

THE PORTRAIT OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA



**A Conversation on the changing face of
anti-corruption and citizens' cynicism, skepticism,
and optimism**

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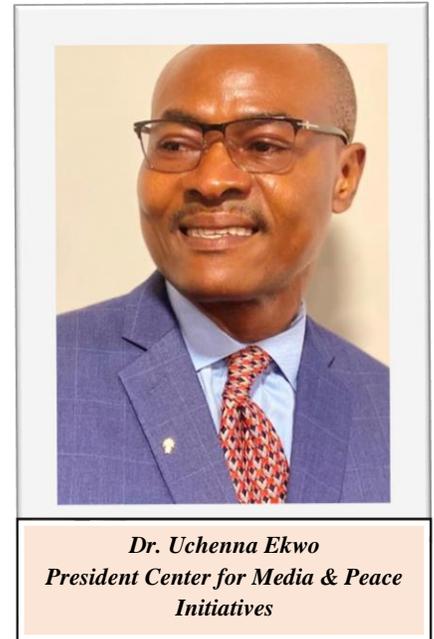
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Executive Summary



The Center for Media and Peace Initiatives convened a Conference on the Status of Anti-Corruption Struggle in Nigeria from the lens of Appreciative Inquiry – a concept in sustainable organizational development that emphasizes a paradigm shift and a radical departure from traditional deficit-based change to a positive strength-based change approach to leadership. Instead of focusing on the gloom and doom of many of Nigeria’s past failures in grappling with corruption, the conference used case studies from United Nations Office of Drug and Crime – UNODC, Signature TV, and individual anecdotes to identify positive efforts to confront corruption in Nigeria.

Speakers and participants shared stories of exceptional accomplishments, discussed the core contradictions of the African country, and deliberated on the aspects of Nigeria’s history that they most value and want to bring to the future. They systematically sought to isolate and learn from even the smallest wins in the anti-corruption efforts.



Imagine what a corrupt-free Nigeria will look like? Nigeria-born President of the Center for Media and Peace Initiatives, Dr. Uchenna Ekwo in his opening remarks says the process of rethinking the approach to fighting corruption requires the use of good-news stories of anti-corrupt practices to craft provocative propositions and collective aspiration of Nigeria’s future great possibilities.

The views expressed by many of the participants reinforced widely held high perceptions of corruption in Nigeria even in the face of recent UNODC data that suggest perception is not reality. Nevertheless, the conference shines a spotlight on the fight against the scourge of corruption. Across different demographics, professions, and six geographical zones, participants explored varying degrees of the prevalence of bribe seeking behavior among Nigerians in addition to wide policy implications for a sustainable anti-corruption regime.

Center for Media and Peace Initiatives (CMPI) – a New York based media and public policy think-tank hosted the event on October 1, 2021, to mark Nigeria’s 61st birthday. The event featured leaders from the public and private sectors who had a frank and forward-looking conversation and assessed not only the achievements that have been recorded in the process of tackling corruption, but also the framework for evaluating the impact of related progress in this moment of reckoning for Africa’s largest democracy.

Acknowledgement

Edmund Janniger, the Vice President of the Center for Media and Peace Initiatives - a New York City based think-tank in especial consultative status with the United Nations welcomed speakers and participants. Today is a special day, as Nigeria celebrates 61st Independence Day. Best wishes to the people of Nigeria, and all those participating from other places across the world. As we discuss corruption and related matters during this event, we're pleased to be joined by a distinguished panel of experts in this round including **Dr Oliver Stolpe** - the Country Representative of United Nations Office of Drug and Crime in Nigeria, **Dr. Kole Shettima**, the Director of MacArthur Foundation in Nigeria, **Lawrence Freeman** – African Political and Economic Affairs Analyst, **VinMartin Ilo**, who is the Chief Executive Officer of Signature TV. and **Dr. Uchenna Ekwo**, who's the president of the Center for Media and Peace Initiatives, who will deliver the opening address. Dr. Ekwo is a Nigerian born scholar practitioner affiliated with the City University of New York. Dr. Ekwo, the floor is yours



Edmund Janniger, VP International Programs, CMPI

Preface

On a day like this that Nigeria is celebrating her independence, I thought we should have a full conversation about the future of the country. Let's preface the conversation through the prism of Appreciative Inquiry. And why I chose to think from this perspective is that you see, instead of just dwelling on the gloom, and doom about Nigeria, or the bad news and all that, we decided that it is better not to dwell too much on all the bad things, let's turn and look at the future. Prior to participating in a conversation on corruption led by the United Nations Office of Drug and Crime, I was one of those who believed that corruption was on the rise in Nigeria. So, when I was confronted with data, I kind of had a rethink. I'm a Social Scientist, and I believe in figures. So, it's not just a matter of seeing things happen, or perception, like Transparency International measures their corruption index on perception of corruption in Nigeria, which is different from reality. So, I thought we should have this honest conversation. And believing that in the process, we can begin to turn the page, we can begin to change the paradigm, embracing the concept of Appreciative Inquiry in organizational development. And I look at Nigeria as an organization; a business entity that must grow. So, instead of just focusing mostly on the negative things, the deficit-focused approach to growth, why don't we shift to look at the strength-based approach. Some of us who are familiar with this concept, we understand the different stages of Appreciative Inquiry - discovery stage, dream stage, design, and destiny stages. I don't want to dwell so much on this principle, because this one is not a classroom, so to speak, where I'm teaching. The bottom line is, I want people to begin to imagine how Nigeria could be if there were to be reduced corruption, how it will change the lives of people in that country, and even the global perception, the strength the country will have in the international community will be huge. So that's why I want us to, now that we have been able to discover this trend, that it's not like as bad as we think it is, we can still have a way to work on that. As the country grows as a nation and a strong member of the international community. So that's why I think it's important for us to discuss this. I also want to say that at the conference on corruption, that the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime participated, I learned a lot in terms of Nigeria's struggle against corruption. For example, I got additional details about some of the stolen money recovered from the former dictator Abacha.

In fact, the US Department of Justice (DOJ) insisted that this money must be put in infrastructure development in Nigeria. And I think it's happening because I had the opportunity of traveling to Nigeria in the summer, I went to visit Delta State and crossed the bridge in Onitsha and saw the second Onitsha bridge, which is one of the things that the government is doing from the recovered money from Abacha. But nobody knows, very few people know about it. I reached out to the Press Secretary to the president, Garba Shehu to tell him that look, you guys are not doing enough job telling the story about Nigeria, and I suggested to him to put a billboard in that place to say, oh, this bridge is being constructed by the money recovered from Abacha. Imagine how it will feel to the people around that area. So those are some of the ideas I think we should be talking about. And that was why I was so happy to bring in VinMartin Ilo, who is also the Chief Executive of Signature TV. I'm sure he'll speak more on this concept about changing the conversation on the way we view corruption, and some of the stories that are running in the country. He will share with what they're doing differently from others. And as some of us may know, it looks like corruption is an elite disease in Nigeria and perhaps other parts of the world anyway, so most people in the villages, yeah, they may know that people are stealing money and all that, but they don't even know the scope.

