African ACAs' digital media progress

Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission of Ethiopia's very popular 29 March 2021 video (Click to view)

By John Leonardo [1]

We recently reviewed the degree of usage of digital platforms by African anti-corruption agencies (ACAs) in a [blog](#) and supporting [video](#). We also highlighted the opportunities that digital platforms offer African ACAs in pursuing their war on corruption in a [separate blog earlier this year](#). In view of the interest in these topics we are now providing an update on African ACAs' digital media progress in recent months.

1. African ACAs digital platform usage trends

1.1 Website usage

There has been no significant change in the use of websites by African ACAs since January 2021. Details of the use of websites by African ACAs as at mid-May 2021 are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: African ACAs use of websites

ACAs	Number
ACAs with stand-alone websites	27
ACAs with webpages included in government websites	1
ACAs with currently inactive websites	4
ACAs without any web presence	22
Total	54

NB. Nigeria has two recognised ACAs with websites; Uganda has two recognised ACAs but only one has a website while the other uses only social media. One Nigerian ACA and the Ugandan ACA which only uses social media are not included in Table 1 or Table 2 below.

Table 2 provides details of the use of websites by African ACAs equally divided between those with higher 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) scores and those with lower scores.

Table 2: African ACAs use of websites by 2020 CPI scores (data as of May 2021)

ACAs	Number	Stand-alone websites	Web page on government site	Website currently inactive	No website
ACAs with higher 2020 CPI scores	27	18	1	2	6
ACAs with lower 2020 CPI scores	27	9	0	2	16
Total	54	27	1	4	22

1.2 Website visit activity

Quarterly data for website visits in the six months ended 31 March 2021 as obtained from similarweb (https://www.similarweb.com/) has been annualised and divided by country internet user numbers as at 31 December 2020 published by Internet World Stats (https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm), to provide an indication of ACA website penetration levels.

This shows a very low annualised average website penetration level for all ACAs of 0.32%, a decline of 18.70% from 411,126 in the 2020 December quarter.

The annualised average website penetration level for the 27 higher CPI scoring ACAs in the six months ended 31 March 2021was 47% greater than the remainder.

Mauritius (5.99%) and Madagascar (1.15%) continued to record favourable overall scores in the six months ended 31 March 2021 following their favourable performance in the 2020

December quarter.

1.3 Social media activity

Social media follower information was analysed for ACAs with Facebook and Twitter pages using the data available in early May 2021, listed below:

| Data	Source
Facebook subscribers as at 31 December 2021	https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm)
ACA Facebook followers	ACA Facebook pages
Potential Twitter audience that marketers can reach January 2021	https://wearesocial.com/digital-2021
ACA Twitter followers	ACA Twitter pages

Details of current African ACA social media pages are presented in Table 3. *NB the Facebook and Twitter pages of the two Nigerian and Ugandan ACAs are included in the data presented in Table 3.*

Table 3: African ACA social media pages

ACAs	Facebook pages	Twitter pages
ACAs with stand-alone websites	17	15
ACAs with webpages included in government websites	1	0
ACAs without any website	1	1
Total	19	16

1.3.1 Facebook activity

African country Facebook penetration rates obtained by dividing Facebook subscriber numbers by the number of internet users as at 31 December 2000 are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: African country Facebook penetration rates December 2020
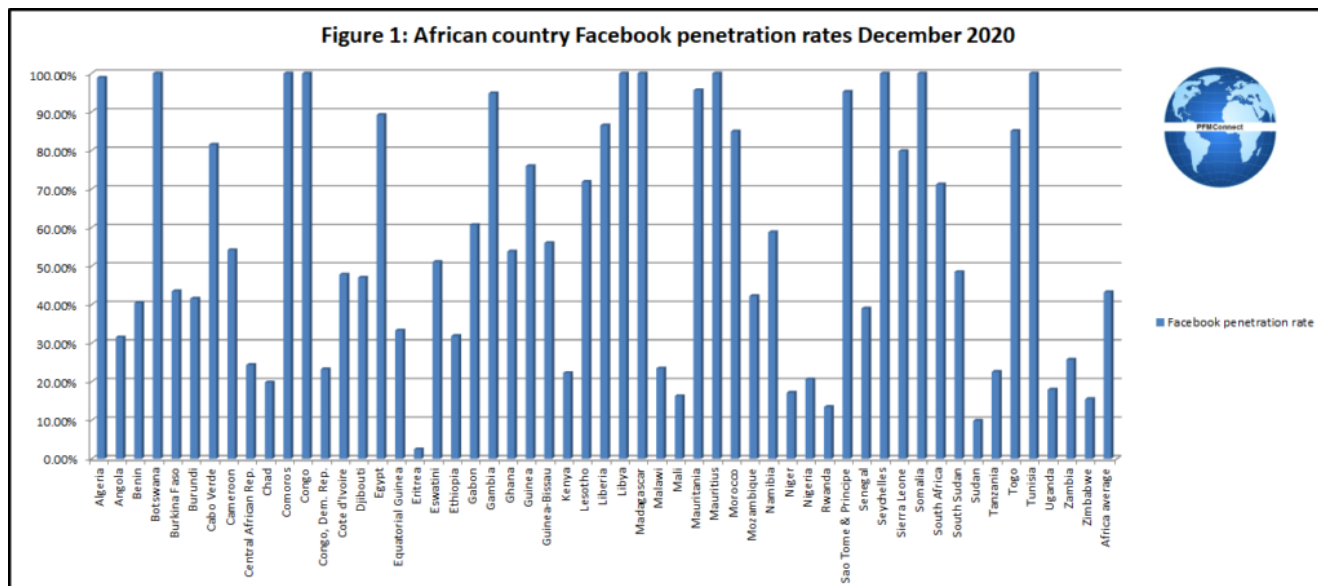
Currently less than one half of African ACAs have Facebook pages.

Key results

Total Facebook followers for ACAs measured on a country basis increased by 4.09% between mid-January 2021 and early May 2021.

Growth rates in African ACA Facebook follower numbers on a country basis between mid-January 2021 and early May 2021 are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Change in African ACA Facebook Follower numbers Mid-January 2021/Early May 2021

	% change Jan-May 2021
Botswana	4.49%
Egypt	3.58%
Ethiopia	44.07%
Ghana	19.73%
Guinea	18.17%
Kenya	2.60%
Madagascar	2.92%
Mauritius	0.15%
Namibia	87.24%
Nigeria (EFCC)	5.41%
Nigeria (ICPC)	0.67%
Rwanda	23.56%
Senegal	22.54%
Seychelles	19.65%
South Africa	2793.33%
Tunisia	-0.06%
Uganda (AntiGraft)	5.56%
Uganda (IGG)	1.50%
Zimbabwe	17.60%
Africa ACAs	4.16%

Facebook follower growth is being driven principally by increased public interest in corruption issues. For example, there was considerable Namibian media coverage about corruption in the 2021 March quarter whilst South Africa's Special Investigation Unit (SIU) has received increased media coverage this year as a result of its anti-corruption activity. Ethiopia's growth seems at least partly due to its particular posting activity discussed later in this article.

The average Facebook follower penetration level for African ACAs on a country basis (country ACA Facebook followers divided by total country Facebook subscribers) increased from 0.9% to 0.95% between mid-January 2021 and early May 2021.

Details of African ACAs' Facebook follower penetration rates on a country basis (country ACA Facebook followers divided by total country Facebook subscribers) in early May 2021 are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: African anti-corruption agencies' Facebook follower penetration levels measured on a country basis (early May 2021)
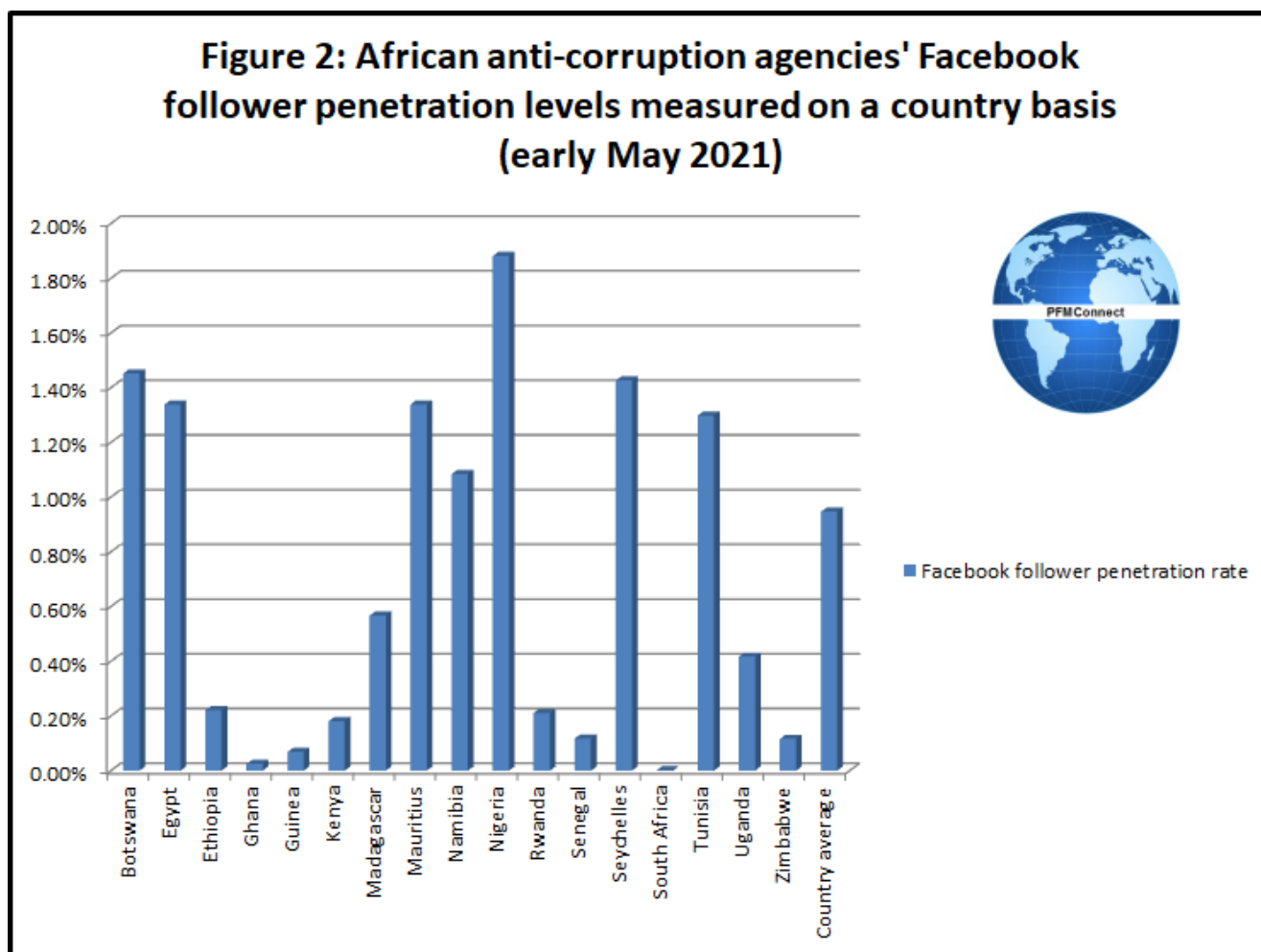
On a country basis, the average Facebook follower penetration rate for Nigeria (obtained by adding together the data for the two Nigerian ACAs) was the highest of the seventeen countries where ACAs have Facebook pages.

Facebook posting and engagement performance

Trends in Facebook posting and engagement performance for the nineteen African ACAs with Facebook pages in the 2021 March

quarter were examined.

