

U4 Expert Answer



Gender, Corruption and Education

Query:

Can you please provide an overview of the impacts of corruption in the education sector upon girls and women, with an emphasis on how this adversely affects gender equity in development in the long-term?

Purpose:

Corruption in the education sector clearly has a negative impact on effective service delivery. I would like more targeted information on how ineffective service delivery for education, due to corruption, impacts upon girls/women in particular.

Content:

Part 1: Forms of Corruption in the Education Sector and their Impact on Women

Part 2: Solutions to Address Gender Disparities and Corruption in Education

Part 3: Further Reading

Summary:

There are few governance indicators that systematically capture the gender dimension of corruption in education. However, there is a growing consensus that corruption undermines the quality and quantity of public services, and reduces the resources available for the poor and the women, ultimately exacerbating social and gender disparities. Corruption hits disadvantaged groups – including women – harder, as they rely more on the public system, have less resources to make informal payments to access education services and seek legal protection. Women are also more vulnerable to specific forms of corruption such as sexual extortion in exchange for schooling, good grades and other school privileges.

There is no empirical evidence available on the long term impact of corruption on gender disparities in the education sector. However, there is a general consensus that such practices have long term consequences on women's education outcomes, psychological and physical health as well as gender equity, ultimately affecting long term social and

Authored by: Marie Chêne, U4 Helpdesk, Transparency International, mchene@transparency.org

Reviewed by: Robin Hodess Ph.D., Transparency International, rhodess@transparency.org

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economic progress. Measures aimed at tackling corruption in the education sector should therefore take into account the gender dimension of corruption by supporting women's participation in schools' management and oversight, promoting gender responsive education budgeting, recruiting more female teachers and raising ethical standards in the sector.

Part 1: Forms of Corruption in the Education Sector that Affect Women

Background: Gender Challenges in the Education Sector

With the formulation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), leaders from virtually all countries have agreed to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE) by the year 2015 and committed to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, including indicators and concrete targets on girls' education and maternal mortality.

Although female education levels have improved in recent years following this commitment, important gaps persist across the world. According to the [2009 Education for all report](#), only 37% of countries worldwide have achieved gender parity at the secondary level, while more than half of the countries in Sub Saharan Africa, West Asia and the Arab States have not achieved the target for gender parity in both primary and secondary schools. In South Asia, women benefit on average from only about half as many years of schooling as men, while girls' enrolment rates at the secondary level are still only two-thirds of boys. Gender inequities are further exacerbated by social, ethnic and economic disparities.

Corruption can greatly undermine the attainment of both gender and education related MDGs. Research indicates that corruption has a devastating impact on the quantity and quality of public services available, resulting in millions of children accessing sub-standard education services where little learning can take place. Although there is little research specifically documenting the differentiated impact of corruption on boys and girls in the education sector, girls are likely to be disproportionately affected by this situation, as the quality of schooling received by boys and girls often differ, with a greater share of resources allocated to boys' education.

Women's Vulnerability to Corruption in the Education Sector

While both genders are affected by the various forms of corruption that are prevalent in the education sector, empirical evidence indicates that women experience corruption differently than men. Women appear to be both less tolerant as well as more vulnerable to corruption than their male counterparts, as indicated by [a study](#) looking at the gender dimension of perceptions of corruption among Australian women. [UNIFEM Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009 report](#) further confirms these findings based on TI's Global Corruption Barometer data, by reporting that women around the world consistently perceive higher levels of corruption in public institutions than men, especially in the public services with which they have the most contact such as school and health facilities.

There are four major reasons why corruption in the education sector disproportionately hits disadvantaged groups – including the women and the poor:

- As women lack access to economic power in many developing countries, there are more reliant on public services and do not have the resources to substitute for poor public provision by paying for better services, private tutoring or private schools. As corruption undermines the quantity and quality of public service delivery, women are likely to be hit more acutely by the corrosive impact of corruption on education services.
- Similarly, without personal income, it is difficult for women, especially poor women, to pay bribes and informal payments to access public services, including education. Furthermore, the costs of informal payments required to access education services represent a higher proportion of income for women and the poor. In addition, due to gender roles, expectations and purchasing power, women have fewer opportunities to access economic resources and political sources of influence, making them less likely to indulge in corrupt transactions. In countries plagued by endemic corruption, this also means that they find fewer entry point networks to access services, including education.
- Corruption in education hits the girl child in poor households even harder, as the poor typically

reserve their resources for boys rather than girls' schooling. A study conducted in India indicates that girls face significant different treatment in the intra-household allocation of education, partly explaining the persisting gender gap in education. ([The Gender Gap in Educational Attainment in India](#)).

