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March 2023 Edition

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INTRODUCTION

Dear readers,

The month of March reminds all stakeholders of the need to celebrate the contributions of women to society. This year's International Women's Day (IWD) theme: "Embrace Equity" is a timely conversation on why we should all be advocate of equity, given the progress communities can make when all gender is treated fairly and impartially.

For us at the Center, we strongly believe that the key drivers of equitable society are transparency and accountability. We must first embrace transparency and accountability in our public and private endeavors in order for us to be fair and just to all human regardless of gender. Thus, as we advocate for gender equity, stakeholders must work to improve measures that promote transparency.

Over the month, the Center relentlessly engaged and participated in activities that promotes transparency and the fight against corruption. In this edition of our newsletter, you will find our intervention on the recently release Global Terrorism Index (GTI) where we called for more stakeholders' actions in wake of threats posed by increasing activities of non-state actors across the sub-region. You would also find report of our engagements with government agencies and other civil society organizations resourceful.

As we enter the second quarter of the year, we hope that you can be part of our journey of ridding the nation's public sector of corruption by entrenching measures of transparency.

Together, let's #EmbraceEquity

Victor Agi
Head, Public Relations

Center Joins Stakeholders in Canvassing for Data Protection Ambassadors in MDAs

The Center for Fiscal Transparency and Integrity Watch (CeFTIW) has joined stakeholders in canvassing for data protection ambassadors in ministries, departments and agencies of government for the nation to reap the gains of the growing digital ecosystem.

This call was made at the monthly lunchtime seminar of the Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) with the theme “National Digital Transformation and Data Protection Awareness Campaign,” with stakeholders stressing the need to consolidate the gains of the digital ecosystem.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr. Vincent Olatunji, the National Commissioner/CEO of the Nigeria Data Protection Bureau (NDPB), said that digitization and digitalization has brought about significant changes to the global economy and workplace environment and urged public servants to key into the nation’s digitization drive for greater efficiency in government businesses.

He said that the digital economy has necessitated the need for the workforce to be circumspect when dealing with data: “data protection in the digital economy has become an increasingly important issue as more personal information is collected and processed by businesses and organizations.”

Olatunji noted that data protection is everyone’s responsibility, and called on stakeholders to implement appropriate measures to ensure the security and privacy of the data, while also preventing the rising cases of identity theft. He added that effective data management can build trust and increase accountability.

In his remark, the Director General of the BPSR, Mr. Dasuki Arabi, noted that the government data protection awareness

campaign is intended to educate and provide technical and non-technical information/support required to successfully implement files and document digitization.

He said that the campaign will provide knowledge and bridge skills gaps, with guidelines & standards for digitization and ultimate implementation of Enterprise Content Management (ECM) Solution as part of the Reform Initiatives of the National Strategy for Public Service Reforms (NSPSR).

The Executive Director of the Center, Umar Yakubu highlighted the benefits of data science to human development but stressed on the needs to regularly address the challenges it comes with such as cybercrime.

As a data-driven organization, the Center welcomes the data protection awareness, and is willing to provide support to government and stakeholders towards ensuring data safety. The Center also believes that digitization is one of the easiest paths to transparent and accountable system, and therefore urge government to facilitate the nationwide implementation of the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) for growth and development.



2023 Elections: Stakeholders Recommend “Truth Squad” Rather than Emotions at SCDDD Dialogue

Organized by the Savannah Centre for Diplomacy Democracy and Development (SCDDD), the LEAD National Online Forum on the State of the Nation was to discuss outcomes of the 2023 general elections in shaping a path for unity, cohesion and development.

While acknowledging areas that institutions and stakeholders in the electoral process failed to live up to expectations, the dialogue recommended and noted that citizens must be wary of political grandstanding and emotionally laden narratives in the interest of peace and unity.

Leading the conversation, Chief Ezenwa Nwagwu, the convener of “Say No Campaign -Nigeria” said that the nation needs a truth vanguard that can confront the propaganda that has characterized the fallout of the election, noting that stakeholders should not “throw the baby out with the bathwater.”