Facebook posting performance across the nineteen African ACAs with Facebook pages during the 2021 March quarter varied sharply; the results for total Facebook posts during the 2021 March quarter are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: African anti-corruption agencies' Facebook total posts March quarter 2021
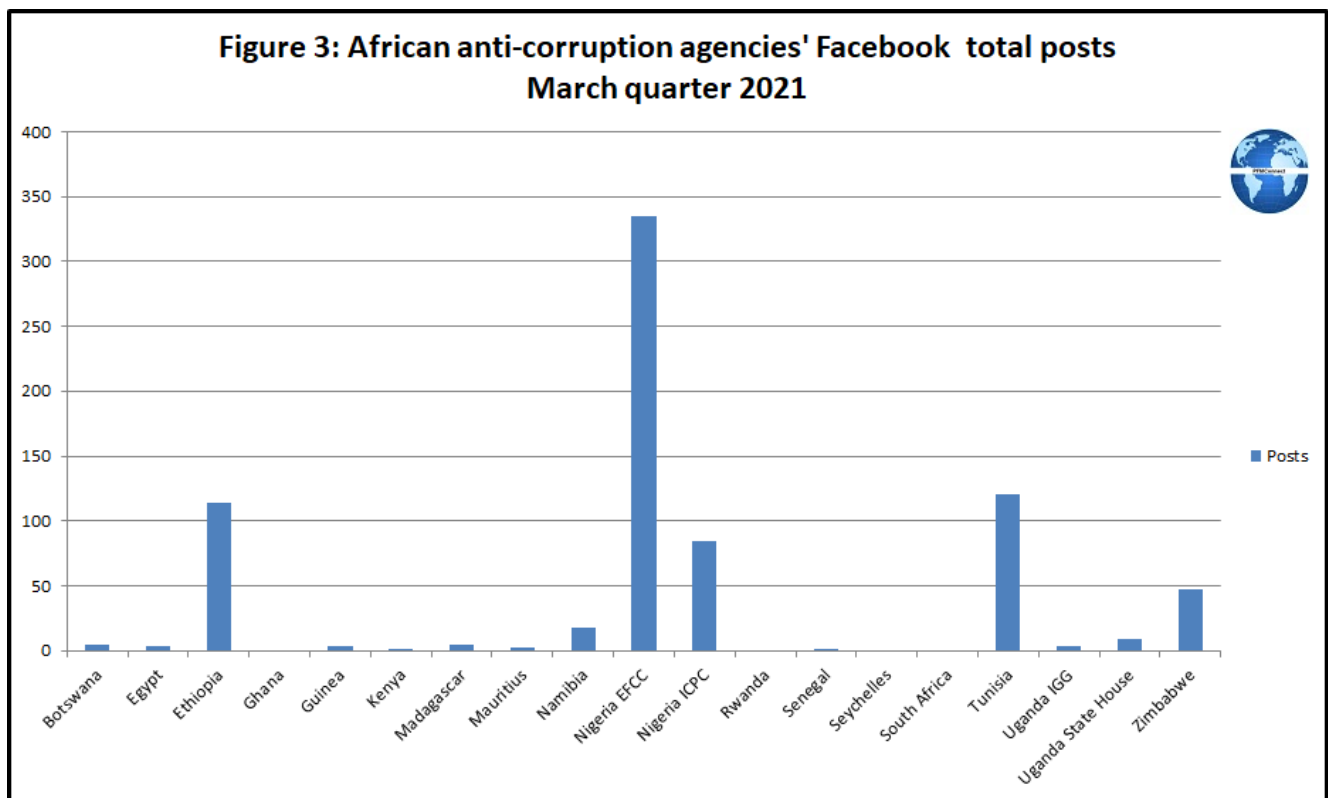
Facebook daily posting performance across the nineteen African ACAs with Facebook pages during the 2021 March quarter also varied sharply; the results for Facebook posting activity on a working day basis during the 2021 March quarter are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4: African anti-corruption agencies' Facebook posts per working day March quarter 2021
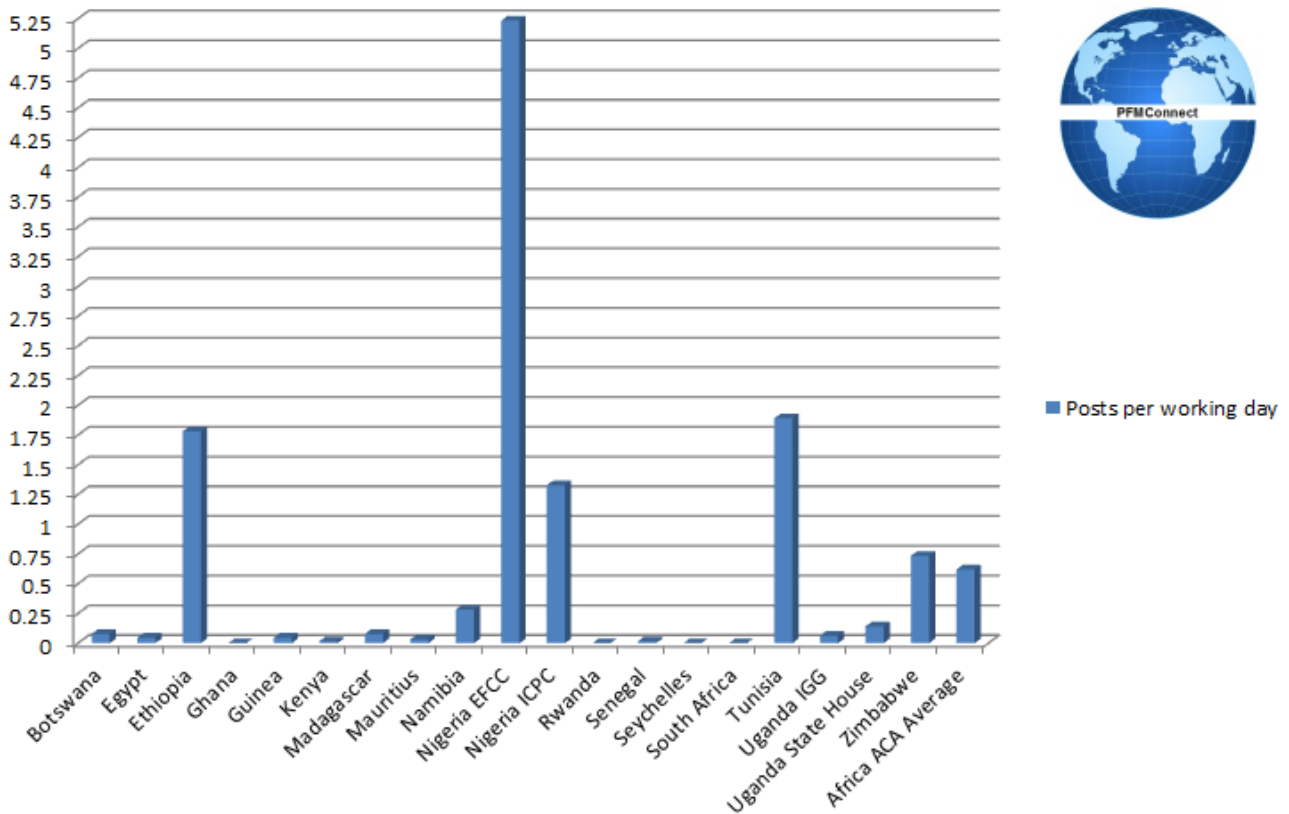
The average Facebook page posts 1.55 times per day according to a 3 November 20201 Social Media Perth post (https://www.smperth.com/resources/facebook/facebook-statistics) but African ACAs results are considerably below this figure with an average Facebook posting rate on a working day basis during the 2021 March quarter of 0.62. Only four African ACAs published more than one Facebook post per day during the 2021 March quarter (Ethiopia, Nigeria EFCC, Nigeria ICPC and Tunisia).

Community engagement data demonstrates the recent impact of video views on African ACA Facebook engagement trends.

The Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission of Ethiopia

has received a remarkable response to date to a video published on 29 March 2021discussing the personality required to be a good citizen (see box below). To date the video has received over 530,000 views.

Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission of Ethiopia's 29 March 2021 video post

"If citizens who are not able to serve good personality today, tomorrow will be dangerous to get a qualified generation. In order to produce a qualified citizen everyone should be responsible for the moral and good personality of human beings. This video will make us laugh when the passenger is trying to protect the law and the law."

Details of video views recorded on African ACA Facebook pages as at early June 2021 for videos posted during the 2021 March quarter are presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5: African anti-corruption agencies' Total Video Views 2021 March quarter
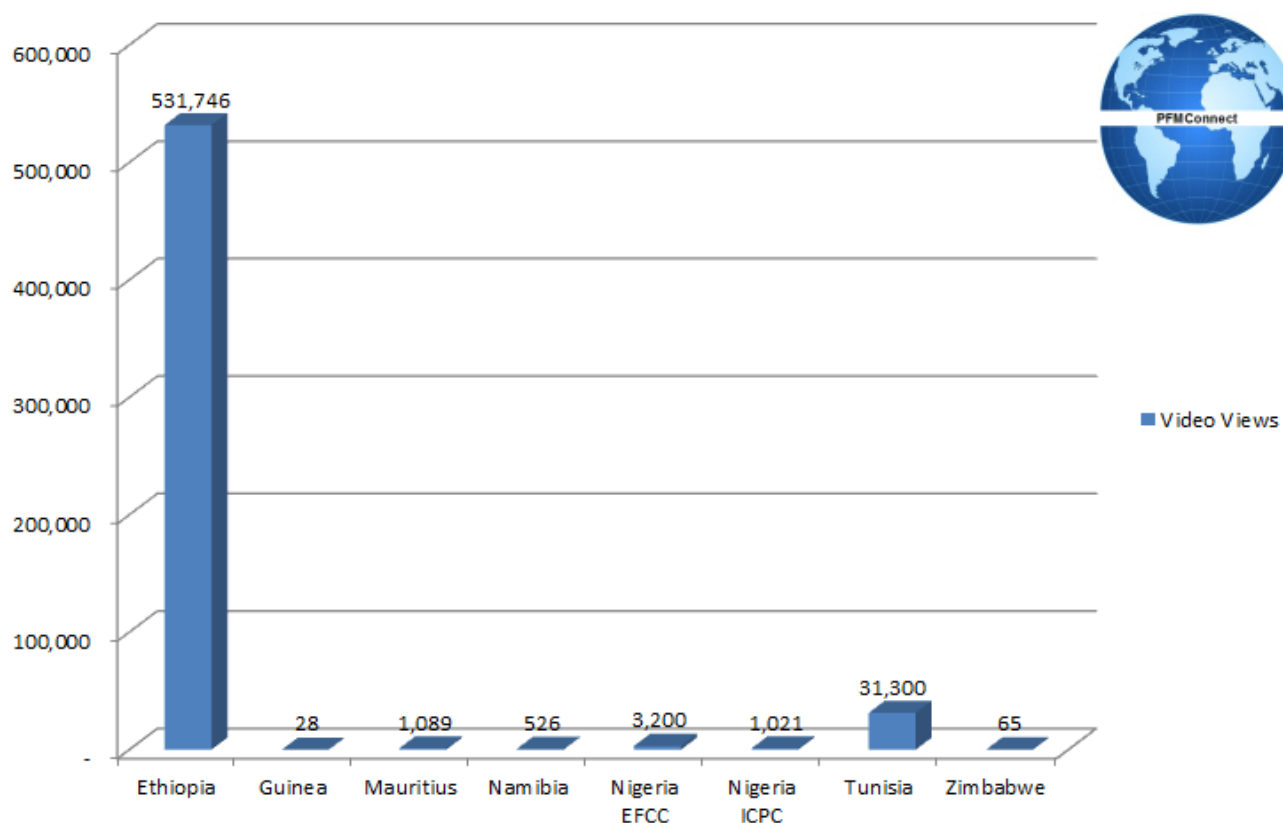
African ACA Facebook engagement trends have been examined on an engagement rate by post basis. This data has been derived on a two-step basis.

Firstly, a total figure for ACA Facebook views, likes, shares, and comments on a per post basis was derived for the 2021 March quarter; details are presented in Figure 6; totals excluding video views are also presented.

Figure 6: African anti-corruption agencies' Facebook Total views, likes, shares, comments per post 2021 March quarter
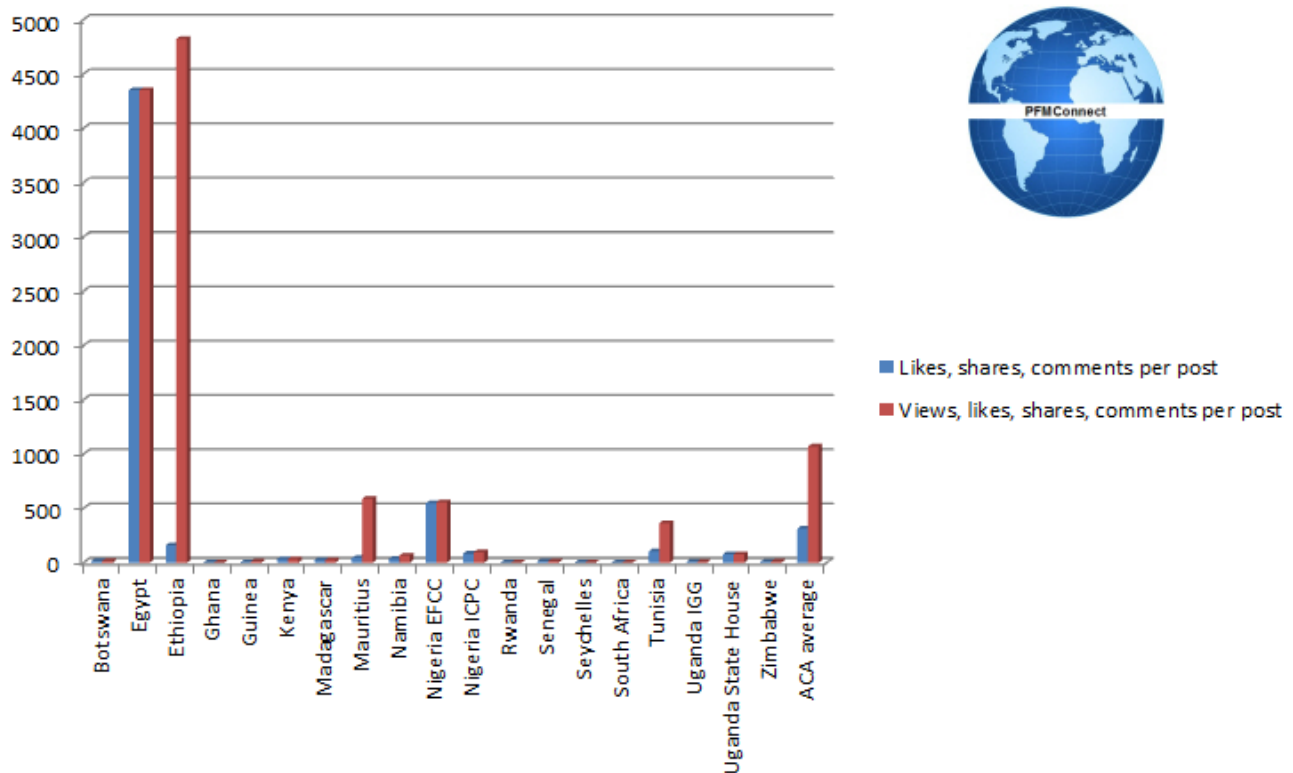
The data in Figure 6 reveals the contribution of video views to African ACAs' Facebook posting activity in the 2021 March quarter.

Secondly, the engagement rate of the above data by post is presented in Figure 7.

