

REPORT ON THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN AFRICMIL AND PRIMORG WHISTLEBLOWING AND WHISTLEBLOWER POLICY SENSITIZATION PROJECT

BACKGROUND:

Corruption has been defined by many as a hydra-headed monster that has robbed Nigeria of the benefits of democracy. Citizens and government alike have a fundamental role to play in the fight against corruption because the consequences of corruption affect all. In 2016, the federal government through the Ministry of Finance introduced the Whistleblowing Policy as one of the mechanisms to deter corruption and mismanagement of public funds amongst others. Months after the policy was launched the Ministry of finance which is the multi-agency unit said it received 2,351 tips from Nigerians on a wide range of corrupt practices such as contract inflation, theft of funds through ghost workers and illegal payments. Also, the then minister of finance Kemi Adeosun said the ministry had paid about three hundred and seventy-five point eight million naira (N375,800,000) to whistleblowers whose information led to recovery of eleven point six billion naira (N11.6B). Citizens wield enormous power in the anti-corruption fight through whistleblowing.

And recently PRIMORG was invited by the ministry to join a team of stakeholders in charting the way forward in bringing about a regime of legislation to institutionalize whistleblowing and whistleblowers' protection. A draft bill is the result of that collaborative and consultative efforts.

The African Center for Media and Information Literacy (AFRICMIL) is a Civil Society Organization which has been promoting its fight against corruption through its weapon of whistleblowing through their project tagged 'Corruption Anonymous'.

Under the project, AFRICMIL partnered with PRIMORG to conduct a series of Radio Town Hall Meetings in furtherance of its goal to increase citizens awareness about whistleblowing, to encourage the government to institutionalize the whistleblowing policy and improve the protection of whistleblowers in Nigeria.

Eight episodes of the live radio program was aired from 4th June to 21st July 2021. Participants on the program cut across the youths, women, CSOs, the government, Persons with Disability (PWDs), etc.

METHODOLOGY:

RADIO LIVE PRESENTATION

The one-hour interactive program which alternated weekly between two radio stations were aired on Fridays at 12:30 pm on RayPower 100.5 FM and on Wednesdays at 10:00 am on 99.9Kiss FM Abuja.

FACEBOOK LIVE STREAMING

All the episodes of the program were streamed live to a wide range of local, national and international audience through the Facebook pages of PRIMORG (@officialprimorg) and that of AFRICMIL (corruption anonymous).

ISSUANCE OF PRESS RELEASES

The high points of each of the episodes were converted to press releases for media houses for publication as news to achieve more mileage in the citizens' enlightenment and information for the general public.

AIM: To further the goal to increase citizens awareness about whistleblowing, to encourage government to institutionalize the whistle blower policy and improve the protection of whistleblowers in Nigeria.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The radio amplification of whistleblowing and whistleblower policy sensitization was powered by AFRICMIL in collaboration with PRIMORG and supported by the MacArthur Foundation. The project was held for 8 weeks running from 4th June, 2021 through 21st July, 2021 and the presenter for all the episodes was Ms. Adaobi Obiabunmuo, Program Manager, PRIMORG. The summary of the execution of the amplification of the whistleblowing and whistleblower policy sensitization project are contained in the table below:

No. of Proposed episodes	No. of live episodes	Total number of calls in the life of the project	Total number of male calls in the life of the project	Total number of females call in the life of the project	Total number of Facebook reach on PRIMORG's page	Total number of Facebook Likes on PRIMORG's page
8	8	16	14	2	2,039	1,756

In conclusion, through the AFRICMIL whistleblowing and whistleblower policy sensitization project in collaboration with PRIMORG, more awareness was created among Nigerian citizens about the whistleblower policy, the responsibilities of citizens, government, CSOs, Media, public sector and private sector officials, the need for the protection of whistleblowers and the need to harmonize the Whistleblowing Bills before the National Assembly and present the document early to the President for accent.

ACTIVITIES:

Episode 1:

TOPIC: FIVE YEARS OF WHISTLEBLOWING: WHAT THE PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW

Date: 4th June 2021.

Venue: 100.5 Raypower FM, Abuja.

Time: 12:30pm to 1:30pm.