Signature TV organization tries to help to interpret what this means to the ordinary person. Somebody stole one billion dollars. So, what does that mean to the lives of people in the villages and trying to explain that in their own local languages, some of them who are not able to read English or understand stuff, so I thought, that's an important journalism assignment, undertaken in that country. And that's why we'll be sharing these ideas. And of course, Dr. Stolpe and his organization has done a lot of research, a lot of work and studies about corruption, not just about the perception, they were able to talk to individuals, a lot of Nigerians, on how they interact with public officials, and the extent to which bribery occurs during that interaction. Also, we'll be hearing from Lawrence Freeman, who has covered Nigeria as a journalist for more than 30 years. He'll also share some ideas following his recent visit to Nigeria this year, to have a study of the rail lines and how it's impacting Nigeria's development.

Finally, Dr. Shettima is the director of Africa region of the MacArthur Foundation, he's also joining us and of course, some of you know that the organization has been instrumental and forward looking in terms of the fight against corruption in Nigeria and other emerging countries. So, with those few remarks, I'll welcome Dr. Stolpe, who will be leaving us immediately after his presentation and of course we're going to have some Q & A before he leaves then we'll continue the conversation with other speakers. I turn it over to Dr. Stolpe of UNODC.

Corruption: Perceptions as a proxy for reality

Thank you so much. Dr. Ekwo and dear participants. It's a real pleasure to join you this morning. Well for you on the on the other side of the ocean, it's the morning. It's the afternoon here in Abuja, indeed a 61st. Independence Day we're celebrating today, and we're excited every Independence Day. We are excited. And of course, every Independence Day, we are also challenged by so many of the things that Nigeria faces, and Nigerians face every day. And that seem to be standing sometimes between themselves and finally sort of reaping the famous dividends of democracy. Now, we've been working with Nigeria with Nigerian institutions, the Nigerian government, but also Nigerian NGOs and a lot of other international development partners such as the MacArthur Foundation, by whom we are joined this afternoon or this morning on essentially tackling the issue of corruption in the country.

In that context, we have also been doing a lot of research, in particular large scale public perception and public experience surveys. And I think the experience, is the important part because that distinguishes the findings that we have been able to gather from the findings that, for example, a corruption perception index of **TI** is capturing. I think we need to be very realistic about perceptions, as a proxy, for reality, should be very wary about that, in the so-called Western world. I think we have reducing crime rates, essentially, since the 60s. Nevertheless, the perception of crime, the perception of security, is continuously deteriorating. That may have many different reasons. And I don't think it is important to go into them. And certainly, there's no time to go into them now. But I think it is always very important to keep that in the back of our minds. So, we did a very first corruption business survey in 2009. Then we did the first large scale public corruption survey in 2017, 2016 – 2017. We repeated that very same survey, again, in 2019. And in 2020, we also conducted a gender specific analysis of the data of the 2019 survey, we did these surveys together with the National Bureau of Statistics. And as opposed to many other studies that have been done, it has the great advantage of having a massive survey scope in terms of the number of respondents that were interviewed, we're talking about more than 30,000 across the country, which is also the reason why we are able to provide data state by state, which of course, in much smaller samples would not be possible where we could only give some generic national number.

And of course, considering the size and complexity and diversity of the country. I think that's the only way to do this kind of research properly.



Dr. Oliver Stolpe, Country Representative UNODC, Nigeria

So, what did we find in 2016 and then in 2019, as concerns the prevalence of corruption, and when I say prevalence of corruption, I should be very specific? What we are measuring here is not the prevalence of corruption per se, but we're measuring the ratio of people, citizens being in contact with public officers, and in the context of that specific contact with a public officer who requested bribe. When you do this kind of service, where you ask citizens in general, you obviously capture primarily what often is referred to as petty corruption or small-scale corruption. And that is, of course, also the case here. But as small scale as maybe the individual bribes may be, in their collective, so to speak, has economic significance. They are quite enormous. There is a total of 117 million bribes being paid annually. In Nigeria, petty bribes, small bribes. That means more than one bribe per adult person basically. And yeah, but we also saw an improvement when we compared the 2016 with the 2019 data. In 2016, 32%, a little bit more than 32% of the respondents who had been in contact with a public official ended up paying a bribe. And in 2019, that percentage had reduced slightly by two percentage points, and to some extent, also confirming what Mr. President himself admitted in a recent interview, that the fight against corruption had been significantly harder and more complex than what he had hoped for when he first embarked on it in at the beginning of his of his office term.

Now, what we found is that things happen, of course, not static across the country, we had some states in which the prevalence of bribe seeking behavior by public officials seem to have been increasing and others where it had been reducing. And then the gray ones are the ones where basically, the situation, remained the same.

So, we have roughly nine states where things got a little bit worse. We had eight states where, sorry, we had eight states where the situation got a little bit worse, we had nine states where it got a little bit better. But in overall, basically, it somehow seemed to even itself out. The most interesting one is maybe that most of the states where the situation improved, were the northern states. That I think, is an interesting development.

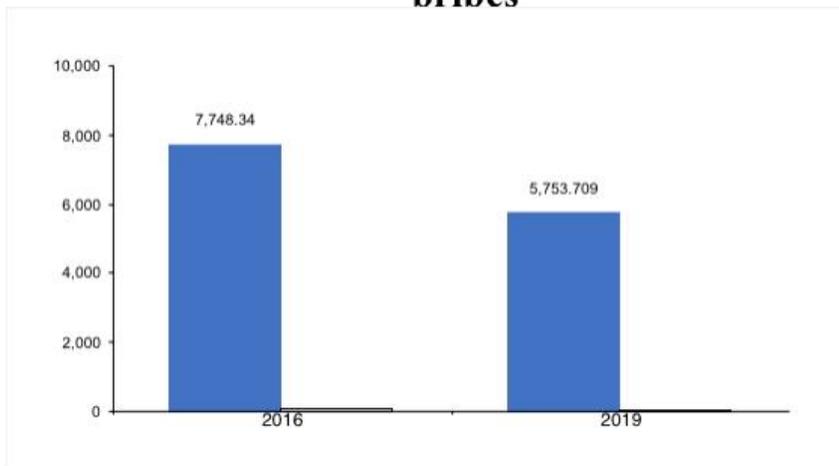
Significant changes in the prevalence of bribery



