

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 2021 was 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

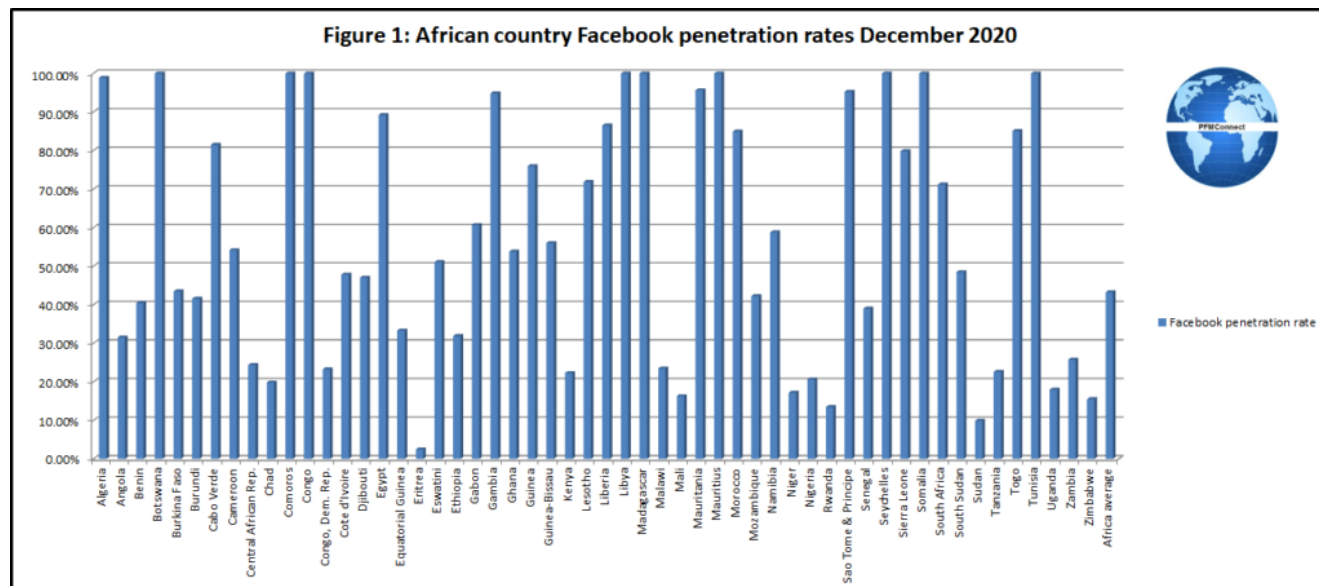
Details of current African ACA social media pages are presented in Table 3. *NB the Facebook and Twitter pages of the two Nigerian and Ugandan ACAs are included in the data presented in Table 3.*

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.



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.

