2018 GENDER PRE-FORUM

THEME:
CORRUPTION AND WOMEN’S RIGHTS IN AFRICA: TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

26 – 27 November 2018
Gaborone, Botswana
A. SETTING THE SCENE

Corruption remains one of the main governance deficits in Africa and has been high on the African Union (AU) governance agenda. According to Transparency International, corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gains. It takes various forms, grand, petty or political, depending on the amount of money involved or the sector where it occurs. The real cost of corruption goes beyond the economic cost. Corruption grossly affects citizens’ daily life, leading to poor health and education systems; injustices, particularly to the most vulnerable; loss of faith and trust in governments; slow economic growth and development; and exacerbates poverty rates, coupled with high unemployment rates. Corruption weakens accountability structures, which are responsible for protection of human rights, hence contributing to a culture of impunity. It ranks among the key structural root causes of conflicts world over and Africa in particular, exacerbating social, economic and political inequalities.

Corruption has well-known differential impacts on social groups, with women and girls carrying the greatest burden of its impact. Corruption feeds on and exacerbates structural inequalities and reinforces unequal power relations between women and men, making the former even further disenfranchised. Such vulnerability is far more evident in the public sector, where inefficiencies and unresponsive systems disproportionately impacts women and girls. Furthermore, corruption hinders progress towards gender equality and presents a barrier for women to gain full access to their civic, political, social and economic rights. Research suggests that petty corruption, particularly when basic public services are sold instead of provided by right, fundamentally affects the full enjoyment of women and girls’ rights. Corruption worsens women and girls’ vulnerability to sexual extortion (sextortion) and reduces women’s access to markets and credit, thereby reinforcing their marginalisation in socio-economic life. Also, corruption enables women and girls’ disempowerment. Dependence on public service for basic services, including health, water and education, increases the vulnerability of women and girls to the consequences of service delivery deficits. In addition, women’s limited access to public offices and officials as well as low-income levels, affect their ability to change the status quo or to hold states and those in power accountable to deliver services that are their fundamental right.

According to World Population Review, women are half of Africa’s population and like it is globally, they form the majority of Africa’s poor. Women in Africa are particularly susceptible to a double jeopardy; as the continent continues to grapple with violations of women’s rights that have resulted in gender inequalities. This is worsened by patriarchy, social discrimination grounded in exclusionary cultural practices. Corruption in Africa has created additional obstacles for women to meaningfully participate in politics and governance processes at all levels. Limited participation of women in these processes, particularly the poor, those in remote areas and those belonging to socially excluded categories, continue to have adverse effect on their perceptions and awareness about the scourge. This limits their contribution to anti-corruption efforts.

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It is however very important to note that the gender equality movement in Africa is not void of accomplishments. Over the years, there have been notable positive shifts and achievements towards women empowerment and the closing of the gender gap in Africa. These have included the adoption of normative and policy frameworks at continental, regional and national levels. Notably, the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights adopted in in June 1981; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights in the Rights of Women in Africa adopted by the Second Ordinary Session of AU Assembly held in July 2003; the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa adopted by the Third Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly in July 2004; AU Agenda 2063² and AU Gender Strategy (2018-2027); continental strategic reporting instruments towards the promotion of gender equality and Women’s empowerment in Africa. Other frameworks have included regional gender mainstreaming strategies and national gender policy frameworks. These normative and policy frameworks have been key in strengthening ownership of the gender equality agenda and keeping the political and socio-economic gender issues alive at the highest political level in Africa.

Specifically, AU and its Organs have over the years committed to: including women in decision-making; fully empowering women in all spheres with equal social, political and economic rights. Further to this, efforts are being made to enable rural women to have access to productive assets; eliminate gender-based violence and discrimination; as well as attain full gender parity, with women occupying at least 50% of elected public offices at all levels. In order to give effect to these commitments, the AU convenes a Gender Pre-Forum to the Summit, to among other things, mainstream gender issues in its annual theme.

While delivering his remarks at the launch of the African Anti-Corruption Year under the theme: Winning the Fight Against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa’s Transformation, during the Twenty Ninth AU Assembly held in January 2018, H.E Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria observed that:

“It is evident that corruption has a devastating impact on marginalised communities especially the youth, women and children. Corruption breeds unequal societies, renders vulnerable groups prone to human trafficking, as well as recruitment into armed groups and militia. In effect, corruption deprives our young citizens of opportunities to develop meaningful livelihoods”.

