

U4 Helpdesk Answer

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The gendered dimensions of corruption in fragile and conflict affected contexts

Gender, corruption and violent conflict are closely intertwined. However, available evidence remains fragmented; most of the literature explores these relationships in binary terms: between “gender and conflict”, “gender and corruption” and “corruption and conflict”. Holistic analysis of the mutually reinforcing nature of the relationship between gender, corruption and conflict is currently missing.

Corruption fuels and sustains violent conflicts in three ways: by generating grievances in society that fuel violence, weakening the capacity of the state to protect its citizens from threats and by undermining trust in government and the legitimacy of the state. In turn, conflicts break down formal accountability structures, thereby creating conditions conducive to the abuse of power, which can express itself in greater levels of both corruption and gender-based violence.

The mutually reinforcing nature of the relationship between corruption and conflict has particularly egregious effects on women and girls, as well as other marginalised groups. Corruption in conflict settings reinforces existing pre-conflict inequalities, discrimination and predatory behaviour targeted at the most vulnerable groups.

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Query

Please provide an overview of the gender-specific corruption risks at each stage of a conflict cycle; how does corruption affect men, women, LGBTQI+ and other marginalised groups differently in conflict and post-conflict contexts? What are the gendered dimensions of anti-corruption measures in post-conflict settings?

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Caveat

There is little evidence available on the impact of corruption in conflict settings on lesbian, gays, bisexuals, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) people. As a result, this Helpdesk Answer primarily refers to gender in terms of the distinction between women and men. In line with the view of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

MAIN POINTS`

- Conflict exacerbates the discriminatory and disproportionate impact of corruption on women, girls and other marginalised population groups.
- Lower constraints on the abuse of power in conflict affected countries appears correlated with a rise in practices such as sextortion and survival sex, as well as forms of petty corruption such as bribery and extortion that have a disproportionate impact on women and girls (GNWP 2020).
- Corruption in post-conflict relief and recovery also has an unequal impact on women and other population groups who tend to be more reliant on public services and as such are more affected by the poor availability and quality of public goods (Transparency International 2019). Corruption that undermines post-conflict reconstruction can deprive women of equitable access to vital services such as healthcare, education, and water and sanitation.
- Post-conflict transitional justice is an important component of peacebuilding, but gender discrimination against women and girls raises additional barriers that prevent women and girls who have fallen victim to corruption or gender-based violence from seeking justice.

(2010), the authors acknowledge that gender “refers to socially constructed identities,

attributes and roles for women and men and society's social and cultural meaning for these biological differences resulting in hierarchical relationships between women and men and in the distribution of power and rights favouring men and disadvantaging women”.

Introduction

Gender, corruption and conflict are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing phenomena. There is broad consensus that both corruption and conflict exacerbate gender inequalities, while inequalities can drive violence by fuelling social grievances and unrest. Countries with lower levels of gender equality (Herbert 2014a; 2014b) and higher levels of corruption (Pyman et al. 2014) are more likely to experience violent conflict. In turn, violent conflicts can create an environment that exacerbates pre-conflict patterns of corruption and gender-based inequalities (Joly et al. 2020).

The impacts of conflict and corruption on societies are profoundly gendered. While men and women are both affected by corruption, evidence suggests that women perceive and experience corruption differently to men (Gerasymenko 2018). Corruption's gender differential appears to be particularly acute for women at the intersection of multiple factors of precarity, such as poverty, occupation in the informal sector, limited educational opportunities or lack of legal identity (Bullock and Jenkins 2020: 15). The effects of conflict, such as violent dispossession and displacement, increase the number of women who display one or more of these characteristics of vulnerability, thereby exposing them to coercive forms of corruption such as so-called survival sex in refugee camps.

Forms of gendered corruption have been documented at each stage of the conflict cycle. In fragile settings in which the risk of conflict breaking out is high, women appear to often be disproportionately affected by grand, bureaucratic and petty forms corruption, which themselves are drivers of social tensions. These forms of corruption include:

- Grand corruption diverts public resources away from social sectors (on which women tend to be more reliant) towards defence and infrastructure projects that offer corrupt leaders greater opportunities to line their pockets.
- Administrative corruption is typically perpetrated by male-dominated patronage networks that exclude women from economic and political opportunities (Barnes and Beaulieu 2014), or only grant access in exchange for money or sex.
- And at the level of petty corruption, women appear to be more likely to be asked to pay bribes in the health and education sector, which given that, compared to men, women often have relatively weaker access to and control over financial resources, can prevent them from accessing their entitlements.

During the active phase of a conflict, gender inequalities are compounded by a total breakdown of protection structures, leaving women exposed to gender-based violence, sextortion, survival sex and human trafficking. Throughout the humanitarian relief phase that commonly follows conflict, the most common gender-specific corruption risks relate to sextortion, survival sex and petty bribery. Finally, during the peace-making processes and post-conflict peacebuilding, corruption can inhibit efforts to investigate and redress gender-based violence.

