

Corruption in West Africa (a US perspective)



Introduction

The United States State Department's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* ("country reports") strive to provide a factual and objective record on the status of human rights worldwide. The 2021 country reports were published on 12 April 2022. Section 4 of the country reports provides an assessment of Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government which addresses the extent to which a country's law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials and the level of implementation of these laws. The country reports provide an insight into a major influence on efforts to combat corruption in West Africa.

Scores for West African countries published by Transparency International in their 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) report demonstrate that West Africa was ranked third equal out

of the five African regions in terms of improvements in CPI scores during 2012-2021. Individual country CPI score performance was variable for West African countries in the 2012-2021 period. The country reports for West African countries reveal shortcomings in the majority of West African countries in the implementation of current criminal penalties for corruption by officials. Further discussion on corruption trends in West African countries is provided [here](#).

Details of the Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government overview comments for West African countries in the 2021 country reports are provided below.

[Benin](#)

“The law provides for criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government sometimes implemented the law effectively; however, there were numerous reports of government corruption during the year, and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. It was commonly believed, and acknowledged by some judicial personnel, that the judicial system at all levels was susceptible to corruption.”

[Burkina Faso](#)

“The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively. There were numerous reports of government corruption during the year, including cases of misappropriation, fraud, or other offenses. The NGO National Network for Anti-Corruption cited the customs, police, and General Directorate of Land and Maritime Transport as the most corrupt entities in the government.”

[Cabo Verde](#)

“The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented the law

effectively. There were isolated reports of government corruption during the year.”

Cote d'Ivoire

“The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials reportedly engaged frequently in corrupt practices with impunity. Human rights organizations reported official corruption, particularly in the judiciary, police, and security forces, but they noted victims of such corruption often did not report it or assist in investigations because they believed the government would not act or they feared retaliation. Civil society groups and government officials reported the High Authority for Good Government (HABG), the government’s anticorruption authority, was not empowered to act independently or to take decisive action. The HABG can investigate alleged corruption but lacks the mandate to prosecute; it must refer cases to the public prosecutor. In July the government created a special unit within the Abidjan public prosecutor’s office dedicated to investigating complex economic and financial crimes, including those involving government officials.”

Gambia

“The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government did not credibly investigate or prosecute any official accused of corruption. There were many allegations of government corruption.”

Ghana

“The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by government officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. There were numerous reports of government corruption. Corruption was present in all branches of government, according to media and NGOs, including

recruitment into the security services. Since the first special prosecutor took office in 2018, no corruption case undertaken by that office resulted in a conviction. When the new special prosecutor took office in August, his staff included one investigator and one prosecutor, both seconded from other offices. The government took steps to implement laws intended to foster more transparency Page 15 and accountability in public affairs. In July 2020 authorities commissioned the Right to Information (RTI) secretariat to provide support to RTI personnel in the public sector; however, some civil society organizations stated the government had not made sufficient progress implementing the law. The country continued use of the national anticorruption online reporting dashboard, for the coordination of all anticorruption efforts of various governmental bodies.”

[Guinea](#)

“The law provides criminal penalties for corruption, but the government did not implement the law effectively. There were multiple allegations during the year of corrupt practices by public officials that went unpunished.”

[Guinea Bissau](#)

“The law provides criminal penalties of one month to 10 years in prison for corruption by officials. The government did not implement the law effectively, and officials in all branches and on all levels of government engaged in corrupt and non-transparent practices with impunity. There were numerous reports of government corruption during the year.”