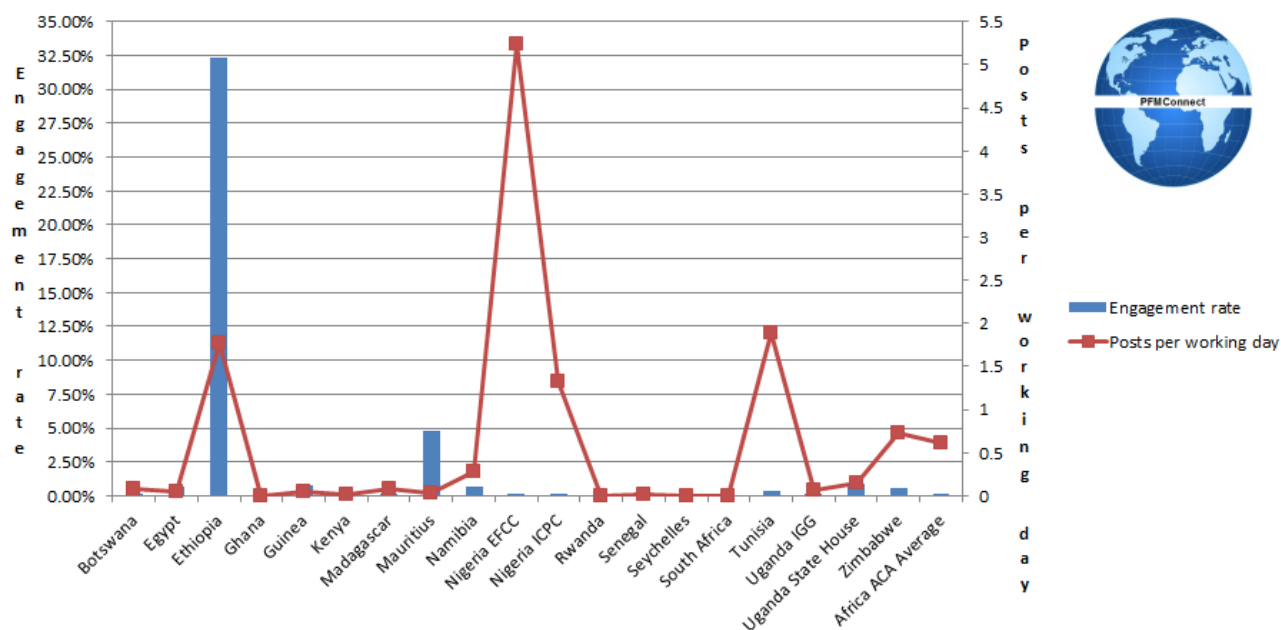Figure 7: African anti-corruption agencies' ACA Facebook engagement rates by post 2021 March quarter
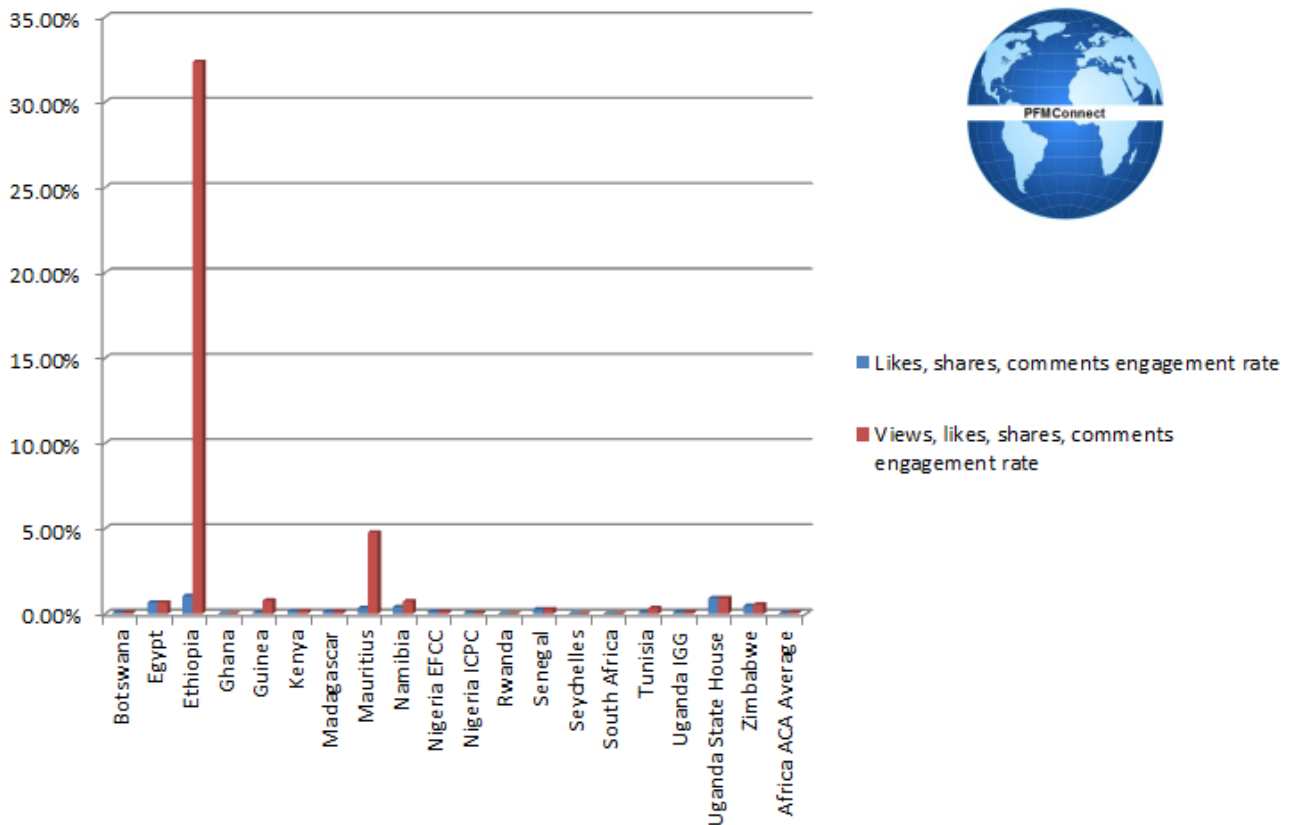
Details of African ACAs' Facebook followers as at early May 2021 and engagement rates by post in the 2021 March quarter are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: African ACAs' Facebook followers and engagement rate by post

	Facebook followers May 2021	Engagement rate
Botswana	16538	0.09%
Egypt	653412	0.67%
Ethiopia	14898	32.37%
Ghana	1930	0.00%
Guinea	1320	0.78%
Kenya	18875	0.17%
Madagascar	16233	0.14%
Mauritius	12299	4.77%
Namibia	8583	0.73%
Nigeria EFCC	426543	0.13%
Nigeria ICPC	172649	0.05%
Rwanda	1694	0.00%
Senegal	4463	0.27%
Seychelles	1017	0.00%
South Africa	434	0.00%
Tunisia	106036	0.34%
Uganda IGG	5562	0.11%
Uganda State House	8300	0.92%
Zimbabwe	1510	0.56%

Details of African ACAs' Facebook posting activity and engagement rates by post in the 2021 March quarter are presented graphically in Figure 8.

Figure 8: African anti-corruption agencies' Facebook engagement and March quarter 2001 posting activity

An analysis of the correlation between African ACAs' Facebook posting activity and engagement rates by post in the 2021 March quarter found only a weak relationship exists. This outcome consistent with industry guidance which suggests content rather than activity attracts audiences the most. The correlation was not materially influenced by the higher engagement rates recorded by Ethiopia and Mauritius or the two Nigerian ACAs' higher posting rate per working day.

An analysis of the correlation between African ACAs' Facebook follower numbers in early May 2021 and Facebook engagement rates by post in the 2021 March quarter using the data presented earlier in Table 5 found a very significant negative relationship. This correlation was also not materially influenced by the higher engagement rates recorded by Ethiopia and Mauritius or the two Nigerian ACAs' higher posting rate per working day.

The data from Table 5 is presented graphically in Figure 9.

Figure 9: African anti-corruption agencies' Facebook engagement March quarter 2021 and Facebook followers
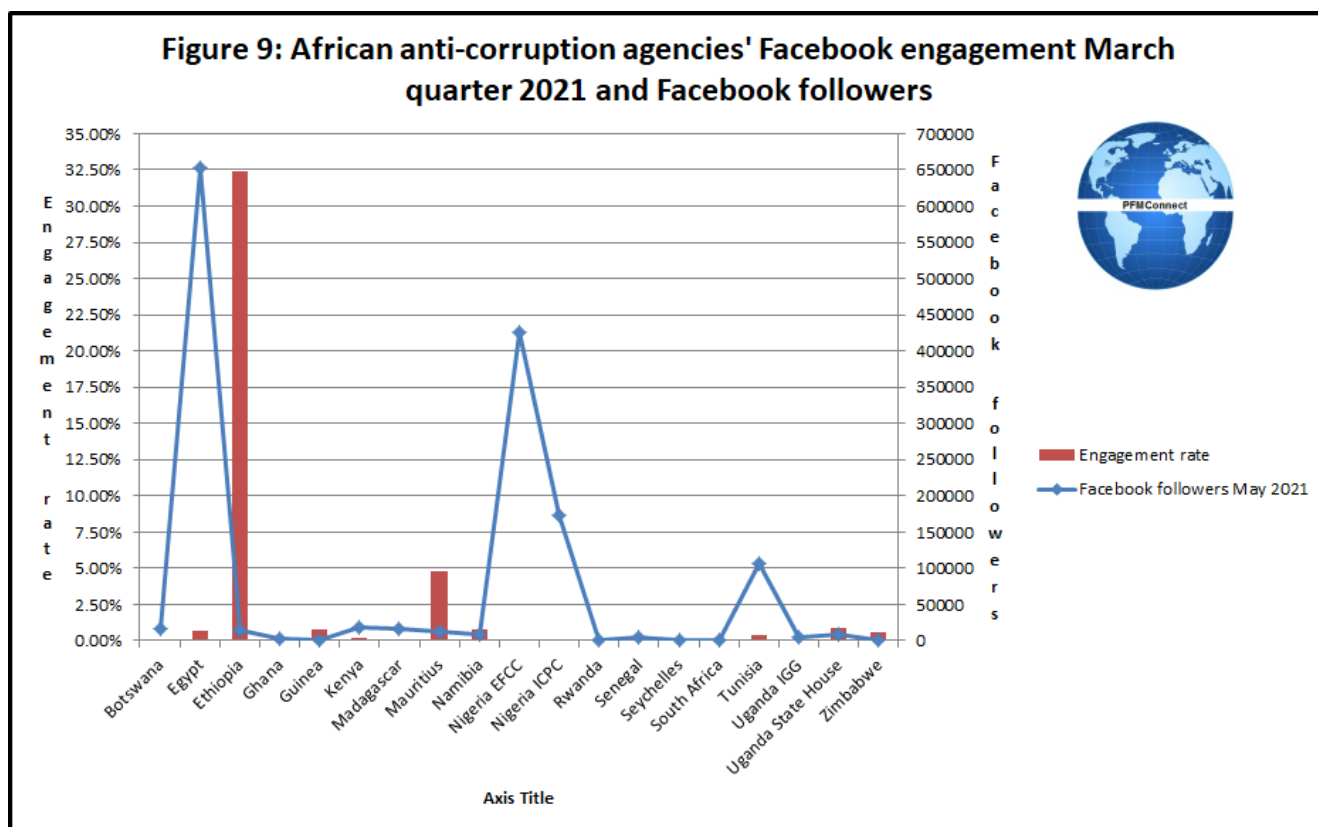
Social Media Perth also outlined in its 3 November 2020 post the following Facebook engagement rates:

- Pages with less than 10k fans have an average post engagement rate of 0.52%
- Pages with between 10k and 100k fans have an average post engagement rate of 0.28%
- Pages with more than 100k fans have an average post engagement rate of 0.10%

The Social Media Perth guidance suggests that the Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mauritius, Nigeria EFCC, Tunisia and Uganda State House ACAs achieved reasonable engagement levels in the 2021 March quarter with Ethiopia being the star performer.

While some ACAs have recorded reasonable engagement levels, improved content in Facebook posts should have a favourable impact on overall engagement levels. The majority of African ACAs could also increase their posting frequency.

Do corruption levels influence ACA Facebook follower penetration levels?

An analysis of correlations between 2020 CPI scores and early May 2021 ACA Facebook follower penetration levels demonstrated moderate relationships between 2020 CPI scores and ACA Facebook follower penetration levels in all countries where ACAs have Facebook pages and also for countries with higher 2020 CPI scores.

A weak negative relationship was noted between 2020 CPI scores and early May ACA Facebook follower penetration levels for countries with lower 2020 CPI scores. This data demonstrates that 2020 CPI scores are not currently a significant driver of ACA Facebook follower penetration levels.

Behind the African ACA Facebook data

A closer examination of the data covering country Facebook subscriber levels in African countries where ACAs currently have or do not have Facebook pages reveals some interesting trends.

There are a number of ACAs with websites that do not have Facebook pages even though country Facebook penetration rates (total country Facebook subscribers divided by total country

internet users) are relatively high. This group of countries includes Algeria, Morocco, Sierra Leone and Togo. The relevant data is presented in Figure 10. NB the green and red bars represent ACAs with or without Facebook pages.

