

STRUGGLING THROUGH CORRUPTION: A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE

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A background paper presentation

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I. Governance as a Common Space

The fiber of rejuvenated and sustainable governance lies upon a participatory platform – wherein women and men are actively involved in the crafting and implementation of plans. It requires among others, an improved government system, one that is values-laden and derives approaches from indigenous and culturally appropriate way of management. But such efforts to construct and implement sustainable development approaches of governance are often crippled by non-participation of women, and worse, hindered by deep enclaves of corruption.

The struggle to eradicate corruption and the equal tension to promote women's participation reinforce the global bid for good governance. It is inevitable therefore that both intersect in many strategic areas. When closely examined, corruption and gender inequity emanate from faulty cultural behaviors, and over the years, have been institutionalized. But whereas corruption nowadays is largely confined within the premise of organizations and societies, gender inequity, notwithstanding its close association with governance, is discerned firstly at the individual level. Discussions related to sexual assaults, poverty, illiteracy, subordination in homes and organizations, normally start from individuals, then, expand to institutions. Hence, measures to curb gender inequality points to individual (private) and societal (public) spheres.

It is imperative to examine conventional theories and practices in which gender and corruption are discussed with the hope of incubating an integrated framework. Likewise, it is important to examine experiences from the ground where women are struggling through corruption, if only to situate honest-to-goodness, gender-fair and empowering anti-corruption measures.

Corruption is indeed border-less. For purpose of focus, this paper deals more on corruption and gender inequality in the public sphere, notably, the organization, and the micro and macro society.

II. Gender Gaps in Corruption: Studies and Theories

Corruption as an ethical concern only gained prominence in the early 80s. On the other hand, women's emancipation, primarily exercising the rights of suffrage and gaining access to education, flourished in the 70s. It is therefore not surprising that theories pointing on the young relationship of institutional corruption and women's participation have not yet fully evolved. Even the TI Source Book 2000, the most comprehensive literature on fighting corruption through the National Integrity System has no mention of corruption correlated with gender.

The dearth of studies on the twin theme *corruption and gender* pose a difficulty in examining their relationship. This may be so because gender theories in organizational management, and particularly, when super-imposed over work and democracy are often ignored in organizational discourses. Organizational perspectives of gender are largely situated in purely sociological debates, and when not closely examined, present disembodiment of work. Most often, it fails to present the fact that authority structures are male-biased, such that corruption issues are primarily treated from the viewpoint of men. This does not altogether mean that anti-corruption strategies proposed by men-dominated organizations neglect the effects of corruption on women. Rather, theories and practices on institutional corruption can be traced from traditional organizational management theories where discussion on gender is alien.

In the academe, courses related to corruption are often lodged at the faculties of business management and laws. Except for related topics 'ethics' and 'morality' traditionally discussed in social science classes, the subject 'corruption' is largely obscure to many.

During her recent fellowship, this researcher observed that women academic institutions seem to treat *corruption* as an alien issue. In order to engage her informants, she would improvise by discussing instead *good governance and organizational management* as entry point. The informants, mostly feminist scholars, were quick to discuss women's non-access to leadership and decision-making, biased treatment in job hiring, assignment and promotion, denial from equal pay – without relating that these are also occasions of corruption! Even the feminist camp do not think 'corruption' in as much as the anti-corruption camp do not think 'gender'. The seeming gap could also be a mere semantic confusion.

Campaigns in increasing gender equity and promoting anti-corruption in the workplace very seldom receive a complementary treatment. Thankfully, there have been efforts to further uncover the gender gap in corruption. Whether the recognition and participation of women can indeed contribute to curbing corruption, is a question surveys have recently answered.

- ❖ A study by the University of Maryland concluded that increased women participation, particularly in decision-making positions and labor, leads to more honest government. (Swamy and others, forthcoming). Cross-country data pointed that women have less tendencies in bribery. In 1981, World Values Survey from 43 countries further revealed women as less tolerant of dishonesty and illegal conducts than men. Based on the correlation between the Country Risk Guide's Corruption Index and the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, corruption falls as the ratio of parliamentary seats are held by women.¹

¹ Engendering Development: through gender equality in rights, resources and voice. World Bank and Oxford University Press (2000), referring to the studies of Anand Swamy and others "Gender and Corruption", forthcoming.

