



The Civil Society And The Fight Against Corruption In Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Civil society has become across the world, the non-state emergent agent for providing critical social welfare, social services, humanitarian services, socioeconomic empowerment, political participation, human capital development and productive economic activities. But more importantly, it has become the popular agent for instituting accountability, transparency and good governance, restraining state abuses, resisting the untamed effects of market forces and strengthening public scrutiny. Thus the critical role of the civil society in the fight against corruption in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. This paper x-rayed the strategic role the civil society had played in the fight against corruption towards the sustenance of our democracy. The paper adopts the advocacy paradigm. The study further identified some of the challenges they faced like intimidation, gagging, funding, compromise etc. The paper recommends among others the need for civil society to remain resolute in their advocacy against government profligacy and continue to act as the mouth piece of the helpless electorate in our democratic experience.

Keywords: Advocacy, Civil Society, Corruption, Democracy

INTRODUCTION

There is no gainsaying the fact that Nigeria as a sovereign nation is faced with a multiplicity of challenges such as lack of visionary leadership, insecurity, extreme poverty, economic inequalities, fast decline of socio-cultural values, lack of adequate infrastructure, decay of existing social institutions and corruption among others. Indeed, corruption is one of the most serious challenges confronting the nation today. Although it is generally believed to be universal as it is found in every human society, corruption is so pervasive in the Nigerian society such that Nigeria in recent years has been ranked by Transparency International in global corruption rating as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Nigeria is ranked 143 out of 182 countries in Transparency International's 2011 Corruption Perceptions Index (TI, 2014). Over the years, the country has seen its wealth withered with little to show in living conditions of the average human being. According to Gbogbo (2011), Nigeria as a sub-Saharan African country has an estimated population of about 156 million. It is a nation bestowed with vast human and natural resources. Despite its enormous array of resources, the Nigerian economy has witnessed a period of stagnant economic growth. This has been partly blamed on corruption and gross mismanagement of the country's vast resources.

Although corruption is a global phenomenon but there are strong suggestions that its adverse effects are felt more severely in developing and transitional economies in comparison to more industrialized countries where social and economic institutions are more strongly developed and the illegal proceeds from corruption are more likely to be re-invested locally (Igbuzor, 2008). Nigeria is frequently cited as one of the leading examples of resource-rich countries in the developing world that is underdevelopment and poverty pervasive after decades of poor governance and corruption. It has regularly featured as one of the world's most corrupt countries within Transparency International surveys. One case in point is the estimated extent of corruption in Nigeria which gives the figure of

stolen public funds outrageously. It has been estimated, for example, that between 1960 and 1999 over \$440 billion of public revenue was stolen by public officials (civil servants and politicians) in Nigeria (Ribadu, 2009:2 and Blair, 2005: 51). Several decades of poor governance and corruption have seemingly played a role in exacerbating the levels of socio-economic inequality between a small select group of politicians, public officials and business elites and the mass of ordinary Nigerians. According to World Bank estimates, approximately 80% of Nigeria's oil wealth is concentrated in the hands of 1% of the population, while over 70 percent of the population live below the poverty line (World Bank 2006).

It was Achebe (1983), who says that anyone who can say that corruption in Nigeria has not yet reached alarming proportion is either a fool, a crook, or else does not live in Nigeria. He further asserted that the situation has come to the extent that keeping an average Nigerian from being corrupt was like preventing a goat from eating yam. This monumental corrupt practice in Nigeria is very severe and devastating. The menace of corruption in Nigeria has certainly emerged as one of the main impediments to national development. Corruption in the country has caused the country severe losses economically, politically and socially, and these facts are responsible for decayed infrastructure, downturn of the economy, fragile political institution, and steady decline in all indicators of national development (Keeper, 2012). Apart from its deformation to macroeconomics indices, corruption ensures that basic amenities such as medicare, water; schools; roads and other infrastructure are unavailable (Waziri, 2011). Generally, the failure of the country to achieve a modicum of development has largely been blamed on corruption. Thus, corruption seems to be the bane of development in Nigeria (Orokpo, 2016).

The civil society which according to Keane (1989) and Ikelegbe (2013), have globally become active non-state agents of democratic governance saddled with the multifaceted responsibilities of providing social welfare, economic empowerment, humanitarian services, political participation, human capital development and economic activities has become an important agents for engendering good democratic governance through the promotion of accountability, transparency, rule of law, curtailment of human rights abuses, and capitalist exploitation. Also known as the third sector because it serves as a vibrant social intermediary between the state, business and family, the civil society in Africa and Nigeria in particular is a recent phenomenon that characterized the recent ascendancy of neoliberal democratic institution and is therefore, expected to serve as a watch dog against excesses of government and capitalists by providing a platform for aggregating and championing the interest of the people in speaking to power and holding the government to account and demanding delivery of good governance from the government.

