



**HUAIROU COMMISSION**  
*Women, Homes & Community*



**UN  
 DP**



United Nations Development Programme

SEEING BEYOND THE STATE:  
**GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES  
 ON CORRUPTION AND ANTI-CORRUPTION**

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## **Acknowledgments**

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Leaders from grassroots women's organizations gathered all the data used in a participatory research process, coordinated the process and also provided translation into English. (Appendix 1 includes a comprehensive list of individuals involved from each organization).

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of UNDP. The study received support from a group of internal and external experts that provided guidance and reviewed the drafts of the report. The review committee comprised Suki Beavers (UNDP Gender Team), Christina Hajdu (UNDP Democratic Governance Group), Zohra Khan (UN Women), Ana Lukatela (UN Women), Koh Miyaoi (UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre) and Noella Richard (UNDP Democratic Governance Group).

UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build better lives. UNDP is on the ground in 135 developing countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges.

The Huairou Commission focuses on empowering grassroots women's organizations to enhance their community development practice and to exercise collective political power at the global level. It is structured as a global membership coalition of women's networks, non-governmental and grassroots women's organizations in 54 countries.

The Best Practices Foundation (BPF), based in Bangalore, India was founded to improve the quality of life for poor and marginalized communities through the documentation, innovation, implementation, and dissemination of best practices in development. BPF's work is characterized by its commitment to highlighting the work of community-based organizations working in development, particularly dealing with gender equity, inclusive governance, and sustainable livelihoods.

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## Corruption and Grassroots Women

Corruption has a negative impact on grassroots women's<sup>1</sup> empowerment and participation. As primary caretakers of their households and communities, grassroots women experience corruption in enrolling their children in schools, denouncing physical abuse against family members, partaking in government subsidized programmes and participating in electoral processes. Considering this within the context of women's position in society, where they are far more likely than men to be engaged in vulnerable employment and their unpaid care work is undervalued due to social and cultural discrimination, corruption impacts them disproportionately. On the other hand, for facing corruption in their everyday lives, women from marginalized communities know best how to deal with corruption in the way that both empowers them and increases the quality of life of their families and communities. Thus, understanding corruption from the perspective of grassroots women and raising the visibility of their local strategies to address misuse of power are central to prevent and reduce corruption.

Unfortunately, while there are several efforts being made to strengthen legal and institutional frameworks for accountable and transparent governments, these efforts often do not reach local decision-making structures and institutions most relevant to women. How is it possible to reduce the impact of corruption on women? To answer this question requires first and foremost understanding and producing evidence on how women across multiple sectors and circumstances experience corruption on a day-to-day basis.

Recognizing the lack of information related to corruption and women, and acknowledging the importance of a bottom-up approach to explore this phenomenon, the Huairou Commission (HC) and UNDP's Global Thematic Programme on Anti-Corruption for Development Effectiveness (PACDE) teamed up to undertake a study in 11 communities across eight countries spanning three continents. The study illuminates grassroots women's perceptions and lived experiences of corruption in developing countries particularly, in the communities where they live and work.

This publication reveals the findings of innovative and ground-breaking research, and brings this rich experience to both anti-corruption and gender equality and women's empowerment discourses. Its recommendations inform our strategies to promote gendered dimensions of corruption in anti-corruption interventions. Grassroots women's perceptions of corruption go beyond the widely accepted definition and are described in terms of specific misuses of power, including sexual exploitation, illegal actions, and physical abuse. Moreover, grassroots women believe in organizing for empowerment to fight corruption through actions such as awareness raising and capacity building initiatives, generating an informed public debate, mobilizing public action, and monitoring service delivery.

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1 Defined here as women living and working at the community level in poor and marginalized rural and urban areas.



## FOREWORD

Practitioners, policy makers and academia can make use of this publication to broaden the spectrum of their research, to support grassroots women's active engagement in fighting corruption and forge anti-corruption policies that take into account the views of the most affected and vulnerable. Grassroots women's groups can utilize its proposed strategies and practices to work towards greater accountability, transparency and responsiveness from governments and service providers.

We sincerely believe that this study provides crucial grassroots perspectives to the overall body of knowledge on the gendered aspects and implications of corruption. We hope that this study is just the beginning, and that it opens up spaces for women in many other communities around the world to contribute their own voices and experiences to the global dialogue surrounding corruption.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Geraldine J. Fraser-Moleketi".

Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi  
Director, Democratic Governance Group  
Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janice Peterson".

Janice Peterson  
Chair  
The Huairou Commission



Corruption is a global phenomenon and a major obstacle to development and economic growth in the global South. Although it affects all social classes and groups, women (and poor women in particular) are among the most affected. In order to better understand corruption from the perspective of women at the grassroots level, the Huairou Commission undertook a study of 11 communities across eight countries in partnership with the Global Thematic Programme on Anti-Corruption for Development Effectiveness (PACDE) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The objective of the study, which took place from December 2011 to March 2012, was to document grassroots women's perceptions and lived experiences of corruption in developing countries and bring this rich experience to important discourses regarding anti-corruption, gender equality and women's empowerment. It is intended to direct attention to the lack of research on the gendered impact of corruption on poor communities, provide some initial insights from grassroots women, and contribute to anti-corruption programming by prioritizing and bringing to the forefront grassroots women's voices.

This study utilizes a methodological approach designed specifically to capture grassroots women's voices and experiences on corruption and anti-corruption. Surveys were administered and participants engaged in focus group discussions in order to share their experiences with each other and refine their responses. There were a total of 471 respondents: 392 women and 79 men.

Grassroots organizations collected the data, in collaboration with NGO partners, without oversight from external agencies. This approach was utilized to help strengthen grassroots community members' primary research skills while also creating a data bank that can be drawn on for future campaigns and activism. Since the women engaged in research (as part of the grassroots groups) were already mobilized around issues of governance, the knowledge that they brought to the study and the final recommendations that they made have immense applicability.

The research findings cut across several key areas. First, **grassroots women's understanding of corruption is broader than the standard definition of corruption as the "misuse of entrusted power for private gain."**<sup>2</sup> Corruption, as experienced in and defined by grassroots communities, covers a wide range of exploitative practices, such as physical abuse, sexual favours, and both the giving and taking of bribes – all of which are perceived as strongly linked to non-delivery of services and poor leadership. **The non-delivery of public services was seen by grassroots women as a cause, consequence and intrinsic component of corrupt practices.** It is thereby labelled by the women as a misuse of power and public office.

Another important finding relates to the contexts within which grassroots women experience corruption. **Broadly speaking, grassroots women's experience of corruption is concentrated in the realm of public-sector service delivery.** Poor women generally interface with public agencies to fulfil two objectives: i) to access basic services for themselves and their families and/or ii) to access services which have a direct (and significant) impact on their quality of life. The study's findings support the former assumption, but it is clear that the women's needs are not restricted to the widely accepted forms of basic services (such as health, education, water, sanitation, and electricity). Women

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2 United Nations Development Programme, 'Corruption and development: anti-corruption interventions for poverty reduction, realization of the MDGs and promoting sustainable development'. UNDP: New York (2008).



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

respondents to the survey also reported being asked to pay for a bribe when accessing the latter type of services, such as those related to business and employment, documentation, and law enforcement. These forms of public sector engagement are not regularly included in the discussion on corruption in basic service delivery, thus reflecting only a small part of grassroots women's lived experience of corruption.

To elaborate, **women reported being subjected to corruption when seeking employment and running businesses in both the formal and informal sectors.** This kind of corruption prevents them from starting businesses and acts as a major barrier to earning income or sustaining their businesses. Furthermore, one of the most critical areas in which women suffer from corruption was shown to be in obtaining documentation. Documentation services encompass the processing and acquisition of all documents related to proof-of-identity and residence such as birth, death, marriage certificates, and passports. Corruption surrounding documentation thus acts as a bottleneck preventing women from accessing other forms of services and opportunities. Women also faced extortion when exercising their land and property rights vis-à-vis bribery during any land transactions. Women further encountered corruption when participating in elections and politics, where votes were often bought in exchange for money or gifts.

**The police force in particular was consistently named by grassroots women as the most corrupt government agency.** Law enforcement officials demand bribes in multiple facets of women's day-to-day lives, whether it is to file charges or to allow slum families to retain illegal, but desperately needed, access to public services like housing, water, sanitation, and electricity which are scarce in impoverished neighbourhoods.

Another important area covered by the research relates to the strategies undertaken by grassroots women to fight and deal with corruption. **The findings reflect that grassroots women have devised and utilized a variety of successful anti-corruption strategies in their communities.** Because the perceptions of corruption vary in different contexts, notable variations exist as to the strategies used to fight corruption, with different approaches being designed based on rural-urban environments and geopolitical region (Latin America, Africa, and Asia). Further, there was a variation in strategies based on whether women perceived there to be an enabling environment or non-enabling environment.

An enabling environment in the anti-corruption literature encompasses a wide range of concepts including the public's right and access to information; freedom of speech; right to protest; legal protection; existence of mechanisms to report corruption, register grievances; and hold enquiries; and the existence of anti-corruption laws. However, for the purposes of this study, the term 'enabling environment' is used to describe women's perception of the existence of anti-corruption laws and funds to fight corruption in their countries, a definition that encompasses only a subset of these anti-corruption mechanisms. Meanwhile, 'non-enabling environments' encompass women's responses regarding either i) the lack of proper anti-corruption laws or infrastructure or ii) the lack of sufficient public awareness of existing laws and measures to address corruption.

These different perceptions revealed radically different kinds of anti-corruption strategies that women choose to adopt. For instance, in non-enabling environments women engaged in protest, while in enabling environments they strategized using the media. Nonetheless there is a set of strategies common to both environments:



- **Educating and mobilizing communities.** Education, achieved through capacity building and awareness raising, as well as mobilization are two essential ingredients for any successful social movement. To effectively fight corruption, an organization has to have a shared sense of purpose and a political vision for the future, which is crucial for the process of mobilization. A working knowledge of the public sector can help grassroots groups fight for the establishment of a pro-poor, anti-corruption legal framework. Even if and when such a framework is in place, grassroots groups have to continue to mobilize and disseminate information within their communities about the existence of anti-corruption laws and mechanisms.
- **Anti-corruption campaigning and advocacy.** Campaigning is a common strategy, whether it is raising awareness about the need for effective governmental anti-corruption laws and measures or sharing information about already existing laws. Advocacy too is a means of establishing support networks linking communities and agencies, both governmental and non-governmental.

The findings of this study provide international organizations and national governments with the unique opportunity to understand and strategize to fight corruption from a gender-sensitive, pro-poor perspective. Based on the research results, Table 1 summarizes recommendations for addressing the gender dimensions of corruption in anti-corruption programming.

**Table 1. Findings and recommendations**

Findings	Recommendations for addressing the gender dimensions of corruption in anti-corruption programming
<p><b>Finding 1:</b>  <b>Grassroots women describe corruption in terms of specific misuses of power</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adopt an expanded definition of corruption to include the broad range of experiences women, and poor women in particular, have in relation to corruption (such as physical abuse, sexual exploitation, abuse of power as it relates to the non-delivery of basic services, etc.).</li> <li>2. Include grassroots women in consultative and advisory processes, and in the collection of data, to ensure definitions of corruption – including gender dimensions of corruption and subsequent policies and programmes – reflect the lived experiences of women.</li> <li>3. Pass gender-sensitive anti-corruption laws and policies that recognize and seek to mitigate physical abuse, sexual extortion or exploitation, and other forms of abuse specific to grassroots women’s experiences.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Finding 2:</b>  <b>Women’s definitions of corruption vary by region</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Involve grassroots women in national anti-corruption programme and policy development so institutional strategies reflect women’s experiences and encompass regional and rural-urban variants of corruption.</li> </ol>



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Findings	Recommendations for addressing the gender dimensions of corruption in anti-corruption programming
<p><b>Finding 3:</b>  <b>Women view all public agencies as corrupt</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure that information related to laws, mechanisms, and channels to address corruption is made public, easily accessible, and can be practically utilized by grassroots women.</li> <li>2. Institutionalize community monitoring of public services through a variety of mechanisms, including but not limited to gender-sensitive social and public audits and anti-corruption desks.</li> <li>3. Engage in community mapping in order to generate and analyze information on the causes of corruption and ways of addressing it in public agencies.</li> <li>4. Establish anonymous and safe spaces for women to report corruption with clear channels for redressing incidents.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Finding 4:</b>  <b>Although there might be differences in where and how they experience bribery, it is a part of everyday life for both grassroots men and women</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote partnerships around localized action research between women’s groups and research institutions to build capacities of women to collect, analyze, and publically disseminate data.</li> <li>2. Raise awareness about bribery’s different impact on men’s and women’s everyday lives by using media, public hearings, theatre and art, and other communication vehicles.</li> <li>3. Train community organizers to disseminate information about laws and mechanisms to redress corruption.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Finding 5:</b>  <b>Bribery occurs not just in basic service delivery but in all areas of engagement with public agencies</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support context-specific strategies to address the widespread corruption in public agencies, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ women-led citizen monitoring groups;</li> <li>■ women’s desks, anonymous reporting lines;</li> <li>■ public registration days for births, marriage certificates, etc., a strategy that increases the openness and transparency of what were previously private transactions;</li> <li>■ public dissemination of incidents of corruption and ways they were redressed in specific sectors; and</li> <li>■ pilot and support community-based anti-corruption mechanisms.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Mandate representation and participation of grassroots women in public resource and service distribution advisory, monitoring and consultative committees.</li> </ol>



Findings	Recommendations for addressing the gender dimensions of corruption in anti-corruption programming
<b>Finding 6:</b> <b>The burden of bribery falls most heavily on women of caregiving age</b>	1. Consult with women of caregiving age and mandate their inclusion in policy, research, or programme design process.
<b>Finding 7:</b> <b>Grassroots women perceive group-affiliated leaders to be more accountable</b>	1. Host public dialogue forums with local government so women can discuss and report corruption, thus ensuring that elected leaders understand local contexts and develop constituencies among grassroots groups.  2. Advocate for the inclusion of grassroots women leaders in drafting committees of anti-corruption treaties and national legislation.
<b>Finding 8:</b> <b>Organized women are empowered to fight corruption</b>	1. Invest in ongoing community organizing, empowerment, and leadership development processes.
<b>Finding 9:</b> <b>Women’s anti-corruption initiatives are relevant to local and political contexts</b>	1. Contextualize anti-corruption efforts based on conditions including (but not limited to) the cohesion of civil society, existence of an enabling environment, demographic characteristics, inputs from the ground, and overall context of gender equality and women’s empowerment. This should be followed by support for context-specific strategies.  2. Fund grassroots women to design, pilot, and develop locally relevant anti-corruption programmes.  3. Provide resources and recognition to, and institutionalization of, successful grassroots strategies.  4. Facilitate international peer exchanges among grassroots groups to enable cross-fertilization of effective strategies.  5. Encourage the international community to include grassroots women’s perspectives, experiences, and successful strategies for fighting corruption in anti-corruption policies, intergovernmental processes, and global debates on accountability, transparency, and the prevention of corruption.  6. Allow a free and independent press that is enabled to investigate, report, and publish on corruption.



