

Sex for Water

A women's right violation

Aug 27, 2018
World Water Week

Results from mini poll on World Water Day

- **51 votes**
- **37%** only happens to women
- **33%** happens to men and women
- **30%** don't know

We need your feedback on this important question. Please share so we can get the full picture. [#WorldWaterDay](#)

In some parts of the world, sex is the currency for [#water](#) services. Would you think that this phenomenon

- only happens to women
- happens to men and women
- don't know

Rösta

23 röster • 4 dagar kvar

Voices from the field

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Women and corruption in the water sector

Theories and experiences from Johannesburg and Bogotá

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Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

Corruption

- Definitions vary

- Dishonest, illicit or fraudulent conduct, misuse of office, &/or abuse of entrusted power
- Mostly involves some undue private profit (for someone) due to abuse of an entrusted authority
- Motivations behind pursuing or accepting illicit conduct vary
- Affects poor households that rely more on public services
- Links between corruption, power and inequality



Corrupt activities in the water sector: How/what

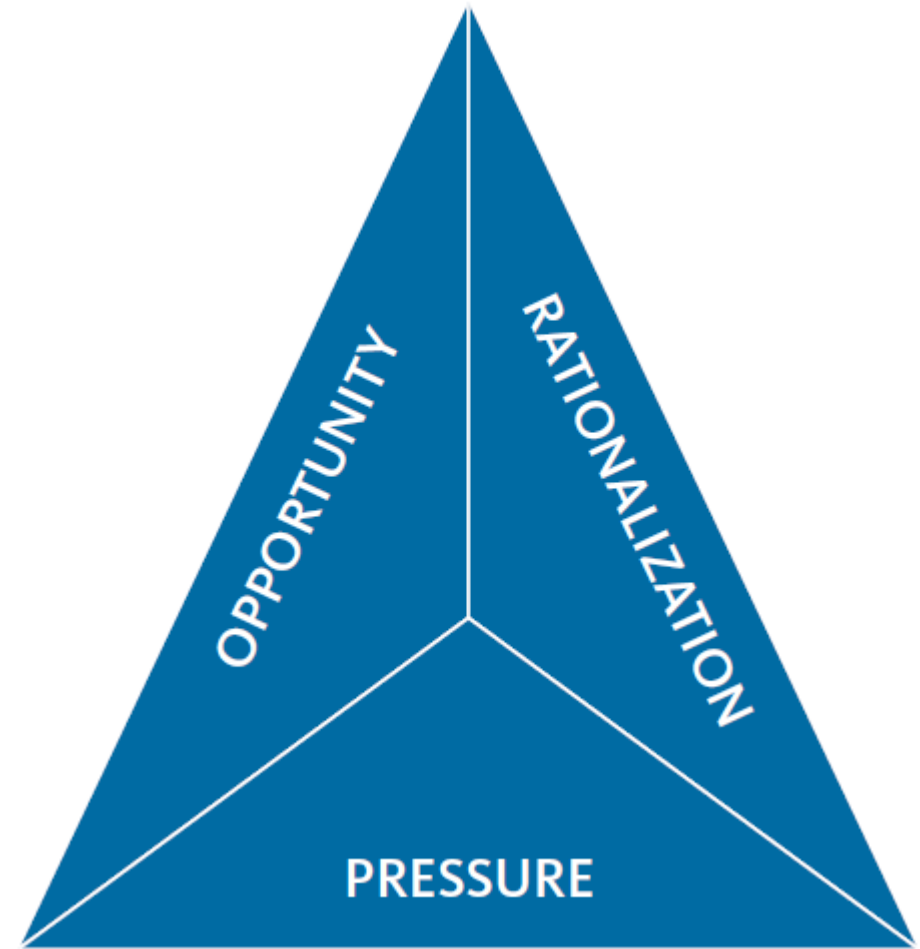
- Favouritism, clientelism, nepotism, collusion, bribes for services
- Officials profiting from giving ‘licenses’ to informal water providers
- Expediting a household’s connection to water supplies;
- Falsifying water meter readings;
- Paying a bribe for a second connection to the same household;
- Landlords hiking the water bill where meters not installed

Principal–Agent Model: how

- Agents: one or more individual persons / entities entrusted with power to make decisions on behalf of, or that impact on, another actor
- Principal: persons, organization, society, etc., impacted by these actions and decisions.
- Dilemma₁: principal cannot perfectly monitor and control agent(s) → the latter take opportunities to act in own interest
- Dilemma₂: 3rd party benefits → accomplice
- Example: water meter reader demanding – or accepting –bribe

Fraud triangle: why

- What drives people to violate trust and engage in corruption?
- Pressure: financial
- Opportunity: abuse of position + likelihood of being caught
- Rationalization: justification or certain attitude to unethical behaviour
 - ‘If it wasn’t for me, how else would these people be served?’



