

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, DECEMBER 9, 2025

International Anti-Corruption Day

Corruption undermines national development by weakening institutions and distorting opportunities. IRIAD and The Electoral Hub call for uniting youth as guardians of integrity to drive transparency, enforcement, and reforms that build corruption-resilient societies.

As the world marks the 2025 International Anti-Corruption Day, Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD) and The Electoral Hub join the global community to condemn the persistent and destructive influence of corruption. Corruption is a daily reality that weakens institutions, distorts opportunity, and undermines national development. It deprives citizens of quality services, erodes public trust, and creates barriers that limit the potential of entire generations.

The 2025 theme, ***“Uniting with Youth Against Corruption: Shaping Tomorrow's Integrity,”*** underscores the pivotal role of young people as guardians of integrity, uniquely positioned to drive accountability and transparency due to their energy, innovation, and direct experience of corruption's impacts, like underfunded schools and healthcare facilities, limited job opportunities, and restricted public and political participation. Youth often bear the heaviest burden, facing barriers to education, healthcare, and civic engagement that erode trust in institutions and stifle personal growth. Thus, this year's theme is highly relevant in Nigeria, where empowering youth through education, advocacy, civic-tech, and leadership fosters ethical governance, counters corrupt practices, and builds corruption-resilient societies for sustainable development.

The reality in Nigeria remains deeply troubling. According to the 2023 National Bureau of Statistics / UNODC corruption survey, public officials received about ₦721 billion in bribes in 2023¹, a figure that reflects both the scale of the challenge and the structural nature of corruption in public institutions. More than 87 million bribe payments were made within that same year, and nearly 27% of citizens interacting with public officials paid a bribe, with an even larger portion asked to do so but refusing². These figures are not just financial losses; they represent millions of Nigerians being denied fair access to health care, education, security services, public administration, and justice. These losses and denied services ultimately impact negatively on state-citizens relationship.

One of the most devastating impacts is seen in public-sector employment. The same national survey estimates that nearly 60% of successful public-sector recruitments between 2020 and 2023 involved some form of bribery, favoritism, or nepotism³. This reality not only destroys morale; it entrenches inequality, demoralises the youth, and undermines national productivity.

¹ https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/corruption/nigeria/3rd_national_corruption_survey_report_2024_07_09.pdf

² Ibid

³ Ibid

A society where people must pay for jobs is a society that undermines its future. Yet there is hope in the growing resistance. Youth-led movements, digital activism, investigative journalism, and civic organizations are increasingly challenging impunity and demanding accountability, transparency and integrity in public systems and processes. The 2025 theme recognizes the role of young people not only as victims of a broken system but as critical drivers of reform, innovation, and accountability.

Preventing corruption is a global concern and societies' collective responsibility. Corruption fuels conflicts and inhibits peace processes, undermines democracy, leads to human rights crises, worsens poverty, facilitates organised crime, and finances armed conflict and terrorism. Nigeria cannot overcome corruption without the involvement, courage, and leadership of its young population. But this leadership must be matched with institutional commitment, political will, and systemic reforms that dismantle the structures enabling bribery, favoritism, diversion of funds, procurement fraud, and entrenched impunity.

Call to Action

On this International Anti-Corruption Day, IRIAD calls upon all relevant stakeholder, institutions and actors to undertake concrete actions toward building a corruption-free Nigeria:

- **Government:** Demonstrate political will by prosecuting corruption cases without fear or favor. Provide anti-corruption agencies with adequate resources and operational independence. Implement transparent, merit-based recruitment processes across public institutions. Establish formal mechanisms for youth participation in governance and oversight bodies.
- **The National Assembly and State Houses of Assemblies:** Strengthen anti-corruption legal frameworks. Exercise rigorous oversight over executive expenditure and budget implementation. Uphold transparency in asset declaration processes. Eliminate budget padding and ensure appropriations reflect genuine public needs. Create pathways for youth engagement in legislative processes.
- **The Judiciary:** Address systemic delays through specialized anti-corruption courts and expedited trial procedures. Maintain absolute independence and resist external influence. Apply deterrent sentencing that reflects the gravity of corruption offenses.
- **Anti-Corruption Agencies (EFCC, ICPC, CCB):** Conduct investigations professionally and free from political selectivity. Establish accessible, youth-friendly reporting mechanisms that guarantee confidentiality. Publish regular reports on case statistics, conviction rates, and asset recovery outcomes. Develop partnerships with youth networks to strengthen community-level corruption monitoring.
- **Traditional and Religious Leaders:** Leverage moral authority to denounce corruption and promote accountability and integrity as fundamental values. Refrain from honoring individuals whose wealth cannot be legitimately accounted for. Integrate anti-corruption messages into religious teachings and community gatherings. Provide support for young people who resist corruption pressures.

- **Civil Society Organizations:** Move toward genuine youth leadership within organizational structures. Foster collaborative networks that maximize collective impact. Document and disseminate lessons learned from anti-corruption interventions. Provide solidarity and protection for young activists facing threats or persecution.
- **The Private Sector:** Adopt zero-tolerance policies toward bribery and corrupt practices. Implement transparent, competency-based recruitment systems. Provide ethical mentorship and equitable capital access for young entrepreneurs. Refuse participation in corrupt procurement processes and report corrupt solicitations.
- **The Media:** Sustain investigative journalism that exposes corruption and holds power accountable. Provide space for youth-led anti-corruption initiatives. Maintain editorial independence by refusing financial inducements. Celebrate integrity and merit-based achievement rather than questionable wealth.
- **Parents and Families:** Instill values of integrity and ethical conduct in children. Refrain from celebrating individuals whose affluence appears disproportionate to legitimate income. Resist securing unfair advantages through corrupt means. Support young family members who choose integrity. Model anti-corruption behavior in interactions with public institutions.
- **Nigerian Youth:** Refuse to participate in corrupt practices as givers or recipients. Utilize reporting mechanisms to document and report corruption. Leverage digital platforms for transparency, accountability and advocacy. Support candidates with demonstrated integrity. Build solidarity networks for peers taking principled stands. Engage with IRIAD and credible organizations combating corruption. Demonstrate that success is achievable through merit and hard work

Together, these collective actions can ensure corruption – resilient Nigeria

**#IACD2025, #YouthLead, #NoToCorruption,
#UnitedAgainstCorruption #IRIADAgainstCorruption**

Signed

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ABOUT IRIAD AND THE ELECTORAL HUB

The **Initiative for Research, Innovation, and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD)** is an interdisciplinary knowledge and advocacy hub committed and focused on developing a critical understanding of governance processes and regimes from research, documentation, policy engagements, public education, and impact advocacy. Whilst promoting and encouraging active citizenship through citizens engagement, participation and representation in democratic governance.

The Electoral Hub is an interdisciplinary knowledge, policy, and advocacy hub committed to promoting electoral knowledge, integrity, and accountability in Nigeria. Our aim is to strengthen electoral governance and accountability in Nigeria through the provision of data, critical and contextualized analysis, and solutions to improve the credibility and integrity of the electoral process.

Knowledge| Innovation | Inclusion|

#Advocacy #Results #Impact

...promoting electoral knowledge, accountability, inclusion, and integrity