

Women and corruption in the water sector

Theories and experiences from Johannesburg and Bogotá



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The UNDP-SIWI Water Governance Facility

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Summary

Corruption exists in many forms and the motivations behind an individual pursuing or accepting illicit conduct may be as diverse as the types of corruption. It is imperative to better understand the underlying aspects of corrupt behaviour and their implications in order to achieve several interlinked targets under the Sustainable Development Goals and to generally improve 'good' governance through more transparent, accountable and effective institutions and procedures. Among those are the gendered roles and special responsibilities that are associated with women in many societies, which make them subject to diverse forms of corruption to obtain water for the household's needs.

This report draws on a literature review into the dynamics of, and rationales for, corruption, including the theories of the Principal-Agent Model, the Fraud Triangle, Need or Greed and institutionalized corruption. Into this mix gender is added, drawing on the discussions about a 'fairer sex or fairer system?', risk aversion, and differences in opportunities and networks. This analytical framework has been complemented by the findings on sextortion. The empirical section of the report builds on a survey administered among a group of water professionals and eight focus group interviews on the theme, conducted in Johannesburg and Bogotá.

Many of this study's findings confirm previous research. Among these is the perception that women tend to be less corrupt because they have fewer opportunities to engage in such behaviour. Another is that they are more averse to engaging in corruption because they stand to lose more if caught, as the general expectations on women in society are different. In both Johannesburg and Bogotá, women are the people primarily responsible for safeguarding access to water for the home, and for ensuring that it can be paid for. In their capacity as

the main water provider, women may often be expected to engage in corrupt behaviour – such as paying a bribe to get a water supply connection for the home, or accepting that the water bill gets hiked by one's landlord. This sometimes places different expectations and pressure on women than on men, with 'sextortion' being the prime example. In both cities, focus group participants had experiences of threats or violence being used to convince them to pay bribes, and the soliciting of sexual favours by water utility staff.

Much of the gendered experience of corruption in the water supply sector is tainted by the feeling of being powerless in relation to an authority upon which one relies for the fulfilment of a basic need. But there are also examples of how a corrupt system can be beneficial, or perceived as such. For instance, at the cost of some 'hush-money', a household's water meter may be 'misread' and a lower bill presented.

The purpose of this report is to explore the links between gender roles and corruption in the water sector mainly from the perspective of end users at the household level, and share insights from lived experiences and practices. There are still vast gaps in knowledge with regards to how and why women experience and engage in corruption differently than men, not least in the water sector. Moreover, there are few examples of how gender can be integrated in anti-corruption and integrity work. An initiative undertaken by the UNDP-SIWI Water Governance Facility (WGF) in 2015 to develop a specific gender and corruption training module within the framework of the Water Integrity Capacity Building Programme for the Middle East and North Africa is presented at the end of this report.

Introduction

Corrupt conduct threatens the achievements of the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and has a negative impact on the enjoyment of the human rights to water and sanitation (Baillat, 2013). A dysfunctional state apparatus – lack of supervision, incompetence and corruption in the public sector – affects the water supply and sanitation sector in most parts of the world (Rothstein, 2015). It impacts all aspects of the sector, from a household’s access opportunities and the state’s provision of water for domestic use, to infrastructure for water treatment, and distribution and resource management. It is estimated that corrupt and dishonest practices globally deplete the water sector by “as much as 30–40 percent in ‘highly corrupt’ countries” (Plummer, 2012: 126), while Davis (2004: 61) finds it “not unreasonable to suspect that these institutions [water & sanitation service providers in South Asia] regularly spend 20–35% more on construction contracts than the value of the services rendered; have a substantial proportion of their resources diverted by staff seeking to court favor with influential individuals; and provide services free of charge to hundreds or thousands of illegally connected households.” This makes corruption one of the key water governance challenges.

There is no reason to believe that the water sector is much worse than other sectors: According to a cross-sector comparison undertaken by the Transparency International global Corruption Barometer, a higher numbers of citizens encountered bribery in the electricity, health and police services compared to water (Rose-Ackerman and Truex, 2012). However, some of the most pernicious effects of corruption are the hardest to measure. They relate to how hidden agendas divert decisions away from agreed or common objectives and frustrate the efforts to build society, often leading to lower interpersonal trust and welfare as a result (ibid).

One of the missing links is how gendered experiences of corruption in the water supply sector are addressed. To achieve the interlinked targets under the SDGs, it is vital that we improve our knowledge from both the social sciences and the situation on the ground to understand the underlying aspects of corrupt behaviour and their implications. To this end, the following goals are particularly relevant: Goal 5 (to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women and girls), water availability under 6.1 (to achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all), and governance and integrity issues, especially 16.5 (to substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms) and 16.6 (to develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels).

Water, corruption and women

Women are overrepresented among the world’s poor as a result of engrained social norms and legal, economic and political disadvantages, and they face higher barriers than men to breaking the cycle of poverty (Kabeer, 2010). Globally, women carry the main responsibility for many activities that require access to water: household chores such as cooking, cleaning, and washing and food production for own consumption and local markets (WEDO, 2003). When access to water is not provided directly to the home, women are primarily responsible for manually providing it (UNICEF and WHO, 2012). Women and the poor are most often the main victims of corruption in water governance, unduly punishing the weakest in societies; poor households are also twice as likely as wealthier households to be asked for bribes, and the cost of bribes represents a higher share of their total income (Transparency International, 2008, 2013). As corruption tends to increase the price and decrease the quality of social services, it reduces the household budget of poor households that depend to a higher degree on public services, since they lack the funds to pay for private alternatives (Boehm, 2015).

The combination of women’s overrepresentation among the world’s poor and their gender role as caretakers makes them more dependent on well-functioning social services throughout their life span. As the UNDP (2011) highlights, poor-quality drinking water and sanitation services disproportionately affect children from poorer families; many children in such communities die from diarrheal illnesses spread by contaminated water.

As a group, women have less control over natural resources such as land and water than men, and do not have the same access to capital to pay for private alternatives when government provided services fail. As a consequence, they are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of corruption on social service provision (UNDP and UNIFEM, 2010). Even if corruption is not the only reason for irregular or unsafe access, it siphons money from public investments and household budgets, hurting the vulnerable and helping the powerful (Gupta et al., 2002). The possibilities for women to seek justice when victimized are also hampered by higher levels of illiteracy, ignorance of laws and de facto lower legal protection, as women’s rights are not equal to men’s in many countries (Hossain, Musembi and Hughes, 2010; Transparency International, 2010).

Women are also disproportionately affected by a specific form of corruption, namely ‘sextortion’ – abuse of power where the currency of the bribe is partly or wholly sexual favours (IAWJ, 2012).

Box 1 - Gender

The concept of gender refers to the role, position, social attributes, and opportunities associated with being male or female. Gender determines what is expected, allowed, and valued in a woman or a man and is part of the broader sociocultural, economic and political situation. These attributes and opportunities are socially constructed and are context and time-specific, and changeable.

