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Tackling judicial bribery and procurement fraud in Nigeria

How harnessing public disapproval can enable collective action against corruption

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Summary

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- Corruption is central to Nigeria’s challenges with insecurity, injustice, inequality and poor public goods and services. Amid consistently low levels of public spending, the misappropriation of those scarce public funds is causing real harm to citizens. This situation is worsened by a weak and compromised judicial system that allows elites to insulate themselves from accountability.
 - These interdependent and intersectional failings in Nigeria’s public sector provide a key example of the systemic challenges posed by corruption. While Nigeria has taken some steps towards reform, these efforts have predominately focused on tweaking top-down formal rules and structures, with little or no consideration given to informal dynamics that may enable and perpetuate corrupt practices.
 - The third household survey by the Chatham House Africa Programme’s Social Norms and Accountable Governance (SNAG) project, conducted in 2022, found that a large majority of Nigerians consider judicial bribery, contract inflation and procurement fraud to be unacceptable. However, most Nigerians also assume these practices to be extremely common, despite the widespread disapproval recorded in the survey.
 - Some 61 per cent of survey respondents believed that judges in Nigeria were likely to accept bribes to influence their rulings. These expectations are further heightened by sociopolitical factors, political interference, the contested relationship between Nigeria’s executive and judiciary, nepotism that contributes to a lack of transparency and merit in the appointment and elevation of judges to higher courts, and a culture of lobbying for position among judges. Existing judicial networks – the formal and informal ties that first connect judges to each other and to legal professionals and court officials – are believed to exert pressure on individual judges to fall in line with existing corrupt practices that undermine the rule of law and harm prospects for institutionalizing accountable governance.
 - Respectively, 74 per cent and 78 per cent of respondents expected officials in charge of state procurement and private contractors to routinely divert money from public contracts for personal use. Procurement officials and contractors alike face strong social expectations that they will engage in fraudulent behaviour and be pressured to reciprocate procurement opportunities, indicating a self-sustaining pattern of corruption that is resistant to top-down reform.

- Despite these expectations, across each of the corrupt behaviours considered in the survey, respondents were systematically mistaken about the attitudes of other people in their community towards judicial bribery, contract inflation or diversion of contract funds. Respectively, 88 per cent, 85 per cent and 88 per cent of respondents personally disapproved of each one of these practices. But many also believed that more of their friends, family and neighbours approved of corruption than was actually the case. These findings indicate that effective anti-corruption in part depends on addressing a problem of collective action – people do not act against corruption because they assume that they have no allies to cooperate with to challenge bad practices.
- This insight suggests that ensuring that Nigerians know that their distaste for bribery and embezzlement is shared by others in their communities could be an effective way of building pressure on officials to act. Widespread public disapproval of judicial bribery signals the potential for non-legal communities (including academia, civil society and media) to take an enhanced role in creating and monitoring public pledges by judges, and supporting judicial networks in enforcing such commitments to integrity. At the same time, strong negative attitudes towards procurement fraud provide a potential foundation for community monitoring efforts such as simplification and improved accessibility of public contracting information at the community level, including through appropriately accessible online procurement portals.
- Nigerians do have faith in the ability of institutions – especially anti-corruption agencies – to take appropriate steps towards accountability. There is therefore a chance for policymakers and organizations to leverage this public confidence to develop community-centred measures around corruption prevention and local engagement on anti-corruption law enforcement. However, significant state-level variation in the survey findings means that institutions responsible for anti-corruption must be sensitive in their approach and, where possible, work with trusted local organizations and individuals, such as the media and traditional leaders.

01

Introduction

Corruption and accountability deficits are undermining Nigeria's democracy and economic development. Social norms and public attitudes are a key part of tackling this problem.

As a regional heavyweight in West Africa and the continent's most populous democracy, Nigeria's efforts to address fundamental challenges of accountable governance have significant wider implications for Africa's political trajectory and future prosperity. Yet high levels of government corruption¹ and accountability deficits remain at the heart of Nigeria's struggles with insecurity, injustice and inequality. The misappropriation of the country's public resources – in most cases with impunity – acts as a major constraint on development and democratic consolidation. Corruption distorts the purpose of government institutions and disrupts public services; inhibits legitimate business activity and investment; and undermines the rule of law by eroding the trustworthiness of the legal and judicial systems. A weak and compromised judicial system in turn allows elites to insulate themselves from accountability.

In confronting entrenched, systemic and cyclical corruption, effective and context-sensitive policy interventions first require an understanding of the underlying drivers of corrupt behaviour. An essential part of this picture, and one that is frequently overlooked, is understanding of how corruption may function as a collective practice, informed by social influences and context. Too often, corruption is treated as a product of the individual decision-making of 'bad apples'. Through an analysis of extensive survey and qualitative data, this research paper seeks to evaluate the ways corrupt behaviours reflect individuals' interdependence with others in their network and community, based on social expectations or norms.

¹ Nigeria scored 25 points (out of 100) in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) – the leading global indicator of public sector corruption – in 2023 to rank 145 out of 180 countries assessed, compared with its ranking of 150 in 2022, with 24 points. The country's score has hovered between 24 and 28 out of 100 for more than 10 years. (In the CPI scoring system, zero means 'highly corrupt' and 100 means 'very clean'.) See Transparency International (2023), *Corruption Perceptions Index 2023*, report, Berlin: Transparency International, <https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/CPI-2023-Report.pdf>.

The paper explores the social expectations and norms associated with three key and interrelated forms of corruption: judicial bribery; contract inflation; and the misappropriation of public funds by private contractors. It also explores the levels of public confidence in, and expectations of, institutions involved in anti-corruption responses in Nigeria. Understanding the role of social expectations and norms across these sectors provides a new perspective on existing bureaucratic accountability mechanisms and uncovers opportunities for improving both institutional trustworthiness and public confidence. Tackling the collective action problem of entrenched corruption requires a better understanding of the expectations, norms and pressures people face when corruption opportunities arise and they have to decide whether to go with or against the flow; whether to violate negative norms or adopt new positive ones.

A social norms approach to tackling corruption

Laws are not the only mechanisms that societies use to regulate behaviour.² Social norms – defined as informally enforced social sanctions and rewards – are not formally codified or enforced, but shape the social acceptability of behaviour. They are a type of language that allows people to establish cooperative relationships with others, comply with expectations and signal belonging to a social group. Social norms are described as ‘shared understandings about actions that are obligatory, permitted or forbidden’³ that ‘govern many parts of our everyday lives from economic and political decisions to cultural practices’.⁴ They also play an influential role in the persistence of behaviours like corruption and discrimination, despite the use of legal prohibitions to stop them.

Individual decisions and policy compliance are social processes that are intimately linked with expectations about the actions and beliefs of others. Non-compliance with social expectations or norms often signals uncooperativeness, which is punished by other group members through criticism, shaming, exclusion or withholding group benefits or recognition.⁵ Pressure to comply with certain norms can push individuals to take decisions that may harm their own long-term interests and those of their community. In this way, evidently detrimental behaviours can persist, regardless of whether those behaviours are economically efficient or socially beneficial.

Social expectations and norms can therefore encourage collective compliance, independent of the personal beliefs of individuals in a social group – as individuals are typically motivated to behave in ways that they believe will be accepted or endorsed by the people and communities that matter to them. This offers both a challenge and an opportunity to policymakers trying to influence collective

² Lane, T. and Nosenzo, D. (2020), *Law and Norms: Empirical Evidence*, LISER Working Papers no 2020-03, April 2020, https://liser.elsevierpure.com/ws/portalfiles/portal/18636042/WP_2020_03_law_and_norms_empirical_evidence.pdf.

³ Ostrom, E. (2000), ‘Collective Action and the evolution of social norms’, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 14(3), pp. 137–58, <https://pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/jep.14.3.137>.

⁴ Apffelstaedt, A., Freundt, J. and Oslislo, C. (2021), ‘Social norms and elections: how elected rules can make behaviour (in)appropriate’, *ECONtribute Discussion Paper*, 068, February 2021, <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/231493/1/1750745291.pdf>.

⁵ Punishments for non-compliance to social norms can also include threats and actual physical harm.

practices such as corruption. Campaigns that seek to raise individual awareness of problems such as corruption are liable to fail. Even enhanced judicial sanction and enforcement may be insufficient if the collective social drivers of detrimental behaviour are not addressed. Decision-makers must think carefully about the social environment in their policy design and implementation efforts. In terms of designing effective policies, measuring the influence of social expectations on collective behaviours such as corruption can help to increase understanding of how those behaviours are enforced and become entrenched, but also of the conditions under which those expectations and behaviours may break down.

Even enhanced judicial sanction and enforcement may be insufficient if the collective social drivers of detrimental behaviour are not addressed.

The Chatham House Africa Programme's Social Norms and Accountable Governance (SNAG) project adopts an approach based on social norms methodology⁶ to systematically test for beliefs and expectations that inform individuals' behaviours and their choices to accept or reject corruption. A central contribution of social norms approaches⁷ is that the willingness to engage in, accept, resist or report corruption is often strongly shaped by expectations of the actions likely to be taken by others, and by perceptions of what their community feels to be acceptable behaviour.⁸ The way in which these social beliefs and expectations manifest and change has profound implications on how corruption becomes normalized in society. Although laws and national policies are crucial for addressing systemic corruption, inconsistent political priorities, vested interests and impunity often hollow out these traditional top-down efforts. Social norms approaches can support bottom-up, middle-out and top-down efforts to disincentivize corruption. They can also create pressure on elites to comply with stronger and coordinated expectations of accountability.

Evidence from previous SNAG research has shown that the beliefs, norms and pressures people experience differ from one corrupt practice to the next, as do the reasons that people give for engaging in those practices. Respondents to various SNAG surveys have cited both moral and practical reasons for approving of, and engaging in, corrupt behaviours (see Box 1).

⁶ There are numerous definitions of social norms. At its most basic manifestation, a social norm is a belief about how other people behave and how other people expect us to behave. For the purposes of accurately measuring social norms, the SNAG project adopts the following definition: a social norm is a belief that most people in the relevant community conform to a certain behaviour; most of the people in the relevant community believe they should conform to that behaviour; and there is a preference to conform with the group. Preference here refers to the disposition to act in a specific way in a specific situation. Preferences can be conditional or unconditional on expectations about other people's behaviours and beliefs. See Bicchieri, C. (2016), *Norms in the wild: How to diagnose, measure, and change social norms*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁷ For example, Hoffmann, L. K. and Patel, R. N. (2017), *Collective Action on Corruption in Nigeria: A Social Norms Approach to Connecting Society and Institutions*, Report, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2017/05/collective-action-corruption-nigeria>.

⁸ Social norms are best understood in terms of how strong or weak they are in relation to other factors that influence a practice. When social norms have a strong influence on a practice, then that practice is considered both appropriate and obligatory and there are sanctions for refusing to engage in the practice. In this way social norms are interdependent, meaning they are dependent on the beliefs and actions of others (especially within an individual's reference group – often the people that matter the most).

Box 1. Moral and practical reasons for acceptance of corruption

Moral justifications for behaviour are grounded in overarching normative principles and deep-seated values, and motivate individuals to undertake actions independently of what others do or expect of them.

Moral reasons for accepting corrupt behaviours might include:

- Perceived justice/fairness: People may have expectations that the business environment is competitive, and that it is therefore fair to use connections to gain an advantage. If they think the judicial system is unfair or ought to be fair, then they may perceive themselves as ‘correcting’ an injustice by giving a bribe.
- Obligations to family or community: People might feel a moral duty to take care of their family or community, even if that means offering or giving bribes to secure benefits to the relevant group.
- Social acceptability: People may consider that corrupt practices are morally acceptable in their cultural or social context.
- Reciprocity/gift-giving practices: In many corrupt exchanges, those giving bribes believe that offering something in return for a service is a moral obligation or a form of gratitude and respect.

Practical motivations, meanwhile, are grounded in people’s daily lives – for example, whether a particular course of action will meet an immediate need. Practical personal beliefs and expectations in this context are dependent on material, social or economic realities, which could include economic hardship, poverty, threats to life (or risk of wrongly being sentenced), insecurity or poor governance.