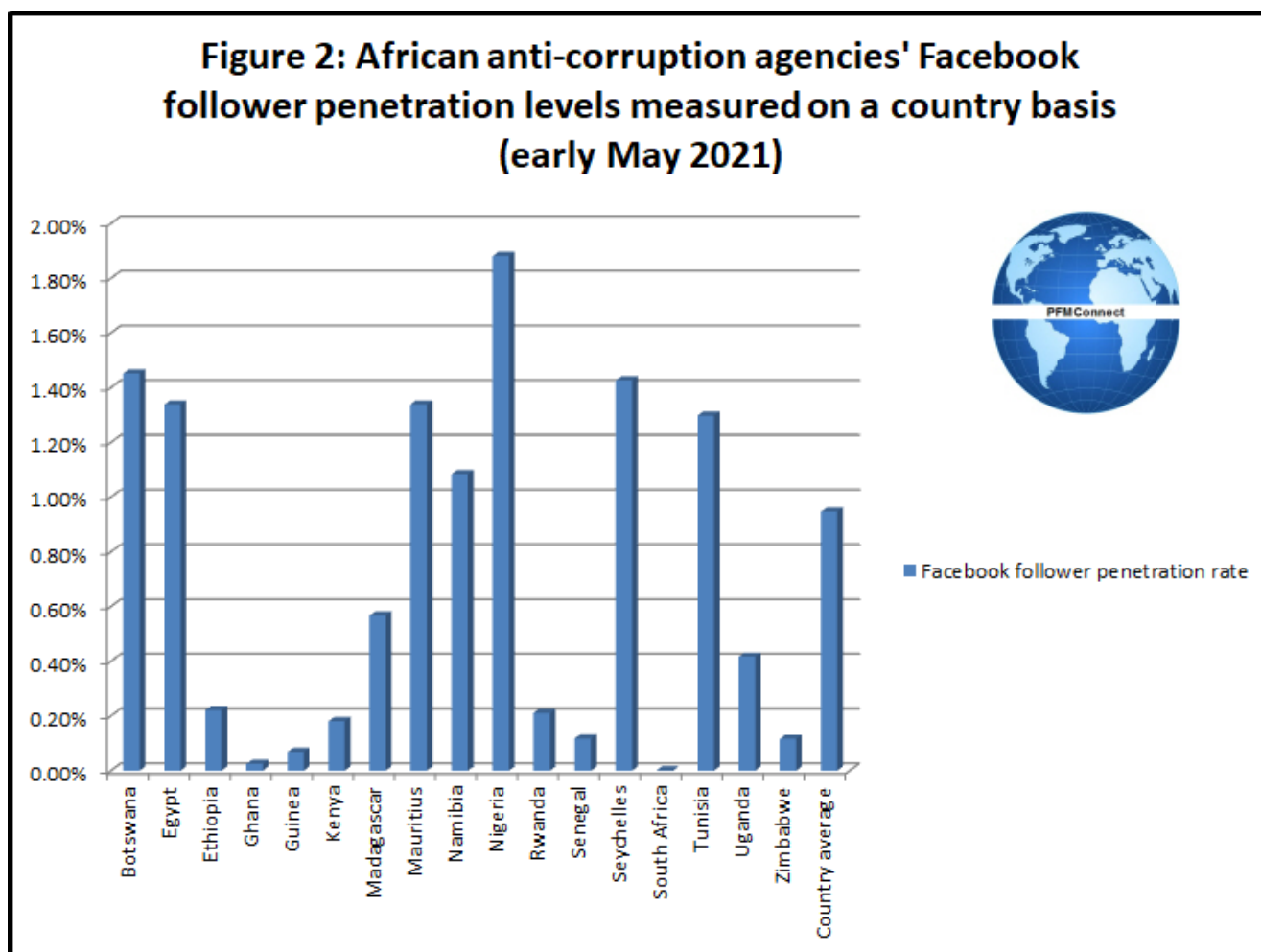
Table 4: Change in African ACA Facebook Follower numbers Mid-January 2021/Early May 2021

	% 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.



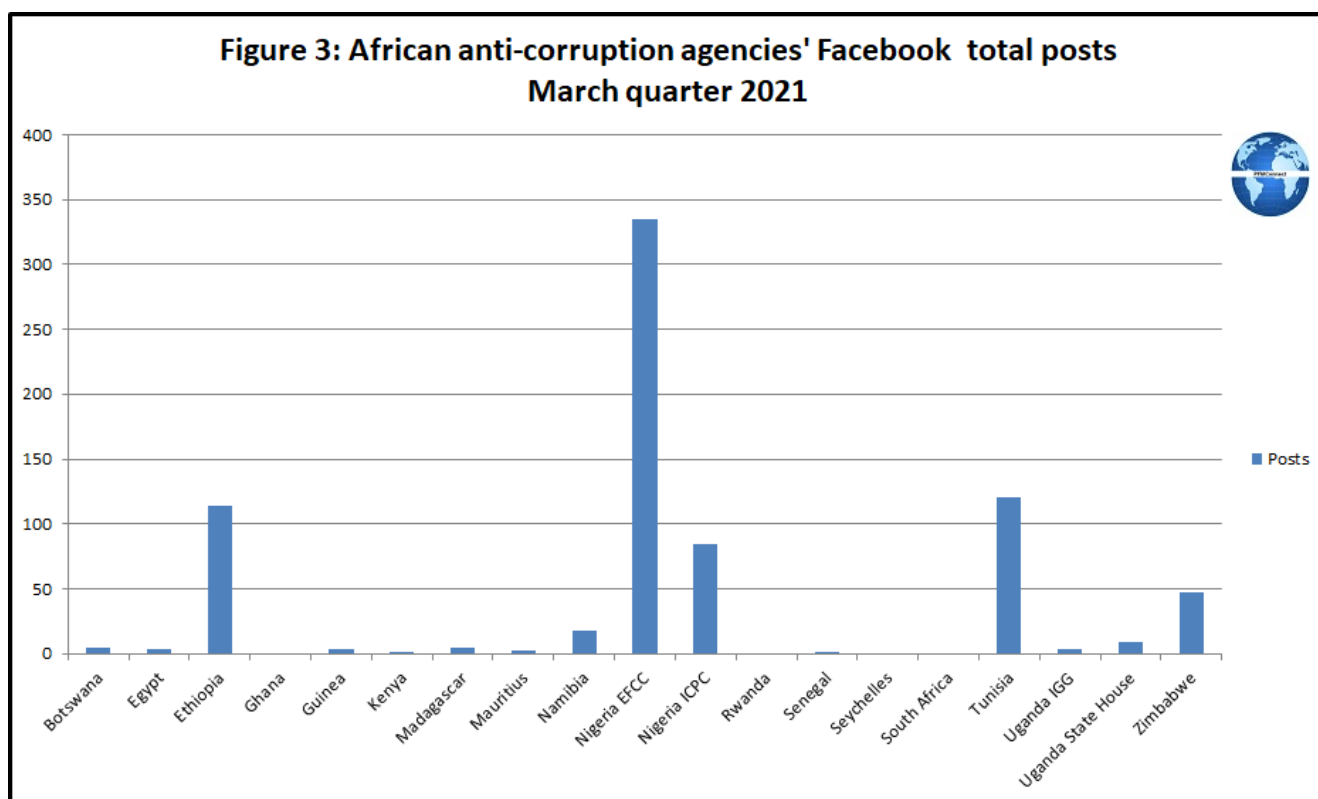
On a country basis, the average Facebook follower penetration rate for Nigeria (obtained by adding together the data for the two Nigerian ACAs) was the highest of the seventeen countries where ACAs have Facebook pages.