➤ 9 States had statistically significant decreases and 8 States had statistically significant increases



NGN 675 billion was paid in bribes



NGN 439 billion was the Federal budget on education for 2018
 NGN 269 billion was the Federal budget on health for 2018

N675 billion paid annually in bribe

So, when we are looking at those 117 million bribes, and they are mounting, of course, we asked every respondent to the survey how much they had paid. And it turned out that the average pay of a bribe in 2016 was around 7800 Naira. So that was in today's dollar value translate to about \$20 to \$25. And in 2019, and the average size of the bribe had, a little bit reduced to about 5700 Naira. However, collectively, because of the large number of bribes that are being paid, this still amounts to a very, very significant amount of a total of N675 billion being paid in these kinds of small bribes, just to have a comparison. That is the combined health and education budget of Nigeria in 2018. So that was the equivalent paid by citizens in the form of these bribes. Next slide. Here we see what I already mentioned, the average bribe is relatively low with the absolute majority. So more than 50% of all these cash bribes, mostly cash bribes, being less than 1500 Naira. That's about today's value would be roughly about \$4.

Why do people pay bribes?

And there's no surprises here, I guess that is rather typical across the world, wherever we do these kinds of studies. One major reason is to speed up procedures. And I think we should also recognize that very often, procedures have a certain tendency, to slow down to solicit bribes. So, there's a certain extortionist element to that sometimes in that transaction. And the second one is to avoid essentially a negative consequence, mostly consequences, mostly the payment of a fine, which also relates as we will see a little bit later to the type of public officials that are requesting bribes.

Bribery: Land Registry Office surpasses Police

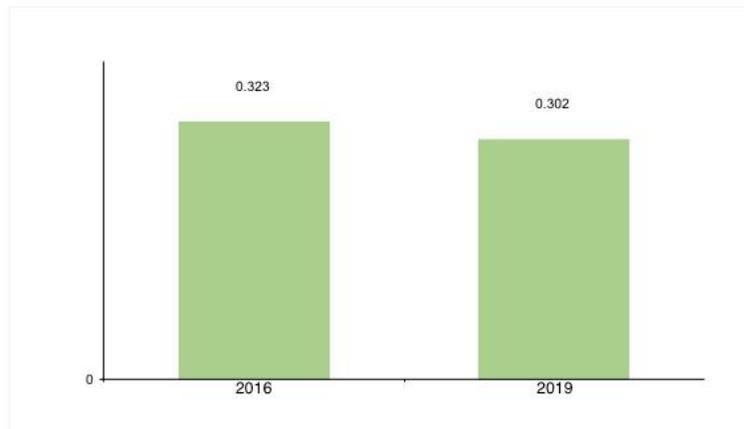
Again, no surprises here. First, the good news, we saw improvements in terms of less propensity to request or solicit bribes across pretty much all the 20 or so public types of public officers for who we conducted this survey. So, in the interaction with police officers, for example, we had a massive drop from 46% of all interactions in 2016, ending up with a payment of a bribe to 33%. So, a very, very significant drop. And really the only actually entity where the likelihood of bribe seeking behavior seem to have increased was the Land Registry Office. However, there's a couple of other things that we will get later to, in terms of the profile of the bribe. seekers, that is interesting that has also policy implications. Yes, and this is one of them. Because if we look, essentially, at who is the one, the type of public officers that are collecting the bribes, we quickly see that it's only seven types of public officers that are responsible for more than 80% of the collection of all these petty bribes. And it's only two types, police officers, namely, and public utility officers, who are responsible for more than half of all the bribes that are being collected. And that, of course, is an extremely interesting finding as concerns where to focus our attention to make some real, tangible, and realistic changes in the life of Nigerians. Because if we would only target our entire anti-corruption drive on the police and public utility officers, we would be able to more than half the entire experience of bribe seeking behavior by Nigerians or against Nigerians across the country.

Refusal to pay bribe: The ranking of six geo-political zones

If we're looking at, for example, just those entities, like the police, but also federal road safety and vehicle inspection officers, who are typically basically on the streets, and in a variety of roadblocks and controls often collecting these bribes, if we would just focus on eliminating or even just cutting by half corruption on the roads. Again, it would make a massive difference in the overall exposure of Nigerians to bribe seeking behaviors by the public officers. We also found a very encouraging trend that Nigerians across all

six geopolitical zones with one exception, that is the Southeast, were more willing to refuse to pay bribes. And that is very important because refusing to pay bribes seems to be something quite common.

Bribery in Nigeria is less prevalent than three years ago



- Nigerians paid an average of one bribe every two months
- **117 million** bribes in total were paid in the 12 months prior to the survey

While reporting the request for bribe seems to be still a big problem, what does this mean? For example, if we look at the North- East region, we had a doubling, essentially, of the readiness of people to refuse bribes. And basically, here, the question was, during the last 12 months, were you approached for bribe? Did you have a contact with a public officer? Yes, or no? If the answer is yes, next question is, did you pay? And then the next question is on any occasion of an interaction with a public officer, did you refuse to pay during the last 12 months and that is that 27% for example, for the North- East, and on average, we are talking about 19%. So almost one in five requests for bribes are being refused. And obviously, this is something that if we can further enhance that further empower people to refuse bribes, and the payment of bribes and requests for bribes, that seems to be quite a promising approach next. Yes, as I already said, the big Achilles heel of the anti-corruption system remains the absence of readiness of Nigerians to go and report bribery. Now obviously we need to keep in mind we are talking here about petty bribes. So, they are often more perceived as a nuisance as some form of a violation, but maybe not amounting up to something where the respective payer would now go on and report the incident, or even if he had or she had refused, the payment would go on to report the incident. And that is something that is unfortunate. But it is also something that the institutions themselves could probably turn around by changing the actual experience of people that are going to report which presently is not very encouraging but could easily be changed. Next, one specific area, we did not see any improvements, but a deterioration was related to corruption specifically, in the context of public sector recruitment. Here we saw a massive increase of the propensity of bribe seeking and bribe paying.