Nwagwu also advocated for a leadership audit at subnational levels, saying that the lack of transparency and accountability at states and local government levels have immensely impacted governance, and by extension the outcome of the 2023 elections.

Amidst mixed feelings and opinions on the outcome, the dialogue described the Bimodal Voter Accreditation

System (BVAS) as a “game changer” that must be improved upon in future elections. However, it demanded more accountability in the performance of law enforcement agencies and political parties during polls in order to strengthen the process.

The Center reiterates the need for civil society groups, media and other stakeholders to pay more attention to governance at state and local government areas, as their operations are often cloaked in opacity. For instance, it is disturbing that of the 774 local government areas in Nigeria that the Center assessed in the 2022 Transparency and Integrity Index (TII), only nine LGAs have functional websites for displaying their activities and engaging citizens. This clearly shows the level of neglect and disregard for transparency and accountability in the third tier of government which is the closest to the people.

The Center also holds that inclusion is important in our quest to achieve national unity, cohesion and development. Regardless of the outcome of the elections, it is hoped that the incoming government would look beyond the dividing lines and form a government that is inclusive in all ramifications.



Proceeds of Crime: Center participates at NDLEA bid opening ceremony

In continuous efforts to ensure transparency in asset recovery regime and implementation of section 3 (c) of the Proceed of Crime Act (POCA) which mandates relevant agencies to maintain assets management and disposal systems, the Center joined stakeholders at the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) during its bid opening ceremony for five (5) advertised properties.

Although the auction was declared inconclusive as bidders do not meet up with the property valuation price, this process is a necessary step towards effective management of recovered public assets, and the Center is urging relevant agencies to continue to follow due process in asset recovery and disposal.





ELECTORAL FINANCING CAMPAIGN: OUR ASSESSMENT OF 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS

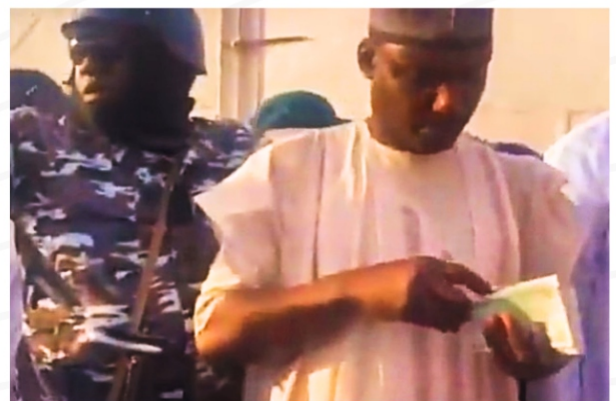
OVERVIEW

As part of its resolve to partner with stakeholders and strengthen democratic institutions through its “Strengthening Anti-Corruption Environment” (SACEN) program, the Center engaged the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on electoral financing reforms. The Center premised the engagement on the signed electoral law that fortified the Commission’s framework and regulate the use of money in politics.

The Center’s electoral financing advocacy was also inspired by the need to check the use of money as a major determining factor in elections by political parties and politicians on the one hand, and the need to infuse transparency in how political candidates source funds for their campaigns. Drawing from previous primaries and general elections, It became important to also interrogate the blatant disregard by political parties to Section 89 (3) of the Electoral Act, 2022, which stipulates that “election expenses of a political party shall be submitted to the Commission in a separate audited return within six months after the election and such

return shall be signed by the political party’s auditors and countersigned by the chairman of the party, supported by a sworn affidavit by the signatories as to the correctness of its contents.”

Despite punitive measures put in place in section 89 (4) of the Act, with the court also empowered “to impose a maximum penalty of N200,000.00 per day on any party for the period after the return was due until it is submitted to the Commission,” political parties have not submitted audited reports for years and INEC on its part has failed to institute action to defaulting parties.



