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Gretta Fenner (1975–2024)
Managing Director

Peter Maurer
President

The final preparations of this annual report were overshadowed by the tragic news that Gretta Fenner, Managing Director of the Basel Institute on Governance for nearly two decades, had passed away in a car accident in Kenya on 6 April 2024.

While we continue to be deeply saddened by the loss, we also know that Gretta was immensely proud of the Basel Institute's achievements in 2023, as well as of the progress made over the Institute's 20 years of existence – the latter, a large part of her legacy.

And there are indeed many reasons to be proud and optimistic. While corruption scandals hit the headlines, the more important stories of anti-corruption progress tend to advance quietly over years. Many of the standout achievements in this annual report are not just from 2023.

Second, anti-corruption tools yield benefits that go far beyond the immediate goal of reducing corruption risks. For example, when we provide advice to companies on compliance and multi-stakeholder Collective Action (page 18), the goal is not merely to reduce the risk of compliance-related violations but to foster resilient, ethical companies, fair competition and thriving industries.

A third reason for optimism is that corruption is finally appearing on the agenda where it really matters – notably in the environmental sector. Our Green Corruption team has been working hard to embed anti-corruption and asset recovery tools in the environmental sphere, and to build bridges between the anti-corruption and conservation communities (pages 14 and 17).

At the Basel Institute, connections like these feed into our evolving understanding of corruption and of the changing tactics of power brokers on the political and geopolitical stage. From a narrowly defined legal concept, corruption has become a phenomenon that connects the biggest issues of our time. What global challenge is not caused or worsened by misuses of power and influence, with the aim of benefitting the few over the many?

As Gretta said at the Munich Security Conference shortly before her passing, the old idea of corruption as "just" bribery causes us to overlook patterns of behaviour that have long-term, systemic impacts on both national and global stability.

So, while we are a centre of technical competence, and advise governments worldwide on their laws and policies on corruption and asset recovery, the solutions we bring are never isolated from their political and social context. And we use behavioural science to better understand what really causes corrupt behaviour, and what might work to shift social norms towards compliance with laws, codes of ethics and other elements of the formal anti-corruption and anti-money laundering architecture.

That is also why a big focus of our work is on engaging and connecting with others in the anti-corruption, asset recovery and business integrity fields, and beyond. Even if, or rather especially if, they have competing priorities. Only through negotiation and dialogue can one forge the type of common understanding and consensus that form the basis of effective and concerted action against corruption.

As the stories in this annual report show, the trust and partnership of our donors and collaborators are vital in order for us to make progress in often turbulent and unpredictable political contexts. We are deeply grateful to those who support our ultimate goal of fighting corruption for a better world, who trust our way of working and who are willing to invest for long-term success.

By jointly designing interventions and building in flexibility, we can continue to leverage our individual and collective resources, achieve greater impact and relevance and keep alive Gretta's legacy over the Institute's next 20 years and beyond.

Fighting corruption, fostering governance

for a more peaceful, inclusive and sustainable world.

Independent, non-profit organisation

Established in
2003

130+
staff

28
nationalities

Based in Basel, working worldwide

UNI BASEL

Associated Institute of the University of Basel

Tackling global challenges together

Empowering people
People are our primary focus. From victims of corruption to those on the front lines of fighting it, we seek to enable our partners through mentoring, guidance and peer learning.

Catalysing learning
We connect practice with policy, feeding our hands-on experience into research, technical assistance and training to help shape future strategies and interventions for fighting corruption.

Building coalitions
We work to break down silos between stakeholders, build trust and get different parties to collaborate in a joint fight against corruption.

Changing behaviour
We seek to shift behaviours and social norms towards integrity and ethics. Our approach combines prevention and enforcement tools; both are powerful means for behavioural change.

2023 at a glance

Anti-corruption and prevention

We uncover the root causes of corruption, create innovative tools for prevention and assist partners in implementing successful anti-corruption strategies.