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Findings	Recommendations for addressing the gender dimensions of corruption in anti-corruption programming
<b>Finding 10: Capacity building of women's groups and fighting corruption should go hand-in-hand</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="678 357 1425 442">1. Reserve portions of anti-corruption funds to support strategies evolved by women's groups.</li><li data-bbox="678 453 1425 538">2. Fund programmes that develop the legal expertise and knowledge of existing legislation among grassroots women.</li><li data-bbox="678 549 1425 666">3. Build capacities of community groups to lobby for appropriate legislative frameworks and to access their rights and entitlements.</li></ol>



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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BPF	Best Practices Foundation, Bangalore
CBO	Community-Based Organization
EWR	Elected Women's Representative
FEMUN-ALC	Federation of Women Municipalists of Latin America and the Caribbean
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
HC	Huirou Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PACDE	Global Thematic Programme on Anti-Corruption for Development Effectiveness
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WDG	Watchdog Group



Corruption is a major obstacle to development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Corruption exacerbates poverty and inequality, undermines human development and stability, encourages and sustains conflict, violates human rights, and erodes the democratic functioning of countries<sup>3</sup>.

Women are particularly affected by corruption due to, among other things, their role as the primary caretaker of the family<sup>4</sup>, the fact that they earn lower incomes and have less control over personal resources than men<sup>5</sup>, and ongoing anti-female biases in public spaces. UNDP and other international agencies<sup>6</sup> have identified the following as areas where women frequently encounter corruption: i) in accessing basic services, markets, and credit; ii) while engaging in electoral politics; iii) in situations where women's rights are violated (e.g., trafficking and sexual extortion); and iv) negligence and/or mismanagement.

Though corruption affects women of all strata of society, poor women are the hardest hit, thus limiting their ability to access public goods and services<sup>7</sup>. Women's perceived or real inability to pay bribes can exclude them from securing even a basic standard of living or result in requests for other forms of payments such as through sexual extortion or exploitation<sup>8</sup>. Additionally, poor women are highly vulnerable to extortion and abuse because they are more likely to be illiterate and unaware of their rights and entitlements<sup>9</sup>.

## 1.1 Definitions of corruption

There is a growing body of literature dedicated to the issue of corruption, especially as it relates to governance in the developing world. Corruption has been broadly defined as "the misuse of entrusted power for private gain"<sup>10</sup>, though it is generally accepted that there is no exhaustive or universal definition of corruption. This is because corruption is a phenomenon that has evolved over time and is continually influenced by various political, economic, social, and cultural contexts. Efforts to define corruption incorporate:

- a moral and ethical assessment of what constitutes corrupt behaviour, and why;
- a strict legal definition anchored on criminalized activities;
- a 'governance deficit' consideration that looks at vulnerability to corruption among institutions and systems; and
- a broader articulation of corruption as a multi-causal and multifaceted phenomenon with political, economic, and social causes and consequences.

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3 United Nations Development Programme, 'Corruption and development: anti-corruption interventions for poverty reduction, realization of the MDGs and promoting sustainable development'. UNDP: New York (2008).

4 Transparency International, 'Corruption and gender in service delivery: the unequal impacts'. Working Paper 2 (2010).

5 Hossain, N., et al, 'Corruption, accountability, and gender: understanding the connections'. UNDP-UNIFEM: New York (2010).

6 Swedish Cooperative Centre and Vi Agroforestry, 'Anti-Corruption Policy for SCC and Vi Agroforestry (2008)

7 United Nations Development Programme, 'Corruption and development: anti-corruption interventions for poverty reduction, realization of the MDGs and promoting sustainable development'. UNDP: New York (2008)

8 Transparency International, 'Corruption and gender in service delivery: the unequal impacts'. Working Paper 2 (2010).

9 Hossain, N., et al, 'Corruption, accountability, and gender: understanding the connections'. UNDP-UNIFEM: New York (2010).

10 United Nations Development Programme, 'Corruption and development: anti-corruption interventions for poverty reduction, realization of the MDGs and promoting sustainable development'. UNDP: New York (2008).



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Some definitions also differentiate between 'petty' and 'large-scale' (or 'grand') corruption, with the former occurring at the local level and usually involving small sums of money and gifts, and the former taking place higher up in the hierarchy and involving large amounts of money and costly favours<sup>11</sup>. A December 2008 UNDP publication, 'Corruption and development: anti-corruption interventions for poverty reduction, realization of the MDGs and promoting sustainable development,' lists the following as elements of corruption and thus examples of corrupt practices<sup>12</sup>:

- **Bribery** is the act of offering someone money, services or other valuables to persuade him or her to do something in return. Among the common synonyms for bribes are kickbacks, *baksheesh*, payola, hush money, sweetener, protection money, boodle and gratuity.
- **Fraud** is a misrepresentation done to obtain unfair advantage by giving or receiving false or misleading information.
- **Money laundering** involves the depositing and transferring of money and other proceeds of illegal activities, to legitimize these proceeds.
- **Extortion** is the unlawful demand or receipt of property, money or sensitive information through the use of force or threat. A typical example of extortion would be when armed police or military men demand money for passage through a roadblock. It is also called blackmail, bloodsucking and extraction.
- A **kickback** is a form of bribe referring to an illegal secret payment made as a return for a favour or service rendered. The term is often used to describe in an 'innocent' way the returns of a corrupt or illegal transaction or the gains from rendering a special service.
- **Peddling influence** occurs when an individual solicits benefits in exchange for using his or her influence to unfairly advance the interests of a particular person or party. The aim of transparency and disclosure laws is to expose such agreements.
- **Cronyism/clientelism** refers to the favourable treatment of friends and associates in the distribution of resources and positions, regardless of their objective qualifications.
- **Nepotism** is a form of favouritism that involves family relationships. Its most usual form is when a person exploits his or her power and authority to procure jobs or other favours for relatives.
- **Patronage** refers to the support or sponsorship by a patron (a wealthy or influential guardian). Patronage is used, for instance, to make appointments to government jobs, facilitate promotions, confer favours, and distribute contracts for work. Patronage transgresses the boundaries of political influence and violates the principles of merit and competition because providers of patronage (patrons) and receivers (clients) form a network bypassing existing lawful systems, through which access to various resources is obtained.
- **Insider trading** involves the use of information secured by an agent during the course of duty for personal gain.

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11 Swedish Cooperative Centre and Vi Agroforestry, Anti-Corruption Policy for SCC and Vi Agroforestry (2008).

12 United Nations Development Programme, 'Corruption and development: anti-corruption interventions for poverty reduction, realization of the MDGs and promoting sustainable development'. UNDP: New York (2008).



- **Speed money** is paid to quicken processes caused by bureaucratic delays and shortage of resources. It normally occurs in offices where licences, permits, inspection certificates and clearance documents are processed.
- **Embezzlement** is the misappropriation of property or funds legally entrusted to someone in their formal position as an agent or guardian.
- **Abuse of public property** refers to the inappropriate use of public financial, human and infrastructure resources. For example, public labour might be diverted to individual use while public properties get hired out for private gain. Such abuse is more common with respect to services offered freely or at subsidised rates by the state and its subsidiaries where such services are either scarce or beyond the reach of the majority of the people. It also tends to be more prevalent where there are no citizens' oversight facilities and where there is obvious monopoly of power by public officials, which is exercised with impunity.

## 1.2 Gender in global anti-corruption discourse

Current anti-corruption policies place a premium on macro-level models of systemic reform. These policies encourage the active involvement of members of parliament or bureaucrats<sup>13</sup>, social workers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)<sup>14</sup>, the media, and the private sector in anti-corruption work.

International development agencies have partnered with governments and civil society organizations to implement anti-corruption strategies that work towards transparent, accountable governance. These strategies are policy-oriented and primarily seek to establish enabling environments at a national level. Broadly, they encompass advocacy campaigns; prioritize the recognition and reflection of international anti-corruption standards; provide platforms for educating state and non-state actors; aim to improve accountability and transparency within governance institutions; and seek to build the capacities of civil society and media to fight corruption.

Aid agencies have invested in strengthening both supply-side and demand-side interventions. The former refers to developing the capacity of the public administration to monitor itself, while demand-side refers to strengthening citizens' capacities, including those of women, to monitor government decision making<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, the view that women are naturally less corrupt – although that assumption is challenged in the literature – has led many international agencies to recommend macro-level strategies for fighting corruption such as parliamentary quotas for women or mandated participation of women in local governing bodies.

UNDP's focus in particular has been to address the gender dimensions of anti-corruption policies and programmes and to promote monitoring systems that use sex-disaggregated data. Suggested mechanisms to address gender dimensions of anti-corruption programming include:

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13 Fjeldstad, O.H., 'The fight against corruption and the role of parliamentarians'. Chr. Michelsen Institute Development Studies and Human Rights (2002)  
14 Lough, B., 'Engaging the poor to challenge corrupt governance'. *International Social Work* 51(4), 2008  
15 Lough, B., 'Engaging the poor to challenge corrupt governance'. *International Social Work* 51(4), 2008



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- **mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment into anti-corruption policies and programmes** through capacity development of government, civil society, and media to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into anti-corruption interventions;
- **improving access to information**, which can be achieved by promoting and advocating for an enforceable right to information for women (and men);
- **implementing gender-responsive budgeting**, which can be hastened by providing tools for use by government and civil society (including advocates) to ensure that budgets are more responsive to women's needs;
- **ensuring that public accountability mechanisms** such as public audits and public-review bodies (including human rights commissions, electoral commissions, and judicial reviews) are gender sensitized, as has been recommended by international agencies;
- **introducing governance programmes to improve service delivery for women.** Agencies have piloted innovations to i) increase women's voice and engagement in participatory monitoring of service delivery and ii) support public sector reforms for increased transparency;
- **increasing the number of women in government** by promoting and supporting the political participation of women and their representation in the public sector in all stages of service delivery; and
- **collecting and applying sex-disaggregated data on corruption** to quantify and respond to the gendered impacts of corruption.

## 1.3 The impacts of corruption on women

While the international community is making strides in developing gender-sensitive strategies for fighting corruption, less attention is paid to developing a deep understanding of the real impacts of corruption on poor women and the role they can and should play in fighting it in their communities. The lived impact of corruption on women, especially grassroots women, is not widely researched and is thus not well understood. Debates on the relationship between women and corruption typically centre on whether women are more or less susceptible to corruption than men<sup>16</sup>. This prevailing focus has obscured the question of the gendered impacts of corruption (in addition to reinforcing gender stereotypes).

Consequently, the need remains to explore the wide range of experiences faced by women of different socio-economic and other backgrounds and to examine the ways in which grassroots women can play a central role in designing, implementing, and monitoring anti-corruption programmes. Grassroots women's input is often missing because of the limited availability of tools, methodologies, and case studies developed specifically to inform the development community on the realities of corruption faced by poor women. Current methodologies rarely disaggregate results by sex and are designed in

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16 The authors of 'The effectiveness of anti-corruption policy: what has worked, what hasn't, and what we don't know,' a paper reviewing the field of corruption studies, state on page 45 that "micro-level gender-based anti-corruption studies find that females are no different to males, on average, in both their attitudes towards corruption and their tendency to engage in corrupt activity." Hanna, R., et al, 'The effectiveness of anti-corruption policy: what has worked, what hasn't, and what we don't know'. EPPI-Centre: London (2011).



ways that do not represent the experiences of most vulnerable populations. As a result, they fail to capture the actual reality of corruption<sup>17</sup>.

To enhance the inclusion of poor women in its anti-corruption work, the UNDP Global Thematic Programme on Anti-Corruption for Development Effectiveness (PACDE)/Democratic Governance Group partnered with the Huairou Commission to commission this global study on grassroots women and corruption.

**The Huairou Commission** is a global coalition of non-governmental and grassroots women's organizations and networks working to advance grassroots women's leadership in sustainable community development. Through its governance campaign, the Huairou Commission works with grassroots women's organizations to develop the strategies and tools required to negotiate and engage with decision-makers; to monitor and document government service delivery; and to build alternative development approaches for their communities.