Practical reasons for accepting corrupt behaviours might include:

- Expedient decision-making: People might feel that they are simply making a slow process faster and more efficient.
- Guaranteeing favourable outcomes: People might feel that bribery is the only way to ensure a favourable outcome for their bid or case.
- ‘Realism’: People may recognize systemic corruption and view bribe-taking as a necessary evil or practical approach to navigate a flawed system.
- Intimidation or concerns for safety: In an environment where people can be threatened for fighting corruption or attempting to hold powerful people accountable, public officials such as procurement officers or judges who want to do the right thing face real threats to their personal safety and that of the people around them.

This list of examples of moral and practical reasons is not exhaustive, and justifications can vary from one context to another. Practical and moral reasons are also not mutually exclusive, and both can influence a practice to varying degrees.

Understanding these differences is vital to identifying policy areas where social norms and behavioural insights could be effective. For instance, SNAG research found that vote-selling in Nigeria is largely driven by practical considerations of economic hardship or fear of violence, rather than social expectations or norms.⁹ Vote-selling remains widespread, despite most people disapproving of it. There are also no social norms against vote-selling. Because vote-selling is primarily motivated by practical concerns, strategies to end it based on moralistic (or value-laden) messaging are unlikely to succeed. Any behavioural approach would have to be matched by interventions that both address material hardship and provide strong disincentives for political actors who buy votes.

Meanwhile, SNAG's research on social evaluations of embezzlement found that religious justifications for stealing public funds were important in shaping the views people had of such behaviour.¹⁰ The research showed that strong social expectations of religious giving, reciprocity, in-group favouritism and an association of religiosity with material prosperity combined to soften evaluations of corrupt behaviour under certain circumstances.¹¹ Given that this pattern of behaviour is less directly linked to practical circumstances than vote-selling, a social norms-based approach could provide a powerful mechanism to generate sustainable change in attitudes towards embezzlement. Such an approach would involve trusted faith leaders and institutions leveraging their social influence to amplify the voices of citizens demanding accountability from public officials, and to support community-led monitoring of public spending.

These two examples demonstrate how social norms approaches can 'render visible the invisible rules that govern systematic corruption',¹² and support the design and targeting of effective anti-corruption policies and strategies that can disrupt negative norms of corruption and create a new social equilibrium.

Survey methodology

With a primary focus on Nigeria and working to a methodology developed with research partners at the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Social Norms and Behavioral Dynamics, the SNAG project conducted its third national household survey during March and April 2022, investigating the social beliefs that sustain different forms of corruption.¹³

⁹ Hoffmann, L. K. and Patel, R. N. (2022), *Vote-selling behaviour and democratic dissatisfaction in Nigeria: Is democracy really for sale?*, Briefing Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://doi.org/10.55317/9781784135348>.

¹⁰ Hoffmann, L. K. and Patel, R. N. (2021), *Collective action on corruption in Nigeria: The role of religion*, Briefing Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/03/collective-action-corruption-nigeria>.

¹¹ *Ibid.* This research highlights how the combination of certain norms and expectations in highly religious contexts can have an unintended negative influence on some forms of corruption.

¹² Bicchieri, C., Patel, R. and Hoffmann, L. K. (2023), 'Corruption, Shared Expectations and Social Dilemmas', in Lindauer, M. (ed.) (2023), *Advances in Experimental Political Philosophy*, London: Bloomsbury Academic.

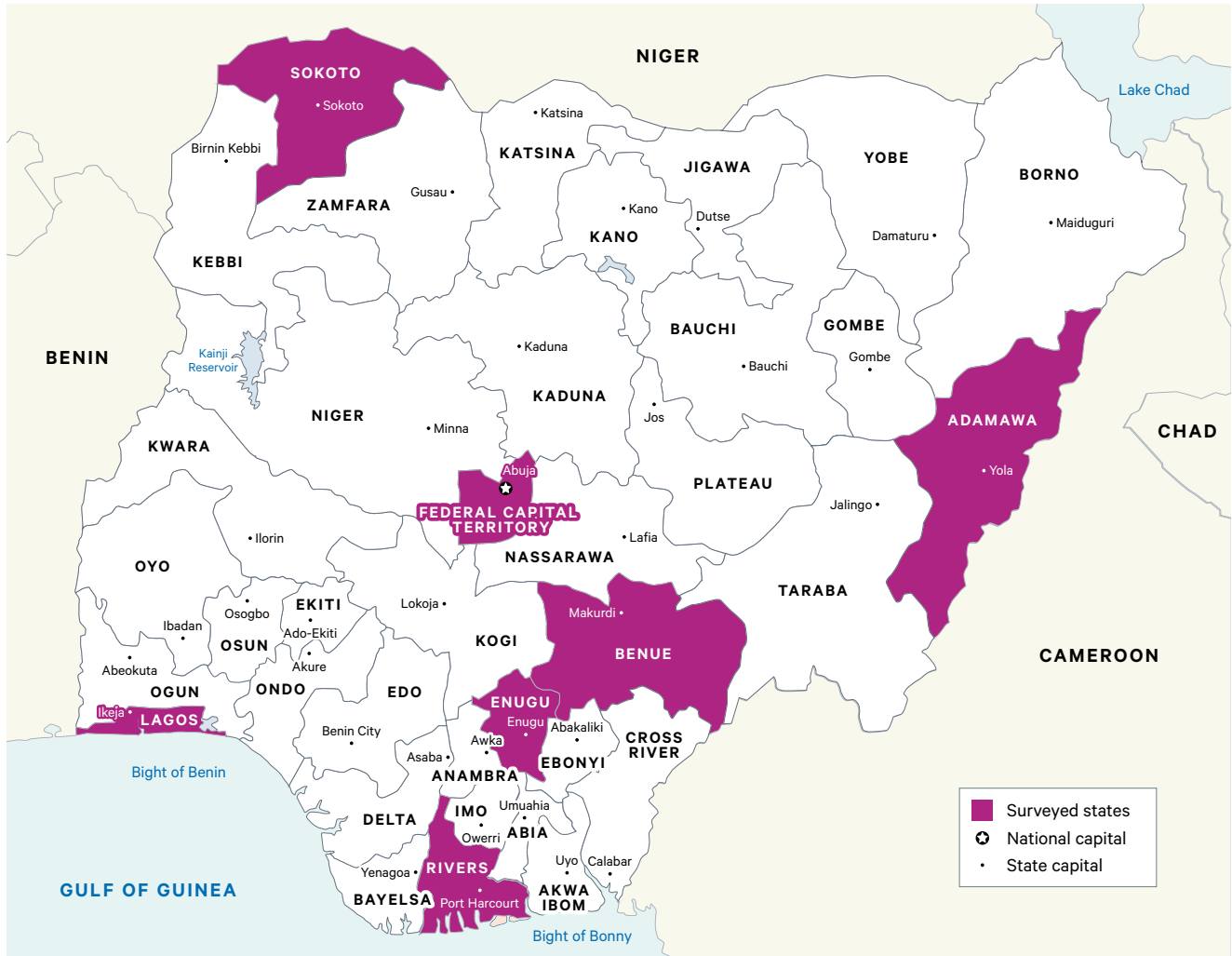
¹³ A total of 24,000 households have been surveyed across the entire project since 2017. Each round of survey implementation has been carried out in partnership with Nigerian universities and research centres. Experienced enumerators were recruited to the survey implementation teams, and used their affiliation to the study during the administration of the survey. Enumerators were trained to dispel any perception that the survey data would be tracked by any government body to avoid response bias. See the Acknowledgments section of this paper for the full list of SNAG partners.

Tackling judicial bribery and procurement fraud in Nigeria

How harnessing public disapproval can enable collective action against corruption

The 2022 survey covered 5,548 households in the federal states of Adamawa, Benue, Enugu, Lagos, Rivers and Sokoto, as well as the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja (FCT-Abuja), providing data from urban and rural areas across Nigeria.¹⁴ These states were chosen to represent a cross section of Nigerian socio-economic, political and demographic conditions,¹⁵ as well as representing Nigeria's six geopolitical zones (see Map 1).¹⁶

Map 1. States surveyed by Chatham House SNAG project in 2022



Source: Chatham House. (Note: Boundaries, names and designations used on this map do not imply endorsement or acceptance by Chatham House or the authors.)

¹⁴ The survey instrument focused on five components nationally and was supplemented by individual interviews and focus group discussions in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja (FCT-Abuja), Adamawa, Enugu and Kano states from October 2021 to April 2022.

¹⁵ The sample included 2,742 women and 2,806 men. Of these respondents, 3,623 lived in rural areas and 1,925 in urban areas. In terms of education, 795 had no formal education, 1,005 had primary-level schooling, 2,604 had secondary schooling and 1,140 had completed higher education.

¹⁶ The survey implementation partner, Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), uses a National Integrated Survey of Households (NISH) frame covering all 36 federal states in Nigeria and FCT-Abuja, with 200 enumeration Areas (EAs) per state and in the federal capital. The 200 EAs that make up the NISH frame are grouped into 20 independent replicates with 10 EAs in each replicate. Chatham House's 2022 survey drew the sample for its survey from the NISH frame of 200 EAs.

The survey did not seek information on individual experiences of corruption. Rather, using a vignette-based questionnaire,¹⁷ the survey evaluated respondents' beliefs about how government officials – judges, public procurement officers and private contractors – would behave when faced with corruption opportunities. Respondents were asked whether they believed that public officials and private contractors made corrupt choices based on what the officials and contractors thought others like them do or would do. Finally, the survey asked respondents about their evaluation of the role of various actors and institutions who the situation could be reported to.¹⁸ To minimize the potential for bias in responses, survey questions did not mention corruption directly, describe the behaviours outlined in the vignettes as corrupt or allude to any normative judgment.

About this paper

Next, Chapter 2 of this paper discusses evidence from the 2022 survey of social expectations and informal rules surrounding judicial corruption, specifically bribe-taking by judges. It highlights the foundational nature of judicial integrity and accountability as a much-needed check on other forms of government corruption. Chapter 3 then presents the survey's findings of social expectations surrounding contract inflation and diversion of contract funds. In Chapter 4, the paper turns to respondents' evaluations of the effectiveness of various institutions and actors involved in anti-corruption to address the corrupt practices discussed in the survey. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the policy implications of the survey findings, and presents recommendations for policymakers and others seeking to strengthen accountability mechanisms in Nigeria's judiciary and public procurement sectors.

¹⁷ The questionnaire was structured as a set of vignettes (relatable short stories) based on the actions of fictional but typical public officials and government contractors in the communities.

¹⁸ Detailed information on SNAG's sampling methodology, questionnaire design and survey implementation strategy can be found in the methodology note for the SNAG project, published in 2019. See Chatham House Africa Programme (2019), *Understanding Social Norms Methodology: Anti-corruption Research in Nigeria Paper*, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/SNAG%20Methodology%20Note%20Web%20file.pdf>.

02

What Nigerians think about judicial corruption

Most Nigerians disapprove of judicial bribe-taking. But these corrupt practices persist, despite various regulatory reforms. Future efforts must therefore acknowledge the role of informal social norms.

Nigeria's constitution establishes an independent judiciary, yet repeated scandals at the highest levels of the country's legal system indicate serious vulnerabilities to corruption.¹⁹ According to the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission's (ICPC) *Nigeria Corruption Index* study in 2020,²⁰ corruption in the Nigerian justice sector was the most severe of all sectors surveyed, due to the scale of electoral and political cases handled by Nigerian courts.²¹ The UN Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) *Corruption in Nigeria* study, published in 2024,

¹⁹ Most judicial corruption cases in Nigeria are not dealt with in the public domain. However, a few such cases have been reported in the media. For example, in October 2016, Nigerian law enforcement agencies seized \$800,000 in a raid targeting several senior judges. In the same year, two Supreme Court judges stepped down following their arrest over corruption allegations. See Omakwu. E. (2016), 'Nigerian Supreme Court judges accused of corruption step down', *Premium Times*, 31 October 2016, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/214130-official-nigeria-supreme-court-judges-accused-corruption-step.html>. In 2022, Chief Justice Ibrahim Tanko Muhammad resigned after accusations of corruption levelled against him by 14 Supreme Court judges became public. See Odusote, A. (2022), 'Nigeria's top judge leaves the justice system in a mess. Here's how his successor can fix it', *The Conversation*, 30 June 2022, <https://theconversation.com/nigerias-top-judge-leaves-the-justice-system-in-a-mess-heres-how-his-successor-can-fix-it-186079>.

²⁰ Anti-Corruption Academy of Nigeria (2020), *Nigeria Corruption Index: Report of a Pilot Survey*, <https://icpcacademy.gov.ng/download/4670/?tmstv=1726590039>.