Adapted from UN Women (2015)

It is important to recognize that corruption exists in many forms and that the drivers behind an individual pursuing or accepting illicit conduct may be as diverse as the types of corruption. This report aims to shed light on corruption in the water sector through a gender lens, with a focus on household uses. The following section provides an analytical framework, drawing on established as well as more recently added understandings of corruption, after which follows empirical findings from Bogotá, Columbia and Johannesburg, South Africa. The discussion emphasises how need, inequality and collective action must be understood as drivers behind and solutions to rationalization and the taking advantage of opportunities. Lastly, the conclusions draw upon the lessons learned from a gender and corruption training module developed within the framework of the Water Integrity Capacity Building Programme for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

Methodology

This report is one of the key outputs from the WGF's research project *Water, integrity and gender*, carried out in 2014–2015. The report draws on a literature review, supplemented by primary data collected through a survey and two sets of focus group discussions. The survey was conducted in 2015, based on questions sent out to 30 professionals working on water, gender and/or anti-corruption issues, and answered by 13 women and 10 men. Eight focus group interviews, comprising in total 68 women, were arranged with female public water supply users. Four groups were interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2014 and four in Bogotá, Colombia, in 2015, by two students conducting their respective qualitative studies and fieldwork in these locations. In the former, interviewees were selected among the residents of the suburbs or township areas of Johannesburg, belonging to the low socio-economic status group. Equally, in Bogotá, the participants were women from low income areas responsible for ensuring access to water in their family. They were also purposefully selected for having experience of contacts with the public officials of the water provision company and being engaged in some civil society organization relating to community and social issues.

When discussing issues of gender and corruption, a distinction is made here between survey respondents in their capacities as professionals (playing official roles in public services), and respondents who are customers in the sense of being beneficiaries of public services.

Analytical framework

Understanding corruption

Corruption is commonly understood as dishonest, illicit or fraudulent conduct, misuse of office and/or abuse of entrusted power. It is mostly assumed to involve some undue private profit (for someone) due to abuse of an entrusted authority; however, as will be discussed below, the element of *private gain* is not always clear. The activity or inactivity can involve acts that are legal in a country, yet unauthorized within the organization in question. However, the definitions and typologies of corruption are controversial both within the academic literature and the broader world (among others, Groenendijk, 1997; Bauhr, 2012; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2015). Furthermore, in their understanding of corruption, women are more prone to include certain types of violence and threats, non-delivery of services and sextortion – activities that are either not included in the standard definition, or tend to be overlooked in anti-corruption legislation and policies (UNFPA et al., 2012).

Corruption is often divided into grand and petty corruption depending on the amounts of money lost and the sector where it occurs, and the level in an organization where the corruption takes place. *Grand* corruption refers to bribery, embezzlement or insider trading involving large sums of money handled by people in the top levels of government or private companies – acts that distort policies or the central functioning of the state, enabling leaders to benefit at the expense of the public good. *Petty* corruption involves smaller sums of money compared with grand corruption, but may result in a substantial economic burden on households. This refers to everyday abuse by low- and mid-level public officials and is common in the interface between customers and service delivery staff, with bribery, speed money and kickbacks being common types (UNDP, 2008, Transparency International, 2016).

Furthermore, the fundamental links between corruption, power and inequality should be kept in mind. However, these relationships are not simple and straightforward. Research in Asian and Latin American countries indicates that while embezzlement indeed affects the distributive outcomes of government spending, when corruption takes the form of vote-buying it may actually reduce inequality as it involves the distribution of resources and the building of clientelistic linkages (Wong, 2017).

Corruption in the water sector | The part of the water sector that is capital intensive is particularly vulnerable to grand corruption. Technically complex investment and procurement processes obstruct transparency, and with decision-making

often being shared between many government agencies and administrative levels, the risk of regulatory loopholes is great. Meanwhile, water services provision tends to require frequent interaction between customers/clients and administrative and technical staff and therefore provides many opportunities for petty corruption, such as bribing and the rigging of water meters (UNDP, 2011; UNDP Oslo Governance Centre et al., 2013).

In a drinking water supply chain, corruption can be divided into public-to-public, public-to-private and public-to-consumer interactions. Corrupt activities typically include:

- Favouritism, clientelism, cronyism and nepotism, collusion or bribes with respect to water service, infrastructure contracts or the allocation of water resources,
- Cutting red tape in applications for reservoir water or groundwater abstraction,
- Officials turning a blind eye to transgressions,
- Expediting a household's connection to municipal water supplies,
- Officials profiting from giving 'licenses' to informal water providers, or letting self-assigned persons be in charge of a tap whereby they charge money for opening it,
- Central and/or local level elite capture of water provision services,
- Political mismanagement of municipality utilities to win votes with low tariffs,
- Establishing 'vote banks' by installing public standpipes,
- Paying bribes or illegal fees to water companies for standard services,
- Paying a bribe for a second connection to the same household,
- Falsifying water meter readings.

(adapted from Plummer and Cross, 2006; , UNDP, 2011; WIN, 2015).

In addition to the above, private-to-consumer interactions may involve corrupt elements. Landlords may take the opportunity to hike the price on a water bill where meters are not installed. It is very common in large parts of the world for private vendors to engage in selling water to households that are not connected to the piped water supply network. Corruption can prevent the building of new pipe networks and the installation of connections, forcing the poor to [continue] buying expensive and often low quality water from vendors (cf. UNDP, 2011).

Box 2 - Some causes of corruption in the water sector

- Weak enabling environment (e.g., weak rule of law, political environment),
- Low levels of accountability and transparency,
- Weak technical and management capacity: In many cases it is difficult to distinguish between (legal) maladministration and corruption,
- Political capture of water policies and projects,
- Gaps in laws and policies,
- International dimension of corruption (multi-national companies, etc.).

Source: UNDP, 2011.

Understanding the dynamics of, and rationales for, corruption

The Principal–Agent Model | The principal–agent model (Rose-Ackerman, 1978) is often referred to as the predominant theory of corruption. This model describes the relationship between the *agents* – one or more individual persons or entities who are entrusted with the power to make decisions on behalf of, or that impact on, another actor – and the *principal*, the persons, organization or society, etc., that are impacted by these actions and decisions. The dilemma lies in the fact that the principal cannot perfectly monitor and control the behaviour of the agent(s), giving the latter opportunities to act in their own interest rather than those of the principal. Principal–agent models assume that the interests of principal and agent diverge; that there is informational asymmetry to the advantage of the agent, but that the principal can prescribe the pay-off rules in their relationship (Groenendijk, 1997). A typical example involves an employee (agent) engaging in dishonest conduct, such as taking a bribe in exchange for a falsified water meter reading. Because it lacks control over both its staff and the metering system, the water supplying company (principal) loses revenue from customers.

Many anti-corruption measures depart from the principal–agent model, but there is also a vast body of research extending the basic model and even questioning its relevance. One important development is the addition of a third party to the equation: the client or customer who is subject to the agent’s misconduct, but who may also have an interest in the exchange (cf. Klitgaard, 1988). Groenendijk (1997) gives the example of a situation where a licence – as such an authorized action – is granted to company C by an agent for company A, for which C pays a bribe or kickback in return. The bribe constitutes an illicit transaction and makes C (or at least its representatives) an essential accomplice in the corruption. Because company C, just as company A, has no control over the agent’s or agents’

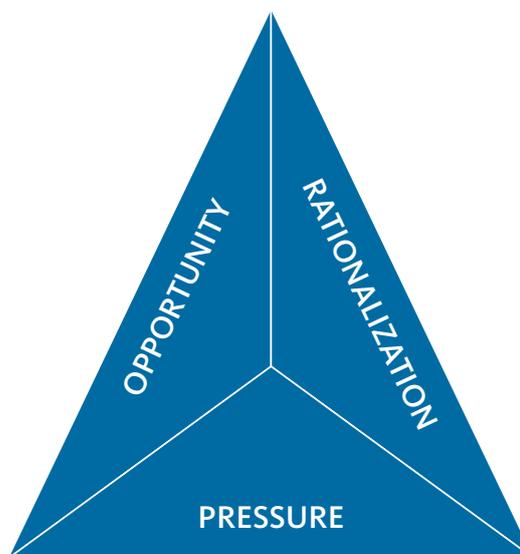
actions and non-actions, Groenendijk labels company C a ‘second principal’ to the corrupt agent.