**UNDP Global Thematic Programme on Anti-Corruption for Development Effectiveness (PACDE) 2008-2013** was developed in response to the growing demand for technical assistance in anti-corruption work. It aims to increase state and institutional capacity to engage more effectively in reducing corruption by mainstreaming anti-corruption in various development initiatives including gender equality and empowerment programming.

## 1.4 Objectives of this study

This lessons learnt study builds on the 2010 gender primer published by UNDP and the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) titled 'Corruption, accountability and gender: understanding the connection'<sup>18</sup>. Investigating and producing evidence regarding women's experience of corruption on a day-to-day basis and across multiple sectors and circumstances is crucial to understanding and addressing poverty, gender inequalities and poor governance overall. While the primer established these links, there is a greater need for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship among women, gender equality and corruption and to examine the strategies used to hold government accountable.

With that in mind, this study has two objectives. First, it aims to provide evidence on the gendered impacts of corruption, with specific reference to the experiences of poor and marginalized women. Second, the study also highlights successful examples of grassroots women's anti-corruption initiatives. The evidence presented can make an important contribution to discussions on how to design more effective and impact-oriented anti-corruption strategies through the inclusion and active participation of grassroots women and their communities.

17 Mocan, N., 'What determines corruption? International evidence from micro data'. Working Paper 10460, National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER): Cambridge, MA (2004).

18 Hossain, N., et al, 'Corruption, accountability, and gender: understanding the connections'. UNDP-UNIFEM: New York (2010).



## 2. METHODOLOGY



Photo courtesy of GSF

A Project Officer from Grassroots Sisterhood Foundation (GSF) in Ghana records responses during a meeting.

This study's methodology hinges on the network of grassroots women and communities. It was designed to reveal specifically how poor and marginalized women perceive, experience, and cope with corruption in order to strengthen policy and programmatic responses.

### 2.1 Research design

A number of research questions underpinned this study, including:

- How do grassroots women perceive corruption?
- What kind of impact do corrupt practices have on the day-to-day realities of grassroots women's lives?
- What specific agencies engage more in corrupt practices in the eyes of grassroots women?
- To what extent are grassroots women able to engage with national initiatives to tackle corruption?
- What strategies do grassroots women employ to deal with corruption? What has worked and what has not?



These questions guided the design of an open-ended questionnaire survey (see Appendix 2) and a template for focus group discussions (see Appendix 3). The open-ended nature of these tools ensured that participants had the fullest opportunity to respond in ways that were most relevant to their national, regional, and local contexts (rather than being limited by the choices offered in a closed question format). Study instruments were designed with the input of an advisory board, which included guidance from the Huairou Commission Secretariat. Support was provided in particular by two members of the board, Patricia Chaves (Espaço Feminista) and Rosario Utreras (Federation of Women Municipalists of Latin America and the Caribbean, or FEMUM-ALC).

### Methodology matters

The methodology used in this study has some innovative elements that set it apart from conventional research on corruption, particularly in its approach vis-à-vis grassroots women and corruption. These are summarized below:

- Research on corruption often lacks a gendered perspective. In contrast, this study was designed from the outset to capture and highlight the voices of women to bring their experiences and insights of corruption to the attention of policy makers.
- More specifically, the research targeted poor and working class women/communities in order to understand how corruption is experienced at grassroots-level.
- Data were collected by grassroots women's community-based organizations (CBOs) using an action-research approach. Instead of an external agency administering the research in an extractive fashion, these CBOs took ownership of the process. This approach built grassroots capacities to conduct primary research and encouraged the organizations involved to utilize the data they collected for their own purposes, such as advocacy and campaigning.
- Another significant advantage of routing the research through grassroots organizations was that the women involved were already mobilized around issues of governance. Thus, far from being helpless, these women are empowered and have valuable experience in taking action to address corrupt practices. The strategies and recommendations articulated have provided key insights about the types of practical, realistic and effective community-level actions that can contribute to policies and programmes for addressing corruption.

## 2.2 Participants

Participants of this study are members of the Huairou Commission network and its governance campaign. A call for participation was opened to members from which 11 organizations<sup>19</sup> in eight countries (recognized below in Table 2) were selected. Participating groups were required to have experience in the areas of women's empowerment and governance, along with specific experiences in one or more of areas outlined below:

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<sup>19</sup> Appendix 1 contains a complete list of the grassroots researchers involved in this process.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

- regional, thematic and size distribution;
- prior experience in conducting participatory or action research;
- demonstrated constituency of grassroots women leaders;
- linkages to government services, programmes and leaders;
- demonstrated ability to manage small funds, provide reports in a timely manner and communicate findings to multiple stakeholders; and/or
- experience of corruption in circumstance-specific issues such as post-disaster, post-conflict, etc.

Participant organizations were provided resources to cover costs associated with translation and replication of the study instruments, training and administration of the survey, data entry, and (in select instances) documentation of case examples.

**Table 2. Grassroots women’s groups**

Region	Country	Grassroots organization
Africa	Cameroon	Ntankah Village Women Common Initiative Group (NVWCIG)
	Ghana	Grassroots Sisterhood Foundation (GSF)
	Kenya	Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS) Kenya
	Uganda	Uganda Community-Based Association for Child Welfare (UCOBAC)
	Uganda	Slum Women’s Initiative for Development (SWID)
Latin America	Brazil	Espaço Feminista
	Brazil	Cooperativa Ser do Sertao (Rede Pintadas)
	Nicaragua	La Unión de Cooperativa Las Brumas
South Asia	Bangladesh	Participatory Development Action Programme (PDAP)
	India	Naugachia Jan Vikas Lok Karyakram (NJVLK)
	India	Mahila Swaraj Abhiyan (MSA)

Selection of respondents was the sole responsibility of the organizations, albeit with instructions for each to target 45 grassroots women and 5 men. Ultimately, a total of 471 people (392 women and 79 men<sup>20</sup>) took part in the study. A breakdown of respondents is provided below, disaggregated by region, sex, and locality (rural/urban).

<sup>20</sup> Male respondents were included in this study in an effort to assess if grassroots women’s answers differed greatly from their male counterparts. Because this study’s primary focus is to highlight the voices of grassroots women, men’s responses comprise only 17 percent of the total sample. All statistics reported and graphs used relate only to women’s responses unless clearly noted.

**Table 3. Describing the data set**

		Female (N=392, 83%)		Male (N=17%)	
		N	%	N	%
<b>Age</b>	Below 20	5	1%	1	1%
	20 – 29	58	15%	10	13%
	30 – 39	128	33%	17	22%
	40 – 49	120	31%	25	32%
	50 – 59	61	16%	20	25%
	Above 60	15	4%	5	6%
	No Response	5	1%	1	1%
<b>Region</b>	Africa	206	53%	34	43%
	Latin America	107	27%	24	30%
	South Asia	79	20%	21	27%
<b>Locality</b>	Rural	313	80%	56	71%
	Urban	79	20%	23	29%

### 2.3 Process

Each organization collected data in local vernacular using the survey and focus group discussion templates designed by the Best Practices Foundation (BPF). Responses were then translated into English either by the organizations themselves or Huairou Commission staff. BPF consolidated the datasets and ran a comprehensive analysis using Microsoft PivotTables. The data tables for the graphs presented in the key findings section (Section 3) can be found in Appendix 4.

### 2.4 Limitations

It is important to recognize that there are limitations to this research, as detailed in Appendix 5. First, linguistic barriers across regions presented difficulties for data collection and processing. In-depth focus groups and subsequent interviews helped overcome some of these challenges.

Furthermore, this study does not attempt to understand and explain how corruption affects grassroots men and women differently, nor does it examine whether grassroots women's strategies were more effective than those of men. Because the study sample is not random and all participants are affiliated with existing community-based organizations, this study should not be read as a definitive description of the realities of corruption for all poor women. Instead, the results of this study provide valuable insights into the oft-untold stories of poor women and corruption. In addition, the study focuses deliberately on women's experiences and networks.



### 3. KEY FINDINGS



Photo courtesy of the Huairou Commission

A grassroots woman from Slum Women's Initiative for Development (SWID), based in Jinja, Uganda, leads community members in a discussion.

#### 3.1 Grassroots women definitions of corruption

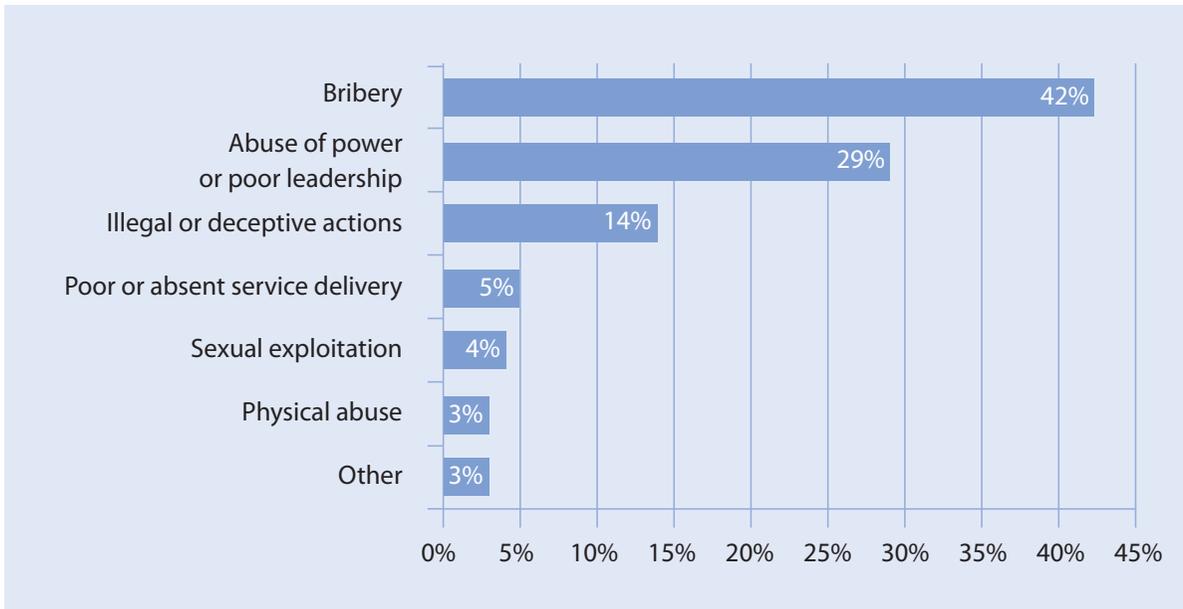
##### ***Finding 1: Grassroots women's definitions of corruption in terms of specific misuses of power***

Women defined corruption by using terms popular in anti-corruption discourse, but they also described the nuanced ways in which corruption affects them specifically. Consistent with prevailing definitions of corruption, 29 percent of grassroots women respondents described corruption as an abuse of power (as presented below in Figure 1). Bribery and illegal actions, common characterizations of corruption in governance literature, were also popular answers (42 percent and 14 percent, respectively).

However, other responses from grassroots women as to main defining characteristics of corruption provided a gender-specific view of corruption, including poor or absent service delivery (5 percent) and sexual or physical abuse (7 percent combined). Poor or absent service delivery is viewed as strongly linked to the abuse of power of those in leadership positions who effectively allow their subordinates to engage in corruption by turning a blind eye or by not holding them to account. Male and female participants were equally likely to mention physical abuse (3 percent each), but not a single man defined corruption as sexual exploitation, as compared to 4 percent of women.



**Figure 1: Grassroots Women’s Definition of Corruption (Global, N=370)**



**Finding 2: Women’s definitions of corruption vary by region**

The way in which grassroots women described corruption was not consistent across regions. Bribery, for example, was not the primary defining characteristic everywhere. While it was the most popular response in both Africa and South Asia, variations in the frequency of this response emerged (61 percent of African women as opposed to 38 percent of South Asian women defined bribery as the primary defining characteristic of corruption). Latin American respondents were most likely to select abuse of power or poor leadership (58 percent) as the main characteristic. Latin American women also chose illegal or deceptive actions more often (26 percent) than women from other regions. Sexual exploitation and physical abuse was a more common response from South Asian women than their counterparts in Africa or Latin America. Grassroots women’s understanding of key elements of corruption therefore emerged as specific to their region in the world.

