

International Anti-Corruption Day 2020: Recover with Integrity to Build Forward Better

Corruption is popularly defined as the abuse of public office for private gain. The International Anti-Corruption Day 2020 marks the signing of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) seventeen years ago, which aims to promote anti-corruption measures and facilitate international cooperation in the fight against corruption.

UNCAC recognises that corruption poses a threat “to the stability and security of societies, undermining the institutions and values of democracy, ethical values and justice and jeopardizing sustainable development and the rule of law”.¹

According to the UN Secretary General, the global cost of corruption is about \$2.6 trillion, or 5% of the global gross domestic product (GDP).² In Nigeria, corruption has also led to rising levels of poverty, inflation, and unemployment; poor access to basic services; insecurity; and poor development in general. Consequently, in 2019 Nigeria’s position on Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index was incredibly low, at 146 out of 180. This represents a decline from its 2018 position, which was 144.

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has also provided new opportunities for corruption within governments, including embezzlement of funds meant for COVID-19 relief, price gouging for health equipment, unfair distribution of health services, and production of counterfeit drugs and vaccines.

Nigeria has not been left out in the display of corruption that has occurred during the pandemic. For example, during the recent #EndSARS protests, it was discovered that COVID-19 palliatives, which should have been used to provide relief at the peak of the pandemic, were hoarded in large warehouses. Such acts of corruption pose even greater risks of hunger and death in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this light, the theme of this year’s Anti-Corruption Day, “Recover with Integrity to Build Forward Better”, emphasises that an inclusive COVID-19 recovery can only be achieved with integrity and accountability.³

The Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD) joins the international community to condemn corruption and impunity in Nigeria and across the world. Our actions to promote anti-corruption and increase accountability include:

- Conducting research and providing resources to change duty-bearers mindsets and behaviour towards public accountability and integrity as well as enable stakeholders and the public at large to scrutinise public accounts;
- Conducting high-level advocacy with stakeholders to increase transparency and accountability in governance;

- Providing training for young people to increase their knowledge and skills to demand accountability from public officials; and
- Going on sensitisation campaigns to raise awareness about issues of public concern.

Through these efforts, we hope to promote accountability and transparency, thereby contributing to the global goal of ending corruption and impunity.

¹ United Nations Convention Against Corruption 2003, Preamble

² <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13493.doc.htm>

³ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/anti-corruption-day>