Poverty further exacerbates gender disparities in education. In South Asia for example, research indicates that in poor households, parents of large numbers of children tend to invest in the quality of their sons' education, while daughters often substitute for their working mothers in the domestic division of labour. ([Gender Inequality in Educational Outcomes: a Household Perspective](#)). In Mali, girls from poor household are four times less likely to attend primary schools than those in rich families, rising to eight times at secondary level. ([2009 Education for All Report](#))

- Last but not least, women tend to be deprived from access to redress, as they have restricted access to formal and informal channels of recourse due to gender roles, cultural attitudes and lack of economic power. Corruption in the justice system also has specific gender dimensions that prevent the women's rights to be adequately protected. As a result, women's voice is not strong enough to hold service providers to account. ([Engendering Development through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources and Voice](#))

General Forms of Corruption Affecting Women in Education

Forms of Corruption in the Education Sector

Corruption challenges can take many forms in the education sector and occurs at all stages of the service delivery chain, from school planning and management, to student admissions and examinations as well as to teachers' management and professional conduct. ([U4 thematic Page on Education](#)). TI's [Africa Education Watch](#) programme assessed school governance,

transparency and management in seven African Countries¹. The three more common problems identified across these countries included illegal demands for non-existent funds, the embezzlement of resources and abuses of power by teachers and officials. The research further identified problems of limited financial information available and unpredictable funding and resource provisions for schools.

There is little research exploring the gendered impact of corruption in education services. However, although educational forms of corruption affect both boys and girls, there are reasons to believe that the greatest burden of corrupt practices falls on the girl child.

At the policy level, corruption may affect the **allocation of resources** to the education sector and general level of funding available for public schools, greatly undermining the quality of education services. Administrative funds and supplies can be diverted before reaching the schools. As women are more reliant on public forms of schooling than boys, this is likely to affect the quality of education received by the girl child to a greater extent. In addition, public spending is often managed by men in a non gender sensitive manner, which is likely to further restrict women's access to quality education services. ([Gender Responsive Budgeting in Education](#))

Education related procurement are also typically confronted to major corruption challenges, with risks of diversion of resources, leakages, biased decision making in contracts' award, etc. Education supplies can be subjected to payoffs, under-deliveries and overpricing. There is anecdotal evidence that resources intended for poor women are especially vulnerable to high level skimming of commissions for procurement, because poor women are less aware of their rights and entitlements to public resources, have limited recourse opportunities to redress mechanisms and are subsequently less likely to challenge public officials. ([UNIFEM Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009 report](#))

¹ Ghana, Madagascar, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Uganda

Admission and access to education services

It is not uncommon that parents and students are asked to make informal payments to access public services that are supposed to be free of charge. Entrance exam papers can be sold in advance for high payer candidates. In Georgia for example, professors are reported to hand out price lists for passing exams. There is no evidence that this practice affects girls more than boys, but the parents' readiness to pay bribes to secure access to schooling is likely to be influenced by the child's gender.

In Bangladesh, a 2005 Transparency International Bangladesh survey also found that 22 % of secondary girl students entitled to receive a stipend in the framework of the "Female Stipend Program" had to pay a fee to enrol in the scheme. In addition, 5% of primary school students and 38 % of secondary school student stated that at the time of payment, a portion of their stipend was deducted by the authority. ([UNIFEM Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009 report](#))

There are other examples where women are more systematically and specifically targeted by corrupt officials. Another survey conducted in Bangladesh found that government account clerks who are charging speed payment fees to process officials' claim for allowance and expenses were more likely to target female education officials and teachers because they were assumed to have a male provider in their lives. Access to allowances such as maternity and sickness pay were found to be especially subjected to informal speed payment, as women were in a weak situation to protest and seek redress. (www.unifem.org/progress/2008/media/POWW08_references.pdf)

Private Tutoring

As under-resourced schooling systems inadequately prepare children for college, parents are often forced to hire private tutors to ensure that children pass the admission examination. In countries as diverse as India, Romania and Egypt, over one third of the pupils receive private tutoring. Risks of manipulation are high when the mainstream teacher provides supplementary tutoring after school hours, sometimes teaching only half of the curricula during regular hours and requiring pupils to pay for the other half during private lessons. In countries such as Pakistan, it has been reported that

the teacher beat the student or submit a failing grade when tuition fees are refused. In some other cases, the most popular tutors are often the same professors who sit in admission committees of higher education, distorting the admission process.

