

NIGERIA: CORRUPTION AND INSECURITY Transparency International 21 May 2014

West African leaders met in Paris on 17 May to discuss how [to curb](#) the violence and destruction of Boko Haram, the Islamic extremist group responsible for [abducting](#) more than 250 school girls in northern Nigeria and the main suspect for devastating [bomb attacks](#) that killed more than 100 people in a crowded market on 21 May.

The leaders pledged to help each other, but not once did the public statements following the summit mention the widespread corruption and poor governance that have contributed to the rise of Boko Haram.

There is a strong link between

[corruption and insecurity](#)

. When a country's institutions are weak, its security forces are not trusted and its borders are not strong, as is the case in Nigeria, giving terrorist organisations room to flourish. This is borne out in academic research, specifically

[on Nigeria](#)

but also on

[other regions](#)

CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

Unfortunately, simply bringing in financial help and military hardware from around the world to help locate the missing girls is only a stop-gap measure for Nigeria: it will not halt the endemic problem of corruption that fuels insecurity.

Nigeria's government and its armed forces and police are mistrusted by the people – nine out of 10 people said the police were corrupt in the [2013 Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer](#) and 45 per cent said the military was corrupt.

The scandals surrounding so-called

["security votes"](#)

, which allow politicians to appropriate millions of dollars behind closed doors simply by evoking "national security", for example, are well documented.

Former president Sani Abacha is estimated to have allegedly

[siphoned off](#)

more than \$1.1 billion using 60 “security votes”, leaving the Nigerian military extremely under-resourced. The

[slow response](#)

to Boko Haram’s abduction of the girls is a legacy of an institution not fit for purpose.

In the recent Government Defence Anti-Corruption Index, which rated 82 countries on their anti-corruption policies,

[Nigeria’s](#)

score indicated a very high level of corruption risk. It was criticised for its lack of overall transparency and having no anti-corruption plan in place for the military, no training for personnel, and significant opaque off-budget military expenditure.

BEST PRACTICE

Defence corruption is not impossible to tackle. The Nigerian government must speak out against corruption and should invite civil society organisations to take part in developing an anti-corruption strategy.

The defence ministry should open itself up to oversight and publish the defence budget in full, including off-budget defence expenditure.

The Office of the Auditor General for the Federation should have access to accounts of the intelligence services and other secret programmes. In addition, stronger controls are needed to monitor procurement, which is cloaked in secrecy.

Civil society organisations in Nigeria are calling

[for an immediate review](#)

of Nigerian defence spending and greater transparency in its efforts to confront Boko Haram.

The Nigerian defence forces should also focus on training their personnel on how to tackle corruption and they should ensure that the existing whistleblower protection laws are enforced.

LESSONS LEANED

Strengthening participatory democracy and transparency in government leads to stronger institutions, which are then better placed to respond to the crisis of insurgencies. This is true for

countries across Africa and in other parts of the world.

Being transparent about the corruption challenges that they face, and tackling them head-on, will strengthen the trust of the public in the Nigerian government and security forces, and help their ability to address the very real risks the country faces.

Read the full [article](#) .