Gender-transformative, effective, with integrity: Overcoming corruption and gender inequality together!

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Part 1: Gender-transformative approaches in anti-corruption

Part 2: Gender-transformative approaches in specific sectors

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This study contains two parts:

Part 1:   Gender-transformative approaches in anti-corruption

Part 2:   Gender-transformative approaches in specific sectors (from page 72)

Table of Content Part 1

Figures and Tables Part 1

Textboxes Part 1

Table of Content Part 2

Figures and Tables Part 2

Textboxes Part 2

Part 1:
Gender-transformative approaches in anti-corruption

Executive Summary

By laying the theoretical, normative and strategic foundation for gender-transformative approaches in anti-corruption work, this part shows why it is not enough to treat gender as a cross-cutting issue in anti-corruption strategies. Rather, working against corruption requires a systemic, intersectional and power-reflected paradigm shift because corruption is not merely an institutional or moral problem. Corruption is deeply rooted in social norms, power relations and exclusionary practices. So long as these structures are not critically questioned and changed, even seemingly neutral anti-corruption measures will reproduce existing inequalities – for example, by relying on approaches, networks and narratives that systematically exclude marginalised groups. The paradigm shift makes it possible to understand corruption not in isolation, but as part of a complex social structure that also produces and stabilises gender inequality.

The most important starting point of this study is that social norms and power relations that structure gender inequality – for example, cultures of silence, informal networks, sexualised dependencies or the exclusion of marginalised groups from decision-making processes – also promote corruption. The focus of the analysis therefore is on the dual effect of social norms in these processes.

Gender-transformative anti-corruption approaches aim to make these connections visible and actively change them. Instead of focusing on individual misconduct or technocratic rules, they focus on the structural conditions that enable gender inequality and corruption – especially the social and institutional practices that legitimise and perpetuate such phenomena.

This part is based on three methodological pillars:

- **Qualitative interviews** with 23 experts from academia, NGOs, multilateral organisations and official development cooperation (see attachment).
- **Evaluation of scientific literature** on gender, corruption, change of norms and governance.
- **Analysis of programme reports and good practices** from various sectors – including health, education, social protection, agriculture, public administration and politics.

Key concepts and analyses

This part begins by defining central terms such as **gender**, **corruption**, **social norms** and **gender-transformative**. Gender should not be understood to mean a biological characteristic; rather it should be viewed as a social power relationship. Corruption is understood to be a normatively embedded practice whose impact and access is structured in a gender-specific way. Descriptive and injunctive norms form the oft-invisible systems of rules in which power is exercised, justified and reproduced.

The study advocates the integration of feminist, intersectional and norm-critical perspectives into anti-corruption research and practice, beyond a binary, women-centred view. Men, non-binary and queer people are also affected by these norms – for example through masculinity ideals, taboos around violence or institutional invisibility.

A central element of this part are the five principles of gender-transformative approaches (*MacArthur et al., 2022*), which are supplemented by further features. Together, they form the basis for effective programmes that specifically address social norms, power relations and structural exclusions in the context of anti-corruption. Gender-transformative approaches work to transform systems rather than seeking integration into existing systems. They are long-term, participatory and systemic.

→ Theory of change and impact pathways

Gender-transformative anti-corruption strategies can be designed and implemented based on a theory of change that advises four complementary pathways:

1. **Social norm transformation:** Changing what is considered legitimate, sayable or acceptable, such as when dealing with sexualised corruption or abuse of power. Possible methods for achieving this might be storytelling, theatre work, or peer work with men.

2. **Resource-based empowerment:** Reducing structural dependencies through access to property, whistleblower systems or grievance mechanisms. The specific goal here is to increase the ability of marginalised people to act, even without access to privileged networks.

3. **Knowledge and competence building:** Critical learning instead of mere awareness-building. Empowerment trainings, political education and leadership programmes create collective self-efficacy, especially for marginalised groups.

4. **Institutional change:** Reformation of rules, procedures and power relations in administrations, courts or procurement using instruments such as: gender-responsive public procurement (GRPP), gender budgeting, gender-sensitive anti-corruption strategies and monitoring by those affected.

These paths of impact are not linear, but **interconnected**: empowerment promotes norm critique, norm critique opens institutions, structural reform secures participation. Gender-transformative programmes combine individual reflection with collective mobilisation.

Norms as a link between gender and corruption

Corruption is not gender-neutral. Women, LGBTQI+ people and other marginalised groups are less visible and often unprotected, but they are usually the more affected group. This is particularly evident in the case of sexualised corruption, which operates at the intersection of abuse of power and gender-based violence – and is still hardly named, documented or sanctioned. Numerous interviewees emphasised that it is not enough to promote women – it requires a **transformation of the systems** that exclude or endanger them. The matrix for gender-transformative analysis of power and norms (GTA-NormCheck, Appendix 3) developed as part of this study serves as a reflection tool for the identification of relevant normative fields. It is aimed in particular at political decision-makers, programme managers in development cooperation and civil society actors who want to plan or further develop gender-transformative anti-corruption strategies.

Result

Gender-transformative anti-corruption approaches are more than a cross-cutting issue – they are a strategic tool for changing structures, rules and normative practices. Part 1 provides the theoretical basis and a conceptual architecture for this. Part 2 applies these pathways at sectoral level. This is not just about best practices, but about context-based levers: Who has power? Who will be heard? Which norms protect – and which legitimise exclusion?

1 Introduction

The importance of taking gender into account in the fight against corruption has over the last 20 years increasingly become the focus of science and politics. At the latest, it became clear at the 10th Conference of the Parties (CoSP10) to the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in December 2023 that corruption can only be effectively combated if gender is taken into consideration. Four of the twelve UN resolutions adopted at the conference mention the link between gender and corruption and explicitly call to systematically integrate gender aspects into national anti-corruption strategies. Resolution 10/10 in particular is a first major step towards the systematic inclusion of gender in (anti)corruption. So far, however, there remains a lack of clear methods and concrete measures that show how anti-corruption approaches can be designed in a gender-transformative way. This study fills in this gap.

Textbox 1 Was ist Gender?

The social sex ("gender") is not the same as the biological sex ("sex"). Rather, it is a social power relationship structured by normative expectations, economic dependencies and political exclusions. Who takes on what role, whose voice is heard, who receives resources and who is sanctioned – all of this is shaped by social norms, cultural narratives and institutional practices. These power relations are changeable, but deeply rooted – and they help determine how corruption is enabled, experienced and combated. (BMZ, n.d.–a)

The central starting point in this part arises from the thesis that it is not enough to treat gender as a cross-cutting issue in anti-corruption strategies. Rather, an explicitly political perspective that systematically addresses the structural intertwining of gender norms, informal power relations, and corruption-promoting dynamics is needed. A gender-transformative approach to anti-corruption asks not only who is affected but who benefits from existing rules, whose experiences remain invisible, and which social norms legitimise these inequalities. Previously, gender equality and anti-corruption strategies have been handled separately but in order to mainstream both directions – i.e. from gender in anti-corruption strategies and from anti-corruption in gender equality policy programmes – it is necessary to consider them together. Systemic solutions can only emerge if the normative, political and institutional interfaces between gender inequality and corruption are addressed simultaneously. A stronger dovetailing of both agendas is urgently needed – because structural inequalities and corrupt practices reinforce each other. An integrative approach that tackles both problems at the same time is therefore essential.

> **Textbox 2 What is corruption?**
>
> "Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private benefit or advantage." (BMZ, n.d.) Corruption can manifest itself in a variety of ways – from the payment of bribes in connection with the use of state services (so-called "petty corruption") to the systematic influence on state decision-making processes and institutions ("grand corruption" or "state capture"). There are a variety of different forms of corruption such as bribery, the granting of advantages, nepotism, embezzlement, patronage, kleptocracy, clientelism, facilitation payments or sexualised corruption. (BMZ, (n.d.–c, 202)

Traditional anti-corruption strategies often do not consider corruption's impact on gender. They neglect how differently men, women and non-binary people experience corruption, overlooking gender barriers that prevent women and marginalised groups in particular from effectively combating or reporting corruption. In particular, there is a lack of a focus on gender and social norms that both enable corruption and reinforce gender inequality.

In recent decades, considerable progress has been made in the literature on the relationship between gender and corruption. The myth that women are inherently less corrupt has been overcome, and the field of research has expanded. Current research clearly recognises that the role of gender in (anti-) corruption is complex and multifaceted (*Merkle, 2020, 2022*). Academic research increasingly focuses on the role of (gender) norms and how they influence perceptions and experiences of corruption. For example, social norms often exclude women and marginalised groups from networks and decision-making processes that could facilitate or combat corruption. At the same time, gender roles shape who is perceived as legitimate and competent to address or fight corruption. Gender norms shape how and where people experience corruption and what forms of corruption they experience, with women and marginalised groups often disproportionately exposed to specific forms such as sexualised corruption.

> **Textbox 3 What is sexualised corruption?**
>
> Sexualised corruption refers to forms of corruption in which sexual acts are demanded or provided in return for the corrupt practice rather than money, goods or services. Originally, the focus of the discussion was on "sextortion," i.e., on the extortionate aspects of this corruption. However, there is now a growing consensus that this limit is too narrow. The term "sexualised corruption" was thus introduced, encompassing all forms of corruption in which sexual reciprocal services play a role. (Bjarnegård et al., 2024)

The academic literature clearly shows that entrenched norms and power relations structure both the practice and prevention of corruption (*Kubbe & Merkle, 2022*). Corruption is not a gender-neutral phenomenon. It is embedded in social norms and power relations that determine who remains silent, who benefits – and who is endangered. Several interviewees emphasised that they do not experience corruption primarily as a violation of the rules, but as a social power structure in which gender plays a central role. One interviewee clarified: "When we think of gender, we still think of 'women' instead of power. And that's exactly why men feel excluded – and the systems don't change."

This research aspect increasingly underlines the close linkage between the promotion of gender equality and the fight against corruption. The central starting point of this study is the finding that certain gender norms negatively influence both gender equality and anti-corruption. For example, rigid social norms and power structures can consolidate inequalities and promote mechanisms of corruption. These dynamics not only hinder equality but also weaken the effectiveness of anti-corruption initiatives. It is therefore urgently necessary to dovetail the agendas for gender equality and anti-corruption more closely. The present research increasingly points out that gender-transformative approaches in corruption prevention initiatives not only promote equality but can also enable sustainable success in anti-corruption.

One interviewee emphasised that gender is not a marginal issue, but the 'core problem' of anti-corruption work:

'You can't fight power asymmetries without questioning gender norms. They are what holds the problem together in the first place.'

Gender-transformative approaches thus aim to systematically analyse and change precisely these norms. Initiatives to combat corruption should therefore focus more on gender-transformative approaches.

Currently, there are increasingly more initiatives to integrate gender perspectives into anti-corruption work (Gender mainstreaming) (*Merkle, 2018a; UNODC, 2020a*), though this is not enough to achieve long-term change. As such, this study examines the possibilities of establishing gender-transformative approaches in anti-corruption. As one interviewee summed it up: "Gender-transformative means going one step further. It's not just about integrating women into existing systems – it's about fundamentally changing these systems."

Textbox 4 What is gender mainstreaming?

Gender mainstreaming is a strategic approach to promoting and enforcing gender equality. The framework of this approach is such that the different life situations and interests of women, men and people with other gender identities are always taken into account in political and social projects and decisions, with the intention of preventing the unequal treatment of the different genders from the outset. This model of gender equality is based on the recognition that there is no gender-neutral reality and that the different genders can be affected in different ways by political decisions and administrative acts. The mission statement expressly covers all areas of life, not only measures that are specifically dedicated to equality. (BMZ, n.d.–b)

Textbox 5 What is a gender-transformative approach?

"According to the BMZ, a gender transformative approach supports attitude changes and social change and acknowledges that unjust social norms underpin unequal power relations that disadvantage women, girls and persons of non-binary gender identities. It aims to reshape gender dynamics by addressing the causes of gender-based inequalities, redistributing resources, expectations and responsibilities between women, persons of non-binary gender identities and men, often focusing on norms, power and collective action. A gender transformative approach identifies and addresses the different constraints faced by women, persons of non-binary gender identities and men, and recognise their specific capabilities." (Gouthami 2023, p. 8)

→ **In the scientific literature, five central principles of gender-transformative approaches can be identified as a whole (MacArthur et al., 2022, p. 6ff; FAO et al., 2020).**

Table 1 Five principles of gender-transformative approaches

Structural transformation	Gender norms and power relations are not accepted as given but deliberately changed.
Systemic approach	Impact unfolds on several levels – individual, social, institutional.
Strategic interests	It is not just about access, but about the fair distribution of resources, roles and decision-making spaces.
Intersectionality	Gender is considered alongside other axes of inequality (ethnicity, class, etc.).
Participatory methodology	Affected groups are not simply taken into account but are actively involved.

These principles form the basis for the impact pathways described below and serve the strategic orientation of gender-transformative anti-corruption programmes and relevant sector projects.

Thus far, the discourse on gender-transformative approaches has focused primarily on norms that hinder gender equality. This perspective falls short, however, as restrictive gender norms not only inhibit equality but also promote corruption. Gender-specific power imbalances and discriminatory social expectations reinforce mechanisms of impunity and dependence, facilitating corruption – especially sexualised corruption. An environment of corruption further complicates access to resources, rights and protection for already marginalised groups, thus preventing existing efforts towards gender equality. This study therefore starts from the premise that gender norms negatively affect both equality and anti-corruption.

→ **There are several key requirements that gender-transformative approaches in anti-corruption must meet (U4, 2024):**

1. **Questioning social norms:** Gender-transformative approaches analyse and address norms that discriminate against women and marginalised groups while enabling corrupt practices. An example of this can be found in societal expectations that favour men as dominant actors in political and economic networks.

2. **Promoting women and non-binary people in leadership roles:** Women and non-binary people in positions of power can break down existing power structures and networks that are often dominated by men and perpetuate corruption. This is especially true in areas such as public service, politics and local administration.

3. **Protecting vulnerable groups:** Women and marginalised groups often take higher risks when reporting or resisting corruption; gender-transformative approaches take that into account by requiring mechanisms that protect whistleblowers, as well as the creation of safe channels for reporting corruption.

Gender-transformative anti-corruption approaches must concretely design four central areas of action that reflect these three requirements.

→ **These areas of action address the social, normative and structural causes of corruption and inequality:**

1. **Redistribution of responsibilities:** This involves changing societal and cultural expectations about who is responsible for certain tasks.

2. **Questioning gender expectations:** These approaches are committed to redefining traditional notions of appropriate behaviour, roles and gender characteristics.

3. **Change in power relations:** Actively breaking male-dominated hierarchies through structural reforms and normative shifts in favour of FLINTA[1] people.

4. **Equitable distribution of resources:** Ensuring that all genders have equal access to resources such as education, health care, economic opportunities and political participation is a key concern.

The academic literature clearly shows that gender norms have a strong influence on who participates in corruption, who benefits and is harmed by it and what forms of corruption a person experiences. Women are often excluded from powerful networks that provide access to corrupt structures (*Alhassan-Alolo, 2007; Bjarnegård, 2013; Goetz, 2007; Grimes & Wängnerud, 2012; Stockemer, 2011*). Case studies clearly show that women and other marginalised groups are disproportionately affected by corruption, especially in areas such as basic services, health and education (*Chêne et al., 2010; Ellis et al., 2006*). These groups are also at increased risk of encountering other forms of corruption, especially sexualised corruption (*Merkle, 2024*). Studies show that this is closely linked to gender and social norms that lead to women and marginalised people being exposed to corruption in different ways (*Kubbe & Merkle, 2022*). Therefore, gender-transformative approaches are needed to effectively combat corruption.

Many studies on corruption still work with a binary understanding of gender that is limited exclusively to women and men. This narrow perspective fails to recognise the diversity of gender identities and forms of expression, and ignores the realities of life for many people, especially those with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIESC). As a result, the particular vulnerability of marginalised groups to corruption often goes unnoticed. However, the few studies that exist on this subject clearly show that marginalised groups are disproportionately affected by corruption (*Abut, 2022; Bullock & Jenkins, 2020; Transparency International & Equal Rights Trust, 2021*). There is a lack of a differentiated analysis that also examines the specific forms of corruption to which LGBTIQ+ people can be exposed.

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[1] FLINTA* stands for women, lesbians, intersex, non-binary, trans and agender people. The term refers to people who are structurally discriminated against because of their gender identity or gender affiliation. The use of the term is intended to make visible that gender-specific power relations not only affect cis women, but exclude and marginalise a variety of gender identities. FLINTA* is a deliberately political collective term that draws attention to structural inequality – even if not all affected persons identify with this term.

Gender norms and structures not only influence women but also shape the experiences of men and non-binary people. In particular, norms of masculinity – i.e., societal ideas about how men should or should not behave – play a central role in the reproduction of power imbalances and corrupt practices. A comprehensive gender-transformative approach must systematically consider these interactions between gender, power and corruption. An intersectional[2] understanding of gender is also essential to making anti-corruption strategies effective and equitable. Gender intersects with other social categories such as class, ethnicity and sexual orientation – and significantly influences how individuals experience corruption. Without this perspective, anti-corruption programmes run the risk of excluding central groups or inadvertently reinforcing existing discrimination.

An intersectional understanding allows to:

1. **Address inequalities more comprehensively:** By analysing the interactions between different forms of discrimination, targeted measures can be developed to address the structural causes of corruption and gender inequality.

2. **Identify barriers for marginalised groups:** For example, it can be investigated how norms increase the risks of corruption for certain groups, such as non-binary people or women from marginalised communities.

3. **Make anti-corruption strategies more inclusive:** Gender-transformative approaches that rely on a broad understanding of gender can ensure that all gender groups benefit from measures and are actively involved in decision-making processes.

4. **Promote long-term cultural change**: A comprehensive approach can challenge norms that promote discrimination and corruption and help create fairer and more sustainable structures.

Considering these aspects would lead both members of academia and policymakers to move away from viewing the link between gender and corruption as merely an (often marginal) aspect of the anti-corruption agenda; rather, the promotion of gender equality must become a central element of anti-corruption work.

Gender-transformative approaches in anti-corruption are still at the beginning of their conceptual and practical development. Although there is growing interest in linking social norms, gender and corruption, many programmes still focus on technocratic instruments, i.e. policies or reporting requirements that take little account of social exclusion and power relations. Systematic analyses of the implementation and impact of gender-transformative interventions are still scarce – not because there is a lack of relevance, but because corresponding programmes are often new, context-specific, and only partially documented (*Maslen, 2024*). In addition, deep-rooted power relations and institutional resistance often make it difficult to introduce measures aimed at structural change.

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2   Intersectionality is an approach first developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (Crenshaw, 1989, 1990) and shows that individuals are usually not exposed to a single system of oppression, such as sexism. Rather, different forms of discrimination, such as sexism, racism, ableism or ageism, overlap and reinforce each other. The totality of these intersectional oppressions is often more far-reaching than the sum of their individual components.

At the same time, it is well documented in the academic literature that social norms are crucial in determining whether and how corruption arises, is legitimised or maintained (*Kubbe & Merkle, 2022*). This research clearly shows that anyone who wants to change norms as a means of combatting corruption must also systematically consider gender relations and power asymmetries. This is exactly why gender-transformative approaches are not optional but essential for addressing corruption in a sustainable and equitable way.

Therefore, this publication outlines practical approaches to gender-transformative work in anti-corruption. The analysis in this part is based on a multi-layered qualitative approach. Interviews were conducted with 23 experts from academia, international organisations, NGOs, GIZ and civil society initiatives (*see Appendix 1*). The interviewees have proven expertise in gender, corruption and gender-transformative programming and work in different regional contexts. At the same time, scientific literature and reports from international organisations dealing with the relationship between gender and corruption or with gender-transformative approaches in areas such as health, education, rural development and governance were evaluated. The aim was to systematically bring together theoretical perspectives, programmatic approaches and practical experience.

2. Definition of gender-transformative approaches in the context of anti-corruption

This subchapter examines how gender-transformative approaches in anti-corruption can be designed to effectively address the intertwining of gender norms, power structures and corruption. A gender-transformative approach not only addresses the symptoms of gender inequality but also specifically addresses its causes. Above all, those norms that are considered 'natural' in a certain context, e.g. discriminatory attitudes or unequal legal and economic structures, must be specifically questioned.

One interviewee emphasised the importance of a human rights-based, intersectional understanding of gender:

> "It's about seeing people in their dignity, autonomy and with their multiple experiences."

These findings change the view of anti-corruption strategies. They require a new institutional design that systematically takes social norms, power relations and integrity issues into account *(Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD], United Nations World Food Programme [WFP], 2020; GIZ, 2024; U4, 2024).*

Gender and social norms are conceptualised in different ways. One view considers norms as social phenomena that are enshrined in laws, institutions and rules, and are internalised through the behaviour and attitudes of individuals. This perspective suggests that approaches to changing norms must address both visible and invisible social structures. Another view understands norms as mentally anchored and dependent on agreement or rejection within groups. It follows that change should be sought by influencing individual and group-based ways of thinking. While literature on gender equality is primarily concerned with gender norms, social psychology speaks of social norms; the terms often overlap because many social norms are gender-specific. Norms are fundamentally different from habits because they are based on power, authority and control. Changing gender-specific norms therefore requires long-term, in-depth strategies that address both the attitudes and behaviour of individuals as well as social structures. Change is only possible if people not only think differently but are convinced of these changes and supported by society *(Harper et al., 2021, p. 13).*

Social norms[3] include cultural products such as values, customs and traditions, as well as formal institutions that shape the behaviour of individuals. These norms determine what is considered acceptable in a society and influence how power is distributed and exercised. Norms such as "men are natural leaders" or "women belong in the family" not only create gender-specific hierarchies but also promote corruption

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[3] For a detailed review of the current literature on gender norms and social norms in development cooperation, see Cookson et al (2023).

by keeping networks and decision-making processes exclusive. For example, the idea that women are less suitable for political office strengthens exclusive men's networks – and it is precisely these networks that have been proven to favour corrupt structures (*Merkle, 2022*). It is important to note that even though academic studies have so far mainly investigated the role of women, the same mechanisms are very likely to apply to other marginalised groups. These norms also determine what is considered acceptable behaviour within a society (descriptive norms) and what is considered appropriate (injunctive norms).
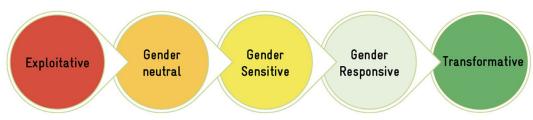
Textbox 6 What are norms?