**“[Corruption] exists at various levels of government and spheres of society.”**  
 – Woman from Espaço Feminista, Brazil

**3.2 Grassroots women’s experiences with corruption**

**Finding 3: Women view all public agencies as corrupt**

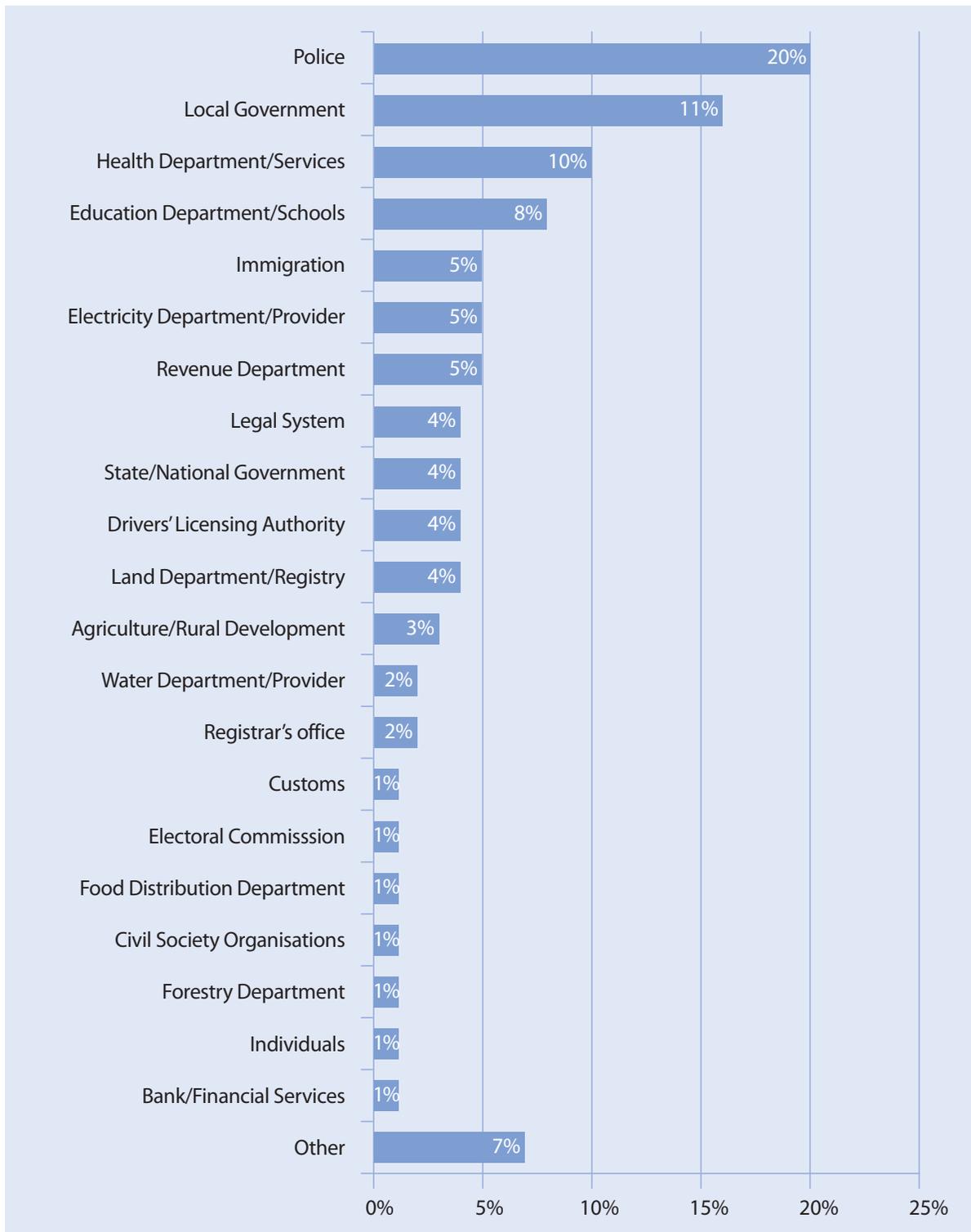
Figure 2 lists responses provided by women when asked to specify service areas or agencies they viewed as corrupt. The wide range of services and agencies listed demonstrates that women can and do experience corruption in their engagement with almost all public offices necessary for meeting their most basic needs. Some areas mentioned by women, such as health care, education, and water, affirm existing knowledge regarding corruption and its impact on the poor. Other significant pro-



### 3. KEY FINDINGS

portions of responses related to the agencies involved in law enforcement, securing documentation, and facilitating livelihoods such as the police and local government.

**Figure 2: Agencies Perceived by Women to be Corrupt (Female, Global, N=1131)**





The police and local government, the two service areas/agencies found to be corrupt most often, perform multiple functions for the public. Many opportunities for corrupt practices therefore exist. For instance, of the women who selected the police as corrupt, 20 percent said they had been asked to pay a bribe by the police to access documents; 15 percent reported being asked for a bribe for bail purposes; 8 percent had been solicited for a bribe to secure justice or seek redress for a crime; and 7 percent had been asked for a bribe at road-blocks or for traffic violations. The diversity of roles played by such multi-functional agencies make it particularly difficult to develop holistic strategies to combat corruption within them.

***Finding 4: Although there might be differences in where and how they experience bribery, it is a part of everyday life for both grassroots men and women***

Literature posits that bribery is widespread in the lives of poor men and women, but results of this study suggest that current estimates may be grossly underestimated<sup>21</sup>. Almost two-thirds of both female (63 percent) and male (62 percent) participants reported having been asked to pay a bribe. Women described bribery in terms of officials demanding bribes as well as citizens offering to pay a bribe or soliciting preferential treatment. Respondents thus viewed bribery as initiated by both those providing and receiving services. The popular Ugandan saying ‘you give what you have to get what you do not’<sup>22</sup> exemplifies the ubiquity of bribery. The bribery experiences reported by grassroots women and men related mainly to petty corruption, like securing the most basic needs.

**Seventy-six percent (76%) of women think that corruption has prevented their access to public goods and services.**

Source: survey data (global, female, N=392)

**“Corruption is getting worse and worse every day. Those of us who are poor are affected most. If you want a job in public service, you have to pay. When you want medical treatment, you have to pay. If you seek justice, you have to pay police. So, if your child can’t get a job and you have spent money educating her, what will you do?”**

– Woman from SWID, Uganda

**Sixty-three percent (63%) of women report being asked to pay a bribe**

Source: survey data (N=392)

21 For example, as cited on page 12 in a study conducted by Naci Mocan (2004), 31 percent of Indonesian citizens claimed that they had been asked for a bribe. According to CPI (corruption perception index) data, however, Indonesia is perceived as having a low corruption index: a marked contrast to Mocan’s direct-impact study results. Mocan, N., ‘What determines corruption? International evidence from micro data’. Working Paper 10460, National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER): Cambridge, MA (2004).

22 As cited by Afisa Nnammonde from UCOBAC, in-person interview, New York City, 2 March 2012.



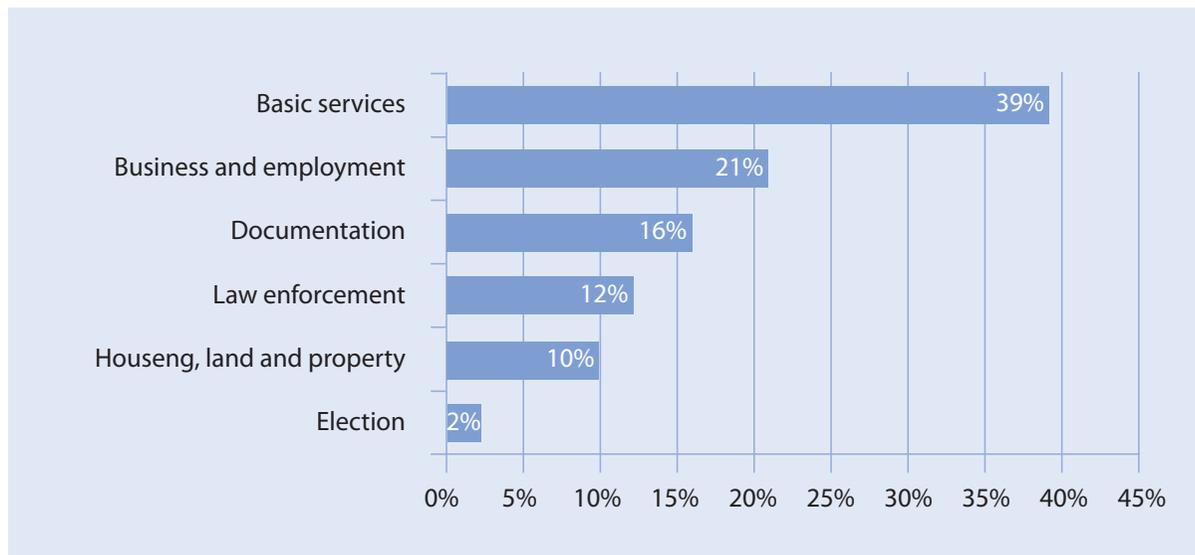
### 3. KEY FINDINGS

#### ***Finding 5: Bribery occurs not just in basic service delivery but in all areas of engagement with public agencies***

In general, corruption in accessing basic services, which encompass water, sanitation, electricity, health care, and education, is well documented<sup>23</sup>. Study findings support this claim. When women participants were asked to select areas of engagement with public agencies in which bribery occurs most frequently, the most popular option referred to being asked to pay bribes while attempting to secure basic services (39 percent).

However, traditional concepts of basic services do not fully capture the wide range of services in which women were asked to pay bribes. This study's findings shed light on previously unexamined sites for bribery, as women described facing extortion in their dealings with the police and while securing the documentation needed to access basic services. Also mentioned were areas such as economic activity and land and property rights as well as participation in elections. These trends can be seen in Figure 3 and are examined in further detail below.

**Figure 3: Service Areas of Requested Bribes (Female, Global, N=447)**



**“To fill a form, to submit a form...There is corruption there.”**

– Woman from UCOBAC, Uganda

As noted in Figure 3 above, 16 percent of grassroots women respondents said one of the most bribery-prone service areas was in regards to the processing and acquisition of personal and official documents. These documents range from birth, death, caste and marriage certificates, to ration cards, licenses, passports and proof of income. Many of these documents are essential for everyday life. For

23 Transparency International, ‘Corruption and gender in service delivery: the unequal impacts.’ Working Paper 2 (2010).



example, proof of identity and address documents are required for grassroots women to access any type of basic public services for themselves, their children, and their families (as well as to exercise their rights). Interruptions or delays in the processing of documents can have serious impacts on the quality of life of poor women. Not only do most depend on formal documentation to access public and social entitlements, but they also need certain documents to exercise their right to political participation. For example, women in Gujarat, India reported that they are required to show various documents in order to stand for local elections. Mahila Swaraj Abhiyan organizes potential local leaders into groups to mitigate this and other barriers to women's political participation (see Case study 1).

Women are entitled to security, justice, and mechanisms to redress grievances. If a woman experiences theft, harassment, domestic violence, or any criminal offence, she needs to be able to approach a law enforcement agency that can guarantee her justice. Instead, study findings show that women experience precisely the opposite as they are routinely expected to pay a bribe to even file a police complaint (as reflected in the fact that 12 percent of women surveyed selected "law enforcement" as one of the service areas in which bribery is the most extensive). Often, perpetrators are able to pay larger sums of money to avoid penalty, thus denying women's access to justice.

Another area where women experience bribery relates to their participation in the economic arena, such as in accessing jobs and running businesses. (Survey responses listed in Figure 3 show that 21 percent of women respondents chose this service area as among the most bribery-prone.) Grassroots women largely work in the informal economy, and are thus subject to bribery from police and tax collectors. To start a business, women often have to pay bribes to acquire licenses and procure a business loan. They also have to deal with police extortion in order to keep their businesses open. For those who work in the formal sector, many participants described being asked to provide a monetary or sexual favour to secure a position.

Legal entitlements to land, property and housing, and exercising of inheritance rights are areas where grassroots women experience corruption and extortion of much higher monetary value. Ten percent of survey respondents

**"When our girls are defiled, police gets paid from both the person reporting and the perpetrator."**

– Woman from SWID, Uganda

**"To collect a housing deed from the government office, you have to pay bribe at each and every table."**

— Woman from PDAP, Bangladesh

**"For a legal land deed, one must employ a surveyor to demarcate the land. Although the district land board encourages using a surveyor affiliated with a firm, it does not stop the corruption. We are asked to pay this or pay that. Then, when women go to apply for a land title, it takes so long; so then they pay to get a shortcut."**

– Woman from UCOBAC, Uganda



### 3. KEY FINDINGS

selected this service area as one in which bribery is especially common. Considering that globally women continue to face discrimination in owning, controlling and accessing land, these biases compounded with frequent bribery make accessing land that much more difficult for women.

#### ***Case study 1. Preventing corruption in the acquisition of documentation for the electoral process: Mahila Swaraj Abhiyan's story***

In 2006, the government of the Indian state of Gujarat passed a law requiring candidates for local councils (*panchayats*) to declare their assets, divulge their criminal records and education details, and demonstrate their conformance with the two-child-per-family rule through legal affidavits. Local notaries took advantage of this new and complex nomination procedure by demanding large sums of money from potential candidates to prepare the necessary legal documentation.

After witnessing these malpractices during the 2006 elections, Sharadaben and Babuden decided to actively fight against local corruption. One year later, these women joined Mahila Swaraj Abhiyan (MSA), a network of NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) that promotes women's involvement in the electoral process through *panchayat* women's forums. To legitimize and politicize the voices of grassroots women, these forums carry out various training programmes on the electoral process, encourage women to apply for non-reserved seats, and train groups of elected women's representatives, or *manchs*, to form vigilance committees and run information centres at the block level.

Another key MSA activity includes raising awareness and holding dialogues with villages regarding the *samra* scheme, a Gujarat government initiative which rewards villages for unanimous voting for a *panchayat* body or village president. Since some village leaders decide to pursue unanimous voting for a candidate without greater participation from the local community, this practice undermines the democratic nature of elections.

Sharadaben and Babuden received training from MSA on election procedures and norms, and learned about the government circular, rules, and procedures for nominating local candidates. Thanks to the MSA training, the two women learned that the notarization of the criminal record and declaration of property was not necessary; potential candidates only needed to sign such declarations before a local election officer.

Because the government had failed to circulate this information, Sharadaben and Babuden decided to assist women candidates in overcoming the barriers with documentation. They first approached the election helpline initiated by MSA and pressured local authorities to circulate this information to relevant bodies and candidates. Sharadaben and Babuden then visited 10 villages to conduct awareness programmes, inform women of their democratic right to vote for the candidate of their choice, and raise awareness on the two-children-per-family rule. This was done through the distribution of posters and banners, film screenings, and discussions. The two women also explained why the *samra* scheme was not a democratic practice and should be avoided. With the support from the local administration, Sharadaben and Babuden also set up an information centre at the block *Panchayat* office.



The women's accomplishments during their seven-day campaign speak for themselves. Sharadaben and Babuden managed to reach 105 candidates, of whom 51 were women. They helped these candidates to fill out their nomination forms and countered corrupt practices through their successful advocacy with the local level authorities. They even assisted seven women to vie open seats by providing them with information on the type of seat and eligibility criteria for nomination.