Facebook posting and engagement performance

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

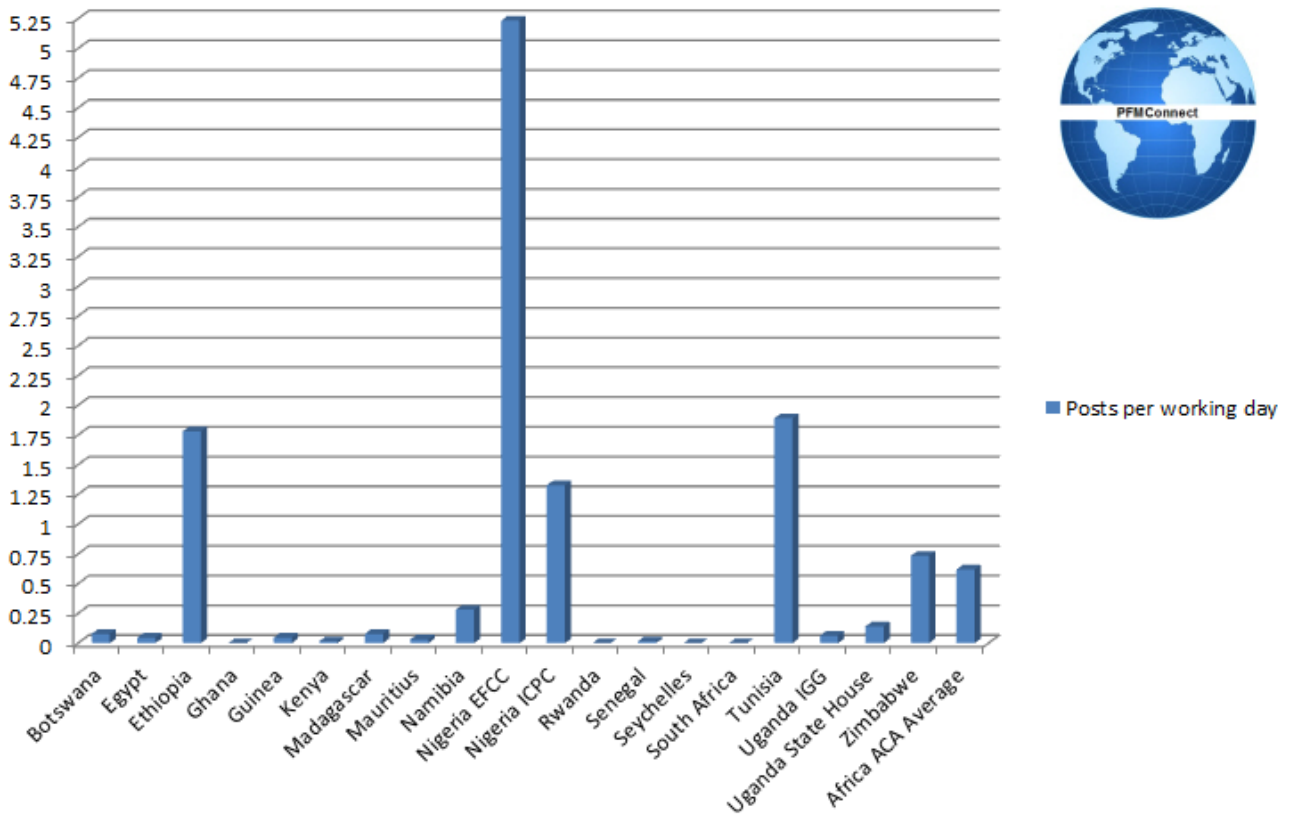
quarter were examined.

