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Title of work: *Corruption: A barrier to essential services for vulnerable populations*

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“Without strong watchdog institutions, impunity becomes the very foundation upon which systems of corruption are built. And if impunity is not demolished, all efforts to bring an end to corruption are in vain.” — Rigoberta Menchú, Nobel Prize laureate.

Brief description of the item of work and why it is a good example of gender awareness and sensitivity in advancing gender equality.

This story explores the devastating impact of corruption on vulnerable populations, particularly women, in Zimbabwe.

It highlights how corruption disproportionately hinders access to essential services like water, healthcare, and education, often forcing desperate individuals to exchange sexual favours for basic necessities.

However, Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) has been seen as a promising approach to mitigate the negative impacts of corruption on these essential services by explicitly considering gender disparities and allocating resources to address vulnerable communities' specific needs.

Key Points:

- **Sexual Extortion:** Women are particularly vulnerable to "sextortion," where officials demand sexual favours in exchange for essential services like water delivery.
- **Economic Disparity:** Corruption disproportionately affects the poor, who rely heavily on public services. When resources are diverted due to corruption, access dwindles and costs rise, further marginalizing the vulnerable.
- **Gender Inequality:** Corruption exacerbates existing gender inequality. Women, already facing social and economic barriers, are less likely to hold corrupt officials accountable and may be unaware of their rights.
- **Impact on People with Disabilities:** People with disabilities are especially vulnerable to corruption in service provision and resource allocation.

What and why makes the story relevant? What context does it respond to

Corruption isn't a victimless crime. It undermines essential services, perpetuates poverty, and disproportionately harms those already struggling. By understanding how corruption impacts different groups, we can develop more effective strategies to fight it and ensure everyone has fair access to the resources they need.

Contextually this story goes beyond the usual focus on bribery and embezzlement. It sheds light on the gendered and societal aspects of corruption, highlighting the specific ways it exploits vulnerabilities.

BACKGROUND

“We have no choice but to comply. And if we refuse, they no longer supply our section with water,” said an angry woman, throwing her hands in the air in frustration.

Why did you write the story? What problem or context is it responding to?

This story was motivated by the growing concern about corruption's disproportionate impact on vulnerable populations in Zimbabwe. While corruption has been a persistent issue in the country, recent reports of women being subjected to sexual extortion in exchange for basic services such as water highlighted the urgent need to address this crisis.

This story aims to shed light on the specific ways in which corruption affects women and other vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities. It seeks to raise awareness of the problem and advocate for more effective measures to combat corruption and protect the most vulnerable members of society.

Additionally, the story responds to the broader context of Zimbabwe's ongoing efforts to combat corruption and improve the delivery of public services. By highlighting the specific challenges faced by vulnerable populations, this story contributes to the ongoing dialogue and policy development in this area.

KEY OBJECTIVES

“Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) can be a promising approach to mitigating the impact of corruption on women, especially as access to essential services like water, healthcare, education, and sanitation becomes increasingly challenging in many towns and cities across the country,” Priscila Maposa Gender Links Zimbabwe Country Director.

What did you hope to achieve with this coverage?

This story is aimed to achieve the following:

Raise awareness: To increase public awareness of the specific ways in which corruption can affect vulnerable populations, particularly women, in Zimbabwe.

Highlight the impact: To illustrate the devastating consequences of corruption on access to essential services, such as water, healthcare, and education.

Advocate for change: To advocate for stronger measures to combat corruption and protect the rights of vulnerable populations.

Inform policy development: To provide policymakers with valuable insights into the challenges faced by vulnerable groups and inform the development of more effective anti-corruption strategies.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Who did you hope to reach?

The primary target audience for this story is the general public in Zimbabwe, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations, women's rights activists, anti-corruption organizations, and policymakers.

Did you succeed in reaching this audience?

I believe I successfully reached this audience through a combination of factors: 1. Relevance: The story addressed a pressing issue that directly affects the lives of many Zimbabweans, making it highly relevant and engaging.

2. Accessibility: The story was published in a widely read publication, ensuring broad reach

3. Social media: The story was shared on social media platforms, further amplifying its reach and engagement.

What Evidence do you have to that effect?

While it is difficult to quantify the exact number of people who were reached, the positive feedback suggest that the story resonated with a significant number of people within the target audience.



Women queuing for water

“We have no choice but to comply. And if we refuse, they no longer supply our section with water,” said an angry woman, throwing her hands in the air in frustration.