Understanding how gender, corruption and conflict affect each other is crucial for the design of adequate, gender sensitive and sustainable anti-corruption measures and peacebuilding interventions. Unfortunately, available research tends to examine the links between “gender and corruption”, “conflict and gender” and “conflict and corruption” in isolation, leaving the interconnections between the three phenomena largely unexplored.

Gender, corruption and conflict: establishing a link

Corruption can be seen both as a cause and a consequence of conflict, with devastating impacts on gender and other forms of inequality. As a cause, corruption can contribute to the emergence of conflicts by exacerbating inequalities, creating social and political grievances, weakening the rule of law and undermining state legitimacy (Kukutschka 2023). It can facilitate the illicit flow of arms and aid the operations of extremist groups and organised crime syndicates (TI UK 2017), which may perpetrate gendered forms of violence such as femicide and trafficking of persons for sexual exploitation (Loaiza 2022). The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) confirms that countries with lower levels of perceived public sector corruption generally face lower risks of internal conflict, while countries in which the incidence of corruption is perceived to be widespread have much higher potential for conflict and threats of violence (Kukutschka 2023).

As an abuse of power, corruption undermines equal access to justice and essential services such as education and healthcare, making it more difficult to reduce poverty and inequality (Santos, Lakehal and Campbell 2020). The

undue influence of dominant (typically male) socio-economic interests diverts scarce public resources towards powerful groups, breeding inequalities, grievances and resentment (TI UK 2017). This may further create divisions between different social groups, especially in contexts where resulting disparities coincide with ethnic, religious or other identities. In such environments, fault lines between identity groups, defined by tribe, religion, race, ethnicity or nationality are likely to emerge, and can potentially escalate into violent outbreaks (Kukutschka 2023; Fragile States Index 2022).

Corruption in the security forces and law enforcement is particularly deleterious when it comes to peace and security. It undermines the capacity of the state to protect its citizens from security threats, and weakens the effectiveness of defence, security and law enforcement institutions, contributing to instability and insecurity (Joly et al. 2020). In Afghanistan, for example, high levels of corruption contributed to the collapse of Afghan security forces by degrading the ability of the Afghan government to hire, supply and retain a competent defence force willing and able to counter the Taliban (Vittori 2021).

While corruption has a destabilising effect on national peace and security, conflict creates opportunities for bribery, rent-seeking and the misuse of public resources. There have been instances where conflicts have been exploited by corrupt government officials to facilitate illicit resource extraction, add “ghost” soldiers to payrolls, and/or inflate defence budgets for their own benefit (Joly et al. 2020). These rent-seeking behaviours may provide incentives to belligerents to perpetuate conflict and insecurity.

In addition, corruption can fuel existing armed conflict by facilitating the cross-border smuggling of weapons and insurgents (O’Donnell 2006;

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Ralston 2014), thereby keeping conflict going, even where the state is subjected to arms or trade embargos (Schneider 2010). Where corruption is widespread, it can stymie regulatory and oversight systems, allowing criminals, kleptocrats and insurgents to launder profits from illicit black markets in humans, weapons, drugs, conflict diamonds, poached ivory, illegally harvested timber and oil to finance their activities (Gomez 2012; Zdanowicz 2009). Indeed, Santo, Lakehal and Campbell (2020) demonstrate how human trafficking thrives in conflict-ridden environments in which state institutions and justice systems have been eroded by violence.

Women and groups at risk of discrimination bear the brunt of corruption's impact on peace and security, as corruption and conflict conspire to exacerbate already existing inequalities and vulnerabilities to gender-specific forms of violence that pervade conflict settings (Halustyan and Kovalchuk 2014). For example, during violent conflicts, women and girls are disproportionately exposed to conflict related sexual violence and trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation. The CEDAW committee has long recognised that corruption combined with conflict fuels impunity, contributing to increased gender-based violence and human trafficking (GNWP 2020).

For the LGBTQI+ community, research has indicated that the mutually reinforcing aspects of discrimination, conflict and corruption heighten vulnerabilities further as the fear of exposure, entrenched prejudices and anti-LGBTQI+ laws create conducive conditions for the institutionalisation of extortive corruption and petty bribery when LGBTQI+ persons seek to access public services such as healthcare (Poder

Ciudadano 2021; Abut 2022b; McDonald, Jenkins and Fitzgerald 2021: 32-39).

Gender-specific corruption risks across the conflict cycle

Risks in pre-conflict settings

Pre-conflict settings are typically characterised by fragility, with governments often unable to distribute public goods and services to the majority of citizens in a just and efficient manner (McLoughlin 2012). The various forms of corruption such as nepotism, patronage and state capture, which frequently characterise life in pre-conflict contexts, undermine the quality of services, public safety and access to justice (Carranceja 2021). In turn, this both compounds social inequalities, including between genders, and generates grievances that can lead to violence. There is evidence that women in these contexts are disproportionately affected by grand, administrative and petty forms of corruption.

