

# GENDER AND CORRUPTION IN THE ACCESS TO NATURAL RESOURCES: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS



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The OSCE Gender Issues Programme works towards the implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality and relevant Ministerial Council decisions. It supports systematic efforts to mainstream gender equality across the Organization in all its policies, programmes, projects, and activities in the three dimensions of comprehensive security, namely politico-military, economic and environmental, and human.

Under its multi-year, comprehensive project “**WIN - Women and Men Innovating and Networking for Gender Equality**”, the Gender Issues Programme is striving to advance gender equality as a prerequisite for achieving and maintaining stable, prosperous, and peaceful societies in the OSCE area, in line with the 2004 Action Plan and other OSCE commitments.

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## KEY LESSONS AND COMMON THEMES

### → **IMPACT OF SOCIAL NORMS:**

Gender dynamics in natural resource management are in some cases heavily guided by existing gender and social norms. Societal expectations for women's employment can, in some cases, prevent women from pursuing relevant higher education and more lucrative roles in the natural resource sector. Legal frameworks in certain countries still prohibit women from accessing hazardous roles in both the mining and hydrocarbon sector.

### → **SEXTORTION:**

Sexual extortion, also known as 'sextortion', a type of corruption in which sexual favours are demanded in exchange for access to resources and/or services, disproportionately affects women. While studies exist on the broader issue, limited research is available on sextortion in context of the natural resource sector. Given the male-dominated nature of the sector and the higher dependence of women on public services, however, it is likely that sextortion has a considerable impact that should be further researched.

### → **OPEN AND GENDER-DISAGGREGATED DATA:**

Key information on the gendered impacts of natural resource management often remain unavailable. Improved data transparency for natural resource contracting, ownership and domestic resource allocation have become pillars of current anti-corruption advocacy, leading to an increase of available data at national and local levels on natural resource management. Not all data, however, is publicly accessible, and in some cases access to previously accessible data is lost, such as in the case of certain beneficial ownership registries. There is also a distinct lack of gender-disaggregated information in the available data. Given these challenges with data accessibility and disaggregation, it can be difficult to determine with certainty how women and men are uniquely impacted by the various parts of the natural resource value chain.

### → **NETWORKING ACCESS:**

Women and men do not have equal access to networking opportunities, which means that they do not have the same access to resources and resource management. This puts women at a higher risk of experiencing corruption, poverty and sexual violence, but it also hinders anti-corruption efforts as women in powerful positions have been shown to have a positive impact on anti-corruption, especially in service delivery.

### → **LACK OF RELEVANT RESEARCH:**

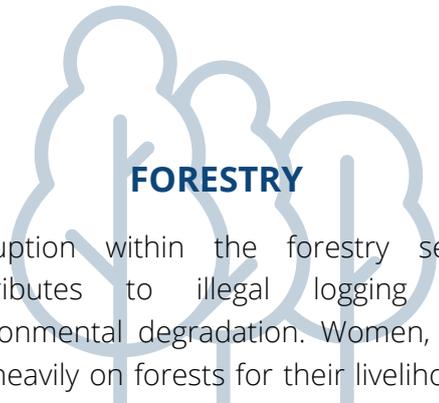
Much of the existing research on this topic examines cases in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, or South and South-east Asia. While many of the lessons from these countries are likely also applicable to the OSCE region, much of it is very context-specific. Therefore, more research is needed within the OSCE to understand the gendered effects of corruption in different countries, the role of gendered forms of corruption, such as sextortion, and the role of gender norms, roles and laws. To achieve a better picture of the specific issues within the region, more data should be collected, both through small scale case studies and larger quantitative research.

## HIGHLIGHTS BY SECTOR



### WATER

Corruption in the water sector leads to mismanagement and depletion of water resources. Women, who bear the primary responsibility for water collection, suffer disproportionately when faced with water scarcity. Inadequate access to clean water jeopardizes their well-being, restricts educational opportunities and hampers economic empowerment. Ensuring women's active participation in water governance is paramount in mitigating these challenges.



### FORESTRY

Corruption within the forestry sector contributes to illegal logging and environmental degradation. Women, who rely heavily on forests for their livelihoods, endure severe consequences as forest resources dwindle. This limits their economic opportunities, heightens vulnerability to poverty and undermines sustainable development. Inclusive decision-making processes that genuinely involve women are indispensable in addressing these critical issues.



### LAND

Corruption in the land sector results in unjust land rights distribution and access. Discriminatory inheritance laws and cultural practices marginalize women, depriving them of land ownership and impeding their economic prospects and decision-making influence. Corruption further amplifies these disparities by enabling powerful individuals to manipulate and control land tenure systems. Measures to promote gender equality in land ownership and safeguard women's land rights are fundamental to address this pervasive problem.



### EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES

Corruption within the oil, gas and mining industries can produce a range of social and environmental challenges. Women employed in these industries face distinctive forms of corruption, such as sexual harassment and exploitation. Environmental degradation resulting from corruption disproportionately affects women, who bear the primary responsibility for managing household resources. Ensuring women's participation in decision-making processes, protecting them from gender-specific corruption and promoting sustainable practices within extractive industries are imperative.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY-MAKERS

- 1** Conduct targeted research on gendered impacts of corruption in the natural resource sector, focusing on the OSCE region.
- 2** Ensure women's participation in decision-making processes for natural resource management.
- 3** Strengthen legal frameworks to protect women's rights and prevent corruption within the natural resource sector.
- 4** Address gender inequalities by reforming resources access, land rights, and inheritance laws.
- 5** Improve transparency, accountability and integrity within natural resource governance.
- 6** Provide capacity-building activities to raise awareness among relevant groups.
- 7** Mitigate climate change's disproportionate impact on women, including access to healthcare and protection from gender-based violence.
- 8** Integrate gender-responsive strategies into anti-corruption initiatives and legislative procedures. This includes tackling sector-specific issues – e.g., sextortion prevention, providing legal protection for individuals facing gender-specific corruption, and recognizing distinct impacts on men and women.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The OSCE has repeatedly highlighted corruption as a significant threat to security and stability.

The OSCE participating States have recognized that

**“corruption represents one of the major impediments to the prosperity and sustainable development of the participating States that undermines their stability and security and threatens the OSCE’s shared values”<sup>1</sup>.**

The dangers of corruption include weakened rule of law, the undermining of democracy and democratic institutions, and reduced economic and social development.

Within a country, these negative effects are not experienced evenly by the population. A growing body of research has highlighted that there is a gendered component to how corruption affects men and women, boys and girls. Corruption’s worst impacts are often felt by the most vulnerable in society, and nowhere is this seen more than in the management of natural resources, where the use of and access to natural resources is highly dependent on gender roles and norms (Dejene & Ogega, 2021).

As is well documented, states rich in natural resources are more prone to higher levels of both corruption and conflict. Improved transparency in natural resource management and more equitable distribution of natural resource revenues are key measures for reducing the risk of conflict in resource-rich states. Here gender, and particularly the relationship between gender and corruption in the natural resource sector, plays a central role in promoting security and creating more just societies in the OSCE participating States.

While corruption in natural resource management and gender and corruption have been examined by

OSCE papers as separate topics, to date no study has been done to better understand the gendered dynamics in natural resource corruption. This report seeks to fill that space, while at the same time identifying opportunities for new data-driven and gender-responsive policies.

Women play an important role in ensuring food security for their households and on a national level, by producing food, managing household food supplies and as consumers (Agarwal, 2018). Yet, their access to land and other natural resources is often limited by structural inequalities and gender norms (Dejene & Ogega, 2021).

Understanding how gender interacts with corruption and natural resources is also essential for climate change adaptation and intervention (Rahman, 2022). Research has shown that women are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to their socially constructed roles and responsibilities. Women are often responsible for collecting water, firewood and food, and in many regions are disproportionately often employed in the agricultural sector. Women are also more likely to suffer the health consequences of climate change, less likely to access assistance and more vulnerable to gender-based violence, trafficking, child marriage and other forms of violence (UN WOMEN, 2022).

In the context of natural resource management, women’s participation is often essential for resource efficiency as well as effective climate change adaptation and mitigation. For example, in many countries, women are the primary producers of food crops and therefore key actors in promoting sustainable agricultural practices. However, women’s access to natural resources and their ability to participate in decision-making processes related to natural resource management are often limited due to discriminatory norms and practices.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 MC Decision No. 11/04 on Combating Corruption, 7 December 2004

Furthermore, corruption in the natural resource sector can exacerbate the negative impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations, particularly women. For example, corrupt practices can result in the misallocation of resources intended for climate change adaptation and mitigation, leading to vulnerable communities being inadequately protected.

In summary, understanding the gendered dynamics of corruption in natural resource management is essential for promoting security, reducing conflict and creating more just and sustainable societies in the OSCE participating States. It is also critical for effective climate change adaptation and mitigation, particularly in vulnerable communities where women play a central role in natural resource management.

## GENDER, NATURAL RESOURCE CORRUPTION AND SECURITY



**CORRUPTION**, commonly defined as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain” (Transparency International — What Is Corruption?, n.d.) can involve the highest political decision makers (grand or political corruption) as well as all policy implementation levels (bureaucratic corruption) (Andvig et al., 2000). There are many different forms of corruption, such as bribery, patronage, fraud, conflict of interest problems, nepotism and official theft (Johnston, 2005). A corrupt act always has at least two parties that are not necessarily both equally willing participants. While the corrupt act can be willing co-operation between the bribe receiver and payer, it can also be a bribe payer who is anticipating future benefits or a forceful extraction of bribes (Davis, 2004). When taking a gender perspective, it is essential to use a broad definition of corruption that includes these more traditional forms of corruption, as well as more recently discussed ones such as ‘sextortion’ (sexual extortion), where a sexual act is the payment of the bribe. Sextortion takes place at the intersection of corruption and gender-based violence and disproportionately affects women (Caarten et al., 2022; Eldén et al., 2020; Feigenblatt, 2020).



“**GENDER** refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female, the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, and the relations between women and between men” (UNOCHA, 2012, p. 5). When looking at corruption and natural resources, gendered power imbalances play an important role. Studies show that on the one hand, women often do not have the same means to be involved in networks that benefit from corruption, while on the other hand they are also frequently more exposed to corruption due to their assigned roles in society (Goetz, 2007).

## Methodology

The study is based on a desk review of academic and policy literature and semi-structured interviews with content experts within the OSCE and civil society organizations. The review includes literature about the key thematic areas of corruption, gender and natural resources (in general, land, forestry, water and extractives). Relevant policy documents were identified through a general search and by searching

the publications of relevant non-governmental, governmental and international organizations. The articles identified were added to a systematic database of resources. The search was conducted in English and supplemented with relevant literature in Russian, covering the situation in OSCE participating States.