Figure 10: Facebook penetration rates in African countries where anti-corruption agencies have active websites (early May 2021)
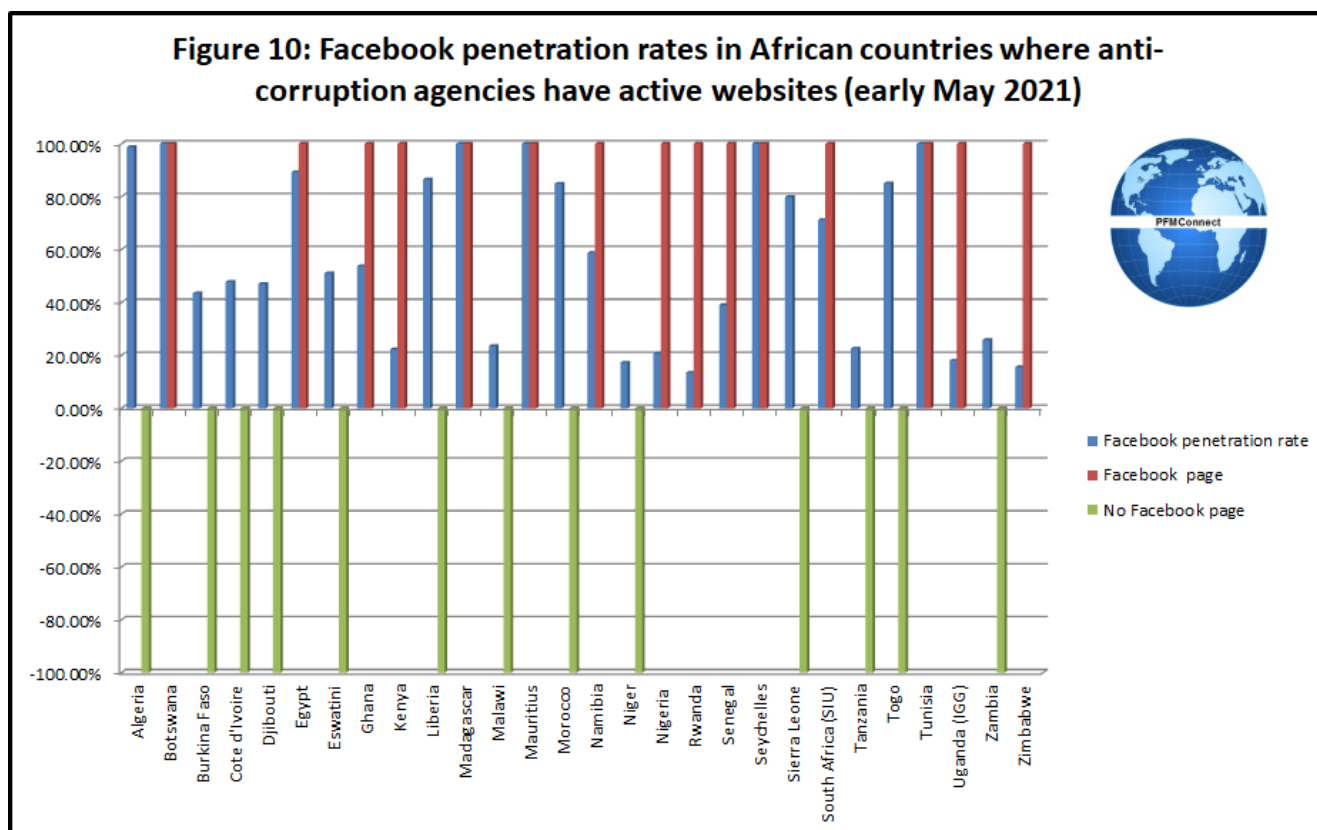
On the other hand, there are a number of countries where country Facebook penetration rates are relatively high but the respective ACAs do not have either websites or Facebook pages. This group of countries includes Comoros, Republic of Congo, Gambia, Libya, Sao Tome & Principe and Somalia. The relevant data is presented in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Facebook penetration rates in African countries where anti-corruption agencies do not have websites or websites were inactive (early May 2021)
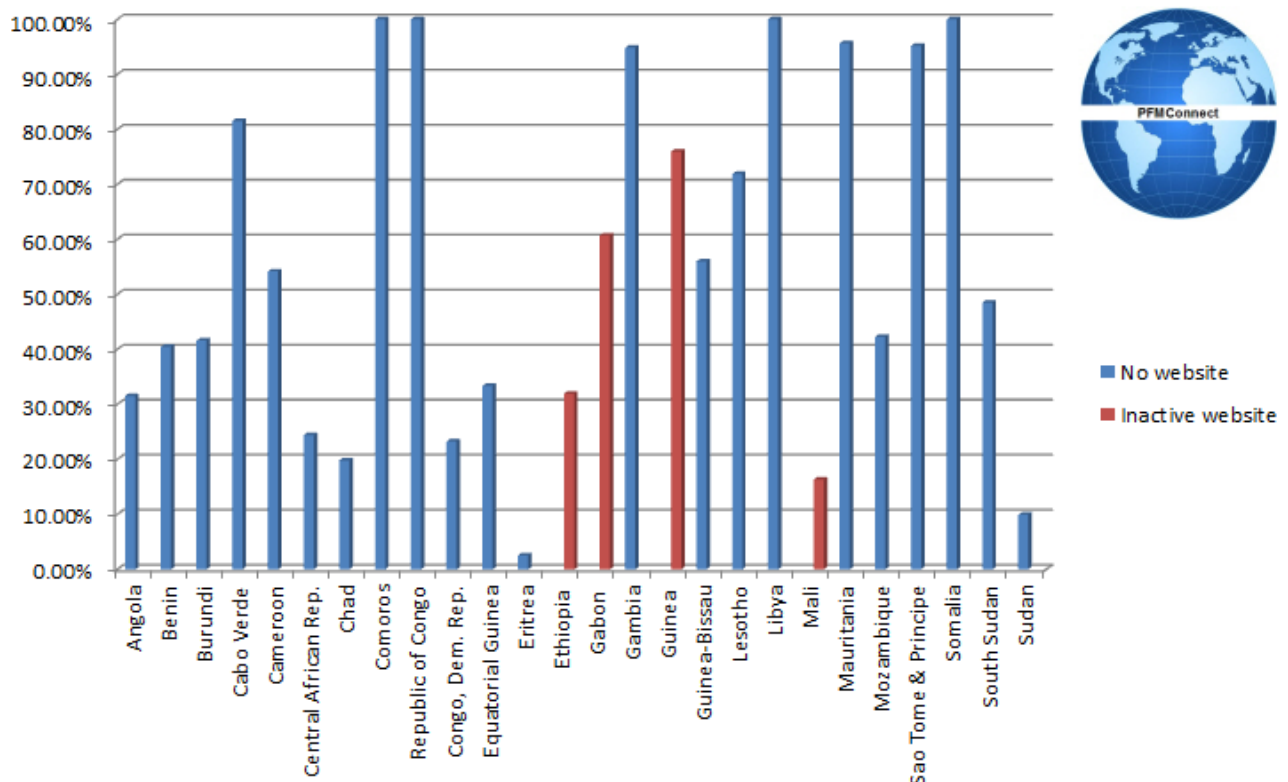
1.3.2 Twitter activity

African country Twitter penetration rates obtained by dividing Twitter subscriber numbers by the number of internet users as at January 2021 are presented in Figure 12.

Figure 12: African country Twitter penetration rates January 2021
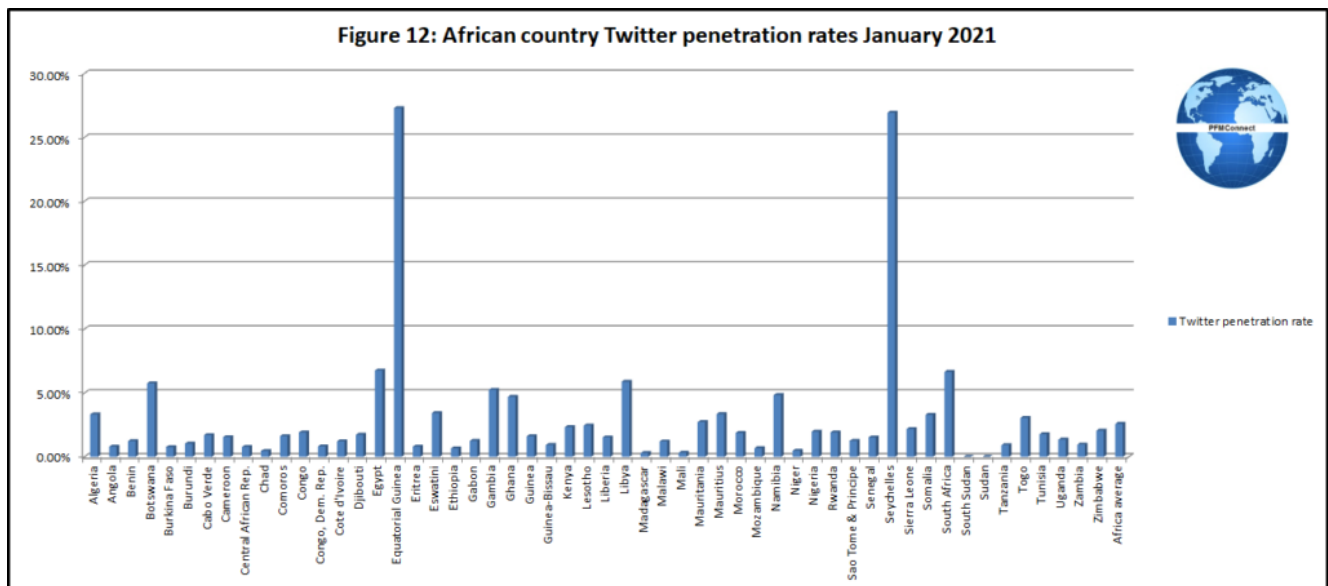
The number of African ACAs with Twitter pages is modest.

Key results

Total Twitter followers for African ACAs measured on a country basis increased by 2.59% between mid-January 2021 and early May 2021. Growth rates in African ACA Twitter follower numbers on a country basis between mid-January 2021 and early May 2021 are presented in Table 6.
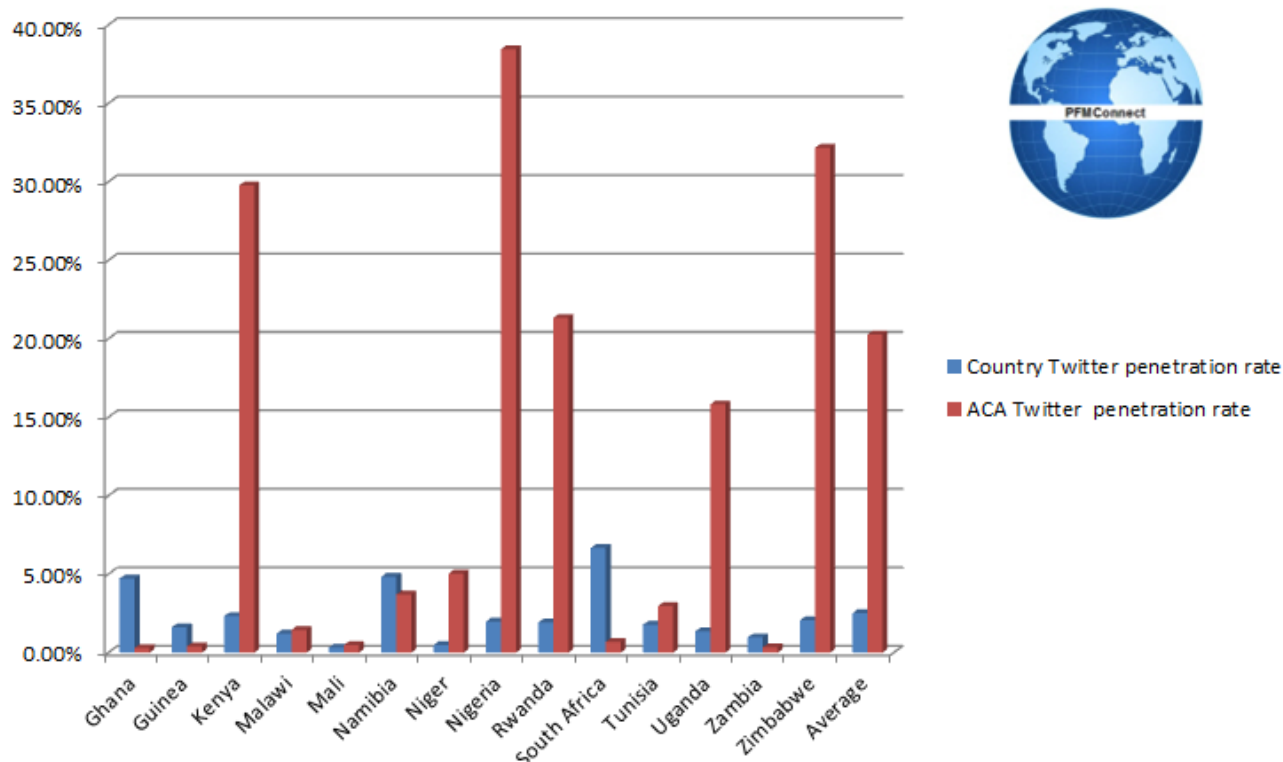
Table 6: Change in African ACA Twitter Follower numbers Mid-January 2021/Early May 2021

	% change Jan-May 2021
Rwanda	10.91%
Namibia	53.77%
South Africa	88.66%
Tunisia	23.58%
Ghana	5.59%
Zambia	0.93%
Niger	14.16%
Kenya	5.63%
Malawi	53.57%
Mali	4.35%
Guinea	18.84%
Uganda (IGG)	8.50%
Uganda (AntiGraft)	21.77%
Nigeria (EFCC)	0.00%
Nigeria (ICPC)	0.55%
Zimbabwe	14.64%
African ACAs	2.59%

Twitter follower growth is being driven by increased public interest in corruption issues. Increased media coverage of corruption issues contributed to the relatively strong growth in Twitter follower numbers in Malawi, Namibia and South Africa in the 2021 March quarter.

The average Twitter follower penetration level for African ACAs on a country basis (country ACA Twitter followers divided by total country Twitter subscribers) increased from 19.75% to 20.26% between mid-January 2021 and early May 2021. Details of African ACAs' Twitter follower penetration rates on a country basis in early May 2021 are presented in Figure 13.

Figure 13: African anti-corruption agencies' Twitter follower penetration levels measured on a country basis (early May 2021)

ACA Twitter follower penetration rates are currently very high in Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda and Zimbabwe.

Twitter posting and engagement performance

Trends in Twitter posting and engagement performance for the sixteen African ACAs with Twitter pages in the 2021 March quarter were examined.

Twitter tweeting performance across the sixteen African ACAs with Twitter pages during the 2021 March quarter also varied sharply; the results are presented in Figure 14.

