

Non-State Actions

**Media-Civil Society Partnership
Against Corruption**

**A publication of
HEDA Resource Centre &
Centre for Fiscal Transparency and Integrity Watch
(Addressed to the Media and Civil Societies Organisations)**

**Policy Brief Series Five
September 2023**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

HEDA Resource Centre wishes to thank Messrs Francis Abayomi and Danmole Abdulhameed, and Barrister Barakat Danmole for extracting the key highlights of the conference leading to this policy brief. HEDA also thanks the researchers who compiled and designed the brief from the highlights of the conference, Dr Rasheed Olawale Azeez and Mr Ridwan Adigun Sulaimon. HEDA also thanks all its staff who worked tirelessly to convene a remarkable conference leading to the materials laying the foundation for this brief. HEDA is grateful to its Chairman, Mr Olanrewaju Suraju for reviewing and commenting on the drafts and for providing the overall broad guidance and coordination for the publication.

HEDA is immensely grateful to Dr. Kole Shettima and the entire members of staff of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for providing the bedrock support and guidance for the conference and this publication.



#1

INTRODUCTION

Aim of this policy brief

This policy brief was informed by the discussions and recommendations from experts and stakeholders at the 30th Anti-Corruption Situation Room (ACSR), a two-day, premier National Conference on Anti-Corruption which was held on Tuesday 11, and Wednesday 12, July 2023 in Abuja, Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory; with the theme: "Nigeria and the Fight Against Corruption – Reviewing the Buhari Regime and Setting Agenda for the Tinubu Administration." Hence, drawing from the discussions and recommendations of the conference, this policy brief seeks to provide strategic recommendations to the Media and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) seen by the people as transparency allies in the onslaught against corruption under the new government.

Summary

This policy brief sets the tone by contextualising corruption and highlighting its implications in the Nigerian context, chief of which is the increasing millions of Nigerians who are extremely poor. It submits that addressing corruption requires a multi-pronged approach, and two essential allies in this battle are the media and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), known as the non-state actors. Together, they play pivotal roles and serve as formidable allies in exposing corruption, holding power to account, and fostering a culture of transparency and accountability. The brief further recognises that the Media and CSOs face several challenges which include limitations in access to information as well as constrained media freedom. This means that corruption often thrives in environments where information is not readily available to the public. The policy therefore suggests that anti-corruption platforms of civil society should network with the media and labour unions for inclusivity. There should also be a partnership between the media and CSOs for the establishment of investigative desks and capacity building for journalists as critical action points.

#2

CONTEXT

The implications of grand corruption are devastating, far-reaching and cross-cutting. Corruption remains a major barrier to meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); fighting climate change; promoting democracy and human rights; establishing international peace and security as well as securing a just society.

In Nigeria, corruption has remained the biggest problem that has inhibited the development and growth of the country since independence with pervasive and deep-rooted consequences. As a result, anti-corruption slogans and mantras are often exploited by political office seekers to garner votes from the citizens, who obviously are fed up with the festering state of corruption and impunity in the country.

Every year, Nigeria loses between \$15 billion and \$18 billion to Illicit Financial Flow (IFF), an amount far above what the country needs to address climate change annually. Diezani Madueke, former Petroleum Minister alone allegedly superintended over the stealing of \$20 billion; Sambo Dasuki, former National Security Adviser is standing trial for over \$2 billion; Former Attorney General, Muhammad Bello Adoke's OPL 245 supervised deal short-changed Nigeria by over \$1 billion; and it's doubtful if the country will ever finish recovering the Abacha loot . When all of these are added to the P&ID case which former President Buhari in 2019 referred to as an “international conspiracy to defraud Nigeria of over \$9.6billion,” then it is safe to conclude that there is danger ahead unless an aggressive action is taken.

According to Chatham House, between 1960, when Nigeria gained her independence, and 2014, up to \$582 billion has been stolen from the country. The HEDA report independently researched and published by HEDA Resource Centre in 2022, titled: “Impunity Galore: A chronicle of some unresolved high profile corruption cases in Nigeria, 1999 – 2022,” is not any less revealing. Shockingly, the report states that over \$825 billion and another N1.6 trillion are involved in the unresolved corruption cases within a 23-year period.

