



MONTHLY TRANSPARENCY WATCH

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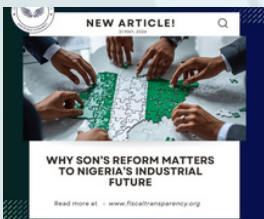
A PUBLICATION OF THE CENTER FOR FISCAL TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC INTEGRITY



TOP NEWS

Dr. Umar Yakubu Delivers Goodwill Message at BPSR and KAS Induction Programme for Public Sector Leaders

The Center Joins Critical Conversations on Public Sector Corruption.



NEW ARTICLE: WHY SON'S REFORM MATTERS TO INDUSTRIAL FUTURE



THE CENTER JOINS CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS ON PUBLIC SECTOR CORRUPTION.



Dear Reader,

Welcome to the latest edition of our Monthly Transparency Watch, where we highlight ongoing efforts to promote accountability, transparency and good governance through out Nigeria. Enhanced transparency boosts public trust, contributes to economic growth and development, and empowers citizens to engage in decision making processes and hold their leaders accountable.

As we remain committed to promoting transparency and accountability in governance, here's something you should know: your unwavering support is our driving force. Thank you for your continued support. We invite you to explore the stories, insights and observations we've shared and remember to stay the course.

WHY SON'S REFORM MATTERS TO INDUSTRIAL FUTURE

The Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) was established by law in 1971 and now operates under the Standards Organisation of Nigeria Act 2015, which sets out its functions in standardisation, certification, testing, enforcement, product recall, and annual reporting.¹ SON's own published mandate is to promote consumer confidence and improve life through standardisation and quality assurance.² Against that legal and institutional framework, the persistence of substandard goods in Nigerian markets raises a legitimate question about whether enforcement outcomes are keeping pace with the agency's statutory responsibilities.³

The Human Cost of Weak Enforcement

The consequences of weak standards enforcement are felt across several sectors. SON's own standards-development structure covers areas including food, civil and building works, electrotechnology, health-related services, chemicals, and mechanical products, showing how widely product standards affect public welfare and industrial performance.⁴ In healthcare, NAFDAC has repeatedly warned that substandard and falsified medicines can lead to treatment failure, drug resistance, increased hospital admissions, higher out-of-pocket costs, and death.⁵

In the electrical sector, SON states that standards exist to ensure that products are fit for purpose and safe for use.⁶ Where poor-quality products circulate despite those safeguards, the resulting risk is not confined to one market segment; it extends to households, businesses, and critical sectors of the economy.

Border control is also central to this problem. The Nigeria Customs Service identifies collaboration with SON and NAFDAC as part of its official functions and expressly lists the import of fake and substandard goods among the illicit trade threats it helps to combat.⁷ SON, for its part, describes SONCAP as a pre-shipment conformity assessment process intended to prevent the dumping of substandard goods into the Nigerian market and to reduce loss of lives, property, and foreign exchange.⁸ If substandard products continue to circulate at scale despite these mechanisms, the issue is not simply the existence of rules but the effectiveness of enforcement and coordination.

Transparency and Public Accountability

Public accountability matters because the SON Act 2015 expressly provides for accounts, audits, annual estimates, and annual reports.⁹

SON also operates public-facing systems for certification, including MANCAP and SONCAP platforms, and maintains access points for standards and certificate verification.¹⁰ Even so, the practical accessibility of consolidated, user-friendly enforcement data remains a policy concern if citizens, businesses, and lawmakers are to assess regulatory performance with confidence.

- **Certifications:** SON publicly identifies MANCAP and SONCAP as core certification mechanisms, but a stronger culture of routine publication around issued, suspended, and revoked certifications would improve public confidence in compliance oversight.¹⁰
- **Enforcement outcomes:** Because the SON Act provides for reporting and enforcement powers, regular publication of seizures, recalls, penalties, and compliance actions would make performance easier to evaluate over time.⁹
- **Oversight:** Better reporting would also assist the National Assembly, businesses, and consumers in scrutinising whether the regulatory system is working as intended.⁹

Any institution that cannot—or will not—account publicly for its enforcement record struggles to make a credible claim to protecting consumers.