Social norms are implicit and informal rules that are accepted and followed by most people. They are influenced by our beliefs, economic circumstances and the expected rewards or sanctions associated with complying with or disregarding these norms. Norms are embedded in formal and informal institutions and are continuously produced and reproduced through social interactions. Change only occurs when enough people decide (or are forced) to act in a different way, creating a new norm *(Harper et al., 2021, p. 14)*.

Gender norms are a subcategory of social norms. They describe how we should behave in a certain social context because of our gender. Gender norms often reflect and reinforce unequal gender relations, usually to the detriment of women and girls, but also of men and boys who do not conform to prevailing gender norms. They usually define the expected behaviour of people who identify as male or female (or are identified as such by others). In doing so, they often ignore non-binary or genderfluid identities *(Cookson et al, 2023)*.

Sources: (Cookson et al., 2023; Harper et al., 2021)

Figure 1 Continuum of gender equality

Exploitative → Gender neutral → Gender Sensitive → Gender Responsive → Transformative

Source: OECD (2022)

Anti-corruption measures can be located along a scale (*see Figure 1*) that shows how much they contribute to gender equality. From exploitative interventions, where the intervention intentionally or unintentionally reinforces, exacerbates and exploits gender inequalities and stereotypes, to those that are truly gender-transformative. In contrast to gender-neutral approaches, which ignore existing inequalities, and gender-sensitive approaches, which merely acknowledge them, gender-transformative approaches seek comprehensive structural change. The radical thing about gender-transformative approaches is their new perspective on gender justice. While gender equality has traditionally been defined either by the focus on "equality" – i.e. the possibility for women and men to enter the same fields – or the equal recognition of women and men (*Rees, 2006*), gender-transformative approaches see gender justice as a "transformation towards new standards for gender relations" (*MacArthur et al., 2022, p. 1*). They go beyond the mere inclusion of women and other marginalised people in existing systems by critically questioning these systems themselves. While gender-sensitive programmes integrate individuals who have thus far been left out (e.g., women or queer people) into the existing power structures, gender-transformative approaches analyse why these structures exclude marginalised groups. They develop strategies for systematic change. So far, anti-corruption initiatives have been largely gender-neutral (*Merkle, 2018b*) and only recently has there been an increased focus on the development of gender-sensitive or gender-responsive anti-corruption initiatives.

In order to develop gender-transformative approaches, it is crucial to understand how social norms change – and under what conditions this change succeeds. Studies by "Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms" (ALIGN) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (*Harper et al., 2020*) and others (*Haider, 2017; Heise et al., 2019*) show that sustainable transformation must take place on several levels: in the areas of education, reproductive rights, paid and unpaid work, and political representation. Research also shows that individual changes in posture are not enough. Collective processes, legitimate ambassadors of change and collective backing are needed. People are more willing to change their behaviour if they see others following the same path – a central moment in the transformation of deeply entrenched gender norms. It is particularly relevant who is at the centre of such transformation processes. Gender-transformative anti-corruption strategies cannot solely focus on women. Rather, men and boys – as well as the associated norms of masculinity – must also be included. The corruption sector is still strongly male-dominated. Perspectives outside this framework are often marginalised. But without the active involvement of male actors, structural change remains limited. Currently, such programmes often exist only selectively and without strategic anchoring (*SIDA, 2022*). Gender-transformative approaches can be used specifically in anti-corruption work by addressing the structural causes of inequality and abuse of power. Research clearly shows that corruption does not function in isolation, but is anchored in social norms, discriminatory power relations, and informal exclusions (*Kubbe & Merkle, 2022; Harper et al., 2021*). Gender-transformative programmes address these dynamics and operate on several levels at the same time – at the social-normative, resource-based, knowledge-related and institutional levels.

→ **At the normative level,**

… it is about questioning gender-related assumptions that legitimise certain forms of corruption – especially sexualised corruption – or make them invisible. Studies show that sexualised corruption is often supported by tacit expectations that normalise gender dependencies (*Bjarnegård et al., 2024; Caarten et al., 2022*). Gender-transformative approaches rely on making such norms visible and delegitimising them – for example through collective dialogue formats, community theatre or working with religious leaders (*BMZ, 2023; Dworkin & Barker, 2019*).

→ **At the structural level,**

… these approaches aim to break exclusive power and decision-making networks through, for example, promoting women and non-binary people to leadership positions. Studies such as those by *Dollar et al.* (2001), *Jha & Sarangi* (2015) or *Grimes & Wängnerud* (2012) show that a higher proportion of women in management positions correlates to lower levels of corruption; this is not because women are "less corrupt" but rather results from more diverse decision-making structures breaking up closed circles of power, increasing transparency (*Goetz, 2007; Schwindt-Bayer, 2010*). At the same time, corruption represents a significant barrier to social participation. Women and marginalised groups in particular are often impacted by systematic exclusion, for example, in terms of resource distribution, access to justice or political representation (*Bjarnegård, 2013; Franceschet & Piscopo, 2014; Norris, 2019*). The fight against corruption is therefore not just a question of integrity, but also a lever to promote justice and equality.

→ At the knowledge-related level,

… specific training programmes – such as those for civil servants, companies or civil society multipliers – help to make the links between discrimination, power and corruption visible. Programmes such as the ERADA project, which links the livelihoods of marginalised groups in rural areas of India with gender-transformative empowerment, show how technical education (e.g. Android training) can be combined with political empowerment (e.g. budgeting, gender analysis) to build agency and strengthen collective responsibility (*GIZ, 2024*).

→ At the institutional level,

… gender-transformative approaches offer the opportunity to initiate long-term reforms through incentive systems, new award procedures or inclusive complaint management. Gender-responsive public procurement (GRPP), participatory budget processes or gender-equitable anti-corruption strategies can be used in a targeted manner to structurally anchor transparency and equality (*U4, 2024; BMZ, 2022*).

The private sector can also play an important role here. Companies that implement internal equality and integrity standards and participate in industry-wide integrity initiatives or multi-stakeholder-based coalitions with a focus on transparency and equality actively contribute to changing existing power structures (*GIZ, 2024*). Cooperation with local communities is especially relevant. Studies and practical examples show that sustainable change can only succeed if collective norm change, local knowledge and institutional structures are intertwined (*Harper et al., 2021; Casey et al., 2016; BMZ, 2023*).

The concrete design of gender-transformative anti-corruption approaches – in response to structural inequalities, normative exclusions and informal power relations – has been laid out above. However, in order to develop these approaches effectively and context-sensitively, a deeper understanding of the social norms that structure both gender relations and corruption dynamics is necessary. The following section is therefore dedicated to the question of how social norms affect the relationship between gender and corruption – and why these norms offer a central starting point for systemic change.

3. The influence of social norms on the relationship between gender and corruption

Research shows that corruption can exacerbate existing gender inequalities, including intensifying unequal access to resources or through creating relationships based on sexualised dependency. At the same time, gender-specific exclusions weaken the effectiveness of many anti-corruption measures.

Political participation and corruption levels

Previous studies on the link between gender and corruption initially focused on the proportion of women in parliaments and their influence on levels of corruption (*Dollar et al., 2001; Swamy et al., 2001*). Subsequent research confirms that there is a statistical association between a higher proportion of women in political decision-making positions at the national, regional and local levels and lower corruption (*Grimes & Wängnerud, 2012; Stockemer & Sundström, 2019*). However, this relationship has grown more complex, as studies increasingly suggest that political violence, gender-based discrimination and patriarchal institutions actively hinder women's political participation (*Norris, 2019*). The correlation is thus less an indication of gender-specific moral superiority and more a reflection of structural differences: women often have less access to informal power resources, are subject to higher social expectations and operate under increased public scrutiny (*Goetz, 2007; Esarey & Schwindt-Bayer, 2018*).

Economic dependency, sector affiliation and vulnerability

Women are disproportionately employed in sectors characterised by high levels of informality, low accountability and direct interaction with authorities, such as health care, education and social services (*Boehm & Sierra, 2015; UNDP, 2012*). At the same time, being responsible for unpaid care work increases their dependence on public services and restricts alternative options. Corruption can thus threaten the very existence of women who live in poverty, especially single mothers or older women, as they lose a disproportionate proportion of their already limited resources (*Hunt & Laszlo, 2012; UNSD, 2015*). This structural vulnerability is exacerbated where protection and grievance mechanisms do not work, language or education are lacking or where there is an added layer of discrimination as the result of their ethnic origin or migration status (*Bullock & Jenkins, 2020*).

→ Sexualised corruption and norms of invisibility

Based on asymmetrical gender relations and normative expectations in which sexual favours are demanded in exchange for access to resources, protection or services – for example, in schools, administrations, or refugee camps (*Feigenblatt, 2020; Caarten et al., 2022*) – sexualised corruption is a particularly serious but often invisible form of abuse of power. This form of corruption is often taboo: victims are reluctant to report incidents for fear of stigma or because they are portrayed as voluntary participants (*UNODC, 2020b; UNDP-SIWI, 2017*). It is precisely this combination of normalisation and invisibility that makes sexualised corruption so dangerous for integrity systems: it undermines institutional protection mechanisms, eludes classic compliance logic and exacerbates structural exclusions, especially impacting women, queer people and people in precarious situations. Thus, it represents not only a form of gender-based violence, but a systemic governance risk. Research documents the serious health, psychological and social consequences of this form of corruption – and at the same time its persistent silence in institutional handling (*UNODC, 2020b*). Sexualised corruption can range from demands such as "sex for grades" or "sex for jobs" to implicit insinuations that access to social benefits, education or justice depends upon sexual favours.

It occurs particularly frequently:

- in educational contexts (access to school, exam results),
- in social security systems (benefit-granting bodies),
- during police checks or in prisons,
- in the workplace, especially in the informal sector.

It is important to remember that sexualised corruption is often not an exception, but often part of informal institutional practice. It is stabilised through cultures of silence, reversal of guilt, stigmatisation and a lack of language to describe the experience. The interviews show that those affected often do not know how or where to classify an experience.

→ Exclusive networks, reporting behaviour and access to power

Male-dominated patronage structures in which corruption practices are informally organised systematically exclude women, not only from decision-making processes, but also from protective mechanisms (*Bjarnegård, 2018; Bauhr & Charron, 2020*). Women often have more limited access to networks where information and support are shared and are less likely to report corruption; this is not due to a lack of interest, but rather the result of a well-founded fear of reprisals or institutional inaction (*Chene, 2021; Global Corruption Barometer, 2021*). Here, too, structural norms and gender-specific expectations interact: women who take public action against corruption are more likely to be socially sanctioned or isolated, especially in conservative-patriarchal contexts.

→ Normative attributions and stereotypical perceptions

Women are considered "less corrupt" in many contexts not because of empirical evidence but as a result of gendered traits such as caring, morality, or conflict avoidance being attributed to them (*Gilligan, 1982; Boehm, 2015*). This perception is often based on traditional gender roles, like the assumption that women automatically act more normatively as mothers. Such attributions reproduce stereotypical expectations and fail to recognise the structural mechanisms of exclusion many women are subject to (*Esarey & Schwindt-Bayer, 2018*). A focus on "female purity" in anti-corruption work can therefore be problematic if it is not linked to structural analysis. Instead of moral attributions, what is needed is a critical examination of the institutional conditions that enable corruption and legitimise exclusion.

→ Research gaps and intersectional perspectives

Despite a growing body of literature, central questions remain unanswered: how do gender-related norms in different contexts concretely affect corruption practices, participation opportunities and protective mechanisms? How can institutional reforms be designed in a gender-transformative way? The role of intersectional factors, such as ethnicity, class, sexual orientation or origin, in the perception and practice of corruption has not yet been sufficiently investigated (*Bjarnegård, 2018; Alexander, 2021*). There is likewise a lack of systematic analysis of the effects that norms have on different gender identities and their institutional participation. The role of masculinity norms and male socialisation in the reproduction of power-based structures and networks that promote corruption has also seen little examination thus far. A systematic analysis of social norms is therefore essential for the development of effective, inclusive and legitimate anti-corruption strategies. This analysis must differentiate gender-specifically, taking intersectional vulnerabilities into account and making visible the structural exclusions that enable corruption while hindering equality. Current research clearly shows that it is not only laws or economic incentives but above all social norms and power relations that determine how corruption works, who has access, who is protected – and who stays excluded.

Textbox 7 Why intersectional analysis is more than a cross-cutting issue

An intersectional understanding of gender is more than a normative claim – it is strategically essential. It allows structural exclusions to be recorded in a differentiated way and addressed in a more targeted manner. In this way, it can be analysed how gender-related norms overlap with other factors such as class, origin or sexual orientation.

Several sample questions could include:

- How do gender-specific norms affect queer youth in rural regions?
- What institutional hurdles do migrant FLINTA* people face in urban slums?

Intersectional analysis not only makes new risk areas visible, it also improves the impact, reach and legitimacy of anti-corruption measures

4. Approaches to fighting corruption and promoting equality

4.1 Context sensitivity and matrix for a gender-transformative analysis of power and norms (GTA-NormCheck)

Both the literature and the interviews impressively underline that social norms do not have a universally equal effect. They are contextual, vary within a country, between regions, social groups and institutions. What is deemed a legitimate act in one context may be considered corruption or a violation of gender justice in another. Several interviewees emphasised that one could not assume "that the same norms apply everywhere or have the same consequences." The intersections between social norms, gender and corruption are not linear, but highly context-dependent, both in terms of risk factors and possible levers for change.

This leads to a central methodological conclusion: Before any intervention to combat corruption and promote gender equality can be undertaken, a well-founded social and normative analysis is required. This must go beyond the analysis of formal structures and specifically make informal dynamics such as normative exclusions, asymmetrical dependencies or symbolic power relations in decision-making processes visible. The integration of local knowledge is particularly crucial: only through the active participation of context-informed local actors, including members of civil society organisations, community leaders or local gender experts, can it be ensured that implicit power relations and normative dynamics are correctly captured, questioned and addressed in a transformative way.

In order to systematically record this complexity and make it practically manageable, a reflection tool was developed as part of this study: the GTA-NormCheck (*see Appendix 3*). It enables the structured analysis of those social norms that support both gender inequality and corruption. Not an evaluation tool, but rather an analytical aid for thinking and orientation, the GTA-NormCheck allows users to identify and prioritise relevant standard fields and link them to concrete intervention logics, for example along impact pathways, institutional interfaces or sectoral risks. The matrix is used in Part 2 for sectoral application and can also be used in a participatory manner, such as in workshops with project teams, gender experts, civil society organisations or government partners. It is particularly suitable for political decision-makers, programme planners and advisory and implementation teams who want to develop or further develop gender and anti-corruption strategies in a context-specific way.

Textbox 8   Method box for the GTA NormCheck Matrix

What is the GTA-NormCheck?

A practice-oriented analysis and reflection tool for identifying social norms that promote both corruption and gender inequality. It was developed as part of this study.

What can it be used for?

- Contextual analyses before the start of the project
- Development of gender-transformative anti-corruption measures
- Participatory risk analyses with civil society or institutional actors
- Impact planning along the four pathways of the theory of change

Who is the tool helpful for?

- Decision-makers in ministries and administrations
- Programme managers in development cooperation
- Gender and governance consultants
- Organizations with a focus on social norms, integrity and equality

Where can I find more information about using the GTA NormCheck matrix?

- See Appendix 3: GTA NormCheck matrix
- Part 2: Application in sectoral contexts
- Appendix 4: Impact measurement indicators

4.2   Recurring norm fields and change objectives

Despite the need for context-specific analyses, it is possible to identify certain norm fields that are repeatedly named in different contexts as central to the emergence and maintenance of corruption and gender inequality. These norms primarily concern transparency and accountability, gender-specific role models, participation, social sanctions and sexualised corruption. The following overview is based on literature analyses, interviews and experiences from project and programme practice. It shows by way of example which social norms are at work in specific areas, how they can have a gender-differentiated effect on corruption and which strategic change goals can be derived from them. Many of these fields are taken up in the matrix of the GTA-NormCheck as analytical categories and are analysed in depth in Part 2 in the sectoral context.

An initial overview of potentials for change and starting points can be drawn on the basis of table 1.

Table 2 Potential for change and starting points

Category
- Leadership & representation

Social norm / structure
- "Men are born leaders"

Impact on equalityg
- Exclusion of women, non-binary and queer people from leadership positions

Impact on corruption
- Informal networks reproduce power and access

Sexualised corruption / violence
- Hostility and sexual assault against female leaders

Potential for change / starting points
- Introduction of quotas, mentoring, diversity promotion

Category
- Norms of obedience

Social norm / structure
- "Good women are docile, don't contradict"

Impact on equality
- Internalisation of subordination, difficulties in exercising rights

Impact on corruption
- Low complaint rates, informal tolerance of abuse of power

Sexualised corruption / violence
- Tabooing, victim blaming culture of silence

Potential for change / starting points
- Rights education, empowerment spaces, participatory educational formats

Category

- Access to resources

Social norm / structure

- "Land belongs to men"

Impact on equality

- Exclusion of women, especially in rural or indigenous communities

Impact on corruption

- Property as an access criterion creates asymmetrical control

Sexualised corruption / violence

- "Sex for land access", sexual blackmail on property issues

Potential for change / starting points

- Promotion of collective property rights, gender quotas in land titles

Category

- Economic dependence

Social norm / structure

- "Men earn, women support" / Gender pay gap

Impact on equality

- Increased poverty and dependence of FLINTA* people

Impact on corruption

- Susceptibility to corruption due to dependence in the work and life context

Sexualised corruption / violence

- Sexual favours for work or protection

Potential for change / starting points

- Gender budgeting, social security, access to grievance systems

Category

- Norms about "honour" and sexuality

Social norm / structure

- "Girls have to be chaste" / "Men are allowed to make demands"

Impact on equality

- Control over female bodies and sexuality

Impact on corruption

- Sanctions against victims instead of perpetrators, normalisation of assaults

Sexualised corruption / violence

- Concealment, impunity, perpetrator-victim reversal

Potential for change / starting points

- Community dialogues, reflection on religious and cultural narratives

Category

- Exclusions by language & institutions

Social norm / structure

- Only binary genders are legally and institutionally recognised

Impact on equality

- Invisibility and legal protection gaps for trans and non-binary people

Impact on corruption

- Lack of access to protection mechanisms, invisibility in the administration

Sexualised corruption / violence

- Forced situations in health care, migration, police

Potential for change / starting points

- Gender-inclusive administration, recognition in data and legal system

Category

- Dependence on gatekeepers

Social norm / structure

- Gatekeepers (e.g. school principals, civil servants)

Impact on equality

- Power imbalance vis-à-vis particularly vulnerable groups

Impact on corruption

- Blackmail through monopoly of power in everyday services

Sexualised corruption / violence

- Sexualised corruption: "sex for grades", "sex for services"

Potential for change / starting points

- Strengthening control mechanisms, independent complaint channels

Category

- Intersectional marginalisation

Social norm / structure

- Multiple discrimination aspects e.g. poor + female + rural

Impact on equality

- Little agency, no access to resources or rights

Impact on corruption

- Rights cannot be claimed; abuse cannot be sanctioned

Sexualised corruption / violence

- High susceptibility to sexualised exploitation in the event of non-access

Potential for change / starting points

- Intersectional monitoring, targeted programmes to strengthen power

In order to effectively combat corruption and promote gender equality, it is necessary to change the following social norms:

1. Standards of transparency and accountability:

- **Status quo:** In many contexts, a lack of transparency and accountability are deep-rooted social norms that enable corruption. Corrupt behaviour is accepted as commonplace or even seen as a necessary evil. Transparency and accountability are also crucial to ensuring the implementation of gender equality commitments. They ensure, for example, that financial resources actually benefit the planned initiatives and do not flow into corrupt structures (*e.g. Esarey & Schwindt-Bayer, 2018; UN Women, n.d.*)

- **Goal of change:** Transparency must be anchored as a social standard and actively defended. Processes should be designed openly and the acceptance of bribery and lack of transparency should be specifically questioned. Accountability must be demanded not only technically, but also culturally. Programmes promoting a "culture of transparency" can help to change collective expectations. The norm field of transparency and accountability is treated in the GTA NormCheck matrix as an overarching topic that runs through all impact pathways – especially where it comes to power control, access to information and the enforcement of equality-oriented standards.

2. Gender-specific power and role models:

- **Status quo:** Gender norms often ascribe a passive role to women and marginalised groups, preventing them from taking up leadership or political decision-making positions. At the same time, norms of masculinity reinforce existing power structures that can promote corruption.

- **Goal of change:** Norms must be established that recognise women, non-binary and marginalised groups as equal and capable of taking on leadership roles. The interviews show that women in political contexts are often only "formally invited" but have no influence. The interviews show that hegemonic norms of masculinity not only hinder equality but also displace integrity-promoting norms such as transparency and accountability. They should be replaced by role models that emphasise cooperation, responsibility and control of power. Empowerment formats, mentoring and collective representation are central levers here.

3. Norms of inclusion and participation:

- **Status quo:** In many societies, decision-making processes are characterised by male-dominated networks that facilitate corruption and exclude women and marginalised groups.

- **Goal of change:** Inclusion must be legitimised not only formally, but normatively. Diversity in decision-making processes should be seen as an added value for society. Community-led initiatives show that collective participation can effectively reduce corruption risks: quota regulations, community-based committees and participatory budgeting are key strategies for this.

4. Norms regarding social sanctions and rewards:

- **Status quo:** In many contexts, there are no or only weak sanctions for corrupt behaviour. At the same time, those who address corruption often experience negative consequences.

- **Goal of change:** Norms that reward silence and punish openness must be transformed in a targeted manner. Reporting corruption should be seen as a courageous act of collective responsibility, not a danger. Whistleblower protection, symbolic recognition and secure communication channels are necessary, though they are only effective if supported by a culture of integrity. In the GTA NormCheck matrix, this field of norms is classified as particularly relevant when it comes to the silence about sexualised corruption and abuse of power by public authorities. Norms that sanction openness and protect perpetrators are central risk factors and must be addressed in a targeted manner.

5. Norms related to sexualised corruption:

- **Status quo:** Sexualised corruption is often perceived as normalised or inevitable, especially in patriarchal contexts.