In yet another report, specifically the fifth Edition of “A Compendium of 100 High Profile Corruption Cases in Nigeria”, also released by HEDA Resource Centre, in May 2022, over 17 trillion Naira (about 35.4 billion US Dollars) is involved in pending (non-exhaustive) high profile corruption cases. This is the equivalent amount of Nigeria's 2022 budget. Nigeria's 2022 budget is 17.1 trillion Naira with a deficit of 6.4 trillion Naira.

The implication of this is that, the amount of money pending in some high profile corruption cases alone can conveniently finance Nigeria's budget without any deficit or loan. Hence, assuming the 100 cases captured in our publication is exhaustive, save for corruption, in 2022 alone, Nigeria can TWICE complete over 6,000 old projects and over 11,000 new projects cutting across water, health, education, road, power and electricity, etc.

Corruption undermines the effectiveness and efficiency of public institutions, including government agencies, ministries, and local authorities. Bureaucratic processes are often marred by corrupt practices, such as bribery, embezzlement and nepotism. This results in a lack of public trust in these institutions and a decline in their capacity to deliver essential services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure development.

Correspondingly, corruption erodes the trust citizens have in their government and public officials. This is evidenced by another report released by HEDA Resource Centre in 2023, titled: “Botched hope: a report of people's assessment of President Muhammadu Buhari Administration 2015 – 2023,” where most of the respondents across all states of the federation gave a low rating to the Federal Government in key indices such as health and education.

When citizens perceive that those in power are corrupt, they become disillusioned and cynical about the state's ability to serve their interests. This erosion of trust can lead to social unrest, political instability, and a loss of confidence in democratic processes.

The negative impact of corruption is often felt most acutely by the vulnerable populations – women, young people and Persons With Disabilities (PWDs). Resources intended for poverty alleviation programs, healthcare, education, and social welfare are siphoned through corrupt practices. This diversion of funds exacerbates poverty and inequality, as it prevents these resources from reaching those who need them the most. It is therefore not surprising that in 2018, Nigeria took over from India to become the poverty capital of the world with over 80million extremely poor people despite its globally acknowledged oil fortunes spanning decades.



#3

THE NEED FOR MEDIA AND CSOs ACTIONS IN THE ONSLAUGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

Corruption is a pervasive issue that plagues societies around the world, undermining economic development, eroding public trust, and impeding social progress. Addressing corruption requires a multi-pronged approach, and two essential allies in this battle are the media and CSOs. Together, they play pivotal roles in exposing corruption, holding the powerful accountable, and fostering a culture of transparency and accountability. The media serve as watchdogs via investigative journalism. They dig deep into issues, uncover hidden facts, and expose corrupt practices. Investigative reports can trigger official investigations and prosecutions. Through media exposure, documentaries, and news reports, the media bring corruption scandals to the forefront of public consciousness. This puts pressure on governments and institutions to take action. Also, the media educate citizens about the consequences of corruption, how it affects their lives, and the importance of transparency. Informed citizens are more likely to demand accountability.

In the same vein, the CSOs advocate for anti-corruption legislation and policies. They lobby for reforms that promote transparency, accountability, and ethical behaviour in both the public and private sectors. CSOs monitor government activities, budgets, and public procurement processes. They publish reports on corrupt practices and misconduct, creating evidence-based narratives that support change. Additionally, the CSOs engage with communities to raise awareness about corruption and empower citizens to resist and report corrupt activities. Grassroots efforts can be particularly effective in reducing corruption at the local level.

The synergetic power between the Media and CSOs is mutually reinforcing because, in many instances, the Media often rely on CSOs for in-depth research and analysis, while CSOs use the media to disseminate their findings and engage a wider audience. Also, collaborative campaigns between media outlets and CSOs can exert more pressure on authorities to address specific corruption issues.

Sustaining any anti-corruption campaign requires seamless synergy between these two powerful allies – the media (and investigative journalists) and CSOs. When they work together, there is no limit to what they can achieve. A shining example of the result of such partnership globally is the Global Anti-Corruption Consortium (GACC), a partnership between the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) and Transparency International. This consortium has broken anti-corruption grounds across continents within a few years with high level resignations, continent-wide sanctions, inspiring new legislation and exposing some of the strongest illicit networks in the world.