It is against this backdrop that this paper x-ray the role of the civil society in the fight against corruption in Nigeria under the fourth republic.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts the advocacy paradigm as expounded by Zompetti, J.P in his work the role of advocacy in civil society. One possible element that transcends the different problems plaguing civil society is advocacy, since the skills associated with advocacy help foster critical thinking and provide opportunities for civic voice against larger cultural trends. It is not surprising that previous scholars have not picked-up on the importance of advocacy in its relation to civil society (Zompetti, 2006). It is perhaps no coincidence that advocacy, as a concept, has similar origins as does civil society. Both concepts related to the polis as well as to the res publica. The ancient Greeks and Romans were fond of discussing advocacy as a means of speaking on someone else's behalf (Dunne, 1999; Grace, 2001; Whalen, 2003). There were two types of advocates: the advocatus, the advocate for civic engagement and improvement of society, and the jurisconsult, or the advocate for someone else (Cohen, 2000). The role of advocatus was highly respected; it was seen as a special gift and eventually became a frequently sought after profession, particularly with the development of Roman law. The jurisconsult was precisely that – a counsel to the court. The jurisconsult was less respectable than the advocatus, since the jurisconsult was an “advocate for hire” and lacked the passion to change society for the better, as opposed to the advocatus.

In fact, it is with Cicero that we see the importance of civic engagement qua advocacy, as opposed to simple legal persuasion with the jurisconsults (Cicero, 1949; Hanrahan, 2003). Accordingly, Cicero emphasized the value of “expressing civic virtue and political stability as well as providing intellectual structure,” in order to advance the cause of a “good society” (Hanrahan, 2003, pp. 313–

314). Advocacy, simply put, is the passionate plea for a particular position. According to legal scholars (Jamail, 1995; Hanrahan, 2003), advocacy is the impassioned making of one's case. Its delivery and content are prepared and presented in ways that are integrally tied to the advocates identity, ensuring that the onus is on the advocate, not the audience. This form of rhetoric minimizes the degree of coercion since the advocacy is, by definition, offered, rather than forced upon its listeners. This does not eliminate the coercive impulse of persuasive exchanges, but it does provide a rhetorical situation where the advocate has a degree of control over the content of their persuasive message.

The skills of advocacy, then, relate to the ability to persuade, including the skills of ethos, pathos, logos, and the Ciceronian five canons. Indeed, as Windes and Hastings (1965) suggest, the freedom of "advocacy" develops as "people attempt to influence the belief of others through advocacy and are, in turn, influenced by advocacy, by the forceful presentation of the beliefs of other citizens". In essence, advocacy enables citizens to perform their roles as a citizen qua citizens. Advocacy skills can reinvigorate civic participation and deliberative democracy (Jewell, 1998; Hanrahan, 2003). Learning how to engage in advocacy can also help citizens understand the importance of civic engagement, thereby curtailing some of the distracting societal forces that have to date discouraged civic participation (Putnam 1995, 1996; Ehrenberg, 1999).

Advocacy, while not a cure-all, can help jumpstart the civil society process in many areas of the country. Where civil society is already taking root, the ability to advocate salient public issues can galvanize additional support and help maintain the spirit of civic engagement that is so critical to a functioning democracy (Hauser and Benoit-Barne, 2002, p. 271). Again, advocacy will not necessarily usher in a utopia, particularly in societies with traditions of dictatorship, or even democracies with entrenched party politics. Nevertheless, with a renewed and vibrant civil society, these countries can begin a path of social transformation which may create opportunities for important political and cultural change.

Advocacy is the lynchpin for preparing and delivering arguments. For a functioning democracy, public discussions about the merits and disadvantages of different courses of action are vital. Only through thorough research and development of arguments can this occur. Advocacy, then, is essential for both civil society and democracy. Thus, in a society like Nigeria where cynicism and apathy run rampant because of corruption in leadership, learning how to advocate might just be the anecdote for a disease of despair thus the civil society fits into this role as a third sector of the society since our democratic experience in 1999.