[Liberia](#)

“The law provides criminal penalties for bribery, abuse of office, economic sabotage, and other corruption-related offenses committed by officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively. There were numerous reports of government corruption during the year. Officials frequently

engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. Corruption was a fact of daily life for citizens and businesses alike. According to the September Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia State of Corruption Report, 90 percent of citizens thought corruption was high in the country and 76 percent had witnessed corruption. The report also labelled the national budget as a tool for corruption in which public resources end up in the pockets of public officials through direct payments, indirect payments, or backdoor deals. As noted earlier in Section 1.e., there was also reportedly widespread corruption in the judiciary, in the form of bribery and extortion where favourable decisions were bought or in the form of direct government influence over judicial decisions. The mandate of the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission is to prevent, investigate, and prosecute cases of corruption among public officials. On June 14, President Weah appointed Edwin Kla Martin as the new executive chairperson of the commission, effective July 22. Martin's appointment followed the resignation of Ndubuisi Nwabudike as chairperson in February amid allegations that Nwabudike obtained his Liberian citizenship illegally."

Mali

"The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. There were numerous reports of government corruption during the year."

Niger

"Although the law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials often engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. There were several reports of government corruption."

Nigeria

“Although the law provides criminal penalties for conviction of official corruption, the government did not consistently implement the law, and government employees, including elected officials, frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. Massive, widespread, and pervasive corruption affected all levels of government, including the judiciary and security services. The constitution provides immunity from civil and criminal prosecution for the president, vice president, governors, and deputy governors while in office. There were numerous allegations of government corruption during the year.”

Senegal

“The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government often did not enforce the law effectively. Officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. There were numerous reports of government corruption.”

Sierra Leone

“The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented the law effectively. There were numerous reports of government corruption.”

Togo

“Although the law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, the government did not implement the law effectively. There were numerous allegations of government corruption, and some officials engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. The body responsible for combating corruption, the High Authority for Preventing and Combating Corruption and Related Offenses, is an independent body that works with the judiciary on strengthening anticorruption practices and

oversees adherence of public officials to anticorruption statutes. It also has a public outreach function that includes raising public awareness and referring complaints for legal action. Other state entities, such as the Government Accounting Office and the Finances Inspectorate, investigated and audited public institutions but reported few results. Authorities maintained toll-free and text-messaging lines for citizens to report cases of corruption.”

Conclusion

The country reports for West African countries demonstrate that only a small proportion of these countries are well placed to fight against corruption by officials.

Limited overall progress is likely to be made against public sector corruption in West Africa while the relevant authorities fail to enforce criminal penalties for corruption.

Corruption in Commonwealth Africa (a US perspective)



Introduction

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Section 4 of the country reports provides an assessment of Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government which addresses the extent to which a country's law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials and the level of implementation of these laws.

Scores for Commonwealth Africa countries published by Transparency International in their 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) report demonstrate that the majority of the nineteen Commonwealth Africa countries failed to increase their 2012 CPI scores during 2012-2021. The

weaknesses in the implementation of criminal penalties for corruption by officials have no doubt contributed in some way to the lack of progress in addressing corruption in a number of Commonwealth Africa countries. Further discussion on corruption trends in Commonwealth Africa countries is provided [here](#).

Details of the overview comments for Commonwealth Africa countries in the 2021 country reports are provided below.

[Botswana](#)

“The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally sought to implement these laws effectively. Officials tasked with enforcement lacked adequate training and resources, however. Media reports of government corruption continued. During the year there were numerous reports of government corruption, including allegations tied to tenders issued by local governments for COVID-19 projects, such as renovating public facilities so that they complied with virus prevention measures, as well as in the acquisition of personal protective equipment. A 2019 poll by Transparency International found that 7 percent of those polled had paid bribes to government officials, an increase from the 1 percent who reported paying bribes in a 2015 poll.”

[Cameroon](#)

“The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively. There were numerous reports of government

corruption. Officials sometimes engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. The law identifies different offenses as corruption, including influence peddling, involvement in a prohibited employment, and failure to declare a known conflict of interest. Reporting corruption was encouraged through exempting whistleblowers from criminal proceedings. In addition to the laws, the National Anticorruption Agency (CONAC), Special Criminal Court, National Financial Investigation Agency, Ministry in Charge of Supreme State Audit, and Audit Bench of the Supreme Court also contributed to fighting corruption in the country. CONAC, the most prominent of the anticorruption agencies, was constrained by the absence of any legislative or presidential mandate that could empower it to combat corruption. There were reports that senior officials sentenced to prison were not always required to forfeit their ill-gotten gains.”