In view of the above, the recognition of the gendered impact of corruption and the appreciation of the fact that corruption adversely affects women, is indicative of the AU’s commitment to combat corruption holistically and inclusively through a gender lens. This is further grounded in the commitment of the AU Heads of State and Government espoused in the Constitutive Act of the AU, enjoining Member States to coordinate and intensify their cooperation, unity, cohesion and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa. Through various activities and initiatives within the context of the theme of the year, the AU aims to rally various segments of the African society including AU Organs, Institutions, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), States and non-states actors towards addressing

² African Union Agenda 2063 is a 50-year development blueprint of the continents. Aspiration 6 envisages an Africa whose development is people-driven relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth and caring for children
corruption and impunity on the continent as a sustainable path to a prosperous and peaceful Africa.

B. RATIONALE

Adopted in July 2003, the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption is an AU normative instrument aimed at among other things, promotion of socio-economic development by removing obstacles to the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights. While all human rights are said to be equal, indivisible, interrelated and interdependent, the monitoring, enforcement and implementation frameworks and structures for economic, social and cultural rights are less advanced than that of civil and political rights. Specifically, in the fight against corruption, this discrepancy has been worsened by lack of coordination among different actor and weak institutional mechanisms, which focuses on civil and political rights than economic, social and cultural rights. Similarly, in the fight against corruption in Africa, the role of women has often been relegated to a few women that make it to the civil and political spaces, thereby leading to continued disenfranchisement of the most vulnerable women – poor, young and socially excluded.

Accountability and transparency are key principles in the promotion of good governance and sustenance of democracy as reaffirmed under Aspiration 3 of the AU Agenda 2063\(^3\). The Aspiration specifically calls for developmental, democratic and accountable institutions at all levels of government that are at the service of the people. It is envisaged that by 2063, African citizens will be actively participating in the social, economic and political development of the continent with corruption and impunity becoming a thing of the past. The lack of intersectional analysis of gender on corruption that successfully addresses the heterogeneity of women remains a daunting challenge in the efforts to rid the continent of the corruption scourge. Currently, there is scanty empirical data that properly measures corruption’s gender dimension and its layered impact, particularly on women. This calls for deliberate policy and programmatic efforts as well as commitments to establish functional partnerships with key stakeholders, including women movements and networks to fight corruption, demand accountability and contribute to anti-corruption approaches that are systematic and sustainable. Women’s meaningful participation in anti-corruption and harnessing the gains so far made in the fight against corruption is at the core of this commitment.

Empowering women and promoting their participation in political and socio-economic life is essential to the fight against corruption; it addresses the gendered impact of corruption; and eventually levels the playing field and the gender power imbalances and inequalities between women and men\(^4\). Within this framework, the African Union, through its Organs and line-directorates is committed to mainstreaming gender in the fight against corruption. To give effect to this commitment, the African Governance Platform\(^5\) with support from the African Governance Architecture (AGA) Secretariat based at the Department of Political Affairs and

\(^{3}\) African Union Agenda 2063 adopted in 2015 provides under Aspiration 3 for “An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law”

\(^{4}\) Transparency International 2016. Gender and Corruption: Topic guide

\(^{5}\) The African Governance Platform is the institutional mechanism for the African Governance Architecture, a framework that was established in 2012 to provide a platform for dialogue between the various stakeholders who are mandated to promote and strengthen democracy in Africa, in addition to translating the objectives of the legal and policy pronouncements in the African Union Shared Values.
the African Union Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC) as the Lead Organ for the theme of the year, in collaboration with the Directorate of Women, Gender and Development of the African Union Commission (AUC) will convene a Gender Pre-Forum to the 2018 High-Level Dialogue in Gaborone, Botswana from 26 – 27 November 2018. The Pre-Forum will be convened under the theme: Corruption and Women’s Rights in Africa: Trends, Challenges and prospects.

C. ABOUT THE 2018 GENDER PRE-FORUM

The Pre-forum is premised on the recognition that gender issues, like corruption are cross cutting. Thus, efforts aimed at addressing corruption that are not gender responsive would be at best, inadequate. The Pre-Forum will be convened under the auspices of the AGA Women Engagement Strategy (AGA-WES), a tool for mainstreaming gender in democratic governance initiatives for the African Governance Platform Members. It will focus on leveraging and reinforcing women’s insights, capacities, and initiatives for preventing and combatting corruption in Africa. The aim is to identify, support, strengthen and amplify the gendered perspectives on the sustainable fight against corruption. It will also provide a platform for capacity building for women led and focused organisations/networks towards enhanced involvement in building a culture of inclusivity, gender balance, transparency, and accountability in Africa; in addition to facilitating inter-regional exchanges and lessons learning. It is anticipated that the Gender Pre-Forum will serve as the biggest platform for women and men across the continent that have engaged in gender responsive anti-corruption efforts for learning and sharing of experiences and providing concrete recommendations to support the sustainable fight against corruption in Africa.