- **Goal of change:** The normalisation of sexualised corruption must be explicitly named, socially delegitimised and institutionally sanctioned. Interviewees reported that "everyone knew what was happening, but no one called it corruption." The establishment of clear legal definitions, the anchoring of gender-sensitive grievance mechanisms and public dialogue formats are crucial steps. Here, changing norms means making protection visible, breaking silence, and reacting structurally.

In addition, the focus on anti-corruption often requires strengthening individual rights and broadening education in anti-corruption skills. Networks that enable corruption can be made visible and broken up through targeted transparency measures and norm-changing interventions.

These changes require awareness-raising and education alongside structural adjustments and political commitment at all levels. This is the only way to achieve a lasting impact on corruption and enhancing gender equality.

Textbox 9 AWACN Men: Men as allies against gender-based corruption

In May 2025, the African Women Against Corruption Network (AWACN) launched a new initiative called AWACN Men with the aim of actively involving young men in the prevention of gender-based corruption. The kick-off event took place on the International Day of the Boy Child at the University of Johannesburg.

Aim of the initiative:

Male actors should not only be seen as "allies" in anti-corruption but should also be strengthened as co-creators of a new understanding of power and masculinity.

The programme calls for them to:

- question harmful gender norms,
- stand up for integrity and justice,
- and make male role models for ethical leadership visible.

Key Message:

Gender-transformative anti-corruption work needs male co-responsibility. AWACN Men emphasises that integrity, equality and social justice are not "women's issues" but common tasks in which boys and men must also be specifically addressed, activated and included.

Further information: https://www.awacn.africa/

5   Good practices and theories of change

Gender-transformative approaches only have an impact if they are considered system-   ati-
cally, not in isolation, and implemented in a context-specific way. The following good practices show
concretely how the principles and impact pathways presented can be applied. They also show that im-
pact is not created by technical interventions alone, but rather need to see norms, power relations and
social expectations shifted together. The interviews also made it clear that when social expectations are
actively questioned, impact is created. One interviewee described an example from working with young
men in rural contexts: There, gender roles, such as the widespread idea that care work is not a man's
business, were reflected in moderated discussions among men. It was crucial that the reflection was not
triggered by external instruction, but by the open exchange among peers who were able to negotiate
their own experiences, doubts and new scope for action together.

5.1   Conceptual basis for gender-transformative impact

The theory of change of gender-transformative anti-corruption approaches is based on the assumption
that corruption and gender inequality are based on the same normative, structural and institutional
conditions. One interviewee formulated this logic very clearly: "The entry point must be abuse of power,
not individual misconduct. Corruption doesn't just mean that someone breaks a rule. It's about how
power is distributed, protected and normalised" (*BMZ, 2023; U4, 2024; UNFPA, 2023; Dworkin &
Barker, 2019*).

Another interviewee described this change of perspective as follows:

> We had to reframe the conversation away from 'women' and towards 'power'.
> Gender is not a group – it is a system of exclusion and entitlement."

The central logic of change: Gender-transformative anti-corruption strategies do not address symptoms
such as individual cases or violations of rules; instead, they address the structural prerequisites for ex-
clusion, dependency and abuse of power, such as informal networks, gender-specific norms, cultures of
silence or the unequal distribution of resources.

Transformation only succeeds if change starts on several levels concurrently:

- individuals develop scope of action, self-efficacy and critical awareness (*GIZ, 2024*),

- social relationships and networks are normatively challenged (*Casey et al., 2016*),

- communities mobilise collective actors for change (*BMZ, 2023; Promundo, 2020*),

- and institutions anchor reforms that systematically break up discriminatory structures and
  patterns of corruption (*U4, 2024; UNFPA, 2023*).

The effect arises primarily through this interaction: empowerment can promote new social norms, norm
changing can facilitate institutional opening and structural reforms can provide access to resources and
protection.

However, one interviewee urgently warned against thinking of empowerment without structural changes:

> If you empower women without changing the system, you only prepare them for disappointment."

Empowerment creates the conditions for norm criticism, collective reflection enables new institutional standards, and structural changes open up a sustainable scope for action. Resource-based empowerment programmes, for example, through access to gender budgets or grievance mechanisms, can only be effective if they are accompanied by normative change that legitimises entitlement behaviour and dismantles cultures of silence. Likewise, institutional reforms have a more lasting effect if they are supported by a broad social movement that actively demands equality and integrity.

Textbox 10 Central impact logic for gender-transformative anti-corruption approaches

Problem analysis:

- Discriminatory social norms (e.g. cultures of silence, male norms) that normalise gender-based violence, taboos and abuse of power
- Informal power relations and exclusive networks that systematically control access to rights, protection mechanisms and decision-making spaces
- Unequal distribution of resources and asymmetrical dependencies that limit room to manoeuvre and promote corruption
- Institutional exclusions and lack of participation that exclude marginalised groups from equitable representation and control

Strategic starting points:

- Making informal norms visible and collectively questioning them
- Building the agency of marginalised groups in all their diversity ("power within" and "power to")
- Strengthening critical reflection and action skills of marginalised groups in all their diversity
- Creation of equitable access, protection and decision-making structures

Logic of impact:

Transformation is the result of the interplay of four pathways of action:

- Social norm transformation (change of dominant ideas about gender, power and legitimacy)
- Resource-based empowerment (material, social and legal access for marginalised groups)
- Knowledge and competence development (understanding of power relatio and options for action)
- Institutional change and structural reform (changes in formal rules procedures and structures of representation)

Potential for change:

- Gender inequality and corruption are not isolated but worked on together according to their common causes
- Anti-corruption strategies become more effective because they take social norms and structural exclusions into account
- Gender equality policies gain depth of impact because they integrate issues of power and integrity
- The interaction of the pathways leads to:
  - the sustainable reduction of corruption risks,
  - strengthening gender-equal institutions,
  - the permanent expansion of individual and collective agency,
  - and the legitimate involvement of marginalised groups in decision-making and accountability processes.
- Reducing corruption risks and strengthening gender-equitable integrity systems
- Permanent expansion of agency and collective participation

The theory of change draws on findings from international programme practice (e.g. *UNFPA, 2023; Rutgers, 2023; UNICEF, 2023*), wherein transformation is understood as the interplay of resource distribution, norm change and institutional action. The GTA NormCheck Matrix (*Appendix 3*) developed as part of this study supports this approach by systematising context analyses and making transformative levers visible.

These levels of change refer to four interconnected levels of action: the individual, social relationships, collective structures and formal institutions. They form the structural basis for the impact pathways of gender-transformative anti-corruption approaches. The four central levels of change are reflected in the following impact pathways, which are described in detail below: (1) social norm transformation, (2) resource-based empowerment, (3) knowledge and capacity building and (4) institutional change and structural reform (see section 5.5). These pathways must be thought of together in a context-sensitive, participatory and political manner in order to have a gender-transformative effect.

5.2 Characteristics of successful gender-transformative programmes

Gender-transformative programmes are characterised by their objectives as well as their systemic mode of action: they rely on long-term processes, address structural causes and work at the individual, social and institutional levels simultaneously. A comparative analysis by FAO, IFAD and WFP (2020) along with further reviews (*Dworkin & Barker, 2019; Sianis et al., 2024*) confirm this assessment and highlight in particular the relevance of participatory dialogue formats, the involvement of local norm holders, the reflection on gender-specific power relations and targeted work with men and boys. Contextual sensitivity and adaptive strategies are also considered central impact factors.

The interviews likewise confirmed additional characteristics. Collective responsibility – especially found in the involvement of men, religious authorities and young women – was repeatedly mentioned as a prerequisite for sustainable impact. Other studies have emphasised the importance of protected spaces, intersectional access and a positive attitude towards male participants (*Casey et al., 2016; Dworkin et al., 2019*). Successful programmes do not rely on individual "re-education", but negotiate social practices in dialogue, creating spaces in which alternative norms can be tested and institutionally anchored. One interviewee described how community monitoring by women has created such spaces in concrete terms, for example, through local groups themselves discussing acceptable behaviour, making abuse of power visible and publicly demanding accountability.

A central characteristic of successful gender-transformative programmes is the combination of individual reflection and collective mobilisation. Programmes that rely on peer-led transformation such as change through credible role models within communities are considered particularly effective. Two internationally recognised examples are Manhood 2.0 (USA) and Program P (Latin America, Southeastern Europe), which work specifically with young men on gender equality, violence prevention and care responsibility (*cf. Casey et al., 2016; Dworkin et al., 2019; Sianis et al., 2024*). Gender-transformative approaches are thus not a technical toolset, but an expression of a political claim: they aim for social justice through a power shift and have an impact where they are context-specific, long-term and collective. These principles have also been confirmed in sectoral analyses by FAO, IFAD and WFP (2020), which highlight comparable impact factors such as norm change, participatory dialogue formats and context sensitivity.

Textbox 11 Peer learning in practice: Manhood 2.0 and Programme P

Manhood 2.0 is an American programme that works with young men from socially disadvantaged communities. Topics include gender equality, sexualised violence, images of masculinity and care work. Through dialogue methods such as storytelling, group reflection and role plays, the programme promotes critical self-reflection, collective responsibility and social support. The work is deliberately peer-based and culturally sensitive.

Program P is aimed at fathers, fathers-to-be and young men and is being implemented in Brazil, Bolivia, Croatia and Bosnia, among others. With the goal of transforming hegemonic norms of masculinity, for example, by promoting emotional availability, domestic responsibility and non-violent communication, the programme uses participatory methods, everyday narrative formats and local moderation teams.

These examples show that norm-changing programmes are particularly effective when they go beyond cognitive learning and create concrete experiential spaces for new understandings of roles.

Sources: Casey et al. (2016); Dworkin et al. (2019); Promundo (2018); Sianis et al. (2024)

5.3 Practical examples: What works during implementation?

The following examples illustrate how gender-transformative approaches have been operationalised and implemented in different contexts. They show how norm change, collective empowerment, structural reform and resource distribution are intertwined. The programmes vary in scope, target groups, sector ad institutional involvement, but they also follow common principles.

Table 3 Overview of selected gender-transformative good practices

Plain	Example	Transformation goal	Source
Individual & interpersonal	Father-to-father groups (Malawi)	Deconstructing the gender-stereotypical division of labour and promoting new role models through peer approaches	Corbé, 2022
Community	Generational dialogues on female genital mutilation (Horn of Africa)	Breaking down deep-rooted norms through intergenerational dialogue	BMZ, 2023
Multilevel	Partnerships for prevention (Southern Africa)	Integration of men's work, community-based norm change and institutional reforms to prevent gender-based violence	GIZ, 2023a
Institutional	Gender-equitable public procurement	Changing institutional exclusion mechanisms through gender-equitable allocation policies	U4, 2024
National/local	National Anti-Corruption Action Plan (NACAP) Ghana	Integrating gender into national anti-corruption strategies; Policy reform on sexualised corruption	U4, 2024
Local government	Gender budgeting at the community level (India)	Promoting marginalised groups in financing and decision-making processes	GIZ, 2024
Digital / Adolescence	Manhood 2.0 (USA)	Reflection on masculinity norms, peer learning, positive masculinity	Dworkin & Barker, 2019; Casey et al., 2016
Education / School	Safe space trainings (Australia, USA)	Empowerment & education on gender norms, consensus and violence prevention in young men's groups	Sianis et al., 2024

The selection of examples shows that transformative effects arise especially where structural reforms are combined with norm-changing interventions. Many of these programmes work intersectionally, use dialogic methods and are designed for the long term. They emphasise collective responsibility instead of individual adaptation – and anchor change in institutional, social and cultural practices.

5.4 Strategic implications for gender-transformative anti-corruption

Gender-transformative anti-corruption approaches open up new strategic options because they not only make power relations visible but actively shift them. They combine normative change with structural reforms, individual empowerment with institutional accountability and collective participation with resource allocation. It is strategically important that these approaches are not understood as an add-on to existing anti-corruption strategies, but as a basis for their legitimacy and effectiveness.

5.5 Theory of change

Gender-transformative anti-corruption approaches address the structural causes of corruption and gender inequality: social norms, informal power relations, unequal distribution of resources and institutional exclusion. Transformation occurs where individuals gain room to manoeuvre (*"power within"*), where they have knowledge, rights and means to act in a self-determined manner (*"power to"*) and where social norms are collectively renegotiated and institutions implement structural reforms. The theory of change of this study distinguishes four complementary pathways, which together aim at systemic change.

Figure 2 **Theory of change**

Starting point: Interweaving of norms, power and exclusions
- Hegemonic norms of masculinity
- Informal networks and patronage structures
- Sexualised corruption
- Structures such as gender pay gaps

Target structure: Transformation of norms, resources and power relations
- Power within
- Power to
- Deconstruction of patriarchal power structures

Intervention logic: Four complementary impact pathways
- Path 1: Social norm transformation
- Path 2: Resource-based empowerment and power redistribution
- Path 3: Knowledge and competence development
- Path 4: Institutional change and structural reform

Transformation of norms, resources and power relations

Table 4 Impact pathways of the theory of change

Path	Abstract
1. Social norm transformation	Changing what is considered legitimate, acceptable or unspeakable – e.g. silence about sexualised corruption or dominant norms of masculinity
2. Resource-based empowerment	Building agency through access to property, information, grievance mechanisms and participatory decision-making spaces
3. Knowledge and competence development	Critical learning, empowerment trainings, political education and norm-reflecting formats to promote collective self-efficacy
4. Institutional change and structural reform	Reform of procedures, personnel structures and accountability mechanisms through gender budgeting, GRPP or gender-sensitive grievance systems

Intervention logic: Four complementary pathways

The four complementary pathways describe interventions in those societal, social and institutional structures in which gender inequality and corruption mutually reinforce each other. The aim is to change existing normative orders, asymmetrical power relations, exclusion mechanisms and unequal resource distributions in such a way that new spaces for action, protective mechanisms and equality structures can emerge.

Path 1: Social norm transformation

Gender-transformative programmes work specifically with Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) formats in order to question deeply-rooted norms – for example, those dealing with power, gender or sexualised corruption. Dialogue formats, role-plays and visual methods such as the Gender Diamond (a method of reflection on gender roles) or the GALS Vision Journey (a visualised model of change for individual and collective goals) help to question socially accepted silence, asymmetrical power relations, or normative exclusions. Programmes such as GALS – Gender Action Learning System (*FAO, 202*0) – or ERADA (*GIZ, 202*4) show that participatory norm negotiations can trigger concrete changes in role models, decision-making structures and everyday practices. The aim is not only to change individual behaviour, but also to renegotiate together what is considered acceptable – and what can be criticised, questioned and shaped.

Textbox 12 **Two practical examples of social norm transformation – GALS and ERADA**

GALS – Gender Action Learning System (FAO, 2020):

GALS is a participatory change model used particularly in rural development programmes. It combines visual methods such as the "Vision Journey", the "Gender Diamond" or the "Road of Change" tool with collective reflections on role models, decision-making and responsibility sharing. The aim is to jointly develop goals that combine individual life realities with social and economic changes – and in doing so make social norms visible and negotiable.

ERADA – Enhancing Rural Resilience through Appropriate Development Actions (GIZ, 2024):

The Indian project ERADA combines livelihood measures with gender-transformative empowerment. Among other things, training courses on digital housekeeping, budget analysis and political participation were carried out, with a special focus on marginalised women and people with non-binary gender identities. The project works at the community level with targeted gender reflection processes to change power relations in families, institutions and authorities.

Both programs show that social norms are not just a field of analysis, but can be actively changed through collective processes, visualisation, peer work and political learning.

SBCC approaches work by employing methods such as:

- role-playing, storytelling and theatre formats to break down taboos and establish new narratives,
- visual tools such as gender diamonds, vision journeys or roads of change (e.g. in the GALS approach),
- community discussions on informal networks, integrity, masculinity and sexualised corruption,
- dialogic work with men and boys to question dominant norms of masculinity,
- critical collective goal definition to negotiate new common standards.

The aim is to change social expectations – both descriptive norms (what "everyone does") and injunctive norms (what "should be done") – and thus systematically undermine the legitimacy of corrupt, gender-discriminatory practices.

In the context of anti-corruption programmes, SBCC can be used to:

- question the social normalisation of bribery or sexualised corruption,

- break up cultures of silence, for example through collective discussions about whistleblowing,

- and foster trust in transparency and accountability through shared visions.

In lieu of pursuing the short-term transmission of information, the SBCC is invested in a long-term change in social coordination patterns, i.e. those unspoken agreements that enable corruption and exclusion. Norm change alone is not enough, however; it is only in combination with empowerment, structural access and institutional reform that social norm change will become effective and sustainable.

→ Path 2: Resource-based empowerment and power redistribution

A second central mechanism of action of gender-transformative anti-corruption approaches lies in the resource-based empowerment of marginalised groups, especially women, non-binary people and other intersectionally disadvantaged groups. These interventions address structural inequalities: control over income, property, information, infrastructure, access to institutions and legal protection mechanisms. The aim is to reduce dependencies and build up agency, or, in concrete terms, give people the "power to control" resources, time, body and decision-making spaces.

Typical forms of intervention include:

- Asset transfers (e.g. land titles or means of production) in connection with measures that promote gender equality, such as strengthening rights, participation and collective ownership,

- Financial self-organisation (e.g., savings groups, cooperatives, access to gender budgets),

- Access to whistleblower systems, legal information and transparent procurement channels,

- Participation in the distribution of public funds at the municipal or administrative levels,

- Involvement in planning processes, e.g. through municipal committees or participatory budgeting.

One example can be found in the introduction of gender-transformative budgeting at the local level in India, wherein women and disadvantaged groups were specifically involved in the allocation of resources. Access to institutional resources (e.g. water, credit, health care) proved in this case to be crucial to both reducing practices prone to corruption and to promoting equality.

In the context of anti-corruption programmes, resource-based empowerment means, among other things:

- transparent, gender-sensitive procedures for awarding public services,

- the creation of alternative approaches where informal networks exclude marginalised groups,

- institutional channels for complaints and claims that are accessible and safe even for disadvantaged groups.

These interventions not only promote individual agency ("power to"), but also question the gendered distribution of rights, property and institutional pathways to accountability – the structures that enable corruption for some and exclude others. Access to resources does not automatically change existing norms – but it can challenge power relations if combined with normative reflection and structural security.

→ Path 3: Knowledge and competence building as a foundation for systemic change

Another key to the transformation of power and norm relations in the context of anti-corruption and gender equality lies in the targeted development of knowledge, skills and self-efficacy. Gender-transformative programmes rely not only on the transfer of information, but also on critical learning, which leads to the renegotiation of scope for action, roles and responsibilities.

This dimension is particularly relevant in contexts where:

- corruption mechanisms are not openly addressed or are not recognised as such (e.g. in the case of sexualised corruption),

- women and marginalised groups do not have equal access to education, legal knowledge or political processes,

- and norm-bearers or decision-makers are not aware of their own role in the reproduction of inequality.

Typical formats include:

- gender and anti-corruption training for administrative actors, teachers, civil society multipliers,

- empowerment trainings for women and LGBTQI+ people on subjects like integrity rights, reporting procedures or collective action,

- leadership programmes that specifically prepare women, young people and disadvantaged groups for roles in decision-making processes,

- workshops in media literacy critical of norms, especially in the case of sexualised corruption in educational institutions or public authorities.

One example can be seen in the work of GIZ as part of the ERADA project in India, where Android training was combined with political education and gender analysis. Participants learned not only how to use technical devices, but also how to make existing inequalities in decision-making processes and household budgets visible and influential.

In the area of anti-corruption, this path can help to:

- make invisible mechanisms of power and norms visible, for example through gender awareness formats in control authorities,

- make protection and accountability mechanisms understandable and usable for, among others, whistleblowers,

- promote decision-makers' critical reflection on role models, turning gatekeepers into change agents.

Knowledge alone does not bring about change, but transformative knowledge formats can create awareness, strengthen self-efficacy and enable collective action. In this way, they make a significant contribution to the dual target structure of anti-corruption and gender equality. As interviewees pointed out, this above all is something that can be measured even in short project cycles, when changes in norms are often difficult to track. Knowledge transfer has a transformative effect when it is embedded in spaces in which norm change is permitted and institutional consistency is ensured.

→ Path 4: Institutional change and structural reform

Gender-transformative anti-corruption work does not end with individual attitudes or community-based interventions. It must change institutional structures – especially where rules, procedures and organisations entrench patriarchal power relations and corruption dynamics. Impact pathway four holds structural reforms and systemic learning within institutions as the goal.

The central assumption is that corruption can only be addressed sustainably and gender equality institutionalised if formalisation, accountability and norm transformation are brought together.

Typical interventions are:

- Gender-Responsive Public Procurement (GRPP) practices,

- reformation of personnel and promotion processes in administrations, police, judiciary,

- institutionalised reporting and protection systems against sexualised corruption (for example through anonymised channels, decentralised complaints offices),

- introduction and implementation of gender-sensitive anti-corruption strategies – e.g. in the Ghana National Anti-Corruption Action Plan (NACAP),

- anchoring intersectional perspectives in policies (incl. LGBTQI+, disability, ethnicity),

- gender-transformative monitoring and accountability systems, e.g. gender audits, household tracking, GRB mechanisms.

Such structural measures not only transform rules – they also influence who has access to power, who is protected and who is heard. A particularly impressive example can be found in Ghana, where the inclusion of women's organisations in the NACAP process has both addressed the issue of sexualised corruption in institutions and introduced concrete regulations and disciplinary procedures. The combination of policy-level reform and public visibility led to a paradigm shift in dealing with sexualised corruption, which has been made visible in nationwide debates and documented dismissals of perpetrators, among other things.

In contrast to many classic anti-corruption instruments, which often focus on formal rules, transparency mechanisms or individual accountability, this impact pathway aims at a profound realignment of institutional logics along the lines of justice, representation and structural participation. Structural reforms, however, remain ineffective if they are not prepared and supported by the empowerment of marginalised groups and collective norm change.

Textbox 13 How do we measure transformation?

The impact of gender-transformative approaches cannot be measured by output figures alone. What is needed are indicator-based measurement systems that take into account normative, structural and subjective changes.

