation would draw on this research (the key findings of which will be made public in Q2 2021), to explore the key role played by gender in resilience responses to organized crime. The key informal rules that shape women’s role in responding to organized crime, and common typologies of responses which women repeatedly co-ordinate.



## Maria Emilia Berazategui

Interim Head of Policy and Advocacy Secretariat  
Transparency International

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Instead of remembering this as the year of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 should have been the year we celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of one of the most visionary agendas for women's rights and empowerment: the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The devastating impacts of COVID-19 are one of the reasons that the limited gains made in the past decades on gender equality are at risk of being rolled back. This is made worse by the failure of many countries to promote gender sensitive measures in response to the pandemic. Corruption, fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic, is likely to worsen gender disparities.

Even in times less extraordinary than this, some forms of corruption disproportionately affect women. Recent reports (here, here and here) have published disaggregated data on the impact that corruption has on women. In Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, recent surveys found that in several countries a majority of people think that anti-corruption complaints made by men are more likely to result in action than those made by women. Women are also less likely to know about their right to request information from public institutions, a basic right and tool in order to tackle corruption.

While the impact of corruption on women has become increasingly prominent on the global agenda, and some high-level commitments on this topic have been made, there is much room for improvement. A recent report published by Transparency International provides some ideas on how countries, especially those that are members of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), can start addressing the impact that corruption has on women.

Governments can make a significant difference if they design and implement public policies with a gender perspective. Policies should be developed in partnership with civil society, the private sector, trade unions and other stakeholders, and should include common anti-corruption components.

Integrating women's experiences into anti-corruption strategies, frameworks and action plans is key. Ideas for how countries could do this effectively, include the development and implementation of gender sensitive reporting mechanisms for anti-corruption, which tackle the social, economic and political barriers to women seeking redress when affected by corruption

A critical, and often missing, component is ensuring we have an evidence base for our actions. Collecting, analysing and disseminating gender-disaggregated data on public service delivery and corruption, including on sextortion, a form of extortion where sex is the currency of the bribe, is fundamental to success.

As is, timely access to sufficient, accurate and up-to-date information in order to design, implement and monitor effective public policies, and to better integrate gender into anti-corruption policies.

Collecting gender-disaggregated data on citizen's access to public services and social programmes, with a focus on sectors where women are traditionally the point of contact, and in public services specifically targeted at women, is crucial if governments are to have a broad impact.

This includes recognising and addressing sextortion as a form of corruption, and ensuring the justice system can effectively receive, investigate and prosecute complaints made by women

Recent surveys from Latin America and the Caribbean and the MENA region found that one in five people experiences sextortion when accessing a government service, or knows someone who has. This is unacceptable and needs to be ended once and for all. It is time for governments to recognise sextortion as a unique offence and amend their approach to tackling it at multiple levels.

As a starting point, governments could legally define sextortion as a criminal offence that has a corruption component and a sexual abuse component. They could apply specific criminal sanctions and assign trained gender-sensitive law-enforcement officials and prosecutors to receive and prosecute cases of sextortion.

Support the participation of women in public and political life

Participation in political and public life is a basic human right, yet women have fewer opportunities to participate in both, largely relying on policies designed by men to address their specific needs. Diversity and equal representation of different social groups in public and political life is a necessary condition for responsive and accountable public institutions.

The risks posed not only by COVID-19, but also by corruption, to gender equality require immediate action. While commitments and promises are a starting point, if not translated into concrete action they are just empty words.

Learn more: <https://www.transparency.org/en/blog/governments-have-to-get-serious-about-tackling-the-impact-of-corruption-on-women>



## Lena Wängnerud

Professor in Political Science  
Gothenburg University, Sweden

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Wängnerud's presentation showed that the inclusion of women in local councils across Europe is strongly negatively associated with the prevalence of both petty and grand forms of corruption. However, the reduction in corruption is primarily experienced among women citizens and in the areas of education and health.

Professor in Political Science at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, Wängnerud's main research area is representative democracy with a particular focus on issues of women's political influence and gender equality. She also studies the link between gender and corruption and gender gaps in anxiety about societal risks and threats. She is the author of the book *The principles of gender-sensitive parliaments* and co-editor of the book *Gender and corruption. Historical roots and new avenues for research*. Her publications have appeared in journals such as *Annual Review of Political Science*, *Politics & Gender*, *The European Journal of Politics and Gender*, *European Journal of Political Research*, and *Governance*.

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