Eswatini

“The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented the law effectively. There were isolated reports of government corruption during the year. Officials sometimes engaged in corrupt practices with impunity.”

Gambia

“The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government did not credibly investigate or prosecute any official accused of corruption. There were many allegations of government corruption.”

Ghana

“The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by government officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. There were numerous reports of government corruption. Corruption was present in all branches of government, according to media and NGOs, including recruitment into the security services. Since the first special prosecutor took office in 2018, no corruption case undertaken by that office resulted in a conviction. When the new special prosecutor took office in August, his staff included one investigator and one prosecutor, both seconded from other offices.

The government took steps to implement laws intended to foster more transparency and accountability in public affairs. In July 2020 authorities commissioned the Right to Information (RTI) secretariat to provide support to RTI personnel in the public sector; however, some civil society organizations stated the government had not made sufficient progress implementing the law.

The country continued use of the national anticorruption online reporting dashboard, for the coordination of all anticorruption efforts of various governmental bodies.”

Kenya

“The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption. There were numerous reports of government corruption during the year. Officials frequently engaged in allegedly corrupt

practices with impunity. Despite public progress in fighting corruption, the government continued to face hurdles in implementing relevant laws effectively. The slow processing of corruption cases was exacerbated by COVID-19 containment measures, with courts lacking sufficient technological capacity to hear cases remotely.”

Lesotho

“The law provides criminal penalties for conviction of corruption by officials. The government did not implement the law effectively, and some officials engaged in corrupt practices with impunity.”

Malawi

“The law provides criminal penalties for conviction of corruption by officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively. Officials sometimes engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. There were numerous reports of government corruption during the year.

The government, in cooperation with donors, continued implementation of an action plan to pursue cases of corruption, reviewed how the “Cashgate” corruption scandal occurred, and introduced internal controls and improved systems to prevent further occurrences. Progress on investigations and promised reforms was slow.”

Mauritius

“The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials sometimes engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. There were isolated reports of government corruption during the year.”

Mozambique

“The law provides criminal penalties for conviction of corrupt acts by officials; however, the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials often engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. There were numerous reports of corruption in all branches and at all levels of government during the year.”

Namibia

“The law provides criminal penalties for conviction of official corruption; however, the government did not implement the law effectively. Officials sometimes engaged in corrupt practices with impunity.”

Nigeria

“Although the law provides criminal penalties for conviction of official corruption, the government did not consistently implement the law, and government employees, including elected officials, frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. Massive, widespread, and pervasive corruption affected all levels of government, including the judiciary and security services. The constitution provides immunity from

civil and criminal prosecution for the president, vice president, governors, and deputy governors while in office. There were numerous allegations of government corruption during the year.”

Rwanda

“The law provides criminal penalties for conviction of corruption by officials and private persons transacting business with the government that include imprisonment and fines, and the government generally implemented the law effectively. There were isolated reports of government corruption during the year, particularly related to road construction projects. The law also provides for citizens who report requests for bribes by government officials to receive financial rewards when officials are prosecuted and convicted.”

Seychelles

“The law provides criminal penalties for conviction of corruption by officials, and the government implemented the law effectively. There were isolated reports of government corruption during the year.”

Sierra Leone

“The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented the law effectively. There were numerous reports of government corruption.”

South Africa

“The law provides for criminal penalties for conviction of official corruption, and the government generally did not implement the law effectively, and officials sometimes engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. There were numerous reports of government corruption during the year.”

Tanzania

“The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively. There were isolated reports of government corruption during the year. President Hassan took several steps to signal a commitment to fighting corruption. These included surprise inspections of ministries, hospitals, and the port of Dar es Salaam, often followed by the immediate dismissal or suspension of officials.”

Uganda

“The law provides criminal penalties of up to 12 years’ imprisonment and confiscation of the convicted persons’ property for official corruption.