State capture¹ and grand corruption pose gender-specific risks for women and girls as they foster inequality by: (i) shaping law-making and policy implementation to benefit those who already occupy the most powerful positions and (ii) neutralising institutions and organisations that are intended to act as checks on that power and act as the voice of less powerful groups in society, especially women and communities at risk of

¹ State capture is a type of systematic corruption whereby narrow interest groups take control of the institutions and processes that make public policy, excluding other parts of the public

whose interests those institutions are supposed to serve (David-Barrett 2021).

discrimination such as the LGBTQI+ community (David-Barrett 2021). State capture exacerbates inequality as interest groups plunder public goods for the benefit of a few to the detriment of the wider population (TI UK 2017). In societies characterised by a high degree of state capture, funds which could go towards the provision of public goods and services are instead frequently allocated to sectors such as construction and defence, which offer better opportunities for graft and kickbacks due to their complex and secretive procurement processes (TI UK 2020). As such, it is little surprise that the impact of high-level corruption in fragile contexts is felt most keenly by the poorest and most marginalised sections of society, including women and girls (Domingo and Holmes 2013; TI-UK, 2020; UN Women 2015; World Bank 2011).

Administrative corruption is typically perpetrated by male-dominated patronage networks that exclude women from economic and political opportunities (Barnes and Beaulieu 2014), or only grant access in exchange for money or sex. In Ethiopia, for example, Degefa and Getachew (2022) point out that women are excluded from key decision-making processes in most political parties, which are characterised by “political violence, male-coded norms and sexist discourses”. Specifically, they note the practice of women candidates having to exchange sex in order to be allowed to stand as a candidate for a political party (Degefa and Getachew 2022).

Boehm and Sierra (2015) have documented how in other countries, women without access to patronage networks are forced to secure jobs, scholarships, and other services through the exchange of sex. Young women in search of jobs are particularly at risk of being coerced into sex with promises of employment (African Union 2018).

Other evidence from South Africa shows that societal inequality caused by systemic patronage and nepotism has profound effects on who can access justice, and clientelist networks provide access to jobs and public services such as health and education (Bapuji 2015). Those who have access to patronage networks can attain skills, resources and services, while those who do not have such access remain at the margins of service delivery, with limited access to knowledge, skills and health to break out of the poverty cycle (Corak 2013; Hudson & Claasen 2017). The exclusion caused by favouritism and nepotism disproportionately affects women and the poorest communities (Khuzwayo 2016).

Petty bribery can also have a destabilising impact on fragile societies and entails gender-specific risks for women and LGBTQI+ people. Women are more likely to be asked to pay bribes when seeking public services given their greater involvement in ensuring the health and education of the family (Boehm and Sierra 2015). UNODC data confirms that in Afghanistan (UNODC 2012) and the Western Balkans (UNODC 2011), women reported a higher risk of paying bribes when in contact with healthcare professionals. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Global Corruption Barometer found that women were more likely to pay bribes for health services and public school education, while men are more likely to pay bribes to the police or for utility services and identity documents (Chêne 2021).

One strand of research has shed some light on how cultural norms related to gender roles affect susceptibility to petty bribery. Asiedu, for example, uses micro-level data on bribery across 20 sub-Saharan African countries to examine the implications of social and cultural norms. His findings indicate that there is a relatively higher exposure of women to bribery in settings in

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which social norms dictate that women are responsible for performing household chores such as fetching water, collecting and fetching firewood (Asiedu 2020).

Risks in time of war

As in pre-conflict settings, gender plays an important role in how corruption is experienced during violent conflicts. While data on gender-specific corruption risks in times of war is scarce, there is a broad consensus that women and men experience corruption differently during active violent conflicts (Domingo and Holmes 2013; Myrntinen, Naujoks and El-Bushra 2014; UN Women 2015; World Bank 2011). During wartime, pre-existing gender inequalities and vulnerabilities are compounded by a total breakdown of protection structures, leaving women exposed to gender-based violence and corruption.

Sexual violence has been widely documented alongside other human rights violations during the recent conflict in Ethiopia. The conflict also created conditions in which food, medical supplies and fuel ran low in Tigray, which led to a desperate situation in which corruption flourished (Human Rights Watch 2022). Sextortion – a type of corruption that occurs when those entrusted with power use it to sexually exploit those dependent on that power (Transparency International 2020) – appears to have been particularly widespread alongside other forms of conflict related sexual violence (Mahderom 2022).

The widespread presence of weapons and ammunition in conflict settings produces a “coercive environment” that empowers perpetrators of gender-specific forms of violence (Hamilton 2019) and corruption such as

sextortion. In both the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan, for instance, illicit trade in and diversion of small arms and light weapons has exacerbated trafficking in women for purposes of sexual exploitation, sexual slavery and forced labour (UNSC 2019).

The breakdown of social ties and diminishing levels of regular economic activity in conflict settings may force women, girls and young boys to search for alternative sources of income through so-called survival sex. In Ethiopia, multiple testimonies have been collected that, faced with scarcity and starvation, many women and girls were forced to turn to survival sex, a problem compounded when many of them lost access to their money after banking services in Tigray were cut off by the federal government (Kassa 2022). Refugees International has recorded how soldiers as well as men in host communities exploited displaced women and girls, coercing them into sexual acts in exchange for food and small amounts of cash (International Rescue Committee 2021). According to interviews conducted by IRC with internally displaced people, this form of sextortion has become common, and 60% of people questioned knew of women and girls who had to exchange sex for food or petty cash (International Rescue Committee 2021).