Conceptual Clarifications

Civil Society

The civil society is the third sector existing alongside and interacting with the state and private industry of which non-governmental organizations constitute an important part, and recognizes that in practice, civil society is an arena of both collaboration and contention. In his assertion, Osaghae (1997), opines that three key elements are important in the definition or conceptualization of civil society: autonomy from the state, public character (setting a normative order for the state), and furtherance of a common good. Grassroots social movements, which draw their strength from solidarity and the struggle against oppression, are parts and parcels of civil society organizations. It needs to be pointed out that civil society organizations encompass a vast array of organizations, which are formal and informal in character. These include: economic; cultural; informational and educational; interest based; developmental; civic-seeking in non-partisan fashion to improve political system; and make it more democratic through anti-corruption effort, by promoting transparency and accountability.

Melvin (2007) quoted in (Egbo, 2018), posits that a civil society organization is considered as a "space" whose function is to mediate between the individual and the State. While there may not be a clear cut definition of civil society organizations, it is widely agreed that it comprises institutions such as religious organizations, labour unions, charities, community groups, non-profits, and the media. In advanced and matured democratic systems these institutions supplement formal processes such as voting and help citizens shape the culture, politics, and economies of their nation.

By structural composition, civil society organizations include a very wide range of institutions, including non-governmental organizations, faith-based institutions, community groups, professional

associations, trade unions, media organizations research institutes and think tanks. By virtue of scope of operations, civil society organizations operate at different levels: global, regional, national, local and community levels. According to the World Bank Group ((World Bank), civil society organizations can be categorized on the basis of the following: representation, advocacy and technical inputs, capacity building, service delivery and social functions.

Corruption

In a broader perspective, Brinkerhoff (2000:241) sees corruption as “subsuming a wide variety of illegal, illicit, irregular or unprincipled activities and behaviours. From this perspective, corruption then is importantly a moral, political and legal issue, thus corruption is a multidimensional concept that has legal, social, political, economic and ethical connotations. It comes in various forms and dimensions. Some researchers observe that corruption is inextricably tied (but not limited) to politics, more especially if politics is defined from the point of view of Harold Lasswell as tradition of “who gets what, when and how” and perhaps how much. This scramble over resources otherwise known as the “national cake in Nigeria has permitted all forms of corruption. The idea that the national cake has to be shared rather than baked by the various ethnic groups that constitutes Nigerian federation provides soft ground for the kleptomaniac elites who are obsessed to siphoning the public fund into various developed countries. In Nigeria, corruption has been at the centre of development and an impediment to true and real development of the country.

Other scholars have attempted to define corruption in relation to particular state society relationships and a distinction has been made between grand (political) and petty (bureaucratic) corruption (Doig and Theobald 2000: 13). According to Robinson (1998: 3), a distinction can also be drawn between (1) incidental corruption, that is the individual behaviours of politicians and public office holders, (2) institutional corruption, where institutional cultures of corruption may have grown up around an entire institution and (3) systemic corruption, representing the idea of the embedding of corrupt practices as a way of life within a whole society. The most prominent definition of corruption, however, is the one used by the World Bank which defines corruption as the abuse of public office for private gains. Public office is abused for private gain when an official accepts, solicits, or extorts a bribe. It is also abused when private agents actively offer bribes to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantages or profit. Public office can also be abused for personal benefit even if no bribery occurs, through patronage and nepotism, the theft of state assets, or the diversion of state resources” (in Agbu, 2003). Orngu (2006: 11) however, sees corruption as any act that negates the principles of accountability and transparency, and ethical moral standards in both the public and private sector of the economy.

On the basis of the above definitions, we can recapitulate the basic postulates of corruption thus;

- a. It is deliberate or intentional exploitation of one’s position, status or resources
- b. It may be done directly or indirectly
- c. It is done for personal aggrandizement-whether it is material gain or enhancement of power or prestige or influence.
- d. It is done by violating legitimate or sanctioned or community accepted norms of behaviour.
- e. It is done against the interests of the community or other persons.

What we can deduce from the definition above is that corruption entails any behaviour that deviates from accepted norm especially in the public space. It is any behaviour that goes against established rules, regulations, and established procedures. In short, corruption is unethical behaviour that breaks the law or aids and abets breaking the law. Such behaviour usually confers undue and/or unmerited advantages on the perpetrator. Such behaviour also expresses the notion of a betrayal of trust especially in a democracy where public office is held in trust for the people (Egwemi, 2012). For the purpose of this paper, corruption is conceived as misuse or improper use of power and influence, deliberately and consciously for personal aggrandizement or group advantage. Therefore, corruption connotes the abuse of public roles or resources or the use of illegitimate forms of political power and influence for public or private benefits (Orokpo, 2016).