## Limitations

Most academic and policy literature specifically examining the intersection of gender and natural resource corruption focuses on countries outside the OSCE region. Most papers look at developing countries in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. The latter is especially well-represented in studies on gendered dynamics of corruption in the mining sector.

Corruption is often context-specific, and as such the relevance of some of these studies on the OSCE can be called into question. The outsized role of artisanal and small mining among women, for example, is an important issue in sub-Saharan Africa, while the same cannot be said for the OSCE region. Similar

context-specific aspects can be noted for much of the literature. While some issues highlighted at a global level may help to shed light on larger trends and issues in the intersection of gender and corruption in the natural resource sector, readers should keep in mind that there is currently a limited amount of relevant material that focuses specifically on contexts relevant to the OSCE's target audiences.

This report primarily surveys English-language academic and policy documents. It is noted that the subject matter is also being researched in local languages within the OSCE participating States; however, such studies were not included here due to time and capacity restraints.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Corruption contributes to environmental degradation. For example, bribes and kickbacks in exchange for resource extraction permits or land-use rights can result in unregulated and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. This can lead to deforestation, soil degradation, water pollution and other forms of environmental harm. In recent years, research on natural resources and on corruption has highlighted the importance of including gender considerations. The importance

### Gender and corruption

Research clearly shows the importance of gender in anti-corruption policies and measures (OSCE, 2021). While initial research focused on the relationship of women in parliament and levels of corruption in a country (Dollar et al., 2001; Swamy et al., 2001), attention has since shifted to the gendered impacts of corruption and different forms of corruption men and women might encounter.

Early studies focused on how a larger number of women in parliament leads to lower corruption levels (Dollar et al., 2001; Swamy et al., 2001), and while this has since been confirmed on national and (sub)regional level (e.g. Bauhr et al., 2019; Grimes & Wängnerud, 2012; Jha & Sarangi, 2018; Stockemer, 2018), as well as in local councils (Sundström & Wängnerud, 2016) and for cabinet positions (Stockemer & Sundström, 2019), it was also quickly discovered that this is not a linear relationship but several mitigating factors play a role.

Both grand and petty corruption affect men and women differently, directly and indirectly. While corruption impacts the parties participating in

### Gender and natural resources

Gender and natural resources are deeply intertwined. The access to and control over natural resources, such as land, water and forests, is often determined by gender roles and power dynamics within societies. Women and men have different relationships with natural resources due to traditional gender roles and cultural norms. For example, in many societies,

of what role corruption playing in natural resources has received a lot of attention from policy makers and academics alike. Surprisingly, how gender plays into this relationship is still not sufficiently explored. This review will give an overview of the different streams of literature that show the importance of understanding the nexus of corruption, gender and natural resources in more detail.

the corrupt act itself, it also affects “third parties, including the general population, taxpayers, specific professions, or communities” (Boehm & Sierra, 2015, p. 2). Research clearly shows that men and women have different levels of exposure to corruption, which is largely due to the different responsibilities and roles either have in society.

The understanding that corruption is closely linked to gender norms is gaining increasing attention (Echazu, 2010; Esarey & Chirillo, 2013; Kubbe & Merkle, 2022; Merkle, 2018). What roles and responsibilities men and women have in society impacts what corrupt resources they have access to, how they are affected by corruption, and which forms of corruption they encounter. In the context of natural resources, much has been written about the role of gender-based discrimination but this has so far not been linked to corruption. In the following section, this link will be highlighted wherever possible but still needs to be further discussed.

men are responsible for agricultural production and control of land, while women are responsible for collecting water and firewood. This division of labour can limit women’s access to resources and opportunities to participate in decision-making processes related to natural resource management.

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed overview of the current research on gender and corruption see OSCE (2021)

Moreover, the impact of natural resource management practices on men and women can differ significantly. For example, the degradation of forests or depletion of water resources can disproportionately affect women, who often rely on these resources for household activities and income-generating activities. Furthermore, women's contributions to natural resource management are often undervalued and overlooked. Women's knowledge and skills in sustainable resource management, conservation and biodiversity protection are often not recognized or utilized, which can lead to less effective natural resource management practices. Therefore, recognizing and addressing gender inequalities in natural resource management is essential for sustainable and equitable development.

The role of gender in extractive industries has been increasingly highlighted by NGOs, donor institutions, development institutions and international organizations. The Natural Resource Governance Institution's 2021 publication "Gender and Extractive Governance: Lessons from Existing Legal and Policy Frameworks" highlighted how "[w]omen and gender minorities often face disproportionate harms from oil, gas and mineral extraction and may be less likely

to access economic benefits or opportunities for political engagement" (Menard and Moses, 2021, 1).

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative has also called for increased attention to gender-based differences in the extractive industries, noting that "women tend to face greater barriers in accessing information and decision-making spaces" (EITI, n.d.). The initiative calls for increased participation by women in extractive industry governance and a more balanced gender distribution in industry employment efforts. Country-level information on gender from local EITI chapters, however, is inconsistent and can vary in scope and quality. This is true even within the OSCE region. Recent reports from EITI chapters in Armenia, Germany and Ukraine provide gender-disaggregated information on employment in the sector. EITI Ukraine also provides information on relevant legislation related to gender mainstreaming and reporting. In contrast, the latest reports from EITI offices in some of the OSCE countries provide no coverage of gender in their respective national sectors.