Weak Capacity and Poor Coordination

Beyond the direct danger to consumers, regulatory failure imposes a wider economic cost. SON's own description of SONCAP says the programme is meant to create a level playing field, prevent unfair competition, encourage genuine investment, promote made-in-Nigeria products, and conserve foreign exchange.⁸ When substandard goods still enter or remain in the market, those objectives are undermined: compliant firms face unfair competition, confidence in product quality weakens, and the cost of doing business rises. The problem is compounded by overlapping mandates and weak coordination among agencies. Customs formally collaborates with SON and NAFDAC on border enforcement,⁷ while NESREA's statutory role includes enforcing environmental standards and coordinating with relevant stakeholders on enforcement matters.¹¹ In the same vein, the Nigeria Industrial Policy 2025 identifies fragmented value chains and insufficient coordination between government and industry as barriers to industrial performance.¹² In practice, that fragmentation can translate into repeated inspections, conflicting directives, and avoidable delays for legitimate businesses while leaving enforcement gaps that bad actors exploit.

Priority Reforms

A credible reform agenda should therefore focus on legal reporting duties, enforcement transparency, institutional coordination, and the infrastructure needed to test compliance effectively. The following reforms flow from SON's statutory framework and from the broader policy goal of building a more competitive industrial economy.⁹¹²

1. Mandatory public performance reporting: SON should publish accessible annual performance reports that go beyond formal compliance and clearly disclose enforcement actions, penalties, recalls, certification outcomes, and complaints handling.⁹

2. Investment in testing and conformity infrastructure: Effective standards enforcement depends on functioning testing, inspection, and conformity-assessment systems, which SON identifies as part of its core services.²¹⁰

3. Clearer inter-agency boundaries and protocols: The responsibilities of SON, NAFDAC, NESREA, and Customs should be coordinated through clearer operational protocols so that compliance is strengthened rather than duplicated.⁷¹¹¹²

4. Industrial policy alignment: Standards enforcement should be treated as part of industrial competitiveness, not as a stand-alone bureaucratic exercise, because Nigeria's industrial policy depends on coordination, value addition, and market confidence.⁸¹²

Conclusion

Nigeria's industrial ambitions depend not only on policy statements but on whether standards are enforced in a way that is credible, transparent, and coordinated. The Nigeria Industrial Policy 2025 links industrial success to competitiveness, value retention, and stronger coordination across government and industry.¹² A standards system that works only on paper cannot deliver those outcomes. For that reason, reforming SON and improving coordination across the wider regulatory system should be seen as part of the country's broader economic strategy, not merely as an administrative adjustment.

Notes

1. Standards Organisation of Nigeria, 'About SON' <existing official SON source> accessed 12 May 2026; Standards Organisation of Nigeria Act 2015.

2. Standards Organisation of Nigeria, 'About SON' <existing official SON source> accessed 12 May 2026.

3. Standards Organisation of Nigeria Act 2015; Standards Organisation of Nigeria, 'SONCAP' <existing official SON source> accessed 12 May 2026.

4. Standards Organisation of Nigeria, 'Standards Development' <existing official SON source> accessed 12 May 2026.

5. National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control, 'Curbing Substandard, Falsified (SFS) and Counterfeit Medicines' (11 November 2019) <existing official NAFDAC source> accessed 12 May 2026.

See more: www.fiscaltransparency.org

DR. UMAR YAKUBU DELIVERS GOODWILL MESSAGE AT BPSR AND KAS INDUCTION PROGRAMME FOR PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERS



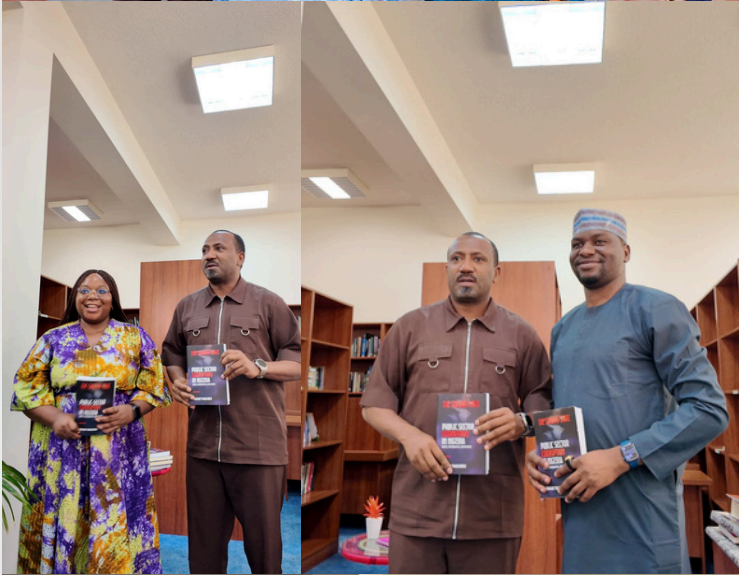
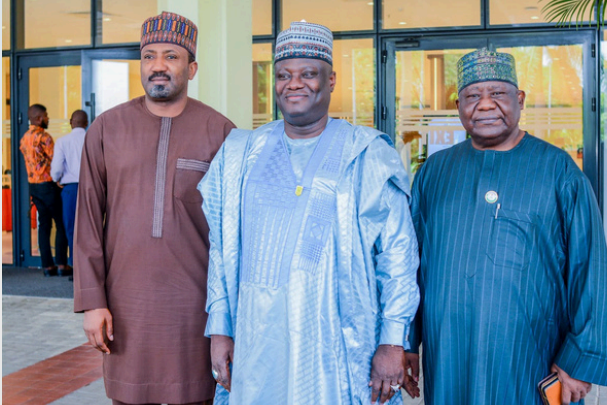
The Executive Director, Dr. Umar Yakubu, was honored to deliver a Goodwill Message at the induction programme for Chief Executive Officers, Chairmen, and Governing Board Members of Federal Parastatals, Agencies, and Commissions.

The programme, organized by the Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) in collaboration with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), brought together key public sector leaders and stakeholders from across Nigeria's governance landscape.

In his remarks, Dr. Yakubu emphasized the importance of visionary leadership, accountability, and institutional effectiveness in driving sustainable public sector reforms. He commended the organizers for creating a platform that equips public sector leaders with the knowledge and tools required to deliver impactful governance.

The induction programme served as an important forum for fostering collaboration, strengthening leadership capacity, and advancing the collective commitment to building a more transparent, efficient, and results-driven public service in Nigeria.

Our organization remains committed to supporting initiatives that promote good governance, public sector excellence, and sustainable national development.






CORRUPTION IS NOT ALWAYS CASH

Corruption is sometimes quieter, less dramatic, less visible and far more easier to normalize.

Sometimes corruption looks like a process.




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CORRUPTION HIDES IN ROUTINE

People imagine corruption as cash exchanged in secret, bribes in envelopes, money moved in shadows.

But much of the corruption citizens live with is administrative. It hides in routine and that is harder to detect.



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WHAT CORRUPTION LOOKS LIKE

Sometimes corruption looks like:

1. A contract no one can explain
2. A vendor no one can trace
3. A project that exists on paper but nowhere on ground
4. A budget line too vague to question
5. A public institution that publishes almost nothing

No headline or scandal just opacity made operational.



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TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY INDEX

The Center's TII assesses institutions not only on anti-corruption variable but on systems that make corruption harder to hide: financials, open procurement and citizen engagement.

Corruption is not only about what is stolen, it is about what is made difficult to see.



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WHEN CORRUPTION BECOMES HARDER TO CONFRONT

This is where corruption becomes harder to confront.

1. When records are incomplete.
2. When disclosures are delayed
3. When procurement is hidden and
4. When oversight is too late.




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ACCOUNTABILITY

The strongest anti-corruption systems are not built on reaction, they are built on **disclosure, traceability, and routine scrutiny.** Corruption does not begin with theft. Sometimes, it begins when public systems become too opaque to question and comfortable to explain.


This is how accountability erodes. Quietly and often in plain sight.



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CENTER FOR FISCAL TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC INTEGRITY

WHERE DOES PUBLIC MONEY REALLY GO




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WHERE DOES PUBLIC MONEY REALLY GO?

