



# CIVIL SOCIETY FOR ANTI-CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA



Established in 1989, **PartnersGlobal** is an international non-governmental organization that works through a global network to transform conflict, strengthen democratic institutions, and achieve sustainable development. Together with **New-Rule LLC** and local civil society organizations BudgIT, the CLEEN Foundation, the Public and Private Development Centre (PPDC), and Partners West Africa Nigeria (PWAN), **PartnersGlobal** is implementing the third phase of the Promoting Civil Society Participation in Anti-Corruption Efforts in Nigeria (Access Nigeria) project. Funded by the **U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement** (INL), the project aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goal 16's commitments to fight corruption and illicit financial flows, increase transparency, and improve access to information.

To address systemic corruption, Nigeria became a signatory of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2015 and implemented its first National Action Plan to promote good governance. The Second National Action Plan (NAP2) was adopted in January 2020, and project partners are developing advocacy strategies to support accountable and transparent implementation of it. To combat corruption within the judiciary, the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) was enacted into law at the federal level in 2015.

Across the country, Access Nigeria is working with civil society and the Government of Nigeria to advance Nigeria's commitments under the OGP. At the federal level, the project supports local civil society to conduct advocacy and provide expertise to the government to implement OGP commitments focused on strengthening asset recovery legislation, improving fiscal and budget transparency, and implementing open contracting and open contracting data standards (OCDS) to improve compliance with Nigeria's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Civil society groups are providing trainings on the FOIA process and building knowledge on OCDS. They also conduct advocacy for open budgeting at the National Assembly and for the passage of the Proceeds of Crime Management Agency, which would establish a legislative framework for asset recovery.

# MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The project established the Open Alliance, an umbrella 139-member civil society organization, in the second phase of the project and effectively advocated to secure government commitment to OGP.
- Through effective advocacy, a total of 16 member groups of the Open Alliance, including BudgIT and PPDC, are represented on the OGP Steering Committee.
- Civil society monitoring tools such as PPDC's annual ministries, departments, and agencies freedom of information compliance rankings are building a culture of disclosure among public institutions.
- By identifying areas of mutual interest, seeking compromise, and taking a solution-oriented approach, the Open Alliance has shifted civil society's relationship with government from one of distrust to constructive partnership.

## IMPACT

At the state level, Access Nigeria supports civil society efforts to advocate for compliance and the passage of policies and legislation to curb corruption, while providing civil society with expertise to address institutional incentives that encourage corruption. The project is currently active in Anambra, Bauchi, Cross Rivers, Edo, Delta, Ebonyi, Enugu, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Ogun, Oyo, and Plateau states. In these states, Access Nigeria is supporting local partners to assess service delivery, collaborate with local government to diagnose and address vulnerabilities to corruption, and track capital expenditures using crowdsourcing technology to improve government accountability.

Across states, civil society and state governments have formed partnerships to promote open budgeting, and state-level advocacy is advancing the adoption of Access to Information laws as well as policies and legislation to encourage whistleblowing. In addition, the project's local partners are monitoring court compliance with the Administration Criminal Justice Act (ACJA), designed to mitigate corruption in the judiciary and the criminal justice system.

Freedom of information has also been a major focus of the project. In 2011, the Government of Nigeria signed the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) into law. Slowly but surely, a culture of disclosure is building in Nigeria; however, several ministries, departments, and agencies have been resistant to disclosing information. Those that have purview of Nigeria's national security have been particularly hesitant.

In 2019, security institutions started requesting PPDC to deliver freedom of information trainings to gain critical knowledge and skills to improve their compliance and disclosure in accordance with the 2011 FOIA. Recently, project partner PPDC conducted a training for the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps on strengthening disclosure practices in accordance with provisions of the 2011 FOIA. Previously, project partner PPDC conducted a similar training for the Nigeria Atomic Energy Commission on the importance of access to information. Because both organizations' work is closely related to national security, staff have always seen information sharing as a liability. When PPDC first began outreach to the Commission in August 2018, they were met with silence or negative retorts. It was not until the Commission's staff were overwhelmed by the challenge of communicating the type of work they do to the public that they requested a training. There, PPDC explained the benefits of the FOIA, emphasizing provisions in the law that allow national security employees to share information without jeopardizing national security or themselves. PPDC also conveyed the benefits of disclosing information to the public, strengthening the trust between citizens and their government.

Both security organizations' shift from secrecy to being willing to be transparent, serves as a milestone for **PartnersGlobal** and PPDC. By working with the Access Nigeria project, these organizations demonstrate to other government actors that upholding the values of transparency and accountability can ultimately improve their institutions.