Guests:

S/N	NAME OF GUEST	ORGANIZATION/DESIGNATION
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1.	Johnson Oludare	Asst Director, Special Investigation and Assignments, PICA – Presidential Initiative on Continuous Audit. Under the Federal Ministry of Finance.
2.	Ezenwa Nwagwu	Say No Campaign and ED, Peering Advocacy and Advancement Center in Africa (PACA)
3.	Vivian Bello	Project Advisor, Social Action
4.	Majeed Dahiru	Public Affairs Analyst

SUMMARY OF DELIBERATIONS:

In March 2020, the Chairman, Presidential Advisory Committee Against Corruption (PACAC), Prof. Itse Isagie, revealed that the Federal Government recovered N994.09bn in less than 3years of the introduction of the whistleblower policy. As good as this recovery sounds, more success would have been recorded if citizens were as involved as they were meant to be.

The whistleblowing policy is a global instrument of revealing wrongdoings to the authorities. The whistleblowing policy has run for over 4years in Nigeria and has been a viable tool in fighting corruption in Nigeria. Any Nigerian can blow the whistle and it's not limited to only recovery of government funds, it concerns all manner of wrongdoing. Whistleblowers must blow the whistle in good fate. A citizen wields so much power through whistleblowing. The problem now is the culture of silence. Many people don't know the power that they have as whistleblowers.

We need to stretch this conversation beyond a policy and see if there's an enabling law. The law will beam a light on wrongdoings in public and private places. When people know the consequences of corruption, whistleblowing becomes easy. At the moment, there is no law protecting whistleblowers, so as much as people are hurt, the policy cannot protect anyone from humiliation after they've blown the whistle.

There has been some major success with the whistleblowing policy but the gaps to cover are still very wide. There are still institutions that actively penalize whistleblowers. To this effect, whistleblowers have not been protected. To this effect, a lot of women have not risen up to the responsibility of whistleblowing. The Attorney General is meant to actively ensure that whistleblowers rights are protected, but so far, we have not seen that. The policy and the law eventually should have some gender considerations in other to encourage women to participate actively in whistleblowing.

Whistleblowers alone cannot to the job of fighting corruption, so we need the political leadership corruption to match their words with action in their vow to fight against corruption. The political will to fight corruption is low. Whistleblowing is a civic responsibility for all citizens. We need to fight administrative rules to punish offenders and corrupt practices.

Summary of Callers' Comments:

First Caller: Everybody in Nigeria is willing to blow this whistle, but everyone fears for their lives and their future.

Second Caller: What gains have the citizens who blew the whistle gotten since they blew the whistle? At the end of the day, most were confined to their houses. Nigeria is not showing seriousness in fighting corruption. However, if we don't blow the whistle, corruption will continue.

Third Caller: The problem is that there are not good structures to protect whistleblowers.

Number of Callers Segregated by Gender:

Male	Female
3	0

Episode 2:

Topic: HOW TO MOBILIZE CITIZENS TO DEMAND ACCOUNTABILITY

Date: 9th June 2021.

Venue: 99.9 Kiss FM, Abuja.

Time: 10:00am to 11:00am.

Guests:

S/N	NAME OF GUEST	ORGANIZATION/DESIGNATION
1.	Cynthia Mbamalu	Director of Programs, YIAGA Africa
2.	Mukhtar Modibbo	Community Engagement Officer, Connected Development (CODE)
3.	Martin Obono	Team Lead, TAP Initiative
4.	Musa Muazu Musa	Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary, National Commission of Persons with Disability.

Citizens have a frontline responsibility in the fight against corruption because they bear the brunt of it. Whistleblowing is one of the government's many mechanisms in fighting corruption in the country and this requires citizens' involvement.

How do we get a larger population of young Nigerians to get involved in whistleblowing? What is an enabler of the culture of silence? If citizens do not see a sincerity of purpose from the government, why then should citizens get involved with whistleblowing? Young people do not want to be engaged in actions that will be futile. To get the youth involved in fighting corruption effectively, the youth need to see a government that is committed to fighting corruption. Secondly, the policy needs to translate into a proper enabling legislation. The youth and the women need to know that they will be protected if they blow the whistle, but as long as it remains a policy, such protection is not guaranteed. The legislation for whistleblowing must be gender sensitive to include protection for women who blow the whistle because the challenges experienced by women differ from the ones experienced by men. The clampdown on social media is a minus for whistleblowing in Nigeria

How do we increase citizens' participation in whistleblowing? It's one thing to have a system and it's another thing to be open or have an enabling environment to let the system work. The entire process

boils back to the credibility and accountability of the government. There's no trust between people and government. The citizens need to understand their power. Every legislator should go back to their place and put in some scalability, sustainability and continuity in their constituency work. They should get the citizens involved in their constituency budget.