Similarly, where a household has a water meter that is misread on purpose, it may benefit from the opportunity to pay a lower bill at the cost of some ‘hush-money’. As a result, this customer could be regarded as an accomplice; a second principal.

In practice, the labelling may not be so straightforward. A report about grassroots women’s experiences of corruption concluded that “poor or absent service delivery is viewed as strongly linked to the abuse of power of those in leadership positions who effectively *allow their subordinates* to engage in corruption by turning a blind eye or by not holding them to account” (UNDP, 2012, p. 22; emphasis added). In such a situation, neither the traditional principal–agent relationship, nor the extended one – wherein the women would themselves be regarded as principals – are directly applicable.

The Fraud Triangle | The fraud ‘triangle’ theory amplifies the understanding of what drives people to violate trust and engage in corruption, or not. This complements the principal–agent model’s description of the relationship between the actors of a corrupt transaction. Based on insights from criminology, Cressey (1953) concluded that the answer is found in the interaction between pressure, opportunity and rationalization.

Whereas the perceived *pressure* or incentive in this theory is usually of financial art, the perceived *opportunity* is about the position that the fraudulent person is able to abuse, such as certain insights or the authority to control resources – but also relates to the likelihood of being caught. The third element in the triangle, *rationalization*, suggests that the individual must formulate a justification or have a certain attitude to engage in unethical behaviour. Examples span from “Everyone does it” and “This is reasonable”, to “I had to steal to provide for my family” and “I was entitled”. In the water sector, the argument may be, “If it wasn’t for me, how else would these people be served?”



The Fraud Triangle

The fraud triangle is mainly applied to economic crime to capture the three key motivations that lead staff to commit fraud against their employers. The theory is also useful to understand some of the general behaviour, enabling environment and moral reasoning behind corrupt conduct, and how the different elements mutually reinforce each other.

Corruption as the norm and a collective action problem

Corruption is hardly ever the act of one subversive individual – rather, it is very often systemic and institutionalized (Klitgaard, 1988). In Teorell's (2007) analysis, one determinant of corruption is income inequality. Water utility staff and other public sector employees are under-paid in many countries and the common expectation is that remuneration will instead come from those benefitting from the services. Endemic corruption is a strong societal institution and must be viewed as *the rules of the game* in which public officials play a part. Treisman (2007) argues that the risks are smaller in autocratic states where bribery and favouritism are often a normal part of doing business. Esaray and Chirillo (2013) add that in such contexts, not being corrupt may be riskier than corruption.

Corruption is often systematic and deeply intertwined with politics and the social–economic fabric of society because it is not caused by some individual culprits. Politicians combating corruption might be as corrupt as their opponents, and may use the rhetoric of anti-corruption to attack political opponents and create a smoke screen to hide their own corrupt practices (UNDP 2011). Societal status may be another determinant of an individual's engagement in corrupt behaviour.

The 2015 World Development Report highlights that where a shared belief – such as that misuse of public office is for the benefit of oneself and one's family and friends – is widespread, expected and tolerated, 'corruption' can be an internalized *social norm*. Moreover, this pressure to abuse one's position can come from within the bureaucracy, for instance in order to funnel money upwards to the ruling party, with punishment for public servants who express different opinions and violate the norms. Public officers may find themselves treated as outsiders or find that their career becomes stalled, and therefore choose to express support for the status quo simply to avoid the costs of being different. Thus, societies can get stuck in an equilibrium in which corruption is the rule, even though privately much of the population would prefer a clean public service (cf. World Bank, 2015).

Systemic corruption problems can be explained by Ostrom's (1998) *collective action* theories that highlight the importance of the norms of reciprocity, reputation and trust, whereby individual action is at least partly influenced by expectations about how other individuals will act (Bauhr, 2016). Persson, Rothstein et al. (2013) argue that in societies where corruption is a rule rather than the exception, framing corruption as a principal–agent problem will likely make the conventional policy recommendations of the global anti-corruption agenda fail, as one cannot assume the logic of the 'principled principals'

who are willing to hold corrupt officials accountable. Where corruption is the expected behaviour, the benefits of falling in line are – at least in the short-term – likely to outweigh the costs. This reasoning is certainly applicable to the water service provisioning sector in a large number of countries.

Need or greed-based corruption | The model suggests that citizens engage in corruption either to receive services that they are entitled to but which are conditioned upon corrupt exchanges ('need'), or to receive extra advantages ('greed'). The latter case occurs when the bribe or other illegal transaction is used to gain personal and additional advantages, and is more difficult to detect and mitigate as both actors benefit from the misconduct.

The need/greed model complements Klitgaard's expanded principal–agent model by placing the customer or client centre stage. It also complicates it by highlighting the difference in voluntariness between different corrupt transactions, distinguishing between situations ranging from extortion (need) and win-win positions (greed). The latter is the case where the customer/client is more of an accomplice in the transaction. Where the situation is characterized by need, the corrupt behaviour is motivated by private gain for the agent but less so for the customer/client. The power imbalance leaves the customer with few alternatives than to participate to ensure access to certain basic services and resources.

The differences in the relationship between the agent and the customer/client will also affect the dynamics of the fraud triangle. For both agents and customers, the rationalization of and pressure for and against participating in corruption varies along the need/greed continuum. Moreover, as Bauhr (2015) suggests, citizens tend to engage in collective action to increase transparency and accountability when corruption is needed to gain access to 'fair' treatment, as opposed to when it is used to gain illicit advantages.

As will be shown in this report, the need/greed model is effective in explaining a great deal of the corrupt activities taking place in the water sector, in particular why women engage in paying bribes.

Adding gender to the corruption equation

Fairer sex or fairer system? | Are women less corrupt than men? In an oft-cited study published by the World Bank, Mason and King (2001) draw on studies by Dollar et al. (1999) and Swamy et al. (2000) to answer in the affirmative. They conclude that increased representation of women in parliaments and public offices reduces the overall level of corruption and increases the probability of corruption being reported. Dollar et al. state that women, the 'fairer sex', are more trust-worthy and public-spirited than men. In addition, from studying Georgian women entrepreneurs' willingness to give and receive bribes, Swamy et al. (2000) conclude that there are global gender differ-

ences in corruption tolerance, linking their findings to women's biologically nurturing role in reproduction and child-rearing. The subsequent World Bank report urged governments and the private sector to employ more women as they have higher ethical standards and are more risk averse and therefore "can be an effective force for rule of law and good government" (Mason and King, 2001, p. 13).

The assumptions about women's inherent integrity were challenged by Sung (2003) who, after revisiting the data about women in parliaments, concluded that a more robust explanation as to why some countries have lower levels of corruption than others is the presence of functioning liberal democratic institutions. A political system built on the liberal traditions of fairness, pluralism and tolerance, alongside an independent judiciary and government transparency and accountability, is conducive to female involvement in public affairs, proportional representation and gender equality (ibid). According to empirical evidence from a replicate study, having more women in government administration or increasing women's representation does not affect corruption; women's social roles as mothers or caretakers cannot explain their behaviour. Instead, progress in reducing corruption is best achieved by ensuring good governance and solid institutions with checks and balances of power (Sung, 2012).

Esaray and Chirillo (2013) propose that women are less susceptible to corruption in democracies but are equally susceptible in autocratic systems, while Alhassan-Alolo (2007) concludes that integrating women into the public realm should be championed and institutionalized as a right, not as an anti-corruption imperative. In a toolkit published by the OECD (Sim, Blanes, Bockelie, et al., 2017), the authors recommend the application of a rights-based approach when encouraging women's participation in government, as opposed to the oversimplified and instrumental strategy of infusing institutions with women as a corruption cure-all.