## COMMON THEMES ON GENDER AND CORRUPTION

### Gender norms and laws

Gender norms play an integral part in understanding how women are affected by and involved in corruption (Kubbe & Merkle, 2022). At the same time, gender norms and roles fundamentally impact the use of and access to natural resources (Dejene & Ogega, 2021). To understand how corruption and gender are linked in the natural resource sector, it is therefore essential to take a close look at existing gender norms and laws.

Several issues are universal, for example that rigid social gender norms prevent women from accessing certain jobs or financial resources as well as joining management positions. The same norms often make women responsible for providing food, water and fuel for their households and communities (IUCN, 2020). Hence, corruption in these sectors often

disproportionately affects women and exposes them to different forms of corruption, such as sextortion.

In several OSCE participating States laws remain in force that prohibit women from performing dangerous work in the oil, gas and mining industry. One of these States expressly prohibits women from working as drill operators or underground miners (World Bank, 2021). This is purportedly done with the intention to safeguard women from being exploited or potentially injured in physically demanding and unsafe roles. Such discrimination, while arguably well-intentioned, can still have the effect of locking women out of networks, including potential influence networks.

While not expressly a result of corruption, this legalized exclusion helps to perpetuate gender divisions within the extractive sector and limit the earning potential of women.

Many norms and laws are highly context-specific; hence it is important to conduct more case studies looking at how individual norms and rules are related to corruption and the gendered impacts in

## Role of sextortion as a form of corruption

Corruption in the management of and access to natural resources can take many forms, from bribery to nepotism to embezzlement. All these forms of corruption undermine efforts to achieve the sustainable and equitable management of natural resources, and can have significant social, economic and environmental consequences.

One form of corruption that has been neglected in most research looking at the nexus of corruption and natural resources is sextortion. Sextortion disproportionately affects women, especially those that are most marginalized, e.g., those living in poverty or with disabilities, or are irregular migrants (Caarten et al., 2022; Feigenblatt, 2020; Merkle et al., 2017, 2023). Sextortion often occurs when accessing services, as recent studies show for the

## Importance of open and gender-disaggregated data

Lack of access to information can negatively impact women and vulnerable populations. Many developing countries are less likely to have access to information on land and water rights, public debates on land and resource management, and the issuing of contracts and licenses for extractive activities in the regions they live. Lack of education and access to influence networks can further hamper these groups' ability to access and digest information. Environments that lack transparency in these processes can also enable corruption and hamper potential efforts by local activists and whistle-blowers to uncover and fight corruption.

Improved transparency in contracting (NRGI and OCP, 2018), ownership (Van Alstine and Smith, 2018) and data (EITI, 2023) have become core pillars of anti-corruption advocacy; however, the role of gender in open information advocacy efforts

the natural resource sector. At the same time, there are other factors that intersect with gender, which impact how an individual experiences discrimination and marginalization, such as age, disability, ethnicity and religion. Therefore men and women should not be treated as homogenous groups but research and policy must understand the layered inequalities in the natural resources sector (IUCN, 2020).

water, sanitation and health sectors (e.g., Merkle et al., 2023; UNDP-SIWI Water Governance Facility, 2017). Similarly, when access to land and financial resources is difficult for women, they are often exposed to corruption, including sextortion (Mathot, 2019). While no studies have looked at sextortion in resources management, the studies that do exist about sextortion in public sector employment show that women were exposed to sextortion in the context of hiring, promotion and favourable treatment (Feigenblatt, 2020). Given that natural resource management is often a male-dominated field, one could expect that women in this sector are also exposed to these practices. Overall, more research is needed on how different forms of corruption impact men and women in the natural resource sectors.

is often not considered in most policy documents. This may be changing as there have been growing efforts to incorporate gender mainstreaming into transparency and open data efforts, most recently seen in civil society recommendations for incorporating gender into the updated 2023 version of the EITI Standard (PWYP, 2022).

Several OSCE participating States have made efforts to increase open data in natural resource management. In addition, EU regulations now require large oil, gas, mining and logging companies registered or listed in EU member states to provide country-by-country reporting of payments to governments (Gavard et al., 2018). The concept of having a "social licence" to operate is also growing in the OSCE space, which focuses more on addressing the local community impacts of extractive projects (Koivurova et al., 2015).

## Lack of research in OSCE region

Much of the existing research on gendered aspects of corruption in natural resource governance is focused on Latin America, South and South-East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Only few case studies cover these topics in the OSCE region. However, this should not lead to the conclusion that corruption in natural resource management does not play a role in the region. The few case studies that do exist show that several issues are also important to be addressed in the OSCE region, while others need more research to be understood properly. This report presents,

wherever possible, findings from the OSCE region, and many of the findings presented from other regions of the world are likely also applicable to the OSCE participating States. However, it needs to be highlighted that many issues around natural resources include highly country- or context-specific elements. Therefore, this study should be used as a starting point to focus on more nuanced research on gender and corruption in the natural resource sector within the OSCE region.

## The role of large corporations in the OSCE region in natural resource corruption abroad

Frequently, corruption scandals in natural resource management involve large corporations, many of them with headquarters in OSCE countries. For example, recent bribery cases involving large corporations (Transparency International, 2023; Serious Fraud Office, 2023) are just the latest examples of natural resource companies based in OSCE countries promoting corruption in the natural

resource sector in developing countries in other regions. Given the global impact of such multilateral corporations, OSCE participating States should consider not only the role of gender and natural resource management in the OSCE region, but also the impact that companies based in the OSCE region have on this relationship in other parts of the world.

