

Working Group on Gender and Corruption
14th Meeting
Wednesday, 1 October 2025

**Engaging Men in the Gender and Corruption Agenda:
Lessons and Perspectives**

It is a pleasure for me to present in this working group.

From my point of view Gender Equality is and will be an issue that is equally important for women and men.

In the invitation letter I was asked on how engaging in this field as a man has shaped my perspective, approach, and impact. As I am a lawyer, my approach is a legal approach. Law should be an instrument to promote justice and equity, and in many cases, that is indeed the case.

For example, the German Constitution states in Art. 3: "Men and women have equal rights. The state promotes the effective implementation of equal rights for women and men and works to eliminate existing disadvantages". The Constitutions of many other countries have similar provisions. The text of the German Constitution is very clear; and it is an old text. The constitution came into effect 76 years ago. But still we did not achieve gender equality in my country (neither in many other countries). After 76 years!

For me this is an ethical and legal scandal, a scandal that affects more than just 50% of the population; looking at the matter from a more holistic point of view: it is a scandal that affects the whole population. Gender equality, from my point of view, is not only a matter of perspective and of justice, it is a matter of respect, and it is a matter of human rights and human dignity.

In my professional career, in the development field, as diplomat, as lawyer and as consultant I have worked with women and with men in different positions and constellations; as my principles, as my colleagues, my subordinates or secretaries. Of course, the way men and women communicate is somewhat different. But in my opinion, this is an asset. There are various studies which show that mixed teams, especially in the leadership of an institution, not only advance gender equality. Such working models provide more transparency and less corruption. These studies correspond to my own experiences. From my point of view, we must see women as agents of change and focus more on aligning anti-corruption and gender equality objectives.

Two and a half years ago I wrote an article with the central message: More gender equality leads to less corruption. This conclusion bases on declarations and the resolutions of United Nations General Assembly Special Session against Corruption (UNGASS) and the 9th Conference of State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) both in the year 2021. It was a call to action from the United Nations on more gender equality.

UNCAC Resolution 10/10 - "Addressing the societal impacts of corruption" of the 10th Conference of State Parties to the United Nations Convention 2023 in Atlanta established a concrete follow up on the matter. The resolution encourages states and UNODC:

- to mainstream a gender perspective into anti-corruption policies, strategies and programs,
- to conduct further research
- to collect data on the impact of corruption on women
- enhance the empowerment of women,
- prosecute all forms of sexual corruption effectively
- and to promote representation of women in anti-corruption activities

The resolutions made clear again, that women and men are affected differently by corruption and that there is a strong link between gender and corruption. To put it into the words of a side event of the UNGASS-Conference 2021: Gender equality and anti-corruption: two themes, one goal.

Unfortunately in recent years, we have to observe an authoritarian and anti-feminist movement in many countries. From my point of view this is more than just a fight against the feminist movement; it is an attack on justice and international law and on human rights. At the same time gender-based violence against women is on the rise, increasingly also in digital spaces. Altogether we can say that these attacks jeopardize human dignity which is a cornerstone of democratic societies.

The commitment for gender equality hasn't got easier in recent years. Clear and important successes already gained, get under stress again. Sometimes I fear that in our days it is not anymore a fight for more gender equality; sometimes it seems to be a fight to defend what we already achieved. The dynamic has changed. We have to defend long established language and attitudes.

It is a similar situation as it is in the case of rule of law. Rule of law seemed to have a common consensus. But now it is under attack as gender equality is. A worrying panorama. At the same time we are observing an increase in corruption. It comes again very clear that those developments go hand in hand.

In response to this worrying situation, I think men's and women perspectives should come to the same result. We are talking about the same values under threat. Therefore I think we should join forces. Women and men. The key question is: what can we do? How can we face the new dynamics, the situation, that gender equality in many countries is not any more on the move? How can we promote gender equality in a situation where it is under threat and must be defended? We need new strategies. How is it possible to align anti-corruption and gender equality objectives to counterbalance the current developments?

Many questions! Therefore I think this working group and especially our agenda today is a very important step which will need a very committed follow up.