



From understanding to action to policy: How gender-sensitive corruption prevention and women's economic empowerment reinforce each other

As a global project that aims at strengthening integrity in the economic system, at the Alliance for Integrity, we have created and grown a multi-stakeholder network where supporters and partners develop practical tools and share experiences for companies and their business partners to promote transparency and integrity along the global supply chains.

The Alliance for Integrity has been addressing **the link between gender and corruption** since 2018, when the issue first entered the international agenda during Argentina's presidency of the G20. As a result, the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group noted in its 2019–2021 plan to deepen the understanding of the linkages between gender and corruption and **"discuss how the gender dimension could be included in anti-corruption programming and policies"**.



Since then, the [Alliance for Integrity](#) has contributed to a **better understanding of the link** between the two concepts. As a result, a **wide range of services** are developed and implemented in different countries that empower and enable women in business to fight corruption and promote gender-sensitive corruption prevention in the private sector for women to exercise their rights **equally**. Moreover, the cooperation between international actors, convened by the Alliance for Integrity, allows **creating synergies in the effort to promote integrity with a gender lens** and **engage policymakers** to develop the necessary framework conditions.

Today, there is an understanding that **anti-corruption and gender equity efforts tend to be mutually reinforcing**. Synergies between the two efforts can generate greater impact by strengthening policy decisions, as stated by the UNODC report **"The time is now"** in 2020.

When we started, however, we encountered diverse information on the topic of women and corruption:

- **Women are affected differently by corruption than men.** These differences are often hard to quantify and difficult to identify.
- **Men are not treated as a gender with specific needs and challenges,** but are considered the norm.
- Corruption tends to reinforce existing **gender disparities** or is an obstacle to removing them.
- There are not enough Corruption Prevention programs in the private

- sector with a **gender equality perspective**.
- **Sextortion**, the most violent form of corruption, in which sexual acts become currency of bribery, is a phenomenon that primarily women suffer from.
- Where there is **diversity** in the decision-makers, **corruption rates are lower**.
- Gender bias in most cultures is related to risk-averse capabilities; therefore, among other reasons, corruption tends to be **correlated to gender**



How has the project addressed the gender-differentiated impact of corruption on women entrepreneurs?

First step, **we wanted to know more**. In 2018, we, therefore, organised an international writing contest among postgraduate students in cooperation with W20 and C20 as part of Argentina's G20 presidency. The question was whether and how corruption affects women's empowerment in business. The [winning entry](#) summarised and confirmed what various studies have increasingly found: **Context and opportunity determine corrupt behaviour, not gender**, as selective inventories suggest. Moreover, an anti-corruption strategy based solely on gender would **reinforce gender stereotypes** instead of promoting differentiated and context-specific approaches to preventing and combating corruption. However, it also became clear that **facts and figures on the links between gender and corruption in business** were still largely lacking. With these insights in hand, we gradually moved forward.

Then **we started with ourselves**, a GIZ team of 16 individuals from seven nations, men and women with diverse cultures, ages, religions, and perspectives. How did we deal with gender stereotypes in the team? Which unconscious biases determined our behaviour, and what did we consider developing gender-sensitive approaches to corruption prevention? We received training at a global team workshop. Based on the GIZ Gender Strategy and the G400 Gender Policy, we developed a policy document for our work in the Alliance for Integrity's network and appointed a **gender focal point**. **Our gender policy** stipulated that our **partners and supporters in the network** were also offered to undergo training and were asked to **commit to the principle of gender equality** in our so-called "letter of support", a document where companies and organisations sign up to support the network and commit to comply with international anti-corruption standards. Since then, the five advisory groups that make up the Alliance for Integrity network in Brazil, Ghana, Mexico, India, and Indonesia have held gender training sessions. Care is taken to ensure that all the network's events are gender sensitive.

Thus, the **promotion of gender equality** became a feature of all our work. We ensure that the topic remains central to our activities, constantly reflecting internally and externally with colleagues and counterparts. In different local GIZs, our team is actively involved in the gender working groups (India, Colombia, Mexico) and sectoral initiatives in Germany and regional initiatives such as REDLAC.

