



# COLLECTIVE ACTION ON CORRUPTION IN THE GENDER CONTEXT

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## Overview

As Africa looks forward to the next 50 years of development, the need for forward looking, innovative solutions with respect to economic, social and environmental sustainability is increasing. The ambitious goals set out in the African Union's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want outlines a roadmap for increased growth and stability on the continent as identified through seven guiding aspirations that focus on equality, peace, prosperity and unleashing the human capital of Africa, specifically those of women and the youth. Indeed, the third and sixth Aspirations are to see "an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law" and "development is people-driven unleashing the potential of its women and youth"<sup>1</sup>, emphasizes the need for a universal culture of institutionalized ethics in Africa with entrenched values of, among other things, gender equality.

The development and empowerment of women is a crucial step in realizing the Africa as envisioned by the African Union's Agenda 2063. However, corruption continues to be major hindrance to sustainable development, with a disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups, such as women and girls, youth, and the poor, who are often disenfranchised and unable to have a say in political issues of corruption or anti-corruption legislation. A 2011 survey from Transparency International found that women perceive higher levels of corruption than men but were less likely to report it.<sup>2</sup> A UNDP study on the perspective of corruption from grassroots women found that 76% of women think that corruption has prevented their access to public goods and services.<sup>3</sup> In the workplace, women are subjected to monetary bribes or disproportionately targets of sexual extortion in exchange for employment or operating a business, hindering their ability to earn income and or sustain their business. These studies show the importance of addressing corruption through a gender lens by providing safe and inclusive environments that are transparent and accountable, while at the same time leveraging women as agents of change.

There is a strong link between gender equality and corruption: countries that have made advances in women's empowerment and gender equality as seen through higher representation of women in decision-making positions have seen a decrease in corruption over time.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the inverse relationship between the advancement of women's empowerment and the levels of corruption in a country demonstrate the rising need for gendered anti-corruption analysis. Despite notable strides in anti-corruption work, corruption continues to profit as a multi-billion dollar industry, impeding economic, political and social development and further hindering sustainability efforts, macro-economic growth and business productivity.



### **How Businesses Can Apply a Gender Lens to Anti-Corruption Efforts**

The private sector has a key role to play in stimulating economic development and embedding sustainable principles in the market. With a global presence and greater investment capabilities, the private sector can be leveraged to establish an innovative, groundbreaking anti-corruption agenda. Current attention towards the importance of gender inclusive policies to combat corruption, particularly reducing the impacts of corruption on women, provides the private sector a distinct opportunity to develop a new comprehensive gender sensitive anti-corruption framework.

While many of the impacts of corruption on women fall within the public sector, the private sector can develop workplace gender sensitive policies, create safe and inclusive environments, involve women in decision making processes, and deliver alternative basic services to support women in reducing their risk of being subjected to corruption. Companies should include women in advisory processes to ensure all definitions of corruption — such as sexual extortion — are identified and addressed in corporate anti-corruption policies. To ensure anti-corruption efforts address the different impacts on men and women, it is essential that women are empowered to participate in the design, implementation and oversight of corporate anti-corruption policies and programmes. Furthermore, companies can address the gender dimension of anti-corruption programmes by using sex-disaggregated data and monitoring systems. Companies can be creative in thinking of ways to support and empower women to help reduce the disproportionate gender dimension of corruption. For example companies can provide health care or childcare services so women do not have to use public services; extensive training to managers on hiring and workplace policies to ensure formal employment is corrupt free; and opportunities for women to be part of decision making opportunities.

Additionally, effective anti-corruption efforts require contributions from all stakeholders including — government, business, civil society and local communities. In the gendered context, collective action among female business owners and employees through women's groups can be a powerful tool for combatting bribery and other abuses. By creating strong alliances with other women in the workplace and within communities, women's groups can serve as a support mechanism to address corruption as well as aid in the design of gender sensitive anti-corruption policies. The strength in numbers through collective action can also facilitate women's participation in politics and bring more women into decision-making bodies to ensure that the gender dimension of corruption is addressed in legislation.

### **The UN Global Compact and Gendered Corruption**

In June 2014, the UN Global Compact launched a strategy for deepened engagement with the Africa private sector towards the achievement of development goals on the continent working with African companies in the areas where the private sector can play a key role in driving change such as infrastructure, responsible investment and youth in a way that benefits business in all segments of the value chain. The cornerstone of the Global Compact Africa's initiative is the idea of inclusive business as the key to achieving sustainable development. By adopting and incorporating business practices that take the larger community into account, companies in Africa can take leadership in development efforts on the continent and make substantive contributions in the area of poverty alleviation, decent job creation, education, and peace and security in a manner that benefits long-term growth prospects and



market development. Anti-corruption is a basic building block of inclusive business, and a crucial step in creating positive market conditions that promote private sector development and investment in Africa.

The UN Global Compact's 10th Principle on Anti-Corruption can serve as a platform for learning and dialogue and guidance on how companies can be proactive in the fight against corruption. In conjunction with this, the Women's Empowerment Principles a joint initiative between the UN Global Compact and UN Women, provide a set of seven principles on how business can empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community. Taken together, the two can be used as an effective tool for companies in Africa to create a robust anti-corruption agenda that is both gender inclusive and gender aware.

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<sup>1</sup> African Union (2014). Agenda 20163: The Africa We Want. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.

[http://agenda2063.au.int/en/sites/default/files/agenda2063\\_popular\\_version\\_05092014\\_EN.pdf](http://agenda2063.au.int/en/sites/default/files/agenda2063_popular_version_05092014_EN.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Transparency International, '2013 Global Corruption Barometer' (Berlin, Germany: Transparency International, 2013), <http://www.transparency.org/gcb2013>

<sup>3</sup> UNDP. 2012. Seeing Beyond the State Grassroots Women's Perspectives on Corruption and Anti-Corruption. Accessed 15 November 2013 from <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/anti-corruption/Seeing-Beyond-the-State-Grassroots-Womens-Perspectives-on-Corruption-and-Anti-Corruption/>

<sup>4</sup> Transparency International, 'Gender, Equality And Corruption: What Are The Linkages?' Policy Brief #01, April 2014.