Bauchi State Commissioner allegedly involved in vote buying

Source: Blueprint

OUR APPROACH

From the onset, the Center recognized that regulating the financing of elections would require the cooperation of all stakeholders including citizens, the Commission, political parties and politicians, law enforcement agencies, media and civil society organizations (CSOs). Hence, it engaged in series of advocacies including convoking a stakeholders' dialogue to aggregate measures to stem monetization of the 2023 general elections. The workshop identified fundamental issues of poverty, institutional failure and the absence of strong punitive measures as factors responsible for the unfettered use of money in the nation's politics. Stakeholders at the roundtable, among other recommendations, urged the INEC to lead by example by publishing its audited reports so it can have a moral ground to lean on to 'compel' political parties to submit their audited accounts as required by law.

The Center also relied on media advocacy to draw the attention of relevant stakeholders, especially candidates running for several political offices. Twitter spaces, infographics, direct messaging, email, and articles were among the tools deployed to get politicians to declare their sources of campaign funding. While constantly drawing attention to section 88 of the Electoral Act which placed limitations on campaign spending by different political offices, the Center's EF campaign was hinged on a moral and trust standpoint; and sought to promote transparency of political candidates' source of electoral funding.



EFCC intercepts N32.4m allegedly meant for vote-buying in Lagos

OUTCOME

The influence of money in politics, often time manifested in widespread vote buying and selling, remains a scourge in the nation's electoral democracy. While the Center sustains efforts to convince candidates to declare their sources of campaign funding, it is disheartening that the political class demonstrated unwillingness to publicize the sources of their funding. Despite the fact that the Center's structured questionnaire was at different times sent to candidates and their spokespersons, none of the candidates responded to the request to disclose their sources of funds for electoral campaigns.

It's no wonder that, aside from the government's own efforts through the Central Bank of Nigeria to limit cash flow by introducing the naira redesign policy, successfully mopping up N1.8 trillion, which greatly impacts on vote buying and selling during the presidential elections,

the reversal of the policy by the Supreme court before the governorship election became a springboard for widespread vote-buying/selling by moneybag politicians. It was observed that voters sell their votes for cash and material rewards in different parts of the country, which affected the credibility and outcome in some states of the federation. Evidently too, voter apathy during the gubernatorial poll, it was observed, made it possible for politicians to engage in vote buying.



Ongoing voting process during the 2023 general elections

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Center's Electoral Financing campaign is not intended to be a seasonal effort, it's planned to be continuous to the effect that there is a behavioral change among the populace on vote buying and selling. In view of the outcome of the 2023 general elections, the following are the Center's recommendations on the issue of the use of money in politics:

1. The INEC must demonstrate exemplary leadership by publishing its own audited account within the shortest possible time so it can be

seen to be approaching equity with clean hands. The Commission must therefore take necessary actions (required by law) to compel political parties to obey section 89 of the Electoral Act.

2. The current political awareness must be sustained in the future, it is observed that the larger the turnout, the less likely vote buying will impact the outcome of the elections.

3. Tougher punitive actions are recommended against perpetrators of vote buying/selling. While the actions of the officials of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) are commendable during the concluded polls, culprits must be publicly brought to book to serve as deterrence.

4. Criminalization of vote buying may be seriously considered or perhaps, candidates whose agents engage in buying votes should be disqualified from a contest.

5. An audit of the election security operation is recommended in order to determine the role of personnel in aiding or abetting vote buying the elections

6. Civil society groups (CSG) and think tanks should strengthen their capacity to track and monitor campaign spending by political parties/candidates.

CONCLUSION

The nation's democracy is a work in progress. While we continue to condemn saboteurs of our electoral process and call for adequate punitive measures against perpetrators of electoral malpractices, we implore all that believe in the Nigerian project not to relent in contributing efforts that would strengthen our democratic experience.

March Infographics Corner

Countering Organized Crime

Do You Know?

In 2022, as many as 9,076 lives were lost to violent incidents that unsettled Nigeria last year, and 4,680 people were victims of abduction

HumAngle

#Notokidnapping
#counteringorganizedcrimes

FTtransparencyNG fiscal transparencynigeria FiscalTransparency

Happy 2023 International Women's Day!

