

**ICPC CALLS ON NIGERIAN WOMEN TO CHOOSE TO CHALLENGE BRIBERY,  
GRATIFICATION AND ALL FORMS OF CORRUPTION IN THEIR COMMUNITIES'  
ASSESSMENT OF ROLE OF WOMEN IN COUNTERING FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC  
CRIME IN NIGERIA.**

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A paper delivered by the Hon Minister of Women Affairs in commemoration of the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Financial Crime, Cross-border Crime and Electoral Fraud.

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It was (*Agbese, 1982*), who said this about corruption; "Corruption is a phenomenon so difficult to define, yet it percolates every structure of the society". and he went on to explain corruption in clearest Nigerian terms "When we use our position in society to secure certain advantages jumping a queue, being waved off at the checkpoint or making others bend the rules to accommodate our demands, by whatever means even if it is just 'thank you' our action however innocent, however well-intentional, however un-threatening to others, has corrupted a system or a convention or some rules and regulations in application".

In another premise, Chief Olusegun Osoba (*1995*), defined corruption, "as an anti-social behavior conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms, and which undermines the authorities' capacity to secure the welfare of all citizens".

So, corruption in itself is a deadly Ébola virus avoided by all, yet is a beautiful bride courted by all even innocently.

Interestingly, Corruption is not gender neutral; it has different impacts on both women and men. Considering that women often face social, cultural, political and institutional discrimination, they encounter even more repression and social exclusion in a corruption-ridden society. Therefore, anti-corruption measures need to be gender responsive to facilitate gender equality and women's empowerment. Recent studies have showed that empowered women, who have an opportunity for participation in decision-making, are powerful actors that can contribute to the fight against corruption.

One major issue that affects Nigerians unfavourably is corruption which manifests in different forms – bribery, gratification extortion, embezzlement, misappropriation, etc. Corruption has been identified to be at the root of most of the problems faced by Nigeria – from economic downturn to infrastructural decay to unemployment, and insecurity.

Corruption has become so entrenched in our ways of doing things that most people think that it is the normal way of life. However, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) with its 3-pronged mandate is poised to challenge corruption and reduce it to the barest minimum.

The Commission also recognizes that it cannot do this alone and on this special day that calls for all women to “choose to challenge” corruption in all its ramifications, ICPC calls on Nigerian women to choose to challenge bribery, gratification, sexual harassment, “sextortion” and all other forms of corruption in their communities.

The call from ICPC is for women to be alert – sit up, get informed and get involved in what is going on around them. This is centered on the second value of the National Ethics and Integrity Policy – the value of Voice and Participation. It is time for Nigerian women to speak up against corruption and participate in eradicating it from the society. Women should also participate in governance and holding leadership accountable.

The reason for the call on women is because the negative effects of corruption affect them the most. When the money meant for basic amenities is embezzled or misappropriated, it is mostly the women that suffer the pain of deprivation and lack of such amenities like water, light, hospitals, schools, etc.

There are many ways for the women to challenge – by holding leadership accountable, by raising their voices collectively (as groups or organizations) and individually against bribery for services, sexual harassment and sextortion wherever it may occur.

The belief that women are less corrupt than men is widespread, even among development specialists. Variations in risk aversion and reciprocal behaviour may partially explain gender differences in corrupt behaviour and provide some guidance for policy choice. However, nurture seems to trump nature, and contextual factors appear to be the main causes of the observed differences in corrupt behaviour. Ultimately, even if there is no evidence that women are intrinsically less corrupt than men, increasing women's participation is still a desirable policy choice. Even if it were not to reduce corruption directly, it would contribute to gender equality.

Women suffer many types of discrimination – including legal, political, economic and socio-cultural forms of prejudice. It is therefore not surprising that women, and especially poor women, are particularly vulnerable to corruption.

Women also play an important role in fighting corruption. Greater participation of women in public life can help in the design of gendered approaches to anti-corruption, which can prevent corruption experienced by women in the first place and allow them to resist it, report it and seek redress when it occurs.

Corruption, whether financial or sexual, has far-reaching consequences for gender equality, sustainable development and democratic governance. Yet most states know very little about women's experience of corruption and their role in tackling it, because it is not recognised as a priority in anti-corruption strategies, research agendas or statistical offices. The Open Government Partnership's Break the Roles campaign aims to remedy this lack of recognition and is asking for at least 30 per cent of its members "to take meaningful action on gender and inclusion."

Typically, women experience poverty differently — as primary family caregivers and due to their reproductive health needs. They are therefore likely to be more affected by corruption in family-oriented sectors, such as health and education. This was confirmed through the analysis of data from a survey in 2014. Respondents indicated how often they had to pay bribes to access different kinds of public services. In Africa as elsewhere women are poorer than men, suggesting that women give away relatively larger proportions of their income as they have

to pay bribes to access state services. Therefore, in substantively representing other women, female regional councilors act rationally by focusing on improving public service delivery in health and education, and expending less effort on sectors that do not directly impact women.

The area of law enforcement, however, is somewhat different. Like other security sector professions, it is traditionally male dominated, and is one area where women legislators spend less efforts countering corruption. The 2014 survey found that men are more likely to access the police, and about two to three times more likely than women to pay bribes to the police. Combining this data about the frequency that citizens pay bribes to the police with information about women's representation on regional councils implied that female councilors have left petty corruption in law enforcement fairly untouched. In other words, there is little difference in the rate of bribe-paying to the police whether there is greater or lesser representation of women in regional councils.

In view of these antecedents, especially in objective consideration of the impacts and imports of Corruption in womanhood, it's imperative therefor not to undermine these grave impacts but to wade through practical and feasible platforms to drive women education and empowerment so as to sustain a more balanced society where the rights and place of women can be secured in a corrupt society.

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