Home in Africa, the partnership between HEDA and the Media both locally and internationally has also seen the exposure of corruption in the OPL245 deal, the biggest scam in Nigeria's history. This partnership has led to repatriation of assets, recovery of funds and prosecution of perpetrators locally and internationally. Equally, some of the shining examples of media-CSOs partnership in Nigeria is the campaign for the enactment on the Freedom of Information Act which spanned over a decade. Indeed, anywhere in the world, there is no limit to what that collaboration between media and CSOs can achieve.

#4

CHALLENGES OF THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION: THE MEDIA AND CSOs IN CONTEXT

The fight against corruption is a critical endeavour for the progress and development of any society. In this context, both the media and CSOs play pivotal roles in exposing corruption, holding those responsible accountable, and advocating for transparency and good governance. However, they face several challenges in their efforts, which hinder their effectiveness. One of the foremost challenges faced by both the media and CSOs is the restriction of access to information. With Nigeria coming from a military regime lasting years, it remains difficult for civil servants and public officials to get out of the mentality. Even with a comprehensive access to information law such as the FOI Act, it is still difficult to access official records and information, rather the FOI Act is being violated with impunity. This makes the work of exposing corruption difficult.

Governments and institutions, in some instances, deliberately withhold crucial information, thereby erecting barriers that obstruct the media and CSOs from effectively investigating and unveiling corrupt practices. This lack of transparency not only fosters a fertile breeding ground for corruption but also obstructs the crucial work of accountability and reform.

The twin problem of victimisation of journalists and activists makes corruption issues a dangerous terrain. Despite various safety of journalists campaigns locally and internationally, records of victimization have only increased. Both journalists and activists who manage to survive attacks end up seeking asylum outside the country, a trend which impacts significantly on their work.

Indeed, a looming threat haunting journalists and CSOs is the fear of reprisals, resulting in a climate of self-censorship. Threats, harassment, and violence against these dedicated individuals or their organizations can lead to a culture of silence. In such an environment, critical stories about corruption may go unreported, and the public remains in the dark about the depths of corruption within their society.

The issue of funding poses a challenge differently to each of media and CSOs. For the media, outlets owned or controlled by powerful individuals or corporations may avoid reporting on corruption cases that implicate their interests. Some outlets are even owned by some of the corrupt elements that media is supposed to expose. The state owned media also suffer the same fate as they act more or less like public relation outlets for the government of the day, rather than as fourth realm of the estate. This significantly undermines the media's ability to act as watchdogs. Lastly, many media organizations, lack the financial and technical resources needed to conduct thorough investigations into corruption. This limitation has continued to hinder their ability to uncover and report on corrupt activities effectively.

For the civil society, the lack of adequate funding poses one challenge. The other challenge is restricted funding. CSOs activities are often limited to those that the donors are interested in and the nature of funding often does not allow enough time to consolidate results and achieve greater impacts. Very often, both the civil society and the media are either looking for funding or running for their lives, a great challenge indeed!

#5

ACTION POINTS

Anti-Corruption Platforms of Civil Society should Network with the Media and Labour Unions for Inclusivity

Collaboration and networking between anti-corruption platforms of CSOs, the Media, and Labour Unions is indeed a powerful strategy to enhance inclusivity and effectiveness in the fight against corruption. CSOs and media organizations should collaborate on investigative journalism projects. CSOs can provide valuable insider information and expertise, while the media can amplify the findings to reach a broader audience. Also, CSOs often collect and analyze data related to corruption. Sharing this data with the media can assist journalists in developing stories and reports that expose corrupt practices. And in turn, CSOs lead advocacy efforts that can lead to actions on the published report.

Establishment of Joint Investigation Desks

The establishment of investigation desks through a partnership between the media and CSOs can be a powerful action point in the fight against corruption and for promoting transparency and accountability. This collaborative approach can leverage the strengths and resources of both entities to enhance the quality and impact of investigative journalism. Media organizations have experienced journalists with investigative skills. CSOs can provide subject-matter expertise, data analysis, and research capabilities. Also, CSOs may secure funding for joint investigative projects, enabling media outlets to allocate more resources to in-depth investigations. CSOs should use the findings of joint investigations to advocate for policy changes, legal reforms, and greater government transparency, while the Media can amplify CSO advocacy efforts by ensuring that investigative reports reach a wide audience, thereby mobilizing public opinion against corruption.