²¹ The influence of bribes on judicial decisions is particularly significant given the increasing role of Nigeria's judiciary in adjudicating electoral outcomes. In the country's 2023 general election, 1,225 election petitions were filed – an increase of 59.9 per cent from the last elections in 2019. See Spaces for Change (2023), *Go to Court: Synonym for Judicial Capture*, <https://spacesforchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/GO-TO-COURT-FINAL-VERSION.-OCTOBER-2023.pdf>.

found that judges and magistrates were paid the largest cash bribes, averaging 31,000 naira (around \$20), in the 12 months prior to the survey, despite being the public officials that citizens had the least amount of contact with.²²

Box 2. Types of judicial corruption

Corruption affecting judicial system actors in their various roles takes many forms. Some of the most common include:

- **Political interference**, which involves influence on the outcome of a civil or criminal case.
- **Bribery**, which involves demands for or offers of money, gifts and other benefits intended to influence the processes or outcomes of court cases. For example, bribing a judge to issue favourable rulings or questionable sentences; a prosecutor being bribed to mishandle a case; or court officials paid to ‘lose’ case files, evidence or even suspects.
- **Extortion**, which involves coercion to act corruptly or selectively under the threat of violence, blackmail or fear of retribution.
- **Nepotism**, where judicial actors may enable close contacts or family members to benefit from any positions or largesse within their discretion, via appointments, promotions and the awarding of procurement contracts.
- **Misuse of public funds and resources**, which involves abuses that result in proceedings being delayed or collapsing altogether.
- **Administrative perversion**, which refers to scenarios such as court officials allocating cases to judges perceived as favourable to one side; other aspects of law enforcement such as investigators, prosecutors or enforcement agents (e.g. bailiffs and prison officers) being compromised and rendered ineffective; or prisoners receiving preferential treatment.

As is the case with systemic corruption in other sectors, it is difficult to gather evidence of judicial corruption. Experience-based surveys may show whether respondents have paid a bribe within a 12-month period, but they typically do not reveal who requested the bribe or who benefited from it (i.e. a few low-paid court clerks or a powerful network of highly connected officials). Perception-based surveys (such as this one) largely focus how people think about corrupt practices in the sector. In addition, it is unusual for a single survey of any kind to encompass both bribery and other corrupt practices such as political interference, nepotism, extortion and conflicts of interest, which can be difficult to detect.²³

Source: Adapted from Jennett, V. (2014), ‘Topic Guide: Judicial Corruption’, Transparency International, 15 December 2014, <https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/guide/topic-guide-on-judicial-corruption/5305>.

²² The survey also found that the share of bribes paid to enable the finalization of a procedure was joint highest (along with other health workers and land registry officers) among judges/magistrates, at 21 per cent. Most bribes recorded as being paid to judges and magistrates were intended to speed up a procedure (34 per cent). See UNODC (2024), *Corruption in Nigeria: Patterns and Trends. Third survey on corruption as experienced by the population*, https://www.unodc.org/conig/uploads/documents/3rd_national_corruption_survey_report_2024_07_09.pdf.

²³ For a complementary typology of corrupt behaviours in the judiciary, see International Bar Association and Basel Institute on Governance (2016), *International Bar Association Judicial Integrity Initiative: Maintaining judicial integrity and ethical standards in practice*, report, London: IBA, <https://baselgovernance.org/publications/judicial-systems-and-corruption>.

Survey findings on judicial corruption

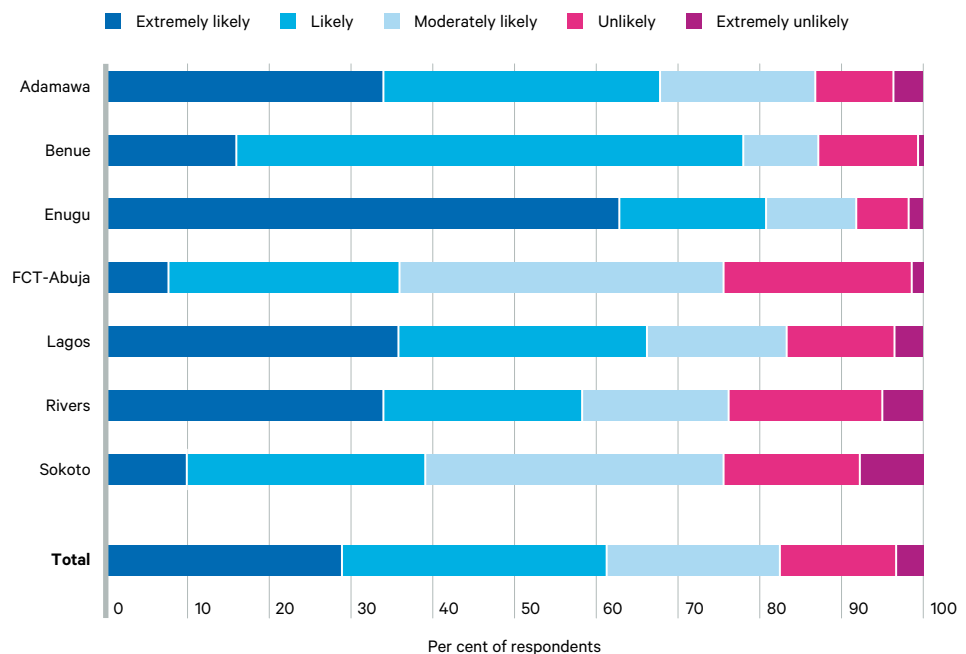
This section of the chapter discusses the survey’s findings in relation to judicial corruption, outlining the question or questions asked, followed by the responses to those questions and an analysis of the findings for each.

How likely are judges to take bribes?

Survey question:

How likely do you think it is that Justice X will collect an informal payment in order to issue a judgment in a case before the court?

Figure 1. Respondents’ expectations of bribe-taking by Nigerian judges, by state



Given the context described by both the ICPC and UNODC, it is perhaps unsurprising that the SNAG survey data revealed a high level of expectation among Nigerians that judges would engage in corrupt behaviour.²⁴ The survey found that 61.3 per cent of respondents believed it was *likely* or *extremely likely* that a typical judge in their state would accept money for a judgment in a case before the court, while just 17.6 per cent saw it as either *unlikely* or *extremely unlikely* (see Figure 1). Beliefs about bribe-taking among judges showed minimal variation between urban and rural areas, men and women respondents, or educational and income levels, highlighting the consistency of shared beliefs across Nigeria that the country’s judges are compromised by bribery. This clear response may indicate the presence

²⁴ The Chatham House survey provided respondents with a fictional scenario concerning a recently appointed chief justice in their state. This scenario was followed by questions about the likelihood and acceptability of the judge collecting an informal payment to influence a judgment.

of a descriptive norm – i.e. that corrupt behaviour in the Nigerian legal system is considered both commonplace and normal. Indeed, studies have shown that such expectations can have the effect of encouraging actual bribery.²⁵

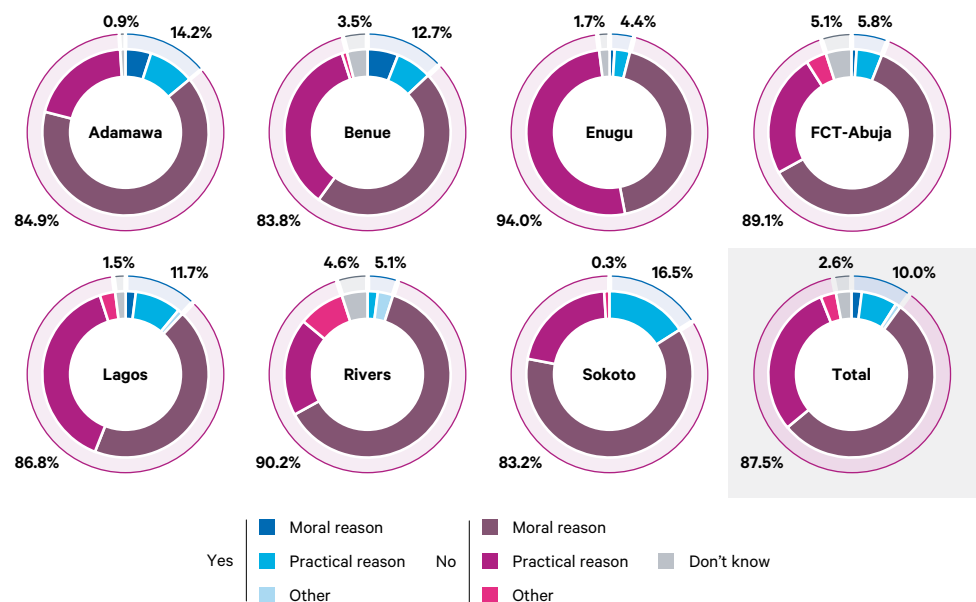
Is judicial bribery acceptable?

Survey questions:

Do you think it would be acceptable for Justice X to collect an informal payment in order to issue a judgment in a case before the court?

Do you think Justice X should collect an informal payment in order to issue a judgment in a case before the court?

Figure 2. Respondents’ personal beliefs on judicial bribery, by state



However, despite the expectations of ubiquity, a substantial majority of respondents to the Chatham House survey – 87.5 per cent – nonetheless thought that it was not acceptable for a judge in their state to receive money for the issuance of judgments, compared with 10.0 per cent who felt it was acceptable (see Figure 2). In other words, most people disapprove of money influencing court cases, even though – as the survey data from Figure 1 show – they also believe that judges do routinely collect bribes in return for judgments. It is also likely that expectations

²⁵ A 2018 sequential bribery game found a causal connection between descriptive norms of bribery and actual bribe offers. The possibility of being sanctioned did not have an effect which highlights the potential risk of a vicious cycle of a high expectation of corruption and actual corrupt behaviour. See Abbink, K., Freiden, E., Gangadharan, L. and Moro, R. (2018), ‘The Effect of Social Norms on Bribe Offers’, *The Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization*, 34(3), pp. 457–74, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jleo/ewy015>.

of bribe-taking and corrupt behaviours²⁶ are reinforced by the poor disciplinary record of the National Judicial Council (NJC)²⁷ – the sole body responsible for appointing, disciplining and removing judges – as well as the enormous discretionary powers of the country’s chief justice.²⁸

Most people disapprove of money influencing court cases, even though – as the survey data show – they also believe that judges do routinely collect bribes in return for judgments.

The survey followed up these questions by asking respondents *why* they held their particular beliefs and, specifically, whether their views on judicial bribe-taking were driven primarily by moral or practical considerations. A significant majority – 66.2 per cent – of respondents who felt the judge in the given scenario should *not* take a bribe cited moral reasons for their view, such as beliefs in the principle of judicial independence and the importance of the rule of law. Among the smaller subset of respondents who *approved* of justices taking bribes, nearly two-thirds (63.3 per cent) believed it was acceptable for practical reasons. These reasons varied, but included speeding up a slow judicial process, physical risks to judges, and the belief that public officials – including judges – are not materially rewarded for professional integrity. In other words, only a small proportion of respondents – less than 5 per cent – felt that bribe-taking by judges was morally justified.

In a situation such as this, where moral reasons drive disapproval of judicial bribery and practical reasons drive approval, interventions to address the acceptability of corrupt behaviours would also need to tackle the specific practical reasons cited. These include slow judicial processes, poor remuneration and pension entitlement delays for judicial officers, and underfunding of courts.

²⁶ As an indication of the scale and nature of judicial corruption in Nigeria, a former chair of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Attahiru Jega, was quoted by a Nigerian national paper as having said: ‘Many judges have also become notorious for corrupt enrichment through ‘cash and carry’ judgments, especially in election matters generally, and in election tribunals, more specifically.’ See *Punch* editorial board (2021), ‘2023: Uprooting corruption from the judiciary’, 29 December 2021, <https://punchng.com/2023-uprooting-corruption-from-the-judiciary>.

²⁷ Between 2000 and 2022, the NJC investigated just 941 complaints of against judges across the 10 levels of the court system in Nigeria. In the 919 cases concluded, judges were only indicted and penalized in 129. See Akinkugbe, O. D. (2021), ‘The Politics of Regulating and Disciplining Judges in Nigeria’, in Devlin, R. and Wildeman, S. (2021) (eds), *Disciplining Judges: Contemporary Challenges and Controversies*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, p. 254.