Increased bribery in public sector recruitment

In 2016, about 16% of all the people who had successfully competed for a public post, work in the public sector, about 16% admitted that in the context of their competition, they had actually paid a bribe. In 2019, it was almost double at 32%. So, a third of all the people that have been hired into the public sector during the past three years, essentially admit having paid a bribe to do so. And if you add, let's say, all forms of nepotistic-like strategies to obtain employment, and we're almost at 50%. And that, of course,

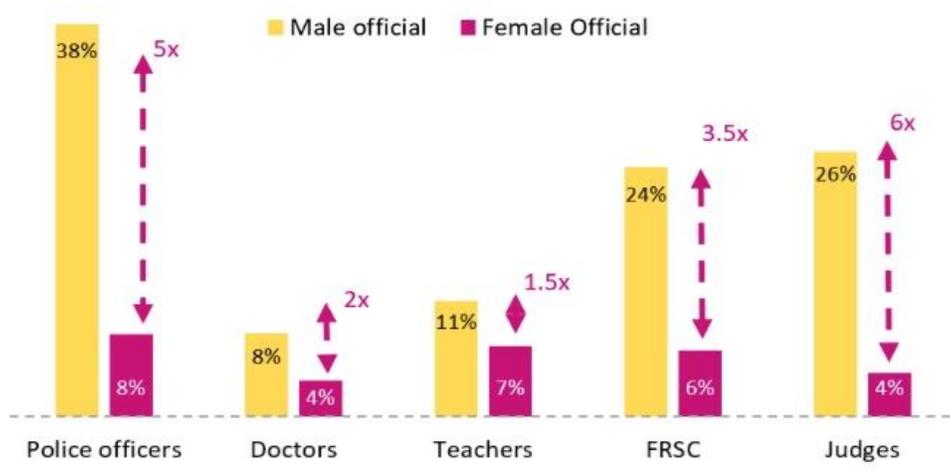
conditioning the public sector in terms of its integrity standards massively. Another area that we investigated, for the first time in the 2019 survey was the question of bribery in the context of elections, and the phenomenon of vote buying. And we found that across all the six geopolitical zones without massive differences, about one in five, Nigerians had, received money in the context of casting of their vote. So that is, of course, quite an undermining factor, so to speak for the democratic process. On the other hand, it seems that there was no difference across geopolitical zones or essentially states that went to one or the other party. So, it seems like something that all political actors to a greater or lesser extent, seem to be engaging.

Gender difference in bribe solicitation

And this is very interesting, because this is the analysis that we do specifically to look at how is this data similar or different for that matter between men and women? And first, in terms of the prevalence of bribery, by gender, we found out that ... sorry... probably being solicited for bribe, right as we speak. No, on a serious note. So, we saw that men were significantly more frequent in paying bribes than women. 35% of the bribes were paid by men, only 23% by women. And of course, it's interesting what may be the reasons for that. It could be that women interact less with public officials; it could be that women are less frequently actually solicited for bribes or could be there were a few more. So, we now looked at the memory mental status of men and women. And when we're looking at that, we see that, for example, women, who are single and live alone in households, they're obviously the propensity towards engaging in bribery increases, which suggests that in many cases, men are not only paying bribes, so to speak for situations set up, merely and exclusively concern themselves, but also quite often on behalf of their families, even though regardless of that, we should keep in mind that still women, single women living alone, as still considerably less likely to pay bribes than their male companions 31% versus 37%.



Likelihood of male and female public officials to take a bribe



When citizens deal with public officials in Nigeria, bribery is significantly more likely to occur when the official is male.

Where the gender composition is more equal, male officials are less likely to take bribes than in those where men heavily outnumber women (with one exception).

Male police officers solicit bribes more than female officers

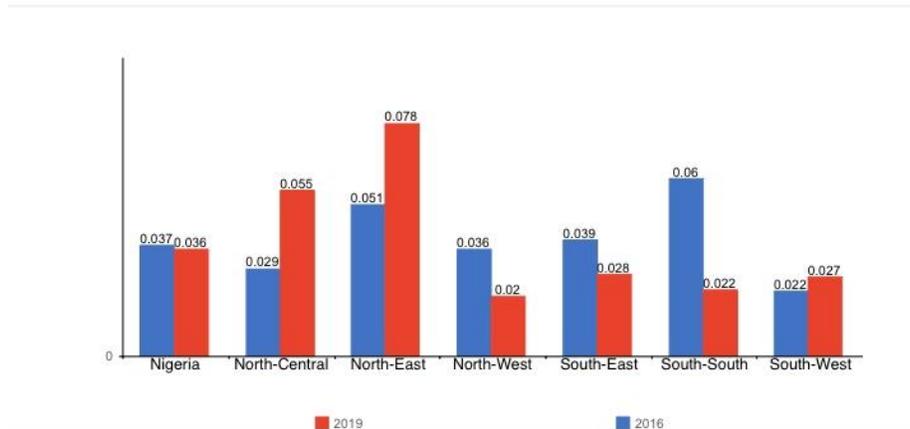
So, this one is really the most interesting one, I find, because this looked not at the pay of the price in terms of gender, but at the solicitor of the bribe. And here we saw that, for example, police are in amongst the police officers that male police officers were five times as more likely than female police officers to solicit bribes. Among Doctors, the male Doctors were still twice as likely to solicit bribes than female doctors. Teachers, again, 1.5 times more likely men to solicit bribes than women. Federal Road Safety Corps and so on. We only got data for some types of public officers. But it was consistent across the board, essentially, the men in those public officers were more likely to solicit bribes, to engage in bribe seeking behavior than their female colleagues. And of course, that has massive policy implications potentially.

Policy Implications of Bribery

In a summary mode, first, Nigerians interact with very few types of public officials. So rather than focusing on every public official, it would be much more efficient and relevant for Nigerians to start with those ones where a lot of interaction happens, teachers, police, and the health system. We also know that seven types of public officials are responsible for more than 80% of all the bribes being collected, again, we can target our anti-corruption interventions. And the last finding - police prosecution and judicial officers representing essentially the criminal justice system remain on a comparative basis most affected by corruption. That means again, of course, they are not only basically, that is not only problematic, because of the bribery itself, but also because they have a role in the fight against bribery. That means basically the typical problem of the gatekeepers and who watches them, and that a specific effort needs to be invested in them to reduce bribery in those professions. Then, the issue that I just mentioned, male public officials versus female public officials, and it's obvious that gender equality and women empowerment in the public sector and in public sector recruitment would promise massive governance gains in terms of reduced propensity of bribery. It is also clear that people who are better educated are the more likely to refuse bribes. They may also be more likely to be asked for bribes because they typically have better jobs and therefore a juicier target. But they also know their rights better, and therefore obviously investing in education would be a very promising anti-corruption intervention as well. And of course, attitudes among young people show the biggest improvement in comparison across age brackets. And that, again, seems to suggest to me that investing into education and investing into the introduction of ethics and integrity related content into education, could bear quite some fruits in terms of the overall anti-corruption effort.

The main reason for the low reporting rates is the fear of reprisal. But if the ministries, departments, and agencies change the reporting experience, I think we would also relatively quickly see a change in the readiness of people reporting bribe seeking behavior. And the last one is I think, just to emphasize the need to continue data collection and come up with new indices and new approaches to collect data on corruption. I think the most important part is really that we continue to use the same methodology so that we can measure over time, whether we are seeing any improvements, or also where we see deteriorations for example, in the public sector recruitment, and can react in terms of our anti-corruption efforts to those changes.