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.



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 2020 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

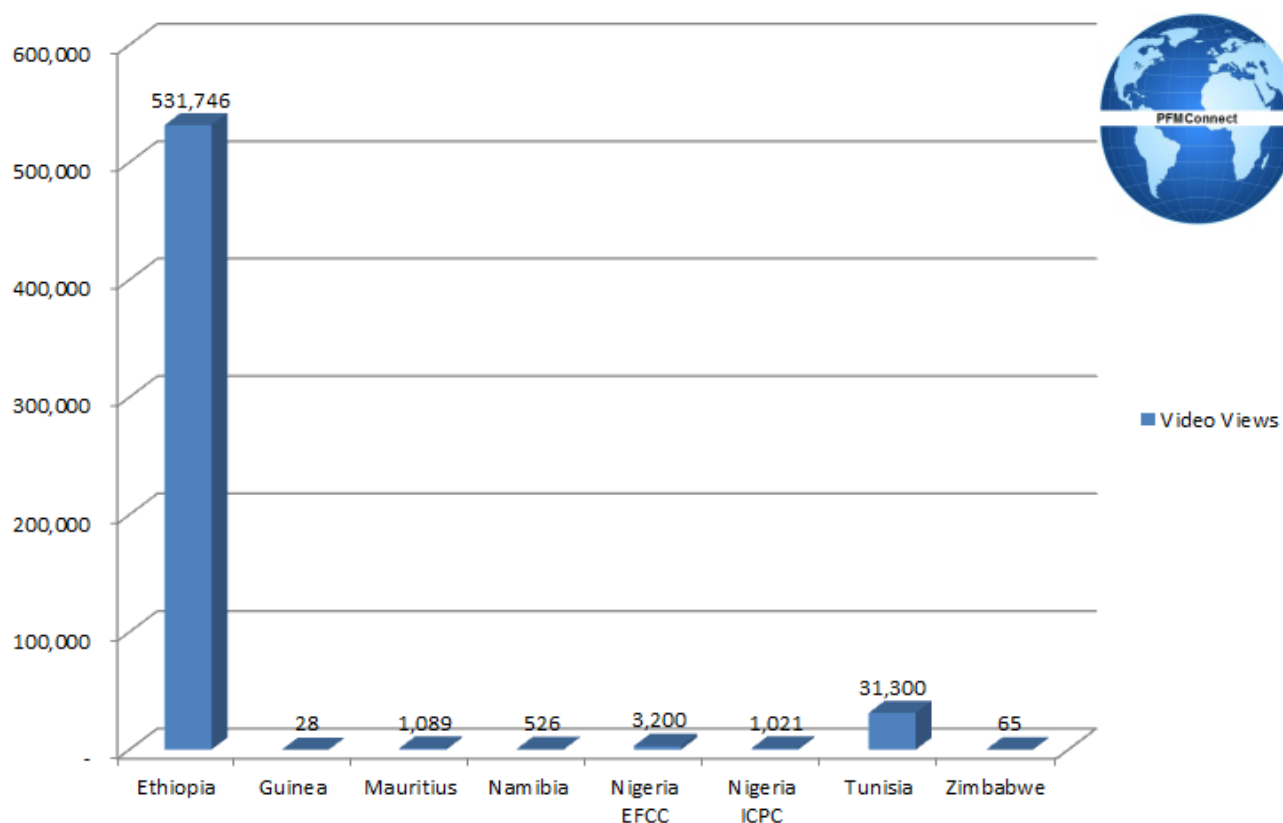
has received a remarkable response to date to a video published on 29 March 2021 discussing the personality required to be a good citizen (see box below). To date the video has received over 530,000 views.