The Civil Society and the Fight against Corruption in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: An Introspection

The concept of civil society as an agent of change is relatively new in the global development landscape. While a number of community groups like churches and religious groups, the media and political interest groups, may have played an integral role in shaping local and national policies and development for decades, the non-governmental organization has only over the past decade or so become more proactively involved in national and international development affairs. Although there is no easy definition of the concept in the global arena, due to differences in forms of social organization, culture and political tradition, civil society is commonly referred to as a collection of social relations that exist at the interface between the state and private sector (Catherine 2006). It is constituted by such entities as membership-based community organizations, advocacy groups, NGOs, private sector philanthropic associations and also includes religious groups, academic and professional organizations. According to Eigen's (1996) description of the interrelationships amongst the three sectors, civil society mediates between the government and the people (grassroots), particularly where the government is not able to reach and where the private sectors sometime operate with unwanted results. Furthermore, he asserts that civil society acts as critic, catalyst, facilitator and advocates of unrepresented or under represented interests. Relating to this, Khan (1998) argues that one of the most effective ways to advance the fight against corruption is to consider its socio-cultural and political significance, thus further emphasizing the strategic role of civil society in anti-corruption initiatives.

In no small measure, a vibrant civil society, representing the third sector in the development arena could potentially play a key role in the fight against corruption when it partners with the government and private sector. For instance, in relation to some of the limitations and constraints facing the implementation and monitoring of the UN anti-corruption convention, the involvement of civil society, according to TI (2006) could help in a number of ways

- civil society organizations can play a key role in encouraging the development and effectiveness of anti-corruption conventions, from initial negotiation process to follow-up reviews,
- civil society groups can put pressure on their governments for the ratification and implementation of the relevant international anti-corruption conventions, through research, analyses and advocacy,
- they can also help in translating into common languages, legal terminology of conventions and create public awareness of the importance of these conventions for the fight against corruption,
- they can play a key role in monitoring the performance of their government and making it public, thus, serving as an independent assessor of their government's progress and in coalition with other stakeholders, they can campaign for tackling particular manifestations of corruption in their country.

History also provides some illustrative examples of how corruption has been curtailed by the increasing interest and ability of people and groups to engage with the system against official abuses and move against unfair advantages of others. For example, in England during the 17th century, as a result of a long struggle with the Crown over issues concerning taxation, religion, and crown patronage, Parliament was better able to curtail royal abuses of power (Roberts 1980; Johnston 1995). Although, while this does not represent a standard model for curbing endemic corruption and official abuses to be adopted by various societies across the world, particularly due to the significance of differences in historical and cultural values, it does draw attention to the key role civil society can play in the fight against corruption.

In Nigeria, there are some civil society groups involved in promoting transparency and accountability in governance. Groups like the Centre for Democracy and Development, Nigerian Women Trust Fund, Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre and YIAGA Africa have been doing a lot to promote electoral integrity and credible elections. They closely observe the electoral process and report their findings to the public. As accredited election observer groups, they have jointly and individually done a lot to deepen Nigeria's democracy. It is on record that YIAGA Africa championed the Not-Too-Young-To-Run campaign ahead of last year's general election. This resulted in the constitutional

alteration that led to the reduction of the age qualification for presidential election from 40 to 35 and those of the House of Representatives and state House of Assembly election from 30 to 25 years. Also, Organisations such as the Centre for Social Justice, Publish What You Pay coalition, Connected Development better known as CODE, BudgIT, Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project and many others have done a lot to partner government in the fight against corruption and open government. These groups analyse government budgets, track budget implementation and development projects and expose corrupt practices in government Ministries, Departments and Agencies. They serve as whistle-blowers and sometimes resort to public interest litigations in order to compel government to act in the interest of the suffering masses (Ojo, 2020). SERAP, more than any other groups, has dragged government at all levels to court in order to enforce better governance. Take for instance the organisation's lawsuit asking state Houses of Assembly that have passed life pension laws for their ex-governors and their deputies to abrogate such laws. This is to promote public good which is highly commendable. The SERAP, also for instance, sued the Federal Government over failure to name suspected looters involved in the arms deal. This was especially informed by the fact that the Freedom of Information grants any interested stakeholder unrestricted access to public information. In a similar development, SERAP in a letter dated 29 July 2016 and signed by its executive director Adetokunbo Mumuni requested the Speaker of the House of Representatives Mr Dogara Yakubu and other principal officers "suspected to be involved in the alleged budget padding to step aside pending the outcome of investigation by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and other agencies." (Obi and Sovereign, 2018).