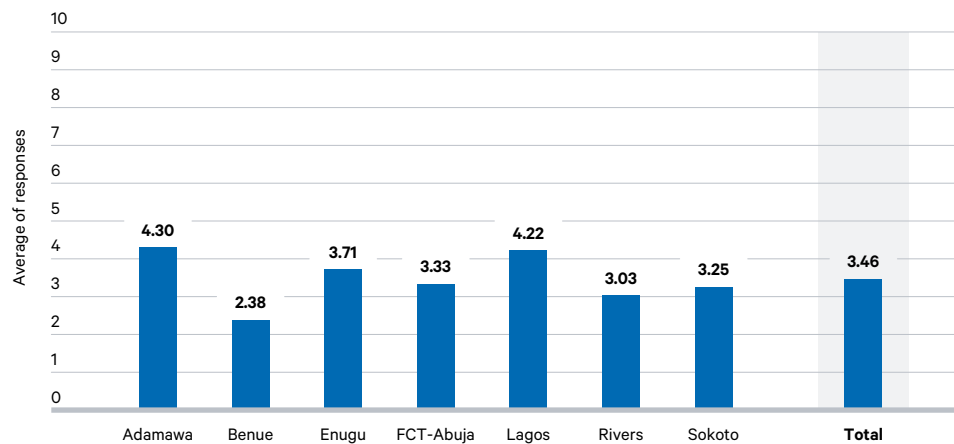
²⁸ The chief justice appoints 80 per cent of the membership of the NJC, and 60 per cent of the Federal Judicial Service Commission (FJSC). In October 2023, retiring Supreme Court Justice Dattijo Mohammed warned in a final speech that the absolute powers of the chief justice could corrupt ‘easily and absolutely’ and were being ‘effortlessly abused’. See Anichukwueze, D. (2023), ‘Full Text Of Justice Dattijo’s Speech On CJN’s Powers, State Of The Judiciary, Other Matters’, Channels TV, 27 October 2023, <https://www.channelstv.com/2023/10/27/full-text-of-justice-dattijos-speech-on-cjns-powers-state-of-the-judiciary-other-matters>.

What do other people think about judicial bribery?

Survey question:

Out of 10 people in your community, how many of them do you think said that Justice X should collect an informal payment in order to issue a judgment in a case before the court?

Figure 3. Respondents' expectations of other people's attitudes to judicial bribery, by state



Finally, respondents were asked about their expectations of other community members in relation to judicial corruption. A significant gap emerged between what people believed themselves about judicial corruption and what they thought others in their community believed. Respondents, on average, thought that 3.5 out of 10 people would approve, but survey data showed the real number to be only 1 in 10 (see Figure 2). The gap between these two numbers points to a potential opportunity for public information campaigns and community dialogue led by trustworthy individuals to correct such misperceptions.

This kind of misperception is in line with a general phenomenon termed 'pluralistic ignorance', which the SNAG project has previously found when bribery is either commonplace or perceived to be common. 'Pluralistic ignorance' is characterized by the mistaken belief of individuals that their personal views are different to those held by the broader public, even when their public behaviour aligns with that of the majority. This gap between individual perceptions and the true beliefs of others creates a situation where most people personally reject corrupt behaviour but fear the consequences of taking action to prevent it – a public disapproval/collective action gap. This fear can then prevent communities from taking the collective action necessary to combat corrupt practices, as people assume they do not have allies to cooperate with or that they will face criticism for expressing their views.²⁹ Even in a scenario where action would be in keeping with societal

²⁹ For an extended discussion of 'pluralistic ignorance' and its role in collective action against corruption, see Hoffmann, L. K. and Patel, R. N. (2023), 'Petty bribery, pluralistic ignorance, and the collective action problem', *Data & Policy*, 5(e24), <https://doi.org/10.1017/dap.2023.19>.

beliefs that are widely accepted – e.g. that courts should be impartial or public funds should be used accountably – individuals perceive little incentive to act against corruption due to these fears over the disapproval or discouragement of others.

Changing social norms around judicial corruption

Disciplinary action against judges, anywhere in the world, is complex and sensitive. In Nigeria, the complexity and sensitivity are further heightened by a combination of sociopolitical factors including a high degree of political interference and financial inducement; a contested relationship between the executive and judiciary; a lack of transparency and meritocracy in the appointment and elevation of judges to higher courts; and a culture of lobbying for position among judges.³⁰ Top-down disciplinary measures and regulatory reforms aimed at addressing these issues have largely failed thus far.³¹

Judges are influenced by social pressures to acquire and display material status symbols to reflect their career success and elevated social status.

It is therefore important for reformers to acknowledge informal social norms and drivers that may contribute to the persistence of judicial corruption. Judges are not immune to the behavioural influences brought about by the endemic nature of corruption in Nigeria – a situation exacerbated by the relatively low risk of disciplinary consequences for judicial officials engaging in corrupt practices. Judges are also influenced by social pressures to acquire and display material status symbols to reflect their career success and elevated social status. The internally tight-knit and exclusionary nature of judicial networks, which generates pressure to keep malpractice hidden,³² means that honest judges risk professional consequences (e.g. being overlooked for promotion or transfer) for refusing to accept inducement for judgments.³³

While judicial networks are not isolated from society, they are inward-looking, politically protected and elevated to a high status within society. A social norms-based approach to tackling this situation would need to be buttressed

³⁰ SNAG interview, Abuja, March 2023.

³¹ Unini. C. (2022), 'Uneasiness as Supreme Court set to review disciplinary powers of the NJC', *The Nigerian Lawyer*, 15 September 2022, <https://thenigerianlawyer.com/uneasiness-as-supreme-court-set-to-review-disciplinary-powers-of-njc>.

³² Because of a reference network effect and peer pressure, the expectations and opinions of other judges and judicial officers (whether negative or positive) contribute to the moral reference point of individual judges. Individuals tend to adhere to the norms of their reference network as a way to signal membership, which provides benefits, opportunities and facilitates access. Judiciaries are intended to be independent, but can appear removed or even to sit above the rest of society in their role of enforcing the rule of law. This separation creates an insular reference group with strong in-/out-group rules. However, such reference dynamics are not totally isolating. As members of families and kinship groups, judicial actors are also subject to familial expectations and social pressures.

³³ A retired senior judge in Nigeria said in a SNAG interview that he had been overlooked for an appointment, he believes, due to his refusal to allow powerful politicians to influence an election-related court judgment. SNAG interview conducted on condition of anonymity, Abuja, March 2023.

by further research interrogating the in-group norms influencing judicial behaviour, which could then inform targeted action to change the social pressures active in the judiciary. This action would need to be supported by stringent disciplinary and social sanctions, such as shaming by their community when complaints of judicial bribery are upheld,³⁴ to change both internal and social perceptions that there are no consequences for judicial misconduct. Communal shaming would also be more potent when the gap between individual and community beliefs on bribe-taking by judges is exposed and more people realize the extent of popular disapproval of the practice.

Finally, a broader challenge of judicial anti-corruption reform in Nigeria lies in addressing national and local realities in a way that encompasses the entire chain of justice – including lawyers, the police, prosecutors and all agencies responsible for enforcing judicial decisions. An even greater challenge is for judicial reform to be backed by sustained political will³⁵ on the part of officials (while still upholding the separation of powers between executive and judiciary), and at the same time maintaining continual oversight and scrutiny through mechanisms such as annual audits of court accounts³⁶ and social audits of courts.³⁷

³⁴ The threat of shame from one's local group or leader for evidence-based corruption charges can be a significant check on corrupt behaviour because political power is less effective in blunting its impact.

³⁵ In the absence of elite-driven political will, civil society and citizen-led action would be necessary to push for political commitments on judicial reform.

³⁶ Odusote (2022), 'Nigeria's top judge levels the justice system in a mess. Here's how his successor can fix it'.

³⁷ A social audit of courts involves carefully assessing the transparency, efficiency and fairness of judicial processes in a way that ensures the community's voice is integrated into judicial reform through active participation. Active community participation would include actions such as objective-setting (identifying measurable goals for court efficiency, transparency or public accessibility); stakeholder engagement (involving community members, CSOs, legal aid organizations, court staff and judges in consultations that ensure diverse input and buy-in); data collection (involving surveys with court users, lawyers and staff of their experiences and perceptions); public hearings or meeting where citizens share their concerns and suggestions for improving the court system); document reviews (involving the analysis of court records, case files, processing times, backlog and disposition rates); data analysis (identifying discrepancies, patterns, areas needing improvement); publicly available reports; feedback mechanisms (initiating dialogue and ensuring commitments to action from the judiciary); and follow-up through mechanisms to ensure community and CSO involvement in monitoring and evaluating implementation of recommended changes.

03

What Nigerians think about procurement corruption

Corrupt practices in public procurement are unpopular. Understanding social norms and expectations around such practices is a key factor in addressing them.

The management of public funds in Nigeria is failing the country's citizens. From 2016–20, Nigeria's public spending as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) stood at 11.8 per cent, among the lowest levels in the world,³⁸ and the country has an infrastructure deficit estimated at \$3 trillion.³⁹ Insufficient public investments are compounded by significant corruption in procurement.⁴⁰ Procurement corruption increases the cost of investment, while reducing the quality of public sector goods and services. Nigeria's anti-corruption agencies estimate that, from the country's total annual spend on public procurement, \$18 billion is lost to corruption and financial crimes.⁴¹

³⁸ World Bank (2022), *Nigeria Public Finance Review: Fiscal Adjustment for Better and Sustainable Results*, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099615111172214261/pdf/P17509504ea7b902108a420d5a2e60b19b1.pdf>.

³⁹ World Bank (2022) 'Nigeria's need to spend more and better', 21 November 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2022/11/21/nigeria-needs-to-spend-more-and-better>.

⁴⁰ Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) (2019) 'Nigeria: Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) Performance Assessment Report', December 2019, <https://www.pefa.org/node/166>.

⁴¹ Egboboh, C. (2024), 'Nigeria loses \$18 bn annually to financial crimes, corrupt procurement process – CSEA', *Business Day*, 22 March 2024, <https://businessday.ng/news/article/nigeria-loses-18-bn-annually-to-financial-crimes-corrupt-procurement-process-csea>.

Corruption in procurement and public investment continues to beset the country despite legislative reforms, notably the introduction of the Public Procurement Act in 2007,⁴² public procurement guidelines issued by the Bureau of Public Procurement, and steps towards greater transparency of public finances, including a commitment to gradually introduce electronic government procurement systems and address beneficial company ownership.⁴³

Nigeria's anti-corruption agencies estimate that, from the country's total annual spend on public procurement, \$18 billion is lost to corruption and financial crimes.

Efforts towards reform remain hampered by poor implementation, and are largely focused on top-down changes to formal rules and regulatory structures, often with little or no consideration for informal dynamics and the social expectations that may influence individuals' decisions to engage in corrupt behaviour around procurement and the use of public funds. Such informal rules and structures – potentially amounting to an unofficial code of conduct – are often resistant and highly adaptable to formal reform efforts. It is here that a social norms approach to anti-corruption can contribute to a comprehensive diagnosis of the factors sustaining entrenched corruption challenges in the procurement sector.

Box 3. Types of public procurement corruption

Corruption involving procurement officials and contractors in their respective roles can take many forms. The following are some of the most common:

- **Bribes and 'kickbacks'** involve an offer of money or any other benefit in exchange for circumventing red tape, speeding up procedures, influencing the allocation of tenders or subverting competitive processes. 'Kickbacks' (i.e. bribes paid after a contract is awarded or via invoice payment) can often amount to between 5 per cent and 20 per cent of the contract value.
- **Bid-rigging** is where procurement officials wrongly disqualify bidders to advance a favoured rival (even if that rival is unqualified), manipulating bids, rigging specifications or providing favoured contractors with advantageous tender information.

⁴² In November 2023, Nigeria's secretary to the government of the federation, George Akume, inaugurated a committee to review the Public Procurement Act of 2007. The listed membership of the committee excluded non-governmental organizations specialized in bridging the public finance information and transparency gap between government and citizens – a missed opportunity for strengthening any subsequent procurement reforms. See Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (2023), 'FG Inaugurates Committee to Review Public Procurement Act 2007', press release, 26 November 2023, <https://www.osgf.gov.ng/fg-inaugurates-committee-to-review-public-procurement-act-2007>.

⁴³ Williams, S., Adeniran, A. and Ordu, A. U. (2023), 'Can we change the narrative on corruption in public procurement in Nigeria?', Brookings Institution, 24 August 2023, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/can-we-change-the-narrative-on-corruption-in-public-procurement-in-nigeria>.