Not reporting bribery remains the Achilles' heel of the anti-corruption system



Anti-corruption: skepticism and cynicism of Nigerians

The whole premise of the presentation is that corruption is on the decline in Nigeria. That is kind of surprising, it's antithetical to everything that I know or have experienced in present day Nigeria. What is the modality for this study? How was this study conducted to arrive at the conclusions? I'm happy you started by mentioning perception, perception versus reality, maybe the study itself is not the perception. The whole study is antithetical to everything that we hear about, or that we have experienced that I have experienced, personally. I go to Nigeria quite often and to hear that corruption in Nigeria is on the decline is really kind of an eye opener to me, kind of very, very, very surprising to me, too. And so, you can understand the curiosity about the validity of the study? What is the integrity of the study, and there is a very big chunk that is left out of this study too? Of course, maybe the focus is on the public sector and the police officers, but the biggest corruption we know that we experience lies with the politicians and with those at the senior level of the government. So, is there any plan to survey that? I'll also like to know who's been surveyed too, I mean, this this raises a lot of critical questions and answers, you know particularly based on perception and reality.

First, in terms of the methodology, this is a household survey that applies the standard NBS sampling methodology. That means, it really tries to essentially get a perfect reflection of the population in a specific area and interview representatives of the households representing that area in the best possible way. It interviewed more than 30,000 individuals across all the states, all the economic classes, interviewed people down to the age of 15 and upwards. It had no limitation. I think the important part that one needs to keep in mind is the data relates back to 2019. So, you know, the latest developments in terms of likely occurrences in 2020 or 2021 are not captured. So, if there have been changes whether to the better or to the worse, they would not be captured by this study. The other thing that the study is, this kind of study is unlikely to be able to come across as so-called large-scale bribery because first of all the chances that you get to interview basically that politician if you do a proper sampling is very low but more importantly the chances that that politician or that private sector person paying that politician will truthfully respond to your questions is very low. For this kind of large-scale bribery, you need different methodologies. There have been some attempts to engage in those, but they are in terms of measurability and comparability over

time these methodologies are much more problematic than the one that we choose for this sort of like more small scale, bribery kind of study.

It's very important for all of us to recognize that even if there is a small improvement, that we were able to discern between 2016 and 2019, overall, the propensity of bribery and bribe seeking behavior by public officials remain extremely high. If a third of all your interactions with a public official end up with the request for a bribe, you obviously have a massive problem. The good news is that, if anything, there might be a little bit of a trend of finally bending down the curve rather than further up in the curve.

Anti-graft strategy at grassroots level

At Signature TV, our interaction with ordinary Nigerians has also shown that gradually, the average Nigerian is buying into the anti-corruption campaign. At the same time, it would be wrong for anyone to say that the corruption in Nigeria is not alarming or worrying. It is, but some of the things we can call the anti-corruption win is taking place in Nigeria. You know, if you look at the bigger picture, you discover that the anti-corruption agencies are securing more convictions. Many corrupt officials are losing money or in terms of forfeiting money to the federal government, more forfeitures have taken place, more convictions. The courts are taking it more seriously, even though that a lot of people in Nigeria are still advocating for special courts or tribunals to make the administration of justice faster, because it might shock you to know that some people have been in court in the last 15 to 20 years. And those cases are not concluded. So, in recent times, EFCC and the other ACA's, (the anti-corruption agencies) are getting more people into prison for what they have done, and a lot more bigger people are being convicted and forfeiting their property. But I'd like to talk more about the work we do in Nigeria, as Signature Television with the support of the MacArthur Foundation, which has invested so much money to support the anti-corruption fight, given new capacity to media organizations, non-governmental agencies that are involved in the war against corruption, giving them more capacity to function better to fight corruption.



VinMartin Ilo, CEO Signature TV

What we have done is that we discovered that the anti-corruption war and the understanding of corruption in Nigeria is so elitist that the ordinary Nigerian those that are going to vote at the end of I mean, at elections, those that are going to endorse candidates, when the elections come know little to nothing about corruption.

In Nigeria, you hear about corruption in billions or trillions of Naira, very staggering numbers and the ordinary man on the street does not know what is a trillion? Does he know what is a billion? So, we discovered that this conversation is confusing for the ordinary Nigerians, thereby isolating them, and distancing them from this war. So, working with MacArthur, we came up with a program on television, where we reached the ordinary Nigerians, you know, educated them, enlightened them about the negative impact of corruption in local Nigerian languages in Pidgin English, Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba. The idea is that we want the ordinary Nigerian to understand first the damage, the cancerous effect of corruption on the development of the country on the development of our new generation and the impact of corruption on the well-being of a country. If you are someone who travels around the world, it is so embarrassing what people say about Nigeria and corruption.

So that's why we think that we need to talk to the ordinary people who get involved in corruption carelessly, not really because they want to, but they don't want to be inconvenienced, they don't want to sleep in a police station if they know that all they need to do is to pay five Naira and they go to the next point. So, we started this program, we call "*A Corruption Tori*" ... our campaign to reach the grassroots.

Luckily for us, MacArthur Foundation is putting down funds for this to be possible. So, at this kind of Town Hall, which we are having in different locations in Nigeria, the idea is that we are breaking down stories about corruption into a manageable understandable language for the villagers. In trying to tell them what we mean by 675 billion, we attempt to say something like look, Nigeria is estimated to be about 200 million in population. For instance, if you sat down to share 675 billion to 200 million Nigerians, almost everyone will get three point something million, every Nigerian. So, we tell them this in their language and tell them that with 675 million, almost every household in Nigeria is going to get pipe borne water. The cottage hospitals are going to work, the roads are going to be repaired, the schools are going to be renovated, children will get textbooks, electricity will function. We also, in that same manner, tell them that when you take 1000 Naira from a candidate that is running for election, or when you take a bag of rice, you have mortgaged yourself for the next four years.

We'll try to break it down to them, tell them why it is necessary for them to hold public officials accountable - their councilors, local government Chairman, town union presidents, and traditional rulers. So, we believe that this big grammar in Abuja, and the state capitals is not yielding results.

But now, I'll give you an instance in a local government in Enugu, about two weeks ago, the youths marched to the local government headquarters. What was their demand? They demanded accountability from the local government Chairman, they wanted to know, all the things he talked about budgets and promises made during the campaigns. If you saw their placards, they were talking about accountability, transparency, how are you translating these promises to dividends for the people? So, with the work we do, we've discovered that the ordinary Nigerians are buying into the anti-corruption efforts, everybody is tired. And with the work anti-corruption agencies are doing and their non-governmental agencies with the support of organizations like MacArthur, and other international foundations that are operating in Nigeria, we'll find out that more people are getting enlightened.