Nevertheless, transparency civil society organizations stated the government did not implement the law effectively, and there were numerous reports of government corruption during the year. Officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity, and many corruption cases remained pending for years.”

Zambia

“The law provides criminal penalties for officials convicted of corruption, and the government attempted to enforce the law but did so inconsistently. Officials often engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. Although the government collaborated with the international community and civil society organizations to improve capacity to investigate and prevent corruption, anticorruption NGOs observed that, the enforcement rate was low among senior government officials and in the civil service.

According to Transparency International Zambia, the conviction rate for those prosecuted for corruption was 10 to 20 percent. The Patriotic Front government did not effectively or consistently apply laws against corrupt officials; it selectively applied anticorruption law to target opposition leaders or officials who ran afoul of it. Transparency International Zambia further reported that, during the Patriotic Front administration, officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity.”

Conclusion

The United States State Department has assessed that more than half of Commonwealth Africa countries are not effectively implementing penalties for corrupt activities. This outcome is similar to the prevailing overall trend in CPI scores reported for 2012-2021.

Considerable effort is required by Commonwealth Africa countries and their development partners in the short to

medium term to reverse the current unsatisfactory trend in implementation of penalties for corrupt activities.

Digital Media, Transparency and the War Against Corruption



Posted by David Fellows and John Leonardo [\[1\]](#)

Corruption is highly damaging to economic and social life through misappropriation of public funds, restriction of open market activity, favouritism towards families of those in power, and the many detrimental effects of rent seeking. In this piece we review evidence for the power of transparency to reduce corruption and improve economic performance. We then consider the increasing relevance of digital media, particularly social media, to the transparency agenda and how its application can be encouraged.

Economic performance, transparency and corruption

The IMF's ['Framework for Enhanced Fund Engagement'](#) 2018 noted that (i) transparency is significantly correlated with a perceptions-based indicator of the control of corruption; (ii) higher levels of corruption are typically correlated with lower growth; and (iii) corruption and governance are significantly associated with average long-run per capita growth, investment, and revenue. The IMF's Fiscal Monitor: [Curbing Corruption](#) (April 2019 edition) shows that the least corrupt governments can collect considerably more in taxes than those at the same level of economic development. [In a blog announcing this guidance](#) Christine Lagarde, then Managing Director of the IMF, affirmed the importance of transparency by commenting that; 'At the end of the day, the most durable "cure" for corruption is strong, transparent, and accountable institutions'.

How governments may involve digital media

The [World Bank Document](#) 'Enhancing Government Effectiveness and Transparency: The Fight Against Corruption' (September 2020) details studies in which developing countries have sought to combat corruption by improving transparency.

It instances:

- The identification of corruption relating to infrastructure projects in Columbia by the Government urging citizens to publicize unfinished projects.
- The introduction of participatory budgeting in Brazil where one study found that adopter municipalities achieved a 39% higher tax collection than those that had not.
- The use of Beneficial Ownership declarations in the Ukraine where online access to records promises significant advantages following a chequered introductory experience.
- Public reporting of Supreme Audit Institution (SIA) findings in Ghana, and India's practice of encouraging the public to comment on SIA reports and provide evidence of misdeeds.

These are all public engagement activities that can most readily be undertaken via digital media.

The impact of social media

Social media is a growing phenomenon across the developing world. It can be used by governments to encourage citizens to make their views known (figures in million).

Country	Population	Internet users Dec-00	Internet users Dec-19	Facebook users Dec-19	Twitter users Dec-19	Min of Finance Twitter followers Jun-20
Kenya	53.7	0.2	46.8	7	0.954	*0.004
Rwanda	12.9	0.005	6	0.6	0.079	0.064
Uganda	45.7	0.04	18.5	2.5	0.177	0.062

Note: *Kenya's Anti-Corruption Agency has 293,000 Twitter followers

A survey of Kenyan social media users conducted by [SIMELab in 2020](#) suggested that social media use was becoming highly age specific.