Such practices may result in distorting the mainstream curricula, making pressure on young pupils, exacerbating social inequalities. But most importantly, this results in making free primary education prohibitively expensive for poor households, and exacerbating social inequalities, including gender. While there is little or no gender disaggregated data on private tutoring, it is reasonable to assume that in view of the above mentioned gender inequalities in spending on education within the household, the readiness to pay high private tutoring fees for the girl child may be limited. ([Adverse Effects of Private Supplementary Tutoring](#))

There is no evidence available that indicates that other forms of corruption that are prevalent in the education sector – such as abusive practices around **examinations², school accreditation or the recruitment, promotion and transfers of teachers** - more specifically affect women. It is however likely that, due to their limited economic power, women lack an adequate entry-point network where services can be accessed in exchange for a bribe. Similarly, it is difficult for women, especially poorer women, to pay bribes to access services or get preferential treatment when applying for a position, transfer or promotion. ([UNIFEM Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009 report](#))

Impact on Women's Access to Education Services

There is a growing body of evidence that demonstrates that corruption undermines the cost, volume and quality of public service delivery, including education services, ultimately affecting education outcomes in developing countries. A recently published study looking at [corruption, public spending and education](#)

² Please see: [Equity Issues in Public Examinations in Developing Countries](#)

outcomes in Indonesia indicates that while corruption does not appear to have a direct effect on education outcomes, it adversely affects the education system through reducing the effectiveness of public spending. Public spending was found to have little effect on school enrolment rates and education outcomes in highly corrupt districts, but was associated with higher primary and secondary enrolment rates in less corrupt districts.

This is likely to have a disparate impact on women, both in terms of quantitative and qualitative access to education services. High level corruption leakages of resources intended for public services at the national level result in scarce public services at the local level, reducing ex-ante the resource available for marginalised groups including women. Furthermore, as women and the poor are especially dependent on public services, the impact of such behaviours falls more heavily on them.

(http://www.womensnet.org.za/files/subsites/wits_research_institute/research_materials/Goetz-Woman-in-Politic-effectiveness.pdf).

In terms of education outcomes, the combined effect of gender bias in service provision and inequalities within the household in education spending is that girls are less likely to attend school, receive quality education or private tutoring and more likely to drop out soon after initial enrolment. **Cross country analysis** of indicators of perceptions of corruption and indicators of provision of education services demonstrates that high levels of corruption have adverse consequences on drop out rates in primary schools, with drop out rates five times as high in countries with high levels of corruption. **Research** suggests that countries with higher levels of corruption and low efficient government services have 26 % higher drop out rates than in countries with low corruption and high efficiency. **Research conducted in the Philippines** indicates that corruption affects all education outcomes, reducing test scores, lowering national ranking of schools, raising variation of test scores across schools and reducing satisfaction ratings. More research would be needed to look at the differentiated impact of corruption on girls and boys' drop outs and education outcomes. However, as drop out rates are higher for girls than boys, it is reasonable to assume that corruption has a profound gendered impact on girls' school attendance.

Gender Specific Forms of Corruption in the Education Sector

Sexual Violence at Schools

While women are involved on both supply and demand sides of corruption, there are also gender specific forms of abuse in the education sector that affect women more specifically, the most common one consisting in using sex as an informal currency in which bribes are paid. A growing body of evidence relates to violence in schools across developed and developing countries. A 2002 **UNHCR/Save the Children UK report** drew the attention on how teachers in refugee camps in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone were using their power position and authority to extort sexual favours from refugee girls in exchange for good grades and other school privileges in exchange for sex. The Education Watch Programme identified instances of sexual harassment already in primary schools in Ghana, Morocco, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Uganda.

A study of sexual violence in Botswana 2001 revealed that 67 % of the girls reported sexual harassment by teachers. 11 % of the girls surveyed seriously considered dropping out of schools due to harassment (despite the fact that Botswana provides 10 years of free education) and 10 % consented to sexual relations for fear of reprisals in respect of grades and performance records. (<http://www.u4.no/themes/education/educationcommonforms.cfm>).

Research further indicates that it is not uncommon in developing countries to use "transactional sex" as a means for girls to pay school fees, meet living expenses or obtain gifts or preferential treatment. Such practices are not always disapproved by all parents, teachers and school girls whether for economic or cultural reasons.