Examples of these include:

- Normative indicators: the perception of role models, willingness to engage in dialogue, degree of taboo (e.g. in relation to sexualised corruption)

- Structural indicators: access to resources, changes in committee composition, institutionalised protection systems

- Empowerment indicators: self-efficacy, participation in decisions, collective agency

- Participatory indicators: Community score cards, outcome harvesting, storytelling (cf. BMZ Action Plan 2023; GIZ Livelihood Toolkit 2024)

Note: Since gender-transformative changes are aimed at social norm change and structural reforms, they usually unfold their impact beyond classic project cycles. Their measurement therefore requires flexible, contextual and longer-term assessment approaches, which also include qualitative and participatory elements.

6 Implementation and partner selection

The implementation of gender-transformative anti-corruption approaches requires more than good concepts. The decisive factor is who supports, legitimises and permanently anchors these approaches. Gender-transformative programmes are effective when they are co-designed by partners who have normative, administrative, or social reach – and at the same time are willing to question existing power relations. In addition, gender-transformative approaches require a medium- to long-term commitment both at the individual and institutional level. For norm change, structural reforms and new scope for action to be effective, reliable partners are needed who will go beyond short-term project cycles and be willing to take responsibility over longer periods of time and support change processes.

Institutional partners as anchor points for structural change

Political and institutional actors such as ministries, national anti-corruption authorities, equality bodies and local administrations play a central role in structurally anchoring gender-transformative elements. They can be integrated in a targeted manner as gender-transformative elements are implemented into national strategies, procurement procedures, budgeting or grievance mechanisms. Interviewees emphasised that "without clear political mandates, everything depends on individuals – and quickly disappears again." Structural responsibilities and clear resources are thus needed alongside personnel openness.

Civil society as a norm changer and bridge builder

Civil society organisations, especially those working with women, LGBTQI+ people, youth or intersectionally marginalised groups, are essential for the legitimacy, reach and sustainability of gender-transformative approaches. They bring specific knowledge, access and trust to the target groups. Particularly relevant are community-based actors, educational initiatives and feminist networks that understand norm change not as an abstract goal, but as lived practice.

Private sector and academia as strategic allies

The private sector and academia should also be more actively involved in gender-transformative anti-corruption approaches – not only as a risk factor, but as a potential ally for integrity-promoting and equality-oriented structures. Companies can design internal regulations for corruption prevention in a gender-equitable way (e.g. through gender compliance guidelines) or participate in gender-equitable public procurement systems. They can also participate in national or international coalitions that advocate for fair procurement practices and transparency (e.g. GRPP, MACN or the Alliance for Integrity; see text box). The decisive factor here is not only the existence of formal regulations, but also their actual implementation, as well as the willingness of institutions to learn and include external perspectives. Science and monitoring actors also play an important role: they can critically accompany reform processes, make their impact visible and contribute to the further development of evidence-based strategies.

Gender-transformative implementation therefore also means reflecting on one's own choice of partner: Who is sitting at the table? Whose prospects are missing? And what power relations are (un)intentionally reproduced?

Textbox 14 Practical examples of equality and integrity in the private sector

Alliance for Integrity:

Since 2018, the Alliance for Integrity has been systematically linking gender and anti-corruption goals in the private sector. Trainings, dialogue formats and platforms for women entrepreneurs have been developed in various countries, including Ghana, where the "Integrity Coffee" series creates safe spaces for the exchange of experiences of corruption and the "Women for Integrity Series" (WISE) programme have been implemented. Training courses on ethical leadership with a gender, diversity and inclusion perspective have also been introduced in Argentina, with the aim of promoting an ethical corporate culture in which women act equally and are protected.

MACN – Maritime Anti-Corruption Network:

A global network of companies from the shipping industry that advocates for transparent supply chains, anti-corruption standards and community grievance mechanisms, MACN combines internal company standards with industry-specific norm change – and increasingly integrates gender equality aspects in the process.

GRPP – Gender-Responsive Public Procureme:

An approach to public procurement that aims to make procurement procedures not only transparent but also gender-equitable. GRPP initiatives promote the participation of women-owned companies, require proof of equality in the selection process and rely on the participatory design of tenders.

Gender compliance systems:

Internally developed policies, procedures and reporting systems in companies to ensure that corruption prevention measures also address gender-specific risks and exclusion mechanisms; these can include gender-sensitive whistleblowing channels, diversity training or inclusive risk management.

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Appendix 1: List of interview participants

Forename	Surname	Position	Organisation
Claudia	Baez Camargo	Director, Prevention, Research and Innovation	Basel Institute on Governance
Monika	Bauhr	Professor in Political Science	University of Gothenburg
Elin	Bjarnegård	Professor in Political Science	Uppsala University
Astrid	Bosch	Head of Project Latin America and Caribbean Initiative to Promote Stability, Democracy and Rules-Based International Order	GIZ
Mariana	Buruiana	Independent Consultant	Moldova
Boris	Divjak	Chair of the Governing Board	Transparency International Bosnia and Herzegovina
Åsa	Eldén	Researcher	Uppsala University
María	Fernanda Galicia Pacheco	Director General	Mexiro A.C.
Nancy	Henry	Former Senior Advisor	IAWJ
Saliya	Kanathigoda	Technical Advisor (EnACT)	GIZ Zambia
Ina	Kubbe	Researcher and Lecturer	Tel Aviv University
Caitlin	Maslen	Research Coordinator	Transparency International
Manon	Moeller	Technical Advisor (EnACT)	GIZ Zambia
Sabeehah	Motala	Technical Advisor Transparency, Integrity and Accountability Programme (TIP)	GIZ South Africa
Zakhona	Mvelase	Founder	African Women against Corruption Network (AWACN)
Laura	Nyirinkindi	Chair	UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls
Sofia	Peters	Anti-Corruption Programs Coordinator	Global Fund for Women
Ida	Pettersson	Senior Policy Specialist for Gender Equality	The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
Jennifer	Sarvary Bradford	Crime Prevention Criminal Justice Officer	UNODC
Florian	Schatz	Technical Advisor in the Sector Project Good Financial Governance	GIZ
Jude	Schönberg	Associate, Prevention, Research and Innovation	Basel Institute on Governance
Jamie	Smith	Senior Policy Specialist for Anti-Corruption	The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
Sope	Williams	Professor and Head of Department of Mercantile Law	Stellenbosch University

Appendix 2: Social and economic structures and their impact on gender equality and corruption

	Potential impact on gender equality	Potential impact on corruption
Social norms		
Gendered stereotypes of leadership roles	Fewer women in management positions and unfair recruitment procedures. Male-dominated leadership levels may not take women's needs into account when making decisions (O'Brien et al., 2023). Women often earn less and have less influence on management and decision-making processes if they are not considered for leadership positions or encouraged to apply.	Leads to unequal access to power and resources, which can encourage corrupt practices that exclude disadvantaged groups. Reduces the ability of female leaders to build networks, enforce rules and fight corruption. Corruption often takes place through informal networks from which women are excluded, making it difficult for them to detect corrupt behaviour (Merkle, 2022, p. 12; UNODC, 2020b, p. 36). These networks' lack of inclusivity contributes to the perpetuation of corrupt behaviour (UNODC, 2020b, p. 36).
Gendered patronage systems	Patronage systems hinder the political careers of women (Correa, 2016) and non-binary people. In some cultures, women are excluded from practices such as wasta, which limits their access to official processes and workplaces (Alsarhan et al., 2021).	Patronage systems promote corruption through gender-specific nepotism. People are selected for positions or government benefits based on their connections and not on the basis of their qualifications (Transparency International, n.d.).
Gendered norms of property ownership	In many countries, men own significantly more land and property than women (Gaddis et al., 2021). This is often because women are disadvantaged by legal and cultural norms.	Reduced property rights mean that women have less influence in their communities and politics. In addition, their income decreases, which increases their vulnerability to forms of exploitation, including sexualised corruption.
Structures		
Unpaid work and property	Women often take on unpaid jobs during marriage and thus have fewer opportunities to acquire property (Gaddis et al., 2021). In many traditional land rights regimes, women's property rights are considered secondary to those of men (Richardson et al., 2018).	Corruption related to land and property rights further disadvantages women and promotes unequal power relations (Richardson et al., 2018).
The informal economy	Women are disproportionately employed in the informal sector, which means that they are not protected by labour laws, social benefits, health insurance or paid sick leave. They are also often exposed to lower wages and unsafe working conditions (UN Women n.d.). However, a reduction in the informal sector could jeopardise their livelihoods.	Studies show that high levels of corruption promote the growth of the informal sector (Ouédraogo, 2017).

	Potential impact on gender equality	Potential impact on corruption
Structures		
The gender pay gap	The gender-specific wage gap means that women earn less than men on average. This limits their financial independence and increases their dependence on social benefits.	Wage inequality hinders a country's economic growth (Bertay et al., 2020). Slower economic growth is associated with higher levels of corruption (Bai et al., 2013). Lower incomes make women more vulnerable to sexualised corruption, e.g. through demands for sexual favours for access to resources such as water in Colombia and South Africa (Fig Leaf, 2020, p. 15).
Unequal access to education	Unequal access to education means that women and girls (as well as members of other marginalised groups) have less independence and fewer career opportunities in adulthood.	Higher quality of education is associated with lower perceptions of corruption (Spruyt et al., 2024). Lack of access to guaranteed education can create corruption risks through, for example, bribery for school places. Reduced awareness of rights increases vulnerability to corruption and makes access to redress more difficult.
Lack of enforcement of laws	This can lead to gender equality laws not being implemented and thus existing discrimination persists.	This can lead to anti-corruption laws not being enforced, favouring impunity for corruption.

Source: Maslen (2024)

Appendix 3: Matrix for gender-transformative analysis of power and norms (GTA-NormCheck):

A tool for the analysis of normative risk areas in gender-transformative anti-corruption work

Introduction: The GTA NormCheck is a practice-oriented reflection tool for identifying social norms, power relations and structural conditions that promote both corruption and gender inequality. It has been developed on the basis of the analysis set out in part 1 and operationalises the dual effect of normative exclusions. The NormCheck supports planners of development cooperation programmes in formulating transformative change goals and identifying targeted levers along the four impact pathways of the theory of change. It can be used on a modular basis and adapted to different contexts, such as for use by the judiciary, or in administration, education or rural development.

The aim of the tool is to support policymakers and project leaders in identifying and transforming social norms and structural conditions that promote both corruption and gender inequality. It operationalises the core message of part 1: Gender norms are a common risk factor for both problem dimensions and can be addressed in a targeted manner in order to have a transformative effect.

How do I use the GTA NormCheck Matrix? The GTA NormCheck helps to identify implicit social norms that legitimise both corruption and the exclusion of marginalised groups. It is suitable for context-sensitive project planning, for impact measurement or for accompanying participatory policy processes. Use the tool in a targeted manner to develop change goals that address structural causes, not symptoms.

Note: This tool can be used for the study of gender issues as well as for the analysis of corruption risks or as part of a theory of change process. It is versatile and can be adapted to different sectors (e.g. education, justice or rural development).

→ Step 1: Context analysis – identification of relevant norms and structures

In many contexts, corruption is not primarily experienced as an individual violation of rules, but as a social power relationship that is closely interwoven with gender norms, social exclusions and dependency structures. The GTA NormCheck was developed to make precisely these hidden dynamics visible – especially where institutional mechanisms reach their limits and formal rules are undermined by informal practices. The matrix is based on the insight that gender is not only a demographic category, but a structuring principle of social order and thus central to understanding and combatting corruption.

Please use the table below to identify norms and structures that, according to current research and local experts, can increase both gender inequality and corruption. Add context-specific observations from your specific project region or industry.

Note: Context analysis should never be done without local knowledge. The GTA NormCheck Matrix requires context-specific power relations and implicit norms to be developed together with affected groups, local experts or civil society actors. External experts should deal reflexively with their own position and perspective. This is the only way to prevent external assessments from reproducing implicit power relations.

Norm / Structure	Typical impact on gender inequality	Typical impact on corruption	Own observations in the project/ programme
Men as "natural" leaders	Women and non-binary people are excluded from power and representation	Informal power circles remain male-dominated and non-transparent	
Norm of female obedience	Reduced self-confidence and entitlement behaviour in FLINTA* people	Less likely to report grievances or corruption	
Exclusion of women from property (e.g. land)	Limited access to resources, dependence	Power asymmetry in resource allocation, e.g. land titles	
Gendered patronage	Men prefer men in recruitment processes	Network-based allocation of benefits, gender-based nepotism	
Tabooing sexuality	Silence about sexualised violence and addiction	Impunity and invisibility of sexualised corruption	
Gender pay gap	Financial dependence of women and marginalised groups	Susceptible to blackmail and increased susceptibility to corruption	
Exclusion of non-binary identities in management systems	Discrimination and lack of visibility	Lack of access to protection and grievance mechanisms	
Control by gatekeepers (e.g. school principals, police officers)	Power imbalances, especially towards poor women	Forced favours in exchange for benefits or protection	

Typology for classification (optional):

- **Descriptive norm:** What people typically do (e.g. "Everyone pays bribes")
- **Normative expectation:** How people think they should behave ("A good woman doesn't complain")
- **Tacit norm:** What is implicitly expected but cannot be addressed

Questions for reflection:

Who benefits from this norm? Who punishes potential deviation from the norm?

→ **Step 2: Analyse the double impact – deepen the influence on corruption and gender inequality in your own context**

This step is about analysing the concrete double effect on corruption and gender inequality in the respective project or programme area for each identified norm or structure from step 1. The aim is to make visible how exactly these norms limit the possibilities of action of individual groups and at the same time promote informal or corrupt practices.

Procedure:

1. Select 1-3 prioritised standards/structures from step 1.

2. Describe how this standard has a concrete impact on the everyday life of the project or the target group: who is placed at a disadvantage or excluded?

3 Reflect on whether and how this norm promotes corruption through, for example, a lack of transparency, blackmail or informal power relations.

4. Pay particular attention to references to sexualised corruption or gender-based forms of violence.

This analysis forms the basis for developing appropriate, gender-transformative intervention approaches in the next step.

Norm / Structure	How does inequality manifest itself in your project context in concrete terms?	What forms of corruption (including sexualised) are encouraged?

Tip: Pay special attention to:

- Sexualised corruption
- Blackmail through dependency relationships
- Taboo on complaints

→ **Step 3: Assess changeability and intervention options**

This step is about assessing how realistically a change is possible in the respective context for each analysed norm (from step 2), and where the change should begin. At the same time, concrete levers should be identified with which transformative change processes can be initiated.

Procedure:

1. Select one or more norms from step 2.

2. Reflect on how strongly this norm is anchored: How visible is it? How openly is it defended? What social, political or cultural risks does their change entail?

3. Determine at which level a change would have to begin (e.g. individual attitudes, institutional procedures, social narratives).

4. Use familiar levers or develop context-specific ideas: e.g. dialogue formats, political reforms, legal requirements, gender quotas, working with gatekeepers or religious authorities.

Enter your assessments in the table below:

Norm / Structure	Changeability (low/medium/high)	Risks (e.g. political, cultural)	Level of intervention (individual / interpersonal / institutional / societal)	Possible levers
				☐ Community dialogues ☐ Policy reform ☐ Gender quotas ☐ Training ☐ Cooperation with religious/ traditional authorities ☐ …

Step 4: Formulate gender-transformative change goals

In this step, formulate on the basis of the previous analysis, concrete change goals aimed at both reducing corruption and promoting gender equality. It is important that these are not only symptom-oriented adjustments, but rather goals that address the structural causes, such as social norms, power relations and exclusion mechanisms.

Each change goal should be formulated along one or more impact pathways:

- Social norm transformation
- Resource-based empowerment
- Knowledge and competence development
- Institutional change

Procedure:

1. Select a prioritised standard or structure from step 3.
2. Formulate a realistic but ambitious goal that describes a gender-transformative change.
3. Describe which measure(s) the project can use to contribute to achieving the goals.
4. Use the checklist below to make sure that the approach is indeed gender-transformative.

Subsequently, the change goal can be documented as an action-guiding statement and integrated into the project logic or theory of change.

Template:

In the context of [project/sector/region], the norm/structure "[XYZ]" is a risk factor for gender inequality **and** corruption because it [justification]. The project can use [concrete gender-transformative measure] to work specifically towards [desired structural or normative change].

Checklist: Is the measure gender-transformative?

- ☐ Does it question existing power relations?
- ☐ Does it address norms of masculinity?
- ☐ Does it actively involve marginalised groups?
- ☐ Is it aimed at social norms AND institutional structures?
- ☐ Does it address sexualised corruption as a gender-specific instrument of power?

Example:

In the context of local administration, the norm "only men can lead" is a risk factor, as it systematically excludes women and promotes informal male networks that are susceptible to corruption.

The norm can be gradually transformed through the introduction of leadership quotas, mentoring programmes for FLINTA* people and gender-inclusive accountability mechanisms.

Further information:

- Link this NormCheck to your theory of change process.

- Use participatory formats, e.g. gender reflection workshops, theatre methods or collective norm analyses to carry out the NormCheck.

- Monitoring: Work with qualitative indicators (e.g., information on agency or changes in how sexualised corruption is handled) and with gender-differentiated data (e.g., access to grievance mechanisms by gender and status).

Appendix 4: Indicator proposals for the four impact pathways of the theory of change

Indicators are needed to make the theory of change of gender-transformative anti-corruption approaches operationally usable; these should go beyond recording outputs to make normative, structural and subjective changes visible. The following indicator proposals are based on the four impact pathways of this study and combine quantitative measures with qualitative survey methods.

The goal:

To make change processes where gender norms, power relations and corruption risks overlap measurable. Particular attention is paid to social perception, institutional opening, the agency of marginalised groups and trust in systems and protective mechanisms.

Important note:

The indicators presented here should be understood as suggestions, not as a rigid set. They offer a well-founded orientation in terms of content and methodology and are intended to support planner of development cooperation programmes in developing context-specific indicator systems. Which indicators are useful depends on the respective sector, the target group, the implementation period and the available data basis.

Table 5 How do I choose suitable indicators?

Question	Purpose of the question	Possible answer consequence
What is the primary change goal of the programme?	Demarcation: Is it about norm change, access, power shift, protection?	Assignment to one or more impact pathways (e.g. pathway 1 = norms, pathway 4 = institutions)
Who is the target group?	Determines whether indicators need to be applied at the individual, interpersonal or institutional level	Selection of gender-specific and intersectional variables (e.g. FLINTA*, young people, religious minorities)
What form of evidence is needed (e.g. accountability, learning, or advocacy)?	Clarifies whether the focus is on hard numbers, narratives, or structural changes	Is a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators necessary?
Are there already data sources that can be accessed?	Checks feasibility and connectivity	Use connection to national indicator systems or existing surveys
Who is involved in the data collection?	Ensures that participatory approaches are taken into account	Use of community score cards, feedback loops, collective reflection
What risks do measurements pose (stigmatisation, retraumatisation, data protection)?	Protection of sensitive groups, especially in the case of sexualised corruption	Anonymised procedures, protection case analyses, focus on systemic instead of individual attribution

This grid supports programme managers, advisors and civil society partners in developing context-specific and gender-transformative indicator systems. It is suitable for participatory planning workshops, for reviewing existing monitoring systems or for developing learning frameworks in the sense of adaptive programming.

→ Indicator proposals for impact pathway 1: Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC)

Expected effects:

- Changing gender norms, especially as they concern images of masculinity, leadership, violence and silence in corruption.
- Increased willingness to engage in dialogue in the community on gender and integrity.
- Decline in social acceptance of corrupt practices (e.g. sexualised corruption).
- Building a critical mass for collective norm change.

Outcome indicators (outcome/intermediate level) – pathway 1

Indicator	Description	Measurement	Reference plane
Proportion of participants who consider corrupt practices to be socially unacceptable after an SBCC intervention	Recording of norm change (injunctive norm)	Vignette survey, group discussion, pre/post surveys	individual, collaborative
Proportion of men who support women's participation in decision-making after a dialogue format	Change in perception of gender and power	Standardised survey with norm-oriented items	individual, interpersonal
Number of collaborative vision statements or norm charts that address gender-equitable, integrity values	Collective goal definition as a sign of normative change	Qualitative document analysis, observation, focus groups	communal
Number of locally anchored dialogue formats (e.g. dialogue groups, student forums, religious dialogues) for norm criticism	Institutionalisation of norm-changing discourses	Monitoring of project activities	communal, structural
Change in consent to statements such as 'sexual favours in exchange for benefits are normal'	Norm change of sexualised corruption	Pre/post survey, anonymised interviews	individual
Proportion of participants who say they would take a stand against corrupt practices	Strengthened individual norm responsibility ('personal norm activation')	Survey with hypothetical scenarios	individual

Complementary qualitative methods – pathway 1

Method	Explanation	Further reading
Story-based monitoring	Narratives about individual or collective shifts in norms	Davies, R. J., & Dart, J. (2005). Tool: Monitoring and Evaluation through stories – most significant change. https://www.smartgrid-engagement-toolkit.eu/fileadmin/s3ctoolkit/user/guidelines/TOOL_MON-ITORING_AND_EVALUATION_THROUGH_STORIES_-_MOST_SIGNIFICANT_CHANGE.pdf
Most Significant Change (MSC)	Reflection on key events in the change of norms	INTRAC. (2017). Most Significant Change. https://www.intrac.org/app/uploads/2017/01/Most-significant-change.pdf
Social Network Mapping	Making new support networks visible (e.g. peer groups)	Kim, A., & Maltseva, D. (2023). Qualitative social network analysis: studying the field through the bibliographic approach. Quality & Quantity, 58(1), 385–411. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-023-01651-6
Gendered Outcome Harvesting	Identification of unintended and emergent effects	Outcome harvesting and Gender Transformative Approach – Building For Welfare. (2024, October 27). https://buildingforwelfare.com/outcome-harvesting-and-gender-transformative-approach/

These indicators can be flexibly combined – depending on the context, target group and resources. They **allow transformation to be captured beyond formal output logic** and are compatible with impact logics in gender and anti-corruption programmes.

→ Indicator proposals for impact pathway 2: Resource-based empowerment

Expected effects:

- Women and marginalised groups in all their diversity will have better access to resources and decision-making processes.

- Dependencies on non-transparent or corruption-prone networks are reduced.

- Institutional procedures are designed to be gender-equitable and accountable.

- Local distribution of resources becomes comprehensible, inclusive and fair.