Age	Social Media Preferred by Kenyan Users (SIMELab findings)
Primary school pupils	Facebook
14 to 20 years	Pinterest, Snapchat, TikTok
21 to 25 years	Instagram, Snapchat, Telegram
26 to 35 years	Linked in (particularly for those from higher education), Skype, Twitter

The survey identified the three most used media as WhatsApp (89%), Facebook (82%) and YouTube (58%). [TIFA Research](#) has identified Facebook as the current most effective advertising platform.

The African public accountability movement [Connected Development](#) (CODE) based in Nigeria uses digital media to help marginalised communities monitor public service investment employing its 'follow the money' slogan. A current focus is COVID-19 expenditure.

[We have analysed](#) the correlation between Transparency International's 2019 CPI scores for the 48 best performing African Countries included in the index where both Facebook and Twitter services were available. There are strong positive correlations between social media user numbers and perceived corruption levels. This result seems consistent with the transparency/corruption relationship found in the IMF Framework for Enhanced Fund Engagement, reflecting public interest in government affairs and corruption.

A growing relationship between formal digital media and social media

Over the past year online news media have reported government initiatives against corruption and investigated acts of corruption. Two examples:

- On 11th November 2020 the [Cyprus Mail commented](#) that: 'without (greater) public support, anti-corruption groups are unlikely to attain their objectives, because the politicians will have no reason to take any notice of them'.
- On 21st November 2020 [ABS-CBN News reported](#) that a task force investigating Philippine Government corruption led by Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra had received at least 60 complaints during the previous two weeks.

These causes could benefit from social media use by community activists (Cyprus) and the government (Philippines).

Conclusions

The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on developing countries brings the prospect of reduced national resources unless and until these countries can address their corruption challenges.

Formal online media have helped increase transparency in recent times. Further, social media is fast becoming an important form of popular communication throughout the developing world. The targeted use of social media platforms presents an effective opportunity for online public engagement that makes messaging easy to assimilate and respond to.

Governments can use social media to seek public support for reporting anti-corruption activities, complaining about unfair decisions and exposing the accumulation of unexplained wealth by politicians and officials. Such engagement is, however, dependent on the demonstration of government integrity, the recognition of public priorities, and the provision of basic information on services and funding to local communities.

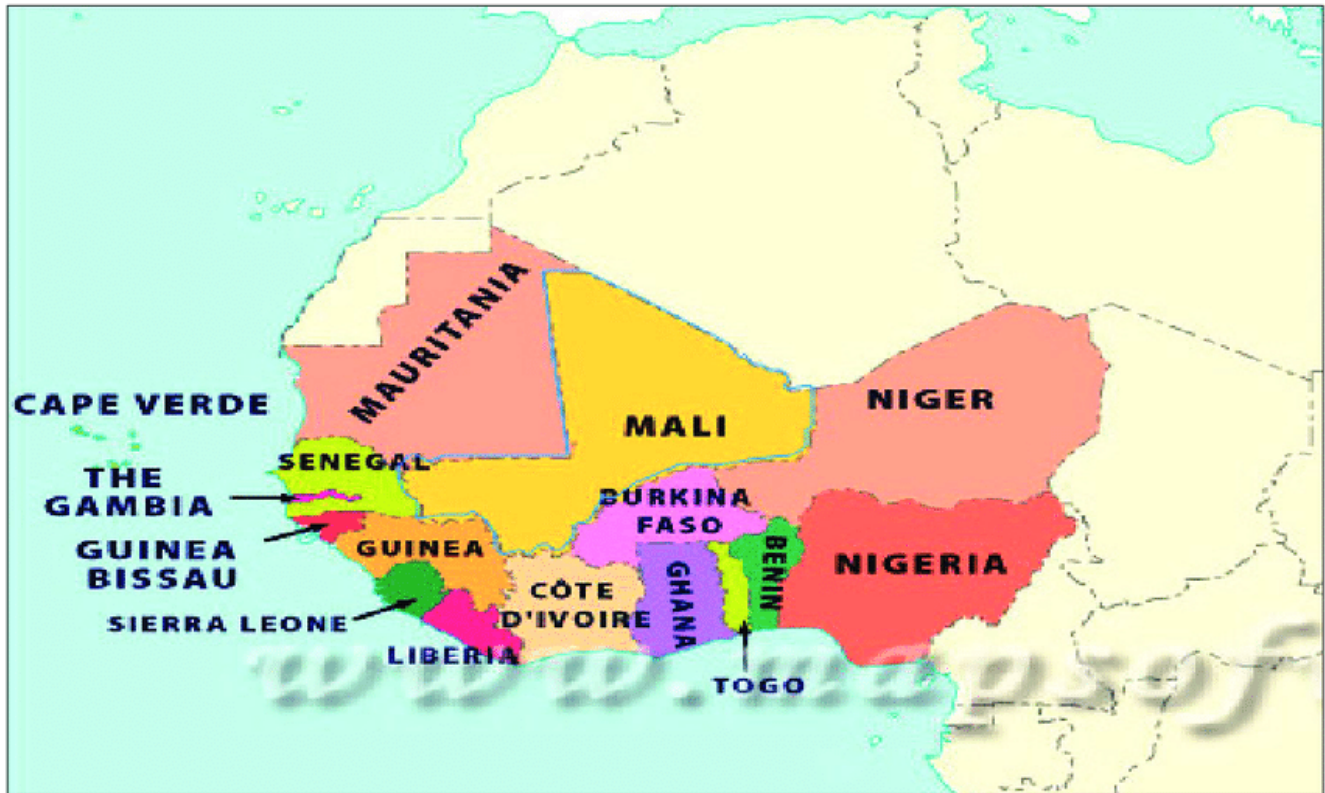
The international development community can encourage governments to uphold press freedom, protect whistle-blowers and use social media as part of the transparency process, and scale up its support to countries that are pursuing effective anti-corruption policies.