Figure 14: African anti-corruption agencies' total tweets March quarter 2021
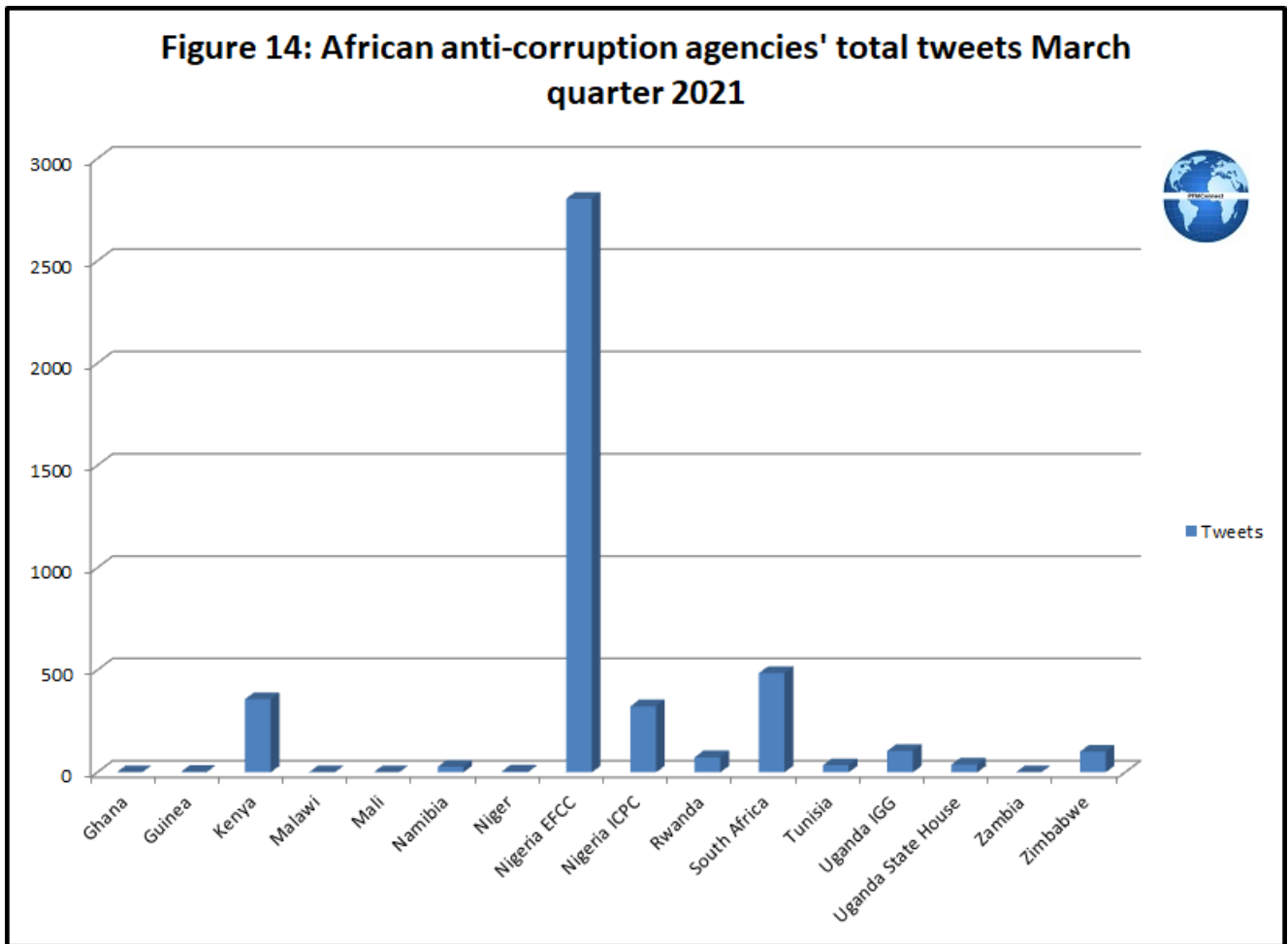
Twitter tweeting performance per working day across the sixteen African ACAs with Twitter pages during the 2021 March quarter are presented in Figure 15.

Figure 15 : African anti-corruption agencies' March quarter 2021 Tweets per working day
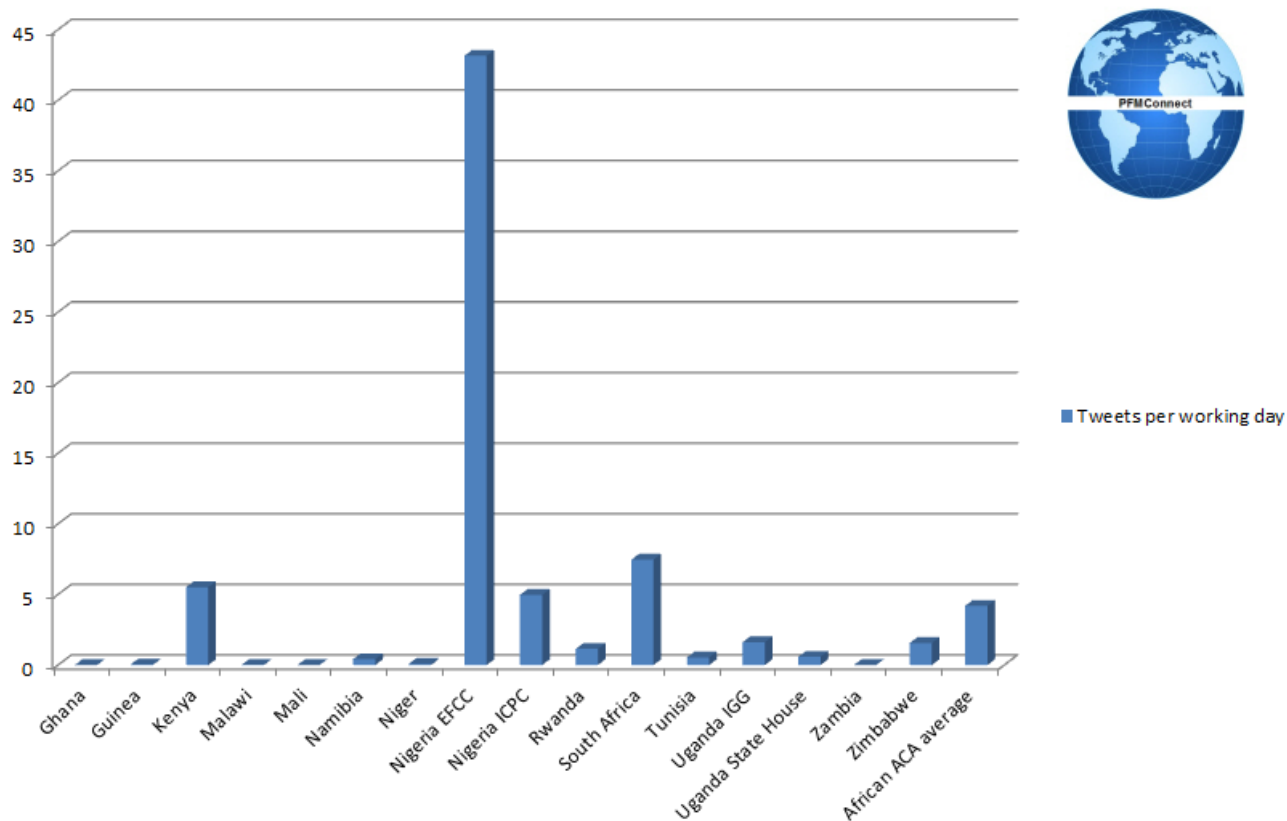
The figure derived for average tweets per day of 4.19 tweets per day for African ACAs with Twitter pages during the 2021 March quarter is relatively high average compared with a corporate brand median of 0.86 tweets per day quoted by Social Media Perth in a post on 1 October 2020 (https://www.smperth.com/resources/twitter/twitter-statistics/).

Only four African ACAs published more than one tweet per working day during the 2021 March quarter (Kenya, Nigeria EFCC, Nigeria ICPC and South Africa).

An analysis of African ACA Twitter engagement trends has been made on an engagement rate by tweet basis based on individual tweet likes and retweets using a public engagement rate

methodology as recommended by Social Status (https://www.socialstatus.io/twitter-engagement-rate-benchmark/). This data has been derived on a two-step basis.

Firstly, African ACAs' data for the total of all likes and retweets on a per tweet basis was derived for the 2021 March quarter; details are presented in Figure 16.

Figure 16: : African anti-corruption agencies' March quarter 2021 Total Likes and Retweets per tweet
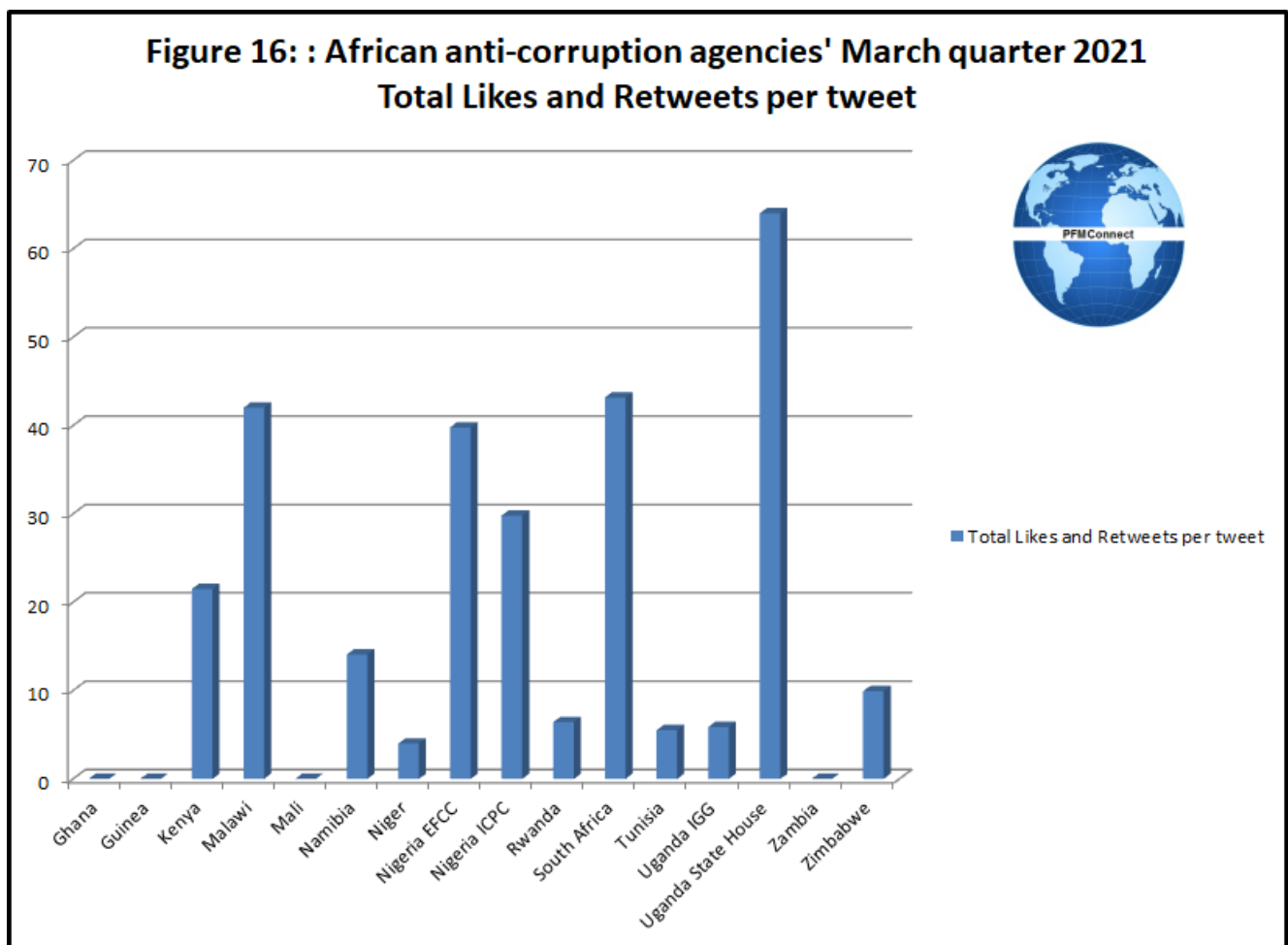
The second step in deriving African ACA Twitter engagement trends on an engagement rate by post basis was to divide the figures for the total of all likes and retweets on a per post basis by the number of ACA Twitter followers; details are presented in Figure 17.

Figure 17 : African anti-corruption agencies' March quarter 2021 Twitter engagement rates by post
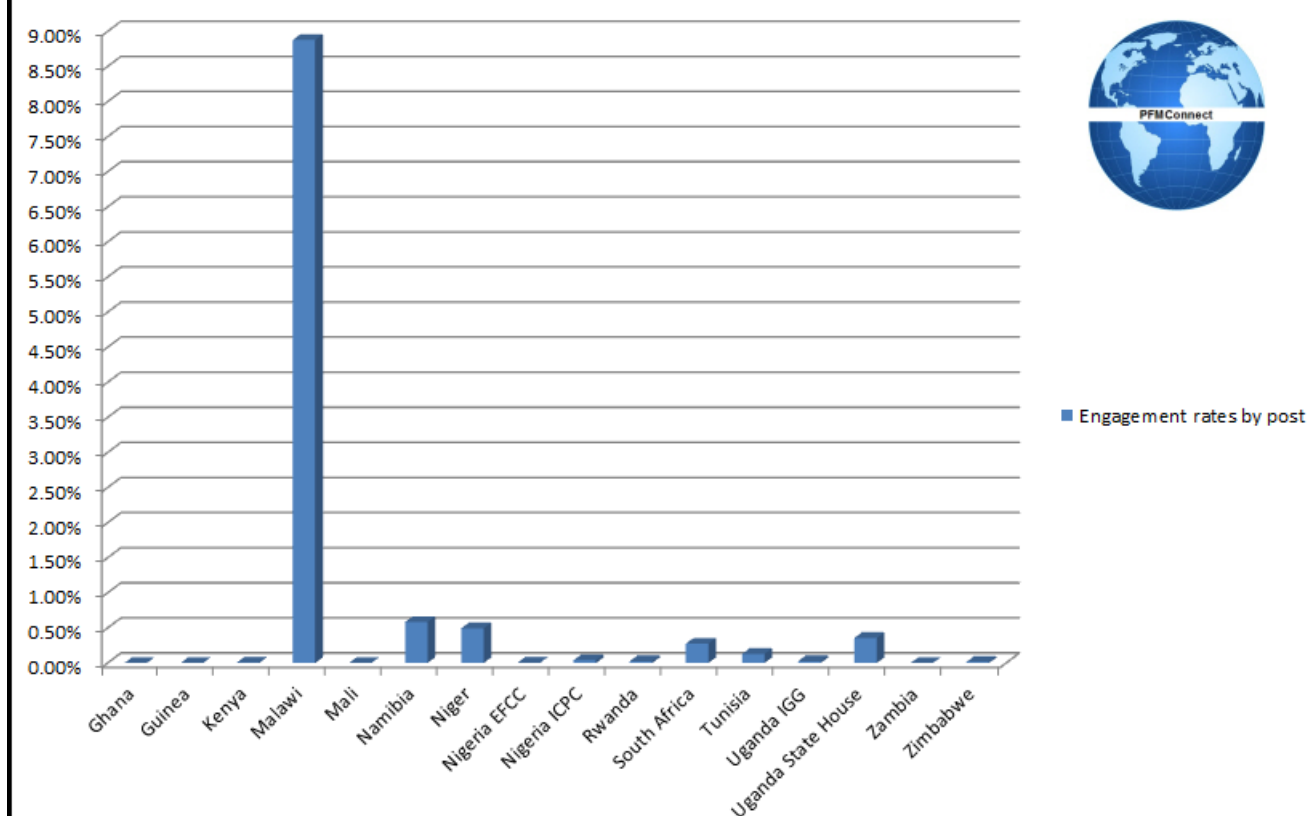
The data for African ACAs' Twitter followers as at early May 2021 and engagement rates by post in the 2021 March quarter included in Figure 17 is also presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Twitter followers and engagement rates by post

	Twitter followers May 2021	Engagement rates by post
Ghana	2022	0.00%
Guinea	164	0.00%
Kenya	324500	0.01%
Malawi	473	8.88%
Mali	192	0.00%
Namibia	2408	0.58%
Niger	806	0.50%
NigeriaEFCC	1100000	0.00%
Nigeria ICPC	72800	0.04%
Rwanda	24400	0.03%
South Africa	15600	0.28%
Tunisia	4293	0.13%
Uganda IGG	21700	0.03%
Uganda State House	17900	0.36%
Zambia	325	0.00%
Zimbabwe	55600	0.02%

Details of African ACAs' Twitter followers as at early May 2021 and engagement rates by post and tweets per working day in the 2021 March quarter are presented in Figure 18.