Corruption also plays a central role in all stages of conflict related sexual trafficking as it facilitates the recruitment of potential victims, the production of fake documents, the facilitation of transportation and border crossings for victims, and the actual sexual exploitation. It also hinders criminal investigations, influences the imposition of biased court judgements and ultimately undermines protection for victims (IOM 2016). For example, collusion with law enforcement can ensure that the illicit activities of smugglers and

traffickers are not properly investigated, allowing them to operate with impunity. Sometimes, law enforcement officials accept bribes from smugglers and traffickers in return for turning a blind eye to their offending. In other cases, law enforcement officials may more actively facilitate smuggling or trafficking by helping to transport migrants or even returning escaped victims of trafficking to their exploiters (UNODC 2021).

Forced migration and displacement due to war aggravate vulnerability to trafficking. Displaced persons may have limited access to education, financial resources or opportunities for income generation, providing a fertile environment for traffickers to promise safe migration routes, employment and education or skills training, and deceive them into exploitative situations (UNODC 2018). Available empirical evidence suggests that sexual trafficking is widespread among refugees and migrants, especially illegal migrants. Merkle, Reinold and Siegel (2018) point to evidence that “women's bodies are used as a currency not only in individual corrupt transactions for the purpose of crossing borders illegally, but also as an exchange commodity for entire migrant groups”. Women and children who travel alone face a higher risk of corruption and sexual exploitation, especially in societies where patriarchal gender rules prevail (UNDOC, 2021).

Other forms of corruption such as drug trafficking and the illicit trade in natural resources and small arms are used to by armed groups to finance their operations and to exploit vulnerable populations, such as refugees or internally displaced people (GI-TOC 2016). Trafficking can weaken the rule of law, exposing the most vulnerable communities to more predatory forms of corruption and violence. In Syria for instance, drug trafficking has been cited as a factor in prolonging the war, which has left

millions of people, mostly women and children displaced (GI-TOC 2016).

Embezzlement during war also undermines the strength of defence and security institutions. When resources that are intended for the support of military or security forces are instead diverted for personal use, armies are left underfunded, demoralised, less responsive to their populations and less effective in addressing real security concerns, which can contribute to the outbreak, longer duration and recurrence of conflict (TI UK 2017). Corruption within the Congolese military, for example, has left the army devoid of resources to fend off rebel groups. This has arguably exacerbated and prolonged conflict in the country as army munitions are sometimes sold to rebels, putting the ability of the army to contribute to security entirely out of reach and contributing to continued violence in the resource-rich provinces of North and South Kivu (MacLachlan 2017).

In Nigeria (CNN 2015; TI-UK, 2017) and Afghanistan (BBC 2021; Vittori 2021), corruption has rendered security forces incapable of countering the progress of extremist groups due to inadequate supplies, non-existent “ghost” troops, and the inability to turn available funding into operational effectiveness.

In sum, women nearly always pay a high price during conflict as war heightens risks of sexual exploitation, extortion and trafficking (TI UK 2017).

Risks during relief, recovery and reconstruction

Even once the active phase of conflict has subsided, humanitarian relief and recovery processes can be marred by corruption (Jackson

and Lough 2022). Corruption in post-conflict relief and recovery has an unequal impact on women, who account for a larger proportion of the world's poor in almost all societies (UN Women 2018; Oxfam 2020), especially if they are older or single mothers (UN Statistics Division 2015). Generally speaking, this means women are more reliant on public services than men and as such are more affected by poor availability and quality of public goods (Transparency International 2019; UNODC 2022).

Corruption that undermines post-conflict reconstruction and recovery can thus deprive women of equitable access to vital services such as healthcare, education, and water and sanitation. For instance, strains left on health and education systems during violent conflicts can be aggravated in the post-conflict period by embezzlement and the misallocation of public funds. Officials and service providers such as doctors or teachers, who may themselves be struggling financially in post-conflict settings, may also seek to extract bribes and other favours from rights holders. This affects the effective and equal provision of these services, perpetuating deeply entrenched social divisions that produce the kinds of grievances that trigger conflict (TI UK 2017).

Corruption can also plague the provision of humanitarian assistance to post-conflict areas across the programme cycle, from the policymaking level and the management of humanitarian aid to the point of service delivery (Walker and Maxwell 2009). In fact, the gendered nature of humanitarian responses, such as supplying food to post-conflict areas, can aggravate existing gender inequalities and susceptibility of women to corruption (Hyndman and De Alwis 2003). Scarce resources including food and non-food items are often managed by a small number of people, usually men, who can

choose to assert their power over the more vulnerable members of the community, especially women (Zicherman 2006).