## 2. CORRUPTION AND GENDER IN FOUR SELECTED SECTORS



The important role of gender in the access to and governance of water has been well documented (e.g. OSCE, 2020; Pouramin et al., 2020; UNESCO, n.d.). Similarly, it is widely accepted that corruption in the water sector is widespread and ranges from grand corruption in water services and water infrastructure to petty bribes when accessing water. Yet, how gender and corruption interplay in the water sector has not been researched as widely.

This section will explore in more detail how men and women are differently affected by corruption in the water sector and will highlight the newly emerging findings of sextortion in access to water and sanitation services.



### Water governance

Water governance in most countries is male dominated, which means that proceeds from corruption go likely primarily to men, while women and girls are disproportionately affected as they are typically responsible for “water collection and household and community sanitation” (Adams et al., 2021, p. 85). Importantly, as Crow and Sultana (2002) argue, “gender relations interact with material inequalities to influence access to water” (p. 712) in three ways. For one, the already mentioned division of labour that typically puts the burden of domestic labour and childcare on women, who then

must decide which tasks need to be prioritized or potentially given to younger girls (e.g., the collection of water). Secondly, most productive assets are controlled or owned by men, which not only limits productive access to water for women but also means that most decision making related to water access continue to be dominated by men. Lastly, the focus on the domestic role of women gives men more social and economic power, which also influences where public investments are made, leaving those areas that are crucial or particularly dangerous for women at the margins (Crow & Sultana, 2002).



## Water access

Women also encounter sextortion in accessing water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services. This is not surprising, as research has long shown that women face an increased risk of violence when access to WASH services is not adequate (Pommells et al., 2018) and that the sector is often plagued by corruption (Stålgren, 2015; Zinnbauer & Dobson, 2008). Studies in South Africa, Colombia, Bangladesh and Kenya show that sextortion is part of the lived reality for many women when accessing WASH services. In Colombia and South Africa, a study found that women were frequently demanded bribes when they needed to access services or resources, e.g., water delivery, or offered bribes in return for not turning off the water supply or misreading the

water meter (UNDP-SIWI Water Governance Facility, 2017). A study in the Kibera Project in Kenya similarly found that two of 10 respondents have heard about sextortion in the WASH sector (KEWASNET & ANEW, 2020). Case studies from East Africa document other examples of sextortion regarding the access to water, such as paying for water with sex if the user cannot pay the fees, or for skipping ahead in queues waiting for water (Pommells et al., 2018). A recent study on Bangladesh shows that women are especially vulnerable to sextortion when accessing water and that living in a water-insecure household, poverty and illiteracy increase a women's vulnerability to experiencing sextortion in WASH services (Merkle et al., 2023).



## Hydropower

Hydropower is a significant source of renewable energy. Given the push towards more environmentally-friendly energy sources, hydropower is an interesting investment for many countries as they are able to receive significant international funding (Panayotou, 2013). Yet, the implementation of hydropower projects can be marred by corruption, which can occur at different stages, from the allocation of licences, permits and contracts to the construction and operation of dams and power plants. Since the implementation of hydropower projects often involves large amounts of money and complex transactions, they are particularly vulnerable to corruption. Corruption affects both large or megaprojects (Mertha and Lowry, 2006) and small (private) projects (Dogmus & Nielsen, 2020).

The introduction of hydropower itself has been identified to have a range of negative social, environmental and economic impacts, such as forced resettlement (Cernea, 2004), water grabbing

(Dell'Angelo et al., 2018), and reduced access to water for local populations (Siciliano & Urban, 2017). All these are exacerbated by corruption in e.g., the planning or licencing phase. In addition to the loss of public trust and confidence, corruption in the hydropower sector can lead to substandard infrastructure, environmental degradation and social conflicts. Hydropower projects can also displace local communities, disrupt livelihoods and have long-lasting impacts on the ecosystem.

In some regions, hydropower plays a major role in recent natural resource and energy development trends. The hydropower industry is marked by severe corruption and, as such, can impact local communities in negative ways when environmental and other laws are circumvented by corrupt means (Duri, 2021). Corruption in this sector incentivizes the construction of new dams without proper community consultations or environmental impact reviews and ignores the concerns of local communities during the construction phase.

## FORESTRY



Wood and its by-products are becoming increasingly more profitable, making forests and trees a sought-after commodity. At the same time, the forestry sector often has weak governance and law enforcement, the combination of which make it a breeding ground for corruption (Interpol, 2016). A recent large-scale quantitative study finds that “the amount of deforestation (in both absolute and relative terms) is positively influenced by the level of economic and financial crime in a country (by both corruption and shadow economy), as well as other determinants like the democratic governance quality, the press freedom, the wood export share, and the culture of that country” (Cozma et al., 2021, p. 17).

While the relationship of female political participation and corruption on national, regional and cabinet level has received a lot of attention, surprisingly little research to date has looked at the relationship between gender and specifically women’s participation and corruption at the sectoral level, including the forestry sector (Kirya, 2019). While both gender and corruption do receive attention individually in research about the forestry sector, the intersection has been studied only tangentially.