- ❖ A similar study by the World Bank involving sample of more than 100 countries confirmed this phenomenon. It disclosed that greater representation of women in parliament can likely lead to a lower level of corruption, although the differences are not so radical. It implied that women would less likely sacrifice the welfare of the public for material gains. (Dollar and others, 1999).
- ❖ A national study in Moldova concluded that women's perception of corruption is relatively higher than that of men. In a six-point scale, women evaluate the problem as more acute than do men, 5.02 and 4.9, respectively. Women feel more angry and humiliated (53% of those in households, and 59.4% of those in business) about bribe-offering, compared to men (52.6% of those in households and 40.7% of those in business). Overall, women have negative feeling about corruption and are like to ridicule bribery. (Carasciuc, unpublished report)
- ❖ An enterprise survey in Georgia in 1996 was conducted using World Bank's diagnostic tools on corruption. Observation on 350 firms of four broad categories of trade, manufacturing, services and agriculture were stacked as they made contacts with 18 countries. Whereas five percent of firms managed/owned by women succumb to bribe-giving, the percentage doubled in firms owned/ managed by men.
- ❖ Interestingly, among the Integrity Circles formed in the Philippines, those that were mostly championed by women succeeded in implementing anti-graft projects. (Arce, 2001) These ICs have also survived the change of political administration, and continue to devise preventive measures in their workplaces. Integrity Circles are peer groups from the same workplace publicly committed to live up to the ideals of honesty, simplicity and professionalism.² (Roldan 1996)
- ❖ Women's capacity to successfully lead in entrepreneurial activities was also cited in Moldova's study. Only one in very five business established by men survive, whereas three out of five business by women continue to operative after their establishment.³

² Integrity Circles are organized to help prevent corruption and improve the services of their respective organizations. The formation of Integrity Circles applies behavior modification, values formation and organization development strategies learned from religious and secular movements, e.g. Basic Christian Communities (BCC), the Japanese Control Circles (JQCC), etc. Its approaches remain secular/scientific rather than religious, ecumenical rather than sectarian, and moral/cultural rather than political.

³ Lilia, Carasciuc, "Corruption and Quality of Governance: The Case of Moldova". (2000), citing data provided at the conference "Small Business – A Way to Progress "(May 1999) organized by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova.

All of these corroborates the worldview that women may have higher ethical standard than men. It can be argued that their presence can “bring enriching values [to government]...the presence of women in the higher echelons of hierarchical structures exercises an extremely positive influence on the behavior of their male colleagues by restraining, disciplining and elevating, the latter’s behavior”.⁴

The studies above support that more women in politics and labor leads to cleaner governments. Women’s greater involvement is associated with women’s increased economic and social rights. In the short term, increasing women’s role in business and politics can lead to gender equity characterized by better education, poverty alleviation, more gender-sensitive and -inclusive institutions. In the long term, it can likely impact in better governance. A stronger democracy coupled by a well-meant mainstreaming of gender in the bureaucracy are fertile grounds for directly boosting women’s participation and for indirectly creating a less corrupt government and a better business confidence.

When given the proper opportunity, women tend to be more competent to govern in spite the worldwide trend of un-supportive working environment and their lack of access to facilities.

In 1995, only ten per cent of the members of the legislative bodies and even a lower percentage of ministerial positions were held by women all over the world. This is deficit by 200% compared to the UN endorsement. The recent trends on corruption challenge the political and social structures, notwithstanding the numerous global pronouncements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), to enlarge women’s representation in power.