Outcome indicators (outcome/intermediate level) – pathway 2

Indicator	Description	Measurement	Reference plane
Proportion of women and marginalised people with control over productive resources	e.g. land titles, micro-credits, decision-making power in households or cooperatives	Project monitoring, household interviews, participatory asset mapping	individual, interpersonal
Number of gender-sensitive budgeting processes involving marginalised groups	e.g. at municipal level, sector budget, gender budget audits	Administrative data, document analysis, stakeholder interviews	communal, institutional
Proportion of participants who have access to gender-sensitive whistle-blower mechanisms	Availability and use of trustworthy complaint channels (e.g. in the case of sexualised corruption)	Usage statistics, anonymised surveys, protection case analyses	individual, institutional
Perception of fairness and transparency in procurement procedures	e.g. water, land, aid or subsidies	Focus groups, community score cards, perception surveys	communal
Number of regulations or policies that prescribe gender-sensitive resource allocation	e.g. municipal procurement guidelines, GRPP (Gender Responsive Public Procurement)	Policy tracking, normative comparison	institutional
Proportion of women and non-binary people on supervisory boards, budget committees or resource councils	Indicator of structural participation and power shift	Project monitoring, administrative data, participation tracking	institutional

Complementary qualitative methods – pathway 2

Method	Explanation	Further reading
Gendered Resource Mapping	Who has access to which resources – made visible in workshops	Gendered Resource Mapping: Focusing on women's spaces in the landscape. (2010, March 19). Cultural Survival. https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/gendered-resource-mapping-focusing-womens-spaces-landscape
Most Significant Change (MSC)	Reflection on key events in the change of norms	INTRAC. (2017). Most Significant Change. https://www.intrac.org/app/uploads/2017/01/Most-significant-change.pdf
Social Audit Approaches	e.g. participatory review of the use of funds from a gender perspective	Gerardo Berthin, Justiniano, F., Berthin, G., Vásquez, M.A., Sandin, C., Fernandez Álvarez de Lugo, M., UNDP Regional Bureau for Latin American and the Caribbean, New York. (2011). A Practical Guide to Social Audit as a participatory tool to strengthen democratic governance, transparency and accountability. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/latinamerica/Practical-Guide-to-Social-Audit.pdf
Gendered Outcome Harvesting	Identification of unintended and emergent effects	Outcome harvesting and Gender Transformative Approach – Building For Welfare. (2024, October 27). https://buildingforwelfare.com/outcome-harvesting-and-gender-transformative-approach/

These indicators reveal the shift in control over resources, institutional opening and the dissolution of dependencies – central dimensions in the intertwining of anti-corruption and gender equality.

Indicator proposals for impact pathway 3: Knowledge and competence building

Expected effects:

- Individuals understand structural causes of corruption and gender inequality.
- Women and marginalised groups develop skills to actively participate in decision-making processes.
- Norm-bearers (e.g. teachers, authorities, community leaders) reflect on their own role in maintaining power.
- Knowledge about rights, duties and institutional procedures becomes accessible, context-sensitive and action-relevant.

Outcome indicators (outcome/intermediate level) – pathway 3

Indicator	Description	Measurement	Reference plane
Proportion of participants with a strengthened understanding of gender, power and corruption	e.g. difference in pre-/post-knowledge level in training courses	Surveys, quizzes, structured group reflection	individual
Proportion of women/LGBTQI+ participating in decision-making processes after empowerment training	e.g. budget decisions, committees, cooperatives	Observation of participation, self-report	interpersonal, collaborative
Percentage of trained actors implementing gender-responsive practices in their institution	e.g. gender-inclusive planning, anti-corrupt standards, criticism of norms	Monitoring, interviews, self-reflection reports	institutional
Change in perceived self-efficacy in marginalised groups	e.g. ability to claim rights, report corruption	Self-efficacy scales, Most Significant Change (MSC), narrative monitoring	individual
Number of new initiatives resulting from trainings	e.g. local dialogue rounds, women's networks, community monitoring	Project documentation, qualitative interviews	communal
Proportion of decision-makers who critically reflect on statements on masculinity, leadership, integrity	e.g. 'I see my role in changing norms'	Pre/post statements, reflection workshops, interviews	interpersonal, institutional

Recommended qualitative instruments – pathway 3

Method	Explanation	Further reading
Pre-/post-reflection sheets with open and closed questions	Comparison of individual learning processes and changes in understanding before and after training or dialogue processes	
Most Significant Change (MSC)	Reflection on key events in the change of norms	INTRAC. (2017). Most Significant Change. https://www.intrac.org/app/uploads/2017/01/Most-significant-change.pdf
Participatory competence grids	Group-based definition and assessment of what empowerment means in one's own context	Education 21 (n.d.) https://www.globaleducation.ch/sites/default/files/uploads/pdf-d/bne/dossiers_zu-gaenge/2012_PH-FHNW-zda_Politische-Bildung_Kompetenzraster.pdf
Feedback loops	Systematic feedback loops with trainers, community leaders and participants to reflect on impact and learning processes	

These indicators capture formal knowledge and, above all, the transformational value of learning: whether information becomes action, whether norms are reflected, relationships are reshaped and institutional practices are changed.

→ **Indicator proposals for impact pathway 4: Institutional change and structural reform**

Expected effects:

- Institutions anchor gender and anti-corruption not only programmatically, but also structurally.

- Discriminatory rules and practices are identified, changed or abolished.

- Transparency and grievance systems will be made accessible and effective for marginalised groups.

- Women and marginalised groups have structural influence in decision-making, control and sanction mechanisms.

Outcome indicators (outcome/intermediate level) – pathway 4

Indicator	Description	Measurement	Reference plane
Number of institutional policies that explicitly address gender-specific corruption risks	e.g. sexualised corruption, gender bias in promotion, access to grievance mechanisms	Policy tracking, legal analysis	institutional
Proportion of anti-corruption institutions with established, gender-sensitive whistleblowing mechanisms	incl. protection systems, multilingual channels, trained staff	Administrative monitoring, external audits	institutional
Proportion of supervisory bodies with equal or inclusive composition (gender, SOGIESC, ethnicity)	Structural access to accountability	Committee structure, participation recording, gender audits	institutional
Share of public tenders running under GRPP criteria	e.g. with indicators on participation, fairness, transparency and inclusive selection procedures	Award database, interviews with applicants	institutional
Number of suspensions, disciplinary proceedings or sanctions as a result of sexualised corruption	Effectiveness of anchoring in personnel policy and internal control	Administrative documents, independent inspection bodies	institutional
Perceived institutional trustworthiness among marginalised groups	'Do I feel heard, protected and involved?'	Perception surveys, qualitative interviews, focus groups	communal, institutional

Complementary qualitative methods – pathway 4

Method	Explanation	Further reading
Policy-Outcome Mapping	Analysis of concrete changes (e.g. changed procedures, new resource allocations) that can be attributed to new policies or institutional reforms	Better Evaluation (n.d.) https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/outcome-mapping
Gender and Integrity Audits	Joint review of institutional practices with regard to gender equality and integrity standards	EIGE (n.d.) https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/tools-methods/gender-audit?language_content_entity=en
Complaint Case Analysis with a Gender Perspective	Evaluation of real complaint cases with a focus on the gender, course, outcome and protection status of the persons concerned	
Organisational Culture Analysis	Investigation of institutional norms, routines and informal patterns of power, e.g. by means of anonymised surveys	

These indicators make it clear that institutional change is not only a question of rule-making, but also of **application, legitimacy and reconnection to affected groups**. Indicators must start at both the policy and practice level, and ideally capture representation, accessibility and sanctionability together.

This perspective was also taken up in an interview that pointed out the institutional responsibility in an impressive way:

> We often look at the numbers and say: Women don't report. But the real question is: Why should they? What happens when they do? We should stop asking why women don't report and instead ask: What have we built up that makes their silence necessary? It's not just about fear, it's about a lack of trust in systems, in tracking, in protection. Reporting is a risk, not a protective mechanism.'

This assessment points to a central aspect of gender-transformative impact measurement: The question is not just whether protective mechanisms exist, but whether they generate trust, especially among those groups that are structurally disadvantaged.

Part 2:
Gender-transformative approaches in specific sectors

Executive Summary

The sectoral analysis shows that gender-transformative anti-corruption approaches are only effective if they are systematically and context-specific anchored along several levels – individual, communal, institutional and political. As laid out in part one of this study, the four impact pathways developed have proven to be a viable analytical framework for describing, classifying and thinking ahead on xpro-grammes, interventions and structural reform processes. This part examines how these four impact pathways – norm transformation, resource-based empowerment, knowledge and capacity building, and institutional reform – can be operationalised across sectors. It is based on 23 interviews with experts from administration, civil society and research, as well as good practices from research and programme practice.

It is evident in the sectors examined – including sexualised corruption and *gender-based violence* (GBV for short), political participation, social security and economic participation – that corruption is more than a question of procedures or institutions. Corruption is deeply embedded in social norms, gender relations and mechanisms of exclusion. It reproduces itself when silence is rewarded, power is not questioned and equality is delegitimised. Gender-transformative approaches start precisely at these points; they make norms visible, open up spaces for collective negotiation and question distribution, access and participation.

Similar transformation logics are taking effect in all sectors, as the analysis shows. Norms concerning leadership, silence, legitimacy and neediness have a transversal effect: they structure experiences of corruption as well as equality. At the same time, sector-specific adjustments are needed. While protection, language and sanctions are central responses to sexualised corruption, in the realm of political participation, representation, backing and structural empowerment is necessary. Norms of gratitude, dependence and institutional control are in the foreground in social protection, whereas in economic participation, the visibility of work, fair distribution of resources and institutional access are vital.

When it comes to sexualised corruption, it is clear how strongly cultures of silence, normative reversal of guilt and a lack of language block institutional reaction. Programmes that collectively break the silence, protect those affected and create institutional recognition, such as digital reporting systems, collective protection formats and political anchoring, have an impact here. Political participation focuses on patriarchal leadership norms, symbolic representation and social isolation. Gender-transformative programmes create access through mentoring, safe spaces, inclusive monitoring and strategic support at multiple levels. In the realm of social security, exclusions are reproduced via informal allocation, moral narratives ('gratitude') and stigmatising discourses of entitlement. Transformative programmes rely on community budgeting, collective needs assessments, and shared decision-making power. In economic participation, informal networks, selective access to resources and normatively coded attributions prevent equal access. Programmes that anchor the visibility of care, gender quotas, transparent award formats and collective management achieve impact.

A comparative sector overview shows that interventions are particularly effective when they combine several impact pathways, like using representation to reflect norms, providing protection through structural feedback and creating empowerment via political legitimacy. At the same time, central gaps remain: institutional reconnection, intersectional reach, protection dimension and the connection to binding legal frameworks. The GTA-NormCheck offers a concrete instrument for participatory norm analysis, but its effect depends upon whether results are translated into decision-making processes and institutional reforms.

Participatory formats, peer learning, collective monitoring processes and community-led protection systems are not a methodological add-on; rather, they serve as the social foundation of a gender-equitable and integrity-based anti-corruption strategy. The effect comes about when normative self-evident things are questioned, agency is collectively constructed and structural exclusions are systematically pushed back. Gender-transformative anti-corruption work therefore should not be considered a marginal issue so much as a political strategy that inextricably links equality, social justice and accountability. At the same time, participation alone is clearly not enough – it must be underpinned by legal recognition, political commitment and institutional reforms. Legal definitions (e.g. on sexualised corruption), gender-sensitive procurement procedures (GRPP), protection systems and long-term cooperation formats are just as necessary to have as political spaces in which collective demands can be heard and structurally implemented. Through interviews and the analysis of programmes, gender-transformative anti-corruption work has been proven to require trust, time and relationship management. It is conflict-sensitive and complex and be built and last over the long-term, in order to be effective. Impact arises where empowerment is collectively shaped, not individualised; where norms are negotiated, not replaced; and where institutions do not seal themselves off, but open up.

Part 2 makes clear that gender-transformative anti-corruption work is possible, though only if it is context-specific, systemic and collaborative. The following section translates these findings into concrete recommendations for action that can serve as a framework to orientate political decision-makers, implementation partners and civil society actors.

1   Introduction

Part 1 has shown that social norms and power structures not only promote corruption, they are also closely linked to the perpetuation of gender inequality. This dynamic is particularly intensified where silence about wrongdoing becomes the norm and where sexualised dependencies are accepted as normal, or where women and marginalised groups are systematically excluded from access to rights and resources. This link between corruption and gender inequality is more than theoretical – it has a very concrete impact on people's everyday lives. It is therefore essential that development projects and programmes ask at every point in the project cycle: Who is allowed to have a say in decision-making? Who has access to education, health care or social security? Who is heard – and who is left out?

Interviews with 23 experts conducted as part of this project impressively confirm these connections. They repeatedly emphasised that women and marginalised groups are particularly affected by corruption, as they are more dependent on state benefits while retaining fewer opportunities for defending themselves against corruption. Confidential complaint mechanisms, a legal basis for punishing sexualised corruption and transparent access criteria to services and programmes are all lacking. In many places, there is simply a lack of space for their perspectives to be heard and taken into consideration.

But there is also reason for optimism: experience from various development programmes shows that there is significant potential for social change, especially in the health, education, water, agriculture and political participation sectors. In Tanzania, for example, a participatory communication campaign in 15 clinics broke the silence about petty corruption in the health sector and triggered a collective reflection on norms (Baez Camargo et al., 2025). In the policy realm, programmes such as the *NDI Women's Participation Framework* work with mentoring networks, safeguards and gender-sensitive monitoring approaches to address structural exclusions (NDI, 2020). In numerous interviews, it was emphasised that changes can be initiated especially where participatory dialogue formats are established, budgets are planned in a gender-equitable way, power structures in public authorities are made visible and dominant images of masculinity are questioned. These levers not only make it possible to curb corruption, but also to promote gender equality at the structural level.

It is striking that transformative impact is not limited to local interventions; this impact also unfolds when gender policy principles are integrated into national anti-corruption and gender equality strategies. Several interviewees emphasised that programmes only have a lasting effect if they are supported by political frameworks, legal definitions and institutional reforms. Or, as one interviewee put it: 'The national level must follow suit, otherwise the local will remain limited' (interview evaluation 2025). The aim of this part is therefore to transfer the theoretical foundations developed in part 1 – in particular the four pathways – to central sectors and to underpin them with empirical material. The four impact pathways – (1) normative change, (2) resource-based empowerment, (3) knowledge and capacity building, and (4) institutional reform – structure the sectoral analysis not as a rigid grid, but as a dynamic interdependence. They help to make sectoral differences visible and at the same time work out common transformative principles. Practical examples, interview statements, theories of change and monitoring approaches from different contexts flow together. Interviews with 23 experts from administration, civil society, international organisations and research form a central empirical basis (*see Appendix 1 in Part 1*

for a list of interview partners). Their statements complement the sectoral analysis with context-specific insights into norm dynamics, exclusion mechanisms and scope for action, and make it clear that transformative impact is not only technical, but also social and political in nature.

In this context, participation is understood beyond the community level: it is also about having a say in national strategies, monitoring systems and policy evaluations. Gender-transformative approaches call for marginalised groups to be actively involved in ministerial processes, interdepartmental steering bodies and political decision-making processes – not symbolically, but with structural influence.

The sectoral analysis pursues two goals: it is intended to illustrate how gender inequality and corruption interact in specific fields, and it should identify patterns and scope for action that can be transferred. It asks: Which social norms shape certain sectors particularly strongly? Which approaches have proven to be effective – and under what conditions? And how can measures be designed in such a way that they are not only gender-transformative, but also resilient to corruption?

This part first analyses cross-sectoral dynamics such as transparency, participation and sexualised corruption. It then delves deeper into four central fields in which gender-based norms, exclusions and corruption risks overlap particularly clearly: sexualised corruption and gender-based violence, political participation, social security and economic participation. The aim is to identify central patterns, pathways and structural blockages, and to derive transferable principles for a gender-transformative anti-corruption practice that applies to different levels of action. The sectoral analysis is not intended as a conclusive assessment, but rather can be seen as a contribution to the further development of a systemic understanding of anti-corruption that jointly addresses social justice, political integrity and gender-equitable participation.

2 Cross-sectoral levers of gender-transformative anti-corruption work

Gender-transformative anti-corruption work is only effective when it takes a cross-sectoral approach and promotes fundamental social, institutional and normative changes. The analysis of the following sectors makes it clear that certain dynamics, such as those related to power, access, legitimacy or participation, play a central role in all areas. Building on the theory of change developed in Part 1 and the four pathways, the next sections will examine which social norms structure these dynamics, and which approaches are suitable for changing them in a targeted manner.

Textbox 1 The four impact pathways of gender-transformative anti-corruption work

The pathways developed in part 1 form the analytical backbone of this part. They structure the levels at which gender-transformative changes can be initiated and anchored:

Path 1 – Norm transformation: Changing social norms and narratives about power, legitimacy, gender and silence.

Path 2 – Access to resources: Equitable access to material, institutional and symbolic resources for women and marginalised groups.

Path 3 – Knowledge and competence: Collective knowledge production, empowerment, critical enlightenment and social learning processes.

Path 4 – Institutional reform: Changing formal structures, laws, policies and institutional practices to ensure integrity and equality.

2.1 Transparency and accountability as a social norm

Transparency and accountability are often considered technical instruments in classic anti-corruption strategies – for example in the form of audits, information obligations or reporting channels. In gender-transformative approaches, on the other hand, they are understood as social and normative practices that are linked to questions of power, visibility, and access.

In many contexts, it is clear that those who receive information make decisions and those who make decisions control access to accountability. Transparency is thus granted selectively; accountability according to status and not according to rule is demanded. The lack of transparent procedures is a key risk factor for exclusion, dependency and silence, especially for women and members of marginalised groups (*GIZ, 2024; U4, 2024; BMZ, 2023*). As one interviewee pointed out, 'When we change the norms

around accountability, we also change the structures of corruption. This means that we must see accountability not only as a rule but as a social value. In some contexts, 'responsibility' was much more accepted as a word than 'transparency' or 'anti-corruption" (*interview evaluation 2025*). In many contexts, terms such as 'responsibility' or 'respect' can achieve more than formalised transparency reasoning. Programmes such as participatory budgeting or gender budgeting show that transparency only works when it is linked to collective agency and normative expectations. Interviews show that transparency becomes legitimate where it is 'demanded from below and negotiated together' (*interview evaluation 2025*).

2.2   Access to protection and complaint mechanisms

Corruption does not affect everyone equally. Where there are no confidentially accessible and protected ways to report wrongdoing, it can become particularly violent for many women and members of marginalised groups. This applies to sexualised corruption as well as to informal blackmail, exclusion or the appropriation of services.

Gender-transformative strategies come in here by legitimising protection systems not only institutionally but also socially, such as through confidants, collective reports, gender-equitable contact points and intercultural dialogue formats. Initiatives like anonymised complaint procedures in schools or clinics (*UNFPA, 2023; GIZ, 2023; NDI, 202*0) only have a lasting effect if they are embedded in a culture of listening, believing and protecting. The importance of these gender-sensitive complaint mechanisms was regularly emphasised in the interviews. Above all, women and marginalised people must be able to access these mechanisms safely and easily. Here, it is particularly important to keep in mind that the possibility of reporting misconduct alone does not have a positive effect. On the contrary, these mechanisms can lead to further marginalisation and stigmatisation if there are not also appropriate rules and laws to punish the perpetrators and support the victims.

2.3   Representation and inclusion

Representation is more than presence. Many programmes showed that women were 'in the room' but could neither support decisions nor exert influence. Gender-transformative approaches therefore aim at collective inclusion and structural representation, for example through participatory committees, quota regulations, rotating representations or formalised participation rights. It is important here that the focus is not only on the presence of women or marginalised people. Instead, it is necessary to analyse exactly which women were (not) involved and find ways to ensure that everyone, especially people who are marginalised in multiple ways, are involved in the processes. One interviewee explained: 'It's not just about women in committees. It's about who sets the rules, and who is even asked before decisions are made. Everything else remains symbolic.' Representation only becomes effective when it changes normative decision-making spaces. This also means that there must be an analysis of which factors, including care work, difficult travel, difficulties in understanding, and the like, prevent certain groups from participating.

2.4   Working with norm-bearing actors

Social norms do not change on their own. Almost all effective programmes involve norm-shaping actors like religious leaders, village elders, teachers or administrative management. These people act as multipliers because they not only express norms, they also bring legitimacy or delegitimise them through their behaviour. One interviewee offered this practical scenario as an example: 'When male leaders spoke out publicly, everything changed very quickly. Because they were listened to.' This observation illustrates how the strategic integration of existing authority can have a social impact. Again, the focus must be on understanding exactly which actors are involved and which have thus far been overlooked. This also requires questioning one's own actions and, for example, analysing whether the previous partners represent all community members or whether the work done so far has contributed to the systematic exclusion of some voices.

2.5   Participatory norm and system analysis

A central element of gender-transformative approaches is joint analysis: What is considered legitimate in this community? Who is allowed to make decisions and who is excluded from decision-making positions? What is perceived as 'normal behaviour' and what is not? And who determines what is 'normal'? Tools such as the matrix for gender-transformative analysis of power and norms (GTA-NormCheck) from Part 1, gender action learning (GALS), community score cards or outcome harvesting make it possible to make implicit norms visible and collectively negotiable. These formats combine knowledge production, empowerment and monitoring, and create spaces in which change is developed, not prescribed (*BMZ, 2023; UNFPA, 2023; Hillenbrand et al., 2015*).

Textbox 2 Instruments of gender-transformative norm analysis – Examples

The following tools are used in gender-transformative programmes to make implicit social norms visible, collectively negotiable and changeable. They combine analysis, empowerment, knowledge production and participatory monitoring – each with specific fields of application:

- **Matrix for gender-transformative analysis of power and norms (GTA-NormCheck):** An analytical tool for structured reflection on norms, power asymmetries and exclusion mechanisms in the interplay of corruption and gender. Developed as part of this project, it can be used in gender workshops, community trainings and strategic policy advice, among other things. The matrix is primarily used to link participatory norm analysis and institutional change (Part 1 of this study).

- **Gender Action Learning System (GALS):** A visual, participatory learning and planning system in which participants develop symbols for equality, like ‚vision journeys' and ‚gender diamonds'. In agricultural value chains, for example, it has been used by FAO, IFAD and WFP, among others, to promote collective target negotiation and gender justice (*FAO, IFAD & WFP, 2020*).