Examples of this kind of abuse of power can be found in the “sex-for-food” scandals, in which peacekeeping forces and aid workers condition the supply of food and other resources on sexual favours from women and children (UNDP and UNIFEM, 2010). Such scandals are widely documented. In Burundi, CARE unearthed several cases where sexual relations were demanded in exchange for access to food aid (CARE 2004). In Syria, UNFPA found that aid workers delivered aid to women's homes in exchange for sex (UNFPA 2018).

Tragically, due to the deployment of military and peacekeeping personnel, the post-conflict phase is often associated with an increased demand for sexual services, which can drive higher rates of people trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation (UNODC 2020). Higher demand for sexual services, combined with lack of basic services or economic opportunities for populations in humanitarian settings provides incentives for trafficking networks to extend their operations into post-conflict zones, or for new networks to develop (Smith and Smith 2011).

In some contexts, sexual exploitation takes the form of forced marriages. The loss of livelihoods and social support systems provided by family can force women and girls into transactional sex for money, food or protection as a survival strategy (Chêne 2009). A report by the United Nations Population Fund offered examples of women and girls marrying officials for a short period of time for “sexual services” in order to receive meals (UNFPA 2018). In Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Yemen, some families traded away their daughters for marriage to obtain some money to support the rest of the family. Others perceive this practice as a way to

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protect their daughters from sexual and gender-based violence, including trafficking for sexual exploitation (UNODC 2018).

In Kenya, Grabska (2011), reporting on the Kakuma refugee camp, noted that forced marriage rates rose as “traditional pressures” on girls to marry and leave the family home were exacerbated by a lack of food and resources in the aftermath of the disaster. In other instances, when humanitarian relief was insufficient for their families, women resorted to prostitution or survival sex (UNHCR 2011).

Gender and cultural norms further expose women to specific forms of corruption during post-conflict relief efforts. Culturally embedded divisions and gender-based prejudices combine with the tough emergency situations to impose extra burdens on women’s living conditions as they are often responsible for finding shelter, food and water, as well as for seeking appropriate care and protection for their families (Ariyabandu 2005). In a bid to fulfil their care and domestic responsibilities, women are put in a position where they must continually contend with different forms of corruption.

In Uganda, for example, research in refugee settlements unearthed evidence of sexual exploitation of refugee women who venture into national reserves and military bases in search for firewood, or who needed to rent land to cultivate food crops. The women reported being coerced to participate in sexual activities before they could get access to firewood or land (Wanyana 2021).

Women’s care and reproductive roles mean that relative to men they have a higher and differentiated need for health services. Women are more likely to make regular trips to hospitals to seek medical attention for family members, as well as to cater for their own biological and reproductive needs. Any conflict is likely to have

imposed bodily harm and serious injuries on women and girls over above these standard needs. Sexual violence during conflict heightens women’s exposure to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (Nawaz and Chêne 2009).

As conflicts generally interrupt the functioning of hospitals, clinics and schools, in the relief and recovery phase of a conflict, women will have to compete for the limited services available, and access might be highly dependent on the ability to pay bribes. Moreover, the social stigma that shrouds both corruption and sexual violence can make it very challenging for women to demand accountability for injustices to which they have been subjected (Nocita 2019).

Addressing gender-specific risks in post-conflict settings

Reconstruction presents an opportunity to “build back better” – to remedy pre-existing inequalities and injustices, and build more just, equal and resilient communities. It is an opportunity to push for the greater empowerment of women and groups at risk of discrimination and to promote gender equality in general (Jackson and Lough 2022; Idris 2022).

Addressing corruption immediately after armed conflicts end is therefore critical. Experience from five countries studied by UNDP suggests that anti-corruption (including integrity, transparency and accountability) should be systematically mainstreamed into post-conflict state-building interventions as early as is practicably feasible after war ends (UNDP 2010). This is important because once corruption becomes embedded in reconstruction processes, it entrenches patterns of governance that are

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difficult to dislodge (Jackson and Lough 2022). It may also undermine the efficiency, effectiveness, legitimacy, and credibility of peacebuilding efforts (Hopp-Nishanka, Rogers and Humphreys 2020) and entrench imbalanced power dynamics that feed into corruption and discrimination cycle.

While highly recommended, concerns that anti-corruption measures can also undermine delicate relations and spoil fragile peace in post-conflict settings are widespread. Designing effective and sustainable anti-corruption measures therefore necessitates the mainstreaming of conflict sensitive and transformative approaches to avert any unintended negative consequences (Hopp-Nishanka, Rogers and Humphreys 2020). Any transformative anti-corruption measures should be rooted in social justice, focusing on local ownership and empowerment, and “do no harm” (Hopp-Nishanka, Rogers and Humphreys 2020). This means integrating “corruption sensitivity” to fully understand and analyse how one’s own actions interact with the context of conflict, corruption, and the political economy context and based on this understanding, take steps to avoid destructive impacts, and maximise positive impacts on corruption and conflict (Hopp-Nishanka, Rogers and Humphreys 2020).