A supporting video is available [here](#).

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[1] David Fellows is an international development PFM advisor who previously worked extensively in UK local government finance and in the Cabinet Office. He was a leader for the introduction of digital communication in UK public service delivery. John Leonardo is a PFM expert with extensive worldwide experience. They are both directors of PFMConnect, a consultancy providing online support in the fields of public finance and digital communication (david.fellows@pfmconnect.com).

**West Africa PFM digital
transparency recent trends**



Introduction

Transparency of public finances is a key element of a public financial management (PFM) system enabling public scrutiny of government actions and intentions. From our September 2020 “Improving PFM digital transparency in African finance ministries” [presentation](#) we now examine recent trends in West Africa PFM from a digital transparency perspective by presenting data for eleven West African countries that was identified during our examination of 45 African ministries of finance (MoFs) current use of digital platforms to promote PFM transparency.

PFM transparency is important

Transparency of public finances is achieved by providing information on PFM which is comprehensive, consistent, and accessible to users. The World Bank's September 2020 report [“Enhancing Government Effectiveness and Transparency – The Fight Against Corruption”](#) (link to be provided) has highlighted the importance of ensuring greater transparency in government operations.

Identifying PFM digital transparency trends

The following statistics were prepared to help identify PFM digital transparency trends:

- 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

Penetration levels for MoF website users, Facebook and Twitter followers were subsequently identified to demonstrate the level of usage of these digital platforms and key recent PFM digital transparency trends.

Key trends

Trends in the key PFM digital transparency indicators for the eleven West African finance ministries with websites during the period May/July 2020 are available. These can be accessed by clicking on to the country links below:

- [Benin](#)

- [Burkina Faso](#)

- [Cabo Verde](#)

- [Côte d'Ivoire](#)

- [The Gambia](#)

- [Ghana](#)

- [Liberia](#)

- [Nigeria](#)

- [Senegal](#)

- [Sierra Leone](#)

- [Togo](#)

A video showing West African country PFM digital transparency trends for key PFM digital transparency indicators is available [here](#).

An additional video showing comparative results on a PFM digital transparency indicator basis across West African countries is available [here](#).

Questions?

Please contact us at team@pfmconnect.com if you have any questions about this material.