- **Collusive bidding practices** are instance where contractors collude to fix markets, prices and production in order to manipulate competition and increase their own profits.
- **Political and patronage network-related corruption** includes conflicts of interest (e.g. public officials acting on their hidden personal interest in a business transaction); improper or non-competitive contract awards; and product substitution.
- **Other bid- and payment-related forms** include: phantom vending schemes (meaning the submission of tenders or bills by procurement officials and allies for non-existent vendors); submission of false, inflated or duplicate invoices; over-buying or paying too much for goods or services; change order abuse (whereby a contractor and procurement official collude to increase a contract's cost after a low bid was submitted to secure the award); split purchases (in which a single procurement is split into multiple individual contracts to evade competitive bidding thresholds); multiple payments for contracts; ghost projects (referring to payment for non-existent contracts); and purchases made for personal use or resale by procurement officials and cronies.

Opportunities tend also to be influenced by factors such as the size of contracts and potential for bribes and kickbacks; the level of technicality required for bidding or execution of a contract; the sector involved (as certain sectors such as construction and defence are more prone to corruption than others); unchecked or unaccountable discretion among officials; weakness of financial controls; state capture; and a lack of political will to prevent corruption.

Source: Adapted from Pillay, K. and Erasmus, J. (2015), *Understanding Corruption in Tenders*, e-book, Johannesburg: Corruption Watch, <https://www.corruptionwatch.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Corruption-Watch-Understanding-tender-corruption.pdf>; and International Anticorruption Resource Center (undated), 'The Most Common Procurement Fraud Schemes and their Primary Red Flags', <https://iacrc.org/fraud-and-corruption/the-most-common-procurement-fraud-schemes-and-their-primary-red-flags>.

Survey findings on procurement corruption

This section discusses the survey's findings in relation to corruption in the procurement sector, outlining the question or questions asked, followed by the responses and an analysis of the findings for each.

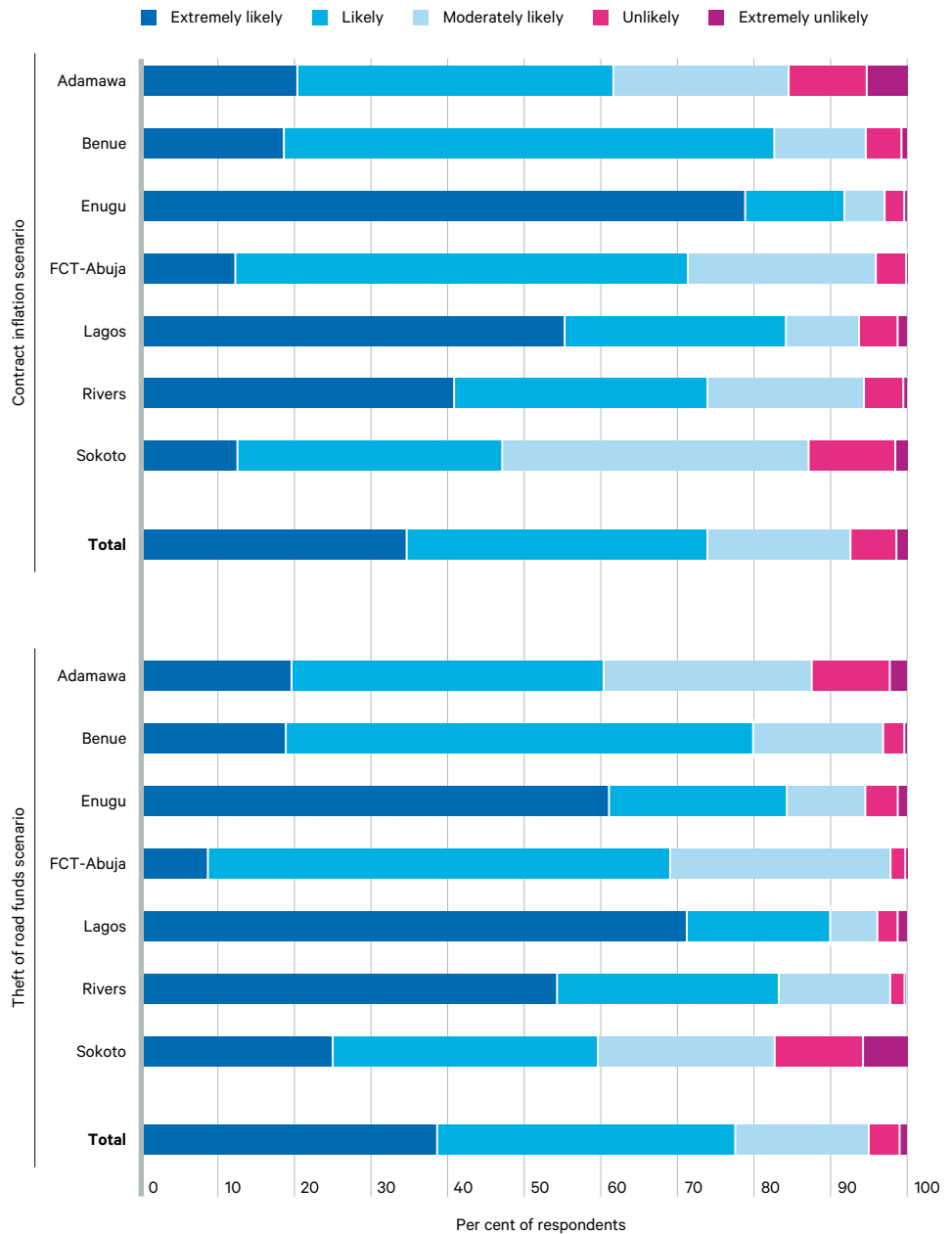
How likely are contract inflation and diversion of public funds?

Survey questions:

Mr X is a civil servant and was recently appointed as the director of procurement in a government ministry. Mr X's job involves awarding contracts for government expenditure. How likely do you think it is that Mr X will increase the total cost of the government contracts he gives out for his personal benefit?

Mr X runs a construction company. Mr X was recently awarded a government contract to build a new tarred road for a rural community. How likely do you think it is that Mr X would take these funds for personal use rather than spend the correct amount on building the road?

Figure 4. Respondents’ expectations of contract inflation and diversion of public funds, by state



Chatham House’s survey research sought to establish how likely Nigerian citizens thought the diversion of public funds by procurement officials and contracted entities to be in the delivery of goods and services.⁴⁴ The survey

⁴⁴ In one scenario, respondents were asked to assess the likelihood and acceptability of a theoretical procurement director inflating the cost of government contracts for personal benefit. In another, questions were targeted at the likelihood and acceptability of a contractor building a rural road taking the contract money for personal gain.

revealed that respondents across all the surveyed states thought it probable that procurement officials would engage in the inflation of contract costs or diversion of public funds in the scenarios presented, with 73.9 per cent considering it either *likely* or *extremely likely* that a procurement official would inflate budgets for personal use (see Figure 4).⁴⁵

Expectations around how road contractors handle government projects are similarly negative. Under the road contract scenario outlined above, 77.6 per cent of all survey respondents believed the contractor was either *likely* or *extremely likely* to take the funds for personal use.⁴⁶ By contrast, only 5.0 per cent of respondents considered it *unlikely* or *extremely unlikely*.

Nigeria's anti-corruption agencies estimate that, from the country's total annual spend on public procurement, \$18 billion is lost to corruption and financial crimes.

The overwhelming weight of these survey findings suggest that Nigerians believe firmly that procurement officials and contractors alike exploit the procurement system to serve their own interests. Previous research conducted as part of the SNAG project has shown that procurement officers may be subject to social expectations regarding corruption, including those from their close networks encouraging them to enrich themselves through their position (positing this as 'the smart or right thing to do'), pressures from colleagues and members of their unit to 'carry them along' by inflating contracts or favouring a politically connected contractor, and expectations to support their family and community financially far beyond their legitimate earnings.⁴⁷ In a broader national context where public service jobs and contracts are privileged and highly sought after, formal efforts towards reform have so far failed to address the influential combination of these social expectations and political interests.

The survey findings also reveal that private contractors face similar opportunities and pressures to enrich themselves and support wider social networks.⁴⁸ The findings may also point to the links between corruption on the part of procurement officials and that among private sector recipients of public contracts: social norms around

⁴⁵ However, Adamawa is a significant outlier in this respect, with over 15 per cent of respondents believing it was either *unlikely* or *extremely unlikely* that contract inflation would take place, compared with an average of just 6.4 per cent across all states included in the survey. It is perhaps notable in this context that the Adamawa state government established its first online open procurement portal in 2020. Expanding the adoption and use of open contracting principles and tools has been a key recommendation of transparency-focused non-governmental organizations such as Accountability Lab Nigeria. See Nigeria Office of the Auditor-General (2022), *2021 Annual Performance Assessment (APA) Report, Adamawa State*, December 2022, https://www.sftas.org.ng/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Adamawa-State-2021-APA-Final-Report-for-DLI-1-9_FINAL.pdf.

⁴⁶ Road contract corruption is inconsistently tracked in Nigeria, and general data on the sums lost to contract inflation are patchy. A survey commissioned by the administration of former president Olusegun Obasanjo found that Nigeria was losing an average of \$267 million annually to different forms of abuse in the award and execution of public contracts. See Ameh, O. J. and Ogundare, O. (2013), 'Impact of Due Process Policy on Construction Projects Delivery in Nigeria', *Journal of Building Performance*, 4(1), pp. 13–23, <https://spaj.ukm.my/jsb/index.php/jbp/article/view/82>.

⁴⁷ Hoffmann and Patel (2017), *Collective Action on Corruption in Nigeria*.

⁴⁸ SNAG interview conducted on condition of anonymity, in January 2023.

reciprocity can compel the contractors to show ‘gratitude’ to officials for contract awards via kickbacks to avoid future disfavour and signal loyalty to corrupt networks.⁴⁹ An environment of mutual dependence such as this benefits from weak regulation and acts to reinforce social expectations and norms of procurement corruption that are widely understood in the construction sector and beyond.⁵⁰ This then leads to institutionalized practices and the capture of procurement processes, ingraining corruption in the public sector as a means of accumulating wealth and maintaining political relationships and influence.

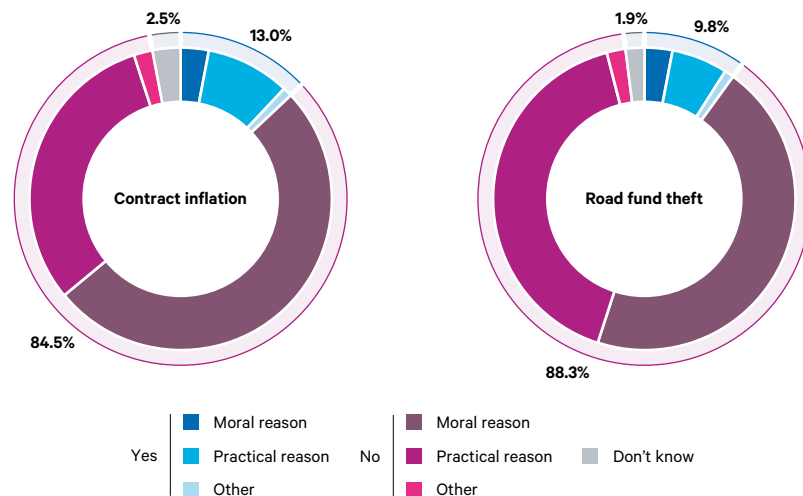
Is government contract inflation acceptable?

Survey questions:

Do you think it would be acceptable for Mr X to increase the total cost of the government contracts he gives out for his personal benefit, and why?

Do you think it would be acceptable for Mr X to take these funds for personal use rather than spend the correct amount on building a new tarred road, and why?

Figure 5. Respondents’ personal beliefs on government contract inflation, Nigeria total



The survey also sought to uncover respondents’ views as to the acceptability of the misappropriation of public funds. Responses revealed overwhelming disapproval of such behaviours. Among surveyed households, 84.5 per cent of respondents thought it was unacceptable for procurement officials to increase the cost

⁴⁹ Miller, J., Scharbatke-Church, C. and Chigas, D. (2024), *The Role of Social Norms in Bureaucratic Corruption: A CJI Research-to-Practice Report*, Calgary: The Corruption, Justice and Legitimacy Program at Besa Global, <https://www.corruptionjusticeandlegitimacy.org/items/the-role-of-social-norms-in-bureaucratic-corruption%3A-a-research-to-practice-report>.