Their efforts additionally helped five villages to stop adhering to the *samra* scheme. Moreover, no women candidates distributed money or gifts in exchange for votes in the villages where Sharadaben and Babuden had conducted awareness programmes. Through dialogues with the local election officers, they also successfully ensured the appointment of an election-monitoring officer at the sub-district level. Finally, by establishing themselves as a local watchdog group during the local elections, they have become a crucial source of information that local officials and villagers now regularly use.

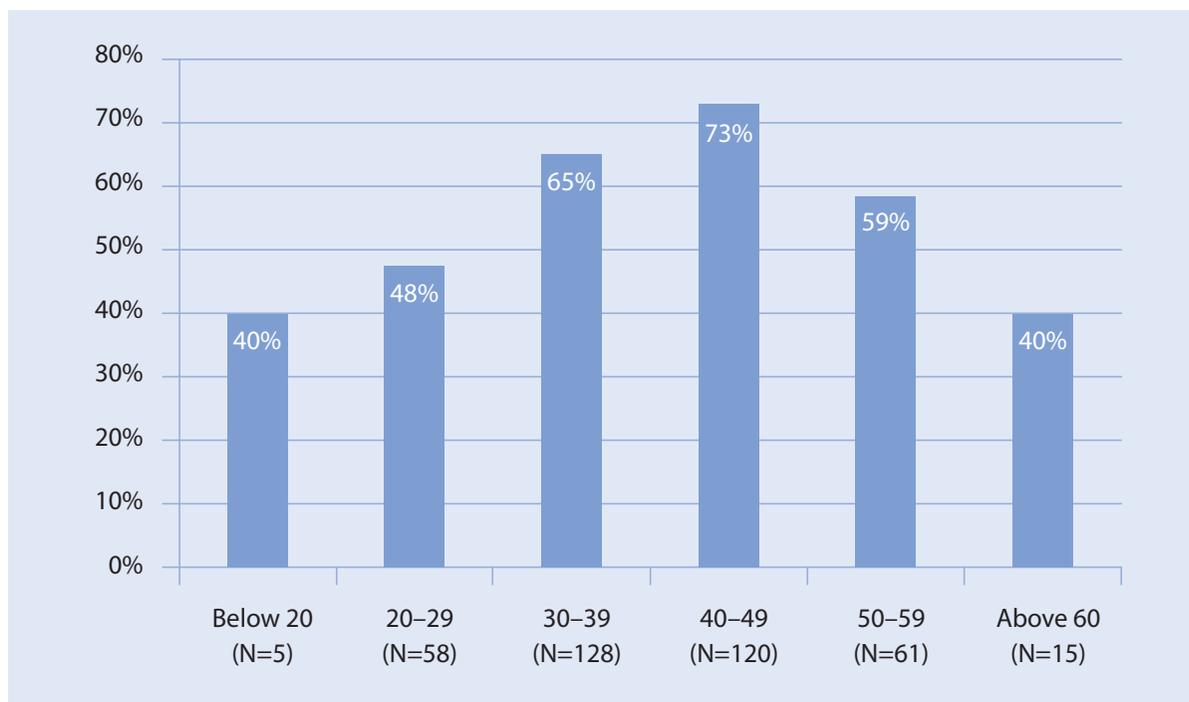
Sharadaben and Babuden's fight against malpractices in documentation services and *panchayat* elections demonstrates the potential effectiveness of grassroots women's initiatives in putting an end to local level corruption. Information centres at the local level, run by forums of elected women's representatives of multiple levels of local government, proved essential and effective in disseminating accurate information regarding acts and procedures related to elections. Candidates were better informed and as a result, local officials or middlemen were prevented from misleading potential candidates. Such forums can play a significant role in disseminating much-needed information to local communities, curb corrupt practices in documentation and elections, and strengthen democratic institutions overall.

### ***Finding 6: The burden of bribery falls most heavily on women of caregiving age***

It is commonly held that women are disproportionately subject to corruption due to their primary role as caregivers and organizers of households. Survey data disaggregated by age give credence to this claim. As demonstrated by Figure 4, women between the ages of 30 to 59 are much more likely to report having been asked for a bribe. Those years represent the peak time in which women will engage with healthcare systems and structures (related to childbirth and women's traditional role as caretakers for both the young and the elderly), education, public utilities, and other services required to manage a family.

### 3. KEY FINDINGS

**Figure 4: Proportion of Women Who Have Been Asked to Pay a Bribe, by Age (Global, Female, N=387)**



#### 3.3 Grassroots women's initiatives to fight corruption

##### ***Finding 7: Grassroots women perceive group-affiliated leaders to be more accountable***

In recognition of the deeper extent of corruption experienced by women, anti-corruption initiatives have responded largely by promoting women's electoral participation and increasing their role in public decision-making. However, debates in the literature surround the assumption that women are necessarily less corrupt<sup>24</sup>.

This study's findings indicate that women leaders from mobilized constituencies are perceived to be far more accountable in public office than female officials who are unaffiliated with a broader constituency. Approximately 83 percent of female respondents felt that organized women leaders provide leadership that is more responsive to grassroots communities and less subject to corruption. Therefore, it is not sufficient to elect any woman into power; in addition, good governance requires that they be linked to a mobilized constituency to make their elected officials more accountable and responsive<sup>25</sup>.

24 Sung, H., 'Fairer sex or fairer system? Gender and corruption revisited'. *Social Forces* 82 (2003).

25 A topic of potential interest for future study could be the relationship between transparency and accountability among elected officials and the number of women representatives (both those affiliated with grassroots groups and those who are not) in local or national bodies. Within this study, women were asked to identify the strategies their organizations used and assess whether they had been successful or not. The short time frame of this study meant that independent verification of the effectiveness of these strategies was not possible (see Appendix 5 – Limitations of the Study). Action research in this area that evaluates the effectiveness of strategies should complement the piloting of women's strategies globally.



### ***Finding 8: Organized women are empowered to fight corruption***

The powerful effects of group affiliation extend beyond the increased accountability of female elected officials. Grassroots women are more empowered (as reported by 79 percent of respondents) to raise their voices against corruption if they belong to a grassroots organization (see Case study 2). This result shows the importance of voice and accountability in governance that empowers citizens to engage in public debate and demand more accountability from their representatives and leaders.

Even still, little attention is paid to interventions being made by grassroots women's organizations on their own behalf. This study finds that women are actively involved in planning and implementing a series of anti-corruption strategies, bringing to light grassroots women's role as powerful agents of change in matters related to corruption and governance. Furthermore, women have been able to identify which strategies they have found to be successful<sup>26</sup>. The

**Seventy-nine percent (79%) of women believe that women affiliated with a community group are better able to stand up against corruption**

Source: survey data (global, N=392)

Photo courtesy of the Huairou Commission.



Grassroots home-based caregivers from GROOTS Kenya.

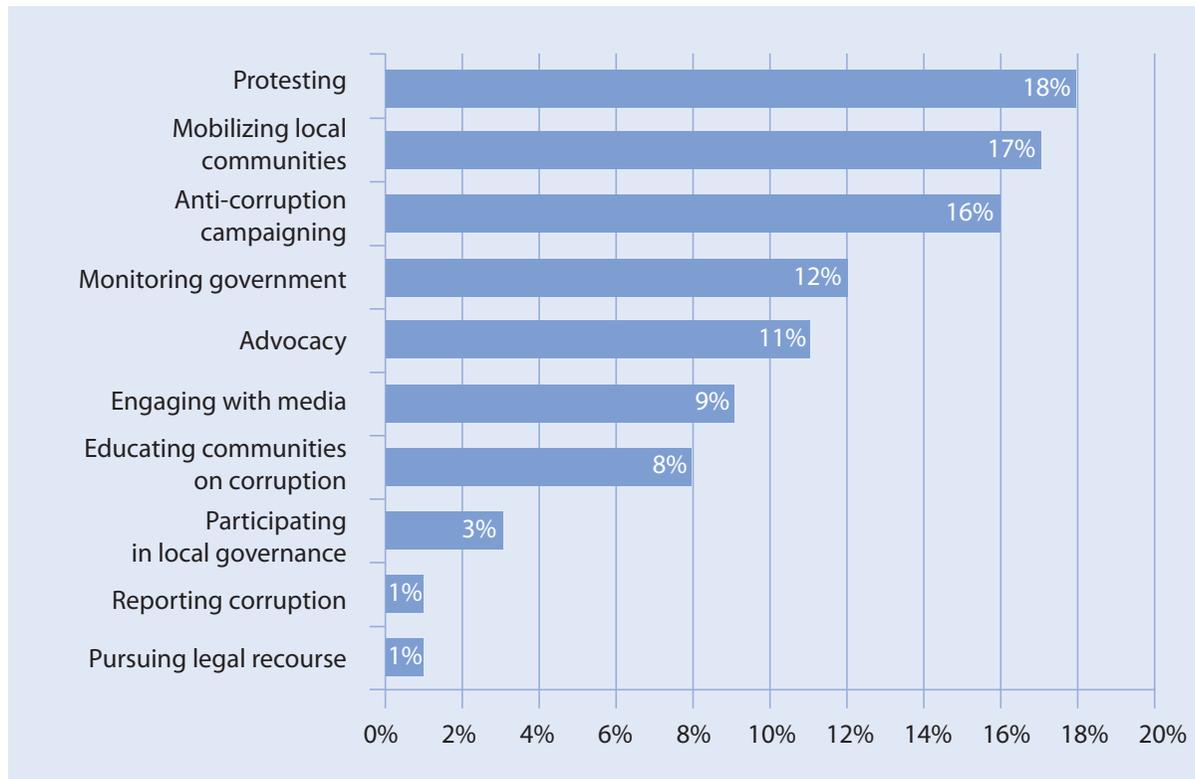
26 Research supervisors asked women to identify the strategies their organizations used and to assess whether they were successful or not. The short time-frame of this study meant that independent verification of the effectiveness of these strategies was not possible (as noted in the discussion of limitations in Appendix 5). Action research in this area that evaluates the effectiveness of strategies should complement the piloting of women's strategies globally.



### 3. KEY FINDINGS

strategies presented in Figure 5 demonstrate the range of practical strategies that grassroots women have deemed effective, having tried and tested them. Globally, the strategies identified by participants as being the most successful include protesting, mobilizing communities, campaigning, and monitoring government.

**Figure 5: Successful Strategies of Grassroots Women’s Groups (Female, Global, N=542)**



**Case study 2. Equipping women with the tools to fight corruption: Las Brumas Cooperative in Nicaragua**

In most municipalities or departments of Nicaragua, there is a *consejo del poder ciudadano*, or council of citizens’ political power, whose function is to identify families in the community most in-need and to distribute available basic goods and services including food, chickens (for raising), building materials, and other basic inputs. The national government sends the materials from the capital city to the municipalities and districts, and distributions do not involve monetary transfers.

Councils typically comprise delegates who are members of the political party, usually men, and do not get paid for their posts. The process for families that want to apply to receive goods is first to apply via public assembly, and then a councillor visits the home to determine eligibility for the distribution of goods.



Aurora Arauz, a leader of a women's cooperative, applied to her local council to receive 10 metal sheets to replace the roof on her home, but she was not selected. One day, while her husband was out working and she was preparing lunch, she received a visit from the council coordinator, who asked, "How's your roof?" He noticed the roof was in poor condition, and told Ms. Arauz that he would give her the 10 sheets to fix her roof, but that she would have to go to Jinotega to pick them up. "Why do I have to go to Jinotega?" she asked. "Why won't they bring them to the community if everyone gets them here? It will cost me a lot of money in transport." She did not get an answer, as the coordinator left rapidly, leaving Ms. Arauz puzzled.

Two days later, the coordinator returned to her home and reiterated that she would need to go to Jinotega in order to get a new roof. This time, he also said that she would need to stay the night. When Ms. Arauz asked why she needed to spend two days in Jinotega, the coordinator told her that she would have to sleep with him first, and the next day he would bring her the metal sheets. Horrified, she grabbed a machete and threatened him, telling him that she would go to the head of the political party and report his corrupt behaviour. He quickly left. She then promptly reported the incident to the authorities, which was a strategy she learned during a Las Brumas Cooperative training workshop on leadership, cooperativism, laws, and citizen rights.

When Ms. Arauz went to the police to file a complaint, it turned out that this was not the first time the former council coordinator had engaged in corrupt behaviour. He had also been involved in selling the rooftop materials and other public goods distributed under the council for his own benefit. As a result, the man was ejected from the council and a special assembly was held in the community to replace him.

During the assembly it was noted that the council had done very little for women in the community. Ms. Arauz was acknowledged as an active leader in the community, as the president of one of the federated cooperatives affiliated with the Las Brumas Union. She was someone who was not only able to defend herself, but also willing to get involved in issues of assault or threats against other women in the community. Ms. Arauz was therefore nominated to the council to represent women's interests. She is now the municipal coordinator of the citizens' group, and has been nominated to stand for a municipal council post in November 2012.

This is a success story in a community that has been well organized. However, in other communities in Nicaragua, many women do not have the support or the knowledge of how to deal with such incidents. Unfortunately, the case of Ms. Arauz is not an isolated one; quite often women are compelled to sleep with men to get things that they need, such as food and medicines. Additionally, there are often incidents of men distributing goods for political favours or sexual extortion or exploitation. Ms. Arauz, as part of an organized, mobilized group, was trained, had the support of the network, and knew how to address the issue. Speaking of the Las Brumas Cooperative, its president, Haydee Rodriguez, said "We support women in leadership, cooperativism, their rights as citizens and in explaining the law. We talk about how women have rights, and in our meetings we speak of the laws, such as the Law of Citizen Participation, and our rights to vote, to speak, and to be respected."