We need to kill the idea of whistleblowing only having to do with reporting mismanaged naira and kobo. Whistleblowing can be carried out in every work of life. Twitter was a medium by which a lot of people blew the whistle and now it is stifled, this once again brings up the issue of trust between the government and the people. People blow whistles and there are no incentives for them. Sometimes, the law enforcement agents get to betray the whistleblowers, this further deepens the lack of trust. Also, there is the issue of nepotism where people don't want to blow whistles because the culprits are their relatives. Using technology to sensitize citizens for whistleblowing should include sponsored ads, tweet-meets, SMS, etc. Whistleblower reports can be sent anonymously, an app can be developed for whistleblowers. Anonymity will be required for whistleblower in a case where the legislation for whistleblowing is absent as it is in Nigeria.

How do PWDs align themselves with whistleblowing in Nigeria? PWDs are a product of the society. Corruption is already an issue etched in the system of Nigeria. PWDs are bigger victims of corruption in the society. PWDs are not only mainstreamed but outrightly excluded in the fight against corruption. How to get PWDs to get involved in whistleblowing is

1. Build their capacity to speak against corruption.
2. Mainstream them in the development of our programs and projects.
3. Include them in policy making rather than making policies for them. Make them stakeholders rather than beneficiaries.

Number of Callers Segregated by Gender:

Male	Female
0	0

Episode 3:

TOPIC: GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION (GESI) AND WHISTLEBLOWING

Date: 18th June 2021.

Venue: 100.5 Raypower FM, Abuja.

Time: 12:30pm to 1:30pm.

Guests:

S/N	NAME OF GUEST	ORGANIZATION/DESIGNATION
1.	Ene Ede	Development Programing strategist and promoter of inclusion and diversity
2.	Babatunde Oluwajo	Public Policy Analyst
3.	Segun Adesanya	Lawyer, Policy Analyst, Presidential Advisory Committee Against Corruption (PACAC)

4.	Florence Markus	Legal Practitioner and Co-Founder of Amputee Coalition of Nigeria
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According to Transparency International’s global corruption barometer, women have a high propensity of frowning and reporting wrong doings which makes a gender sensitive whistleblowing mechanism necessary in the fight against corruption.

Cultural issues, religious issues, lack of political will and weak frameworks have been a bane in the fight against corruption through whistleblowing. Women cannot be insulated from the challenges of the environment. Corruption affects the woman culturally, behaviorally, maritally, and even spiritually. If we have many women in positions of authority, corruption will reduce because we will have fleshy conscience.

However, corruption knows no gender, religion, status or tribe. Corruption makes it impossible to exist whether as a man or a woman. We must be firm against corruption. Whistleblowing is an ethical disclosure of wrongdoing in a system against persons or organizations who may be public or private but who are doing things wrong that are inimical to the collective interest of society. Systems should be put in place to encourage anonymity, protection and reward because whistleblowing may include the incurring of losses – losses of jobs, incomes, sense of belonging, etc. The university system needs a collection of students, council members, senate and independent individuals in the society who can investigate whistleblower reports. The reason Nigeria still has relative peace is that we have enterprising youths who are winning awards globally even when the country is not providing them the enabling environment.

On the part of the government, one of the challenges observed since the policy has been in place is the cynicism. The citizens find it difficult to trust the government. When there are new inventions and policies, people tend to be skeptical about them. The fear of victimization also dapples public morale to blow the whistle. Also, there is the challenge of a whistleblower blowing the whistle in a selective approach. When a citizen reports one corruption case in different antigraft agencies, there will be duplication of whistle blowing and it might be seen to have personal interest with the aim of achieving what is best known to the person. One other challenge is people using the whistle blowing policy as an opportunity for personal vendetta. The whistle blowing process is a means of disclosing financial breach, breach of criminal actions, issues that violate government regulation, issues that have to do with ill finances, revenues that affect the majority of the people as it were, the challenges are enormous and the government is working tirelessly to water them down and handle them in a way that the objectives of the whistle blowing policy are not defeated.