Figure 18 : African anti-corruption agencies' March quarter 2021 Twitter engagement rates by post and tweets per working day
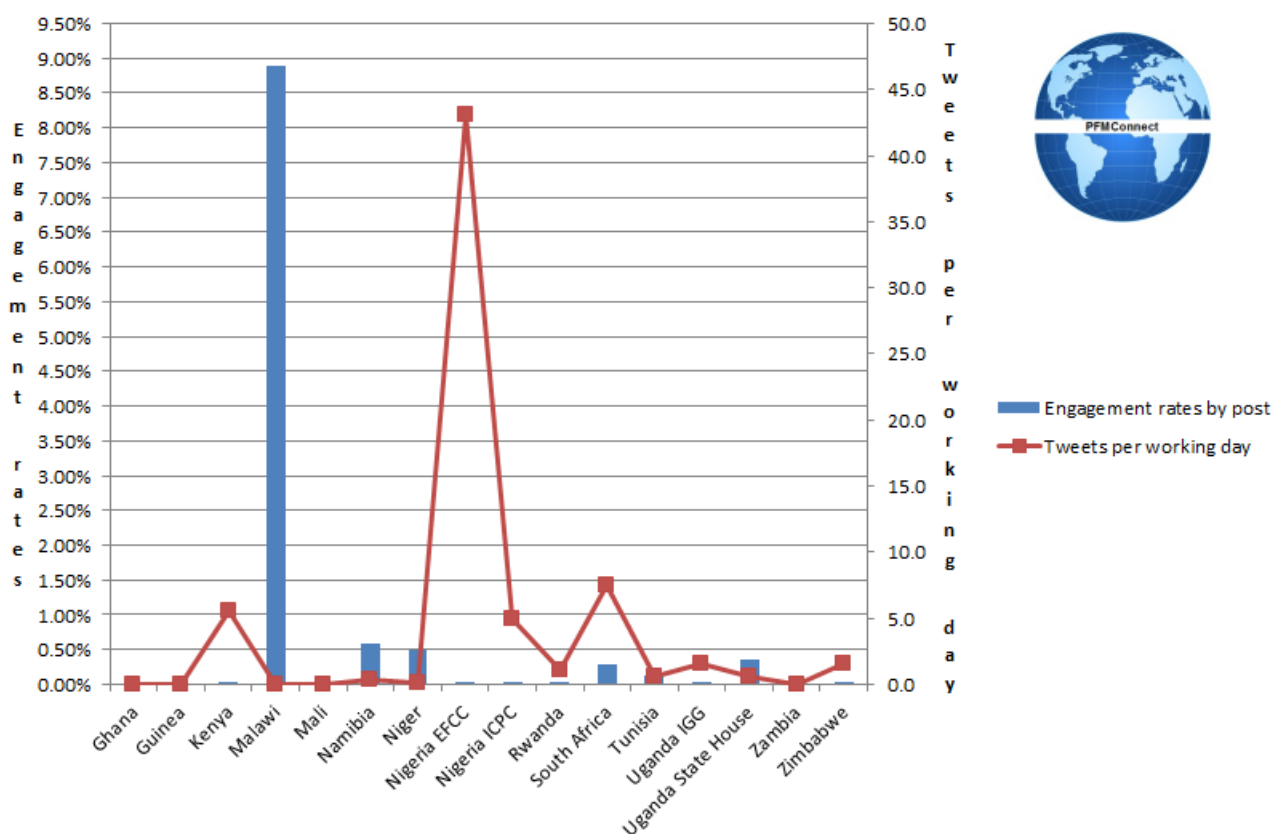
Six African ACAs achieved engagement rates by post above 0.10% with Twitter pages during the 2021 March quarter. Social Media Perth in a post on 1 October 2020 (https://www.smperth.com/resources/twitter/twitter-statistics/) suggested the median corporate twitter engagement rates was 0.048%.

An analysis of the correlation between Africa ACAs' Twitter tweeting activity and engagement rates by post in the 2021 March quarter found a very weak negative relationship exists. This outcome is consistent with industry guidance which suggests content rather than activity attracts audiences the most.

The three African ACAs most active on Twitter (Kenya, Nigeria

EFCC and Nigeria ICPC) all recorded relatively low engagement rates; this result suggests improved content in their tweets may well produce higher Twitter engagement rates.

While some ACAs have recorded reasonable engagement levels, improved content in tweets by a number of ACAs should have a favourable impact on overall engagement levels. Numerous African ACAs could also increase their tweeting frequency.

Behind the African ACA Twitter figures

A closer examination of the data covering country Twitter subscriber levels in African countries where ACAs currently have or do not have Twitter pages provides some interesting trends.

There are several ACAs with websites that do not have Twitter pages even though country Twitter penetration rates (total country Twitter subscribers divided by total country internet users) are relatively high. This group of countries includes Botswana, Egypt and the Seychelles. The relevant data is presented in Figure 19. NB the green and red bars represent ACAs with or without Twitter pages.

Figure 19: Twitter penetration rates in African countries where anti-corruption agencies have active or inactive websites (early May 2021
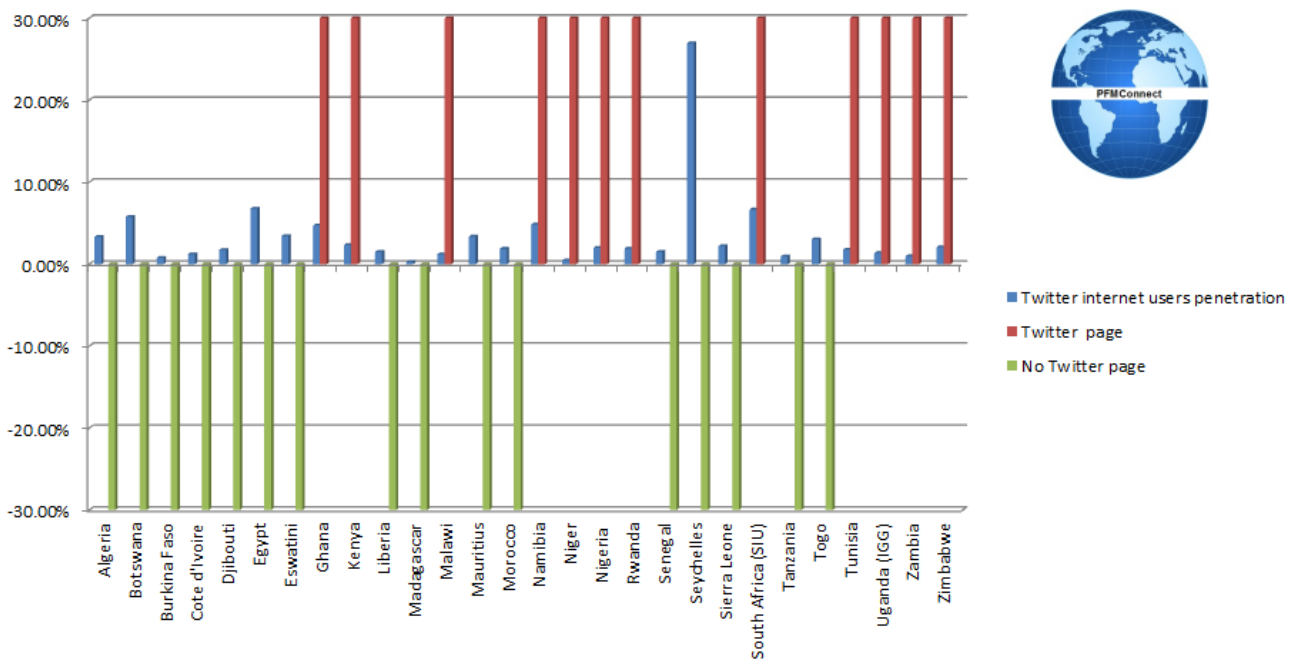
On the other hand, there are a few countries where country Twitter penetration rates are relatively high but the respective ACAs do not have either websites or Twitter pages. This group of countries includes Equatorial Guinea, Gambia and Libya.

The relevant data is presented in Figure 20.

Figure 20: Country Twitter penetration rates in countries where African anti-corruption agencies' do not useTwitter (early May 2021)
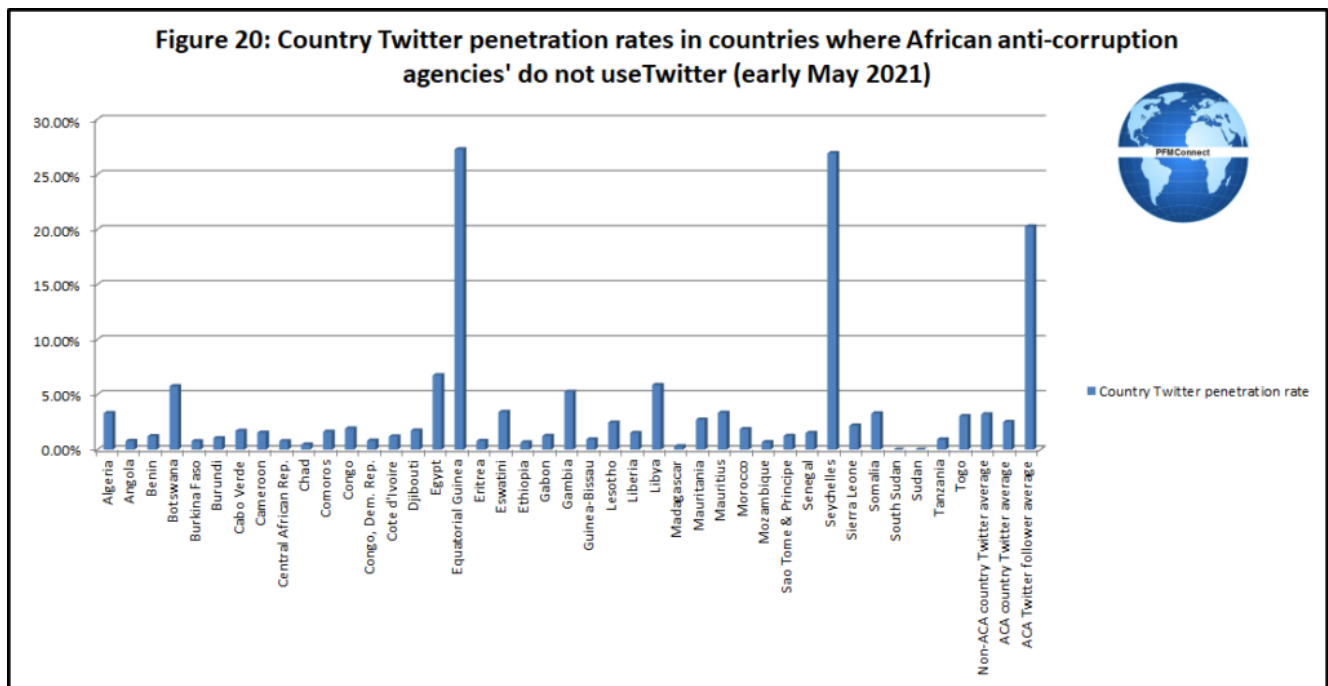
Do corruption levels influence ACA Twitter follower penetration levels?

An analysis of correlations between 2020 CPI scores and ACA Twitter follower penetration levels demonstrated a weak negative relationship between 2020 CPI scores and ACA Twitter follower penetration levels in all countries where ACAs have Twitter pages.

A very weak relationship was recorded between 2020 CPI scores and ACA Twitter follower penetration levels for countries with higher 2020 CPI scores.

On the other hand, a very strong negative relationship was recorded between 2020 CPI scores and ACA Twitter follower penetration levels for countries with lower 2020 CPI scores. While the number of countries with lower 2020 CPI scores and Twitter pages was very small, the results demonstrate how the public may take an interest in social media posts from an ACA

when prevailing corruption levels are relatively high.

2. Reporting activity

The availability of the following categories of key reports on ACA websites or on web pages of national government websites was examined:

- National Anti-Corruption Strategies
- ACA strategic plans
- ACA annual reports

Details of the availability of the above reports on ACA websites as at early May 2021 are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Availability of reports on ACA websites

	National anti-corruption strategy	ACA annual report	ACA strategic plan
Available on ACA website	12	20	13
Available on another national non-ACA website	3	0	0
Exists but not available on any website	4		1
Being prepared	3	0	0
Not prepared	6	8	14
Total	**28**	**28**	**28**

N.B. One Nigerian ACA with a website and the Ugandan ACA which only has social media sites are not included in Table 8.

Some publications that have become available recently on ACA websites for the above-mentioned report categories were examined to particularly review coverage of social media activity.