Let me give you an instance. And part of the work we are doing, identifying those that are making, you know, changing the narrative, positively changing the narrative of corruption in Nigeria. In Kano, about a

couple of months ago, a policeman was sent to an accident scene in Kano. And they were casualties, some fatal. And one of those that died in that accident had one million naira in a bag. And we know in Nigeria, when you talk about policemen, yeah, everybody's like, the other name is bribery. The other name is corruption. But this policeman took the one million naira and returned it to the headquarters of the police in Kano.

And the police traced the deceased family, and that money was returned. Also in Kano, a policeman and a civil servant had been sent to seal a warehouse, where expired drugs were stored to be sold. And when they got there, they were offered a bribe more than one million naira. The officials took the one million naira and returned the money. What we did, because that's part of our mandate with the MacArthur program, to identify those that are changing the narrative. So, we went all the way from Abuja to Kano to identify these great Nigerians, celebrated them, gave them awards, and then did special programs on them. And I remember that when we were interacting with the policemen, one of the things they told one of our reporters is that look, I'm now respected in my community. The other policemen want to be like me because everyone is now seeing that they're doing something positive. So, it is to change the narrative that it is not all corruption, corruption, corruption, corruption, corruption, that incrementally a few Nigerians are trying to do it in a different way.

A couple of years back, when in the South- East, some people were celebrated for advance fee fraud. People that were involved in drugs, they came from Malaysia. They came from Thailand Brazil, and different places. They bought expensive cars and were celebrated by musicians who used their names to sing popular songs. And everyone wanted their child to go to Malaysia. They didn't want to know what they were doing there. But today, a lot of Nigerians are asking questions. What are you going to do in Malaysia? They're asking their daughters that are going to Italy. Are you going there for prostitution? Or do you have a genuine job? So, I think that although corruption is still cancerous in Nigeria, it is gradually being fought by Nigerians. There is an incremental effort towards fighting corruption in Nigeria, and not just by government, by the ordinary people.

Corruption: A Nexus of democracy, security, economic development

I was in Nigeria in April, spoke to many of my friends and other people in and around the government and otherwise. And they all had the perception that the security situation and corruption were not declining. President Buhari's campaign promises of security and reducing corruption and dealing with security had not actually been accomplished during the first six years of his administration. Therefore, I'm pleasantly surprised to see this information. It counterintuitive to what you hear, but perception is only perception. It doesn't mean it's the truth or it's even reality. And I think that there should be a large discussion. I don't know if the author of this study has circulated this inside Nigeria or gotten any publicity. For me, corruption and security are very much tied to the question of economic development. My theory is that if you have an increasing, improving standard of living for the population, then you reduce corruption and you reduce security concerns. If you have poor people, if you have desperate people, if you have people who don't know if they're going to get a meal the next day, don't know if the children will be given medical care if they're sick. Their desperation is to be manipulated very easily and desperation drives people to do desperate things. My overall thesis is that all these issues of democracy, security, corruption, are tied to economic development.



Lawrence Freeman, Africa Analyst



Dr. Kole Shettima, Director, MacArthur Foundation, Nigeria

Anti-corruption and accountability

In a scholarly world, you know, we all have different perspectives and ideas. And so, I'm sure we have different interpretations of what we see happening in Nigeria, or of any issue as well, so I'm not surprised about the responses to all the presentations that have been made, because that's why there is diversity, that's why you have a competition, so that you can agree to anything, and you can disagree with anything as well. I'm going to talk about the Foundation's work around accountability and anti-corruption. And the main reason why we decided to focus on accountability and anti-corruption was primarily because we believe that central to whatever the country is going to achieve, if we don't deal with the challenges of corruption and accountability, we are convinced that we will have given a much, much longer route to follow to reach the desired goals and objectives of Nigerians. We did a survey when we were starting this program, we asked Nigerians what their major problems were? I think that was 2014. And Nigerians said insecurity was number one and followed by lack of services in education and health; corruption, and finally how to find the solution to the problem by investing in young people. So, when we sat down and analyzed the situation, we were convinced that probably that discussing and dealing with the issues around corruption is a common threat. Whether you look at the security situation, especially in 2014 and many of you have followed some of the revelations that have come out of public reporting in the media and conversations around corruption and insecurity, the challenges of health and education. And if you look at UNODC's study on the level of corruption that happens in our education sector or health sector, we believe that those are the mitigating factors. And that's why we were convinced that probably what we should focus on is how can we reduce corruption and improve accountability in Nigeria? As of 2021 MacArthur Foundation supports investigative journalism because we feel that an independent media, a critical investigation is very important to dealing with issues of corruption.

On this realm, we support maybe about 90 independent media houses and organizations. In doing that, we want to see how local languages can play a role in that because I think the reality is that Nigerians speak English, but many of our people rely on Nigerian languages for their information and artists. That's what's why people have been trying to work around other Nigerian languages, so that, you know people can talk about these things in their languages.

Of course, we also want to make sure that most children who are in in Abuja will learn to speak Igbo so that he is not lost, like many of our own children have gotten lost, because none of them can speak any of the languages that we have spoken. So, for us, it's also about how we revive our local languages, through this kind of media support?

Improving the Criminal Justice System

The second area of support is in criminal justice system. Many of you are aware of how our system is rigged, in favor of the rich. The rich people have figured it out, that they can drag a case for 20 years, 30 years, maybe they will become a governor, and then they will become a senator then the following day, they will become House of Representative member. So, they have figured it out that you can rig the criminal justice system, if you have the money, if you have the resources so that people will not catch you. And we have several of those court cases in our system that has made it impossible, almost difficult for anybody really to convict many of those people, well, many of them will just hire 100, plus lawyers, Senior Advocates of Nigeria, they will intimidate a magistrate who have just graduated from university, a Judge, they will intimidate this person with all their credentials and therefore will not be able to give any judgment. The next thing is the case is knocked out on all kinds of technical reasons, but the substance to the case is never touched. And we have several cases of those ones. So, we thought that, you know, how can we improve our criminal justice system, so that the rich and the powerful do not just simply rig it in their own favor and get out, get away with it.