Principles for designing gender-responsive anti-corruption measures

Understand the context

Adopting anti-corruption measures that work in post-conflict settings requires a good understanding of the local context. Without a comprehensive understanding of the context-specific (gendered) drivers of corruption, anti-corruption efforts can backfire and potentially

trigger renewed instability (Zaum 2013). Sound gender-sensitive political analysis is therefore needed to map the different constraints in capacity, political will and legitimacy to adapt anti-corruption interventions that speak to the realities of a given context (Rose 2019).

Effective context analysis should apply the underlying principles of gender mainstreaming, which include collecting reliable gender disaggregated data about the size, health, needs, income, housing conditions, age and sex of affected populations, as well as engaging women and marginalised groups in decision-making (Chêne 2012).

To identify gaps and opportunities towards gender transformative change, context analyses should further seek to understand how gender may be expressed in different contexts by studying the cultural and gender norms that influence the division of labour, access to and control over resources, as well as the relative condition and position of women, men, girls and boys in society. Appreciating these nuances can identify the context and gender specific corruption vulnerabilities of women, men, girls, and boys, and inform anti-corruption measures which aim to transform the negative social and gender norms underlying these vulnerabilities.

Promote non-discrimination as a basis for inclusive and stable societies

Post-conflict reconstruction involves a redistribution of power that represents an opportunity to reshape patterns of power to include women, youth and communities at risk of discrimination in state-building. Anti-corruption interventions in post-conflict contexts should therefore strive to consistently promote gender equality and equity and inclusion of women social

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inclusion and human rights (OECD 2007). These are important elements that underpin the relationship between state and citizen, and form part of long-term strategies to prevent fragility. Strategic ways to promote non-discrimination may include engaging women and marginalised communities in peace negotiations and in all levels of post-conflict governance, peace negotiations and designing of anti-corruption measures, rather than addressing gender after political or peace deals are done (GIWPS 2020). Fostering broad coalitions across civil society, politics and public institutions, including working with grassroots women-led organisations and providing core funding to women's organisations to address corruption risks in their contexts may also go a long way in not only promoting non-discrimination but sustainable anti-corruption measures (Castillejo 2011).

It is also an opportunity to employ gender transformative approaches (GTAs) with the goal of a more inclusive and stable society. GTAs are defined as “a method for tackling the roots of gender-based inequalities, in particular constraining gender norms, and thereby kick-starting a process toward greater gender equality” which involves engaging both women and men to fight for change, so that the burden does not fall on women alone (CGIAR no date). According to Prevention Collaborative, projects that use GTAs include participatory approaches that foster critical and personal reflection about gender roles, norms, and inequalities, promote more equitable behaviours and norms, and transform the norms and structures that promote inequalities (Prevention Collaboration no date).

Do no harm and then build trust

Another important principle is the importance of avoid causing harm and possibly exacerbating not only corruption but also other drivers of

conflict. Post-conflict settings are highly delicate. Intervention introduced in these settings can facilitate peacebuilding, but they can also drive conflict (Saferworld 2012). For example, in Afghanistan, when anti-corruption coalitions put pressure on a governor to resign for illicit drug trade, he instructed his followers to join the Taliban, massively destabilising the security situation in that area. This well-intentioned anti-corruption effort exacted an unanticipated toll on the broader conflict context, leaving behind a climate that heightened women's insecurity and exposed them to extreme forms of violence (Ventura 2022).

This evidence from Afghanistan is useful in illuminating that efforts to control corruption can easily cause harm and contribute to destabilisation (Johnston & Johnson 2015). Gender blind anti-corruption measures, which overlook existing and intricate gender dynamics and norms in post-conflict settings are also likely to aggravate inequalities and heighten risk of harm for marginalised communities. It is therefore essential that before introducing anti-corruption measures into any context, extensive research is done to understand the context, what types of anti-corruption approaches pose the greatest risk for this pattern and what appropriate measures can be taken to mitigate the risks. Johnston (2010) also proposes prioritisation of trust-building both between state and citizens and among different social groups by prioritising the provision of basic services as a starting point to mitigating negative impacts of anti-corruption measures (Clausen, Kraay and Nyiri 2009).

Prioritise prevention

Early corruption prevention intervention can reduce fragility, lower the risk of future conflict and other types of crises, and contribute to long-

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term development and security. International actors must therefore aim to take rapid action where the risk of conflict and instability is highest. A greater emphasis on prevention should also include sharing risk analyses; looking beyond quick-fix solutions to address the root causes of state fragility; strengthening indigenous capacities, especially those of women, to prevent and resolve conflicts; supporting the peacebuilding capabilities of local organisations to address emerging corruption related risks in their contexts (OECD 2007).

Measures for countering gender-specific risks of corruption in post-conflict settings

Short-term measures

In post-conflict settings, the immediate needs and safety of the affected population should be addressed. Nonetheless, there is still potential for both anti-corruption and gender-sensitive measures to be included within these immediate responses and for “integrity, transparency, and accountability” to be mainstreamed into relief activities (UNDP 2020: 62).