2.1 Publication of national anti-corruption strategies

Less than one-half of African ACAs with websites have published their respective national anti-corruption strategy (NACS) on their website.

NACS social media coverage

The recent Zimbabwe 2020-2024 NACS specifically identifies the use of social media in its awareness-raising campaigns on the nature and effects of corruption (Specific Objective 1.1) through the employment of social media in its educational communication strategy (Acton 1.1.5)

When discussing its objective of supporting the media (Specific Objective 1.5) the Zimbabwe NACS notes "The internet and various social media provide unprecedented opportunities of disseminating knowledge and increasing transparency across national borders in a timely fashion."

It will be interesting to see whether the more detailed discussion of the use of social media employed in the Zimbabwe 2020-2024 NACS becomes the norm in future African NACS documents.

2.2 Publication of ACA annual reports

Coverage of digital platform activity in ACA annual reports remains generally modest.

ACA annual reports social media coverage

Madagascar's Independent Anti-Corruption Office commented in its 2019 annual report that communication through digital media has been optimised to generate more support fight against corruption".

Nigeria's Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) published details of its media coverage including social media in its 2019 annual report (see box below).

The Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) in its 2019 annual report provided some detailed commentary on it social media activity. It noted that "In 2019, the Commission intensified publication and dissemination of anti-corruption information through a variety of media. In a commentary on a weekly television programme on Combating Corruption run in collaboration with a local TV station, the ZACC reported that recordings of the programme "were also posted on ZACC social media platforms *Facebook* and *Twitter*, where the public were further engaged and their comments and views taken on board".

The ZACC also noted that its weekly television programme on Combating Corruption was consistent with article 13 of the UNCAC which reinforces the belief that States are best served

when more information of public interest is made available to more people.

After providing references to social media activity in their 2018 annual reports, Ghana's Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and Kenya's Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission made no such references in their 2019 Annual Reports.

On balance, coverage of digital platform activity in ACA annual reports is gradually increasing.

2.3 Publication of ACA strategic plans

Less than one-half of African ACAs with websites have published their respective strategic plan on their website. The number of unpublished African ACA strategic plans is not known.

ACA strategic plans social media coverage

Recently published African ACA strategic plans have included social media related activities to support key ACA objectives.

For example Ghana's Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice's 2021-2025 5 Year Strategic Plan lists "Enhanced communication through CHRAJ website and social media handles" as the activity to support their objective of prioritising publication of CHRAJ under Output 1: Corporate affairs and visibility improved by 20% by 2025. The designated

indicator for the latter activity is "Traffic on website and social media handles". An accompanying budget figure has been presented.

Rwanda's Office of the Ombudsman's Strategic Plan 2020/2021-2023/2024 outlined the envisaged roles for its social media and website activity in its discussion of the implementation of its proposed communication and marketing plans, namely:

- **"Media:** The Office of the Ombudsman needs to maintain a permanent communication intended to awareness raising of the general public but also receiving feedback through different media channels including TV, Radios and newspapers, social media and digital billboards.
- **Office of Ombudsman website** shall be regularly updated with significant information about achievements, issues and expected contribution from various layers of the community in issues' solving."

South Africa's Special Investigating Unit's strategic plan 2020/21-2024/25 comments in its "Improving branding & communication" section that "The SIU will, amongst other things, focus on its public interface through the use of multi-media platforms for congruent and constant messaging for brand positioning characterised by independence, trustworthiness, success and integrity".

The Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission's Strategic Plan 2020-2024 has provided for a separate social media related output ("Interactive website, email, social media, & twitter. Manned call centre & toll free").

The recent increase in coverage of social media related activities in African ACA strategic plans is encouraging in view of current growth in social media use in Africa.

2.4 Overview of ACA online reporting activity

ACA reporting principles

The 2012 Jakarta Statement on Principles for Anti-Corruption Agencies set out sixteen principles to help ensure the independence and effectiveness of ACAs, as part of countries´ commitments and obligations under the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). The latter principles include principles addressing public reporting (principle 15) and public communication and engagement (principle 16).

In 2020 UNODC published a "Commentary on the Jakarta statement on principles for anti-corruption agencies" which is intended to assist States parties and ACAs in ensuring that national anti-corruption frameworks are developed and strengthened in line with the UNCAC requirements.

Current African ACA reporting performance

On an overall basis, African ACA online reporting activity has, to date, not achieved the performance levels outlined in UNODC's 2020 publication "Commentary on the Jakarta statement on principles for anti-corruption agencies" for the above-mentioned public reporting and public communication and engagement principles.

New IMF financial support arrangements to African countries which include the strengthening of anti-corruption frameworks could hasten improvements in African ACA online reporting in the near to medium-term.

Conclusions

Public interest in the work of African ACAs continues to grow as demonstrated by the recent growth in Africa ACA social media follower numbers.

The majority of the 20 African ACAs that have recently used at least two digital platforms have though experienced greater interest being shown in their Facebook and Twitter pages rather than their websites. This data is presented in Figure 21.

Figure 21: African anti-corruption agencies' penetration rates across digital platforms June 2021
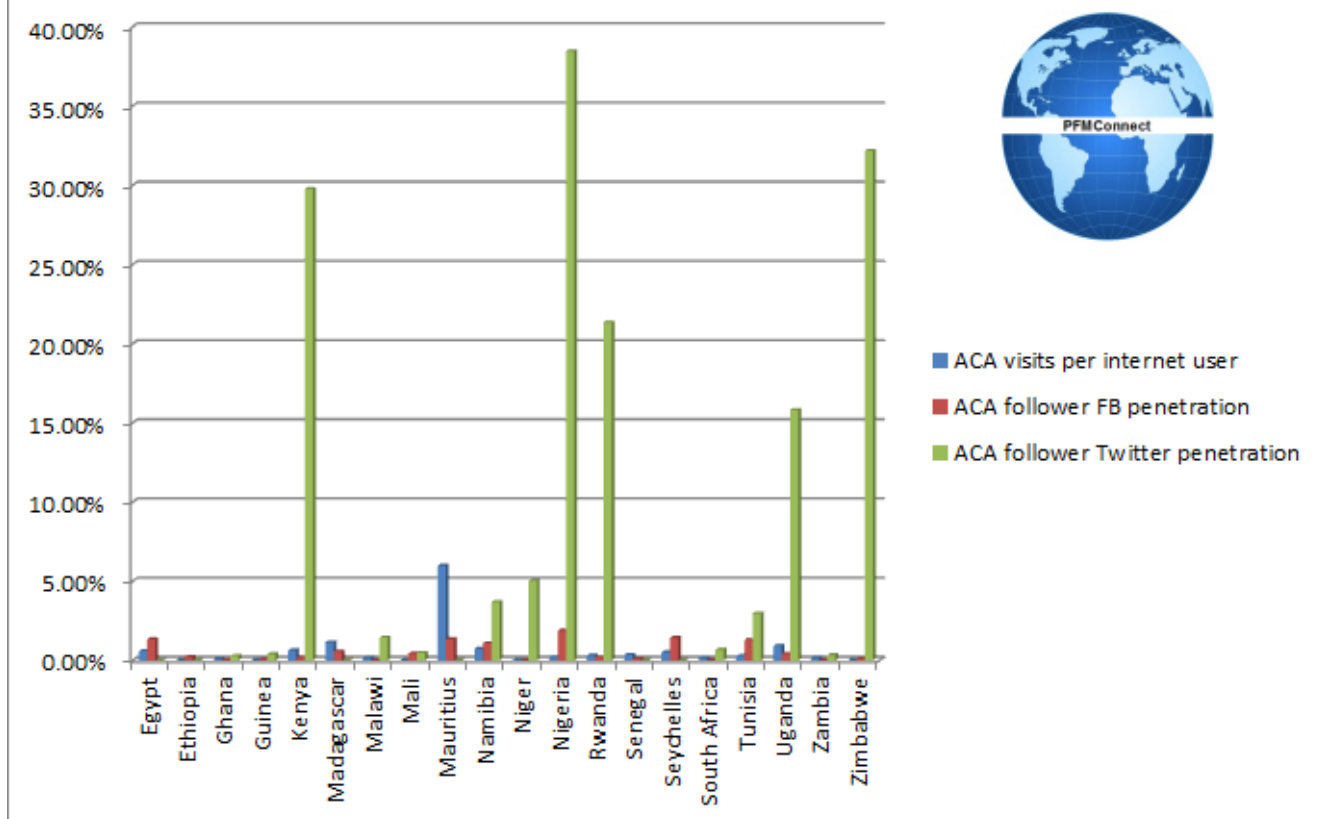
Increased attention is being given to the role of social media in African NACS documents, ACA annual reports and ACA strategic plans. The current overall use of websites by African ACAs is, however, not significant while overall African ACA reporting activity has not yet achieved the levels suggested by UNODC in its 2020 "Commentary on the Jakarta statement on principles for anti-corruption agencies".

There are currently significant opportunities for numerous African ACAs to expand their digital media activities:

- All ACAs should maintain websites on which to lodge key documents and provide anti-corruption advice to all sections of the public. This material can then be

referred to in Facebook posts and tweets.

- All ACA websites should contain at a minimum: the national anti-corruption strategy, annual reports or strategic plans (if these are separate documents).
- Those African ACAs with existing websites but without either Facebook or Twitter pages and are located in countries with relatively high Facebook and/or Twitter subscriber penetration levels should make good this omission.
- The majority of African ACAs with existing Facebook and Twitter pages should increase their daily posting activity.
- The overall quality of content being posted to African ACA social media sites requires improvement in view of the prevailing weak correlation between social media posting volumes and follower engagement. This includes both clarity of message and use of video content.

Implementing the above actions will contribute to an increase in African ACA social media usage and engagement.

African ACA stakeholders can make an immediate non-financial contribution to the expansion of digital media use by African ACAs by actively encouraging ACAs to publish their key reports online and using their social media pages to explain their work and successes.

Development partners can also assist the expansion in use of digital platforms by African through targeted support of related training and development activities.

[1] John Leonardo is a PFM expert with extensive worldwide experience. He is a director of PFMConnect, a consultancy

providing online support in the fields of public finance and digital communication.

Note: Improving PFM digital transparency in African finance ministries

by John Leonardo

Introduction

This note provides an introduction to our "Improving PFM

digital transparency in African finance ministries"
[presentation](#) which is also available as a [video](#). Transparency
of public finances is a key element of a public financial
management (PFM) system enabling public scrutiny of government
actions and intentions. Transparency of public finances is
achieved by providing information on PFM which is
comprehensive, consistent, and accessible to users.

Ministries of Finance (MoFs) play a leading role in promoting
transparency of public finances. The World Bank's September
2020 report "[Enhancing Government Effectiveness and
Transparency – The Fight Against Corruption](#)" has highlighted
the importance of ensuring greater transparency in government
operations.

Transparency is an important factor in African public
financial management (PFM) in view of historically relatively
weak PFM in many African countries, including transparency
activities, and relatively poor recent progress in curbing
corruption.

PFM digital transparency

In a PFM context, digital transparency can be defined as the
process of providing PFM related information using digital
platforms such as websites and social media; for example,
Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. PFM digital transparency should
be an important part of African MoFs' digital government
strategies.

Currently African MoFs employ PFM digital transparency

practices using a range of platforms such as websites and social media (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, LinkedIn). They publish a range of PFM and related material on the latter platforms.

Current PFM digital transparency trends analysis

We have examined MoF website, Facebook and Twitter use to obtain an understanding of Africa MoFs' current use of digital platforms.

The following statistics are presented and reviewed in the presentation:

- Country internet usage

- MoF website visits during May/July 2020 and projected annualised visits for 2020

- Domestic and non-resident visits to MoF websites

- Country Facebook usage

- MoF Facebook page follower numbers

- Country Twitter usage

- MoF Twitter follower numbers

We have also examined penetration levels for MoF website users, Facebook and Twitter followers to demonstrate the level of usage of these digital platforms. In addition, we have identified correlations that may exist between digital platform use and leading economic and governance indicators including those relating to e-government.

Some key findings

Some of our key findings from our analysis are as follows:

- Six of the twenty-five MoFs with Facebook pages had higher Facebook follower numbers than estimated 2020 MoF visits to the respective websites demonstrating the role that MoF Facebook pages can play in boosting PFM transparency

- MoF social media content approaches differ quite markedly with MoFs generally publishing a wider range of material on their Facebook pages compared with the material included in tweets on Twitter.

- African MoF social media activity is helping to raise awareness about African MoFs' PFM activities. Some African MoFs have generated considerable interest in their activities using social media.

- The proportion of non-domestic visitors to MoF websites

varies considerably demonstrating how digital structures enable reach to the diaspora and other international stakeholders

- Use of digital communication mechanisms to strengthen African MoFs' operational capacity and support PFM reform plans have to date been limited prior to the onset of COVID-19

- African MOFs overall progress to date in the use of digital platforms to promote transparency has been relatively modest

Recommendations

We recommend African MoFs should take advantage of the opportunities provided by digital platforms to improve their PFM digital transparency by:

- Addressing identified PEFA transparency gaps which will result in more PFM material being published

- Establishing Facebook pages if these are not already in place

- Posting a variety of PFM related information on Facebook pages to increase community interaction and promote transparency

- Preparing PFM digital transparency action plans to improve PFM digital transparency performance and support PFM reform activities.

We have also outlined the nature of the tasks that should be included in PFM digital transparency action plans.

