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Guest Post: Gender Equality in Parliaments and Political Corruption

Priya Sood, Program Advisor at the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC) contributes this guest post, in honor of International Women's Day (March 8):

Does the extra X chromosome make political leaders less likely to bribe, pilfer, and lie? Are women across the board less corrupt? According to [recent research](#) by GOPAC's Women in Parliament Network, the reality is far more nuanced.

GOPAC conducted research based on a ten-year analysis of trends in the proportion of women elected to national parliaments as correlated to trends in national corruption levels. Surprisingly, the findings showed no general worldwide correlation between changes in parliamentary gender balance and changes in political corruption. However, when GOPAC examined countries which have traditionally been strongholds

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of parliamentary democracy, the picture changed. In countries with reasonably robust democratic systems that enforce anticorruption laws—but only in those countries—an increase in the number of women in parliament will tend to reduce corruption.

In addition to that general finding, GOPAC's research on legislative gender equality and corruption also suggests a number of potential reforms that would help further both equality and anticorruption:


- Legislation to mandate parliamentary oversight of government use and management of state financial instruments
- Rules within political parties that commit a party to fielding a minimum number of candidates of each gender in general elections
- Increasing female political leaders' capacity and understanding of financial oversight mechanisms

For a more evidence that the women's political participation tends to reduce corruption in strong democracies, but not elsewhere, see [recent research](#) by [Justin Esarey](#) and [Gina Chirillo](#).

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