III. A Closer Look at the Enclaves of Gender-Related Corruption

To say that an organization or any other analytical unit is gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine. Gender is not an addition to ongoing processes, conceived as gender-neutral. Rather it is an integral part of those processes, which cannot be properly understood without an analysis of gender. (Acker, 1996)

Only through a gender analysis of good governance and of any anti-corruption measures will the authenticity and harshness of women’s subordination be

⁴ David Dollar and others, “Are Women Really the ‘Fairer’ Sex? Corruption and Women in Government”, a World Bank Policy Research Report, Working Paper Series No. 4. (1999), quoting political scientist Valerie Ishkov in reference to the potential role of women in the Russian government.

exposed. Doing so can create resistance and shake power structures. Women continue to spur critical mass in South Africa, Latin America, the Southeast Asia and the Pacific amidst structural and cultural inconveniences brought about by post-colonial transition. Countries seriously pursuing democratization have opened more and more seats to increase women's numerical representation and legitimate influence. But unless anti-corruption frameworks are expanded and correlated with social development issues, the cry for an honest, efficient and responsive governance vis-à-vis the employed strategies will remain in misalignment.

A. Organizational Corruption

Will a simple increase in women's representation guarantee a behavioral boost necessary in eradicating corruption? Definitely not, for firstly, this constructs a blanket condemnation of men to be essentially evil. Secondly, women who are not necessarily gender-sensitive and are swept to power due to nepotism, political patronage and even legitimate elections may not authentically carry developmental gender concerns. Controversies in power brought by Evita Peron, Imelda Marcos and Marie Antoinette are lucid examples of systemic corruption.

Providing women with space and voice would critically surface many of the equally important issues in development which men, given their traditional sphere of identity, may fail to allot equal importance. As for example, inherent to women's domestic competencies and nurturing qualities, is the ability to determine social welfare services. The loop-sided priorities in development are caused by inadequate representation of marginalized sectors, including women. Women may have concrete corruption concerns uniquely experienced and determined by them.

Here are examples in which organizational corruption impact on women:

- ❖ Sexual assault or favors in exchange for incentives, *e.g. promotion, getting hired*
- ❖ Occupational segregation and pay differentials
- ❖ Lack of opportunity to get hired and promoted, *e.g. organizations still largely prefer young and single women with pleasing personalities over married ones;*
- ❖ Stereotyping in jobs, *e.g. secretaries should be females, managers should be males.*

When corruption has become systemic, highly qualified and gender-sensitive women may not even get hired in decision-making posts. And even if they do, sooner or later, there is a tendency that they may give up. A possible conditioning in their ethical work standard can be manifested by women's hesitance to cooperate in a system permeated by corruption.

B. Societal Corruption

Societal corruption impacting on women may be distinguished as national or trans-boundary in scope. The gender-related impacts can be only clearly determined when data are gender-segregated, and when viewed from the multi-dimensions of economic, social, cultural and political. Here are some examples.

❖ Wars and Violence

Armed violence anywhere in the world -- from Afghanistan's defense of ideology to Zimbabwe's breakdown in law and security, redounds to victimization of women. Displaced by war, women and children face multiple burdens in restoring livelihood and homestead, in nourishing the sick and burying the dead, in building anew from the debris of chaos. At the outset, this is shaded by political tumults; something deemed incomprehensible to women in general. But what usually provokes war? Is it not an intricate result of lawlessness, conspiracy and high vested interests of those in power? High-end corruption is so shaded, such that quantification of losses is almost impossible. In such a situation, women's voice is again neglected even if consultations took place. For usually women's concerns are subsumed by their men-representatives, namely, husbands, and fathers. Women rarely decide on or go to wars. They receive low if not insignificant compensation during the post-conflict reconstruction. But historians and journalists always fail to chronicle rape and torture incidences associated with atrocities.

Evidently, terrorism, wars and all forms civil violence result in the degradation of natural resources, disruption of social life as well as the decline of quality of services to the poor in which the poorest women and girl-children suffer the most.