Also according to SERAP Deputy Director Kolawale Oluwadare, he asserted that SERAP obtained judgment compelling the Minister of Power to compile and make available to SERAP specific names and details of contactors that collected money for electricity projects, but failed to execute them from 1999 to 2018. Secured a judgment ordering the Federal Government of Nigeria to disclose and publish names of looters of public funds from whom over \$406 million had been recovered by the Buhari administration. In 2019, they were able to campaign and forced the former Senate President to stop the payment of "double pay" to him by the Kwara state government. The Senate President specifically mentioned that he stopped receiving pension from Kwara State immediately after he heard about SERAP's intervention on the matter. More recently, SAREP obtained a landmark judgment ordering the federal government to recover pensions collected by former governors now serving as ministers and members of the National Assembly. The judgement also directed the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice to challenge the legality of states' pension laws permitting former governors and other ex-public officials to collect such pensions. If implemented, this judgment could save Nigeria billions of naira in taxpayers' money, which would be available to provide public goods and services to Nigeria. The government has publicly promised to enforce the judgment (Trott, 2020). Also BudgIT, through the use of infographic, has over the years been breaking federal and state government budgets down for easy assimilation by the public. CSJ like CODE has been involved in budget analysis and tracking of implementation of government projects.

Civil society as organisations have demonstrated some level of consistency in the fight against corruption especially, in the area of advocacy. This is evidence in the Save Nigeria Group (SNG) which mobilized the masses against the corrupt practices associated with the fuel subsidy removal by the President Goodluck Jonathan regime. This mass movement of citizens against a policy that was considered corrupt clearly shows the strength of civil society in supporting the anti-corruption crusade. The arena of anti-corruption in Nigeria is populated by organisations including; Zero Corruption Coalition (ZCC) which according to Akinyemi (2006) work with legislators and government anti-corruption agencies on the need to domesticate and implement both the United Nations Convention on Anti-Corruption and the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, Integrity CSO is working to empower and inform civil society in order to tackle corruption in Nigeria and to coordinate efforts between public and private institutions in a national fight against corruption. Convention on Business Integrity (CBI), was originally adopted in 1998 to ensure that members sign the Code of Business Integrity and goes through an accreditation process as well as adhere to values of corporate integrity and transparency. Its signatories are both foreign and local companies operating in Nigeria. Independent Advocacy Project (IAP), is working to promote transparency, accountability, and good governance in Nigeria by building partnerships

between individuals and organisations through information sharing. The IAP issues a monthly electronic newsletter, an in-depth quarterly and specialized report. It also produces the Nigerian Corruption Index (NCI) in order to empirically determine the degree of corruption in Nigeria. The African Parliamentarians Network Against Corruption (APNAC) is an all-party parliamentary anti-corruption network in Africa. Its main work is to promote good governance and to strengthen parliamentary capacity to fight corruption (Obi and Sovereign, 2018).

Kim (2009) quoted in Egbo (2018), stated that civil society organizations play the following roles in terms of dealing with corruption:

1. control and observation: establishing monitoring and civil oversight of public administration preventing the misuse of power,
2. promoting transparency and accountability;
3. putting pressure on authorities by raising public awareness and campaigning.
4. Exposing corruption cases and criticizes corrupt officials and institutions, including judiciary.
5. Identifying corruption-prone areas within the legal and administrative system.
6. Civil society organizations make efforts to raise public awareness regarding the existence, causes and gravity of and the threat posed by corruption. It publicizes some indices, reports, and study results for better awareness on the issue.
7. Civil society organizations do not only criticize the problems of corruption, but also gives alternatives for controlling it better.
8. It proposes new policies and legislations for better governance based on integrity and accountability.
9. Monitoring and evaluation of the performance of anti-corruption agencies are also one of important roles of anticorruption CSOs.
10. Civil society organizations can initiate a strong coalition among different sectors of the society for fighting against corruption and safeguarding integrity

However, it is important to also consider the undemocratic structure of civil society itself, issues of accountability, transparency, good ethical judgments and compliance with established rules within civil society itself are critical elements that could enhance the legitimacy of greater involvement of civil society within anti-corruption activities. Some civil societies, for example, are clearly established to simply advance the political and economic interests of founders and core staff (Iftekharuzzaman 2009). Despite their important role in the development arena, however noble these roles may seem, this does not suggest that civil society organizations are immune to corruption. Without international mechanisms to promote transparency and accountability and monitoring and scrutiny by donors and state institutions, civil society may itself also be susceptible to embezzlement of funds, false claims over the execution of ghost social and infrastructure projects, involvement in partisan campaigns during elections, mobilizing and contributing to election campaign finance and so on.