- **Community Score Cards:** A tool developed by CARE in which citizens and service providers separately provide ratings on service quality and fairness before jointly developing action plans. In Malawi and Uganda, it has been used in the health sector, for example, with documented positive effects on access, trust and accountability (*Hillenbrand et al., 2015*).

- **Outcome harvesting:** An approach to participatory impact measurement in which changes are named (‚harvested') by the affected groups themselves and analysed together. Particularly suitable for recording normative changes, such as in UNFPA, Oxfam or the World Bank programmes, it is often associated with storytelling and ‚most significant change' methods (*World Bank, 2020; Harper et al., 2021*).

These instruments are particularly effective when they are not isolated but embedded in national anti-corruption strategies in conjunction with protection formats, accountability mechanisms and political feedback.

The cross-sectoral levers show that gender-transformative effects arise where social norms are systematically reflected, collective negotiation is made possible and institutional power relations are shifted.

3   Sexualised corruption and gender-based violence (GBV)

Sexualised corruption is a central field in which gender-specific power relations, social norms and informal structures overlap particularly intensively. Gender-transformative anti-corruption work in this area must therefore go beyond protecting community members from attacks. Beginning where dependency is systemically established, silence is normatively secured and the body is normalised as a negotiation resource, gender-transformative anti-corruption work in this area aims to question normative self-evident facts, build collective spaces of protection and action and to structurally anchor institutional responsibility.

3.1   Connection to power, norms and impunity

Research shows that sexualised corruption is particularly widespread where there is a strong power mbalance. Dominant norms of masculinity and norms about honour, silence and opportunity ('*She knew what she was getting herself into*') legitimise structural exploitation. As one interviewee pointed out, 'There is this norm that women's bodies are a resource for survival. No one questions that, it's just expected. This is especially true in informal systems where women have no other access.' Such norms are particularly destructive because they not only enable violence but legitimise it. At the same time, there is a lack of legal definitions, institutional reporting channels and ostracism of survivors by society as a whole.

These gaps are increasingly being addressed by international organisations (*e.g. UNODC, UNDP*) and there are calls worldwide to include sexualised corruption in national laws while also having countries develop their own prevention and protection mechanisms.

One interviewee made it clear how important it is to find the right language to make sexualised corruption visible in the first place:

'Most people don't even realise that sexual favours are a form of corruption. We had to start with the most basic education: sex for grades, sex for jobs is not misconduct, it is an abuse of power. Many women said: That's just the way it is. Nobody called it corruption.'

Textbox 3 Sexualised corruption as a strategic starting point

Sexualised corruption is a particularly visible intersection between anti-corruption and gender (in)justice precisely because it combines the structural abuse of power, normative cultures of silence and gender-based violence into one phenomenon. At the same time, there are already established gender-transformative approaches in this field, especially from the work on *gender-based violence* (GBV) and *sexual and reproductive health rights* (SRHR). Formats such as community-based protection structures, peer-to-peer reflection, confidants, gender-sensitive complaint mechanisms and norm-critical media campaigns provide valuable insights for anti-corruption work. This link was also emphasised in numerous interviews, with several interlocutors noting there are many points of contact for transformative approaches in the work against sexualised corruption, not least because civil society networks, protective formats and collective language finding have already been tried and tested there. Attention is also growing internationally: Resolution 10/10 of the UNCAC CoSP 2023, as well as several programmes of UNODC, UNFPA and the *U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre and the African Women Against Corruption Network* (AWACN) reinforce the need to make sexualised corruption visible and the necessity of addressing it legally and institutionally.

At the same time, it is important to operate with strategic caution: sexualised corruption is only one part of the complex interrelationship between gender, social norms and corruption. Too narrow a focus on sexualised violence threatens to reduce women and marginalised groups to the role of 'victims' instead of empowering them as active creators of integrity, transparency and accountability. Gender-transformative anti-corruption must therefore be broadened: it does not begin with violence but with power relations; it does not end with protection, but with structural change.

3.2 Gender-transformative approaches to work against sexualised corruption

Gender-transformative strategies to combat sexualised corruption start at the interface of anti-corruption policy and equality. Beyond making sexualised corruption visible, they aim to deconstruct it as a structural power relationship by simultaneously changing social norms, institutional processes and protective structures.

The main levers used include:

- **Norm critique and visualisation** (Pathway 1 – norm transformation): In order to break through the normalisation of sexualised corruption, programmes rely on collective spaces for reflection. Formats such as community dialogues, storytelling, theatre work, radio broadcasts or digital *Social and Behaviour Change Communication* (SBCC) *campaigns* make power relations, silence and gender images negotiable (*UNFPA, 2023; Dworkin & Barker, 2019*). Peer-to-peer dialogues in which norms are actively questioned are particularly effective with young people and men (*Casey et al., 2016*).

- **Protection and institutional response** (Pathways 2 & 4 – resources & institutions): Effective protection systems avoid retraumatisation, stigmatisation and isolation. Successful models combine anonymous reporting channels with community-based trust structures, gender-sensitive support and mandatory response mechanisms (*Hillenbrand et al., 2015*). The decisive factor here is institutional retention: credible accountability can only be achieved if complaints are pursued and documented in a binding manner.

- **System reform** (Pathway 4 – institutions): Anti-corruption strategies must explicitly address sexualised corruption, whether through legal definitions, sectoral risk analyses, gender impact assessments, gender budget tracking or other means. Such instruments permanently anchor gender equality perspectives in integrity and accountability systems (*BMZ, 2023; Maslen, 2024*).

A central principle of gender-transformative anti-corruption work is that those affected are addressed as collective actors with agency, not passive victims. Formats such as the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) or Participatory Theories of Change (ToC) make it possible to make even strongly taboo forms of corruption visible and negotiable through collective spaces, social security and clear perspectives for change (*FAO et al., 2020*).

Empirical programmes such as *CARE's participatory response systems*, UNFPA-ToC models or the behavioural intervention in Tanzania's health sector as one example (*Baez Camargo et al., 2025*) show that sexualised corruption can be successfully addressed if it is recognised as a component of informal institutions, analysed in a context-sensitive manner and tackled not just communicatively but also structurally.

Textbox 4 Gender-transformative approaches to taboo topics – GALS and participatory theories of change

A central feature of successful gender-transformative anti-corruption work is the ability to make even highly taboo topics such as sexualised corruption collectively workable.

Two internationally proven formats show how this can be achieved:

- **Gender Action Learning System (GALS):** GALS is a visual-supported, participatory learning approach that makes social norms and power relations within communities visible and changes them in a targeted manner. In GALS processes, participants develop what are called ‚vision journeys' to identify inequalities and plan steps for change. ‚Gender diamonds' are used to discuss existing gender norms and develop transformable alternatives. GALS has been successfully used in agricultural contexts by FAO, IFAD and WFP, among others, but can also be applied to governance and anti-corruption contexts, especially where sexuality, body and power are strongly taboo (*FAO, IFAD & WFP, 2020*).

- **Participatory Theories of Change (ToC):** In contrast to classical, linear impact models, participatory ToC formats enable a collective development of change pathways based on local experience and social positioning. In the context of sexualised corruption, such ToC approaches have been used, for example, by UNFPA to define target images, risk factors and institutional levers together with various groups (e.g. affected women, local authorities, community leaders). The decisive advantage of this approach is that normative change is negotiated jointly and not imposed, so it is not institutionally bound.

Both formats not only strengthen individual empowerment but also create collective agency and anchor anti-corruption as a social practice beyond legal proceedings.

Textbox 5 Strategies of collective response – From protection systems to structural impact

Gender-transformative programmes against sexualised corruption work not only through norm criticism but also through collectively organised protection formats and strategic response structures.

Two programmes exemplify how protection, monitoring and empowerment can intertwine:

- **CARE's participatory response systems:** In several contexts (including Uganda, Nepal), CARE has developed participatory protection systems in which community members themselves take on the role of confidant, accompanying person or reporting agency. Instead of waiting for formal grievance mechanisms, especially in the case of sexualised exploitation in the context of public services, these systems create protected spaces for collective response. These formats were combined with accompanying mechanisms such as trust-building trainings, follow-up protocols and community-owned monitoring (*CARE, 2021*).

- **UNFPA ToC models on sexualised corruption:** UNFPA has developed strategies to specifically combat sexualised corruption in public health based on participatory theories of change in several countries. In a typical model process, affected groups, local health actors and administrative staff are involved in the development of common target images, risk diagnoses and action strategies. A crucial feature is that the theories of change contain monitoring indicators, institutional feedback, and protective mechanisms from the outset, and link empowerment with political commitment (*UNFPA, 2023*).

Both formats show that gender-transformative anti-corruption work is most effective where collective response, structural anchoring and social legitimacy interact and protection is viewed as a collective system rather than an individual case.

3.3   Impact along the four pathways

The four impact pathways developed in Part 1 provide a systematic basis for designing, implementing and evaluating gender-transformative approaches against sexualised corruption as part of anti-corruption strategies.

While Part 1 provides the theoretical framework, in practice it shows how crucial simultaneous work is on a normative, collective, institutional and resource-related level:

- **Pathway 1 – Norm transformation:** Shifting narratives, breaking taboos, creating language, for example through publicly visible campaigns, participatory norm analyses or social reflection formats such as GALS or storytelling.

- **Pathway 2 – Access to resources:** Enable protection, access and justice, such as through gender-sensitive reporting systems, legal access, psychosocial support and protection funds for those affected.

- **Pathway 3 – Knowledge and capacity:** Critical educational work, empowerment and reflection on masculinity, e.g. through training for state actors, peer formats, or collaborative case analyses.

- **Pathway 4 – Institutional reform:** Legal definitions, monitoring and of a binding nature, such as by integrating sexualised corruption into national anti-corruption strategies, risk analyses, gender budgeting and the training of supervisory bodies.

The interviews clearly show that individual measures like awareness-raising campaigns that are not supported by legal consequences fall short or even generate resistance. Gender-transformative anti-corruption approaches are effective when they enable collective reflection, demand institutional commitment and empower those affected to become change agents. Sexualised corruption is not a marginal phenomenon but can be seen as key to systemically understanding and transforming the nexus between corruption, norms and inequality.

4 Political participation of women and marginalised groups in all their diversity

Political participation is a central prerequisite for the prevention of corruption, and at the same time an area in which social norms, institutional power relations and structural exclusions are particularly dense. Gender-transformative anti-corruption work in the political sphere must therefore go beyond questions of representation. It starts where belonging is negotiated, legitimacy is ascribed or denied and political spaces are normatively shaped.

4.1 Norms, exclusions and structural barriers

In many contexts, political aptitude is associated with masculinity, assertiveness and authority. Women, non-binary and queer people are often normatively considered unsuitable, too emotional or dependent. At the same time, the informal nature in which political spaces are structured, including via networks, loyalties, resource and access systems, systematically limits access for marginalised groups (*U4, 2024; Dainty Women, 2023*).

Previous studies have shown **th**at while women are often present in political processes, this does not necessarily mean that they are heard. These exclusionary practices create individual barriers and offer an expression of social norms that encode influence, visibility and leadership in gender and social terms. Alongside gender, class, age, language and local affiliation play a role. Political participation thus becomes a question of normative legitimacy.

4.2 Gender-transformative strategies for political participation

While political participation is a goal of gender equality policy measures, it also serves as a central lever in anti-corruption work. Where political spaces are made more inclusive, representative and accountable, the risks of informal networks, clientelist allocation and non-transparent decision-making processes are reduced. Gender-transformative strategies therefore aim not only at visibility but also at a structural change in who has political influence, how legitimacy is attributed and which norms structure political power.

→ Specifically, gender-transformative anti-corruption strategies in the field of political participation address three interlocking levels:

1. **Norm change (Pathway 1 – norm transformation):** Dominant notions of political authority are questioned through public narratives that show alternative leadership models, such as emotionally-integrated, collectively-oriented or queer role models. There are already initiatives and projects such as AWACN Men (see Part 1) that work with men, youth groups or locally anchored elites to redefine belonging and make exclusive codes of political belonging visible.

2. **Strengthening collective participation (Pathways 2 & 3 – resources & knowledge):** Platforms for marginalised groups, rotating models of representation, peer formats or community-based policy advice create new opportunities for action and access. These formats undermine informal patronage structures, strengthen accountability from below and increase resilience to the concentration of power and corruption.

3. **Institutional reform (Pathway 4 – institutions):** Gender quotas with structural ties (e.g. mentoring, resources, security), gender-sensitive tenders or protection against political violence create institutional conditions for integrity-oriented and equitable participation. Programmes such as the NDI Women's Political Participation Framework or the National Anti-Corruption Strategy in Ghana (NACAP) show that such changes are effective when combined with monitoring, social anchoring, and political legitimacy (*NDI, 2020*).

4.3   Impact along the four pathways

The four impact pathways developed in Part 1 provide an analytical basis for understanding gender-transformative strategies in the field of political participation as an integral part of anti-corruption strategies.

➜ **Political transformation is possible where normative change, access to resources, knowledge and institutional structural reforms are intertwined.**

- **Pathway 1 – Norm transformation:** Dominant ideas of leadership, rationality and legitimacy are challenged by alternative narratives and role models. In interviews, it became clear that participation is not possible so long as political competence remains affiliated with male connotations: 'The idea of a good leader is often still automatically male.'

- **Pathway 2 – Access to resources:** Political participation is inextricably linked to resources, whether they be access to networks, financing, time or physical security. Gender-transformative programmes enable participation, e.g. through scholarships, childcare, mobility grants or safe spaces, and thus reduce the reproducibility of existing exclusions (BMZ, 2023).

- **Pathway 3 – Knowledge and capacity:** Empowerment is built through civic education, intersectional competence development and collective reflection formats. Peer mentoring, community training or extended selection training help to overcome uncertainties and to make integrity visible as a political goal.

- **Pathway 4 – Institutions:** Legal quotas, transparent procedures, gender-sensitive selection processes and protection from violence create structural conditions for inclusive policymaking. Successful programmes show that such measures are particularly effective when they are linked to accountability, monitoring and political visibility (NDI, 2020; U4, 2024).

The interviews make it clear that gender-transformative political participation does not arise through representation alone; it develops through the shift in the structural conditions under which political participation is possible and legitimate. One interviewee put it in a nutshell: 'It's not just about women being there. It's about who speaks, who is heard, and who is even invited to have a say at all. Many think that one chair in the room is enough. But often this chair is empty.'

Textbox 6 Political participation as a lever for integrity – Practical examples

Gender-transformative strategies in the field of political participation not only contribute to equality, they are also effective instruments for preventing corruption. Where political spaces are made more inclusive and responsible, the risk of non-transparent networks, patronage and political violence decreases.

The following programmes show how concrete formats link these goals:

- **NDI – Women's Political Participation Framework (global):** The National Democratic Institute has developed a comprehensive framework that combines gender quotas with mentoring, civic education and monitoring for violence. In Jordan, Colombia and Ghana, training for young female candidates, safety training and participatory feedback systems, among other things, have been integrated into election committees with the aim of making systematic exclusions and integrity gaps visible (*NDI, 2020*).

- **Ghana – National Anti-Corruption Action Plan (NACAP):** Ghana's national anti-corruption strategy was developed in a participatory process involving women's organisations and gender equality actors. Sexualised corruption was explicitly included, gender was defined as a cross-cutting issue and an institutional coordination office with an equality mandate was set up (*UNODC, 2020*).

These examples show that the strategic design of political participation creates a two-pronged effect: there is resistance to corruption through accountability and legitimacy, and equality arises through structural inclusion.

5   Social security and basic services

Whereas social security systems are supposed to offer protection, they can also be realms
that replicate structural inequality, exclusion and informal power. For many women and marginalised
groups, while services such as health care, social transfers, child benefits or disaster relief are essential for
survival, they are often only accessible to a limited extent due to discriminatory norms, lack of informa-
tion, institutional dependencies or direct blackmail (*GIZ, 2024; Hillenbrand et al., 2015*).

5.1   Norms, exclusions and institutional practices

In the interviews, it became clear that social security is often linked to moral notions designating what
counts as neediness. Anyone who defends themselves against unequal treatment or demands rights is
quickly portrayed as disloyal or demanding.

It is often not clear what criteria apply to access, who decides worthiness or how complaints can be
levelled. In patriarchal contexts, women, especially single parents, queer or rural women, are often de-
fined as 'dependent' and thus systematically disenfranchised. In addition, there are language barriers,
information inequality and sexualised exploitation (*U4, 2024; UNFPA, 2023*). As one project interview
summarises, marginalised groups are structurally blackmailed: 'In our trainings, many women said: If I
complain, I lose everything. There was no protection, no guarantee, not even listening. Only risk. And if
they don't say anything, it gets worse – but at least not publicly.'

5.2   Gender-transformative strategies in social security

When considering social security, it becomes especially clear how closely intertwined gender-specific
exclusions, informal power relations and corruption risks are. Access to benefits is often dependent on
personal relationships, non-transparent criteria or implicit quid pro quos, systematically disadvantaging
women and marginalised groups in particular. Gender-transformative strategies in the realm of social
security therefore aim to strengthen accountability, participation and entitlement security as well as to
change the structural prerequisites for integrity and equality.

Effective approaches intersect across several levels:

1. **Norm change and enlightenment (Pathway 1 – norm transformation):** Many programmes rely
   on Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) to challenge common narratives, like
   the idea that social benefits are a 'privilege' rather than a right. In dialogue formats, communities
   reflect on attributions such as 'ingratitude' or 'dependence' and formulate new concepts of care,
   dignity and entitlement.

2. **Institutional opening (Pathway 4 – institutions):** Gender-transformative anti-corruption strategies
   promote the introduction of transparent access criteria, clearly defined responsibilities and gen-
   der-sensitive contact points. Community monitoring – such as through the use of score cards – not
   only strengthens the user perspective but also increases institutional accountability and legitimate
   control over resource allocation.

3. **Protection and collective structures (Pathway 2 – resources):** Empowerment groups, collective grievance mechanisms and accompanying community structures not only offer protection against the arbitrary denial of benefits but also enable collective countervailing power. These formats have a particularly strong effect where state procedures are experienced as arbitrary, dependent or sexualised.

4. **Distributive justice (Pathways 2 & 4 – resources & institutions):** Instruments such as gender budgeting and intersectional needs assessments enable a fairer allocation of resources by distributing resources in favour of people who are care managers, queer or living with a disability. They make structural vulnerability visible and derive political priorities from it.

5.3   Impact along the four pathways

The four pathways of gender-transformative anti-corruption approaches help in understanding that social security is not only a question of distribution, but also part of a normative and institutional integrity architecture.

- **Pathway 1 – Norm transformation:** Attributions such as 'needy', 'dependent' or 'grateful' are critically questioned. Programmes promote a sense of entitlement, legal awareness and a new understanding of care as a public right, not charity.

- **Pathway 2 – Access to resources:** Access to social benefits determines everyday security for resources such as food, housing and health care. Programmes like participatory budgeting show how collective negotiation processes enable fairer distribution.

- **Pathway 3 – Knowledge and capacity:** Ignorance of rights, procedures and reporting channels increases dependency. Gender-transformative approaches rely on easily accessible training, local awareness campaigns and community-based advice, including in oral or visual form.

- **Pathway 4 – Institutions:** Transparent procedures, protected feedback channels, gender-sensitive documentation and community-based control are crucial for trust and sustainability. Programmes are particularly effective when protection and monitoring are permanently integrated into administration and budget processes.

Social security can thus become a space in which not only is protection guaranteed, but power relations are redistributed and accountability is institutionally anchored in the sense of a gender-transformative anti-corruption strategy.

Textbox 7 Integrity through social security

Social security systems offer the opportunity to make structural exclusions visible and to reshape institutional accountability while providing protection.

The following examples show how gender-transformative approaches can be specifically integrated into the integrity and accountability architecture of social systems:

- **Community Score Cards – Uganda & Malawi (CARE):** Community Score Cards have been used in several projects to evaluate social performance. Users and service providers, including those in the health and social assistance sector, work together, along with women's and youth groups who identified access barriers, arbitrariness in allocation and sexualised dependency relationships. The results were presented to the public, discussed and translated into action plans (*CARE, 2021*).

- **Gender budgeting with intersectional needs analysis – Nepal:** As part of a programme supported by UN Women, local budget processes were adapted in such a way that the specific needs of marginalised groups – such as the visibility of care work, mobility needs of rural women or access barriers for LGBTIQ+ people – were systematically recorded and prioritised. The budget proposals developed in this way were incorporated into medium-term budget planning at the district level (*Dahal et al, 2019*).

- **Participatory protection formats – West Africa (UNFPA):** UNFPA developed participatory protection models in government benefit programmes, such as health services and humanitarian aid. Affected groups (e.g. single women, internally displaced persons, queer youth) jointly developed reporting procedures, confidant structures and feedback mechanisms. These were fed back into institutional grievance systems and monitored (*UNFPA, 2023*).

These formats show that gender-transformative social protection can be part of an effective anti-corruption strategy if entitlement rights are made visible, distributions are made transparent and institutional learning processes are made possible.

6   Economic participation and the empowerment of women and marginalised groups

Economic participation is a central lever for self-determination, accountability and integrity; at the same time, it is a field in which corruption, exclusion and gender norms are particularly closely interwoven. Access to land, credit, public procurement or informal markets is often regulated by patriarchal norms, informal networks and structural discrimination. For many women and marginalised groups, economic participation therefore means that along with opportunity comes increased risk (*FAO, 2020; GIZ, 2023; BMZ, 2023*).

6.1   Norms, exclusion and economic vulnerability

In many societies, economic roles are strongly gender-coded. Men are considered providers, women as additional earners. Non-binary people and queer people often have no place at all in these systems. These norms influence who is allowed to hold property, who is granted credit, who is considered 'entre-preneurial' or 'worthy of funding' and who is systematically excluded.

In interviews, it became clear that women and other marginalised groups are often excluded from de-cision-making processes in agricultural cooperatives, procurement procedures or business associations. Corruption in this field manifests itself not only in the form of direct bribery or nepotism, but also in the informal control of resources through networks, lack of transparency and norms that make certain groups invisible, for example in funding programmes, access to public procurement or market informa-tion. Gender-transformative anti-corruption strategies must therefore specifically address this interface: Where exclusion is systematically organised, there is a need for collective counterpower, structural visi-bility, and institutional responsibility.