If corruption becomes fixed in the reconstruction process from the outset, then it is difficult to dislodge, so contextually sensitive approaches should be integrated as early as possible (Jackson and Lough 2022: 11). And, as noted in a review into donor projects in fragile contexts by the OECD, many donors miss an opportunity by failing to effectively link support to gender equality with wider efforts to address conflict

(OECD 2017: 51). It is key that both gender equality and anti-corruption be embedded right from the start of engagement with conflict and post-conflict states and that women’s voices inform the design of all interventions to prevent them from further harm.

Coordination during humanitarian relief and aid

Humanitarian aid and relief are typically the first response from the international community to those in a conflict zone, and these should be gender-sensitive and inclusive to help mitigate the gender-specific risks of aid. For women, the immediate focus of aid should be their physical safety (Cities Alliance 2022: 16), which can address urgent dangers such as sextortion, unequal access to healthcare, and other abuses. Interviews conducted with women in Ukraine by Cities Alliance have shown that, during the conflict, women mobilised across the country using their existing networks to get aid to civilians in need (Cities Alliance 2022: 21).

Noting this example, such networks can provide a gateway for international actors to supply aid to local communities while also ensuring that women’s voices are acknowledged in these processes. Cities Alliance recommends that in the case of Ukraine (which can be applied to other conflict contexts), international actors need to partner with these local civil society organisations (CSOs), women leaders and mediators to provide aid and immediate physical safety support to women in the country (Cities Alliance 2022: 23). Coordination and consultation with local groups is integral to ensuring women are heard and international aid is gender sensitive.

Coordination is not only important in ensuring a gender-sensitive aid response but also to ensure the good governance of aid provision. The UNDP

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highlights that a coordinated stance on anti-corruption will ensure each intervention interacts with the others and taking joint positions on anti-corruption will allow donors to do so who may not be bold enough in isolation (UNDP 2020: 42). It recommends joint statements and formalised collaboration with other donors to publicly show the commitment to anti-corruption, and, additionally, this approach could also be applied to donors' commitment to gender equality.

Long-term measures

One of the most important lessons learned when implementing anti-corruption measures in the reconstruction process is that of patience with the timeline needed to achieve change (GIZ 2020: 33). In post-conflict states, change can be slow, and longer-term measures may be slow to come to fruition. Nonetheless, once the context analysis and short-term relief and anti-corruption measures have been applied, there are several measures that can be implemented to ensure stronger governance and gender equality in the reconstruction process.

Social accountability and local organisations

The UN highlights the need to remove obstacles that impede women's participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding by ensuring that there is a systematic consultation with women's organisations to "develop effective, context-specific and gender-aware solutions" (UN 2012). As set out by Jackson and Lough, an "us and them" dynamic between international and local actors can cause projects to stagnate (Jackson and Lough 2022). Therefore, any donor-designed gendered anti-corruption measures must ensure mutual accountability and consultation between

international bodies and local community groups to ensure integrity and buy-in from citizens (Jackson and Lough 2022).

Indeed, working with local organisations is essential in that they "can disseminate their findings to concerned citizens through their own networks of personal contacts... [and] can also engage the population in ways the media cannot, by holding meetings, workshops and rallies" (Boucher et al. 2007: 38). Local community groups play an important role in establishing and enacting social accountability mechanisms in post-conflict and fragile settings. Chêne notes that one of the most effective means for controlling corruption in post-conflict settings is to engage local community groups in mechanisms such as participatory monitoring of public expenditure and scorecards (Chêne 2012). Here, employing a gender transformative approach would help to ensure there is equal and constructive engagement of both local women and men, with the end goal of gender-aware solutions. This approach would lighten the burden of women and help to establish sustainable and inclusive change.

One notable example of donor support and consultation with local community organisations was UNDP's "grants facility" in Afghanistan, which was used to build the watchdog capacity of civil society actors, strengthen CSOs to act when confronted with corruption and empower them to take ownership of the monitoring of government services (UNDP 2020: 54).

Another example, in Liberia, was The Poverty Reduction Strategy Tracking Network (comprising of eight Liberian CSOs) which monitored and engaged authorities in the implementation of the national development plan (U4 Brief 2011: 3). This network used community scorecards and interviews to assess the level of participation, accountability, access

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to information and availability of the government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Projects (U4 Brief 2011: 3). They identified that, in the Lofa County, a grant of US\$82,000 that was allegedly given for the construction of a women's centre was never accounted for, and the centre never constructed (U4 Brief 2011: 3). The government has since committed to integrating citizen feedback in its monitoring and evaluation framework (U4 Brief 2011: 3).

An independent media

A study into the role of independent media in fragile states found that the "capacity of the media to hold power – including corrupt power – to account is at least as substantial as many other anti-corruption arenas, and often more so" (Deane 2016). Indeed, many anti-corruption interventions (such as citizen monitoring) rely on the assumption that the media can use these outputs to inform policymakers and educate other citizens (Deane 2016). Therefore, to support an independent media, international donors can work with journalists and media outlets in post-conflict (and conflict) settings through training and mentoring sessions, as well as establishing consortiums of journalists to report on corruption related issues (GIZ 2020: 24).