❖ Trafficking of Women

The fangs of lawlessness and abuse of power bite dangerously on the vulnerable sector, such as the illegally recruited overseas workers, and the prostituted and trafficked women and children, to name a few. Corruption committed way from the falsification of papers, alteration of identities, bribery in the borders – and finally, the merchandize of women are almost always associated with high-level and strategic conspiracies. Because these mostly involve undocumented cases, hard data are difficult to piece together. But even those categorized as so-called documented migration, e.g. arranged/mail-order marriages, sex tourism and entertainment, domestic labor, are not spared from further brutalities. Worse, the latter adds up to the GDP of a country. Due to illiteracy, ignorance and lack of comprehension of their rights, trafficked people are most susceptible to further harassment.

Nonetheless, snapshot impacts can point to spread of HIV-AIDS, breakdown of families, psychological and physical impairment, death and further servitude of women.

In the above gender-related examples, issues of corruption may be indirect, as these are mediated by male-dominated social structures and by the malignancy of the problems. Only when the effects of the historical exclusion of women are correlated with 'hard issues' like war, human rights violation and environmental degradation – which are all anti-development, can a full cost accounting of corruption impacting women be ascertained. Gender inequality breeds corruption, in the same manner that corruption breeds gender inequality.

IV. Start-Up: Opportunities, Challenges, Recommendations

The whole reflection on the twin theme gender and corruption brings out two important lessons. Firstly women, owing to their lack of participation and influence in decision-making, and owing to absence of gender analysis in societal problems, are badly hit by both simple and complex forms of corruption. That due to absence of state-of-the-art tools to determine the broad and indirect correlation of gender and corruption, there seem to be no clear-cut indicators to measure the multi-dimensional impacts of corruption on women. In effect, there are no comprehensive mitigation measures. If gender is not fully mainstreamed in the bureaucracy and in the national development plans, efforts in mobilizing women to fight corruption can remain sporadic.

Second, owing to their widely accepted trustworthiness, greater concern for public welfare, and lesser tendency to succumb to corruption – women hold much potential in restoring an ethical and responsive governance.

What then can women- and gender-sensitive organizations, and the wide range of civil society groups do to mitigate corruption and corruption's impact on women? To diminish corruption impact on women by merely increasing their numerical participation is an incomplete measure.

- ❖ Examine, and strive to remove obstacles from making women fully participate in organizational decision-making, and exercising their rights to an equal space and voice. Outside the workplace, correlate efforts geared to upscale women's education and political awareness with good governance.
- ❖ Map out efforts done by women in the regions, determine the initial gains and challenges, initiate networking, and propose for converging actions. Trickle of interest to strategically situate gender and corruption are compounding. Anti-graft women movements in the bureaucracy, following the review of the Beijing Platform for Actions (BPFA) +5 are gradually assimilating the concepts of corruption.

- ❖ Spawn an integrated theoretical framework of corruption and gender, where sustainable development becomes the ultimate basis. It should therefore encompass issue-based, multi-sectoral concerns such as human rights, poverty, environment, peace and social justice. This calls for a more inclusive definition of corruption. The lack of theories and tools to engender anti-corruption measures should be responded with in-depth studies.
- ❖ Publish cases from the ground as those of rural alternative media raising women's political awareness, communities monitoring the delivery of minimum basic needs, and forest sentinels, among others. The dearth of literature and documented experiences had been a hurdle for those pursuing a gender-based anti-corruption program
- ❖ Create a forum in all TI national chapters where ideas and concerns pertaining to gender and corruption may be discussed. Even supportive policy-makers can likely face difficulty in pushing for unpopular policies, especially with the dominant views of gender roles.
- ❖ Initiate advocacy work to influence governments in fully mainstreaming gender. Highlight prevailing corruption obstacles that deprive them from moving onward. Take advantage of international reviews of Agenda 21, CEDAW, BPFA, and others, and inculcate anti-corruption strategies in medium-term plans.
- ❖ Organize women organizations to analyze gender implications in anti-corruption strategies. Encourage them to bring up and expose gender insensitive practices in the bureaucracy and the society, and to come up with gender-empowering alternative solutions.

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