PACAC is doing a lot in advising the government accordingly:

1. Collaboration with every willing stakeholder like AFRICMIL. PACA has successfully collaborated with several stakeholders in ensuring that people are enlightened and informed.
2. Secondly, PACAC is doing her best in terms of engaging the public by having stakeholders’ meetings and dialogues. This meeting has taken place in over 27 states of the country, with the aim of providing orientation on the need to speak up, need to disclose information, need to report violation of crime, and need to come up and say something, all of these are to support the

legalization of the whistle blowing policy, promoting the idea that this thing must not remain as a policy

Persons with disability are not exempted from blowing the whistle, they have the capacity to do so and they owe the society the responsibility of reporting wrong doing. To be able to carry these people along, they have to be re-engaged through the use of strategic practices and best practices by meeting, engaging and dialoguing with their cluster heads. Also, it is pertinent that there is an inclusive society in favor of PWDs especially because corruption affects them the most. The policy also should be disseminated in formats that are PWD friendly.

Number of Callers Segregated by Gender:

Male	Female
0	0

Episode 4:

TOPIC: PROTECTION OF WHISTLEBLOWERS

Date: 23rd June 2021.

Venue: 99.9 Kiss FM, Abuja.

Time: 10:00am to 11:00am.

Guests:

S/N	NAME OF GUEST	ORGANIZATION/DESIGNATION
1.	Barr. Chibu Godwin	Legal Practitioner
2.	Barr. Maxwell Kadiri	Legal Practitioner
3.	Rafat Salami	Former Secretary, NUJ, FCT, Appointed Chairperson Anti-Corruption and Transparency Unit, Voice of Nigeria, 2020
4.	Kazeem Olalekan Lawal	Legal Practitioner and Chairman, Association of Lawyers with Disabilities in Nigeria, FCT Chapter.

Some citizens who blew the whistle against corruption have had unpalatable stories of victimization, stigmatization and persecution. The policy is now faced with an increasing distrust by citizens despite a reward system that ensures a whistleblower gets 2.5% – 5% of recovered money if a person blows the whistle in good faith.

Section 12 of the whistleblower policy seemingly protects the whistleblower from retaliation for the action from either the reported individual or the entity, but in the practical reality, there have been cases where whistleblowers have suffered blow backs from whistleblowing without protection, that then calls into question, the efficacy of the protection of the whistleblower in the whistleblower policy. In other African countries like Uganda, Ghana and South Africa, they give varying degrees of

whistleblower protection and even though Nigerians, Africans believe that African solutions should be given to African problems, there should be some basics which Nigeria and Africa at large can borrow to improve our whistleblower protection mechanism. Lawyers should actively consider providing pro-bono services to fight for whistleblowers.

The whistleblower bill was intended to make elaborate provision of protection meant for whistleblowers but there has been an unintended error by the drafters of the bill which robs that bill of a certain aspect of protection that is readily available to whistleblowers in standard practice. The bill has a provision to make the identity of the whistleblower and the information given a matter of confidentiality – this is a measure of protection for the whistleblower. The aspect of protection has to do with the protection of the life and person and family of the whistleblower and his/her interests. Government should show its seriousness in the pursuit of this policy by giving adequate compensation to those who made disclosures and suffered reprisals and also make sure there is stiff punishment for those who got the information and disclosed the information or identity to the culprits.

Ever before the government put measure in place to expose corruption, journalists have been at the forefront in speaking against corruption and exposing the ills of the society, however, journalists have been persecuted for carrying out this mandate. Journalists are trained to protect their sources, however, there are dangers in the process of protecting the sources. Where there is no protection for the journalists, it affects the quality of journalism. There is no shield law for the journalist in Nigeria. Infringements on the rights of journalist should be investigated. Non-payment of journalists' salaries should be criminalized. Also, journalists should be trained.

The bill as it is today, gives more emphasis on the reward, however, the bill should also look into the issue of punishment. For proper protection of whistleblowers there must be some sort of punitive measures for whistleblowers and offenders. There must be emphasis on punishment especially to those who receive a whistleblower's information and refuse to act. A whistleblower needs protection from all strata of the economy. Physical protection of whistleblowers is very key.