### 3. KEY FINDINGS

#### ***Finding 9: Women's anti-corruption initiatives are relevant to local and political contexts***

Women have developed strategies that are not only workable, but are also contextually relevant. Strategies tend to vary based on geography and region. For example, urban women prioritize campaigns (24 percent of urban respondents) and mobilization (23 percent), while rural groups favour protests (19 percent of rural respondents). Latin American and South Asian women prefer mobilization and protests (33 percent and 24 percent, respectively). African women have found campaigns (21 percent) and monitoring government (15 percent) to be the most effective.

#### **Enabling vs. non-enabling environment**

While there are a variety of contexts in which anti-corruption interventions can be successful, anti-corruption literature acknowledges that more enabling environments are found when citizens' rights to information laws, freedom of speech and press legislation, protection for whistleblowers, formal mechanisms for redress, and other legal and social rights exist and can be utilized. For the purpose of this lessons learnt study, it is possible to distinguish between 'enabling' and 'non-enabling' environments vis-à-vis women's perceptions of the existence of anti-corruption laws and/or funds in their country. Full analysis of each political and social setting, however, is beyond the scope of this study (see Appendix 5 for a discussion of the limitations of this study).

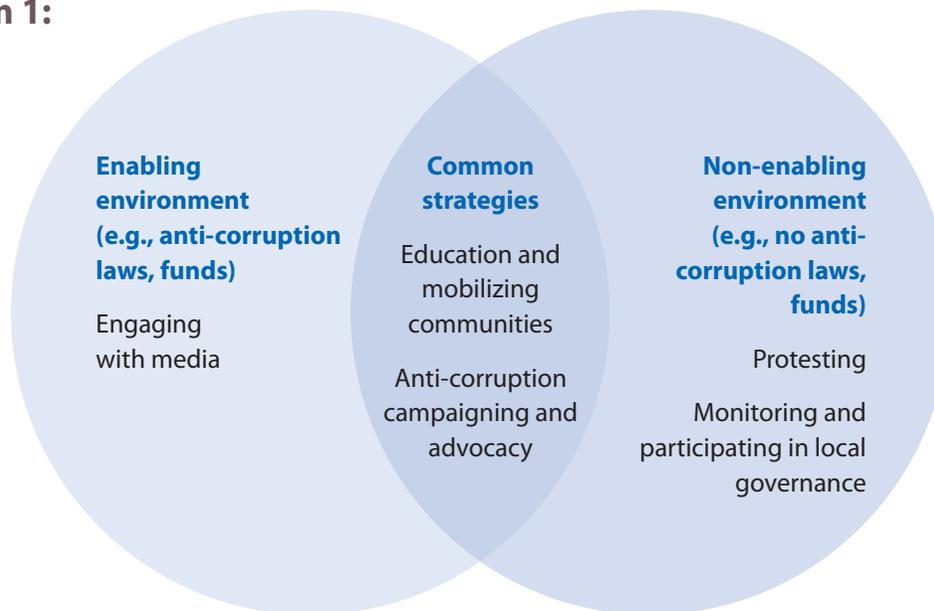
The largest variations in strategies hinge on the socio-political setting in which women's groups operate. The study examined the effect on women's strategies of i) their perception of an enabling environment in terms of a legislative framework and mechanisms to fight corruption (anti-corruption laws and funds, for example) and ii) where this perception did not exist.

The study found a significant difference in strategies employed by women who perceived that their countries had an enabling environment (in terms of laws and mechanisms) compared with those that did not (see Diagram 1 below). Similarly, there was considerable variation in awareness amongst grassroots women on the existence of anti-corruption laws and funds in their country. For instance, only respondents from India and Brazil were unanimous in their answers, while women in the other six countries (Bangladesh, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Nicaragua and Uganda) gave contradictory responses. This indicates a lack of awareness of, or at least ambiguity around, anti-corruption measures.

Regardless, women's groups share certain core organizational strategies across both types of political environments. Mobilization and community education are, for example, employed across the board. Engaging with the media is a strategy unique to women in enabling surroundings, whereas participating in protests is the preferred tactic of women's groups in non-enabling contexts.



Diagram 1:



### Core strategies

As noted in Figure 5, survey respondents selected the following strategies as the most successful and important in terms of achieving their objectives: mobilizing communities (17 percent), educating citizens (8 percent), anti-corruption campaigning (16 percent), and advocacy (11 percent). All of these strategies are commonly employed by women's groups, independent of the perceived socio-political environment.

For poor communities, mobilizing and educating communities were intrinsically linked:

"We need to create awareness among all people in local communities. But one cannot sensitize the community at random, so we must organize people into small groups, based mostly at the village level. We form specific groups so that we can understand more about the issues women face. Each village or parish has only so many people, so you can get them together at the same time. After mobilizing the whole community, we create general awareness."<sup>27</sup>

Mobilizing and educating women also involves developing expertise among women to help individual community members access their rights and entitlements. The work of GROOTS Kenya, through its mobilization of watchdog groups equipped with legal expertise, has helped women in their struggle to exercise their right to land ownership (see Case study 3).

Grassroots women's groups have engaged in organized public expressions against corruption so as to instigate systemic change. Anti-corruption campaigns and advocacy tend to be geared towards creating a rigorous legal framework bolstered by corresponding mechanisms of implementation and enforcement. In this context, grassroots women's groups have developed partnerships with various legal, governmental, civil society, and international bodies.

27 Afisa Nnamamonde, UCOBAC, In-person interview, New York City, March 2, 2012



### 3. KEY FINDINGS

#### Strategies in enabling environments

Women who were aware that anti-corruption laws and funds exist in their country reported having fought corruption more often (63 percent) than those who were not aware that these conditions held (34 percent). Engaging with media is the most popular strategy used by women operating in an enabling environment (27 percent). Media can play a crucial role in fighting corruption through investigative journalism and the public exposure of cases of corruption. This capacity of the media

rests on the assumption that a free and independent press is allowed to exist, journalists are capable of professional and thorough investigations, and legal safeguards shield members of the media from undue prosecution or harassment related to accusations of libel, slander, and irresponsible reporting<sup>28</sup>.

Given these preconditions, media can become an important ally for women’s organizations. By collaborating with the media, women’s groups can more effectively expose instances of corruption by performing the role of key

**Women in enabling environments (63 percent) are more likely to stand up to corruption than their counterparts in non-enabling environments (34 percent).**

Source: survey data (global, N=48 and N=100)

informants in the community. Because responsible and respected journalists recognize their obligation to fact-check, women’s groups can initiate a thorough investigation of an issue even though they may be lacking the resources or connections to perform such investigations themselves. In this way, women can ensure that corruption is exposed while maintaining anonymity.

#### Strategies in non-enabling environments

While protests are not a significant strategy in enabling environments, they are a salient feature (20 percent) of anti-corruption campaigns in environments where women felt that there were no laws to support them. When a large number of citizens convene in public, the government is forced to respond if only because such demonstrations of popular unrest draw both media and international attention. In conditions where national and/or local governments are apathetic and non-responsive to the needs of their citizenry, strong actions are often taken. For women’s groups whose efforts are perennially under-resourced and little recognized, mass agitation is sometimes the most effective way of making their voices heard.

Many women survey participants in non-enabling environments prioritized monitoring government (11 percent). For instance, if grassroots women’s groups have a legitimate role in monitoring basic service provision, they can improve the quality of the services provided to their communities regardless of the existence of anti-corruption laws. Another way women ensure government responsiveness in such environments is by involving themselves at all levels of local governance, from administrative positions in local offices to employment in key service-sector departments.

<sup>28</sup> Lugon-Moulin, A., 'Fighting corruption: SDC strategy.' Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation: Berne (2006).



### *Case study 3. Developing expertise to secure land rights: the work of GROOTS Kenya*

Land is a valuable and highly contested resource world-over, but especially within poor communities. Resource-crunched men and women are often tempted to take illegal measures to secure land because of its value, sometimes even from their own family members. Legal documentation is therefore indispensable when it comes to establishing proof of land ownership. Lack of knowledge about this requirement makes it difficult for grassroots women to lay or retain claim to land that may be theirs by legal right. Wilmina, a widow from Shibliyu, Kenya, lived on a piece of land she once shared with her husband. Following his death, Wilmina was faced with the prospect of losing her land to Anita, her stepdaughter. Accompanied by the police and carrying a fake court order, Anita erected a fence on Wilmina's land and claimed part of it as her own. She also acquired fraudulent 'special consent' from the district land office, which permitted her to subdivide the land.

Wilmina turned to Virembe, a local watchdog group, which set about establishing her proof of ownership. Group members with paralegal training investigated and debunked Anita's claim that she had filed a succession case in court. In retaliation, an irate Anita bribed the local police to arrest Wilmina and her child. Once again Virembe stepped in to negotiate their release. On the group's advice, Wilmina compiled the required documentation including the land title deed, her late husband's death certificate, and all of her correspondence with Anita. She proceeded to file a case at the land dispute tribunal court in hopes of settling the feud. The court finally ruled in Wilmina's favour. As a result her property is protected by a court order and she has now registered the land in her name.

Wilmina's successful fight to exercise her land rights depended on a set of well-orchestrated measures, taken by a skilled and mobilized watchdog group. In order to help her access justice, Virembe discredited false documentation while simultaneously establishing credible certification. This process required careful investigative work and an up-to-date knowledge of the legal system. Virembe representatives' familiarity with the law enabled them to advise Wilmina on the best course of action, which in this case was to petition the tribunal court to intervene.

Group members also possessed crucial skills that helped Wilmina win the court battle for her land. They were familiar enough with the court system to know where relevant documentation would be housed, so that they could research and investigate it. They were able to advise her on the best legal course of action, urging her to compile the necessary certificates and title deeds. In addition, they helped her raise the money to pay for the court proceedings. Some key roles that group members played were those of mediator, paralegal, investigator, researcher, and financial support network.

Wilmina's success notwithstanding, grassroots women in Kenya face a daunting struggle over land rights. Kenyan law endows women with the right to inherit, own, manage, and dispose of property, but a combination of poverty, patriarchy, a lack of information about the law, and corrupt bureaucratic practices often prevents them from actually exercising this right. Women have come to function as mere placeholders whose legal ownership of land enables husbands and male relatives to retain control of family property.



### 3. KEY FINDINGS

It is thus glaringly apparent that a grassroots woman's ability to take on corruption depends on the backing of a politically aware and mobilized support network. Local watchdog groups play an indispensable part in helping grassroots women learn about, and fight to secure, their property rights. This case study also demonstrates the futility of using traditional monitoring systems to track the more insidious forms of public sector corruption. What is required is an approach that is as mobile and far-reaching as the types of corruption being tackled.

Unfortunately, most grassroots watchdog groups such as Virembe have limited capacity. Since mobilization requires financial, social, and intellectual capital, grassroots watchdog groups confront wide-ranging infrastructural challenges, including lack of physical space in which to hold meetings and co-ordinate actions; limited finances with which to help clients pay legal fees; lack of recognition by community members who may be unwilling to accept their interventions; and limited access to funds for learning exchanges and training workshops where members can update their legal and policy knowledge.

#### ***Finding 10: Capacity building of women's groups and fighting corruption should go hand-in-hand***

Although the survey's findings indicate that women are adept at designing their own solutions to fight corruption, this does not mean that they do not require support. Quite to the contrary, they do need support and of various kinds. Grassroots women asked for a variety of assistance, as depicted in Figure 6. Almost one in three women (30 percent) responded that their groups' need was for 'financial support' to meet the costs associated with organizing groups and launching protests and campaigns. Women also perceive that their organizations need education (through capacity building) and information regarding corruption, particularly legal and other expertise (a combined 35 percent).

Building partnerships and alliances is another top priority for women's groups. During a FGD, women from Espaço Feminista requested this explicitly by agreeing that "Politicians should present their programmes and achievements to their electorate through means of communications or in public events". These groups understand that they have the power to fight corruption, but know that working with experts or governments may be the best way to achieve their goals.

Given that many existing national programmes have failed to curb corruption, it is clear that a series of anti-corruption measures are required. New efforts should build on grassroots women's current strategies and provide support to sustain them.