Sub-Thematic Focus Areas

(i) Corruption: A barrier to Gender Equality in Africa

This area will focus on the state of corruption in Africa through a gendered lens. It will facilitate a critical analysis of the gendered impact of corruption and how it manifests in the political, social and economic aspects of gender equality in Africa. impact on equality, democratic governance effectiveness and development outcomes on the continent. Discussions will take the form of a keynote address and opening remarks, which will provide a horizon scanning on the realities of corruption in various governance spaces and how collective efforts and action can help turn the tide. Speeches, presentations and discussions will also seek to highlight the role of women in the fight against corruption and take stock of existing gender responsive anti-corruption initiatives on the continent.

(ii) Assessment of Normative & Institutional Frameworks on Women’s Rights and Anti-Corruption in Africa

This area will assess the adequacy, effectiveness and appreciation of women’s rights and anti-corruption normative and institutional frameworks at the international, continental, regional and national levels. Presentations and discussions will introduce participants to the various normative instruments and institutions, driving State and non-state anti-corruption initiatives and efforts in Africa. Furthermore, interventions will dwell on various non-state efforts in the field of anti-corruption and how they support, interact and amplify state-led efforts.
and interventions. In this regard, policy recommendations will be drawn to support the effective implementation and operationalisation of the various instruments and institutions respectively.

(iii) **Understanding the nexus between Corruption and Women’s Rights in Africa**

Discussions under this area will focus on unpacking the impact of corruption on the full enjoyment of women’s rights in Africa. It will bring to the table discussions on how fundamental human rights can be leveraged in the fight against corruption, including the right to information, freedom of expression and assembly as well right to access to justice. Further discussions will be held on how to make anti-corruption efforts more sustainable and effective, using the Human Rights Based Approach Policy and programmatic recommendations will be drawn towards enhanced protection and promotion of women’s rights through a sustainable fight against corruption in Africa.

(iv) **Lessons from the Frontlines: Sustaining Women’s Leadership in Combating Corruption in Africa**

This focus area will facilitate conversations around the role women can play in the fight against corruption, particularly those in leadership positions. Focused on the right to participation, it is envisaged that discussions in this area will facilitate critically analyse the hypothesis that “women’s participation and representation in public offices and politics leads to less corruption”, coupled with the assertion that women are likely to be less corrupt that men. This area will leverage the experience of women politicians and leaders as well as gender and human rights activists to facilitate an experiential understanding of the role women can play in the fight against corruption at all levels. Specifically, discussions will highlight various initiatives undertaken by women towards the prevention and mitigation of corruption as well as leveraging technology, encouraging open governance systems and, creating state and citizen’s joint action for anti-corruption. Overall, the sub-theme will provide a snapshot into a best practice booklet which will be produced at the end of the Gender Pre-Forum to facilitate lessons learning.

(v) **Gender Sensitive Reporting Mechanisms for combating Corruption in Africa**

This focus area will address the need to strengthen women’s voices and empower them to report corruption and demand accountability. It will assess the gender responsiveness of existing corruption complaints mechanisms and law enforcement, facilitating a discussion on challenges and lessons learned towards ensuring women’s access to justice. Discussions under this area will premised on the assertion that a corrupt judiciary is an obstacle for women seeking redress, especially if they are complaining about someone in power or wealthy. Policy and programmatic recommendations will be garnered from these discussions to inform interventions towards a gender sensitive reporting mechanism for corruption.

**Goal and Objectives**

1. **Goal**

The overall goal of the Gender Pre-Forum is to strengthen understanding and appreciation
among key stakeholders on the gendered impact of corruption and innovative actions that can be taken to enhance the role of women in the fight against corruption in Africa.

ii. **Objectives**

Specifically, the Gender Pre-Forum will:

a. Improve the understanding and appreciation of continental, regional and national frameworks and institutions on anti-corruption, with particular focus on women’s rights;

b. Provide a platform to raise awareness among state and non-state actors on the gendered impact of corruption and its resultant effects on the protection and promotion of women’s rights in Africa;

c. Assess and document the contributions of women and girls to the prevention and fight against corruption through individual activism and collective efforts;

d. Strengthen the capacity of women and men to meaningfully participate in the fight against corruption, including forming effective alliances with various national, regional, continental and international stakeholders; and

e. Identify concrete strategies and innovative initiatives at national, regional and continental levels for gendered and sustainable prevention and fight against corruption.