Capacity Building for Journalists

This involves strengthening the skills, knowledge, and resources of journalists can enhance their ability to uncover, report on, and combat corruption effectively; organizing training programmes and workshops specifically focused on investigative journalism techniques. These programs should cover topics like data analysis, source protection, and legal aspects of reporting on corruption cases. This training should emphasize the importance of ethical reporting in corruption investigations. Train journalists on the ethical dilemmas they may encounter, such as protecting sources while maintaining accuracy and fairness should also be a core of the activity.

Prioritisation of Advocacy and Enlightenment Initiatives

The prioritization of advocacy and enlightenment initiatives by the Media and CSOs to stimulate behavioural change among the citizenry is crucial for addressing the issue of a low moral compass in a country. A multifaceted approach can help instigate a positive transformation in societal values and ethics. For instance, the Media and CSOs should collaborate to design and implement extensive public awareness campaigns focused on ethical behaviour, integrity, and moral values. These campaigns should utilize various media platforms, including television, radio, print media, social media, and community outreach programs.

These efforts should aim to reach a wide and diverse audience, emphasizing the importance of ethical conduct in personal and professional life. Equally, workshops, seminars, and educational programs should be organized by CSOs in partnership with educational institutions to target students and young adults. These initiatives can help integrate moral and ethical education into the curriculum, fostering a sense of responsibility and integrity among the youth, who are the future leaders and influencers of society.

Additionally, the Media and CSOs should collaborate with religious leaders and community elders who have significant influence over local communities. They will play a pivotal role in promoting moral values and ethics through their teachings and interactions with community members. The partnership between HEDA Resource Centre and the National Orientation Agency (NOA) is a good example in these regards, where HEDA produced series of jingles and NOA assisted in airing it across radio stations to cover various parts of the federation.

Campaigning for Passage of Whistle-Blower Act

The continued victimisation of journalists and activists who are exposing corruption remains an undebatable negative score for the fight against corruption. Corruption cannot be fought by the state actors alone. An effective whistle-blower Act can help to address this gap to some reasonable extent. In this new administration, CSOs must now form a more formidable synergy to advocate for a whistle-blower protection law.

Campaigning for Effective Implementation of Anti-Corruption Frameworks

The National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS), the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Nigeria, the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA), the Proceeds of Crime Act, etc, just to mention a few are key transparency and accountability and anti-corruption frameworks that must be effectively implemented to ensure a successful and inclusive fight against corruption. The media and civil society have a role to put this atop agenda of public rhetoric to ensure that enough pressure is mounted on relevant government agencies to act on them.

Campaigning for Creation of Specialised Anti-Corruption Courts and International Anti-Corruption Court

The creation of specialised anti-corruption courts is a strategic approach that can significantly enhance the effectiveness of the fight against corruption in Nigeria. These specialized courts are designed to exclusively handle corruption-related cases, and their establishment can lead to several positive effects because the courts are staffed with judges, prosecutors, and defence attorneys who have expertise in corruption cases. This expertise allows for more efficient and expedited trials, reducing the backlog of corruption cases in the regular judicial system. Also, specialized courts dedicated to fighting corruption would enhance public trust in the judicial system. The International Anti-Corruption Court (IACC) is a global campaign aimed at beating the national barriers to accountability and anti-corruption. These two special courts should be a focus of advocacy so that the new administration can consider engaging them more seriously.

Campaigning for Judicial Reforms to Strengthen and Restore Dignity in Justice System

Judicial reforms aimed at strengthening and restoring dignity in the justice system are essential to promote fairness, accountability, and the rule of law. There is need to ensure that judges are appointed, promoted, and disciplined based on merit, legal expertise, and ethical standards, rather than political influence. Efforts should be rededicated to enforcing clear ethical guidelines and codes of conduct for judges, justices and court staff. This is a clear advocacy direction for the media and CSOs

Campaign for Nigeria's Admission into the Financial Action Task Force

The CSOs and media should advocate the provision of legislative requirements for admittance into international forums like the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) as a critical action point for the National Assembly (NASS) to demonstrate the country's commitment to global efforts against money laundering and terrorist financing. To achieve this, NASS can consider reviewing and amending existing anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorist financing (CTF) legislation to align with international standards set by organizations like FATF. CSOs should work with the NASS in legislative advocacies to ensure that these laws encompass all aspects of AML and CTF measures, including customer due diligence, reporting requirements, and asset forfeiture. Additionally, advocacy should be directed towards ensuring that NASS provide statutory backing to the relevant regulatory authorities responsible for implementing AML and CTF measures, such as the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) with a view to reinforcing and showing commitment to international standards and cooperation in the fight against money laundering and terrorist financing, ultimately contributing to the country's admittance and active participation in international forums like FATF.