**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.

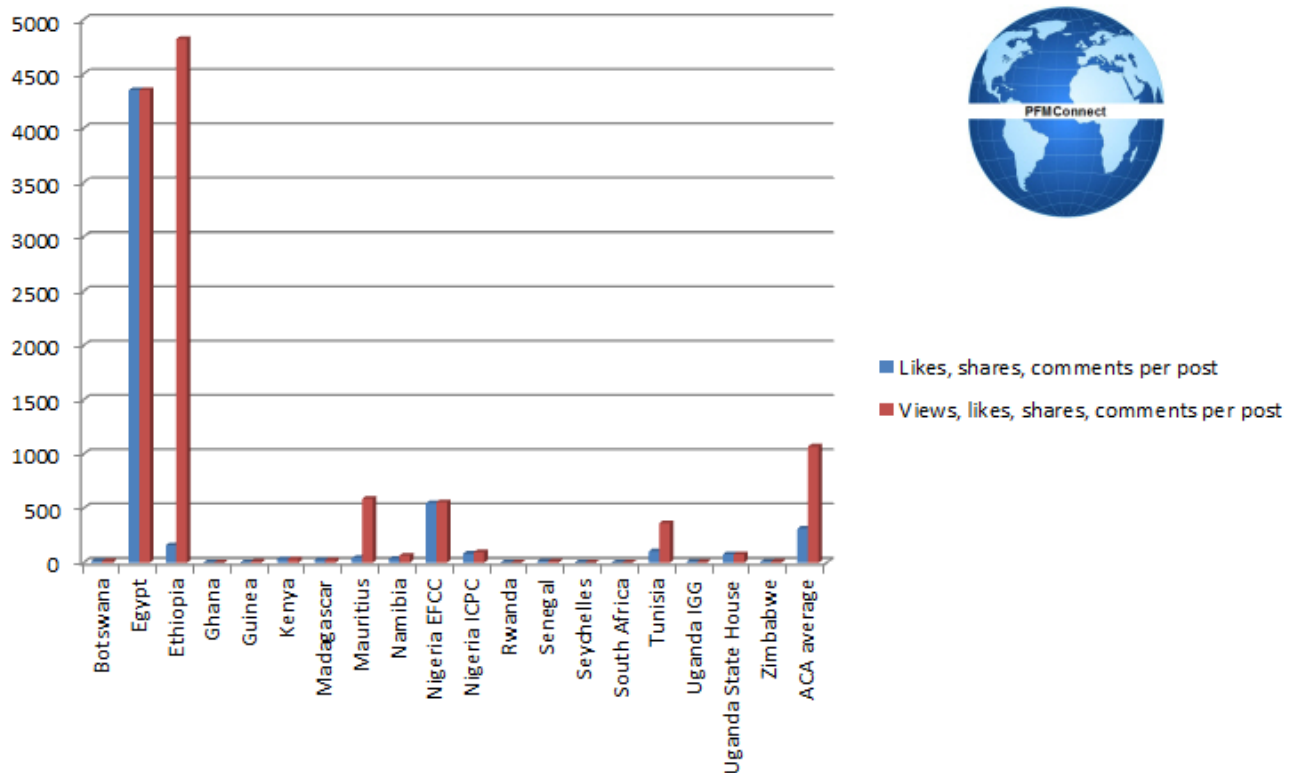
Figure 5: African anti-corruption agencies' Total Video Views 2021 March quarter



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.