Summary of Callers' Comments:

First Caller: The life style of public officials on its own can be enough whistleblowing. If a public official is living higher than his/her income, it's enough grounds for investigation. Also, how are the whistleblowers protected

Second Caller: If we claim that there are omissions in the whistleblower policy by error, how sure are we that those omissions were done by error? Why can't we mirror the whistleblower policies in advanced countries?

Third Caller: I am willing to blow the whistle even without protection; now imagine if I had protection. I want to blow the whistle because corruption affects the society negatively.

Number of Callers Segregated by Gender:

Male	Female
3	0

Episode 5:

TOPIC: Institutionalizing Whistleblowing

Date: 2nd July 2021.

Venue: 100.5 Raypower FM, Abuja.

Time: 12:30pm to 1:30pm.

Guests:

S/N	NAME OF GUEST	ORGANIZATION/DESIGNATION
1.	Soji Apampa	Executive Director, Integrity Organization
2.	Abdulaziz Abdulaziz	Deputy Editor, Daily Trust Newspapers
3.	Suleiman Daudu	Executive Secretary, Administration of Criminal Justice Monetary Committee
4.	Paul Vianana	Assistant Director, Anti-Corruption Unit, Federal Inland Revenue Service

This episode talks about how whistleblowing mechanisms can be developed and incorporated into processes and operations in the public and private sector, and it will discuss whistleblowing as a means of achieving transparency and accountability in the public and private sector.

What is the reason people are uninspired to use the whistleblowing mechanisms in their various organizations? The reason is that asking people to be whistleblowers is asking them to voluntarily be a target. A whistleblower is perceived as a sellout, a snitch, a traitor by most people in society. The name 'whistleblower' and everything it connotes has a negative view by the society and this is not in Nigeria only, it's the same situation even in countries where whistleblowers have protection. This is different from staff members speaking up when there are corruption issues that are costing the company's progress – there might be an exception on shaming the whistleblower in a case like this.

Integrity doesn't just happen, it is built. To build integrity, systems to prevent corruption have to be built. There also has to be a system that helps detect when people are doing wrong. Two reasons why people don't use public feedback mechanisms are the following: 1. Fear of Retribution 2. Apathy (what will come out of it?).

Whistleblowing ideally is supposed to be a confidential process. It's a misnomer when the identity of a whistleblower is out there. It's important that all systems come up with very robust mechanisms to ensure that there are necessary tools to ensure safe and secure reporting because proper reporting helps the system. When people know that their misconducts can be reported, there will be more efficiency in the sector. Whistleblowing serves the public interest and the organizational interest.

One of the key issues in the fight against corruption is the detachment of the citizens from the commonwealth. Nigerians need to be sensitized to personalize public funds. They need to understand that when public funds are stolen, it's their money that is stolen.

There's meant to be an anti-corruption unit in each of the MDAs with the creation of the Anticorruption and Transparency Unit which the ICPC law establishes according to Section 7,10. How much functionality

is the main challenge. The absence of legal framework is a major reason why it is difficult for the federal government to protect whistleblowers. There is also the challenge of the absence of the political will to protect whistleblowers. There is also the question of who will head the Anticorruption and Transparency Units in the MDAs, will it be an internal person or an external person?

One more missing gap is the coordination of managing the whistleblowing protest. There needs to be a focal point for reporting and there needs to be a focal point for the protection of the whistleblowers. These are now present in the new bill before the legislature.

The FIRS as an organization has in place a whistleblowing unit called the Anticorruption and Transparency Unit which has been inaugurated and reconstituted by the current chairman. The unit has been in existence since 2016 and is very effective. In collaboration with AFRICMIL, this Unit organized a sensitization program for members of staff to inform about the existence and effectiveness of the Unit. The Unit has received about 10-15 complaints since inception. The management uses this Unit to recover tax revenue that otherwise would have been lost. The FIRS has a mechanism of getting information from the public that helps in recovering tax information for revenue that would have been lost. This system also has a confidentiality clause for protecting the reporter. This encourages citizens to report tax wrongs and the issues reported will not be swept under the carpet. This mechanism also has a reward system.

Summary of Callers' Comments:

First Caller: It will be ideal for the whistleblowing Act to specify what caliber of people should serve as committee members in the MDAs. As long as the Executive oversees the appointment of whistleblower Act committee members, it will not be trusted.

Second Caller: The heat of the matter is that the policy was not drawn out of good intentions, that's why it is not working. It gets to the point where whistleblowers are looked at as though they are doing wrong for blowing the whistle.