8th March, 2023

As we #EmbraceEquity today and always, let's remember that the key drivers of equitable society are transparency and accountability of systems

#2023IWD #EmbraceEquity #Transparent&AccountableInstitutions

Center for Fiscal Transparency & Integrity Watch

Join the conversation on Spaces

Integrity Questions on National Census
The 869 Billion Naira Cost

Friday 31st March 2023 @FTtransparencyNG 4.00 p.m

Dr. Nasiru Aminu
Public Policy Expert & Academic

Jessica Odudu, Esq.
Project Officer on the Media in National Elections Project, CJD

Godwin A. Ochube
Strategic Relations Officer
CeFTIW

Emmanuel Sani
Specialized Workforce
National Population Commission

www.fiscaltransparency.org

Center for Fiscal Transparency & Integrity Watch

Join the conversation on Spaces

#NigeriansDecide2023

Addressing Transparency Concerns Ahead of Governorship & States Assembly Polls

Friday 10th March 2023 @FTtransparencyNG 4.00 p.m

Mboho Eno
Deputy Director
Center for Journalism Development and Innovation (CJID)

Ozobulu Solutochukwu
Secretary, Governance Peace & Migration
EU Youth Sounding Board in Nigeria

Moshood Isah
Election Observer and Communications Expert

www.fiscaltransparency.org

Skeptics Nigeria's Fiscal Burden

Do You Know?

The FG wage bill has risen from N1.832 trillion in 2015 to N3.494 trillion in 2022 amid a plethora of employment scams in the public service

ICPC

FTtransparencyNG fiscal transparencynigeria FiscalTransparency

WORLD WILDLIFE DAY 2023

3rd March

Together Let's partner for **Wildlife Conservation**

@FiscalTransparency



Democracy: Between Supreme Court Judgment and Perpetual Executive Disregard

By Victor Agi

In the week that Nigerians await the outcome of its presidential election, the dominant news in the U.S., the nation we copied the presidential system of electoral democracy, was on its Supreme Court, as the court convened to hear cases that challenged President Joe Biden's \$400 billion worth student loan forgiveness plan. The court was to determine if the administration's proposal to unilaterally forgo student loans without congressional approval is within its powers, and if such powers can indeed be derived from the provision of the Higher Education Relief Opportunities For Students (HEROES) Act being relied upon, on the one hand, and if such waiver will be fair to "a small business owner who did not have a college degree but instead took out a loan to start their business," for instance, who may not see any relief, a point made by Chief Justice John Roberts during the hearing. The outcome of the cases brought before the courts is expected to be out before the end of June.

The above is one of many cases that exemplifies how powers are properly delineated to check abuse and usurpation by one arm of the government as contained in the writings of the French political philosopher Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron Montesquieu (1748; *The Spirit of Laws*). Simply put, the principle of separation of powers spells out the mutual relations among the three organs of the government, thereby empowering each organ to function without intrusion by the other in a democratic society.

While Nigeria continues to celebrate the successful transmission of power from one democratic government to another since we embraced our current constitutional democracy in 1999, and indeed the progress we have made with our elections, especially with regard to legal framework, the same cannot be categorically said of our institutions and officials empowered by law to ensure the law is supreme. This is especially true because laws, no matter how well thought

out, require upright and democratically minded individuals who understand and submit to the principle of the "rule of law" to implement (executive role) and interpret (judicial role). This appears to be the major shortcoming in our democratic experience, a situation where those vested with executive powers flagrantly disregard procedures for seemingly selfish purposes, often time under the guise of national interest/security.

A case in point is the current issue of the naira redesign policy brought and determined by the supreme court last

week. It was a matter that borders on the constitutionality or otherwise of the CBN's policy and whether the supreme court has the jurisdiction to entertain the case in the first instance. In the run-up to the final judgment which was delivered on the 3rd of March, 2023, Nigerians saw how the CBN and the President varied and issued counter directives to the Supreme Court's initial interim order which compelled the CBN and

commercial banks to abort the 10th of February deadline, pending the determination of the case filed by the concerned state governments on behalf of its citizens. Regardless of its claims that the policy was in the interest of Nigerians, this experience typifies a government with disregard for court rulings and democratic processes.