As sexual extortion is a largely unrecognised form of bribery, such practice is usually not detected or punished by the accountability system in place. There is also general apathy among officials, lack of awareness and reluctance to believe the girls reporting sexual harassment. As a result, recent studies worldwide reveal that sexual violence in the education sector remains largely an unaddressed issue. (**Beyond Victims and Villains: Addressing Sexual Violence in the Education Sector**)

Impact on Women's Psychological and Physical Health

Gender specific forms of corruption in the form of sexual extortion has a far reaching impact on women's education, psychological and physical well being. Sexually abused school girls are at risk of unwanted pregnancies which in many developing countries results in the girl being expelled from school, severely limiting their ability to achieve their educational potential. In countries with high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, such practices also expose school girls to sexually transmitted infections including HIV infection and the social stigma attached to it. (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001467/146763e.pdf>). In the worst infected countries, girls are estimated to be five to six times more likely to be HIV positive than boys of the same age (www.panos.org.uk). Last but not least, such practices may have long lasting impact on the psychological health and sense of identity of abused children that go far beyond the cessation of the sexual transaction.

Long Term Impact of Corruption in Education on Women

Gender Equity

There is no systematic research on the specific impact of corruption in the education sector on gender equity. However, there is a general consensus that corruption creates equity setbacks and exacerbates social disparities – including gender – because the efficiency losses that can be attributed to corruption are not distributed equally across society. Corruption fuels poverty, which ultimately exacerbates gender disparities. These disparities restrict women and girls' access to public services and economic power, ultimately limiting their capacity to participate in and benefit from development.

Education, Growth and Development

In the longer term, corruption affects education in three major ways. First, it exerts pressure on the education budget, which represents in many developing countries the largest component of public spending, generating price increases, undermining government output and service delivery and reducing investment in education services. Second, it has a negative impact on the cost, volume and quality of education services, reducing

public confidence and demand and ultimately affecting learning outcomes and their potential contribution to long term social and economic development. Last, it may undermine the young generations' acquisition of core ethical values during their formative years that are critical to promote integrity and accountability in a given society.

(http://www.igac.net/pdf/publications_adb_manyfac_esofcorruption.pdf).

As already mentioned, women are disproportionately affected by the impact of corruption on the quality and quantity of education services. Female education has been shown to be a major driver of social and economic development. Among other effects, corruption is likely to affect long term social and economic progress by undermining female education outcomes.

The link between literacy, corruption and economic growth has been confirmed by a [recently published study](#) exploring the relationship between human capital as measured by education and corruption and their combined effect on economic growth. The research indicates that education matters in both lowering corruption and increasing GDP per capita. The findings suggest that corruption and literacy account together for 62 % of the total variation of GDP per capita, with corruption having the strongest power, followed by education. The findings also indicate that adult literacy rates and gender gap are statistically significant in fostering economic growth, as countries with a low gender quotient tend to be plagued by endemic corruption and associated with low GDP per capita.

Part 2: Solutions to Address Gender Disparities and Corruption in Education

As women appear to be disproportionately affected by corruption in education services, anti-corruption efforts should more systematically take into account the gender dimension of corruption. Women's experience and perceptions of corruption should inform anti-corruption efforts to ensure that forms of corruption that affect women most are adequately addressed. This implies promoting a deeper understanding of the issue, by more systematically capturing and monitoring the gendered impact of corruption in education on female's education outcome, drop out rates, etc, through the systematic collection of disaggregated data. This also

involves the design of anti-corruption strategies aimed at empowering women to participate in policy making, monitoring and oversight of education services, as a prerequisite to make services more accountable and responsive to their needs.

Women's Participation

Cutting across all anti-corruption measures is the need to introduce effective mechanisms to promote more women's participation in the planning, management and oversight of education services.

Transparency and access to information is a prerequisite for participation. Women and the public in general must have access to updated and accurate information on financial data for the transfer of funds to schools, the allocation of resources, procurement of school materials as well as regular access to an up-to-date and accurate list of teachers, etc, to monitor and compare actual expenditure against policy statements. In practice, findings from TI's education Watch indicate that parents had little opportunities for and little interest in the schools' financial oversight.

A typical avenue for women's participation in the education sector is to promote **gender parity in Parent Teacher Associations and School Management Committees** (SMCs). However, findings from TI's Education Watch indicate that SMCs are vulnerable to capture by teachers and local elites and that there is a general lack of engagement of parents in these structures as well as in the schools' financial oversight. Participation mechanisms should therefore be accompanied by **awareness raising and capacity building initiatives** to ensure that parents – including women - are empowered to play a meaningful role in the schools' management and oversight.

The introduction of **effective complaints mechanisms** supported by adequate whistleblowing protection is an important component of any anti-corruption intervention, with the view to encourage women and schoolgirls to report on wrongdoing at school. An expert answer has specially dealt with good practice in introducing effective **anti-corruption complaints mechanisms**.

Choice strategies through privatisation of service delivery to address some of the quality issues are likely to have a limited impact and even adverse effect on

women, as they tend to have less access to resources than men.