6.2   Gender-transformative strategies in economic empowerment

Gender-transformative programmes in the area of economic participation are also instruments of cor-ruption prevention if they aim at power relations, resource distribution and institutional accountability.

They rely on:

1. **Access to resources and redistribution (Pathway 2 – resources):** e.g. through gender quotas for land titles, gender-sensitive lending, participatory tendering procedures, gender-responsive procure-ment (GRPP).

2. **Shift in norms (Pathway 1 – norm transformation):** By valuing female and informal work, pro-moting alternative role models, reflecting on masculinity in financial committees and critically reflecting on market logics.

3. **Collective structures (Pathway 3 – knowledge):** Women's cooperatives, LGBTIQ+ economic net-works, self-managed savings groups or collaborative production networks act as places of collective bargaining power and social control over resources.

4. **Market access and visibility (Pathway 4 – institutions):** e.g. through gender-inclusive value chains, transparent information systems, alternative trading platforms or digital resources for informal providers.

Programmes such as the IFAD Rural Empowerment Framework or internationally supported GRPP initiatives show that economic empowerment does not work when individual women are supported; rather, it is successful when access, control and norms are shifted together, with an explicit link to anti-corruption logics.

6.3 Impact along the four pathways

The four pathways developed in Part 1 help to understand economic participation not only as a means of poverty reduction, but also as a central lever for anti-corruption strategies. Interviews and practical examples showed that gender-transformative effects arise above all when structural exclusions, normative expectations and informal power structures are addressed at the same time.

- **Pathway 1 – Norm transformation:** Economic productivity is often equated with formal employment, male risk-taking and market integration. Gender-transformative programmes shift these narratives: they make care work, subsistence economy and collective reproduction visible – and publicly negotiate what is considered to be 'value-adding'. At the same time, they question notions of leadership, entrepreneurship and efficiency that often reproduce corruption through social selectivity.

- **Pathway 2 – Access to resources:** Access to the means of production, capital, land or orders is often regulated informally via networks, relationships and expectations of opportunity. Marginalised groups – especially women without property, queer small entrepreneurs or informal workers – are systematically excluded as a result. Gender-transformative programmes not only enable a fairer distribution of resources but also collective control over resources, e.g. through common ownership, transparent allocation criteria or publicly accessible evaluation procedures.

- **Pathway 3 – Knowledge and capacity:** Economic exclusions are often based on structural information asymmetries: Who knows how an application will be submitted? Who understands contracts? Who has access to market prices, procurement platforms or legal means? Programmes here focus on empowerment through financial education, exchange platforms, mobile legal advice or peer-to-peer training – in simple language, intersectionally accessible and locally anchored. This also strengthens the resilient defense against corrupt practices in everyday life.

- **Pathway 4 – Institutions:** If tenders are non-transparent, procurement procedures are informal or supervisory bodies are biased, exclusionary practices are reproduced despite good rules. Gender-transformative effects occur where state and private institutions take responsibility for gender equality, for example, through gender-sensitive credit guidelines, monitoring of discriminatory procedures or mandatory training in gender equality and accountability. It is particularly important that gender is not treated as a technical additional criterion, but as an integral part of integrity and legitimacy.

Economic participation can thus become a place of active power shifting: away from network corruption and towards collective control, equality and transparent accountability.

Textbox 8 Economic participation as an anti-corruption strategy

Economic participation is not only a goal of gender-equitable development – it can also be an effective means of weakening corruption-promoting networks.

The following examples show how gender-transformative measures for economic empowerment are deliberately combined with anti-corruption logics:

- **Gender-Responsive Public Procurement (GRPP) – Dominican Republic:** A minimum share of public procurement for women-owned companies has been set by law. This reform opened up previously non-transparent procurement systems, weakened patronage networks and increased women's economic visibility – while strengthening competitive and formalised procedures (*Maslen, 2024*).

- **Cross-border trade – East Africa:** Women who trade at border crossings often have to do so informally. A Search for Common Ground project therefore promoted the formalisation of informal trade for women at border crossings and linked this to measures against harassment and extortion by customs authorities. Part of the project entailed legal education, political advocacy and training on grievance mechanisms, with measurable successes in trade volume, security and corruption resistance (*Camargo & Amado, 2021*).

- **Women's Citizenship Initiative – Egypt:** A multi-stakeholder project supported women in accessing official ID cards, a prerequisite for financial inclusion and access to government programmes. The measure not only strengthened individual economic independence but also reduced vulnerability to informal control and bribery in the social system (*Kubbe, Camargo, & Scharbatke-Church, 2024*).

These examples show that economic participation can become an anti-corruption strategy if it breaks down structural exclusions, institutionally secures access and makes the allocation of resources transparent.

7 Comparison of sectoral approaches: What works, what is missing?

The analyses to date show that gender-transformative anti-corruption work encounters similar structural challenges in different sectors, among them normatively anchored exclusion, institutionalised lack of transparency and the marginalisation of certain groups. At the same time, the forms of expression of these dynamics differ, as do the concrete logics of intervention. In order to make these patterns visible and to identify similarities and differences, the following table summarises key findings from four exemplary sectors. It shows by way of example which social norms shape the respective fields, which interventions can have a transformative effect, how they are located along the four impact pathways and which good practices serve as references. The table is not intended as a complete systematisation, but rather provides a structured snapshot of current programme logics.

Table 1 Tabular overview of sectoral approaches

Sector	Dominant social norms	Exemplary intervention	Associated impact pathway	Reference
Sexualised corruption	Silence, reversal of guilt, body as a resource of exchange	Storytelling and peer work on abuse of power (CARE, UNFPA)	1 (Norms), 3 (Knowledge), 4 (Institutions)	UNFPA 2023; Hillenbrand et al., 2015
Political participation	Leadership = masculinity, emotional incompetence of women	Mentoring networks & protection against digital violence (NDI)	1 (Norms), 2 (Resources), 3 (Knowledge), 4 (Institutions)	NDI 2020
Social security	Gratitude instead of entitlement, neediness is interpreted as passivity	Community-based budget processes with self-help groups (SHG)	2 (Resources), 3 (Knowledge), 4 (Institutions)	UNFPA 2023
Economic participation	Men as providers, women only as additional earners	Gender quotas in job advertisements, care redistribution	1 (Norms), 2 (Resources), 3 (Knowledge), 4 (Institutions)	Maslen, 2024; Camargo & Amado, 2021

The analysis shows that effective interventions can be found in all sectors if they are systemic, participatory and structurally anchored. Measures are particularly effective where normative work (pathway 1) interacts with equitable access to resources (pathway 2), collective knowledge production (pathway 3) and institutional accountability (pathway 4). Programmes that target individuals only or seek to raise awareness without structural reforms, on the other hand, often remain ineffective or even create new exclusions.

At the same time, it becomes clear that each sector has its own normative risks and institutional gaps:

- In the case of sexualised corruption, the challenge lies in breaking taboos and finding institutional language.

- In political participation, the danger stems from confusing representation with influence, without structural feedback.

- In regards to social protection, informal procurement practices and moral attributions reinforce institutional dependence.

- Economic participation is dominated by barriers to access, network exclusion and a normatively legitimised lack of transparency.

These sectoral differences are crucial for developing targeted intervention strategies, but they must not replace the systemic view: Gender-transformative anti-corruption work only works if it addresses norms, resources, knowledge and institutions equally and connects these dynamics in a context-sensitive way. These sectoral insights also form the basis for the subsequent analysis of structural barriers.

→ **What works?**

The interviews highlight three key conditions for gender-transformative approaches at the intersection of anti-corruption work and equality to be successful:

1. **Participation as a starting point:**
   Gender-transformative impact arises where community-level programmes work together on social norms, resource conditions, protection needs and collective agency. As several interviews emphasised:'Sustainable change only occurs when the community itself talks about problems, causes and solutions' (interview evaluation 2025). Participation is not a method but a prerequisite for legitimacy and effectiveness.

2. **Anchoring in political and institutional structures:**
   Profound transformation can only succeed if legal foundations, political mandates and organisational structures at the national level follow suit. The example of Ghana's Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACAP) shows that where gender and integrity plans are introduced on a mandatory basis and sexualised corruption is explicitly included, effective protection systems and accountability relationships are created (UNODC, 2020).

3. **Longevity and relationship work:**
   Gender-transformative processes cannot be prescribed. They are based on trust, time and shared commitment across sectoral, institutional and societal boundaries.

Recurring success factors from the sectors include:

- Participatory norm analysis as a starting point (e.g. GALS, matrix for gender-transformative power and norm analysis (GTA-NormCheck))

- Collective protection mechanisms and empowerment formats (e.g. peer groups, group grievances)

- Linking empowerment with institutional commitment (e.g. gender budgeting, GRPP)

- Strategically positioned multipliers (e.g. men, religious leaders, administrative staff)

- Consolidation through monitoring and participatory evaluation (e.g. score cards, outcome harvesting)

Impact is created where social norms are made visible, institutional structures broadened and collective possibilities for action realised as a legitimate component of anti-corruption policy.

→ What is missing?

Despite innovative approaches and concrete progress, central gaps are evident in project practice as well as in the political framework:

- **Institutional retention:** Many programmes remain project-based and thus not integrated into permanent administrative structures.

- **Intersectional anchoring:** Queer, non-binary and multiply marginalised groups are often symbolically present but excluded at the practical level.

- **Protection and risk dimension:** Political violence, stigmatisation and repression are rarely systematically considered even though they massively limit the gender-transformative effect.

- **Connection to legal frameworks:** A lack of legal definitions (e.g. on sexualised corruption) prevents institutional responsibility from taking hold.

→ What do we need?

For gender-transformative anti-corruption to be structurally effective rather than selective, it is necessary to include:

- **Binding political frameworks** that explicitly integrate gender-transformative logics into anti-corruption strategies, supported by clear legal requirements, resources and monitoring.

- **Cooperation formats between civil society, state institutions and norm-shaping actors** who assume joint responsibility.

- **Indicators that record social, normative and structural changes,** including qualitative metrics on role models, experiences of participation and a subjective sense of security.

- **Investments in collective processes instead of technocratic individual measures**, with a focus on relationship, legitimacy and reliability.

- **Protection, support and accountability systems** that provide trust and security of action for particularly marginalised groups at increased risk.

The sectoral comparison shows that gender-transformative anti-corruption work does not follow a standard model. It is not a toolbox, but a norm-driven attitude, a long-term process of change and a community-based practice with the aim of considering social justice, political integrity and equality together.

Strategic risks and opportunities of gender-transformative approaches

Not every measure that calls itself 'gender-transformative' has a transformative effect. This overview shows the conditions under which frequently used formats actually contribute to the shift of power and when they run the risk of remaining symbolic or even generating new exclusions:

Measure	Effective when …	Critical if …
Gender quota in committees	… it is combined with resources, mentoring and safeguards	… it exists only as a representation requirement and does not allow for a say
SBCC campaign	… it aims at collective reflection, functions in dialogue and is locally anchored	… it is individualised, moralising or not accompanied by protection
Community monitoring	… there is institutional retention, feedback systems and consequences	… results have no consequences or are controlled by local elites
Empowerment trainings	… they promote collective agency and open up spaces for connection	… they take place in isolation or exclude questions of power
Grievance mechanisms	… they are trust-based, anonymous, secure and offer feedback	… they retraumatise, stigmatise or do not allow a reaction

This matrix helps to recognise that gender-transformative effects are not a side effect. They must be planned, accompanied and structurally secured in a targeted manner.

8 Barriers and opportunities

8.1 Structural, political and social barriers

The interviews and studies analysed clearly show that the implementation of gender-transformative approaches in anti-corruption work is not primarily a technical challenge but rather depends upon a political debate surrounding deeply rooted norms, power asymmetries and institutional inertia.

Structural barriers exist in particular in regards to:

- The lack of legal definitions of central problems (e.g. sexualised corruption),

- inadequate or non-gender-sensitive complaint procedures,

- an inadequate anchoring of gender competence in anti-corruption institutions (*BMZ, 2022; U4, 2024*).

Political barriers include:

- gender being a low priority in existing or planned national anti-corruption strategies,

- resistance from male-dominated networks within politics, administration and the judiciary and

- the tendency to depoliticise gender issues or treat them symbolically (*BMZ, 2023*).

Social barriers can be seen in:

- strong taboos on sexualised corruption,

- the stigmatisation of people who name grievances and

- limited collective agency due to social isolation or intersectional discrimination (*GIZ, 2023*).

In several interviews, it became clear that resistance to anti-corruption measures arises from a lack of structures and a lack of political imagination. It is often necessary to convince decision-makers first through concrete examples, making visible the real impact of corruption on women, families and communities and by pointing out practical solutions. Persuasion may not replace structures, but it can create the political climate in which structural changes become possible.

8.2   Responsibility and scope of action of the actors

The interviewees agree that gender-transformative anti-corruption work is only possible when responsibility is shared. It has been shown in practice that different actors each bring their own levers and resources and confront specific barriers, as discussed above. These potentials and challenges must always be strategically considered together, with each group of actors contributing according to their strengths.

→ Communities and local groups can:

- offer contextual knowledge, hold normative orientation knowledge and coordinate collective mobilisation,
- implement participatory formats, norm-critical learning processes and protective structures,
- make exclusions and forms of violence visible.

→ State institutions and administration can:

- provide legal framework and institutional safeguards,
- allocate resources and monitor responsibility,
- offer structural legitimation of gender and integrity measures.

→ Civil society organisations (NGOs, women's rights networks) can:

- act in the areas of mediation, training, advocacy,
- serve as building bridges between community and politics,
- perform advocacy and offer strategic visualisation of structural problems.

→ Actors in norm-shaping roles (e.g. religious leaders, media, school staff) can:

- legitimise or question existing norms,
- signal effect in transformation processes,
- establish social sanctioning or normalise behavioural patterns.

The interviews underline that gender-transformative effects are only possible when these roles are clearly named, have attention drawn to them and are employed in a coordinated manner. It becomes clear how central participatory approaches are for gender-transformative anti-corruption work especially against the backdrop of the barriers and complex actor landscape outlined in this part's section 8.1. These approaches enable shared learning, collective responsibility and offer context-specific strategies as their social foundation, not as a substitute for political reforms. The significance of such approaches and their methodological design will be explored later in more detail. Crucial to their success is identifying the right people who can actively support change within the administration, in the community and among political decision-makers. It takes targeted relationship management, personal conversations and the building of strategic alliances, both with men and women. In this context, awareness-raising is not 'education from the outside' rather it acts as continuous political communication about the importance of equality and integrity for the common good.

As one interviewee put it:

'In the end, it's about people understanding why this is important to them.'

Textbox 10 **Context decides – When reporting systems are really accessible**

Reporting systems are considered a core instrument of anti-corruption work. But gender-transformative perspectives show that not every reporting option is accessible, safe or legitimate – especially not for women and marginalised groups who face increased risk and institutional mistrust. :

The interviews make important factors for reporting options clear:

- **Visibility can mean risk:** Many people hesitate when having to report corrupt behaviour in a publicly visible manner, such as needing to visit a contact point, write a complaint or make a phone call in the presence of others.

- **Not everyone has access and protection:** Phone-based hotlines implicitly assume that people have access to the device, electricity, time and privacy required, which is often not the case in patriarchal, monitored or resource-poor households.

- **Reporting structures must be credible:** If reporting channels run through the perpetrating institutions such as via the police, local authorities or hospital staff, they will not be used, no matter how technically sophisticated they are.

- **Language and mediation are crucial:** Paperwork in the dominant language, bureaucratic requirements or digitised portals can have an unintentionally exclusionary effect, especially for queer young people, older women or people with little formal education.

- **Familiar formats work better:** In many contexts, informal or intermediary channels are more successful; examples of this include complaints made to trusted persons in the community, group discussions with moderation or oral reports in a protected space.

Gender-transformative anti-corruption strategies actively take these conditions into account: they ask not only whether it is possible to report – but how, to whom, under what risks and with what prospects of protection and action. The interviews show that effective reporting systems are not created via technology but through trust, embeddedness and credibility.

9 Participatory approaches and locally initiated initiatives

Participation is about more than actively taking part. As one interviewee pointed out, true participation also requires a change of role on the part of the supporters: 'We had to learn to step back – and give the [affected] women the space to define their own priorities. Our task was not to fill this space but to hold it. That was new for many in our team, but it changed everything.' Only when marginalised groups shape their own spaces of action can participation have a truly transformative effect. In gender-transformative anti-corruption projects, participation is more than a means to an end. It is a method for questioning informal power relations, for the collective redefinition of legitimacy and for the redistribution of institutional agency. It breaks through classical forms of state governance and creates spaces in which women, non-binary people and other marginalised groups can build collective agency ('power with') (*Align, 2023*).

As shown in Part 1 it is often social norms and not legal regulations that determine who is heard, who is silent and who is allowed to exert influence. Especially in the context of corruption, these norms have an exclusionary effect and protect privileged groups from control. Participatory, community-based formats break these dynamics by enabling collective norm negotiations, local accountability formats and socially anchored accountability (*Maslen, 2024; World Bank, 2020*).

9.1 Types of participatory approaches

The evaluation of international programmes (Align, 2023; Hillenbrand et al., 2015; Oxfam, 2019) and the interviews show that participatory formats[1] can be systematised along four main types:

1. **Locally-driven participatory initiatives:** arise from the community itself, are locally controlled and normatively self-determined. They are based on self-organisation, collective knowledge production and often rely on informal structures. Examples include women's groups, LGBTIQ+ networks or youth councils.

2. **Community-based formats:** are usually initiated by external actors (e.g. NGOs) but rely on close participation and ties back to local structures. They have a transformative effect when they decentralise decision-making processes, not just symbolically obtaining 'input'.

3. **Co-productive models:** emerge where communities and institutions work together, for example, in gender budgeting processes, participatory monitoring or local grievance mechanisms. They combine institutional legitimacy with collective self-determination.

4. **Institutionalised participation:** refers to legally or administratively anchored formats, such as quota committees, gender committees or participatory budgeting. These can have a transformative effect if they are inclusive, backward-bound and reflective of power (*BMZ Action Plan, 2023*).

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1   For more on participatory methods in development work, see also https://www.participatorymethods.org (from the Institute for Development Studies).

The decisive factor here is not the form, but the effect: Do the approaches open up real room to manoeuvre? Do they make norms negotiable? Do they shift existing power relations or do they merely stabilise them in a new form?

9.2 Tools for collective impact: Potential formats of participatory anti-corruption work

Participatory approaches in gender-transformative anti-corruption work use a variety of formats. The decisive factor is not their external form, but **whether they enable collective negotiation, offer protection and shift structural power relations**.

→ **The following formats have proven to be particularly effective in research and practice:**

- **Community Score Cards (CSC):** CSCs combine the participatory evaluation of public services with collective norm negotiation. Users and service providers independently evaluate access, fairness and quality, and then jointly develop concrete action plans. The impact comes from public accountability, collective control and institutional backing (*Hillenbrand et al., 2015*).

- **Gender Action Learning System (GALS):** GALS is a visual, participatory learning and planning tool. With the help of tools such as 'Vision Journeys' or 'Gender Diamonds', participants reflect on individual role models, resource relationships and normative barriers, and formulate their own pathways of change. It has been successfully used in agricultural programmes, value chains and is increasingly used in local governance processes (*FAO, IFAD & WFP, 2020*).

- **Outcome Harvesting / Story-based Monitoring:** These methods of participatory impact measurement do not rely on predefined goal achievement, but on collective recognition of change. Communities themselves name what has changed and analyse how these changes came about. The formats are particularly suitable for normative change, informal dynamics and complex power constellations (*World Bank, 2020; Oxfam, 2019*).

- **Peer learning formats:** Formats such as women's circles, fathers' groups or LGBTIQ+ forums create protected spaces for the exchange of experiences, mutual reinforcement and standard-setting role models. They work especially where institutional spaces are missing or uncertain and enable collective empowerment from below.

- **Participatory gender budgeting processes:** These formats link budget planning with collective needs analysis. Women's representatives, community groups or self-help organisations (e.g. self-help groups (SHGs)) jointly analyse public spending, prioritise needs and help shape budget decisions. Especially effective when combined with visualisation, dialogue forums and social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) (*UNFPA, 2023*).

- **Community-based reporting systems:** These systems enable those affected by e.g. sexualised corruption to submit complaints anonymously and in a protected manner via trusted persons – outside of formalised authority structures. The decisive factor here is the reconnection: complaints must be processed and communicated in a comprehensible way, otherwise mistrust or repression arises (*U4, 2024; Hillenbrand et al., 2015*).

The effects of these formats unfold in their interaction: reflection, negotiation, institutional reconnection, collective effectiveness. It is precisely this process logic that makes them the central building blocks of a gender-transformative anti-corruption practice. For participatory formats to be truly inclusive, they must actively address intersectional exclusions, such as a lack of language skills, mobility, care obligations, security risks or access to technology.

The overview below shows how central participatory formats work along the four impact pathways. In this table, it becomes clear that each format addresses certain levers particularly strongly, e.g. norms, resources or institutional structures, but none of them alone addresses all dimensions. The table shows that gender-transformative effects are achieved above all when formats are combined, coordinated and used in a context-sensitive manner. The classification is based on a literature review and interview analyses and serves as an orientation for the strategic planning of participatory anti-corruption measures.

Table 2 Impact pathways of participatory formats in anti-corruption work

Format	Pathway 1: Norms	Pathway 2: Resources	Pathway 3: Knowledge	Pathway 4: Institutions
Community Score Cards	X	X	X	X
Gender Action Learning System (GALS)	XX		XX	(indirectly)
Outcome Harvesting / Story-based Monitoring			XX	X
Peer Learning Formats	X		X	
Participatory Gender Budgeting Processes		XX	X	XX
Community-based Reporting Systems		X		XX

Notes on use:

XX = strong primary focus of the format on this impact pathway
(indirectly) = effect either accompanies or arises as a consequence of other processes

→ **The table shows that each format has a specific effect: but it is their interaction that makes them effective**

Textbox 11 Norm-shaping actors

Norms are not changed through rules alone. Rather, it is through those people that provide orientation in social contexts that shifts occur. Gender-transformative anti-corruption work must therefore entail working specifically with actors who can stabilise or change existing gender norms and power relations. Their influence is ambivalent: they can enable change, but they can also reinforce blockages.