**Figure 6: Support Needed by Grassroots Women’s Groups (Female, Global, N=468)**

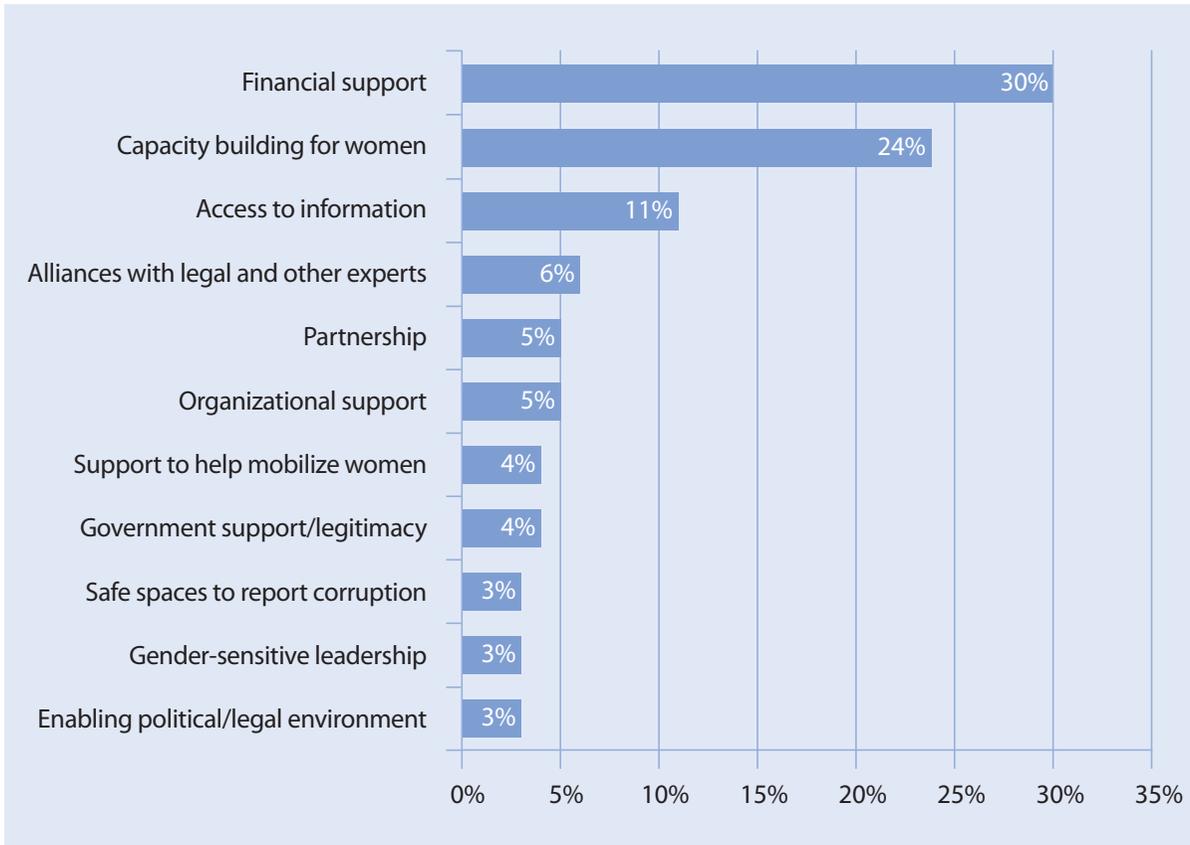


Photo courtesy of Espaço Feminista



In Recife, Brazil, grassroots women of Espaço Feminista gather to discuss how corruption is impacting their community.



## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, this section considers the ways in which international agencies, policymakers, and civil society groups can create inclusive gender-sensitive anti-corruption strategies (See Table 1 in the Executive Summary).

### ***Understand the relationship between grassroots women and corruption***

Operational definitions of corruption should be rethought in order to encompass the unique experiences of poor women, which primarily relate to access and delivery of basic services. Towards this end, the following should be undertaken.

International agencies should:

- Adopt an expanded definition of corruption to include the broad range of experiences women, and poor women in particular, have in relation to corruption. This should validate grassroots women's experiences with corruption including physical and sexual abuse and abuse of leadership of those in positions of power in relation to the delivery of basic services. Given the variation of experiences by region and context, this definition should be contextualized with the input of grassroots men and women.
- Promote partnerships around localized action research between women's groups and research institutions to document grassroots women's real experiences and develop capacities of women to collect, analyze and publically disseminate data.

National governments should:

- Include grassroots women in consultative and advisory processes, and in the collection of data. This is necessary to ensure that definitions of corruption, including gender dimensions of corruption, and subsequent policies and programmes reflect the lived experiences of women.

Civil society organizations should:

- Raise awareness about bribery's impact on the everyday lives of both women and men by using media, public hearings, theatre and art, and other communication vehicles.

### ***Develop relevant and effective strategies***

Truly gender-sensitive and pro-poor anti-corruption programming requires facilitating community participation to create localized solutions to combat corruption. The following should be undertaken to achieve this goal.

International agencies should:

- Consult with women of caregiving age and mandate their inclusion in policy, research, and programme design processes.
- Support context-specific strategies to address the widespread corruption in public agencies, such as:
  - women-led citizen monitoring groups;
  - women's desks, anonymous reporting lines;



- public registration days for births, marriage certificates, etc., a strategy that increases the openness and transparency of what were previously private transactions; and
- public dissemination of incidents of corruption and ways they were redressed in specific sectors.
- Contextualize anti-corruption efforts based on conditions including (but not limited to) the cohesion of civil society, existence of an enabling environment, demographic characteristics, inputs from the ground, and overall context of gender equality and women's empowerment. This should be followed by support for context-specific strategies.
- Fund grassroots women to design, pilot, and develop locally relevant anti-corruption programmes.

National governments should:

- Mandate representation and participation of grassroots women in policy and programmatic advisory, monitoring, and consultative committees as to ensure policies and programs reflect the lived experiences of women.
- Systematically collect sex-disaggregated data and apply gender analysis of service delivery
- Institutionalize community monitoring of public services through a variety of mechanisms, including but not limited to gender-sensitive social and public audits and anti-corruption desks.
- Provide resources and recognition to, and institutionalization of, successful gender-sensitive grassroots strategies.
- Reserve portions of anti-corruption funds for women's groups.

Civil society organizations should:

- Engage in community mapping in order to generate and analyze information on the causes of corruption and ways of addressing it in public agencies.
- Facilitate international peer exchanges among grassroots groups to enable cross-fertilization of effective strategies.
- Mandate the equal representation and participation of grassroots women in the governance structures of their organizations

### ***Create an enabling environment for grassroots women to address corruption***

To create accountable, transparent governance and ensure adequate legal protection of communities in fighting corruption, a first step would entail the creation of an enabling environment to fight corruption. The following efforts should be undertaken toward this goal.

International agencies should:

- Advocate for the inclusion of grassroots women in drafting committees of anti-corruption treaties and national legislation.



## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage the international community to include grassroots women's perspectives, experiences, and successful strategies for fighting corruption in anti-corruption policies, intergovernmental processes, and global debates on accountability, transparency, and the prevention of corruption.
- Fund programmes that develop the legal expertise and knowledge of existing legislation among grassroots women.
- Build capacities of community groups to lobby for appropriate legislative frameworks and to access their rights and entitlements.

National governments should:

- Pass gender-sensitive anti-corruption laws and policies that recognize physical abuse, sexual extortion or exploitation, and other forms of bribery particularly experienced by women.
- Involve grassroots women in the development of national anti-corruption programmes and policies so institutional strategies reflect women's experiences and regional variants of corruption.
- Establish anonymous and safe spaces for women to report corruption with clear channels for redressing incidents.
- Ensure that information related to laws, mechanisms, and channels to address corruption is made public, is easily accessible, and can be practically utilized by grassroots women.
- Allow a free and independent press that is enabled to investigate, report, and publish on corruption.

Civil society organizations should:

- Train community organizers to disseminate information about laws and mechanisms to redress corruption.
- Host public dialogue forums with local government so women can discuss and report corruption, thus ensuring that elected leaders understand local contexts and develop constituencies among grassroots groups.
- Invest in community organizing, empowerment, and leadership development processes.



The study concludes that corruption is an endemic, community-wide issue that has a substantial impact on women's lived experiences. Existing national mechanisms are inadequate to address the issues faced by grassroots women around corruption. It is in this context that promoting grassroots women's participation becomes vitally important.



Photo courtesy of GROOTS Kenya

Grassroots women from GROOTS Kenya.

Comprehensive anti-corruption efforts require the combined efforts of international agencies, national and local governments, and the women and communities most affected. The state has an instrumental role to play in the creation of an enabling environment in the form of gender-sensitive policies, legislations, and mechanisms to combat corruption. International agencies should focus on facilitating a supportive environment for women and men to organize around and fight corruption, including the gender dimensions of corruption.

To ensure that programming and policies are relevant and effective for poor communities and women especially, grassroots women should be involved at all stages of anti-corruption interventions, including design, implementation, and evaluation. This is best expressed by the following FGD response from the women of UCOBAC in Uganda, Africa, "Grassroots women fight corruption because we have been the most affected and can work best in their communities. If we mobilize and sensitize our communities, we can bring the issue of corruption to light. Let us fight corruption. Our strategies will work."



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# APPENDIX 1. LIST OF GRASSROOTS RESEARCHERS



Name of organization	Name of researcher	Role in research
Cooperativa Ser do Sertao (Rede Pintadas)	Nereide Segala Coelho	Coordination
	Paolo Cugini	Coordination
	Solange Passion	Coordination
	Magalli Almeida da Silva	Data collection
	Tamiris Texeira de Oliveira Santos	Data collection
	Silvania Lima Santos	Data collection
	Fabiane Silva Carneiro	Data entry
	Camilla Bishop Regis	Data entry
	Valeska Holme (Huairou Commission)	Translation
Espaço Feminista (EF)	Patricia Chaves	Coordinator, case study author
	Celma Tavares de Almeida (Dra)	Data analysis, data collection
	Regina Pritchett	Data collection
	Ivan Chaves Jucá	Data collection
	Maria de Fatima Arruda Coelho	Data collection
	Nazaré Duarte	Data collection
	Valeska Holme (Huairou Commission)	Translation
Grassroots Sisterhood Foundation (GSF)	Fati Alhassan	Coordination, leading focus group discussions
	Martha Abugbilla	Data collection, data entry
	Maltiti Husein	Data collection, data entry
	Sophia Owusu	Data collection, data entry
	Jacqueline Abu	Data collection, data entry
	Rita Karimu	Leading focus group discussions
	Charity Assibi	Leading focus group discussions
	Rebecca Seidu	Leading focus group discussions
	Irene Karimu	Translation
	Rosena Douglas Awuni	Translation



# APPENDIX 1. LIST OF GRASSROOTS RESEARCHERS

Name of organization	Name of researcher	Role in research
GROOTS Kenya	Violet Shivutse	Coordination
	Winrose Nyaguthii	Coordination
	Cecilia Mburugu	Translation, leading focus group discussion
	Rachael Ojala	Data collection
	Lucy Njoki	Data collection
	Betty Petronnilla Busiega	Data collection
	Magdalene Kariuki	Data entry
	Shibuye community health workers	Case study author
Mahila Swaraj Abhiyan (MSA)	Avani Rawal	Case study author, translation, data entry
	Madhuben Chowdhry	Data collection
	Ramila Meda	Data collection
	Geeta Dodiya	Data collection
	Namrata Patel	Data collection
	Varsha Maheta	Data collection
	Mahendra Makwana	Data collection
	Hasmukh Vankar	Data collection
	Bharat Patel	Data collection
	Dilip Patel (Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan)	Data collection
	Mr. Hitesh Dhobi	Organizational support
Naugachia Jan Vikas Lok Karyakram (NJVLK)	Irra Sharma	Data collection
	Sobha Devi	Data collection
	Parvati Devi	Data entry
	Munni Devi	Data entry
	Renu Devi	Leading focus group discussions
	Rampyari Devi	Translation
	Sulekha Devi	Translation

# APPENDIX 1. LIST OF GRASSROOTS RESEARCHERS



Name of organization	Name of researcher	Role in research
Ntankah Village Women Common Initiative Group	John Esandua	Case study author
	Theresia Morfaw	Case study author
	Magdelene Sirri	Case study author
	Emmaluella Funkuin	Data collection
	Emmanuella Lum	Data collection
	Prudentia Nayah	Data collection
	Celine Dongmo	Data collection
	Gladys Ndifor	Data collection
	Quintoline Kongran Jikpu	Data entry
	Theresia Morfaw	Data entry
	Margaret Munga	Data entry
	Prudentia Fotou	Data entry
	John Esandua	Data entry
	Veronica Kini	Translation, transcription
	Mirelle Tchaptchet	Translation, transcription
Participatory Development Action Programme (PDAP)	Rina	Coordinator
	Banu	Coordinator
	Umme Fatema	Data collection
	Shewli	Data collection
	Maksuda	Data collection
	Jahanara	Data collection
	Ferdoushi	Data collection
	Quazi Baby (with the help of four others)	Editing, data entry
	Mahjabeen	Translation
Slum Women's Initiative for Development (SWID)	Maria Kisakye	Case study author, data collection, data entry
	Hannah Namuyomba	Coordinator, Case study author, data collection, data entry



# APPENDIX 1. LIST OF GRASSROOTS RESEARCHERS

Name of organization	Name of researcher	Role in research
	Latiffa Ziraba	Data collection
	Susan Kiriire	Data collection
	Brenda Akankunda	Data collection
	Henry	Data collection
	Juliana Achi	Data entry
	Jonathan Kisakye	Data entry
Uganda Community-Based Association for Child Welfare (UCOBAC)	Frances Birungi	Coordination
	Susan Gamwino	Coordinator, leading focus group discussions, testing instruments, data/case study compilation
	Aminah Nakintu	Leading focus group discussions, data collection
	Afisa Nnamamonde	Leading focus group discussions, data collection
	Harriet Nakamanyisa	Leading focus group discussions, data collection
	Olivia Nankya	Leading focus group discussions, data collection
	Asha Babu	Monitoring data collection, testing instruments
Union de Cooperativa Las Brumas	Josward H. Rodríguez	Data collection
	Carmen María Gutiérrez	Data collection
	Jader L. Pineda S.	Data collection
	Nuris Herrera	Data collection
	Maria Teresa Fernández	Data processing
	Claudia Linarte	Data processing
	Uri Farkas (Huairou Commission)	Translation
	Katie Gillet (Huairou Commission)	Translation
	Nicole Remple (Huairou Commission)	Translation



SI No:	Date:
Name:	
Age:	Gender:
Location (town & district & country):	Locality (rural/urban):
Main occupation:	
Name of organization:	

## A. Perspectives on Corruption

1. In your opinion, what do you consider to be corruption? *Give an example if possible*
2. Based on your definition, how would you measure corruption? What indicators would you use? (e.g.: expectations of bribes, sexual favors, other favors, lack of transparency)
  - Indicator 1: .....
  - Indicator 2: .....
  - Indicator 3: .....
  - Other (s) List .....
3. Is there government agency providing public goods and services which you cannot access due to corrupt practices? (Yes/No/Do not know)
  - a. What strategies can increase access to public goods and services?
  - b. What strategies can improve transparency on public goods and services?
  - c. What strategies can improve decision-making on public goods and services?