PROCESS/METHODOLOGY

How did you gather data? How many female and male sources did you consult? Why did you choose these sources? Why were their voices important?

Voices-six: three females & three males

To produce this story, I conducted extensive research and interviews with a variety of sources. I gathered data from the following:

- **News articles and reports:** I reviewed numerous news articles and reports from reputable sources, including local and international media outlets, government publications, and research organizations, to gather information on corruption, its impact on vulnerable populations, and ongoing efforts to combat it in Zimbabwe.
- **Experts:** I consulted with experts in the fields of anti-corruption, human rights, and gender studies to gain insights into the specific issues faced by vulnerable populations and the best strategies for addressing them.
- **Affected individuals:** I spoke with women and other vulnerable individuals who have been directly affected by corruption to get their first-hand accounts of the challenges they face.

Source Selection and Importance of Their Voices:

I chose these sources based on their expertise, credibility, and relevance to the topic.

By consulting a diverse range of sources, I was able to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the issue from multiple perspectives. The voices of the affected individuals were particularly important because they provided first-hand accounts of the devastating impact of corruption on their lives.

Their stories helped to humanize the issue and illustrate the real-world consequences of corruption. By including the voices of women, I was able to highlight the specific challenges they face due to gender-based discrimination and their heightened vulnerability to corruption.

This helped to emphasize the importance of addressing gender equality in the fight against corruption.

IMPACT

What impact did you achieve through your story

The story achieves several impacts:

Awareness and Sensitization: The story sheds light on the issue of corruption and its specific impact on vulnerable populations, raising public awareness and understanding.

Policymakers' attention: It draws the attention of policymakers and decision-makers to the problem, urging them to address it through effective policies and regulations.

Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups: The story empowers vulnerable groups by providing them with information about their rights and the avenues available to them to report corruption.

Advocacy and Action: The story can inspire civil society organizations to take action against corruption, advocate for reforms, and support vulnerable groups.

Strengthening institutions: It can contribute to strengthening institutions responsible for combating corruption, such as anti-corruption agencies and judicial systems.

Overall, the story highlighted the negative consequences of corruption and advocating for systemic change. It empowers vulnerable groups, mobilizes civil society, and influences policy decisions to address the root causes of corruption and its impact on marginalized communities.

The greatest impact was when my story was shortlisted for the National Journalistic and Media Awards (NJAMA). These are the biggest awards in the country, organized by the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ). I was the runner-up under the Anti-Corruption Journalist of the Year category.

How did you use social media to maximise impact of your story.

To maximize the impact of this story, I shared it on different social media platforms such as WhatsApp, X and Facebook.

Impact and Evidence: While it's difficult to quantify the exact impact of social media, I believe by sharing it on different social media platforms has a significant impact since it reaches a wider audience, sparking conversations,

FEEDBACK

Please provide any examples of feedback that you received, including on social media?

Feedback:

- *"The article was very informative and well-written. It provided a clear and concise overview of the issue and highlighted the importance of addressing corruption."*- ZACC provincial head for Bulawayo, Matabeleland North and South, Simbarashe Zvidzai.
- *"I found the interviews with affected individuals particularly powerful. Their stories really brought the issue to life."* Tsepang Nare-Disability activist
- *"This article is a valuable contribution to the ongoing conversation about corruption and its impact on vulnerable populations, well-done tsano"*-Methuseli Moyo-Political commentator and Media lecturer at NUST

FOLLOW UP

How would/did you conduct follow up to your story after it has/was been published?

I will do a follow-up on this story based on the feedback I receive from readers. This is a great way to ensure that the story remains relevant and engaging to your audience. I will contact the individuals I interviewed for the original story to see if they have any new information or insights to share.

I'm also keeping an eye on social media for any discussions or reactions to the story. This can help me identify new angles or areas to explore. By doing all this I hope I can produce a high-quality follow-up story that will inform and engage my readers.

It also important to note that this story comes after a number of stories I had written on gender-responsive budgeting.

<https://bmetro.co.zw/beyond-the-bins-how-gender-responsive-budgeting-can-address-waste-management-woes-for-female-community-sweepers/>

<https://bmetro.co.zw/leaving-no-one-behind-why-budget-planning-must-embrace-women-with-disabilities/>

<https://bmetro.co.zw/how-gender-responsive-budgeting-can-be-powerful-tool-for-achieving-gender-equality>