Corruption as the norm: why

- C. is often systemic and institutionalized; part of *the rules of the game*
- Income inequalities → under-paid public servants ⇒ expectation that remuneration will come from customers
- Pressure to abuse position can come from within the bureaucracy → not being corrupt may be riskier
- collective action: norms of reciprocity, reputation and trust → individual action is influenced by expectations about how other individuals will act
- Questions the P–A model

Need or greed-based corruption: why

Citizens engage in corruption ...

Greed

- to receive extra advantages
- win-win positions; agent + accomplice benefit
→ harder to detect & mitigate

Need

- to receive services that they are entitled to, but which are conditioned upon corrupt exchanges
- power imbalance leaves them with few alternatives
- *Larger interest in increasing transparency and accountability?*

Adding gender to the equation: why

- Women are more prone to include (in def.) certain types of violence & threats, non-delivery of services, & sextortion
- Gendered roles and responsibilities *make women subject to* diverse forms of corruption to obtain water
 - household chores (drinking water, hygiene...)
 - food production (own consumption, income at local markets)
- Gender shapes opportunities for & exposure to corruption, but does not (pre)determine women's reactions to it
(foremost: in cases of *need-based*)

Sextortion: what

- Gendered non-monetary corruption
- International Association of Women Judges

“the pervasive, but often ignored, form of sexual exploitation and corruption that occurs when people in positions of authority – whether government officials, judges, educators, law enforcement personnel, or employers – seek to extort sexual favours in exchange for something in their power to grant or withhold”

Empirical data collection

- Survey (2015)
 - Questions sent out to professionals working on water, gender and/or anti-corruption issues
 - 13 women and 10 men responded
- Focus group discussions
 - Female, public water supply users
 - 68 participants
 - 4 group discussions in Johannesburg, South Africa (2014)
 - 4 in Bogotá, Colombia (2015)

Rationalizations

- Respondents did not see women as incorruptible, but having fewer opportunities
- In 5 of 8 FGs, women had engaged in c. themselves. Why?
 1. A corrupt system demands corrupt acts: corruption is all-encompassing and systemic, institutionalized, a collective action problem and a social *norm*;
 2. The behaviour was to satisfy a basic *need*, not for profit (protect the family's access to water for basic consumption)

In the women's own words

- Absence of transparency & access to information regarding the water system, & the cost of services
- Malfunctioning equipment & infrastructure → generating opportunities for corruption related to reading of water meters & repair of pumps & pipes
- Sub-standard equipment → low sustainability & insecure water provision ⇒ women access water at mercy of company staff
- Complexity of the system used purposefully by water company staff to increase price of water for own benefit

“We are affected by corruption not because we are weak but [more] fragile than [men] are”

Focus Group 2
Johannesburg, 2015

If I don't have money to bribe
the water utility staff

*“he will sexually abuse me because that's
the only valuable thing I can give him”*

Focus Group 4
Johannesburg, 2015

*“For the plumber to give them a little water,
eh, forgive that I express myself so clearly,
he fucked all those women,
several women for him to give them water”*

Focus Group 1

Bogotá, 2015

“Men want sexual favours to deliver water and this is a form of corruption. Women, because of their vulnerability and inability to walk long distances to get water, also give in to men’s demands in exchange for water”

Survey respondent 2, 2015

”The fight against corruption may well be linked to [human] rights to information and participation, but [it] also concerns how society’s institutions function and thus the interaction between different centres of power within a country”.

Broberg & Sano (2018). Strengths and weaknesses in a human rights-based approach to international development - an analysis of a rights-based approach to development assistance based on practical experiences. *International Journal of Human Rights*, 22 (5): 664-680

In conclusion

- Corruption threatens the achievements of Agenda 2030/ SDGs
- It has a negative impact on the enjoyment of the human rights to water and sanitation
- Fuller understanding of how c. may affect women & men differently is *imperative* to improve ‘good’ governance (more transparent, accountable and effective institutions & procedures)
- *Do we need more empirical data before action is taken?*

Thank you