⁵⁰ The CEO of a Nigeria-based construction firm, which employs 150 people, explained that because of his public stance against corruption, he had only handled one government contract in his 30 years of business. The construction CEO said: ‘It is a general notion that working with [the Nigerian] government, you have to play ball and I didn’t want to be involved in that. It’s known everywhere that working with government, you have to part with money and that’s something I didn’t want to do ... People don’t understand why you have to be so rigid ... But I think we have to stand firm, no matter the cost.’ SNAG interview conducted on condition of anonymity, Lagos, March 2023.

of a contract for personal use,⁵¹ while 88.3 per cent of survey respondents thought it was unacceptable for a contractor to take the road contract funds for personal use (see Figure 5). In other words, most Nigerians disapprove of this misuse of public funds, even though – as noted previously – they expect procurement officials to engage in such behaviours.

The research also asked respondents whether their judgment of the acceptability of these behaviours was based on *practical* or *moral* criteria. Among the minority of respondents who believed that contract inflation was acceptable, 70 per cent cited practical reasons such as the understanding of procurement quid pro quo, while 22.6 per cent cited moral reasons like gift-giving culture.⁵² For those who thought it was acceptable for the contractor to take the road contract funds, 62.0 per cent cited practical reasons and 29.6 per cent said it was acceptable for moral reasons. The higher frequency of reference to practical justification is likely to reflect entrenched beliefs that corruption is simply part of the way government conducts business with contractors.

Of the larger subset of respondents who described the behaviours in both scenarios as unacceptable, moral reasons were more frequently cited. In the procurement fraud scenario, 61.2 per cent of respondents believed such behaviour was unacceptable for moral reasons (for example, the belief that inflated contracts and the theft of public funds denies citizens public goods and services), while 36.4 per cent believed it was wrong for practical reasons, such as the belief that procurement fraud resulted in inflated costs for inferior quality goods and services or project delays.⁵³ In the scenario regarding theft of road project funds, 51.0 per cent of respondents believed it was unacceptable for moral reasons, while 46.4 per cent gave practical reasons to oppose such behaviour. The largely moral basis of disapproval of corrupt practices reflected perspectives shared in focus group discussions, in which many participants drew direct links between corruption and the deterioration of public services, infrastructure and community well-being.⁵⁴

⁵¹ To measure whether people approved of the procurement official increasing the contract cost for personal benefit, we asked the following question: ‘Do you think it would be acceptable for Mr X to increase the total cost of the government contracts he gives out for his personal benefit?’

⁵² In such a context, all contracts are believed to be inflated and to include a percentage that would be used to show ‘appreciation’ to the contract issuer.

⁵³ Moral reasons drove negative normative expectations more strongly in Adamawa state (73.1 per cent), Rivers (71.8 per cent) and FCT-Abuja (67.9 per cent), while the same expectations were more strongly driven by practical reasons in Enugu (58.9 per cent). The Enugu survey supervisor believed that the high percentage of practical reasons for disapproval can be explained by the consideration that if these contract costs are inflated, the ultimate result will include low-quality output of the intended contract, since those involved in the chain of project application and approval are already compromised. There were also concerns that such inflations pull resources away from where they are more needed to mere settlement of individuals in government.

⁵⁴ Focus group discussions held in Kano state, October 2021, and in Adamawa state, Enugu state and FCT-Abuja, February 2022.

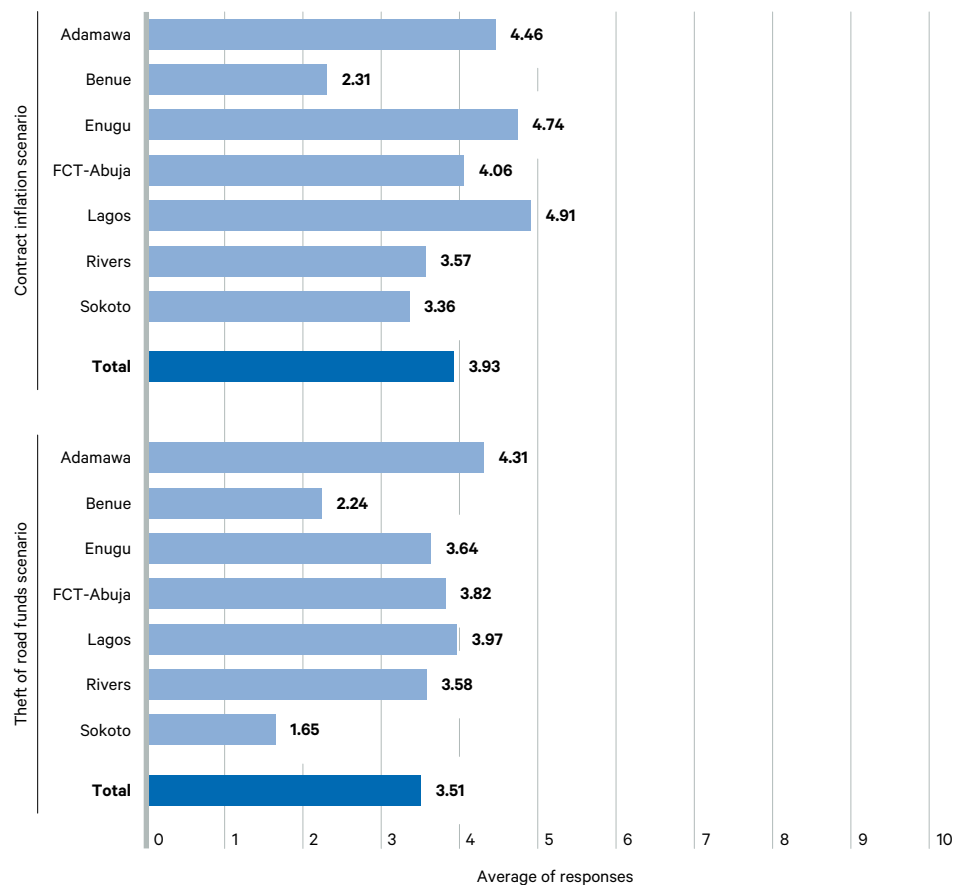
What do other people think about procurement corruption?

Survey questions:

Out of 10 people in your community, how many of them do you think said that Mr X should increase the total cost of the government contracts he gives out for his personal benefit?

Out of 10 people in your community, how many of them do you think said that Mr X should take these funds for personal use rather than spend the correct amount on building a new tarred road?

Figure 6. Respondents' expectations of other people's attitudes to government contract inflation, by state



Finally, the survey also revealed that expectations about the responses of others were too pessimistic. Many Nigerians are unaware that most people in their community agree that contract inflation and procurement fraud are negative practices. As part of the survey, participants were asked to consider 10 people in their community – such as family members, friends, neighbours and colleagues – and to state how many of them the respondent thought would accept embezzlement by procurement officials or contractors. As Figure 6 shows, on average, respondents thought that

almost 4 out of 10 people in their community would say that such practices were acceptable (with averages of 3.9 out of 10 in the contract inflation and 3.5 out of 10 in the road contract case).

Changing social norms around procurement corruption

The survey findings suggest that critical opportunities exist for embedding new norms of anti-corruption and accountability in Nigerian public procurement – most notably, in tackling gaps in perception by facilitating dialogue among communities to show just how widespread opposition to corruption is. Further measures could include co-creating and sharing simplified public contracting technology and information⁵⁵ at the community level to allow for greater citizen participation, such as public committees and commitment devices⁵⁶ for monitoring contract delivery. Furthermore, to facilitate increased participation and investment in regulatory reforms among citizens, procurement data (including on contracts, tenders and bidding processes) also needs to be disclosed in a machine-readable format and made convenient for further processing and public scrutiny.⁵⁷

Critical opportunities exist for embedding new norms of anti-corruption and accountability in Nigerian public procurement – most notably, in tackling gaps in perception by facilitating dialogue among communities to show just how widespread opposition to corruption is.

Efforts at increasing transparency should be both public-facing and context-specific, with the objective of involving citizens in determining procurement priorities, bidding, evaluation and award processes, as well as providing complaints and review mechanisms. In an interview for the SNAG project,

⁵⁵ The goal is to ensure there are transparent and trackable digital records of procurement transactions that can be easily understood and audited. This can be achieved through the adoption of open contracting principles and expansion of e-procurement processes.

⁵⁶ Example of commitment devices include performance bonds and financial guarantees (such as requiring contractors to provide performance bonds or guarantees that ensure they also have a financial stake in completing projects to an agreed standard and timeframe); non-performance penalties when contractors fail to meet contractual obligations; third-party monitoring of the entire procurement process and reporting of irregularities; safe reporting channels (with robust and secure whistleblower protections); integrity pacts that include accountable stakeholders from beneficiary communities; milestone-based contract payments; citizen oversight committees (such as bodies composed of local citizens to oversee project implementation and channel community input to contractors and procurement bodies); and technology-based monitoring (such as project management software or GPS tracking to monitor real-time progress).

⁵⁷ The accessibility of procurement data (often stored in physical files, or individually accessible electronic documents) is a huge barrier for the extraction and dissemination of necessary information for community monitoring.

a public service reformer in Nigeria explained in simple terms the potential of technology in ensuring transparency and addressing the information asymmetry between government and the public:

I came in, collected everything and put it on the website, so everything is available on the website. That entire business [of selling information to the highest bidder] is dead, because who's going to pay you for data that they can get themselves on the website?⁵⁸

Multi-stakeholder participation is often an infrequent afterthought in Nigeria's procurement system, for both large and small contracts. For instance, the construction of the 700-km, \$11 billion Lagos–Calabar coastal highway is a recent example of the opacity, conflicts of interests and lack of transparency or multi-stakeholder engagement in Nigeria's broken procurement system.⁵⁹ Efforts to address dysfunction, opacity and corruption must involve the mandating and enforcement of public scrutiny, and the ability of oversight mechanisms to investigate public complaints.

Disclosure measures such as the establishment of a public register of the real beneficial owners of Nigerian firms (for example, the Persons with Significant Control (PSC) Register,⁶⁰ which became publicly available in May 2023)⁶¹ can also be powerful tools for engaging communities in greater public accountability. Such measures would breach the powerful opacity of hidden forms of high-level corruption like embezzlement, and could further entrench resistance to procurement corruption, particularly at local levels where procurement officials and contractors alike are embedded in communities and thus potentially sensitive to changes in social pressures and expectations.⁶²

But even if popular opinion can be shifted, available tools and processes for oversight and enforcement would need to be used effectively by the public, procurement regulators and law enforcement, which entails significant investment in training and capacity-building. Cases would need to be adjudicated swiftly and independently – in other words, social pressure would need to be backed by material consequences.

⁵⁸ SNAG interview conducted on condition of anonymity, January 2023.

⁵⁹ Kogbara, D. and Ezeamalu, B. (2024), '10 things to know about Nigeria's controversial \$11bn Lagos-Calabar coastal highway', *The Africa Report*, 13 May 2024, <https://www.theafricareport.com/347898/10-things-to-know-about-nigerias-controversial-11bn-lagos-calabar-coastal-highway>.

⁶⁰ World Bank (2023), 'Building Trust by Combating Corruption in Western and Central Africa', 13 December 2023, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2023/12/13/building-trust-by-combating-corruption-in-western-and-central-africa>.

⁶¹ Assessing the effectiveness of the PSC register is beyond the scope of this study.

⁶² An interview with a procurement regulator suggests that full and robust adoption of ICT can go a long way in reducing pressure on public officials from contractors and block opportunities for influence peddling and corruption. The regulator stated: 'I made sure that we now use ICT to block the leakages. So you [contractors] don't even come to us; I told them [contractors] we are not banks here. I gathered all the contractors of [redacted] state government; I said "We are not banks here, we don't collect cash."' SNAG interview conducted on condition of anonymity, January 2023.

04 Nigerians' views on reporting corrupt practices

Survey responses suggest that Nigerians still have faith in the ability of institutions to hold people accountable for corruption.

