



# “THE CHAT DIALOGUE

**Data and Technology as viable accountability  
solutions ‘to corruption cases in Nigeria**

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## PREAMBLE

Act Hub Africa held her dialogue tagged “The Chat”. The event which was organized to serve as a platform where Actors in Development space can come together to discuss identified issues around development with special focus on Accountability and fight against corruption with the intention to proposed workable, sustainable and home-grown solutions to the identified issues. The Chat's focus on Tuesday, May 19, 2020, was on the topic: data and technology as accountability solution to corruption cases in Nigeria.

The justification for this edition of “The Chat” is to address the issue of data and technological gap and how well-planned data-driven by technology can help check or slow down the exponential increase in corruption cases in Nigeria.

The Chat had Mr Adeyemi Ademuyiwa from Tracka/BudgIT as discussant, Mr Ismail Auwal from Kano; an OGP advocate, Accountapreneur with Accountability Lab and the Team Lead of Act Hub Africa, Mr John Oluwafemi OLLA on the live chat with several other people online. The event was held on the Facebook page of Act Hub Africa.

### IDENTIFIED ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

Open and timely information are key factors; people can use to hold government accountable, as the technology was identified as a tool for accountability and eradicating corruption in Nigeria. It was pointed out that technology does not have to be sophisticated before it can achieve the purpose of combating corruption. While still on technology, all discussants agreed that low-tech can be viable tools for combating corruption in the country such as infographics, SMS, social media engagements, newsletter etc. are the instrument that we can be used to fight corruption.

**Corrupt people find their way and often go unpunished:** People who are found culpable are often celebrated without facing the consequences of their actions.

**The complexity of information available to the public:** The representative of BudgIT (Adeyemi) said

in one of its discussion that they are doing a lot in terms of trying to simplify data in such a way that people can understand the information in the budget in a simplified form and various languages for easy understanding. Other discussants also agreed that if the data are made available and information are broken down in a way that people understand, then this will help the people to become active citizens.

### Absence of community engagement in terms of government programmes and policy:

They identified the fact that the communication of the activities of government should be taken to the local Communities and communication materials should be designed in their languages. During the discussion, the activities of certain NGOs were mentioned, such as Accountability Lab, BudgIT, Act Hub Africa, Connected Development, Tracka among others.

### The deliberate gap between government and civil society:

They also identified the fact that the civil society will have to do a lot of work by sensitizing Nigeria people and what their roles are in ensuring good governance in Nigeria.

### The technological know-how of Nigerian youth:

They also said that the Nigerian youth should be trained on how to leverage technology to achieve open governance in Nigeria as well as fighting corruption.

### Hoarding of information by government agencies despite the existence of the FOI Act:

They also highlighted the issue of inability to access information in terms of hoarding of information by a government official as one of the major clogs in the wheel of holding government accountable.

### QUESTIONS WERE RAISED DURING THE DISCOURSE, HERE IS A SPOTLIGHT OF ONE THAT STOOD OUT AMONG SEVERAL OTHERS:

*The question was also asked whether the Nigerian government is fighting corruption in its real sense or the government is doing something entirely different*

from fighting corruption?

**Response:**

*The responses from the discussants were in unison; they believed that the government is not fighting corruption because there is no clear mechanism that is in place to prove that they are fighting corruption but rather, what they are doing can be tagged stolen fund recovery.*

*They further suggested that the government should do more by designing a mechanism that can fight corruption on its own. Therefore, it was suggested the government should design a system that can check corruption at all levels, by doing this the fight against corruption will be holist.*

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Recommendation to the government on how to curb corruption using data and technology:**

**Big data:** government should try and work on creating a centralised database that can be accessible, queried, easy to use and information stored in those databases should be structured in a way that it will be easy for users to navigate.

**Data mining:** data mining can be a viable tool for government in the mission of curbing corruptions among civil servants and the political officeholders. Example of using R-language and Python to extract data from various sources without violating privacy policies to be able to analyse, organised and examine them for traces of corruption.