Our network partners got quickly engaged. For a network, cooperation is the key success factor to achieve its goals. Our supporters and partners provide all technical contributions to the anti-corruption ecosystem. The GIZ team members at the secretariat and in the five hubs, who coordinate the network in 14 countries, act as facilitators to organise the cooperation of supporters and coordinate the articulation with other stakeholders.

The companies took action! In order to act immediately and gain insights from everyday business life, our trainers, compliance officers of large international companies, offered one of our established formats, the anti-corruption training for SMEs ("From Companies to Companies" DEPE from its original name in Spanish), in a special edition exclusively for women entrepreneurs and female executives of SMEs in Mexico. The concept, which is strongly based on sharing experiences, brought to light harrowing experiences of women leaders in business related to corruption. As a result, we quickly realised that **we needed to create trusted spaces where women could discuss these challenges**.

Integrity Coffee
Mexico 2018, 2019



Integrity Coffee
Colombia 2020



Integri-Tea
India 2020



Women for Integrity Series
Ghana 2020



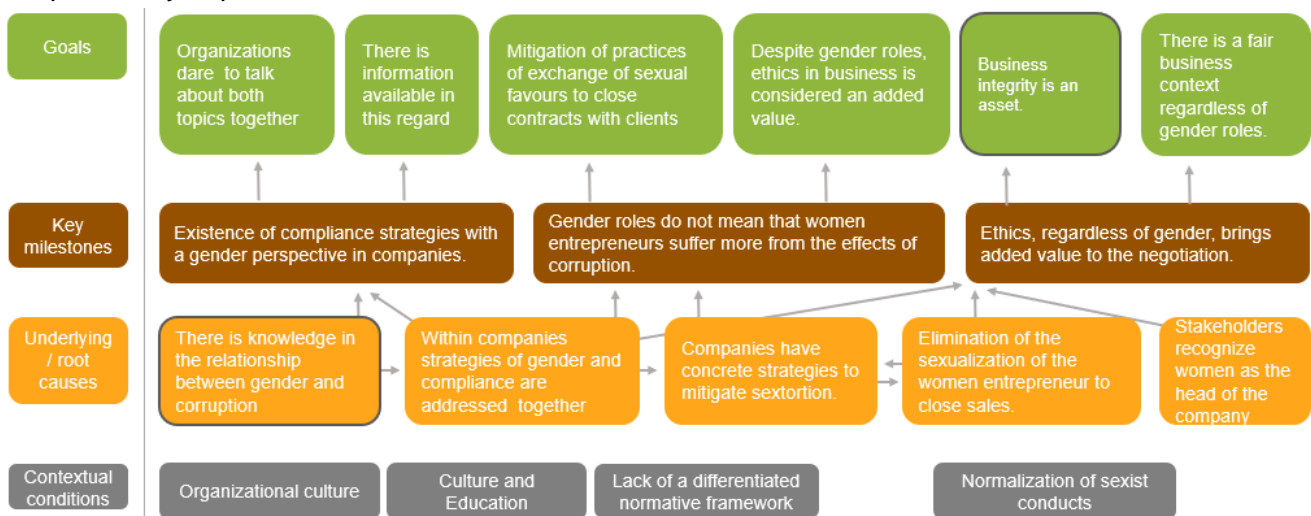


Based on this reflection, **the Integrity Coffee was born**. In this format, women meet informally to share in a safe space about how they are affected by corruption and how they can protect themselves against it. The first [Integrity Coffee](#) in Mexico, implemented in 2019, has become globally established and regionally adapted for Colombia, Ghana ([Women in Integrity Series WISE](#)) and India ([Integri-Tea](#)), among others. In Indonesia, for instance, "[Women in Integrity](#)" ([WIN](#)) is a safe platform for female entrepreneurs and professionals to discuss key challenges related to corruption in day-to-day business. Since 2019, WIN is also part of the Regional Advocacy Committee (RAC) of the government in West Java.

From understanding to action: After two years in Mexico and Colombia listening to women entrepreneurs at the Integrity Coffee about how corruption impacts their businesses in a gender-differentiated way, we created a first bi-national working group with our main partners in both countries on gender and corruption.