Decentralisation

Decentralisation is often referred to as a way to foster more voice in public service delivery by bringing services closer to the beneficiaries and a growing number of countries transfer financial responsibility to lower levels of government, local communities and school providers. However, this strategy can have a mixed impact on women and potentially drive further inequalities, including gender. In South Africa for example, decentralised services are often delivered through traditional councils, which are government supported traditional development centres. In spite of existing regulations stipulating that at least one third of traditional community leaders must be women, these councils primarily appoint men as gatekeepers of local services for women, which is likely to introduce a gender bias in public service delivery. ([2009 Education for All Report](#))

Gender Responsive Budgeting

Gender responsive budgeting has been introduced with the view to improving accountability to women in public service delivery and eliminating inequalities in access to education, health, security, justice, training, employment, etc. This approach has been developed to ensure that budget formulation, execution and reporting adequately target gender issues. Government budgets are formulated based on an assessment of the different roles and needs of women and men in society and result in increased allocation for gender equality. In Morocco for example, government departments are required to prepare a gender report providing information on budget allocations and sex disaggregated performance indicators. More than 15 countries have introduced systematic gender responsive budget guidelines. ([Gender Responsive Budgeting in Education](#))

Recruiting more Women teachers

Another approach developed to promote gender equity in education in developing countries has been to recruit more female teachers. Research indicates a positive correlation between the number of women teachers and girls' enrolment, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as a positive impact on girls' retention in school

and on their achievement. In contrast, in countries where women constitute only 20% of teachers, there are far more boys than girls entering school.

(<http://www2.unescobkk.org/elib/publications/080/impact.pdf>).

This strategy has also been implemented to address the problem of sex for good grades. In 2002 for example, the International Rescue Committee launched a so-called "Classroom Assistant Programme" in Guinea and Sierra Leone to address sexual violence at schools by appointing a female classroom assistant with the view to "*addressing the male domination of the schools and provide a more protective conducting learning environment for girls*".

(http://www.ineesite.org/uploads/documents/store/doc_1_58_Gender_Strategies_in_Emergencies_GBV.doc).

Codes of Conduct for Teachers

A complementary initiative to prevent sexual abuse and harassment by teachers and address corruption in the education sector is to promote higher ethical and professional standards of behaviours. This can be achieved through the development and implementation of **codes of conduct for all teachers and other education personnel**, addressing all forms of unethical behaviours, including sexual extortion or harassment. A **2005 study** compared the design, implementation and impact of teachers' codes of practices in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. The study established that the introduction of teachers' codes of conduct was perceived to have had a positive impact on the commitment, professional behaviour and performance of teachers and school personnel.

Part 3: Further Reading

Who Answers to Women? (Progress of the World's Women report 2008/2009)

This report shows that realising women's rights and achieving the MDGs depends on strengthening accountability to women and gender equality, by increasing the number of women in decision making and promoting gender responsive good governance. The report provides evidence that women's empowerment and gender equality are drivers of poverty reduction, effectiveness of aid and social and economic development.

www.unifem.org/progress/2008/

Gender and Corruption: Testing the New Consensus (2007)

This article explores the gender probity argument to justify women's inclusion in public life as an anti-corruption strategy. The paper concludes that women may not necessarily be less corrupt than men when exposed to opportunities and network of corruption, especially in collectivist cultures that expect civil servants to fulfil certain obligations such as nepotism and cronyism. The paper concludes that women should be integrated in public life as a right and not an anti-corruption imperative.

http://www.konsnet.dk/Admin/Public/DWSDownload.aspx?File=%2FFiles%2FFiler%2FKN%2FGovernance%2FGender_and_corruption_-_Testing_the_new_consensus.pdf

Gender responsive Budgeting in Education (2005)

This Oxfam paper uses the gender responsive budgeting approach to explain how governments and donors can promote gender equality in education through their decision on financing.

[http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/epr/MTEF/04Financial_Planning/01Budgeting_Process/040115001Oxfam%20GB%20\(2007\).pdf](http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/epr/MTEF/04Financial_Planning/01Budgeting_Process/040115001Oxfam%20GB%20(2007).pdf)

Gender and Corruption – Measuring the disparate impact

This paper explores the gendered impact of corruption, examining the tripartite linkage between Corruption-Poverty and Gender. Studies have shown the clear nexus between gender and poverty and the further linkage to corruption as an engendering factor. This paper interrogates the possibility of measuring the disparate impact in a manner that enables informed policies.

http://www.eadi.org/fileadmin/WG_Documents/gender_wg/workshop_corruption_ekeanyanwu.pdf