Ensuring that women's voices are represented and heard in the media is important for future abuses of power to be held to account. The Global Alliance on Media and Gender sets out several principles for achieving a gender-sensitive independent press in their Framework and Plan of Action, which can be implemented when working with national media outlets in post-conflict settings. Through consultation with multiple stakeholders, they identified the following as necessary to achieve a gender equal media:

- gender mainstreaming of journalism education
- improvement of women media worker's working conditions
- ensuring the safety of women journalists
- encourage reporting on issues affecting women (such as sextortion and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings)
- and use of the media to promote gender equality (GAMAG no date)

Public sector reform

Reforming the public sector during the reconstruction phase is another important long-term anti-corruption and peacebuilding measure. Jackson and Lough identify that public administration reform should be a key priority in the reconstruction process, and that "basic meritocratic and integrity standards should govern hiring and promotion, backed by specific tools to ensure enforcement" (Jackson and Lough 2022: 12). As noted by the OECD, a fragile situation can present a rare opportunity to establish a new governance system that is free from corruption (OECD 2012: 92). The three features identified in relation to the public sector which are needed to counter corruption are: a meritocratic system, training and proper remuneration (Boucher et al. 2007: 31). Supporting measures that ensure these should create a public sector that is depoliticised and reduce petty bribery from staff (Idris 2022: 10).

These key anti-corruption changes can be implemented alongside gender equality initiatives to enable women in the public sector to contribute to reform and reconstruction. The Asian Development Bank (2012) sets out several strategies for ensuring gender mainstreaming in public sector reform, and to ensure policies set

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out by these institutions are both gender-sensitive and accountable. Their most notable entry points to promote gender equality are:

- to update the national action plan on gender equality
- support gender-responsive budgeting and accompany with capacity development for the ministry of finance and other sector agencies
- introduce affirmative measures in civil service recruitment to achieve gender parity
- support the setting of quotas or targets for women's representation in decentralised decision-making processes and structures
- and support the development of gender equality and domestic violence laws (ADB 2012: 3)

Gender-sensitive anti-corruption legislation

As noted in the above section, reforming national legislation is key in post-conflict settings, and this is an additional opportunity to address gender-specific corruption risks and repeal discriminatory laws (Agathe and Klugman 2020). International organisations can have a key role in supporting this process once they have applied the key context analysis and consulted with local groups. As an example, in Sierra Leone, the UNDP supported the drafting of some laws including the Local Government Act, Public Procurement Act, as well as gender-based laws including the Domestic Violence Act (UNDP 2020: 53).

Supporting such gender-sensitive anti-corruption policy reform requires the collection of disaggregated data on gender (OECD 2021: 24). The OECD recommends evidence-based

assessments of gender impacts and considerations into the various dimensions of public governance (such as public procurement and service delivery management) to be conducted at all stages of the policy cycle (OECD 2021: 25). Importantly, this data collection should be conducted with local CSOs and women's groups, and they should be consulted regularly on the formation and impact of government policies (OECD 2021: 26).

Through consultation with women's groups and the understanding of the specific gender-based risks facing them, anti-corruption legislation can then be tailored to ensure their safety. For example, whistleblowing laws can be designed to increase the likelihood of women reporting corruption and other forms of misconduct. Based on an experimental survey of over 2,000 employees, Feldman and Lobel (2010) found that women are more incentivised than men to act if there are anti-retaliation protections and legal duties (Feldman and Lobel 2010). Therefore, whistleblower legislation in post-conflict settings should include robust protection mechanisms to ensure women can speak up against corruption freely.

In the case of curbing sextortion in post-conflict and conflict settings, for example, Feigenblatt (2020) sets out several recommendations that can be enshrined in national legislation which include:

- access to appropriate resources, including physical and psychological health services, financial and legal support for those who report
- clear guidance on the reporting process
- protection against retaliation
- and coordinated efforts between anti-corruption and gender-based violence

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reporting mechanisms (Feigenblatt 2020)

Justice sector reform

The UNDP notes the importance of engaging with the judiciary in post-conflict settings to review its independence and integrity for it to deal with corruption cases (UNDP 2020: 53). To enforce gender-sensitive anti-corruption legislation, the justice sector should be reformed and strengthened, and international actors can help to inform and facilitate this process. This involves providing training to justices of the peace, magistrates, clerks and bailiffs, and supplementing their salaries, as well as engaging with informal justice systems to ensure they are refashioned in accordance with contemporary human rights standards (UNDP 2020: 53).

To ensure a gender-sensitive justice system, Agathe and Klugman recommend that transitional justice mechanisms be supported in post-conflict states, which include truth commissions, reparation programmes, sanctions, mobile courts and others to ensure women needs are addressed and guarantee justice for women (Agathe and Klugman 2020: 32). Post-conflict reconstruction should be seen as an opportunity to build the justice system from the ground up to include women's participation as judges, lawyers, and community leaders (Agathe and Klugman 2020: 34). Supporting grassroots justice actors such as unions of informal sector workers, civil society justice defenders, community paralegals, human rights activists and other community leaders are all important for advancing justice for women – and the anti-corruption agenda (Agathe and Klugman 2020: 36).

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