More heart-rending and shocking according to (Ojo, 2020), is the fact that some of the managers of the CSOs who are torchbearers in the fight against corruption have themselves been caught in the web of corrupt practices. Their organisations have been found to have doctored their account books. The phenomenon is called creative accounting where all manner of sharp practices including financial fraud are perpetrated by some NGOs. Many a time, these malpractices are detected by eagle eyed auditors from the donor partners and when such are discovered, the organisation in question is made to refund the misappropriated sums as well as risk being blacklisted from receiving future support from the donor organisations and indeed all other donors.

According to Lafenwa (2016), an effective involvement of the civil society in the fight against corruption depends on three key issues. These are:

- (a) the existence of a legal framework that enables civil society organizations' participation without political and legal restrictions
- (b) the willingness of the state to engage constructively with the civil society and
- (c) The effective engagement of civil society groups in the fight against corruption. Also, the credibility of the message conveyed by these organizations depends on two major factors including their independence from the state and their capacity to fight corruption and promote common interests (Clean GovBiz, 2013:7). Civil society groups' ability to be vocal and to expose corruption cases is clearly linked to their independence from government. If they rely heavily on public financing and

civil servants for their operations, the tendency is high that they can be subject to pressures from the state. Thus, they should be encouraged to become structurally and financially independent from the state. More importantly, it has been observed that the potential of civil society in contributing to development and fighting against corruption has often been challenged by capacity constraints in terms of human resources and finances. It is well known that these constraints would have a direct impact on the aptitude of civil society organizations to mobilize resources and to become independent. It is expected of each Civil Society group to encourage the participation of its members in training programs and seminars that would strengthen not only their knowledge on corruption fighting and their interaction with other key stakeholders (notably government and donors) but also their management and financial skills. The sustainability of the activities engaged in by civil society organizations and the effectiveness of their anticorruption efforts will also depend on their ability to put in place solid internal mechanisms (Lafenwa, 2016) amidst the various challenges they face.

CONCLUSION

There is no gainsaying the fact that corruption still remain endemic and pandemic in Nigeria body polity thus becoming a bane to development and a threat to democratic sustainability. Despite the many laudable anti-corruption initiatives in Nigeria since the return of democracy in 1999, the incidence of corruption still remains alarming in every sphere of Nigeria society which is evident in Nigeria's ranking on the transparency international corruption perception index where Nigeria still ranked very low. In an attempt to address this anomaly because of the nature of most African leadership who are incapacitated and irresponsible to the wellbeing to the people which they claim to protect and carter for as a result of the social contract and particularly with the Nigerian citizenry docility amidst perceived failure of the political leadership since 1999, the civil society no doubt is expected to serve as a watch dog against excesses of government and capitalists by providing a platform for aggregating and championing the interest of the people in demanding delivery of good governance and holding government accountable to its promises and the need to galvanizing efforts among stakeholders in the anti-corruption struggle in the society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is however not out of place to commend the Nigerian civil society organisations in their anti-corruption campaign since the return of democracy in 1999 but it is not yet 'uhuru' judging from the fact that corruption is still very endemic and remains one of the major threat to democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The following recommendations are hereby proffered;

- That there is need for the civil society to remain resolute in their advocacy against government profligacy and continue to act as the mouth piece of the helpless electorate in our democratic experience.
- There is a need for unity among CSOs. Divisions among the Nigerian civil society along the ethnic and regional lines have not helped its democratic advocacy and political mobilization. Such inherent divisiveness weakens efficiency and makes the associations vulnerable to penetration by government agents.
- Civil society should establish strategic alliance with the legislature to ensure Constituency feedback information sharing.
- Civil society should continue checking corruption and abuse of power through whistle blowing.

There have been accusations of corruption, ranging from lack of transparency in the utilization of donor-funds to outright embezzlement/conversion of foreign donations to personal use. This tends to weaken the CSOs' moral rights to engage the state. The impact of their advocacy for a change is also limited, because it is stated that he who comes to equity must come with clean hands (Orokpo, Oyebanji & Fayigbe 2019).

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