While research clearly shows that corruption has detrimental effects in the forestry sector (Cozma et al., 2021), the focus mainly remains on countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

Corruption plays a fundamental role in illegal logging and deforestation. The situation has worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic when donor attention for anti-corruption programmes shifted to pandemic-related public procurement, social distancing and a reduction in the number of patrols, while rules and regulations are being relaxed in the name of supporting economic development (WWF, 2020). Women are impacted disproportionately by deforestation, being obliged to travel further to get what they need and therefore facing a higher risk of poverty, income loss and lack of personal safety (Marin & Kuriakose, 2017).

How forest products are used, managed and accessed also differs by gender; however, as a global study shows, this is not universal and differs by geographical and other factors (Sunderland et al., 2014). The study also shows how important it is to conduct research in different areas since gender roles and tasks are not the same everywhere.



## Forest management

Forest management is a crucial aspect of sustainable development, and gender plays an essential role in ensuring its success. Gender influences how people use and benefit from forests and the different roles they play in forest management activities. Research shows that the most profitable forest resources are typically in the hands of men (Agarwal, 2009; FAO, 2015), while “women’s control over resources may be more commonly centered on management and use of fuelwood, fodder and non-timber products” (Marin & Kuriakose, 2017, p. 2). At the same time, socio-cultural norms often create barriers for women to participate in forest management unless projects are designed to focus on equal participation of men and women (Marin & Kuriakose, 2017).

Forest management plays an important role in the preservation of forests and therefore the fight against environmental degradation. Corruption can have a significant impact on forest management and exacerbate gender inequalities. In many cases, corrupt practices result in the mismanagement of forest resources, leading to environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity. Corruption also affects the equitable distribution of benefits from forest resources, disproportionately impacting women who often rely on forest resources for their livelihoods. Corruption can lead to the exclusion of women from decision-making processes, denying them access to forest resources and perpetuating gender inequalities. Corruption is a frequent

obstacle to proper government control. Studies on Indonesia, for example, show that rich individuals can use their wealth to impact legislation in their favour, often to the detriment of the poorer local population (Fadli\* & Purnomo, 2019), and that the fragmentation of governance structures leads to more illegal exploitation of forests (Smith et al., 2003). Similarly, Irland (2008), analysing 46 countries, finds that absent or dysfunctional governments lead to dysfunctional forest policies.

Women often face challenges in accessing forest resources due to cultural and social norms that limit their mobility and decision-making power. Development aid often focuses on community-based natural resource management to empower rural communities in managing their own natural resources and to improve conservation efforts (Dressler et al., 2010; Otto et al., 2013). However, even in these efforts “inequitable access to and control over resources, conflict within communities, unsustainable resources use, and weak participation of significant stakeholders such as the poor and women” continue to be a problem (Leisher et al., 2016, p. 2). Several factors have been identified to improve the success of such initiatives if women are included in the forest management group (Agarwal, 2009). Data collected in a global study also shows that despite efforts to increase the number of women in forest management groups, these remain dominated by men (Sunderland et al., 2014).



## Illegal logging

The primary manifestation of corruption in the forestry sector comes in the form of illegal logging (Kirya, 2019), which is estimated to account for 15 to 30 per cent of the global logging activity (Interpol, 2016). Corruption is an essential part of the illegal logging supply chain; from cutting to selling the timber, corruption is needed for each step (WWF, 2020). Corruption makes it possible to log more than the legal limit (Pellegrini, 2011), to avoid forest laws (Robbins, 2000), or to export or transport illegal timber (Milledge et al., 2007; Miller, 2011). It has also been shown that corruption takes place at different levels (Sundström, 2016).

Illegal logging can have serious gendered impacts on local communities, especially indigenous ones. The illegal removal of timber can lead to a loss of livelihood for women who rely on forest products to support or feed their families. Local health, education and social services can potentially be uprooted as well, with those individuals least able to relocate forced to bear the brunt of the impact of these lost services. In some cases, families themselves may be forcibly removed to allow for illegal logging.

The influx of a typically male labour force can also alter community dynamics and lead to an increase in gender-based violence, such as sexual assault, domestic violence and forced prostitution (Castañeda Carney et al., 2020). Given that such logging is done illegally, (migrant) workers also do not have protection and are vulnerable to different labour rights abuses, such as child labour, dangerous working conditions or the withholding of wages of forced labour (WWF, 2020).

Illegal logging and its connections to organized crime are a major issue in some of the OSCE countries. These activities can have an outsized impact on marginalized communities, including women and girls (Bullock and Jenkins, 2020).



Issues of corruption in land tenure and its impact on women have been well-studied in sub-Saharan Africa; however, similar studies in the OSCE region are scant.

Land holdings owned by women are often of lower quality and smaller than those of men (Dejene & Ogega, 2021).



## Land governance

Land governance, also known as land administration, refers to the policies and practices by which public authorities administer land tenure and land use in a country.

Corruption in land governance can have severe impacts on women, particularly on those who rely on land for their livelihood and housing. Women are often denied access to land ownership and control due to discriminatory cultural and legal practices, which makes them vulnerable to land grabbing and displacement. Corruption exacerbates this vulnerability by facilitating the illegal acquisition of land by powerful individuals or companies. Women are often excluded from decision-making processes, leaving them without any legal recourse to defend their land rights.

Corruption in land governance can also perpetuate gender inequalities, as women are often not recognized as legitimate landowners and are denied access to credit, training and other resources that

could help them improve their livelihood. This lack of access to resources further marginalizes women, making it difficult for them to escape poverty and economic dependency.