**Expected Outcomes**

It is envisaged that the discussions at the 2018 Gender Pre-Forum will facilitate:

1. Actionable recommendations towards gender responsive anti-corruption efforts:
   a. Provide a framework for gender responsive anti-corruption approaches;
   b. Enhance individual programming of AUABC and other AU Organs and RECs working on corruption, transparency and accountability issues to become more gender responsive; and
   c. Enhance efforts towards meaningful participation of women and girls in the fight against corruption by African Governance Platform Members and at national levels by the National Anti-Corruption Bodies and Ombudsman agencies;

2. Enhanced capacity of women led or focused organisations and networks to develop innovative solutions and strengthen existing efforts at deepening accountability and transparency;

3. Documentation of gender responsive anti-corruption initiatives on the continent through sharing of best practices and comparable lessons;

4. Establishment of an African Community of Practice on Gender Responsive anti-corruption Efforts to support national, regional and continental institutions;

5. Development of a best practice booklet on successful gender responsive anti-corruption initiatives in Africa; and

6. Publication a Policy Brief/Discussion Paper on Gender and Corruption in Africa: Perspectives from the Gender Pre-Forum to the High-Level Dialogue

**D. Methodology and Timelines**

The 2018 Gender Pre-Forum will be conducted using a combination of methodologies. These will include plenary presentations and intergenerational panel discussions. The Pre-Forum will
be designed to empower individual participants to share their insights, reflect and engage in deliberations and constructively come up with ideas and strategies that can be leveraged for the fight against corruption.

Specifically, the Pre-Forum will be structured as follows:

(i) Speeches including Keynote Address on the theme with an emphasis on regional dynamics;
(ii) Moderated Intergenerational and gender balanced panels focusing on national, regional and continental trends, challenges, and prospects; and
(iii) **Africa Talks DG Trends** – The Gender Pre-Forum will host an edition of the AfricaTalks DG Trends, as an open platform for showcasing good practices and initiatives as well as knowledge sharing with regards to preventing and combating corruption in Africa.

**E. Policy Linkages**

i. **Annual High-Level Dialogue on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance in Africa**

To further facilitate the intergenerational policy exchange and dialogue within the context of the 2018 theme of the year, outcomes of the Gender Pre-Forum will be discussed at the 2018 High-Level Dialogue (HLD) on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance: Trends, Challenges, and Prospects. The HLD will provide opportunities for broader exchange on policy issues, practice challenges and prospects for strengthened anti-corruption efforts in Africa. Through the participation of women on various panels and the official presentation of the outcomes, it is envisaged that the HLD will adopt the recommendations for further presentation at the January 2019 AU Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

ii. **Report of the Champion to the AU Assembly on the 2018 Theme of the Year**

The final recommendations from the Gender Pre-Forum will also be presented to President Muhammadu Buhari and will form part of his report to the January 2019 AU Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This will ensure that key recommendations from the Pre-Forum form part of the Declaration of the AU Summit and provide impetus to the various anti-corruption efforts including work of many women activists, women’s organizations, and networks as well as continental, regional and national gender architectures.

**F. Dates and Venues**

In line with the principle and spirit of the African Governance Platform, the 2018 Gender Pre-Forum will be convened in **Gaborone, Botswana** from **26 – 27 November 2018**.

**G. Documentation**

The documentation for the Gender Pre-Forum will be shared electronically, while more information and updates will be available on the African Union website [www.au.int](http://www.au.int) under the Department of Political Affairs portal and the AGA website [www.aga-platform.org](http://www.aga-platform.org).
Conversations can also be followed on Twitter @AUC_DPA / @AGA_Platform and through the #DGtrends and #AfricaAgainstCorruption.

An online campaign will be instituted to encourage conversations on the theme of the Gender Pre-Forum. This campaign will be heralded by a series of Tweetchats aimed at amplifying the role of women in the fight against corruption.

H. Participants

Participants for the Gender Pre-Forum will be purposively identified based on gender and regional representation through existing databases; recommendations from the African Governance Platform Members, partners and key stakeholders; and AUC Directorates working on the issue. Specifically, The Gender Pre-Forum will target groups and individuals with a track record of work, and experience in the area of transparency and accountability drawn from:

- Women-led and oriented organisations implementing activities that are related to anti-corruption, transparency, and accountability, open governance systems as well as Freedom & Access to information programmes and activities in the Member States at all levels taking into consideration gender aspect of corruption;
- AU Member States, including Representatives of National Anti-Corruption Agencies, Parliaments, Security Institutions as well as the Judiciary amongst others;
- Think-tanks and academic research institutions with experience in working on the Gender and anti-corruption initiatives;
- Media practitioners; and CSOs
- Representatives of the African Governance Platform Members;
- Host Governments;
- International and African-based Organisations; and
- Development Partners

I. Partnership and Management

The Annual Gender Pre-Forum is an initiative of the African Governance Platform convened by the AGA Secretariat based at the Department of Political Affairs of the AUC. The Gender Pre-Forum will be convened in collaboration with the AU Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC); and Women and Gender Development Directorate (WGDD) for the African Union Commission with support from Development Partners.

J. Working Languages

The Pre-Forum will be conducted in the four AU Languages - English, Arabic, French and Portuguese. Online and physical publications will be available in English and French.

K. Contact Details of the Coordinating Team

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