Alongside all of the scenarios it presented (judicial bribery, contract inflation and theft of contract funds), the Chatham House survey also asked respondents about their understanding of the legal status of such behaviours. Respondents showed a high level of knowledge in all three scenarios. In all, 90.1 per cent of people surveyed knew it was illegal for a judge to collect money for a judgment in a court case, 88.9 per cent answered that contract inflation was illegal, and over 87.2 per cent said it was illegal for the fictional contractor in the given scenario to take road contract funds for personal use.⁶³ Only a small number believed that such actions were legal or did not know.⁶⁴

Reform efforts that focus simply on increasing the legal knowledge of Nigerians regarding corruption will not be sufficient to shift expectations. Indeed, high levels of legal knowledge among the public may reinforce the view of many that those in the judicial and procurement sectors are lawbreakers. This negative perception would continue to undermine the role of judges as enforcers of laws, and that of procurement officials and contractors as providers of efficient services.

⁶³ The state breakdown of legal knowledge was slightly skewed for Sokoto state, but the overall average was not significantly affected. Computer-assisted interview (CAPI) devices used in Sokoto experienced upload issues for the specific legal knowledge question, causing the loss of data for some Sokoto respondents. Despite this technical glitch, the overall figures regarding legal knowledge remain high.

⁶⁴ For the judicial bribery scenario, 7.5 per cent of respondents thought it was legal while 2.4 per cent did not know. In the contract inflation scenario, 8.7 per cent thought it was legal, while 2.4 per cent did not know. For the road contract fraud case, 10.9 per cent thought it was legal and 1.9 per cent said they did not know.

Which institutions are people most likely to report to?

Survey questions:

Mr Z suspects that Mr X, who is in charge of procurement, has increased the total cost of the government contracts he gives out for his personal benefit. Which organization do you think Mr Z is likely to report Mr X to?

Mr Y is a leader/farmer/trader/cleric in a rural community. Mr X has the contract for building a new tarred road for this rural community. Mr Y suspects that Mr X has taken the funds for personal use, rather than building a new tarred road. Which organization do you think Mr Y is likely to report Mr X to?

The survey uncovered some evidence that Nigerians retain considerable faith in the official accountability mechanisms set up to combat corruption, particularly those institutions involved in investigating and reporting alleged corruption before cases reach the courts. When asked which organization a colleague would be likely to report to regarding contract-cost inflation or the personal use of road-building funds, respondents most commonly selected an anti-corruption agency such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) or the ICPC (32.2 per cent for the procurement fraud case, and 42.9 per cent for the road contract scenario). These answers suggest a significant degree of awareness of the role of anti-corruption institutions as official checks on corrupt practices and behaviours. A smaller number of respondents, averaging 14.5 per cent across the two scenarios, selected 'none of the above' – indicating either a low awareness or opinion of these institutions or a degree of fatalism about the persistence of corruption.

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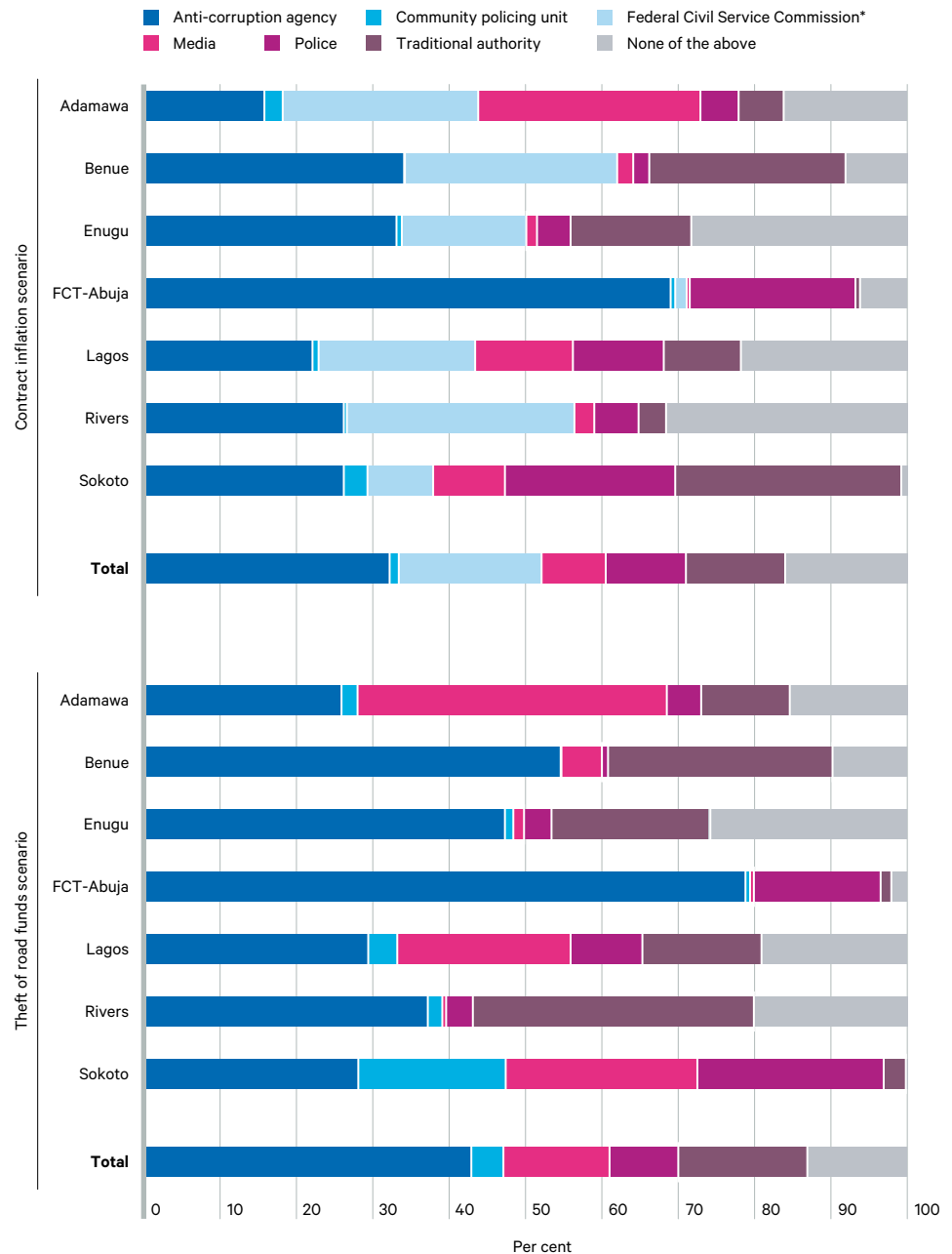
A degree of variation at state level was also notable. In FCT-Abuja, for example, the share of respondents who said that a report would be made to an anti-corruption agency was extremely high across both scenarios (see Figure 7), likely reflecting the relatively stronger presence and visibility of these agencies in the federal capital. In Adamawa, the largest selection of respondents picked the media, signalling the likelihood of a more prominent role not just for informing the public but as a deterrent and check on corrupt leaders. In Benue state, meanwhile, over 25 per cent of respondents for both scenarios (25.7 per cent for contract inflation, and 29.4 per cent for road contract fraud) selected traditional institutions such as a chief or district head, signalling the ongoing significance of those roles and their holders in Nigerian society. Expectations of reporting to a traditional leader were found to be consistently higher in rural areas than in urban areas. It is also noteworthy that the police and community policing units were among the least

Tackling judicial bribery and procurement fraud in Nigeria

How harnessing public disapproval can enable collective action against corruption

frequently selected organizations in both scenarios for most states⁶⁵ (see Figure 7), despite the police being the statutory body for enforcing the criminal and penal code. (Respondents in FCT-Abuja and Sokoto were significantly more likely to select the police than the country-wide average.)

Figure 7. Respondents' views on likely reporting agencies/institutions, by state



* Federal Civil Service Commission was only provided as an answer option under the contract inflation scenario.

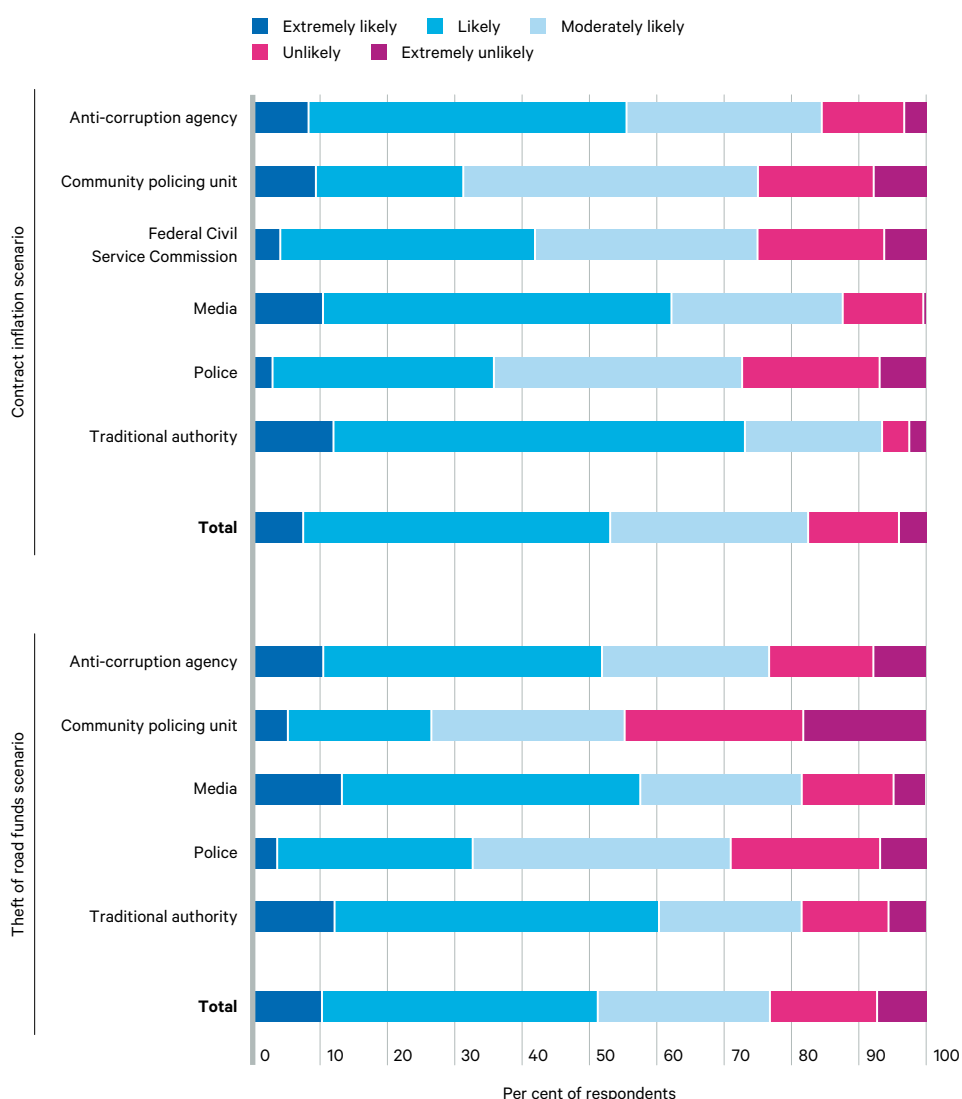
⁶⁵ However, it is important to note that the police were selected by more respondents (10.5 per cent) than the media (8.4 per cent) in the contract inflation scenario.

How effective are those institutions at holding people accountable?

Survey question:

How likely do you think it is that the selected organization would be able to hold Mr X accountable?

Figure 8. Respondents' views on effectiveness of reporting agencies/institutions, by state



Survey respondents were then asked a follow-up question regarding the likelihood of their selected organization being able to hold the perpetrator accountable for their corrupt behaviour. Regardless of the organization or authority that they chose, more than half of all respondents (52.2 per cent) thought that their selected organization was *likely* or *extremely likely* to hold the perpetrators accountable for their actions. In contrast, under one quarter of respondents (20.4 per cent) thought their organization was *unlikely* or *extremely unlikely* to hold the official accountable.

Expectations of accountability for corrupt behaviours were also higher for respondents living in rural areas, where traditional leaders were most frequently selected as reporting institutions. As highly regarded people in those areas, the expectations of traditional leaders play an important role in how others view their own status and belonging. Therefore, those institutions hold potential for helping to enforce socially embedded performance contracts – Rwanda’s public sector reforms are an example of this – and the sanctioning of public officials including judicial officers.⁶⁶

These survey results indicate that the foundations for effective anti-corruption in Nigeria’s states are perhaps stronger than may previously have been expected. Anti-corruption agencies in particular should capitalize on favourable social perceptions by engaging with other government institutions and communities more directly, and encouraging more monitoring and reporting of corruption. Those agencies should also seek stronger cooperation with public-procurement oversight authorities to ensure alleged corruption cases are handed over more quickly. Despite not being part of formal state bureaucracies, traditional leaders can also play a critical role in ensuring accountability by monitoring any performance bonds or commitment devices involving individuals or organizations in their communities.