Regional analyses of trends in key PFM digital transparency indicators for all 45 African finance ministries are available for:

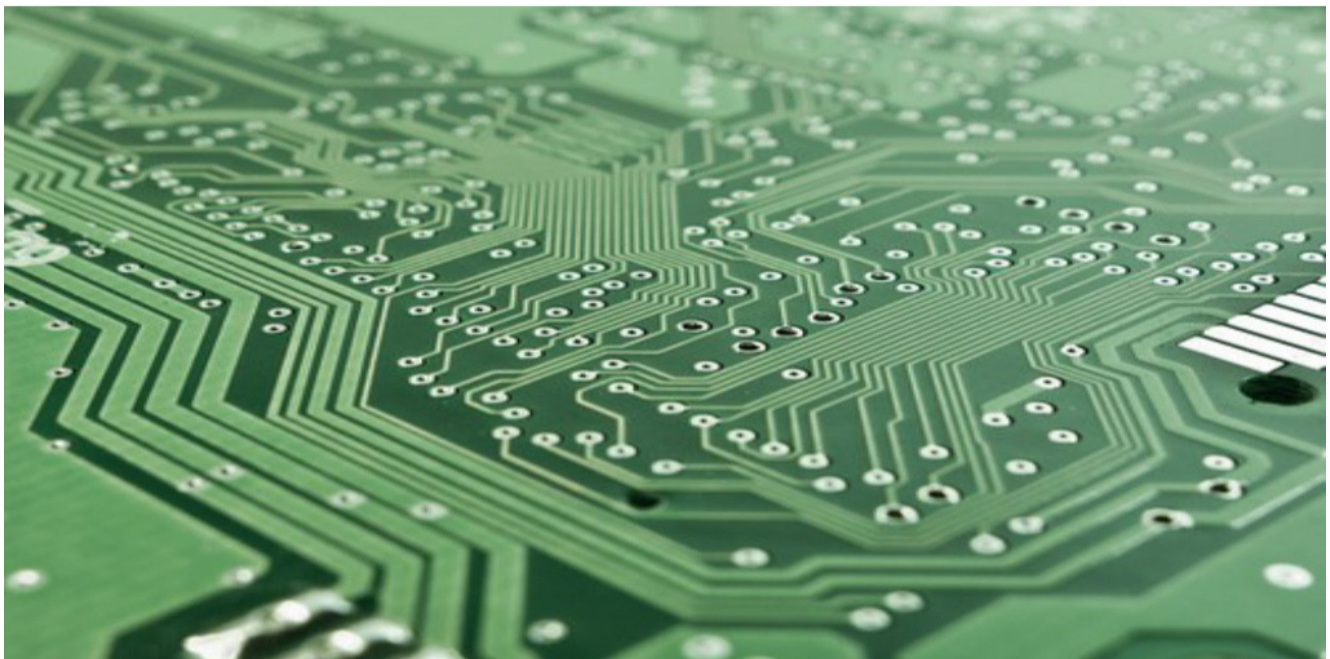[Central Africa](#)

[East Africa](#)

[North Africa](#)

[Southern Africa](#)

[West Africa](#)

Using Digital Technology to Improve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Delivery

by David Fellows and Glyn Evans[1]

The SDGs

The United Nation's [SDGs](#) present an array of complex social, engineering, medical, scientific and managerial challenges for member states set in different contexts and mostly requiring very significant investment, organisational capacity and community involvement. Nations have made commitments to this agenda and it is accepted as guiding the key purposes of international development work worldwide. It is a hugely ambitious enterprise yet we suggest that current development work could be more successful.

The need for a powerful learning system

At a general level perhaps the greatest challenge is the creation of a learning system that is powerful enough to develop and distribute relevant knowledge and an understanding of how that knowledge can be best applied in the very different circumstances that exist across the world. As SDG performance criteria are finalised and adopted a [report by ESCAP](#) makes it clear just how difficult it is going to be to make a real difference.

We are not suggesting a great deal of organisation to create this necessary learning system. We propose a loose system of networking between experts based on digital communication. This would enable advice to be made available to community-based projects with greater levels of expertise being made available to the development of major programmes and projects. It would also facilitate feedback on project progress and performance. The use of digital technology would also improve the public information base and support public engagement.

Learning system features

The basis of this networking would be a digital communication system that would be largely self-driven by those in the field and a support network that will evolve around them. Key aspects of this digital communication system are illustrated below.

At national and local level:

- *Provide* feedback on progress made at
  local level within the country
- *Request the public to identify key factors to be taken into account*
  when designing SDG initiatives
- *Seek feedback on the regulations*
  required to support SDG initiatives
- *Engage in shared learning (perhaps amongst scattered populations) between ordinary people who are trying to cope*
  with SDG challenges on limited resources

At regional level:

- *Undertake shared research programmes*
- *Share experiences of adapting recognised approaches to particular circumstances*
- *Improve monitoring techniques*
- *Share monitoring and advisory services*
- *Encourage the development of problem-solving support networks*
- *Undertake peer reviews of projects and governance*

arrangements

At international level:

- *Build worldwide expertise to address fundamental scientific, engineering, economic, social and implimentation challenges*
- *Identify and promote successful strategies and initiatives*
- *Recognise issues for which effective solutions remain elusive*
- *Create networks capable of addressing significant and urgent challenges*
- *Develop modeling tools to help design solutions*

Supporting technology would include:

- *Websites including chat rooms, website messaging, on-line data monitoring and online questionnaires*
- *Video-conferencing for expert dialogue and advisory sessions*
- *Cloud-stored databases and shared document development*
- *Email for public interactions(newsletters), dispatch of documents, technical & administrative correspondence and technical update circulars*
- *Learning management systems to support training programmes that develop skills and expertise*
- *Application software to assist the gathering of performance data including the collection of data from administrative*

> *sources (ESCAP Report ibid: page x)*
> - *Text messaging and social media for public dialogue*
> - *Massive open online courses to raise general awareness*

In general such a system would require relatively unsophisticated technology dependent only on fairly low level digital communication. Expert dialogue would tend to benefit from good connectivity at reasonable bandwidth to support video conferencing although this is not absolutely essential. Proprietary software is readily available for most of these applications although bespoke monitoring, modelling and assessment tools could be created as the approach gained traction.

Examples from around the world

Our blog '[An International eCollaboration Route to Public Service Reform](#)'
(also published by the Australian National University's [DEVPOLICYBLOG](#) in July 2017) considers the diverse power of digital communication technologies. Examples of this technology used in ways relevant to this proposition are, as follows:

1. An example of 'Shared Learning' is set out in the UNESCO publication [Digital Services for Education in Africa](#). UNICEF has reported that in Vietnam 40% of children in rural areas used the internet for educational purposes, rising to 62% in urban areas.

2. Communities of practice have already been established in

[Canada](#) for green climate purposes

3. Social media has been used by PFMConnect for the past three years to raise public awareness on public financial management and governance topics reaching significant numbers of people in more than 50 countries.

Conclusion

This is not a system requiring heavy oversight and regulation. We seek cultural change to the way programmes and projects are developed. A more inclusive approach at expert and community level could be usefully supported by major development agencies and could become a requirement on contractors. For instance, these proposals could help the Green Climate Fund which appears to be heavily engaged in process issues at the expense of shared innovation.

Is it time to experiment with change?

End note

We should be pleased to discuss the ideas in this piece with those who believe that they may have relevance to their situation.

[[1]](#) *David Fellows is a specialist in public financial management and digital government reform and is a director of*

PFMConnect. He is a recipient of the Swedish Prize for Democratic Digital Service Delivery. Glyn Evans is the Vice President of the Major Cities of Europe IT Users Group and former CIO of various major cities.

An International eCollaboration Route to Public Service Reform

Author: David Fellows

Governance of public affairs is a complex topic. It includes the processes by which decisions are made, the means by which service performance is assessed, the standards of behaviour to which public servants are held, the transparency applied to public life and the extent to which ordinary citizens are engaged in policy-making. In this respect, developing countries provide a wealth of expertise and examples of outstanding practice, research projects, and reform programmes.

In this post I propose an approach to governance reform in

developing countries that is owned and developed more extensively through multinational collaboration, and that uses digital media as a basis for that collaboration. This is not to suggest that development partners should be excluded from generating ideas or providing support but that developing countries should become more dominant orchestrators of their own development through more effective collaboration.

Working with an International Perspective

Each nation requires its own strategies and implementation plans for governance reform, reflecting its specific needs, capacities, cultures, geographies and priorities. Nevertheless, multinational collaboration can offer a valuable combination of experience, ideas and expertise from diverse perspectives. At the centre of such an approach would be those who are responsible for achieving administrative reform, both civil servants and politicians, and who are intimately familiar with the challenges of the operational situation.

Such an approach would require an open and honest sharing of key problems and possibilities, the reality of progress made and the means by which achievements are being realised. Research could be shared at an early stage, development programme progress could be followed as it is rolled out and promising initiatives could be emulated promptly. Practical solutions could be sought to common problems, including mutual dependences.

This shared approach could involve officials, academics, staff from development agencies and the private sector, journalists and other experts. Technology can facilitate virtual exchanges that would not otherwise be feasible due to time, cost, and travel restrictions. It could enable the engagement of those best placed to assist, rather than those who are most

readily available. In short, digital technology is an excellent medium for bringing the most appropriate combination of people together in a low-cost, time-efficient manner.

There are very many collective organisations in most if not all regions of the world, including organisations with broad national representational remits, organisations consisting of specific types of institutions, and professional bodies. The purpose of this proposal is not to supplant these organisations, but to use them as a source of expertise, conduits for dissemination and platforms for discussion. Regional collaboration whether of formal groupings or ad hoc alliances can also provide a highly effective means by which these proposals can be approached in their entirety.

New Ways of Working using Digital Technology

There are four basic strands to my proposed approach: (i) collaborative development arrangements; (ii) expert advice and mentoring; (iii) professional training for public servants; and (iv) public transparency and engagement.

(i) Collaborative development. Central to this proposal is the notion of collaboration: sharing current practice; learning from research and reform programmes; and identifying more effective ways of working through collective consideration. Relevant subject matter could include: public procurement; budgeting and performance management; auditing and risk management; broad-based annual reporting; the appointment of public officials; the conduct of elections; declarations for public office; small business development; cross border trading; taxation policy and the administration of justice. Broader themes are also relevant, such as strategic planning; combatting corruption and equality of opportunity.

A key aspect of the collaborative approach is to engage a

broad range of relevant people to contribute their ideas, experiences and judgements. The emphasis should be on how national priorities might be identified, reform programmes constructed, and viability tested. Their objective would be the creation of reasonably effective solutions that are affordable, feasible and sustainable.

The use of digital technology would allow flexible connectivity between people and ready access to information resources. Databases capturing a wide variety of policies, plans, reviews, process descriptions and standards would need to be constructed and made available for interrogation. Updatable schedules of financial and performance data would be required together with platforms to facilitate multiple authoring of documents. Working group meetings could be conducted over video conferencing systems offering document display and a record of proceedings.

(ii) Expert advice and mentoring. Beyond large group collaborations, the proposal also offers the opportunity for knowledge and experiences to be shared on a more personal basis. The key technological contributions here would be email, chat rooms and video conferencing with some use of databases as discussed under (i) above.

(iii) Professional training for public servants. Professional training is an essential aspect of public service development. However, traditional training methods can be highly expensive when physical attendance is required and can make significant demands on the student's time away from the office.

'Open university' approaches to further education have been in operation for decades in many countries and new technology has given them a boost [1]. There is no reason why the model cannot be extended to suit the particular professional development needs of public servants from developing countries.

Digital technology can enhance the learning experience with video packages, interactive learning modules, online assessments, conventional study material, chat rooms and email exchanges together with video conferencing for tutorial sessions. Existing study programmes (e.g., World Bank courses) could be incorporated. Academics from major institutions around the world, experts from development agencies and specialists from international centres of excellence could be approached to lend support, providing a rich learning experience. It is possible that some existing public service training institutions could provide the basis for this type of provision.

Financial support for traditional training facilities has tended to fall out of favour with development partners. Perhaps this should be reconsidered using an evidenced-based approach to the value derived. A recent study [2] undertaken by PFMConnect provides substantial support for the feasibility of such an approach.

(iv) Public transparency and engagement. This can equip citizens to contribute ideas for the development of public service and hold officials to account for their judgement, integrity and effectiveness. Going further, it can also help to reduce costs and improve service benefits, root out corruption, and create confidence in public institutions.

This process of accountability and engagement can be effectively achieved through official websites, chat rooms, email and social media. There is considerable scope for all governments to improve two-way communication with their citizens. A professional training institution as discussed above should seek to play a leading role in advancing key developments in administrative reform, including public transparency.

Key Technical Considerations

This proposal mainly concerns the infrastructure available to central government services in capital cities, as central government offices are the principal subject of these proposals. In this respect there is already a fairly high standard of general internet connectivity and the capacity to implement facilities of the kind required. The public engagement aspects must, however, rely on whatever public networks are available in a particular locality and these can be expected to improve over time.

In terms of government offices, there appear to be three principal technological issues. Firstly, individual offices need to have appropriate internal facilities. Secondly, there will need to be agreement to a range of key considerations concerning the digital architecture, service providers and core software products. Some issues must be decided internationally and some can be left to local discretion. For example, video conferencing requires basic software decisions to be made on behalf of all users with operating systems and browsers having the capacity to support the chosen software but beyond this there can be considerable desktop flexibility. Thirdly, it may be useful to establish document standards for certain purposes [3].

A balance would need to be struck between the sharing of information across a broad network of participants and the need for confidentiality and security over some material. Clearly such a proposal will not take root if it is based on stipulations that are highly complex and expensive. An evolutionary approach is clearly required.

Conclusion

In a [previous blog](#) covered by the World Policy Journal the author and colleague John Leonardo set out the case for governance reform in developing countries in order to reduce

corruption and thereby improve economic performance and public service delivery.

Shifting the balance of responsibility and organising power for governance reform towards developing nations could give this agenda new impetus. An imaginative use of digital technology could enrich the inclusivity and practicality of such an approach.

This is a very tentative proposal. I have not started to discuss whether it would constitute a unified system or a series of ad hoc arrangements; how such a proposal would gain traction; and how the system would be financed. Observations and reactions would be welcome.

David Fellows is Co-principal of PFMConnect.

Thanks are extended to Chris Fellows of ITI Europe for his views on the application of digital technology.

[1] See this example from a British university: http://www.wbs.ac.uk/courses/mba/distance-learning/teaching/

[2] Commonwealth Africa Anti-Corruption Programme Evaluation – see http://blog-pfmconnect.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Anti-Corruption-Africa-Programme-Evaluation-Feb-2017.pdf

[3] For instance: Horizon 2020 EU programs must include a deliverable called "data management plan" that, in part, describes the kinds of formats that will be adopted within the consortium. See http://www.sussex.ac.uk/library/researchdatamanagement/create/biddingforfunding/horizon2020dataplan and http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/oa_pilot/h2020-hi-oa-data-mgt_en.pdf)