Research into the 'quality of government' finds that [the existence of] gender-equal legislative institutions have proved to be an important factor for the success of anti-corruption efforts (Rothstein, 2015). Meanwhile, the UNDP (2011: 15f) concludes that "good democratic practices at national and local government levels – including fair elections, accountability of politicians towards their constituencies and free press – help a great deal in curbing corruption in general. This also applies to water governance, which after all, is not an isolated sector".

Gender, risk aversion and corruption | The literature contains many studies that seek to explain variances between men and women by referring to gender – the different roles ascribed to women and men. For instance, through their customary function as caretakers and in charge of the household, women develop more 'helping' behaviours than men. An individual's social role and presence in the public domain may play an important part in her exposure, and therefore also attitude, to corruption. Because of social norms and systematic dis-

crimination, women are held to a higher standard than men and, as a result, are punished more severely than men when their involvement in corruption is exposed. Hence, they are socialized into being more risk averse (cf. Esaray & Chirillo, 2013). In most societies, women as a group have less power and fewer assets than men. When calculating costs and benefits, it is rational for women to abstain from corruption and instead focus on the wellbeing of the family and on getting money for food, schooling, etc. (Rothstein, 2015).

Adding to the gendered understanding of corruption, studies from Mexico indicate that it is more common among female politicians to have a background in social movements. To engage in corrupt behaviour would therefore be particularly risky since it could damage their relationship with civil society and their future political career (Wängnerud, 2012).

However, Alatas, Cameron et al. (2009, p. 362) conclude that when confronted with a common bribery problem, differences in behaviour may be more cultural than gender specific. Furthermore, laboratory experiments have shown women to be much less prone than men to engage in corruption when monitored, but not when the risk of being caught and punished is very low or non-existing. Thus, women are not more intrinsically honest or averse to corruption than men, in the laboratory or in the field (cf. Frank, Graf Lambsdorff and Boehm, 2011; Schulze and Frank, 2003).

The role of opportunities and networks | While it is difficult to find direct measures of closely knit male-dominated networks or norms/signals hindering women, Sundström and Wängnerud (2016) show that a high level of corruption indicates the presence of 'shadowy arrangements' and male-dominated networks that benefit those already privileged. Beck (2003) argues that patronage networks tend to uphold traditional power relations and thus often reproduce female subordination in politics, while Alhassan-Alolo (2007) highlights how women's low participation in the labour force in many sectors limits their opportunities to engage in corruption. In male-dominated work places, corrupt transactions are managed through male networks; gender-based power structures that often exclude women. Goetz (2007) demonstrates that some of the recent studies about gender and corruption record *perceptions* about propensities to engage in corrupt behaviour and suggests that, rather, the gendered nature of access to politics and public life shapes *opportunities* for corruption.

In other words, gender does indeed shape opportunities for corruption, but this is different from the myth that women's gender determines their reactions to corruption. In sectors dominated by women, for example health, "where women professionals are dealing with women clients or with socially inferior class, women professionals are not averse to exhorting unofficial payments" (Goetz, 2007: 98).

Sextortion – gendered non-monetary corruption | The term sextortion is used by the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) to describe “*the pervasive, but often ignored, form of sexual exploitation and corruption that occurs when people in positions of authority – whether government officials, judges, educators, law enforcement personnel, or employers – seek to extort sexual favours in exchange for something in their power to grant or withhold*” (IAWJ 2012). Authority can be vested by law, codes of professional responsibility or community expectations. When those entrusted with authority use it to obtain a personal benefit rather than in the manner and for the purposes it was entrusted to them, they abuse their authority.

The IAWJ notes that sextortion involves a request – whether explicit or implicit – to engage in sexual activity. It need not involve sexual intercourse or even physical touching, but could be any form of unwanted sexual activity, such as exposing private body parts or posing for sexual photographs. Furthermore, there must also be a corruption component: The perpetrator must abuse his position of authority by attempting to exact, or by accepting, a sexual favour in exchange for exercise of the power entrusted to him. Sextortion involves both official corruption and corruption in the broader sense of the word: people who exercise the authority entrusted to them for personal benefit rather than with the integrity, fairness and impartiality expected of their position. There must be a *quid pro quo*, meaning a ‘this for that’ exchange.

Sextortion has not been extensively studied and is generally not recognized in global and national surveys about corruption or international conventions such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption. However, cases of extortion for sexual favours have been documented in various sectors, such as education, health, humanitarian aid and the judiciary system, although the scale and dynamics of sextortion in different sectors and countries are still largely unknown (IAWJ, 2012). Transparency International (2016b) stresses that women are a primary target, and that victims are forced to suffer in silence for fear of reprisal. Furthermore, sextortion increases gender inequality and hampers a woman’s development.

The fear, shame and stigma associated with being a victim of sextortion, in combination with the lack of protection of women’s rights in many countries, makes it less likely to be reported, which in turn leads to misleading data (UNDP and UNIFEM, 2010). Apart from the psychological and physical trauma, sextortion can lead to unwanted pregnancies and transmission of diseases, with direct and indirect economic consequences and far-reaching social consequences.

Strict application of anti-corruption laws in some countries, such as in the USA, could mean that when sexual coercion is regarded as bribery, it is possible to prosecute the bribe giver as well as the bribe receiver. In other words, a private citizen (almost always a woman) from whom sexual favours are extorted by a public official could be deemed to have ‘paid’ an unlawful bribe, and be an accomplice in a criminal act (Gitlin, 2016). A generous interpretation of coercion as a defence should guide the interpretation, both with respect to situations characterized by need (sex in exchange for something to which the woman is already entitled) and when the woman is not otherwise eligible, and seeks an advantage (greed). Differences in power define the circumstances; even when the force involved is subtle there may be threats of future retaliation from a person in an authority position. Sex in exchange for a benefit may or may not involve active consent and initiation from the woman’s side, but should still be viewed in terms of coercion (cf. Gitlin, 2016).

Lessons from the field

Country contexts

Both countries explored for this study are characterized by poverty existing in parallel with extreme wealth and, hence, tremendous inequality gaps. They share these features with a very large number of others in the global South. The calculations of the often criticized Gini coefficient, which represents the income or wealth distribution of a nation's residents, have labelled South Africa as the most consistently unequal society in the world. The most recent ratio is 63.4 (a value of 100 represents absolute inequality). Colombia, at 53.5, ranks among the five most unequal Latin American countries (World Bank, 2017).

Bogotá | South America's Bogotá is the capital and largest city of Colombia, with an estimated population of between 8 and 11 million people as of 2014. Bogotá has a water supply system run by the water and sewerage company, Empresa de Acueducto, Alcantarillado y Aseo de Bogotá (EAAB), which is a municipal water utility that has been operating since 1955. The Potable Water and Basic Sanitation Regulation Commission (CRA) is the Government agency responsible for regulating tariff-setting and services.

Under Article 49 of the Colombian Constitution, health is a public service for which the State is responsible, and all individuals are guaranteed access to services that promote, protect and rehabilitate it. Water and sanitation services are among the basic services specified. According to Article 366,

[A] basic objective of the State's activity will be to address the unfulfilled public health, educational, environmental, and drinking water needs of those affected.

For such an outcome, in the plans and budgets of the nation and of the territorial entities, public social expenditures will have priority over any other allocation.¹

To realize the human right to water and sanitation, as recognized in UN resolution 64/292 of 2010, some local governments provide a minimum essential amount of free water to families living in poverty. In Bogotá, according to the District Water Plan of 2011, the minimum essential amount is provided free of charge to households classified as strata 1 and 2 and that has a connection to a formal service provider. The free volume of

Box 3 - Corruption Perceptions Index

The Transparency International ranks countries by their perceived levels of corruption, as determined by expert assessments and opinion surveys, and publishes the results in an index annually.