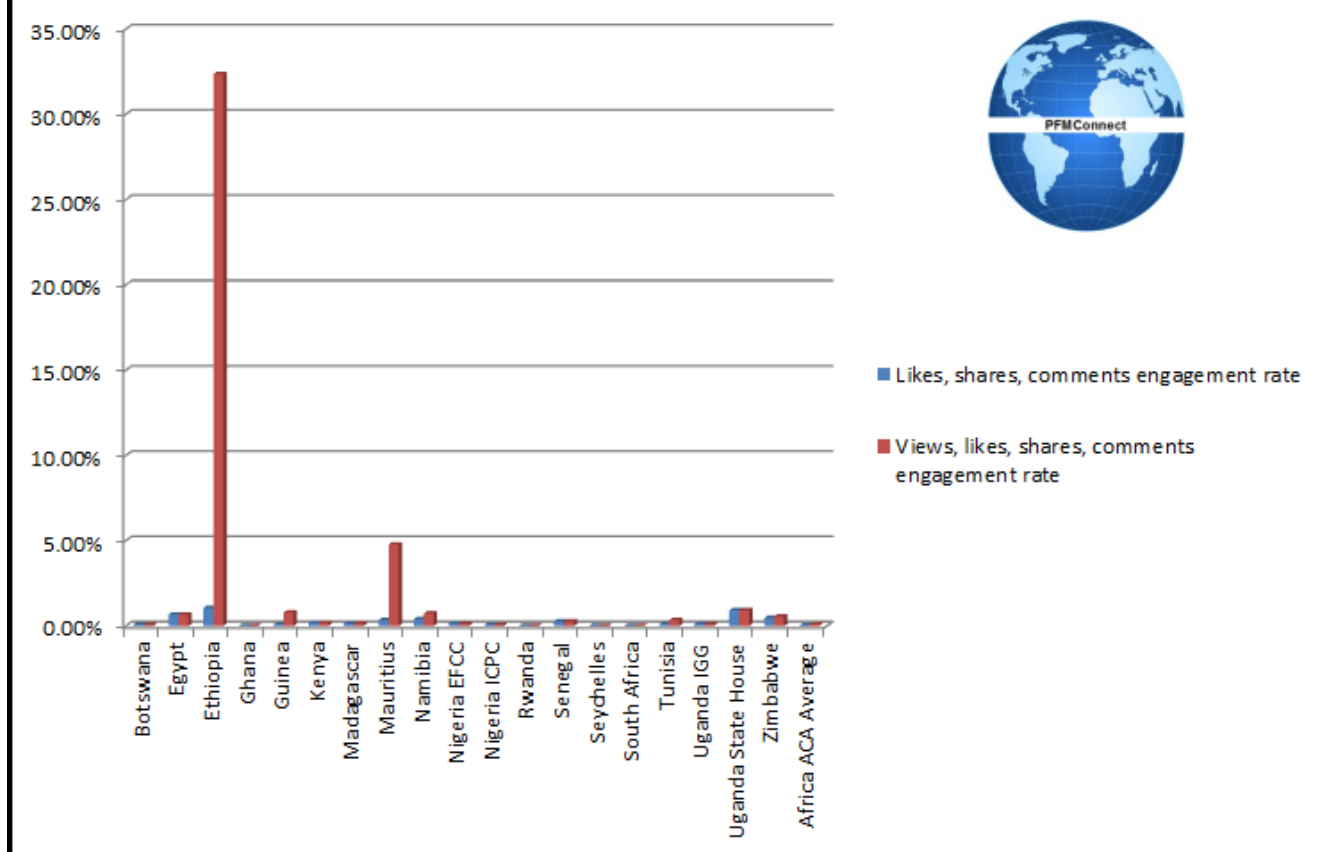
Figure 6: African anti-corruption agencies' Facebook Total views, likes, shares, comments per post 2021 March quarter



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



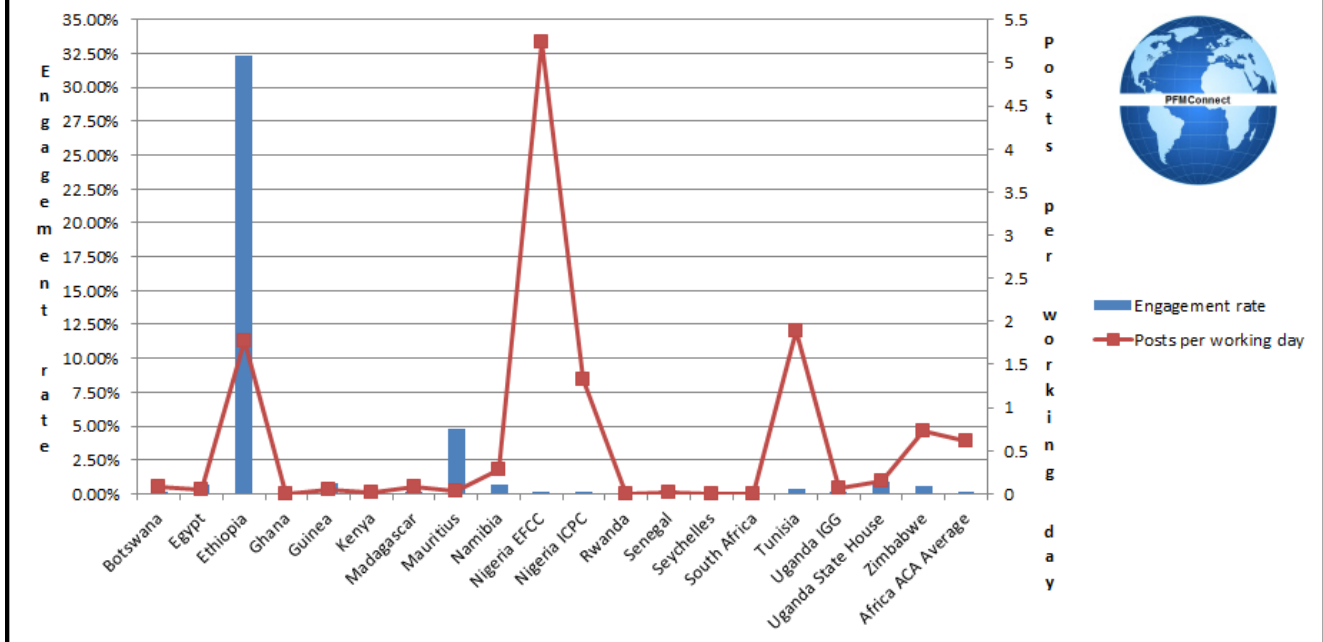
Details of African ACAs' Facebook followers as at early May 2021 and engagement rates by post in the 2021 March quarter are presented in Table 5.