Every year, government announces trillions in spending. Budgets are passed, projects are listed, promises are made.

Roads. Schools. Hospitals. Security. Everything gets a budget line.

But here's the real question: **How much of it becomes reality?**



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PUBLIC MONEY IS EASY ON PAPER

Budget is approved, funds are allocated, contracts are awarded and projects are expected.

This is how public finance is supposed to work.

But between what is approved and what is eventually delivered, too much disappears into the process.

This is where accountability breaks



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TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY INDEX

The Center's TI 2025 edition assessed 517 Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and the 36 states across five variables; financials, open procurement, human resources, control of corruption and citizen engagement.

Core finding: Many MDAs still perform below average in areas that make public money easy to trace; financials, procurement and citizen engagement.




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ACCOUNTABILITY GAP

The problem is not the plans the government makes but transparency often ends where public spending begins.

Citizens hear what was approved but hardly; what was released, what was spent, who received it, what was completed and what can be verified.

This is not just a transparency gap but a accountability gap.



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WEAK DISCLOSURE AND OVERSIGHT

Citizens cannot verify spending, journalists cannot trace implementation, oversight becomes reactive and institutions become harder to question.

This results to corruption.

Inflated contracts, buried records, abandoned projects, delayed disclosures, and public money becomes harder to explain.



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FISCAL TRANSPARENCY

Fiscal Transparency is a public accountability issue.

Transparency allows the citizens to ask;

1. What was promised?
2. What was released?
3. What was spent?
4. What was delivered?



These questions needs to be answered clearly and consistently until public accountability is complete.



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A STANDARD TO UPHOLD

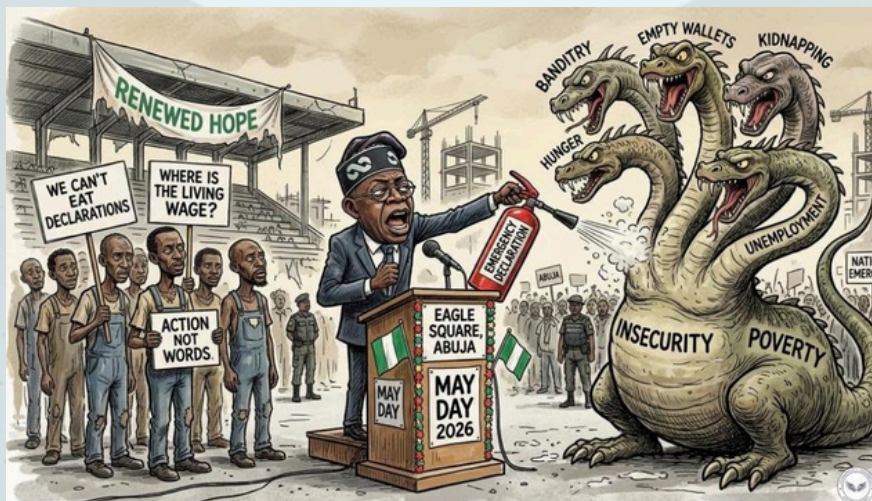
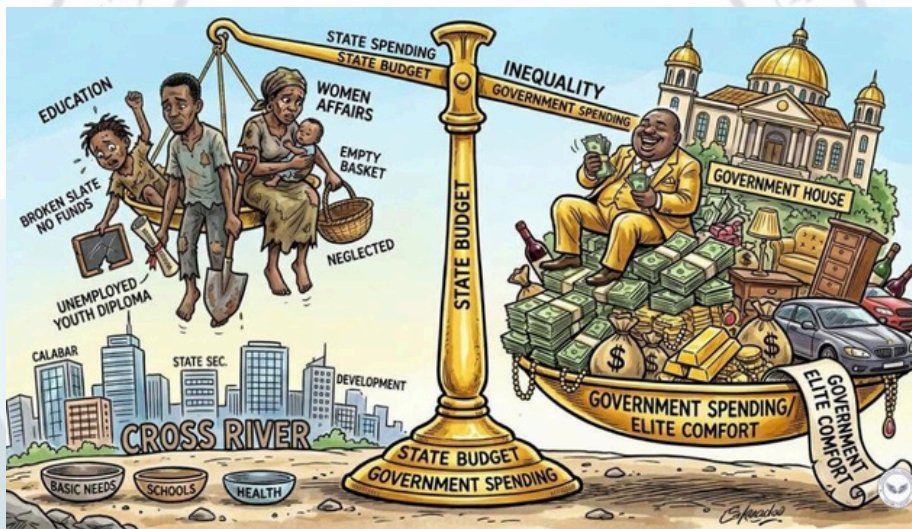
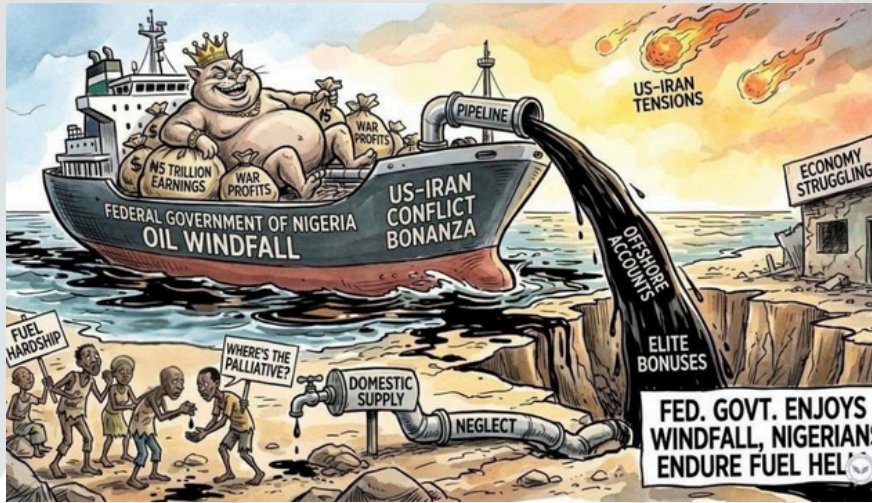
Public money should be traceable, through systems the public can question, towards outcomes the public can verify.