Third Caller: Why is there still corruption if the President's first campaign promise was to do away with corruption? If the whistleblower is at risk of losing his life, then why is the policy available in the first place? These gaps should have been considered before the policy was rolled out in the first place.

Number of Callers Segregated by Gender:

Male	Female
2	1

Episode 6:

TOPIC: Anti-corruption Agencies and Whistleblowing

Date: 7th July 2021.

Venue: 99.9 Kiss FM, Abuja.

Time: 10:00am to 11:00am.

Guests:

S/N	NAME OF GUEST	ORGANIZATION
1.	Mrs. Azuka Ogugua	Spokesperson, ICPC
2.	Samuel Asimi	Program Officer, CISLAC
3.	Dr. Alison Timipre	Head of Programs, CDD
4.	CSP Femi Adedeji	Representative, Police Force Relations Office

The introduction of the whistleblowing policy in 2016 was a boost to the work of the anticorruption agencies – ICPC, EFCC, CCB, BPP, NFIU and OAuGF– these agencies were expected to take advantage of the whistleblower policy to engage citizens and expand their nets on obtaining information on hidden corrupt acts. How much impact has the whistleblowing policy made on the anticorruption agencies?

The ICPC Act predates the whistleblower policy and section 27 gives citizens the rights to blow the whistle, report corruption orally or in writing to the Commission. Over the years, the ICPC has improved its methods of collecting reports from the public – electronic means of reporting has been included via ICPC’s official email, website and toll-free lines. Channels for reports are available. Citizens are encouraged to know that they are the ones that empower anticorruption agencies to work. Whistleblowing is a big part of what ICPC does.

Anticorruption and Transparency Units are established in every MDA to serve as mini-ICPCs where they are located. People complain about corruption mostly in the MDAs. Their powers include everything the ICPC head office can do including preliminary investigations except prosecution. The ICPC commenced the ACTU Effectiveness Index in 2020 to measure how effective the ACTU desks are in the MDAs.

Sometimes whistleblowers endanger themselves, reveal their own identities by duplicating their reports to various anticorruption agencies.

In Nigeria, we have a whistleblower policy and prior to that, we know also agencies have existing frameworks to help support whistleblowing at their own levels. The whistleblower policy in existence now does not support witness protection, so CISLAC is of the opinion that we need an all-encompassing legal framework: a whistle blower law that will harmonize the existing policy and would actually cover victim protection and also prevent victimization of whistleblowers. Whistleblowers should have constitutional protection so that they can blow the whistle and lose their jobs. Policies alone are not enough to guarantee protection of whistleblowers.

The Police Force has always used informants/whistleblowers to get information from everyone across the country, community, government department, agency, and private sector. The police use informants and their information to aid investigations. On the issue of whistle blowing, because it’s an initiative of the Ministry of Finance, the police get information and passes it on to the appropriate body to utilize it: this is apart from the police taking action on the actual crime when it is proven. The ‘appropriate bodies’ usually refer to the MDA in question which requires the specific information.

Summary of Callers’ Comments:

First Caller: Are anticorruption agencies allowed to reveal the identities of whistleblowers? I have an experience of betrayal by the police to whom I blew a whistle - the Police reported to the offender. The government should create a platform for people to blow the whistle anonymously.

Second Caller: To what extent should a case have been executed before a whistleblower is given his reward for blowing the whistle? This has to be spelt out clearly in the policy or else there won't be support from the citizens.

Number of Callers Segregated by Gender:

Male	Female
2	0

Episode 7:

TOPIC: Citizens and Whistleblowing

Date: 16th July 2021.

Venue: 100.5 Raypower FM, Abuja.

Time: 12:30pm to 1:30pm.

Guests:

S/N	NAME OF GUEST	ORGANIZATION/DESIGNATION
1.	Jelili Hassan Tunde	Auto Mechanic
2.	James Ugochukwu	Project Manager, Say No Campaign
3.	Faith Agbakoya	Business Woman, Dutse Market Abuja
4.	Uzo Amadi	Public Affairs Analyst/ Broadcast Media Consultant

About a month ago, the current chairman of the EFCC, Mr. Abdulrasheed Bawa, revealed that as a result of the whistleblower policy, the Federal Government recovered \$43m. The remarkable feat achieved in whistleblowing could not have been achieved without the citizens.