In the 2016 index, South Africa was placed at number 64 and Colombia ranked 90 of 176. At the top sat Denmark and New Zealand, sharing first place.

Source: https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016#table

6,000 litres/household/month is cross-subsidized by contributions from the highest strata and the commercial and industrial sectors. The amount has been established based on an estimated average of four individuals per family, totalling 50 litres/person/day. The essential free water policy has reduced the number of disconnections due to non-payment of water bills (Vargas and Heller, 2016).

Twenty per cent of the seats in the Colombian parliament were held by women in 2016, compared with five per cent in 1990 (World Bank, 2017).

Johannesburg | Johannesburg is the largest city in South Africa with an estimated population in 2016 of 4.4 million. As of 2011, more than 1.2 million of its inhabitants lived in the township of Soweto. The Johannesburg Water Company, a municipal-owned utility, is in charge of the city's water supply. During the period 2000-2005, when the private sector was responsible for water service delivery, pre-paid meters were installed in the poor townships of Johannesburg, including Soweto.

Article 27(1)(b) of the South African Constitution gives all citizens the right to have access to sufficient water. As per Section 3 of the Water Services Act 108 (1997), each person is entitled to a 'basic' water supply and every water services institution must take reasonable measures to realise this right. As per the Regulations Relating to Compulsory National Standards and Measures to Conserve Water, 2001, with reference to the UN World Health Organization, the minimum standard for basic

¹ Translation by Coward, Heller, Vellve Torras and the Max Planck Institute https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Colombia_2005.pdf.

water supply services is 25 litres /person/day, or 6,000 litres /household/month, for free, estimating an average of eight individuals per family. Above this amount, tariffs apply. The decision of the Johannesburg Water Company to limit the free water supply with a pre-paid meter system has been challenged, but in 2009, in the *Mazibuko case*, the Constitutional Court declared that this practice was neither unfair nor discriminatory.

Forty-two per cent of the seats in the South African parliament were held by women in 2016, compared with three per cent in 1990 (World Bank, 2017).

Experiences of, and attitudes to, corruption

Access to water – a gendered responsibility | In both Bogotá and Johannesburg, women consider themselves the main person responsible for ensuring domestic access to water. The respondents also testified that a lack of access to water sometimes forced them to fetch water from afar, making them feel at risk of crime and physical and sexual violence (Focus Group 2 Johannesburg, 2015). Having to wait in line by public water points puts them at risk of conflict and physical violence (Focus Group 2 Bogotá, 2015).

A great majority of water professionals surveyed, as well as the focus group respondents, testified to the constraints and stresses on women caused by the lack of access to water. *“It’s a double role, the women pay more attention so that we have water, the men, the majority need it but they don’t care, they go, they leave the home and if there is water – good – and if not, they go without washing and leave the kids there for us to solve”* (Focus Group 1 Bogotá, 2015).

In addition to having to cater for the family, it was also highlighted that women’s personal hygiene and sanitary needs require more water than men’s – in particular during menstruation. *“Especially during that time of the month, we need to bath often ... [girls and women] need to take a bath twice or three times a day. What happens when there’s no water or [we] don’t have 10 Rands?”* (Focus Group 1 Johannesburg, 2015).

Considering that both Colombia and South Africa score relatively highly on the Corruption Perceptions Index, is it not surprising that that corruption was seen as endemic and omnipresent in both Bogotá and Johannesburg. Bribes solicited by frontline staff were the most common types of corruption the respondents had encountered. Absence of transparency and access to information regarding the water system and the cost of services was also pointed out. Extensive problems with malfunctioning equipment and infrastructure were perceived as generating many opportunities for corrupt practices related to the reading of water meters and reparation of pumps and pipes.

According to the respondents in Soweto, Johannesburg, the water company cut back on costs by providing sub-standard equipment, resulting in low sustainability and insecure water provision, reinforcing a situation where the women accessed water at the mercy of the company staff (Focus Group 2 Johannesburg, 2015; Focus Group 3 Johannesburg, 2015). Similarly, in Bogotá the respondents perceived the situation such that the

water company staff had changed the water meters to increase the consumer cost and to generate revenue for the company (the customers have to pay for the instalment of the new water meter). One respondent had her meter changed three times within a period of five years (Focus Group 4 Bogotá, 2015).

Furthermore, it was believed that the complexity of the system was used purposefully by the water company staff to increase the price of water for their own benefit or for the benefit of the water company. *“Since it doesn’t show on your tag the amount, they probably give you water for [the worth of] less money ... by the time they go home they have R6000 in their pockets because they have taken money from all of us because we don’t know how much money water we are buying”* (Focus Group 3 Johannesburg, 2015). *“We don’t know what they charge for on the receipt, that is, there is not a good culture of information ... really no one knows!”* (Focus Group 2 Bogotá, 2015). For respondents living in rental apartments, not having access to the receipt generated suspicions that landlords were taking out excessively high fees for personal profit.

In addition, the perception that the complaint mechanisms were cumbersome and ‘corrupt’ made the request for redress from the company a frustrating experience, effectively discouraging the respondents in both cities from reporting irregularities or problems.

Unfair system: Need as main incentive and rationalization of corrupt behaviour

| The large majority of the respondents in Bogotá and Johannesburg condemned corruption and were well aware of the profound negative effects corruption has on their lives and societies: *“Corruption is not something affecting only your family but it also affects the entire community or the environment where corruption is taking place”* (Focus Group 1 Johannesburg, 2015). In Bogotá, the respondents agreed that one should not take part in corruption and that bribing officials, for example, reinforced an unjust and irrational system.

Even so, the participants in five out of the nine focus groups admitted to having engaged in corruption themselves. The discussions clearly indicated that the motivation varied with the circumstances, the purpose and the type of corruption. Two main types of rationalizations were used to explain their own participation in corrupt practices:

1. A corrupt system demands corrupt acts: corruption is all-encompassing and systemic, institutionalized, a collective action problem and a social *norm*;
2. The behaviour was to satisfy a basic *need*, not for profit.

According to the interviewees, grand corruption at the top sanctions corruption at lower levels and forces water users – especially the poor – to engage in need-corruption to access basic resources that, partly as a result of corruption, are scarce and competed over. A clear distinction was made both in Johannesburg and Bogotá between corrupt acts born out of necessity (need) and corrupt behaviours with the aim of generating personal profit or other personal benefits (greed).

In a typical need/greed example, one's own engagement in petty corruption was justified by not seeing this behaviour as corrupt, or at least not regarding it as *equally* corrupt as the water utility staff soliciting or accepting a bribe, if it was paid to protect the family's access to water for basic consumption. The respondents regarded this conduct as necessary to counteract an unfair system. Yet, if a water user paid bribes to protect access to water for personal economic gain, for example to secure water for a carwash, then both parties were seen as equally corrupt. The latter example was thus condemned as 'greed'.

Furthermore, the respondents in Bogotá expressed very strongly that the concept of corruption was closely related to [the absence of] fairness and justice: *"If we look at corruption from the legal perspective, everything is 'corrupt', but if we look at it from a moral perspective there are things that are not 'corrupt'"* (Focus Group 2 Bogotá, 2015). Therefore, the appropriation of public goods and resources by an individual for personal gain, as well as the failure of institutions to fulfil their responsibilities, were all defined as corruption since both resulted in social, cultural, economic and political exclusion and injustice. Since one of the main responsibilities of the government, both local and national, is to provide services such as water, health, education and security, the failure to fulfil this responsibility was therefore seen as corruption.