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.

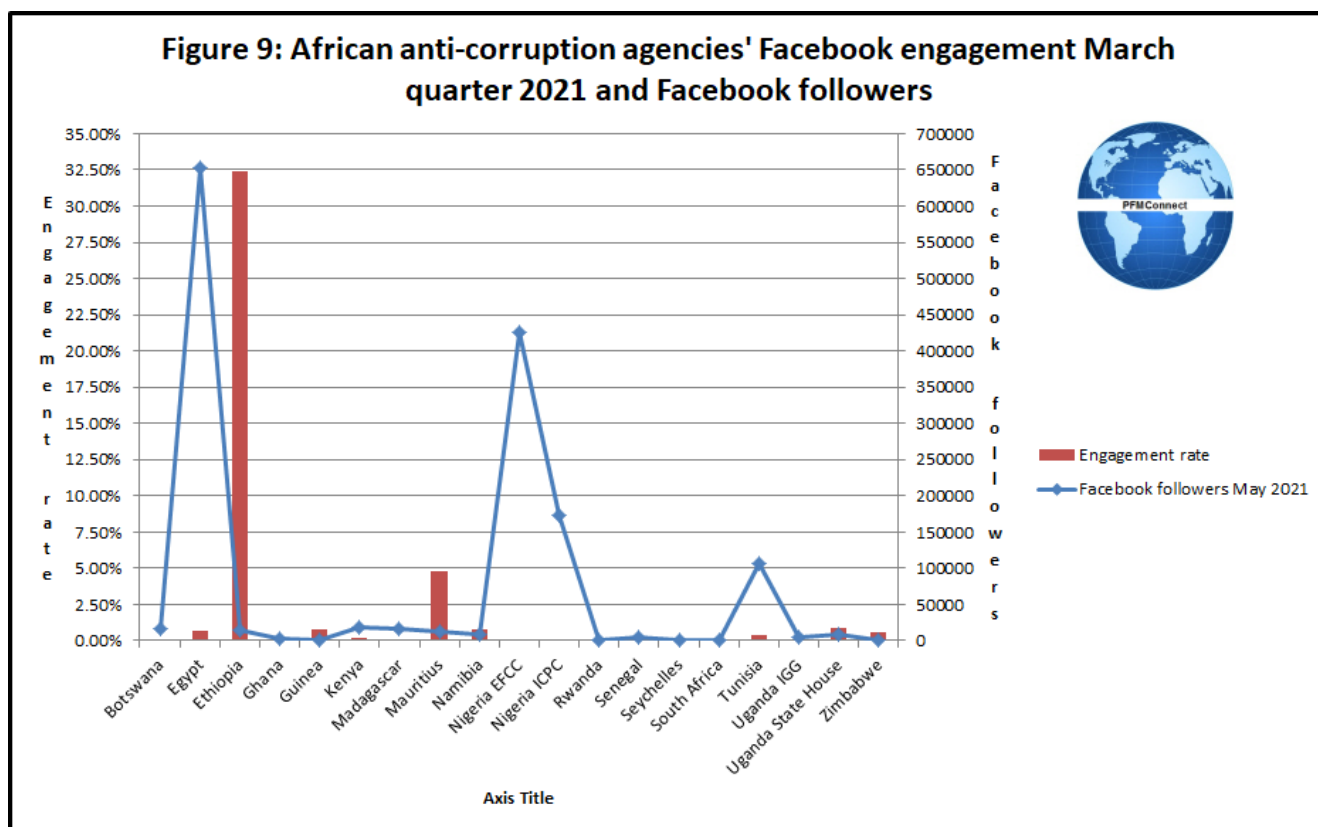
Figure 8: African anti-corruption agencies' Facebook engagement and March quarter 2021 posting activity



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.