In Nigeria, when you report an act of corruption to the authorities, if not careful, you could be roped into the situation negatively. In the Nigerian system, investigation starts at the confessional stage; thorough underground investigation might be lacking in a corruption case. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), whistleblowing is classified into three – open whistleblowing, closed whistleblowing – when one reports with his or her identity but requests for his/her identity not to be revealed, and lastly, anonymous reporting. If citizens know that they can report corruption anonymously without being harmed, they may embark on more whistleblowing activities. Nigerians should not be deterred by any backlashes on whistleblowing.

It is dangerous when the citizens don't trust the anti-graft agencies – it dampens the morale of the citizens. As long as there are untouchable citizens, the fight against corruption is child's play. The anti-graft agencies need to self-cleanse as well. If abandoned cases can be dug up and brought before the justice system, the citizens may be encouraged to trust the system once more. The change should start with each individual citizen – he who comes to equity must come with clean hands.

Trust in the market place is a big issue. The prices of the originals are skyrocketed, so people buy the fake at cheap prices and sell them at the cost price of the original prices. Most people go for the fake stuff because they don't have funds for the original and yet sell them at costly prices. Reporting fake goods openly will cause enmity between colleagues but it may work better if reporting is done in a closed manner. Protection of the whistleblower is highly required to encourage whistleblowing.

We have our own inbuilt corruption fighting mechanism as a people with varying cultures. There is the issue of us westernizing ourselves and forgetting our own cultures thereby losing our cultural lifestyle of instilling the right values in our people. The app for reporting corruption introduced by the EFCC reduces the person-to-person procedure; that is a good step and it can increase the interest of Nigerians in blowing the whistle. The successful prosecution of a corrupt person that was revealed through whistleblowing will increase the crave for whistleblowing among citizens. The new app can also help further if it's accommodating to receive reports that are made to other anticorruption agencies.

Summary of Callers' Comments:

First Caller: If you report any act of corruption within and around your environment, the security persons will report you and even call your name.

Second Caller: Reporting corruption can mean putting yourself in trouble.

Third Caller: When you call the appropriate people, will they protect your image?

Fourth Caller: Is corruption all about money? There are so many things happening in various public offices? Why are they not exposed?

Number of Callers Segregated by Gender:

Male	Female
3	1

Episode 8:

TOPIC: The Future of Whistleblowing in Nigeria

Date: 21st July 2021.

Venue: 99.9 Kiss FM, Abuja.

Time: 10:00am to 11:00am.

Guests:

S/N	NAME OF GUEST	ORGANIZATION/DESIGNATION
1.	Godwin Onyecholem	Project Manager, AFRICMIL
2.	Honorable Kayode Oladele	Former Member, House of Reps, representing Oyewa North, Ogun State, (2015 – 2019)
3.	Oluwatoyin Aladegbami	Legal Practitioner and Development Practitioner
4.	Senator Abiodun Olujimi	Serving Senator, Ekiti South

The aim of this episode is to discuss the future of whistleblowing in Nigeria, the challenges, the need to move from policy to full blown legislation and the protection of whistleblowers.

According to the Federal Government, as at 2018, at least 8,000 whistleblower tips were received. In 2020, According to PACAC, the FG recovered N594.9bn in about 3 years of the introduction of the whistleblower policy. The current EFCC chairman, Mr. Abdurashheed Bala, revealed that about \$43bn was recovered due to whistleblowing. Despite these success stories, there is a growing distrust of the people towards the government and their handling of the whistleblower policy and the whistleblowers.

CORA is a project designed to build public confidence and support for the whistleblower policy which was introduced in December, 2016. AFRICMIL works with Presidential Initiative on Continuous Audit - PICA to ensure that the rights of whistleblowers are protected. It takes a lot of courage to blow the whistle and whistleblowers face a lot of threats at different angles. AFRICMIL seeks to leverage on the power of radio and social media to draw attention to issues of accountability and good governance and increase the effective participation of citizens in the whistleblowing policy. The executive bill that PICA is packaging now includes the aspect of whistleblower protection. Whistleblowing is a rare form of fighting against corruption. It's an extension of the citizens' freedom of expression.