The survey data also point to significant variation in expectations of institutions between states, and between rural and urban communities. For that reason, there will be no one-size-fits-all approach that is effective across Nigeria as a whole. Further research is needed to discern the crucial differences between social, political and cultural contexts across the country. But the extent of popular faith in institutions outside the formal law enforcement and judicial systems is encouraging, and can potentially be leveraged in efforts to prevent and monitor corruption through more deliberate and sustained public engagement.

⁶⁶ Public sector reform in Rwanda that leveraged socially embedded performance contracts also offers lessons for enhancing public accountability in Nigeria. Historically, in the Kingdom of Rwanda, individuals would appear publicly before local leaders to declare their commitment to accomplishing specific goals, and this was later followed by evaluation ceremonies. This practice (called *imihigo*) was reinvented under President Paul Kagame after 2000 and, according to researchers Claudia Baez Camargo and Nikos Passas, now ‘forms the backbone of a central performance monitoring scheme that covers all public institutions and officials in Rwanda’. Rwanda’s approach involved reinventing and formalizing informal practices – specifically, the traditional practice of public commitments and the social pride of achieving performance promises. This approach seeded new social expectations for public officials by leveraging the shame of failure or praise of success for individuals and their families. Carefully crafted civic education on the values of integrity and anti-corruption was also targeted at citizens and public officials. While Rwanda’s public sector reforms have been criticised as enabling state control and representing a top-down initiative based heavily on the actions of elites, these reforms still demonstrate how similar contexts can leverage informal dynamics such as social norms to denormalize corruption and socially incentivize public officials to reject it. Evidence from studies of models of effective governance in Nigeria has also shown that bottom-up and middle-out anti-corruption strategies can be encouraged by reformers with strong political backing and persuasive, coalition-building skills. These examples underscore the importance of how informal dynamics interact with contextual specificities and the wider political environment. For a deeper evaluation of informality, corruption and the Rwanda example, see Baez Camargo, C. and Passas, N. (2017), *Hidden agendas, social norms and why we need to re-think anti-corruption*, working paper, Basel: Basel Institute on Governance, https://baselgovernance.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/biog_working_paper_22.pdf; Baez Camargo, C. and Gatwa, T. (2018), *Informal Governance and Corruption: Transcending the Principal Agent and Collective Action Paradigms: Rwanda Country Report*, Basel: Basel Institute on Governance, https://baselgovernance.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/rwanda.informalgovernance.country_report.pdf; Hasselskog, M. (2016), ‘Participation or What? Local Experiences and Perceptions of Household Performance Contracting in Rwanda’, *Forum for Development Studies*, 43(2), pp. 177–99, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2015.1090477>; Roll, M. (2014), ‘The State that Works: A ‘Pocket of Effectiveness Perspective on Nigeria and Beyond’’, in Bierschenk, T. and Olivier de Sardan, J.-P. (eds) (2014), *States at Work: Dynamics of African Bureaucracies*, Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, pp. 365–98.

05 Conclusion and recommendations

Despite widespread expectations of corrupt behaviour, opportunities exist to harness public disapproval to combat corruption.

This research paper has revealed widespread beliefs that judges in Nigeria are corrupt, with 61 per cent of respondents in the Chatham House survey expecting bribery in case judgments. Despite the expectation of commonplace judicial bribe-taking, disapproval remains high, with 88 per cent opposing the behaviour mainly based on moral objections. Most respondents, however, are unaware that others in their community share their disapproval, which may exacerbate the problem and discourage collective action against corruption due to fear of social backlash. This is further complicated by the difficulty of disciplining judges and the failure of existing reforms and oversight bodies. As a result, reform initiatives must consider social expectations and institutional drivers of corruption, integrating them into strategies that involve social-sanctioning and transparency mechanisms, alongside sincere and bold political support. These efforts should aim to bolster community dialogue and leverage communal disapproval to combat corruption. Likewise, understanding and addressing in-group pressures within judicial networks, supported by robust disciplinary actions, can help with transforming expectations and standards. Comprehensive reform should also encompass all elements of the justice system and ensure continuous oversight through mechanisms like social audits of courts.

In addition, the research highlights widespread corruption scepticism of public procurement among Nigerians, with 74 per cent expecting procurement officials to inflate contracts for personal gain and 78 per cent anticipating similar corruption in road projects. But an overwhelming majority again disapprove of such practices, indicating the power of moral objections rooted in the belief that corruption undermines public service delivery. These findings underscore the need to shift collective beliefs regarding public opinion to activate collective action against corruption at community level (i.e. narrowing the disapproval–collective action gap).

Recommended strategies include fostering deliberate dialogue, involving credible facilitators, to expose the true extent of public disapproval, implementing simplified public contracting information and technology, and enhancing citizen involvement in procurement processes. However, success depends on comprehensive societal engagement, the public's ability to use oversight tools, and root-and-branch reform of the justice sector.

The Chatham House survey also reveals a high level of legal knowledge among Nigerians, with more than 87 per cent of respondents recognizing the illegality of judicial bribery, contract inflation and procurement fraud. Interestingly, there remains a strong belief in the effectiveness of anti-corruption agencies like the ICPC and EFCC in areas such as FCT-Abuja. Conversely, in Adamawa and Benue states, the media and traditional institutions, respectively, are viewed as more important avenues for reporting corruption. Rural respondents show higher expectations of accountability from traditional leaders, highlighting their continued importance in enforcing social norms and performance contracts. These findings underscore the potential for tailored anti-corruption strategies that consider the sociopolitical context of each state. However, further research is crucial to understanding local differences and context-specific social norms, and fully harnessing the impact of local institutions in anti-corruption work in Nigeria.

Nigeria urgently needs a new type of governance model for tackling corruption – one that is rooted in the strong anti-corruption sentiments shared by its citizens.

By emphasizing the high negative empirical expectations across three interrelated corrupt behaviours, this research paper also sheds light on how and why corruption in Nigeria's judicial system and procurement sector can be so resistant to formal reform programmes. Corruption reinforces, and is reinforced by, social expectations, despite overwhelming levels of disapproval of the practices among individuals. Future efforts at reform must therefore engage with informal drivers of these social expectations as part of a whole-of-society approach to anti-corruption. Seen in this light, efforts to strengthen accountability should also consider socio-cultural processes and the role of public pressure on institutions and government. Interventions to expose gaps in perception between the individual and community can help galvanize collective action – closing the gap between public disapproval and collective action – and support bottom-up accountability demands.

Nigeria urgently needs a new type of governance model for tackling corruption – one that is rooted in the strong anti-corruption sentiments shared by its citizens. Such a model would be more effective if it created a transparent and accountable bond between Nigerians and the country's bureaucratic institutions, and leveraged key sites of social approval (for example, religious and other traditional institutions, along with the media).

This paper's findings do not suggest that socio-cultural processes and collective action by citizens, communities and traditional institutions are a substitute for

the structural changes and sincere political will essential to fostering greater accountability in the judiciary and public procurement sector. But these efforts can at least help create new expectations for the behaviour of public officials, institutions and government contractors. For example, the findings regarding the perceived effectiveness of anti-corruption agencies are indicative of public support and should reinforce the mandate and efforts of these agencies. Alongside the SNAG project's consistent finding in its research of individuals' personal disapproval of corrupt behaviours, the paper also suggests potential entry points for collective action towards greater accountability in Nigeria.

Recommendations for strengthening accountability

The following recommendations are based on the research findings set out in this paper, and are intended for policymakers and anti-corruption practitioners in Nigeria:

- **Motivate and mobilize citizens to challenge their elected representatives regarding specific community needs and government allocations.** Sustained and well-directed public pressure can be effective in pushing decision-makers to recognize the public's interests and act accordingly. However, this approach is hampered by the vested interests, impunity and durable resistance of Nigeria's political elite to accountability. Systemic forms of corruption can only be broken down by the reinvigorated voices and agency of citizens in matters of governance and politics.
- **Conduct research to identify in-group norms of behaviour and expectation among judges, and the relationships of the legal and law-enforcement sectors to the wider community.** Such insights would enhance the design of network-specific anti-corruption interventions that best target the corruption opportunities and pressures within the justice sector's tightly bound social networks, which have strong links to the political elite.
- **Encourage an increased role for non-legal communities (including civil society, media and academia) in creating and monitoring anti-corruption mechanisms.** These may include socially embedded public pledges for judges, supporting judicial networks for enforcing and maintaining such integrity pledges, and establishing social accountability directly to the communities that individual courts serve. Such efforts will need to be designed to complement others seeking to address the practical reasons behind acceptance of corrupt behaviour – including slow court processes, underfunding and understaffing.
- **Recalibrate anti-corruption interventions to take account of prevailing expectations, which can contribute to apathy and a sense of fatalism about service delivery and the rule of law.** Such recalibration would involve discarding sensationalist anti-corruption messaging that emphasizes the prevalence or punishment of corrupt practices that most citizens believe are commonplace. Moralistic messaging in the form of value-laden campaign rhetoric or sensationalist language is more likely to lead to desensitization if law enforcement institutions are known to be weak and the judiciary is believed

to also be corrupt. Instead, messaging should be audience- and action-specific (for example, reporting corruption to credible authorities or encouraging citizens to pressure their elected leaders to carry out specific actions, and informing citizens as to how they can mount an effective pressure campaign). Because of the risks of these efforts backfiring or raising apathy rather than awareness, it is important for messaging campaigns to be clear on their desired outcomes and be delivered by credible messengers.⁶⁷

- **Create socially embedded public commitments or performance contracts for public officials and government contractors.** Public contracts and performance contracts must leverage social pride and the shame of failure to socially incentivize public officials and contractors to reject corruption. Such community monitoring efforts can be enhanced via greater attention to civic education on the responsibilities of public officials and importance of integrity, the simplification of public-contracting information and tracking technology, and increased accessibility at the community level. On the latter point in particular, online procurement portals are growing in popularity in Nigeria and can be a vital tool if regularly updated, and if consideration is given to accompanying communications strategies that tap into strong public disapproval of procurement corruption.
- **Highlight the strong level of consensus around social disapproval of corruption.** Provision of information about social disapproval can be localized and targeted at specific procurement units or private contractor groups (for example, in a specific community or industry), so these can be used to ‘seed’ new norms and coordinate network relations around new codes of business and practice. Messaging around new norms must be extensively tested and contextually piloted before scaling, to ensure that it leads to positive norm changes rather than reinforcing corrupt practices.
- **Localize interventions to make them more effective at influencing unsustainable and unpopular practices.**⁶⁸ Such an approach has contributed to measurable impact on anti-corruption in Nigeria’s maritime sector,⁶⁹ for example, and could be effective in tackling local-level procurement and construction fraud.
- **Leverage public faith in the ability of anti-corruption agencies to develop a more community-centred corruption prevention approach and local engagement on corruption law enforcement.** Such an approach must be sensitive to state-level variation and, where applicable, involve working with trusted and credible local institutions or individuals (as indicated by preferences expressed in the SNAG survey), such as the media or traditional leaders.

⁶⁷ For rigorous guidance on developing anti-corruption messaging, see Peiffer, C. and Cheeseman, N. (2024), *A How-to Guide to Anti-Corruption Messaging*, report, Washington, DC: Center for International Private Enterprise, <https://www.cipe.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/CIPE-How-To-Guide-to-Anti-Corruption-Messaging-2.pdf>.

⁶⁸ This is because of the underlying role of ‘social tipping’ (which is defined as the point at which a series of small changes in behaviours or beliefs results in a non-linear cascade of changes owing to the interdependence of the behaviours or beliefs) in creating a critical mass, where enforceable and mutually agreed expectations and sanctions are introduced, eventually leading to non-linear behaviour change.

⁶⁹ The Maritime Anti-Corruption Network and the Convention on Business Integrity have played a significant role in achieving this reduction. See Basel Institute on Governance (2023), ‘Cutting corruption in Nigerian ports: data, impact and collective action’, 7 March 2023, <https://baselgovernance.org/blog/cutting-corruption-nigerian-ports-data-impact-and-collective-action>.

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Cover image: A protester holds a banner during a demonstration against the non-removal of judges being investigated for bribery and corruption, Abuja, Nigeria, 2 November 2016.

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