These COVID-19 Analytical Snapshots are designed to capture the latest research, information and analysis in a fast-moving environment. Topics will be repeated from time to time as analysis develops. If you have an item to include, please email us at research@iom.int.
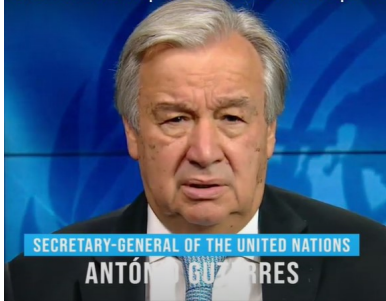
What is corruption?

In general terms, corruption can be described as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It impacts a wide variety of organisations and activities in countries across the world. The United Nations Convention against Corruption is the only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument. It provides tools to foster accountability, integrity and transparency in times of crisis, in and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Information on the Convention and related materials can be found on the UNODC website.

> " *Corruption is criminal, immoral and the ultimate betrayal of public trust. It is even more damaging in times of crisis – as the world is experiencing now with the COVID-19 pandemic."*

UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres

Watch the Secretary-General's statement on COVID19 and corruption here:

Recent research & analysis on COVID-19, migration and corruption

Smuggling in the time of COVID by Lucia Bird

COVID-19 Impacts Cross Border Traders in East Africa by Jacqueline Klopp, Alissa Krueger and Melissa Trimble

Labour migration and tourism mobilities: Time to bring sustainability into the debate by Noel Salazar

COVID-19 and legalized criminality: notes from the Arizona Borderlands by Linda Green

The Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trade, Corruption, and Supply Chains (project under way) by Eleanor Wiseman

Corruption & migration

The links between corruption and migration have become increasingly recognized as an area of research in academia, with scholars examining the extent to which corruption in societies can be a driver of migration, raising emigration rates, as well as the impacts of corrupt practice in migration processes. In migration policy spheres, the challenge of corruption is well understood, with organizations such as UNODC providing authorities with tools and resources to assist in the implementation of anti-corruption practices and institutional strengthening in combating human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

Corruption in the time of COVID19

Current anti-corruption monitoring is mainly focused on vaccinations, treatment, testing, reporting and medical research—essentially, all of the health dimensions of the pandemic, which involve large budgets and significant investments. However, organizations such as Transparency International are reporting that citizens are calling out covid19 corruption in a wide variety of settings, such as in:

- quarantine measure implementation;
- border management; and
- humanitarian aid.

Some authorities are embarking on anti-corruption investigations amid covid19 outbreaks linked to border crossings. In Thailand, for example, the Prime Minister has order an enquiry into officials following a covid19 cluster that has been linked to human trafficking. In Colombia, irregular border crossing are undermining public health measures. In Kazakhstan and Uganda, covid19 border systems are said to be resulting in a rise in corrupt practices and bribe-taking.

With migrant worker recruitment practices often plagued by bribery and corrupt practices, it is widely acknowledged that COVID19 will expose migrant workers to potentially greater exploitation as economies shrink. IOM's Global Guidance on International Recruitment and Protection of Migrant Workers supports ethical recruitment, enhanced transparency and accountability, and improvements in the migration and employment outcomes for all stakeholders.

Calls to action

The UN Global Compact Special Appeal on COVID19 references anti-corruption as central to business response to the pandemic.

Similarly, in October 2020, G20 countries adopted the G20 Call to Action on Corruption and COVID-19, which includes strengthening international anti-corruption cooperation.

Gender dimensions

With shrinking economic opportunities, women become more vulnerable to corruption.

The gender implications of covid-related corrupt practices stretch well beyond migration and mobility, however, with women migrant workers dominating specific occupations and sectors (see snapshot #25 on gender), the implications of covid corruption are significant:

⇒ Border closures have exposed women working the informal sector as cross-border workers to sextortion risks and coercion by officials. Many women are forced to pay a double bribe – monetary & sexual – in exchange for crossing borders.

⇒ Levels of corruption have increased during the pandemic of COVID-19 exacerbating its effects on women, especially given their greater reliance on public services and humanitarian assistance.

⇒ On the other hand, some researchers have pointed to women being less likely to be corrupt and also more trustworthy—and women's leadership during covid arguably more effective—an issue of importance globally during the pandemic crisis.