Hon. Kayode Oladele sponsored the bill at the 8th NASS. The whistle blower bill got stuck in the 8th National Assembly. The NASS has to see, document, get acquainted and make comments on bills that are before the house before they are passed. Well, the ninth assembly is fast running out, passing the bill can be very close particularly when the powers that be or the authorities are not interested in that bill, but if it is a bill that concerns the powers that be, NASS can pass it within one week, two weeks record time, but since it is something that is for the general good of the society nobody takes ownership of it. He charges the general public to take ownership of the bill as much as possible. He recognized that the radio town hall meeting is also part of taking ownership of that bill.

The challenge faced as a nation is insecurity. This has slowed things down a bit. It will be good to broaden the whistleblower policy to include the lapses in security. The fact that the whistleblowing policy is housed under the Ministry of Finance makes the average citizen think that it is all about money and money crimes, perhaps if other aspects like security, are incorporated, it may make the bill to get passed more quickly such that it is not just the ministry of Finance that manages the policy. Also, there is the issue of protecting the whistleblowers. The mentioned reward of 2.5 to 5% of recovered funds to be willed to the whistleblower is not fair enough.

There is the need to harmonize the bills in a readable and an understandable way and then present it to the floor. Because what has happened over time is that different versions of the whistleblowers bill have been presented and yet the government has brought out another one though the MDAs that's being used but it is not strong enough to serve the purpose of whistle blowing and time is of the essence. We need to be able to sit down and look at all the interest to ensure that all of them are captured in one single bill that is supported. It is also important to have an input from the executive because they refuse bills because they are not carried along. So, the minutes you carry along all the interest of the executive then it would be easy for the bill to have a quick passage and to get accented to. There is the need to get government parastatals involved let them have their input, moderate their input, benchmark it to meet international standard and then put it up and get it done.

Summary of Callers' Comments:

If you blow the whistle against any political leader, you will be asked what party the individual belongs to. If the offender belongs in the ruling party, the case may not be followed up. This has demoralized Nigerians from doing the right thing.

Number of Callers Segregated by Gender:

Male	Female
1	0

Solutions:

1. Citizens should know that they owe themselves and the community the responsibility of reporting wrong doings
2. Citizens owe their faith the duty to report anything done against humanity.
3. People should create a name for themselves, a name of integrity.
4. The government should make more policies that should encourage freedom of information rather than restrict them
5. We need the whistleblower legislation.
6. The citizens need accountability from the government.
7. A government should be willing to engage with the people. This gives some encouragement to the people that the government cares for them.
8. The people should not let the attitude of government restrain them from pushing for accountability because governments come and go but the people will always remain.
9. PWDs must be encouraged by the government through the implementation of the policy. Government must make laws that gives assurances for the protection of whistle blowers. Government must also ensure that there is transparency and accountability of the funds that are recovered from the loots because this will go a long way to encourage the PWDs to report acts of corruption. Then the government must follow through with the reward system for whistleblowers.
10. Whistleblowers should do their best as much as possible to hide their identities so that the issue of victimization can be reduced.
11. Duplicity of reporting by whistleblowers should be cut off as much as possible.

APPENDIX

Links to media reports.

<https://primorgnews.org/collaboration-africmil-primorg-flag-off-radio-town-hall-meeting-on-whistleblowing-in-nigeria-fg-reveals-move-to-send-whistleblowing-legislation-to-national-assembly/>

<https://primorgnews.org/stakeholders-to-fg-social-media-ban-stifling-whistleblowing-policy-anti-corruption-war-in-nigeria/>

<https://primorgnews.org/whistleblowing-presidential-committee-says-citizens-need-to-raise-voices-against-official-corruption-as-stakeholders-make-demands-for-women-pwds-students/>

<https://primorgnews.org/corruption-prospects-of-whistleblowers-protection-law-excite-nigerians/>

<https://primorgnews.org/whistleblowing-units-not-functional-in-many-govt-mdas-says-fg-committee-urges-nass-to-speedily-pass-bill/>

<https://primorgnews.org/whistleblowing-stakeholders-urge-stiffer-punishment-for-corruption/>

<https://primorgnews.org/rewards-for-whistleblowers-citizens-anti-corruption-organs-disagree-over-delayed-payments/>

<https://primorgnews.org/whistleblowing-sen-olujimi-others-express-optimism-over-enactment-of-law-call-for-speedy-harmonization-of-draft-bills>