Furthermore, corruption in land governance can lead to environmental degradation and loss of natural resources, which can have a significant impact on women who rely on these resources for their daily needs. Women often have a closer relationship with the environment and are more likely to be affected by environmental disasters and resource depletion.

Overall, corruption in land governance reinforces gender inequalities and undermines women's access to resources and opportunities. To address this issue, it is essential to promote women's participation in decision-making processes related to land governance, as well as strengthen legal frameworks to protect women's land rights and prevent corruption.



## Land tenure

Land tenure refers to the legal and social frameworks that govern the use, ownership and transfer of land. It encompasses the rules and regulations that determine who has access to land, how it is used and how disputes are resolved (UN-HABITAT, 2008). Land tenure systems vary widely across different regions and countries, and they can have significant impacts on social and economic development, environmental sustainability and gender equality.

Corruption in land tenure systems can have severe impacts on women, particularly when it comes to inheritance issues. Women often face discrimination in inheritance laws and cultural practices, which deny them the right to inherit land and other property (Gray and Kevane, 1999). This exclusion from inheritance can have far-reaching consequences for women, limiting their access to economic opportunities, social status and decision-making power (Kandiyoti, 2003).

Corruption can exacerbate this exclusion by allowing powerful individuals or groups to control and manipulate land tenure systems, denying women

their rightful inheritance. This can lead to land grabbing, where women are forcibly removed from their land or coerced into selling it at a low price. In addition, women's lack of legal recognition as landowners can make them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, as they have no legal recourse to defend their land rights.

Furthermore, corruption in land tenure systems can reinforce gender inequalities by perpetuating cultural norms that limit women's access to land and property. Women are often excluded from decision-making processes related to land tenure, leaving them without a voice in how land is allocated and managed. This can lead to the prioritization of male interests and the perpetuation of patriarchal norms that deny women's agency and autonomy.

Finally, the lack of security in land tenure inhibits the options of more sustainable land management practices, contributing to further environment degradation and climate change (Nkonya et al., 2016).



## Urban planning

Urbanization is increasing and by 2045 six billion people are expected to live in urban areas (World Bank, 2023). Hence, understanding the gendered impact of corruption in the development of urban areas will play an important role in future. While urbanization can lead to various opportunities for individuals, the negative effects, such as environmental hazards, crime and poverty, do affect men and women differently (OSCE, 2017). For women, urbanization is frequently linked to greater employment opportunities, lower fertility rates, less strict social values and norms, and better access to services; however, they also face more threats to their

personal safety and security, as well as inequalities in financial and physical assets, access to decent work, and representation in formal structures (Tacoli & Satterthwaite, 2013).

Corruption in urban settings, "can perpetuate poverty, inequality and injustice" (Nkula-Wenz, 2023, para. 1) and can, particularly for women, shrink opportunities and exacerbate risks. Especially corruption in urban planning can lead to a lack of access to essential services, such as hospitals and schools, and infringe on people's right to individual property (Nkula-Wenz, 2023).



The oil, gas and mining industries can produce immense wealth for private shareholders, governments and – in theory – society. Translating these profits into accessible, effective benefits for the most vulnerable members of society, however, is in some cases easier said than done.

Corruption is unfortunately commonplace in the extractive industries. One recent review found that nearly one-fifth of all documented bribery cases occurred in the extractives sector (OECD, 2014). Corruption occurs at every point along the extractive value chain, from the initial decision to extract, to the awarding of licences, the management of operations, and in the collection and management of revenues (OECD, 2016). In addition to the increased impact on women, corruption in the sector can also uniquely

impact men as well, given that men make up the primary workforce in the extractive industries and are therefore uniquely impacted by lax safety or environmental standards on the job sites.

The relationship between gender and corruption in the extractive sector is not well-explored in the current literature.

Some gendered aspects of corruption are common across all extractive industries, while others may be specific to the hydrocarbon or mining sectors. We will first consider common issues before examining the oil and gas sector, which has received only limited coverage in the literature, and afterwards the better explored mining sector.



### Decision to extract

The initial decision to extract resources is a crucial stage that sets the tone for the entire value chain. As previously discussed, women are often underrepresented in decision-making bodies and processes, which can result in their needs and perspectives being overlooked. This imbalance can exacerbate the gendered dynamics of corruption, as male-dominated decision-making processes may be more susceptible to biased interests, exclusionary practices and self-serving motives.

The lack of women's participation in these critical decisions not only limits the diversity of perspectives but also hampers efforts to address any potential social and environmental impacts the planned projects may have on local communities.

The impact of displacement or environmental degradation may not be as closely considered, or more easily overlooked, in the face of powerful interests advocating for the supposed economic benefits of the proposed projects (Kojola, 2019).

In addition, in cases where corruption is prevalent in the initial decision-making process, the distribution of benefits and resources may be skewed, with a disproportionate share being allocated to those

with power and influence. This further marginalizes women and other vulnerable populations, perpetuating gender inequalities and hindering sustainable development.



## Revenue collection and expenditure

When revenue generated from the extraction of natural resources is embezzled or diverted to personal accounts, it deprives local communities of much-needed funds for social services, including healthcare, education and infrastructure. Women, serving often as the primary caregivers and providers for their families, bear the brunt of this deprivation, as they are disproportionately affected by poor social services. Additionally, when revenue is not spent effectively or efficiently, women are often left out of

the benefits, as they are already marginalized and underrepresented in decision-making processes, as discussed above. This perpetuates a cycle of gender inequality and poverty, as women are unable to access resources that could help them thrive and contribute to their communities. In situations where local revenue spending is already limited due to corruption in the planning and contracting stages, corruption in the management and spending phase also eats away at already depleted and limited funds.