It should be added that in Johannesburg, several of the interviewees did not regard tampering with one's water meter to be a corrupt act, based on the argument that access to water is a human right and so the entire volume consumed should be free of charge: *"In the olden days we use to get water for free and why now, suddenly we must pay, it's our right. Yes for some people [tampering with meters] is like that and not corruption as such"* (Focus Group 2 Johannesburg, 2015).

Greed-based corruption | Overall, respondents to this study did not see women as incorruptible. For instance, several of the surveyed professionals observed that with an increasing number of women in positions of power, women tended to adopt corrupt behaviours over time. In high ranking positions, there may be peer pressure to engage in corrupt practices and officials sometimes have to choose between conforming to corrupt practices or being bullied or kicked out of office.

In the focus group containing female landlords in Johannesburg, there was a clearly positive view on paying bribes and becoming an accomplice to the water utility's agent. Respondents acknowledged that they personally benefited from gaining access to unlimited water each month: *"Corruption makes our lives easy ... because we don't have to buy more water and I don't have to spend more than R400 a month for water"* (Focus Group 3 Johannesburg, 2015). Their main concern was not with the consequences of corruption for the general service delivery but that the corrupt practices might cause them problems in the future, as they expected the water utility to make it increasingly difficult for them to get away with it: *"They might come up with another way of tightening the system more, which will be difficult for us to corrupt. Because we are busy corrupting and damaging*

we're thinking that we're living a good life, and we don't know what they are coming up with – like ideas they will come up with to stop the corruption. Maybe in a long run they might come up with a solution that will stop corruption for good now" (Focus Group 3 Johannesburg, 2015).

Gender roles shape women's opportunities | A strong theme among this study's respondents was that gender roles and stereotypical ideas about men's and women's aptitude and opportunities to hold higher offices shaped their opportunities to engage in corrupt practices. As men tend to hold higher offices with more power and control over resources, they are able to take advantage of, for example, embezzlement. *"The woman don't have access to the higher levels and she don't have access to the money, the men are those that have access to the money. Half in the right pocket, half in the left pocket and the rest we take"* (Focus Group 2 Bogotá, 2015).

Power and inequality was another underlying theme. One survey respondent opined that if elected, women water committee members were not given power to influence decision making and management procedures; vested interests and corrupt male-dominated networks remained intact (Survey respondent 5, 2015). Another highlighted that, at times, women's representation in water users' committees was merely nominal since *"the involvement of women in many cases has been ... policy compliance and has very little to do with reducing corruption"* (Survey respondent 2, 2015).

In addition, women seldom benefitted in the same way as men from being part of networks. *"When a woman starts ascending, she obviously steps on some toes ... so then the men starts to condition her, that is, they are the ones who always have been in power since they are men, so the woman that has succeeded in getting up there and is there, is restrained"* (Focus Group 4 Bogotá, 2015). According to the respondents in Johannesburg, men also tend to have better social cohesion which is conducive to forming networks for illicit transactions and exchange of favours, while women are taught to see each other as rivals. *"Men have other strong men, their back up is very strong; that's why when they're corrupt it's not just one man it's a whole lot of other men; but with women I can only stand up on my own and the rest would be like 'we're scared' ... men they stand together, no matter what"* (Focus Group 2 Johannesburg, 2015).

Yet, most of the water professionals as well as the focus group respondents opined that women in local organizations tend to be less corrupt than men because they 'felt' a greater social pressure to be honest and serve the community, and thus refrained from taking advantage of their positions. *"Women have proved trustworthy in managing funds [because they] have the future of their children at hand when managing resources and [are] always afraid of being imprisoned for misappropriation or ashamed [at] the community level"* (Survey respondent 4, 2015). Gendered expectations and roles were used to explain differences in behaviour: *"For men it's okay, like cheating, a man cheats, okay he's a man. [If a] woman cheats, ah! They call her derogatory names"* (Focus Group 3 Johannesburg, 2015). Likewise, some saw

female politicians as more likely to refrain from embezzling public resources for basic services, because they have a ‘better understanding’ than male politicians of women’s struggles to ensure water access for the family. However, in Bogotá, the respondents argued that women from a wealthier background are less empathetic to the negative impacts of a lack of basic services on the lives of poor women, and thus are less concerned with the detrimental effects of corruption on public institutions.

Sextortion: experiences in Bogotá and Johannesburg

The majority of the respondents did not perceive their experiences of corruption as linked to them being women. An exception, however, was the threat or use of physical violence to convince women to pay bribes; it was suggested that this was a specific female experience. In one focus group, women’s weaker physical strength was referred to; it made them less able to defend themselves and therefore more at risk. *“If a man comes to me and say ‘hey give me a R100, if you don’t I’m going to slap you’ I’m going to give [it to] him, because there’s no way I’m going to beat a guy; whereas a guy can stand up for himself and he knows how to fight. We are affected by corruption not because we are weak but [more] fragile than [men] are”* (Focus Group 2 Johannesburg, 2015).

Another exception was the soliciting of sexual favours by male water utility staff. From the discussions in Johannesburg, sextortion seems to be common in a variety of situations where women need access to resources or services. One respondent expressed that *“[l]ooking for a job, the manager or the supervisor will ask you to sleep with him”* (Focus Group 1 Johannesburg, 2015). Not least in the role of water provider for the household, women may be subject to unwanted requests. As one woman put it; if I don’t have money to bribe the water utility staff *“he will sexually abuse me because that’s the only valuable thing I can give him”* (Focus Group 4 Johannesburg, 2015).

In Bogotá, sextortion was not brought up spontaneously; yet, when probed, a few of the respondents also knew of male staff having solicited sexual favours from women to provide them with water services: *“For the plumber to give them a little water, eh, forgive that I express myself so clearly, he fucked all those women, several women for him to give them water”* (Focus Group 1 Bogotá, 2015). One of the survey respondents explained that *“[m]en want sexual favours to deliver water and this is a form of corruption. Women, because of their vulnerability and inability to walk long distances to get water, also give in to men’s demands in exchange for water”* (Survey respondent 2, 2015).

Yet, like many other aspects of corruption, the matter of sextortion is far from uncomplicated. Furthermore, the discussion of the topic in both the studied cities indicates that the distinction between need and greed is blurred. In one group, a woman said *“I’m an entrepreneur and [if] I want a tender to distribute water, like the pre-paid, I can sleep with one of the officials there and they will give me a tender... If you want a business, you need to bribe with money and sleep around”* (Focus Group 3 Johannesburg, 2015). In Bogotá, respondents in four of the five groups alluded to flirting being one of the ways women sought to convince male officials not to cut the water access: *“The engineer comes, or the person to cut the water, and right there they flirt with him and that and ‘let’s go inside’ and so that he doesn’t cut off the water ... or ‘give me your number’ to go on a date”* (Focus Group 1 Bogotá, 2015); *“When they have come to cut the water or something like that, I dress up and flirt with them”* (Focus Group 3 Bogotá, 2015).

Discussion: Women and corruption in the water sector

Need and greed, rationalization and opportunities

In Johannesburg as well as Bogotá, the respondents painted pictures of an unfavourable power balance between men and women, involving a clear division of tasks that perpetuate traditional gender roles. Girls are taught to take certain responsibilities relating to the household chores, and the securing of water is a major task. The availability and cost of water is a constant worry for many women. It is essentially up to them to rise early, walk the distance, stand in line, collect and store water; to recycle it (for instance to flush toilets with used water from the washing machine); to harvest rainwater; and be generally frugal with the resources. The social and cultural norms related to women's gendered roles result in them being seen as caretakers of the household, not as breadwinners and decision-makers.