## B. Official Initiatives to Fight Corruption

4. Is there a process to address corruption in your country? (Yes/No/Do not know)
  - a. If yes, describe the process.
5. Has your Government passed an Anti-Corruption Law or Act? (Yes/No/Do not know)
6. Can you list which government bodies are responsible for investigating corruption (e.g. Comptroller General of the Republic, the General Directorate of State Contracting, or the Courts, Ombudsman)?
  - b. Name of agency .....
  - c. Name of agency.....



# APPENDIX 2. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

- 7. Does your Government have an Anti-Corruption Fund? (Yes/No/Do not know)
  - d. If yes, describe the purpose of the fund.
- 8. What have been major advances in recent years in the fight against corruption?
- 9. What anti-corruption strategies should the government focus on in the future?

## C. Issues Faced by Grassroots Communities

- 10. Have you or anyone you know ever been asked to pay a bribe? (Yes/No/Do not know)
- 11. If yes what for? Please list examples. (Ask about services related to health, education, credit, licenses, permits related to enterprise, housing, birth/death certificates, public distribution of food or other public goods, pensions, land acquisition, etc.)

	11.1 Type of Service	11.2 Agency involved	11.3 What was the official cost of the service?	11.4 How much was the bribe you were asked to pay?	11.5 Did you pay?	11.6 If yes, which level of official did you pay?	11.7 How many times has this occurred? (e.g. frequency)	11.8 If you refused to pay what were the consequences (e.g. threats, sexual harassment)
A								
B								
C								
D								
E								
F								

- 12. In your personal experience, are some government agencies more corrupt than others? (Yes/No/Do not know)
  - e. List agencies and assign each a score on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not corrupt and 5 is very corrupt. (Note: Use more sheets if required)



	12.1 Agency Name	12.2 Score
A		
B		
C		
D		
E		
F		

12.3 For any agencies that you have given very high scores (4/5), please explain why.

12.4 For any agencies that you have given very low scores (1/2), please explain why.

13. Have there been any cases where someone in a position of authority tried to extract non-monetary favors from you in return for a service? (Yes/No)

13.1 If yes, what favors were expected from you?

	Favors	Yes/No
A	Gifts in kind (e.g.: produce, jewellery)	
B	Sexual favors (from you or your female relatives)	
C	Free labor (domestic work, agricultural work)	
D	Transfer of property deeds	
E	Other	
F	Other	
G	Other	

14. Have you ever taken a stand against corruption? (Yes/No)

14.1 If yes, who did you report your complaint to? Fill in table below.



## APPENDIX 2. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

	14.1 Who did you report it to?		14.2 What action did they take?	14.3 Was this action helpful for your case? (Yes/No/Not Sure)	14.4 Was your case satisfactorily resolved (Yes/No / Not Sure)
A	Police	Y/N			
B	Administrative authority (e.g.: Ombudsman)	Y/N			
C	Lawyer / Courts	Y/N			
D	Local politician	Y/N			
E	Women's group	Y/N			
F	Community based organization	Y/N			
G	Non-governmental Organization	Y/N			
H	Local leader (e.g.: community elder)	Y/N			
I	Other (please specify)	Y/N			
J	Other (please specify)	Y/N			

14.5 Give examples of instances of success.

### D. Political Participation and Corruption

- 15 As a voter, have you ever been offered gifts/cash/favors during elections? (Yes/No/Do not know)
- 16 Have you ever been elected or appointed to a position of local public/political office? (Yes/No)
- 17 During elections were you subject to threats or illegal practices? (Yes/No)
- 18 Once elected, did you face pressures that could result in corrupt practices? (Yes/No)
- 19 How corrupt are elected women representatives compared to elected men? (More/Less/Same/Do not know)
- 20 What recommendations do you have to improve transparency and accountability among elected officials?



## E. Organizational Responses

- 21 Can grassroots women affiliated to your organization raise their voices more or less than women who are not affiliated? (More/Less/Same/Do not know)
- 22 In your opinion are elected women affiliated to your organization more or less accountable than those not affiliated to your organization? (More/Less/Same/Do not know)
- 23 What organizational strategies have been used to fight corruption? List in table below and check the top three most successful strategies (e.g.: protest, mobilization, advocacy, media, legal)

	23.1 Strategy	23.2 Was this successful (Yes/No/Do not know)
A		
B		
C		
D		
E		

- 24 What challenges do organizations face in fighting corruption?
- 25 How can these challenges be overcome?
- 26 What support does your organization need to fight corruption?

## F. Final Recommendations

- 27 Do you have any recommendations for grassroots men or women who experience corrupt practices?
- 28 What would you recommend for global or national anti-corruption programmes to ensure that their strategies address your concerns on corruption?



# APPENDIX 3. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONNAIRE

<b>Organization:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>No of women present:</b>

**Questions:**

- Have you all experienced corruption in your lives? Where? In what ways? How often?
- Does corruption affect you all in similar ways? Or are there differences in your experiences? What might explain any differences?
- Do you think that corruption is different for women than for men? How is it different? Please explain
- Is corruption a constant problem? Or is it worse in specific circumstances? Please give examples.
- Are some officials or government agencies more corrupt than others? Please explain why.
- What factors do you think lead an official or an agency to become corrupt?
- Have you ever been able to do anything as individuals to tackle corrupt behavior? Who did you look to for support when dealing with corrupt officials?
- Have you been successful at any point in dealing with corruption? Why do you think you were successful? What factors helped the situation? Please give examples.
- What have been the major barriers to tackling corruption that you have faced as individuals? What do you think can be done to overcome these?
- What work have you been doing with your organization to tackle corruption? Have you found strategies that have worked? What has been the impact of this work? Please explain your experiences.
- What have been the major barriers your organization has faced in the fight against corruption? What can be done to overcome these?
- Do the current laws work to discourage corruption? Do the courts uphold the law? If not, how in your opinion can the law/legal system be changed to make them more responsive?
- Do you know of any other mechanisms outside of courts that have been or can be used to address corruption? What are they? In your experiences are these useful? Please give examples.
- What can/should be done to encourage corrupt individuals or organizations to end their corrupt practices? What actions/punishments would you advocate to discourage corruption?
- Which individuals or organizations do you think should take the lead in fighting corruption? Whose responsibility is it?
- Now that we have discussed so much on corruption, can we all agree on a definition for it? If not, what differences of opinion are there amongst you?
- Draw up an action plan with recommendations for policies or programs that you think would help to reduce corrupt behavior, especially targeting grassroots women. Who (i.e. which stakeholders) is this plan aimed at? Please explain why you have made these recommendations and why you are targeting these stakeholders.



**Figure 1. Grassroots women’s definition of corruption (global, N=370)**

Definition	Rate	Percentage
Bribery	157	42%
Abuse of or poor leadership	109	29%
Illegal or deceptive actions	50	14%
Poor or absent service delivery	17	5%
Sexual exploitation	14	4%
Physical abuse	10	3%
I don’t know	1	0%
Other	12	3%
No Response	22	–
Grand total	370	100%

**Figure 2. Agencies perceived by women to be corrupt (female, global, N=1,131)**

Agency	Rate	Percentage
Police	223	20%
Local government	128	11%
Health department/services	108	10%
Education department/schools	91	8%
Immigration	55	5%
Electricity department/provider	53	5%
Revenue department	51	5%
Legal system	49	4%
Drivers’ licensing authority	48	4%
State/national government	48	4%
Land department/registry	46	4%
Agriculture/rural development	33	3%
Water department/provider	26	2%
Registrar’s office	21	2%



## APPENDIX 4. DATA TABLES

Agency	Rate	Percentage
Customs	14	1%
Electoral commission	12	1%
Food distribution department	10	1%
Civil society organizations	9	1%
Forestry department	9	1%
Individuals	8	1%
Bank/financial services	7	1%
Other	82	7%
Grand total	1,131	100%

*Figure 3. Service areas of requested bribes (female, global, N=447)*

Service area	Rate	Percentage
Public entitlements	75	17%
Documentation	73	16%
Employment and remuneration	59	13%
Healthcare	54	12%
Law enforcement	52	12%
Education	47	11%
Housing, land and property	43	10%
Business	34	8%
Election	9	2%
Family	1	0%
Female grand total	447	100%



**Figure 4. Proportion of women who have been asked to pay a bribe, by age (female, global, N=387)**

Age band	Response	Rate	Percentage
Below 20 (N=5)	Yes	2	40%
	No or unsure	3	60%
	No response	0	0%
	Grand total	5	100%
20 - 29 (N=58)	Yes	28	48%
	No or unsure	24	41%
	No response	6	10%
	Grand total	58	100%
30 - 39 (N=128)	Yes	83	65%
	No or unsure	31	24%
	No response	14	11%
	Grand total	128	100%
40 - 49 (N=120)	Yes	87	73%
	No or unsure	23	19%
	No response	10	8%
	Grand total	120	100%
50 - 59 (N=61)	Yes	36	59%
	No or unsure	17	28%
	No response	8	13%
	Grand total	61	100%
Above 60 (N=15)	Yes	6	40%
	No or unsure	6	40%
	No response	3	20%
	Grand total	15	100%



## APPENDIX 4. DATA TABLES

**Figure 5. Successful strategies of grassroots women’s groups (female, global, N=542)**

Organizational strategy	Rate	Percentage
Protesting	97	18%
Mobilizing local communities	90	17%
Anti-corruption campaigning	89	16%
Monitoring government	65	12%
Advocacy	58	11%
Engaging with media	50	9%
Educating communities on corruption	46	8%
Participating in local governance	14	3%
Pursuing legal recourse	7	1%
Reporting corruption	7	1%
Other	19	4%
Grand total	542	100%

**Figure 6. Support needed by grassroots women’s groups (female, global, N=468)**

Organizational support needed	Rate	Percentage
Financial support	140	30%
Capacity building for grassroots women	111	24%
Access to information to fight corruption	51	11%
Alliances with legal and other experts	27	6%
Partnerships to fight corruption	25	5%
Organizational support	23	5%
Government support and legitimacy	20	4%
Support to help mobilize women	18	4%
Enabling environment to fight corruption	15	3%
Gender-sensitive leadership to fight corruption	14	3%
Safe spaces to report corruption	14	3%



<b>Organizational support needed</b>	<b>Rate</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
International support	5	1%
I don't know	2	0%
Other	3	1%
Grand total	468	100%



## APPENDIX 5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is important to acknowledge that this study is limited in a number of ways. These are summarized below:

- Due to the short time-frame for the study, it was not possible to conduct an extensive literature review at the outset. Some issues were not reviewed in-depth due to time limitation – for instance, regional variations in how corruption reportedly manifests.
- Piloting of instruments was not done. As noted elsewhere in this report, the lack of piloting (due to the short time-frame) prevented iterative (re)design that would have resulted in more streamlined instruments. Furthermore, regional pilots (i.e., in Africa, Latin America and South Asia) would have ensured that the final instruments were well adapted to all the regional contexts in which they were to be administered. In the absence of such piloting, it was necessary to adopt an open-question format (as presented in Appendix 2 and 3) that required more time to administer and slowed down analysis due to the non-standardized nature of the responses elicited.
- It would perhaps have been better if the organizations selected to participate in the research had been more representative in terms of geographical spread. For instance, grassroots women in Southeast Asia were not represented at all in the study. In Latin America, three organizations were chosen, but two of them were from Brazil, albeit different states. The same was true for South Asia, where two of the three organizations selected were from India (albeit different states). However, such limitations were also conditioned by the fact that selection of organizations was done based on their interest to engage in the process. This has implications for the validity of the findings outside of the limited geographic areas where the research was conducted.

Moreover, comparative analysis of the data from the three regions represented – Africa, Latin America and South Asia – must be treated with some caution since the numbers of respondents from these areas was unequal. (The sample was skewed as follows: 240 respondents from Africa, 131 from Latin America and 100 from South Asia). In reporting some of the findings, percentages to represent frequencies were used rather than absolute numbers in order to correct for this skewed dataset.

- Extrapolation of the findings to grassroots women/communities more generally should also be treated with caution. This is because the respondents in this study were overwhelmingly associated with grassroots organizations. Since they were mobilized and had received education/training in issues surrounding corruption and governance, they cannot be treated as representative of grassroots communities in general.
- This study was unable to delve into a comparative gendered analysis of corruption – e.g., to consider responses to the questions “In what ways does corruption affect grassroots men differently to grassroots women?” and “What strategies do men adopt to deal with corrupt practices and how are these similar or different to those used by grassroots women?” This was not possible due to limited resources in terms of finance and human resources as well as the short time-frame.
- The reduced time-frame for this study meant that triangulation of data (using multiple methodologies in order to reach a more robust conclusion) was virtually impossible. Additional long-term research could be considered to fully assess both the social, economic, and political contexts in which grassroots women’s organizations are operating and the effectiveness of their organizations’ strategies.



- This study has produced some interesting findings and has raised a number of questions that need to be addressed. For instance, the questionnaire did not ask respondents to provide strategies and recommendations for tackling corrupt practices that grassroots women experience in relation to specific agencies. In all countries, the police were high on the list of agencies perceived to be the most corrupt; based on the data collected, however, it is difficult to identify what steps grassroots respondents have taken (if any) to address the corrupt practices of the police specifically. Due to time limitations, it was not possible to collect more targeted information based on the initial findings.



UN photo/ Martin Perret.

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