This working group was formed by more than 35 organisations, from the public sector (Government of Mexico and Colombia), private sector (e.g. Siemens, Covestro, Bayer, Cemex, Toks), business associations (e.g. Asociación de Mujeres del Sector Automotriz en Colombia, CCE, COPARMEX, ANDI, Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá), international organisations (e.g. UN Women, local Global Compact networks, UNODC), academia (U. Anáhuac, U. Externado).

Through the Theory of Change methodology, the Working Group studied and structured the results that the women entrepreneurs had shared and thus proposed the creation of 3 business integrity products with a gender equality perspective that women entrepreneurs could practically implement in their businesses.



The products were collectively developed, pilot tested and launched at the Alliance for Integrity's Regional Business Integrity Week. The products are: [Guide](#) to ensuring a gender equality perspective in compliance programmes, [Infographic](#) and communication campaign on the relationship between gender and corruption, and Workshop on ethical negotiation as an added value for women entrepreneurs

The matter gained momentum. These experiences resulted in more and more actors reaching out to the Alliance for Integrity to collaborate on the topic. Currently, we work in a collective action approach with different actors. In April 2021, we launched a **Global Sounding Board on Gender and Business Integrity** with international organisations (UNDP, World Economic Forum), a think tank (U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre), a multinational enterprise (Covestro), civil society organisations and local actors from the public sector (Ghana Enterprises Agency) and business institutions



What do we want to achieve, and how? Our strategy relies on four pillars:

- 1- Create awareness among companies, the public sector, and other stakeholders.
- 2- Support peer learning and knowledge exchange between companies and experts.
- 3- Empower women business leaders, especially from SMEs, to promote integrity.
- 4- Agenda setting, articulating, and coordinating activities.

Create awareness: Gender week social media campaign, success stories from women entrepreneurs, [Quotes](#) from high level decision makers.

Peer learning: webinar series ([Workshop to develop whistleblower channels with a gender and diversity perspective](#), [Sextortion](#), [Role of compliance within a gender perspective](#), [How does business corruption affect women](#).) [interregional](#) exchange between experts from Argentina and Indonesia., [Integrity Week Latin America](#), [Gender Conversation in Chihuahua Mexico](#).

Capacity building: [DEPE training for women](#), negotiation with integrity training for women entrepreneurs. Training for women-led companies on integrity in procurement in cooperation with UNDP's FairBiz programme and LPPK Indonesia

Agenda setting: Global Sounding Board on Gender & Business Integrity, joint activities as the UN CoSP 9 2021 Side event: "Women as drivers for fair and ethical business".

These four aspects aim to produce practical evidence on the link between gender and corruption and raise the capacity among more and better-informed actors to link the two concepts in a way that allows for more effective and sustainable results in the prevention of corruption in the global supply chains.

From action to policymaking. Regularly, we feed the international dialogue with our good practices, e.g., the format "Integrity Coffee" was mentioned as best practice in the B20 policy recommendations in 2020. In addition, the new Action Plan (2022-2024) of the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group establishes that "the ACWG will continue to improve our understanding of the linkages between gender and corruption to identify ways to prevent and address it, including how corruption can affect women and men differently, and we will continue to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women including by mainstreaming it in relevant legislation, policy development, research, projects and programmes, as appropriate and in accordance with the fundamental principles of domestic law."

We are aware that there is still a lot of work to do. Indices need to be developed to be able to advance in the qualitative and quantitative measurement of gender and integrity issues. Tools are needed to provide orientation for companies to implement gender-sensitive Compliance Management Systems. In this regard, the self-assessment tool [TheIntegrityApp](#) could be equipped with a feature that allows companies to measure to what extent they integrate already gender-related aspects in their integrity and compliance policies. Good practices need to be systematised and disseminated. And finally, the public-private dialogue on gender-sensitive legislation, enforcement and reporting mechanisms needs to be extended.

We believe that the trustful space generated inside the Alliance for Integrity's network, due to successful collective action experienced by the involved actors, provides a promising ground for further action and concrete results.

The Alliance for Integrity Global Team