Because the responsibility for water-related tasks in the household is a gendered one, girls and women are exposed to a range of corruption situations.

In both the studied countries, misconduct among the front office staff was viewed as the rules of the game. When it is perceived that 'everyone' bribes the water meter reader, the opportunity and private gain may trump the fear of women being punished harder than men in the same situation, although women – due to gender roles, social expectations and norms – may be less willing to take the risk of getting caught in corrupt transactions.

Furthermore, there were statements from respondents indicating that female customers may take the opportunity – if given – to tamper with the meter or flirt with water utility staff to obtain benefits such as a lowered bill or to hinder the water supply being cut.

Deeply engrained inequalities characterize the societies in both the countries studied, just as in the majority of the global South, and serve to incentivize engagement in corruption. The motivation behind the own behaviour may be related to an opportunity presenting itself, and/or to the view that the bribe is the only way to obtain a service and access the basic need for water. The respondents' actions were in some cases rationalized by referring to water as a basic need and a human right. Where water was regarded as an entitlement, and obtained for own household use only, there was also seemingly no condemnation of others who engaged in petty corruption.

The two case studies present a mixed picture, but most respondents agreed that women have less opportunities to

engage in corruption in terms of being a formal part of the water sector. Because of its male domination, female staff may lack networks to engage in corruption and 'shadowy arrangements'. It was also mentioned that women do not have each other's backs, nor are they able to benefit from networks in the same way as men, and it may prove costlier for women to risk their relationship with civil society. However, there were cases alluded to where women were adapting to corrupt institutional cultures, taking advantage of the opportunities that came their way. Female landlords ensuring water access at a reduced price can be characterized as being motivated by greed.

Sextortion

The extent of sextortion in the water sector in the two studied cities is not possible to determine; however, the fact that this was a recurring theme in most of the focus group discussions in Johannesburg indicates that it may be more common there than Bogotá. These experiences are all but invisible today, though they have a far-reaching impact on the reality that many women are subject to in order to access water for themselves and their families.

The experiences from Johannesburg raise questions over one dimension of the term sextortion: that it involves unwanted sexual activity. The opportunity to use sexual appeal towards male frontline staff could be viewed as a female privilege. However, there should be no mistake made in relation to the existence and severity of sextortion: sexual abuse is an expression of power and it is one of the ways that authority is misused 'for private gain'. Where respondents to this study suggested that flirting takes place as a means used by women to convince male officials not to cut the water supply, there is usually a very clear power imbalance between the utility representative and the woman in question. There may be instances where 'undeserved benefits' are illicitly acquired to the detriment of other water users, such as getting a more favourable meter reading, but the public officer remains in control of the situation. Such cases may be characterized as corruption motivated by greed but, all the same, they fall under the definition of sextortion. In the vast majority of cases, though, it appears that as they are responsible for securing water to the household, women may feel pressured to play along. Their participation in sextortion is hence motivated by the need to ensure access to a basic service.

Implications for anti-corruption and integrity measures

Ever-louder demands for democratization and development resulted in the Arab Spring revolution and have been formulated in terms of “the absence of an agreed social contract” between state representatives and the people. Widespread perceptions of corruption are frequently associated with low public expenditure on services such as health, education, and low participation of women in both the labour market and politics (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2015). There is evidence that high and rising corruption increases income inequality and poverty, and that the consequences of corruption – skewed government spending, biased asset ownership and tax systems, inadequate targeting and reduced investments in social services – falls disproportionately on poor and vulnerable groups, to the benefit of the rich and powerful (Gupta, Davoodi and Alonso-Terme, 2002).

Where corruption is intrinsic to a society, solutions include increased empowerment of users’ groups, consumer committees and civil society organizations, and a robust, free press (UNDP 2011). Mungiu-Pippidi (2013) stresses the importance of controlling corruption through building and reinforcing sustainable collective action networks to fight it. In this sense, the efforts should aim to overcome normative constraints of social capital and civic culture, and provide collective action networks so the corruption fighters are not isolated. Bauhr (2016: 2) argues that “widespread mobilization, or at least perceptions thereof, can be expected to facilitate collective action, as it would make mobilization not only less risky but also potentially more effective”. However, this is contingent on there being a common and shared feeling that corruption is ‘needed’ to access a public service, rather than individual greed being the motivation.

To challenge corruption, one must therefore understand how it works in a specific environment, and what motivates people to engage in corrupt behaviour. Mungiu-Pippidi (2013) points to two important implications of this: First, importing anti-corruption policies from developed to less-developed countries without contextualization will lead to poor institutional fit. Second, a general focus that includes the ‘raising of awareness’ is not sufficiently concrete.

Hence, in terms of access to water and gendered roles in securing water for the household, it is important to understand and acknowledge the need-based corruption in order to better design anti-corruption measures that work for and with women, and society in general. Bauhr (2016) argues that citizens are more likely to mobilize, become engaged and act when corrupt behaviour is necessary to gain access to public services and fair treatment. Such corruption victimizes people and exposes them to injustice. Greed corruption, on the other hand, leads to secrecy, demobilization and a propensity to ‘free ride’ on other citizens’ anti-corruption efforts; one can reap the

long-term collective benefits of others’ abstention from, and engagement against, such corruption. The lack of transparency surrounding greed corruption undermines opportunities for broad-based engagement. Therefore, building on collective action theory, it can be concluded that the willingness to engage in anti-corruption efforts is highly sensitive to interpersonal trust, reciprocity and evidence that others will do the same. In other words, it seems more likely that interventions that target, for instance, the paying of petty bribes for accessing water are more successful. Women can be expected to jointly stand up against such everyday injustices that they perceive as ‘the only way to get a basic service’ if an anti-corruption drive is initiated that involves all households in their neighbourhood. In contrast, greed-based corruption is more difficult to mobilize against.

However, it is also argued that it is inequality that creates the environment for corruption, and that corruption accentuates the issues of inequality and powerlessness. Thus, societies need to address issues of inequality more forcefully, as corruption is just a symptom (Surendra, personal communication, 2017).

Gendered impacts of corruption are not limited to a specific sector or type of service, they have been documented in the health, education, justice, land and water sectors as well as in national politics (Alhassan-Alolo, 2007). Despite this, the large majority of anti-corruption initiatives, policies and legislation do not consider potential gendered differences (UNDP & UNIFEM, 2010), and women’s participation in anti-corruption work is often not prioritized (UNDP, 2012). There is also a lack of sector specific studies. Comprehensive gender sensitive integrity strategies and research tailored to the water sector are urgently needed (UNDP, 2014).

As recognized in the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and Dublin Principles of 1992, women play a central role in providing, managing and safeguarding water. The gendered roles and special responsibilities that are associated with women in many societies make them subject to different forms of corruption in order to obtain water for the household’s needs. In the capacity of water provider, women may also be expected to engage in corruption, sometimes in ways that are different to what men experience. It has been pointed out in this report that much of the gendered experience of corruption in the water sector is tainted by the feeling of being powerless in relation to an authority upon which one relies for the fulfilment of a basic need. But there are also examples of how a corrupt system can be beneficial, or perceived as such.

The gender dynamics of corruption are explored to an increasing degree today. Yet, specific examples of how gender can be integrated in anti-corruption and integrity work are lacking, particularly in the water sector.² The main challenge for a gender approach in integrity work is the need to address forms of corruption that affect women differently and/or more profoundly than men.

² One of the few examples are the Gender and Water Alliance’s integrity courses and online discussions about gender and corruption in the water sector. For more information visit:

<http://genderandwater.org/en/gwa-activities/knowledge-sharing/e-conferences/gender-water-and-integrity>.