Fostering Behavioral Change

We think that law and order is important, so is behavioral change. As important as the criminal justice is, we also must think about how can we change the behavior and the norms of our people? We know that if some things were learned, practiced, and became part of the values in our society, it is extremely difficult to change just by throwing people into jail. And there's as you know, there are very few prisons in Nigeria anyway. So, you don't even have the prisons to hold on these people. So, in doing this behavioral change, we're looking at so many things. You know, we're looking at faith leaders. Every Nigerian claim that they are religious people. So, for example, today, Friday, I think one of the reasons why I came late was because I went to the Mosque. And on a Sunday many people go to the church. And so, everyone believes in something. But what does that say, but what does their faith say about accountability and corruption? Or does it mean that there's no relationship with all the prayers that people do? And then there's their own daily behavior and other things. So, we are working with several religious leaders, try to challenge them and ask them questions about you know, what does your faith say about this thing? Is it okay for you just come and pray for a politician or a criminal and collect their own money and bless them? And then that is the end of the story. Is that what your Faith says or not? The other element of behavioral change is looking at our entertainment industry- Nigeria's Nollywood, that are entertaining our young people about all kinds of things. How do we portray the people who are doing bad things in our society? How do we portray good people in our society? How can we subliminally send messages about integrity and how people are supposed to behave in certain ways?

Have we made any significant difference in terms of the work that investigative journalism was doing? Excellent, there was a very good evidence, based on the content analysis of the newspapers and other things, there was very good evidence. Can we say that there was significant change in terms of laws, policies and convictions and other things, there was good evidence that there was significant change in



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that direction. So, it was a mixed outcome. And frankly, we're not disappointed because we never believed that the MacArthur Foundation or anybody for that matter, would be able to eradicate corruption in Nigeria.

Become change agent

Sometimes the change that we want, is in the smiles, in the faces of the young children when you go to school. When you see the faces of children who are getting food, the one meal a day, and smiling because they are getting the meal, they will take that meal, some of them or even hide it, or share it and take it home, because they want to share it with their brothers and sisters who are not in school. So, some of the changes that we see may not be necessary in terms of the big, big, big picture that we see in people. But some of them are going into a classroom where there was supposed to be a classroom, seven by seven blocks, two windows, that was never there before, but for the work that all the grantees are doing to ensure that when government says that I'm giving money for constituency project and ensures those constituency projects are implemented. Or you go to a constituency office of a legislator and see all the vehicles and the tractors and the medical doctors, you see legislators who have built hospitals, appropriated it as their own hospitals, but for the fact that, you know ICPC have come and taken over this one and given it back to the community, those things would have never been there. So, I always try to remind people that when we're evaluating what we are evaluating, like corruption, some of the things that we see, just the smile of a hungry child who will not have eaten, but for the work that these people are doing, who will never have gone into a hospital and get the medical attention, but for the work that they are doing and other things. And to me those are the things and I also try to tell people that that what we do today, some of them we will never see the results until five years down the road until maybe 10 years down when we are not even there. That is when we begin to see some of the results that we were working and other things. So, I think that we all need to be humble. We all need to be considerate and be very measured in thinking of what is it that we can achieve and what we cannot be achieve. And I also don't want us to be throwing the baby with the bathwater and thinking that nothing has changed. And I don't think that is also true. But I also think that we should not be thinking that we are going to initiate a revolution.

Layers of accountability mechanism

One challenge is that most of us tend to focus on the national capital, and we believe that the National Capital should be the solution to our problems. And forgetting that probably 40 to 45% of the resources of this country are held by those people at the lower levels of the community. And that's why we decided to identify about 25 media organizations at lower levels to support them, because we think that to bring change, we should all not be talking about Buhari all the time, but more of our governors and other elected officials who have the responsibility to deliver the goods and other things. This means that we need to expand the accountability mechanism to the village level, community level, primary school levels. If you look at some problems related to feeding programs problems, unfortunately, our head teachers are the ones who will collect the money, and they will not feed the children. This is the reality that we are all dealing with, you know, so we must hold them accountable for what they do. I don't think that we are doing enough in terms of the lower levels of governance and structures and other things. And I think that is certainly an area that I think we should all do more, try to hold local government officials accountable. But at the same time, as you know, our people have a proverb about, you know, the fish that gets rotten from the head. And I think that if we get the head to be getting much better and sweet and others, hopefully, they will also see the example of what happens at the top and therefore, we will begin to shift, I mean, we may not be able to be behaving the same way as we should, but probably there will be some shift in certain good directions as well. So, the point you made is also related to the point I was making about behavioral change. How do we change the norms and values and other so the young people will emulate the legislator who is doing the right thing?

There was a study by Carl Green, one of the early colonial masters, the late colonial officials about who is a good person. And it's very interesting. At that time when people were asked, who was a good person. The good persons were the judges, lawyers, and district artists. Today, if you asked who the good person, probably they'll tell you, it must be the richest person in the village, the richest politician in the village. So, that kind of orientation and the norms and values change is so important as part of the work that we're doing. And that's why we're also challenging the religious leaders and others because people who will say Muslim prayers admit they will do all the wrong things. They will say Christian prayer at the end of the day, then they'll just pack their bags and go as if nothing has happened. What is the point in having a prayer in the beginning, prayer at the end of the day and then in between them, you are doing all the crooked things on earth?

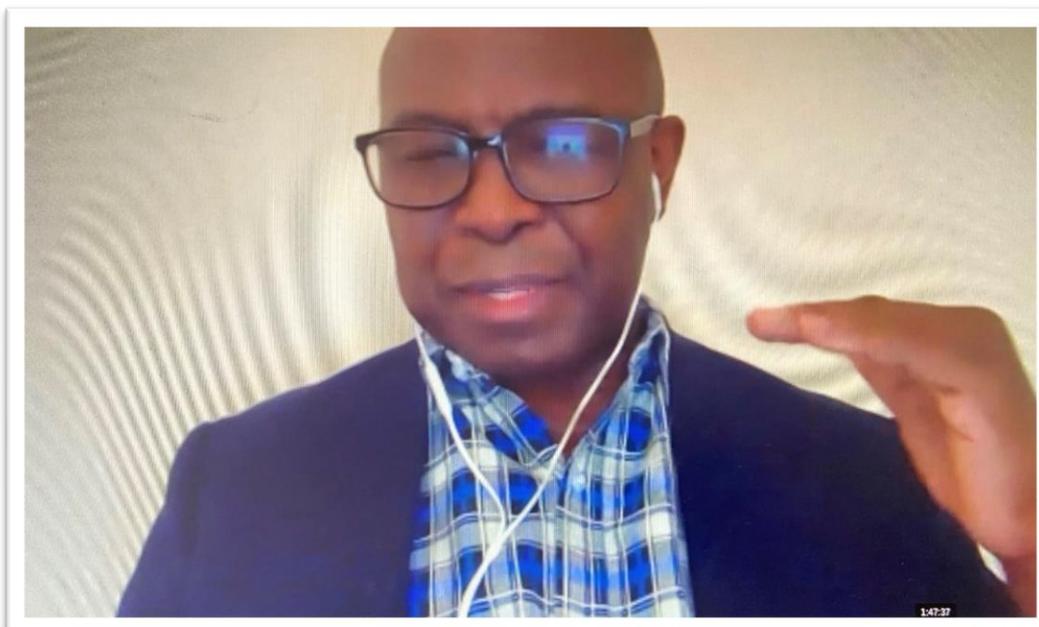
Incremental change in culture of corruption