Read hear: <https://www.fiscaltransparency.org/democracy-between-supreme-court-judgment-and-perpetual-executive-disregard/>

Victor Agi is the Head, Public Relations at the Center for Fiscal Transparency and Integrity Watch





CENTER FOR FISCAL TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY WATCH

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Press release

17th March, 2023

Countering Organized Crime: 2023 Global Terrorism Index Ranking Calls for More Action

With 8.065% score, Nigeria, according to the just-released Global Terrorism Index (GTI) is now the 8th (8.065 score) most terrorized country. This was as its bordering countries to the north, east and west have also increasingly become notorious for terrorism, with Niger ranking 10th (7.616), Cameroon and Chad at 11th (7.347) and 19th (6.168) positions respectively; and Benin at 28th position (4.840). Only Guinea to the east is safe as per the recently released index which analyzed the impact of terrorism across nations and covers 99.7 percent of the total world's population.

Although Nigeria's 2022 ranking was considered an improvement in comparison with 2021, as it drops by 2 places, increasing terrorism activities in the Sahel region calls for concern, as Islamic State of West Africa (ISWA), Boko Haram, and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) also made it to the top ten deadliest terrorist organizations in the world in 2022, ranking 6, 7 and 10 respectively.

The index developed by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) using data from Terrorism Tracker and other sources indicated a beehive of terrorism activities in the Sahel region of sub-Saharan Africa, which it described as "now the major epicenter of terrorism, with the Sahel accounting for more terrorism deaths in 2022 than both South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) combined." It further noted that terrorism-related death in the region accounted for 43 percent of the global figure, and a seven percent increase from 2021.

The report attributed the rise of terrorism in the region to complex and systemic underlying factors including weak governance, ethnic polarization, ecological insecurity, abuses by state security, pastoral conflict, the growth of transnational Salafi Islam ideology, political instability, transnational crime, food insecurity and geopolitical competition.

As with other organized crimes, terrorism is a transnational operation, hence, the need for intergovernmental collaboration has become more urgent than ever to stem the tide in the Sahel region. This empirical insight into terrorism activities means that countries in the region must, as a matter of necessity come together and proffer practical solutions that will address the aforementioned factors that continue to fuel terrorism. The situation in the tri-border area of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger needs to be swiftly subdued for the security of civilians and state security actors.

In Nigerian situation, the Center is calling for the strengthening and implementation of legal framework. Working with stakeholders, the Center ensured the passage and signing into law of the Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act in May 2022. For instance, Part X (Section 63-75) provide measures for investigating and prosecuting of terrorism offences; we are therefore calling for an aggressive implementation of the law.

As we make progress with combative efforts in the fight against insurgency, the country must also up its non-kinetic approach to addressing the challenges of terrorism. More attention should be paid to building peace instead of overreliance on force as the only solution. Necessarily, the government must strengthen institutions, reduce corruption and collusion by state actors, and address the fundamental issue of poverty in order for the country and region to make progress in subsequent rankings.

Victor Agi
Head, Public Relations

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The Cost of Corruption

Corruption, the beast that lurks within
A poison that seeps into every sin
It claws at the fabric of our society
And leaves behind a trail of anxiety

It's the cost of a life-saving surgery
The cost of a child's education
It's the price we pay for our security
And the cause of our nation's stagnation

@Peace Essien

STOP CORRUPTION

Stop corruption please,
It's a contagious disease,
That not only affects the persons,
But also the whole nation.

Corruption is like cancer,
Spreading from one part to another,
And its movement is so fast,
That almost nothing's left to be done at last.

The apparent patriots like the scared birds,
Fly away to the distant lands,
In search of a secured,
And better life indeed.

If anyone dares to stand against corruption,
The ones suffering from the very pollution,
Throw him in the jail,
Or bury under the soil.

As the sunset lets the dawn to appear,
We shouldn't let our dreams expire,
Since the expected moment isn't far away,
Only you and I can bring that day.

@Md. Ziaul Haque



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