Moreover, the findings from this study show that it is crucial to encourage discussion about how corruption is defined, and in what situations one may be exposed to corrupt behaviour. This can benefit a deeper understanding of how women are affected by corruption in their efforts to access water, and how socio-political norms and values shape perceptions about what behaviour is acceptable/unacceptable. However, one should be aware that 'corruption' may in some contexts be used as a catch-all concept that also refers to general economic grievances and democratic deficits (Bauhr, 2016).

To discourage corrupt actions and participation in corruption in the water sector, more female professionals and members of staff would not, in itself, lead to less corruption unless this is a result of democratic reforms. Employing more women, for instance as water meter readers and bill collectors, could, potentially, have a direct impact on women's experiences of sextortion; however, conclusions cannot be drawn from this study.

If an automated meter reading and data entry process is installed to replace a manual reading element, the impact of potentially corrupt agents is removed from the equation. Similarly,

such technical upgrades would effectively hinder the customers' involvement as a second principal in getting a lower water bill. However, mindful that a large proportion of end-users would be motivated out of need, it is not in everyone's interest to have to pay the actual tariff for the household's water consumption.

When developing anti-corruption strategies with a gender lens, it will be key to ensure that they do not overlook other factors that impact women and men's experiences of corruption, including how gender roles may intersect with other disadvantages that a person may have in a society, such as race, ethnicity and disability. It is also important that actors working to pursue integrity issues engage women and women's organizations in various initiatives as ambassadors for women's interests and experiences related to corruption, and support them, as well as individual women working in the water sector, as change agents in their specific contexts. While many aspects of this issue merit further investigation, it is clear that Agenda 2030 and the SDGs cannot be achieved unless gendered experiences of corruption in the water supply sector are addressed.

Box 4 - Specialized Training Module on Water Integrity and Gender

The WGF defines water integrity as the adherence of water stakeholders and institutions to principles of good governance – transparency, accountability and participation, based on core values of honesty, equity and professionalism. The capacity building work highlights the linkages between gender and anti-corruption in the water sector for the purpose of enhancing the knowledge base, and ultimately improving the water governance systems. To strengthen water integrity in the MENA region, the WGF has tailor-made a programme together with regional and local partners to address the governance principles in water resource management and service delivery, with a focus on the gender dimension. The resulting training module on water integrity and gender was designed in 2015 and delivered during the alumni workshops. The objective was to increase the capacity of the

participants, including project partners, with regards to recognizing the different experiences of men and women towards corruption, and acting upon them.

The module first provided a general introduction on gender and water. After this, participants were asked to reflect on the situation in the MENA region and particularly in their specific countries, allowing them to share experiences and best practices to ensure women's representation in decision making processes.

The second part of the module aimed to deepen the understanding among participants with respect to different impacts of corruption on men and women, and different expressions including sextortion. Participants were asked to discuss and reflect on how corruption may impact differently on men and wo-

men in the MENA region. The third part aimed to go beyond commonalities on the gender and corruption discussion. Participants were asked to reflect on the assumption of women being the 'fairer sex' by biological explanations, and if they find that attitudes to corruption are related to context and access to power.

The final part of the module consisted of the participants working in groups to discuss and identify how any given water integrity action plan could apply, and how best to integrate a gender approach in their work.

For further information, <http://watergovernance.org/programmes/water-integrity/water-integrity-capacity-building-programme-in-mena/>

Conclusions

Based on the conceptual frameworks and empirical data drawn on in this report, tentative conclusions can be made about women's gendered experiences of, exposure and attitudes to, and engagement in corruption in the water sector. Addressing all these aspects involves nothing less than designing new approaches to governance in terms of norms and procedures applied within the water services sector. Due consideration must be paid to how the *accessing* of water may be a matter of paying bribes of different kinds, including its gravest form – sextortion – and how this has serious implications on making drinking water equitably available for all. This, in turn, must inform strategies for the *empowering* of women and girls so that they perceive themselves as rights-holders just as much as seeing the larger structures and systems behind corruption.

This report has sought to highlight the problem of 'sextortion' to ensure that it informs the debate, but it has only been able to scratch the surface. After being coined as a term by the IAWJ, sextortion has slowly gained recognition as a widespread problem. Within the water sector, where girls and women in many countries have traditional roles with respect to accessing and ensuring drinking water for the household, they remain at risk of exposure to this type of corruption. The express inclusion of sextortion as a concern in water integrity initiatives can provide a basis for addressing the specific dynamics and impacts of this gendered experience of corruption. Appropriate and targeted strategies to combat it need to be developed, alongside provision of support to victims. The inclusion of sextortion in corruption reporting and anti-corruption policies would provide a vital recognition of this form of abuse of power. In addition, further research of the factors influencing the extent and prevalence of sextortion in the water sector is necessary in order improve the strength of knowledge on this topic.

In conclusion, this report makes two key recommendations:

1. Because corruption takes many different forms along the water services supply chain, it demands context-based responses that consider the fact that the literature on the one hand does not support the existence of a 'fairer sex' but, on the other, stresses how engagement in corruption may be motivated by the need to secure water access on behalf of the family;
2. Varying expectations on women to pay bribes, subject themselves to sextortion or otherwise take part in illicit conduct, and how this is linked to their gendered responsibility for accessing drinking water, must be considered when designing anti-corruption policies as well as measures to enhance equity in water availability.

Lessons learned from the Training on Water Integrity and Gender

The Specialized Training Module on Water Integrity and Gender (Box 4) was presented in all the regional alumni workshops and it was received with great interest and engagement by the participants. However, equal treatment of women in relation to men is not the basis for the construction of society in the MENA region, and a pre-requisite for the discussions was that the facilitators had a good understanding of this context. The programme designed a gender-mixed team to balance knowledge on the gender topic but also on regional-sensitive issues, which proved successful. It is worth noting that during the Women Alumni Regional workshop, the discussions were very vibrant and more open to acknowledging forms of corruption such as sextortion, which was not the case when the group was mixed men and women.

One of the main views expressed by participants was that women suffer disproportionately from corruption in the drinking water sector, in terms of higher costs to access services and resources, because of their responsibilities, work tasks and needs. Furthermore, women may be victimized because of sextortion.

Raising the issue of gender is only the first step, but developing gender equalizing strategies should be the next one. More research and experience sharing need to be ensured to address gender when designing and implementing a water integrity initiative.

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Women and corruption in the water sector: Theories and experiences from Johannesburg and Bogotá

Women and corruption in the water sector

Theories and experiences from Johannesburg and Bogotá

Globally, women bear the main responsibility for many household activities that require access to water. Being in charge of securing water for different purposes, by whatever means, leaves women exposed to corruption in the water sector to a different degree than men. With the help of insights from Johannesburg and Bogotá, this report seeks to further the understanding of corruption by exploring the gendered perceptions, experiences and impacts of corruption in the water supply sector.

While there may be no biological differences between the sexes, gender roles frequently mean that women as a group will have fewer opportunities to engage in corrupt behaviour because of their lower participation in the labour force, and in decisive networks. However, where women work as homemakers or are otherwise responsible for contacts with the water utility and people in water related power positions, they may be exposed

to a range of corrupt activities. In this capacity they may, for instance, often be expected – and have ample opportunities – to bribe the water meter reader. Furthermore, women may feel pressured to participate in, and in some cases feel the need to take advantage of, sextortion.

This report also describes the gender and corruption training module developed by the UNDP Water Governance Facility at SIWI as part of the MENA Water Integrity Training Programme. Within this Programme, both women-only and mixed capacity building have been held, with specific efforts made to invite women's organizations and women water practitioners.



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