Campaign for Effective Implementation of the Public Procurement and Proceeds of Crime Act

The CSOs and media should continue to shine the spotlight on the anti-corruption laws to ensure their effective implementation. Through active engagement of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Nigeria process, CSOs and media should support more effective implementation of open contracting, e-procurement and the Nigeria Open Contracting Portal (NOCOPO). This should also apply to the Proceeds of Crime Act.



ABOUT HEDA RESOURCE CENTRE

The Human and Environmental Development Agenda (HEDA Resource Centre) is a prominent Nigerian organization committed to promoting good governance, combating corruption, and advocating for environmental justice. Founded in 2001 and officially incorporated as a non-governmental organization in 2004, HEDA conducts research, policy advocacy, training, and citizens' awareness campaigns in various areas such as anti-corruption, food security, climate change, human rights, public sector accountability, and electoral reform.

VISION & MISSION

HEDA's vision is an Africa where all persons regardless of locations and situation have the freedom and ability to enjoy the benefits of good governance, and respect for human dignity in a sustainable environment. Its mission is serve as a policy and campaign centre for research, training and advocacy on the environment, good governance, and human rights.

PARTNERSHIPS AND RECOGNITION

HEDA is a member of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) Coalition, a global network of over 350 CSOs and 100 individual members in more than 100 countries. HEDA has observer status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the Green Climate Fund.

CONTRIBUTION TO TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

HEDA has made significant contributions to transparency and accountability in Nigeria through extensive research and advocacy efforts.

The organisation's "A Compendium of 100 High Profile Corruption Cases in Nigeria" has garnered attention from local and international partners, including the UK's National Crimes Agency (NCA). This publication has served as a basis for investigations on illicit asset tracing and recovery.

HEDA's transparency and anti-corruption campaigns, along with its media engagement, have exposed scandals such as the Malabu Oil Deal (OPL245), leading to the suspension of the mining lease. The Organization also published: "Corrupt Practices in Nigeria's Oil Industry: OPL245 Case Study" and this has attracted a refund of \$85 million to Nigeria from the United Kingdom. The organisation and its partners blew the whistle on a private jet belonging to former Petroleum Minister, Dan Etete, believed to be a proceed of the OPL245 deal and the Nigerian Government had it seized when it was moved out of Dubai to Canada.

In a continual effort to promote transparency and accountability, also published a collection of corruption cases not investigated by the EFCC, ICPC, Senate and House Committees of the Nigerian law-making body- The National assembly between year 1999 till 2022 in a published article titled; 'Impunity Galore: A Chronicle of Some Unresolved High Profile Corruption Cases in Nigeria (1999-2022)'. HEDA's activism in the judiciary also earned it recognition, as it became part of the National Judicial Council's Committee on the Monitoring of Trials of Financial Crimes and Corruption Cases in Nigeria.

LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

HEDA has played leadership roles in various civil society collaborations, both locally and internationally. It hosts the secretariat of the Civil Society Network Against Corruption (CSNAC), a network of over 150 anti-corruption organizations and individuals in Nigeria. HEDA is also an active member of the Procurement Monitoring Working Group (PPMWG) and the Anti-corruption thematic working group of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Nigeria. The organization continues to collaborate with critical stakeholders, such as Integrity International Institute (III), to advocate for the establishment of an International Anti-Corruption Court (IACC).

WHISTLE-BLOWERS AND ANTI-CORRUPTION TOLL FREE LINE

HEDA has a whistle-blowers toll free line: 08004332277, which has received hundreds of phone calls from members of the public on sundry issues of corruption, human rights abuses, transparency and accountability. Some of the cases have been taken forward through petitions, Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and public interest litigation.

ABOUT CEFTIW

The Centre for Fiscal Transparency and Integrity Watch (CEFTIW) is an NGO established in 2016 with the aim of promoting accountability, transparency within the public sector, and ensuring good governance at all levels. While it promotes open governance at national and sub-national levels, it also serves as a credible hub for resources related to criminal justice such as crime, compliance, asset recovery and illicit financial flows.

The Center has over time worked with both government and CSOs to implement programs and interventions aimed at strengthening democracy and improving governance in Nigeria.





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