This is what transparency is for and what public accountability requires.



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SATIRE CORNER





THE CENTER JOINS CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS ON PUBLIC SECTOR CORRUPTION



Public sector corruption remains one of the greatest barriers to effective governance and public trust. Tackling it requires informed dialogue, practical solutions, and collective action.

Our Executive Director, Dr. Umar Yakubu, recently participated in a book reading and discussion of his book, *The Shadow State: Public Sector Corruption in Nigeria*, at the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Centre. The conversation explored the drivers of public sector corruption and the strategic reforms needed to strengthen transparency, accountability, and institutional integrity.

At the Center for Fiscal Transparency and Public Integrity (CFTPI), we remain committed to translating these insights into impactful advocacy that promotes fiscal transparency, strengthens public institutions, and advances accountable governance in Nigeria.

GOVERNANCE AND CORRUPTION



The Executive Director of the Center for Fiscal Transparency and Public Integrity (CeFTPI), Dr. Umar Yakubu, participated as a guest speaker in an X Spaces discussion hosted by TheCable in collaboration with The Electoral College under the #Politeracy101 series.

The discussion, titled "Governance & Corruption," explored the relationship between governance, accountability, and corruption, highlighting the need for stronger institutions, transparency, and citizen participation in promoting good governance. Dr. Yakubu shared expert insights on the systemic challenges of public sector corruption and emphasized the importance of evidence-based reforms and fiscal transparency in strengthening public institutions.

The session, moderated by Adesola Aladesawe, provided an interactive platform for public engagement on governance issues and reinforced CFTPI's commitment to advancing accountability, transparency, and public integrity through thought leadership and policy advocacy.

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13



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: [fiscaltransparencynigeria](https://www.instagram.com/fiscaltransparencynigeria)



: +2348033278895
+23492921659



: www.fiscaltransparency.org



: [Center for Fiscal Transparency and Public Integrity](https://www.linkedin.com/company/center-for-fiscal-transparency-and-public-integrity)



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No 11 Ado Ekiti Close, Area 11, Abuja.