- **Religious leaders** play a central role in normative debates about family, sexuality, authority and what constitutes ‚moral behaviour'. In gender-transformative programmes, they can legitimise safe spaces, religiously frame change and build moral pressure against sexualised corruption. At the same time, there is a danger that they might reproduce patriarchal norms or reversal of guilt in cases of violence.

- **Teachers and school leaders** shape how authority, participation and gender roles are understood from early on. Their integration into norm-critical educational processes – e.g. through theatre, debate formats or curricula critical of discrimination – can have a lasting effect. However, if their influence is not reflected, they can pass on social hierarchies uncritically.

- **Administrative actors** have formal power, as they can, for example, allocate resources, respond to complaints or implement quotas. In gender-transformative training and monitoring processes, they can act as an interface between the community and the state. At the same time, informal networks and opportunistic behaviour can become ‚breaking points' here.

- **The media and journalists** have a say in determining which role models are visible and how sexualised corruption is reported. Programmes that combine journalistic ethics with gender and anti-corruption sensitivity can initiate sustainable change here. But stereotypical portrayals and perpetrator-victim reversal remain real risks.

- **Men in positions of power** can serve as either gatekeepers or allies. The decisive factor is whether programmes specifically create spaces in which dominant norms of masculinity are questioned and new ideas of integrity and responsibility are negotiated.

Gender-transformative strategies therefore rely on dialogue, role clarification and alliances: they work with, not against, these norm-shaping actors and actively demand their responsibility in the process.

9.3   Impact and limits of participatory strategies

Participatory approaches are considered a central component of gender-transformative anti-corruption work because they not only address normative orders, but actively negotiate them. They open up spaces for collective reflection, enable new forms of local accountability and create connections between individual experiences and structural change. But not every form of participation is transformative per se. The interviews and international experiences show that impact is created where participation is taken seriously, structurally secured and designed to reflect power.

In practice, four prerequisites for effective participatory formats have been proven:

1. **Collective legitimacy:** Formats can only change social norms if they are recognised and supported within the community.

2. **Safe spaces:** Participation needs security – physically, socially and emotionally. This is especially true for groups that have to fear violence or stigmatisation.

3. **Connectivity to institutional systems:** Participatory processes must enable feedback into decision-making and implementation structures. Without institutional echo, many impulses remain without consequences.

4. **Power-sharing:** True participation means that decision-making space is truly shared and not just consulted.

A systematic review of participatory approaches to changing social norms (ALIGN, 2023; Oxfam, 2019) shows that locally initiated participatory formats are particularly effective when they:

- are invested over longer periods of time,

- build trust in norm-setting actors *(e.g. elders, religious leadership, teachers)* and

- offer individual reflection with collective bargaining.

The World Bank also emphasises that impact occurs when participatory formats are linked to access to resources, scope for action and institutional reconnection (*World Bank, 2020*).

The analysis by Hillenbrand et al. (2015) highlights the following as particularly effective:

- formats with co-moderated learning instead of frontal training,

- intergenerational exchange at eye level and

- a combination of SBCC, monitoring and structural reflection.

Participatory approaches are not risk-free either. They can reproduce new inequalities, disappoint expectations or unintentionally stabilise existing power structures. The interviews and studies show the following critical points:

Table 3 Potential risks of participatory approaches

Risk	Description / Examples	Sources
Tokenism	Participation without influence ('to be involved in order not to change anything')	Oxfam, 2019; Interviews
Repression	Intimidation or social sanctioning of active groups	Interviews
Co-optation	Appropriation of participatory formats by local elites	ALIGN, 2023; World Bank, 2020
Exclusion through participation	Exclusion of resource-poor groups (e.g. caregivers, those who are illiterate)	FAO, 2020; Interviews

➡️ **These risks do not contraindicate participation but rather show that participation is political and must be carefully designed.**

What helps:

- Continuous reflection on representation ('Who is there – who is missing?').
- Collective rather than individualised protective structures.
- Monitoring by communities themselves (e.g. via outcome harvesting).
- Targeted promotion of the participation of marginalised groups.

Participatory formats are only transformative if they extend beyond project cycles, are structurally tied back and do not enable legitimation, but change.

The overview shows when participatory formats actually have a transformative effect and when they can become symbolic, exclusionary or even counterproductive. Based on the interview statements and international programme observations, the table makes it clear that it is not the external form that determines the impact but whether participation enables real influence, ensures feedback and is structurally anchored. The table serves as an instrument for reflection on programmes, strategies and political measures in order not only to demand participation, but also to make it effective and power-sensitive.

Table 4 When is participation transformative – and when is it not

Participation format or promise	Transformative when…	Problematic if…
Invitation to participate	… participation is envisaged, decision-making spaces are real	… input is collected but not used ('symbolic participation')
Quota regulations in committees	… they include resources, mentoring and protection mechanisms	… women are present but have no say or are socially isolated
Community dialogue formats	… designed for collective negotiation and feedback	… sanctioning dissenting opinions and reinforcing dominant norms
Reporting systems (e.g. in the case of sexualised corruption)	… accessible, anonymous, culturally legitimised and trustworthy	… there is a lack of feedback or the person reporting can expect repression
Monitoring and evaluation	… communities define their own indicators and results flow back into decisions	… only quantitative key figures without local relevance are used
Workshops or focus groups	… results are integrated into decision-making processes and representation is guaranteed	… only one-off consultations take place without a structural connection

→ **This overview makes clear that it is more than the format that is decisive – it is also the distribution of power, legitimacy and connectivity.**

Textbox 12 Opportunities and risks of technology-enabled participation

Digital technologies play a growing role in participatory formats for corruption prevention, such as through reporting systems, participation platforms, participatory household apps or tools for collective indicator collection.

Opportunities provided by gender-transformative digitalisation:

- **Anonymity and protection:** Digital channels enable secure, discreet reports – especially in the case of sexualised corruption.
- **Reach and participation:** Even remote groups can be involved, e.g. via SMS-based feedback or online dialogues.
- **Collective data power:** Participatory tools such as digital score cards or mapping apps strengthen collective control over resources.

Risks and limitations:

- **Digital inequality:** Women, LGBTQI+ people and informal workers often have more limited access to devices, networks and digital education.
- **Normative distortion:** If participation is only digital, existing exclusions are reproduced.
- **Security gaps:** In repressive contexts, digital traces can pose a risk, especially when reporting corruption.

Exemplary approaches:

- **The SafePal App** in Uganda allows anonymous reporting of GBV via mobile device (*UNFPA, 2020*).
- In Mexico City, the **NGO TOJIL** provides a digital platform (Teo-Tu abogado virtual – Your Virtual Lawyer) where citizens can anonymously report irregularities and abuses of power in the justice system. This app is especially important for groups with little access to institutional protection (https://tojil.org/).
- **UN-Habitat's SpeakUP** app provides UN staff with a central platform for preventing sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace. It brings together information about rules, reporting channels, hotlines and frequently asked questions in an easily accessible digital format, thus strengthening institutional education and protection.
- **The Ambulex GBV Reporting App** in Kenya enables secure, anonymous online reporting of gender-based violence. The platform offers immediate access to psychosocial support, an emergency function ('Red Escape Button') and encrypted data transmission to guarantee security and confidentiality to those affected (https://ambulexsolutions.org/gbv-reporting).

Gender-transformative digitisation therefore requires more than technology; it requires socially embedded systems that combine protection, participation and accountability.

9.4 Connection to state and institutional systems

Participatory and locally initiated approaches unfold their full transformative potential when instead of remaining isolated as project instruments, they are structurally linked to state institutions, local authorities and governance systems. This connection is crucial to enabling long-term impact, legitimacy and institutional consolidation, and to protecting participatory processes from co-optation or marginalisation (*World Bank, 2020; U4, 2024*).

Several studies have emphasised that the institutional integration of community-based approaches does not automatically lead to more impact. To the contrary: If state systems are not receptive, open and willing to learn, participatory formats can be emptied or even undermined (*Align, 2023; Oxfam, 2019*). Therefore, the connection must be designed in a participatory way, legitimised and feedback-oriented, explicitly considering the shift in power.

→ **The analysis shows three central ways in which participatory approaches can be integrated into institutional systems:**

1. **Linking to existing institutional bodies or mechanisms** (e.g. gender committees, associations, municipal councils or ombudspersons). This is particularly effective when community-based actors participate on an equal footing, not just in an advisory capacity (*BMZ Action Plan, 2023; Hillenbrand et al., 2015*).

2. **Co-production of institutional processes with locally initiated participatory structures** (e.g. development of participatory indicators together with women's groups, design of whistleblower mechanisms with the participation of marginalised groups (*U4, 2024*)). These approaches are particularly well-suited because they promote ownership, legitimacy and cultural connectivity.

3. **Formal recognition and funding of community-based structures** (e.g. involvement of local women's platforms or youth groups in state budget processes, monitoring mandates, training of norm-facilitators through public funding (*GIZ Rural Toolkit, 2023; Interviews*)). This can only work if the groups involved are not instrumentalised, but their independence and ability to criticise are protected.

→ **The integration of community-led formats into institutional systems also carries risks:**

- **Co-optation by local elites**, e.g. when participatory bodies are controlled by already dominant groups,

- **Loss of autonomy and legitimacy** when community formats are perceived as a 'government extension',

- **Political appropriation or restriction** of critical agency.

→ **The literature therefore recommends the following safeguards against the risks outlined above:**

- clear mandates with co-determination rights, not just consultation (*Align, 2023*),

- institutional back-up structures, e.g. ombudspersons or alternative complaint channels *(U4, 2024)* and

- the accompaniment of external actors to ensure protection, documentation and political reconnection *(Hillenbrand et al., 2015)*.

Tools such as the GTA-NormCheck – an analytical tool for gender-transformative analysis of power and norms – can form a structured bridge between participatory processes and institutional reforms. They help to systematically identify implicit social norms, role models and exclusion mechanisms – and to translate them into concrete paths of change. In practice, the tool could be used in various areas, e.g. in gender committees, strategy workshops and anti-corruption monitoring systems, to feed norm-related findings from community processes into institutional decision-making logics. The GTA-NormCheck makes it possible to make hidden power relations visible, to assign institutional responsibilities and to develop collective paths of action, for example by combining qualitative norm analyses with indicators, policy feedback and participatory reflection. When participatory processes are understood and designed to be permanent, legitimised and power-shifting elements of state structures, institutional arrangements emerge that are both resistant to corruption and gender-equitable. Such systems are not ideal types, but they are capable of learning, accessible and able to support normative changes.

Textbox 13 From community knowledge to institutional change – Application of the GTA-NormCheck

The GTA-NormCheck is a practice-oriented tool for gender-transformative power and norm analysis. It was developed to make implicit social norms, exclusion mechanisms and informal power relations visible – and to systematically integrate them into institutional change processes. The interviews show that the added value is greatest where community knowledge is taken seriously, systematically processed, and purposefully fed back, which is why the GTA-NormCheck Matrix was developed as part of this project.

Example steps for application:

- **Community-level survey:** In facilitated workshops, dominant norms on topics such as accountability, silence, legitimacy or access are identified – especially from the perspective of marginalised groups.

- **Analysis with the matrix:** The recorded norms are systematically entered with their sanctions, reference groups and associated power relations. The matrix shows who benefits from which norms and how – and who is excluded.

- **Institutional feedback:** The results serve as a basis for discussions in gender committees, policy workshops or strategic reform processes, such as in the design of complaint structures, monitoring indicators or gender quotas in decision-making processes.

The GTA-NormCheck thus creates a bridge between lived experience and structural change and helps to make participatory processes politically effective and institutionally anchored.

9.5 Monitoring, indicators and impact measurement

Participatory and community-based approaches not only change structures, they also shift what counts as impact and who determines it. While classic monitoring and evaluation systems usually focus on output figures, compliance or goal achievement, gender-transformative formats are about processes, meanings, collective dynamics and normative change (World Bank, 2020; Oxfam, 2019). This places special demands on the design of indicators, survey forms and evaluation logics. It focuses on the question: Who is allowed to define what counts as success – and on what basis?

Three levels of participatory impact measurement:

- **Participatory indicators:** Communities, especially marginalised groups, jointly define which changes are relevant and visible to them – e.g. in terms of security, participation or access to services.

- **Community-led monitoring formats:** Formats such as outcome harvesting or story-based monitoring capture experiences and changes that cannot be mapped in classic key figures, such as norm shifts, trust building or collective mobilisation.

- **Linking to institutional evaluation systems:** The participatory results are fed back into political or administrative decision-making processes – e.g. gender budget planning, accountability systems or strategy evaluations.

Gender-transformative impact measurement makes visible:

- Which role models are dominant, and whether they are changing

- Who has access to grievance mechanisms – and who doesn't

- How trust in state structures develops

- Whether accountability is experienced not only formally, but also legitimately

- Which groups open up new spaces for action

Such indicators make equality measurable along with structural power shifts and are therefore a central element of strategic anti-corruption work. The impact of participatory formats cannot be measured quantitatively alone. Combinations of community score cards, collective impact reflection, participatory indicators and normatively informed accountability have proven themselves in practice (*Hillenbrand et al., 2015; World Bank, 2020*). Participatory impact measurement is demanding; it requires time, trust, methodological flexibility and the political will to share the sovereignty of interpretation over impact. It is only where monitoring is not just 'reviewed' from the outside but also co-designed from within, however, that legitimacy, adaptability and real transformation will emerge.

Textbox 14 What counts as impact? Exemplary participatory indicators

Participatory impact measurement goes beyond asking: 'Has something been done?' to ask: 'What has noticeably changed and for whom?'

Here are some exemplary indicators that have been developed in participatory processes together with communities:

- ‚How safe do women and queer people feel about accessing public services?'
- ‚Who knows how complaints can be filed – and who actually uses this option?'
- ‚Who regularly participates in community meetings – and who speaks there?'
- ‚Has our idea of who is considered a legitimate leader changed?'
- ‚Were there concrete reactions from authorities to our demands?'

These indicators not only measure change, they make power visible.
They strengthen local legitimacy, enable feedback and also give marginalised voices a structured role in monitoring.

Textbox 15 Integrating collective analysis into institutional reform processes

Gender-transformative anti-corruption work often begins at the local level, through dialogue formats, group trainings, protection initiatives or participatory norm analysis. But structural impact only arises when this collective knowledge is fed back into institutional processes. The link between community knowledge and institutional change is strategic, not automatic, making this change only possible with clear and deliberate translation work.

Pre-conditions:

- **Anchoring interfaces between community and administration** (e.g. gender committees, participatory budget forums, monitoring offices)
- **Recognition of collective forms of knowledge** (e.g. storytelling, peer analysis, group assessments) as a legitimate basis for policy-making
- **Translation work** between normative empirical knowledge and administrative logic (e.g. by civil society intermediaries)

Challenges:

- **Lack of institutional absorption capacity** (e.g. because reports or demands are not processed)
- **Political decoupling of participatory processes** (symbolic participation without decision-making power)
- **Risk of depoliticisation:** When local knowledge is decontextualised and technocratically exploited

Possible methods of feedback:

- **Systematic documentation of participatory analyses** (e.g. from GTA-NormCheck processes) and structured contribution to strategy development
- **Anchoring in existing procedures:** e.g. gender budgeting, GRPP, national monitoring reports
- **Political legitimacy** through participatory indicators that are fed into existing control systems

The GTA-NormCheck is an instrument that addresses precisely this interface: it structures collective analyses of social norms, resource relations and institutional scope for action. However, its impact depends on whether and how the results are incorporated into institutional decision-making processes, such as via workshops, policy briefings or reform committees.

9.6   Conclusion and recommendations

Participatory and community-led approaches are much more than complementary methods within gender-transformative anti-corruption work. **They are a structural prerequisite for legitimate, effective and socially anchored change**, especially in contexts where formal institutions are experienced as exclusionary, repressive or corrupt.

The sectoral and empirical analysis shows that participatory formats have a transformative effect where they challenge existing norms, enable collective negotiation processes and make alternative forms of accountability, belonging and power visible. They create spaces in which integrity is not managed but lived – not as a technocratic standard, but as a social practice. Such formats are particularly relevant where state structures fail, systematically exclude marginalised groups or do not provide legitimate methods for conflict resolution. In many interviews, it became clear that peer learning, collective protection formats and dialogic decision-making processes are often the only contexts in which integrity and justice can be experienced – not abstractly, but concretely.

→ **For participatory formats to be effective, they must:**

- be designed in a context-specific, intersectional and collective manner,

- be allowed to operate independently, critically and with legitimacy rather than being instrumentalised,

- be institutionally recognised and fed back into relevant processes,

- and also reflect on power relations within the monitoring and evaluation processes themselves.

Participation is transformative when it generates more than just visibility but entails a redistribution of interpretive sovereignty, agency and political responsibility. It is not a means of legitimising existing processes but rather serves as the social lever for new institutions, narratives and power relations.

→ **It is thus essential for all actors in anti-corruption and gender equality work, from local initiatives to government programs and projects, to:**

1. Anchor participation at an early stage, not only as an output, but as a basic attitude.

2. Involve communities in impact measurement, e.g. through co-designed indicators, MSC, outcome harvesting.

3. Institutionalise confidentiality, protection and solidarity, e.g. in the case of reports of sexualised corruption.

4. Go beyond 'involving' community structures to give them resources, decision-making space and visibility.

5. Promote peer learning and self-determined dialogue formats, especially with groups that are discriminated against in multiple ways.

→ **For state and institutional structures, it is important to:**

1. Recognise locally-initiated participatory formats as an equal governance innovation, not subordinate participation.

2. Ensure connectivity to state systems without giving up participatory autonomy.

3. Institutionalise gender-transformative monitoring logics that allow for the collective power of interpretation.

→ **Research and academia must:**

1. Make social norm change visible, for example through narrative-qualitative methods and combinations with system tracking.

2. Decolonise and de-technocratise indicator systems, understanding that impact is what those who are affected call it.

In gender-transformative approaches, participation is not a pedagogical claim but a political principle: it is both a prerequisite and an objective, and the foundation of every just and integrity-based order. Gender-transformative anti-corruption work is a political practice that intertwines social justice, institutional integrity, and structural equality, not merely a technical add-on.

Textbox 16 Good practice: Participatory behavioural intervention in Tanzania (according to Baez Camargo et al. 2025)

A particularly well-documented example of the effectiveness of participatory, norm-oriented approaches can be found in a study conducted in Tanzania by Baez Camargo et al. (2025). The combination of behavioural intervention logic, participatory norm diagnosis and institutional feedback led to measurable changes in the perception and handling of petty corruption. What is particularly relevant is that the intervention did not aim at behaviour in isolation, but at collective reflection on what is considered acceptable and why.

Aim of the initiative: To reduce bribery and change norms in public health facilities

Context: 15 government hospitals in Tanzania; focus on petty corruption in everyday interactions.

The gender relevance arises particularly from structural dependency relationships: patients, often women in precarious situations, were dependent on the goodwill of hospital staff and did not have recourse to effective protection or complaint options. These asymmetrical relationships increased the risk of silent toleration, informal quid pro quos and sexualised exploitation.

Approach:

- Combination of a communication campaign, poster and radio series, and staff training
- Participatory norm diagnosis (Which behaviours are tolerated?)
- Targeted approach to relevant reference groups (mothers, patients, hospital staff)

Results:

- Significant change in attitudes towards a culture of silence and acceptance of corruption
- Increase in trust, feedback, collective reflection on norms

Transferability: As long as cultural adaptation, a secure trust structure, and long-term institutional embedding are ensured, the transferability of this initiative is high. This case study also demonstrates that gender-transformative anti-corruption work, through participatory methods, can go beyond awareness-raising to change institutional culture in the long term.

Note: Asymmetrical dependence refers to power relations in which a person or group is dependent on benefits without being legally or socially protected, for example, by relying on access to health, education or social transfers. In such constellations, corruption can be particularly subtle and gender-specific.

10 Gender-transformative anti-corruption work – Basics, impact, direction

This study has shown that corruption and gender inequality cannot be viewed as separate problems but serve as mutual reinforcers that reproduce alongside social norms, institutional structures and political power relations. Those who take integrity seriously must consider equality. Those who seek gender justice must understand corruption as a structural instrument of power.

Part 1 has laid the theoretical foundation: social norms shape not only role models but also cultures of silence, access to resources and institutional decision-making logics. Gender norms are doubly effective, stabilising inequality and making corruption invisible. The section demonstrated how gender-transformative approaches can analyse these norms, negotiate them in a context-specific manner and shift them through collective processes. The introduction of the four impact pathways – norm transformation, access to resources, knowledge and capacity and institutional reform – created an analytical framework linking individual, social and structural levels.

Part 2 situated these impact pathways in practice, showing that gender-transformative approaches can already generate impact across different sectors. Whether in the areas of sexualised corruption, political participation, social security or economic participation: transformation occurs where programmes recognise structural exclusions, challenge normatively legitimised inequality and build collective countervailing power – through protection formats, monitoring, budgeting processes or leadership narratives.

There is no master plan for gender-transformative anti-corruption work. It is not a model, but an approach shaped by context, supported by actors, anchored in relationships.

Its impact does not come from technical solutions but from political clarity, social legitimacy and institutional willingness to learn. At the same time, it has become apparent that programmes fail due to common barriers: a lack
of legal definitions, a lack of institutional support, political resistance or intersectional exclusion.
These challenges make it clear that gender-transformative anti-corruption work needs more than good approaches – it needs strategic backing.

What does this mean in practice?

1. Gender-transformative anti-corruption work must be more than gender mainstreaming through technical measures. It begins with analysing power relations – not with counting the number of female project participants.

2. Participation is not a method but an attitude. Only where affected groups co-develop their own pathways of action do legitimacy, effectiveness and trust arise.

3. The goal is a shift in power – not consultation. Gender-transformative formats should not simply 'include' people, but redistribute decision-making power.

4. Impact is not generated solely at the local level. Without national strategies, political mandates, and legal obligations, local successes remain fragile.

5. Monitoring is political. It is not only about whether measures have been implemented, but about who defines their impact, how it is measured, and whose reality becomes visible in the process.

The analysis of this study makes it clear that gender-transformative anti-corruption work is not only possible, but also necessary. It shows how integrity and equality can be addressed jointly, legitimised and shaped together – beyond isolated measures, through collective processes, and with institutional responsibility. It changes not only who makes decisions but also what is considered just, legitimate and possible.

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