## Mining

The mining sector is uniquely exposed to corruption risks. Mining projects can involve large amounts of funds, repeated interaction between the private and public sector, and are often located in remote areas where regulatory monitoring and enforcement can be difficult. Limited access to relevant political and planning processes, as well as fewer resources further hinder the possibility for the community living near mining projects to counter illegal activity.

Corruption in the mining sector can negatively impact women's economy, health and safety, and social well-being. The lack of women's voices in political participation and decision-making is worsened by corruption, and in turn further decreases women's ability to advocate and benefit from mining sector

resources. They are also disproportionately affected by the results of corruption, such as increased environmental damage due to a failure to follow regulations.

As with other natural resource topics, current research on gender and mining centres on the developing world, with a particular focus on central and southern Africa and Latin America. In addition, women are generally more involved in artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) than in large-scale mining projects. As a result, research on gender and corruption in the mining industry focuses primarily on the experiences of women in ASM in regions outside the OSCE region.



## Environmental impact

When corruption enables mining companies to bypass environmental regulations, it can lead to severe consequences for local ecosystems and communities. Women are often worst affected by these consequences as they are primarily responsible for managing household resources, including water and food. The degradation of water sources through contamination or depletion can increase the time and effort women must spend on collecting water, limiting their opportunities for other activities such as education, working outside the home, or social engagements. Furthermore, the

destruction of arable land and traditional livelihoods may force women to seek alternative sources of income, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation and gender-based violence. The exacerbation of poverty, malnutrition and diseases caused by the degradation of the environment can also disproportionately affect women via their role as the primary caregivers for the sick and elderly. Overall, the environmental impact of corruption in the mining industry amplifies existing gender inequalities and undermines women's well-being and opportunities for advancement.



## Corporate responsibility and due diligence

OSCE participating States have a role to play even in countries outside the OSCE region. Much of the ASM performed by women in developing countries is part of larger global supply chains which link back to companies within the OSCE area. A global understanding of the interplay between gender and corruption in the mining sector is therefore important for all OSCE participating States, to insist that local companies perform proper due diligence

to ensure responsible mineral supply chains (OECD, 2016). Reviewing data released under local EITI publications and via EU-mandated reporting by mining companies at the country level can help researchers identify companies based in OSCE participating States that are involved in mining ventures highlighted in the research mentioned above.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

The relationship between corruption and natural resources is complex and multifaceted, particularly in the areas of water, forestry, land and extractive industries. In each of these sectors, corruption can have severe environmental, social and economic consequences. However, the impact of corruption on men and women can vary significantly, and a gender-sensitive approach to policy-making in the management of natural resources can prevent or, at least, mitigate its effects.

In the water sector, corruption can lead to the mismanagement and depletion of water resources, which can have a particularly negative impact on women. Women are often responsible for collecting water for their households, and when water is scarce, they may have to walk long distances to access it. This can have significant consequences for their health, education and economic opportunities. Women are also often excluded from decision-making processes related to water management, which further marginalizes them and makes them more vulnerable to corruption. Ensuring women's participation in water governance and decision-making can help address some of these issues.

In the forestry sector, corruption can lead to the illegal logging of forests, which can have significant environmental consequences. Women who rely on forests for their livelihoods, such as through collecting non-timber forest products, can be particularly affected by this. When forests are degraded, it can reduce the availability of these products, which can impact women's economic opportunities. Furthermore, women are often excluded from decision-making processes related to forest management, which can perpetuate gender inequalities and increase their vulnerability to corruption.

In the land sector, corruption can result in the unfair distribution of land rights and access, which can have significant consequences for women. Women often have less access to land than men, which can limit their economic opportunities and increase their vulnerability to poverty. Corruption can exacerbate these inequalities by allowing powerful actors to monopolize land and exclude women from access.

Furthermore, corruption can lead to forced evictions, which can disproportionately affect women and their families.

In the extractive industries, corruption can have a range of negative environmental and social consequences. Women who work in these industries are often excluded from decision-making processes and face unique forms of corruption, such as sexual harassment and exploitation. Furthermore, extractive industries often have negative impacts on local communities, e.g., through pollution and displacement. Women can be particularly affected by these impacts, as they may have less access to resources and may be more likely to bear the burden of caring for their families in the face of environmental degradation.

Women often also suffer from a lack of access to procurement opportunities when it comes to managing natural resource. This is a persistent issue that impedes gender equality and sustainable development. Women often face multiple barriers, such as discriminatory laws, cultural norms, and limited access to education and resources. Empowering women to participate fully in natural resource procurement is not only a matter of social justice but also critical for achieving sustainable development goals.

Corruption plays a significant role in denying women access to natural resource management networks. Gender-sensitive approaches to natural resource management and anti-corruption in natural resources sectors are crucial to addressing these challenges and ensuring that men and women are equally able to benefit from natural resources and the protection of the environment. A stronger focus is needed on anti-corruption in promoting women's participation in decision-making processes, addressing gender inequalities affecting the access to resources, and protecting women from gender-specific forms of corruption. Addressing corruption in natural resource management is crucial for promoting gender equality and empowering women to participate fully in decision-making processes related to the management of natural resources.

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