- In 2023, our **Prevention, Research and Innovation** team provided **expert advice and political economy analysis for anti-corruption programmes** in seven countries, helping to mitigate risks and maximise effectiveness for donor agencies.
- Our **Green Corruption** team rolled out **corruption risk assessment** training for environmental authorities in Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Indonesia and Malawi, followed by intense advisory work to help implement mitigation measures.
- In **Ukraine**, our corruption prevention specialists worked with the Ministry of Infrastructure, Agency for Restoration and Ukrainian Railways to conduct corruption risk assessments, develop codes and policies, and strengthen strategic anti-corruption plans and institutional arrangements.
- In **Bulgaria**, we assisted government partners to establish new anti-corruption laws and institutions aligned with international standards and to develop a strategy to change perceptions around corruption.
- In **Peru**, through training and technical assistance on **Public Finance Management** to subnational governments, our team helped the authorities to surpass targets in areas from tax collection to vaccination and the execution of public investment projects.

Tackling global challenges together

We empower, enable and connect practitioners to collectively address the corruption hindering progress on the environment, security and other global challenges.

- Use of our **Basel LEARN** knowledge platform and its seven free eLearning courses – now in multiple languages – grew by 60 percent to nearly 40,000 users.
- Together with partners, we organised prominent events like the **7th Global Conference on Criminal Finances and Cryptocurrencies** and regional multi-stakeholder coalitions under the US-led **Summit for Democracy** initiative.
- We helped spotlight environmental corruption at the **10th Conference of the States Parties to the UNCAC**, put corruption on the agenda at the **Munich Security Conference** and contributed to the endorsement of Collective Action in policy recommendations of the **B20 India**.
- Over 500 anti-corruption and conservation practitioners have now joined the **Countering Environmental Corruption Practitioners Forum**. As co-leaders we organised regular peer learning workshops and developed a public website and knowledge-sharing platform.
- Our 12th annual **Basel AML Index** spotlighted critical gaps in global anti-money laundering policy and practice. Subscriptions to our Expert Edition risk assessment tool rose by 47 percent.
- The **B20 Collective Action Hub**, our global resource centre on multi-stakeholder approaches to business integrity, saw 48,000 visits and now lists over 300 initiatives around the world.
- We contributed to critical global policy debates with more than **20 research papers and studies** on topics from environmental corruption to sanctions and asset recovery.

Asset recovery and enforcement

We help to build the enforcement capacity and systems needed for countries to effectively investigate corruption and recover illicit funds.

- In 2023, our **International Centre for Asset Recovery (ICAR)** worked with over 30 partner agencies across four continents on dozens of complex, transnational cases. Drawing on this case work, we provided advice on closing gaps in laws, policies and practices that hinder efforts to fight corruption and recover assets.
- Our **ICAR training team** conducted 21 high-impact training programmes on financial investigations and asset recovery, backed up by 42 workshops led by our in-country teams.
- Our ICAR team in **Latin America** supported some of the region's largest and most complex corruption and asset recovery cases, providing financial analysis and hands-on assistance with international cooperation to partners in Peru, Ecuador and Colombia. At the subnational level, asset recovery experts in our **Public Finance Management** programme in Peru trained over 200 specialised prosecutors in the use of non-conviction based forfeiture legislation and saw significant recoveries in domestic cases.
- Under our **Green Corruption** programme, we mentored and trained law enforcement officials across three continents to conduct financial investigations in environmental crime cases and to confiscate illicit assets linked to environmental harm.

Business integrity and governance

We support the development of resilient, ethical companies and business environments characterised by integrity, transparency and fair competition.

- Our **Private Sector** team expanded its mentoring programme for civil society organisations working with the private sector on anti-corruption, adding five new organisations to this growing community.
- Our **regional Collective Action Forums** and Awards ceremonies in South Africa and the Philippines helped raise the profile of anti-corruption Collective Action and build relationships between participants from the private sector, public sector, civil society and academia.
- Collective Action initiatives facilitated and supported by the Institute continued to **raise standards of integrity and compliance** in sectors including metals technology and finance.
- Through tailored advice and training, our **Compliance** specialists helped private firms, state-owned enterprises and a multilateral organisation to improve their anti-corruption and governance policies and to implement them effectively.