

The Intersection of Diversity and Corruption



Workshop 2



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The Pearl Initiative in partnership with SABIC hosted a workshop titled, '**The Intersection of Diversity and Corruption**' on **July 15, 2025 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**.

The workshop explored the critical link between gender diversity, workplace culture, and corruption, highlighting how these elements shape ethical environments. Research highlights a strong correlation between gender inequality and corruption, with evidence showing that women often experience and perceive corruption differently from men. In contrast, diverse teams and inclusive leadership have been shown to strengthen governance and enhance transparency.

Using the "Human Library" format, speakers Suzzane Echevarria, Director Global Compliance & ESG at SABIC, and Dr. Miznah Alomair, CEO of Al Nahda Society, shared personal experiences and insights, bringing the discussion to life through lived experiences.

Below are the key insights from the discussion:

Organisational Culture and Governance

- A strong framework sets the "rules of the game," while culture determines whether people accept and follow them.



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- Corruption can arise in environments where governance frameworks are weak or ignored.
- Inclusion is not a checkbox exercise it must be embedded in culture through sustained leadership behaviour.
- Tone at the top matters, but leaders at all levels often have a great influence on daily culture.
- Leadership is more than training, mindsets, values, and frameworks need to be deeply embedded.

Inclusion, Belonging, and Empathy

- Inclusion must involve both genders; men should also be part of governance and empowerment conversations.
- Empathy and mutual understanding are crucial as everyone brings a unique experience
- Cultural sensitivity is essential in global or cross-regional compliance and leadership efforts.
- True belonging leads to thriving individuals and stronger organisations.

Intersection of Gender Diversity, Leadership & Corruption

- Diverse boards and leadership teams enhance decision-making.
- Inclusion reduces corruption risks by encouraging transparency and collective accountability.
- Compliance and ethics must be aligned; high ethical standards lead to higher compliance.

Global vs Local: Cultural Adaptation

- SDGs and Vision 2030 are adaptable and can be contextualised to fit local norms.
- Programs and systems should reflect cultural values while aligning with global standards.
- Identity and authenticity must be preserved in locally-driven solutions.



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Speaking Up and Accountability

- A speak-up culture is vital; retaliation-free environments encourages reporting and transparency.
- Reported concerns need to inform training and strategy decisions.
- Integrity Ambassadors and anonymous channels are key to managing and bringing forth ethical issues.
- Transparency about what is being reported and why is critical to building trust.

ESG, Compliance, and Future Priorities

- Coordination across departments is necessary to align ESG and compliance reporting.
- Smaller organisations in supply chains need support to adopt similar standards and ethics frameworks.
- Future plans include building dedicated compliance departments in nonprofit spaces, especially around donation governance.