**Update and functional web/mobile applications:** government should start deploying mobile applications that will put the information in the hand of the people without having to contact the government before this information can be available. They further suggested that these mobile apps can be designed in such a way that it will give the people timely information such that as government upload the information, the people with access to the App will get the information without stress just by the press of a button.

**Forensic tools:** Another suggestion was that the government should start working on developing forensic tools that can be used in terms of fighting corruption which agencies like Independent



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Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) can make use of, for them to be accurate and precise in their judgements about the issue of tracing, tracking, monitoring and fighting corruption.

They opined that if these tools are available then the issue of fighting corruption will be very easy for the agency saddled with the responsibility of fighting corruption in Nigeria's public spaces.

**More effective National Orientation Agency (NOA):**

The discussants uniformly agreed that the NOA is not doing enough to educate the Nigerian public about their fundamental human right and Freedom of Information Act. Therefore, the National Orientation Agency needs to buckle up and do what is necessary to educate Nigerian populace and as well focus more on the youth to drive good governance in Nigeria.

**National Human Rights Commission should improve in their efforts:**

It was also recommended that human right commission of Nigeria should do more in teaching and educating people about their fundamental human right and also convinced them on how they can participate in the process of governance apart from elections alone.

**Participatory everything:** The advice was also made that the government should begin to understand that participatory everything is the norm. Community engagement, participatory budgeting, monitoring and tracking of development projects should be part of the duty of the citizens and civil societies by encouraging them to get involved.

**Renewed relationship between the government and civil society:**

The government should work in consonance with the civil society in Nigeria as this is the only way to successfully entrench good governance and promote accountability.

**Open data policy:** It was recommended that the government should begin to drive the open data policy in all the government establishment from federal to local governments. If the government make available in the public domain needed



information, it will increase the trust of the citizens and improve the relationship between the leaders and the led.

**Citizen Budgets:** Budget should be simplified in a way that citizens will understand what the budget is saying and the implication of the figures therein. Federal, state and local governments should make it a compulsion to design citizens' budget for every budget year. They also recommended that the government should make open the information available to them which will turn to increase the trust of the people.

**Recommendations to civil society on how they can help fight corruption and promote accountability in governance:**

**Civil society actors should improve their data usage capacity:** the civil society should train themselves on how to use data, organise and simplify data in a way that it will be easy for people to understand. They never failed to recognise the efforts of civil society in Nigeria that are working on simplifying budgets and complex data in a way easy enough for people to understand using infographics and other means that people can easily relate with.

**Infographics as a communication tool:** He spoke about using infographics in such a way that when people see them they relate better because a lot of people prefer to see information in a simplified way and infographics will do this in a way that will help people to understand things that are being passed across without having to stress themselves in reading the junk of text and figures.

**Civil society organizations should invest in the use of social media:** Civil society can seize the opportunity that abounds in the social media as it is a viable tool that can be used to demand accountability from the government at all levels (federal, state and local), while giving instances of what has been achieved in the past through engagement on social media platforms. Since social media is one place that unifies both the old and the young in socializing, therefore civil society should see social media as a tool that they can use to drive the campaign against corruption in Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it was agreed that without adequate information, unified and centralized database in Nigeria, the country is not ready to walk on the path of the development. Therefore, Nigeria needs to start working deliberately on how to generate home-grown data, geared towards development and designed to solve Nigerian problems. Meanwhile, the Federal Government needs to carry civil society and the young people of Nigeria along on the issues of governance for them to become the voice of the people by relating and communicating the effort of the government to the hard-to-reach communities.

Also, accountability can only be driven by information that is available to the Citizens, youths are considered to heart of every development and if youth are considered as an important stakeholder in the process of holding government accountable, then, youths must be equipped enough to ask the right question at the right time and this role can be best played by civil society.

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