I don't think anyone in this conversation has said, we've come out of the woods or that Nigeria has suddenly become corruption free. But for those of us on the ground, we see incremental progress. Let's say that a couple of years back, it was just darkness. Of late we have seen flashes of some light here and there. And these days in Nigeria too, you find out that what that never happened before now seems to be happening like where some people quit their positions because of scandals. A minister resigned, because there was a scandal, it never happened before. In the past public officials will sit tight, people in positions will sit tight and weather the storm. But these days, you still find out that people leave offices because of scandal. That is a positive. If market women suddenly are marching to the local government headquarters. If some youths will go to the local government Chairman demonstrating and asking to know how you have used money, allocation given to you for the good of the people. A senator, somewhere in the southeast. who, bought motorcycles, bought buses, and just went and put it in his compound, , and locked the gates for several years? No one knew if he was going to sell them when he completed his tenure, or whether he was going to

use it for his personal business. But one day, the people marched to this Senator's house, this happened with video everywhere. And they took possession of what belonged to them. They asked our anti-corruption agencies - ICPC and EFCC to intervene. And these articles were distributed to the people. What we're saying is that we're trying to enlighten people, tell them about their rights, tell them about what they need to do, as much as they are doing the right thing. If those ordinary Nigerians did not discover that this man had kept items bought with their money in his house and demanded that those items be given out to the people, nothing would have happened. We're not saying that everything has changed. But we're saying that people are getting aware, people are getting tired, people are getting angry. Today, ordinary Nigerians are rising and demanding that there should be transparency and accountability, and that the right thing must be done. That's the point we are making, that's the job we are doing. And we think there's an incremental change.

Technology, transparency, and tracking of criminals

There's no doubt that technology is helping the process, increasing more transparency, reducing indiscretion, removing power from the hands of some people, and handing over to technology to make some important decisions. The Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) has deployed all kinds of technologies to track some of those things that are happening. And this has made life more difficult for some Nigerians, especially criminals to do the thing that we do. And I think that with increased deployment of technology, and others, we'll be able to do some things much better than we used to do. But also recognizing that our people, unfortunately, as Soyinka used to say, intelligence gone crooked, we are thinking about one way of blocking one way, they are perhaps two or three steps ahead of us thinking of how they go about rigging that technology for bad things, and wrong things as well. So, I will say that, yes, technology has made a lot of good difference and made some things much easier and more transparent. But I'm also one of those one who recognize that, unfortunately, some of our people have also recognized that they can use the same technology for wrong things and to circumvent certain things to happen. So, you know, it is both directions, you can go in the right way, sometimes go the wrong way. And that is how life is.



Prof. Augustine Okereke, City University of New York

Technology has really helped; without technology, I won't be having the information I have today. Without technology, instances of police brutality will not have been exposed. With the cell phone, they'll just capture some malfeasance live. So, the same thing is happening in Nigeria, too. And that is really very, very helpful. However, the question is, how is the government using technology to address these endemic issues? One of the biggest issues we're having in Nigeria now is kidnapping and banditry and these bad guys communicate with the cell phone. And the cell phone is the easiest way of identifying somebody, once you have a cell phone, you have no more secrets. I mean even if you put it off, you know, and Nigeria has the technology? How is the government employing that technology to address these issues? When you kidnap somebody, you call from a location that could be identified and yet the criminals operate freely. Has it got to do with corruption? Has it got to do with elements within the government being part of that system? So, I'll be most interested to learn about employing technology to solving our problems?

Banks, illicit money, and insecurity

The success of Bank Verification Number (BVN) and National Identification Number (NIN), are evidence of technology's impact on our lives, but how is the government using this technology to help to alleviate people's issues, to alleviate problems to solve crime? A friend of mine who is a bank manager told me that a lot of unaccounted for funds or unclaimed funds are in many Nigerian banks today. Because these were ill-gotten monies from corrupt practices and with BVN, and NIN, and all that, if they tried anything around those accounts, they would be in deep trouble. So, a lot of billions are in Nigerian banks are unclaimed. And I think it's technology that has made it possible. It has also made it more difficult to take big bribes in Nigeria today. You know, at a point, the criminals moved over to using dollars to do their transactions. But with the developments in the foreign exchange sector, their opportunities are becoming narrower for very corrupt people. So, I think technology has also helped even in terms of security, but challenge is, how are those responsible for security, using the available technology to fight insecurity?

As I said, our people will always look for, you know, you can come out with the best of technologies to fight all these corrupt things in our banking system and other things. Trust my people, they will figure it out, how can they undermine that system? I have this young person who just finished from a university and told me that oh, he has now repented, he is no longer going to do any of the things that he used to do. I asked him. What were the kinds of things that you were doing? It was so mind boggling, I've never even thought about how he was able to get Exam sheets and exams whatever, ahead of anybody and everybody and sell it to other people so that he can make money out of it. He was telling me that, oh, he has repented. So, for those kinds of people, I think that we can do many things, to stop them from doing some of these things. But some of them, I'm not quite sure what you can do to stop them from what they are used to do. So, there are all kinds of challenges. I think just that's the reality that we are dealing with as people in this country.

As stated earlier, the police seem to be very active when one of them is touched. Probably this is not in any way different from the police all over the world. You don't kill a police officer in any jurisdiction and easily get away with it. I think in our own case probably they sometimes will overreact. And sometimes we don't know, they are getting the right people or not whether they're just getting, producing some people somewhere and accusing them of the ones that killed the police or not, I'm sure they are capable of framing people if they can't really get the real outright person to show that they are on top of their job as well.

Although technology is very important, I don't want us to over emphasize or overrate technology. I think that technology helps with a lot of things that we can do differently. But I think that there are also limitations

in terms of what technology does and doesn't.

It is true that there was a US citizen who was kidnapped near the border between Nigeria and Niger, and they succeeded in rescuing him. The Americans, with the help of all kinds of people and things were able to rescue the person as well. But I think we have not taken the best advantage of our technological infrastructure to make probably some significant differences.

When you are not in government, there are some things that you know, there are many things that you don't know and, but I know we could have done better with all the technologies that are around all over the world and others, but you know, we have a system sometimes like it's set up to fail. I remember a governor who wanted to get drones for his state. And it has now taken three months to get the license. And I don't know why something that should be a national emergency, should go through some bureaucracy. I don't understand why it must be that way. This is the only country that we have, and we know, and we must deal with whatever reality that we have found ourselves.