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.

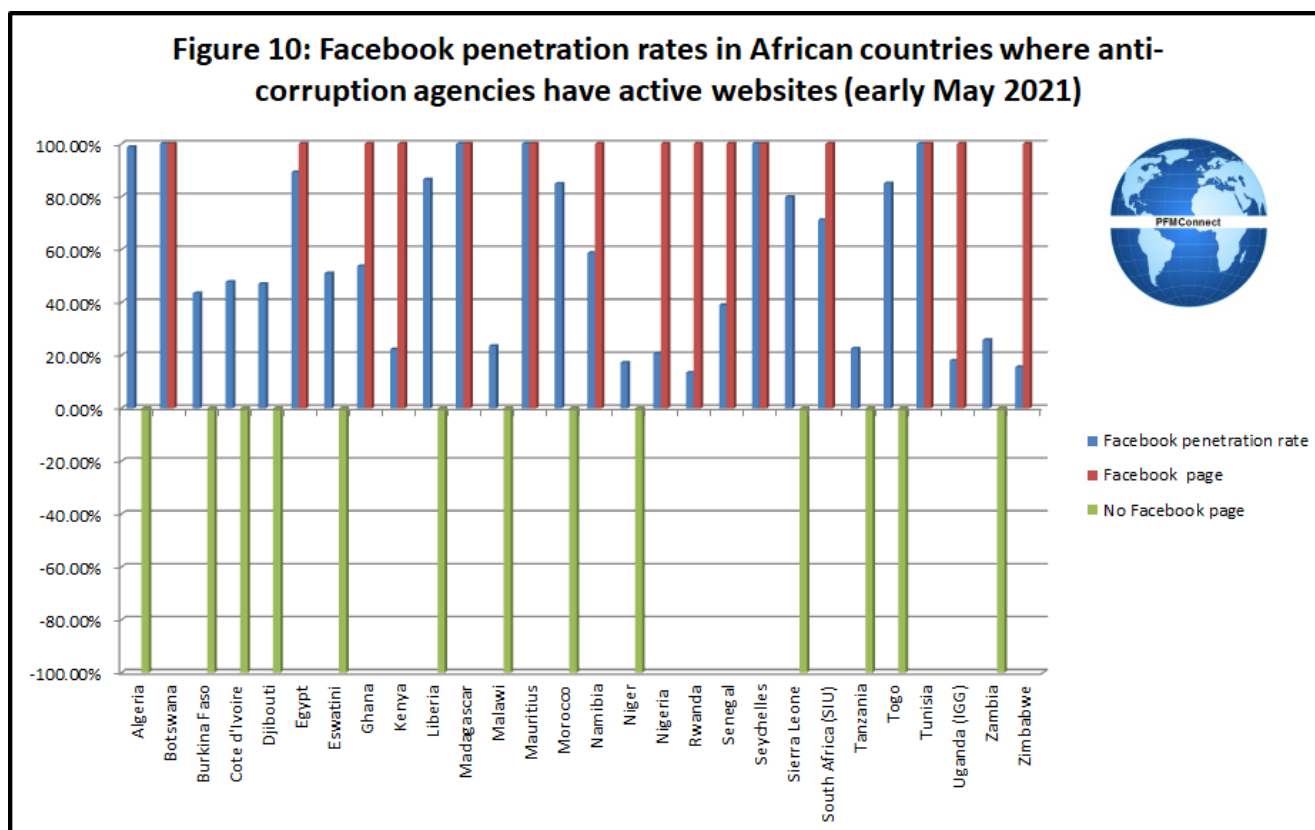
A weak negative relationship was noted between 2020 CPI scores and early May ACA Facebook follower penetration levels for countries with lower 2020 CPI scores. This data demonstrates that 2020 CPI scores are not currently a significant driver of ACA Facebook follower penetration levels.

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.

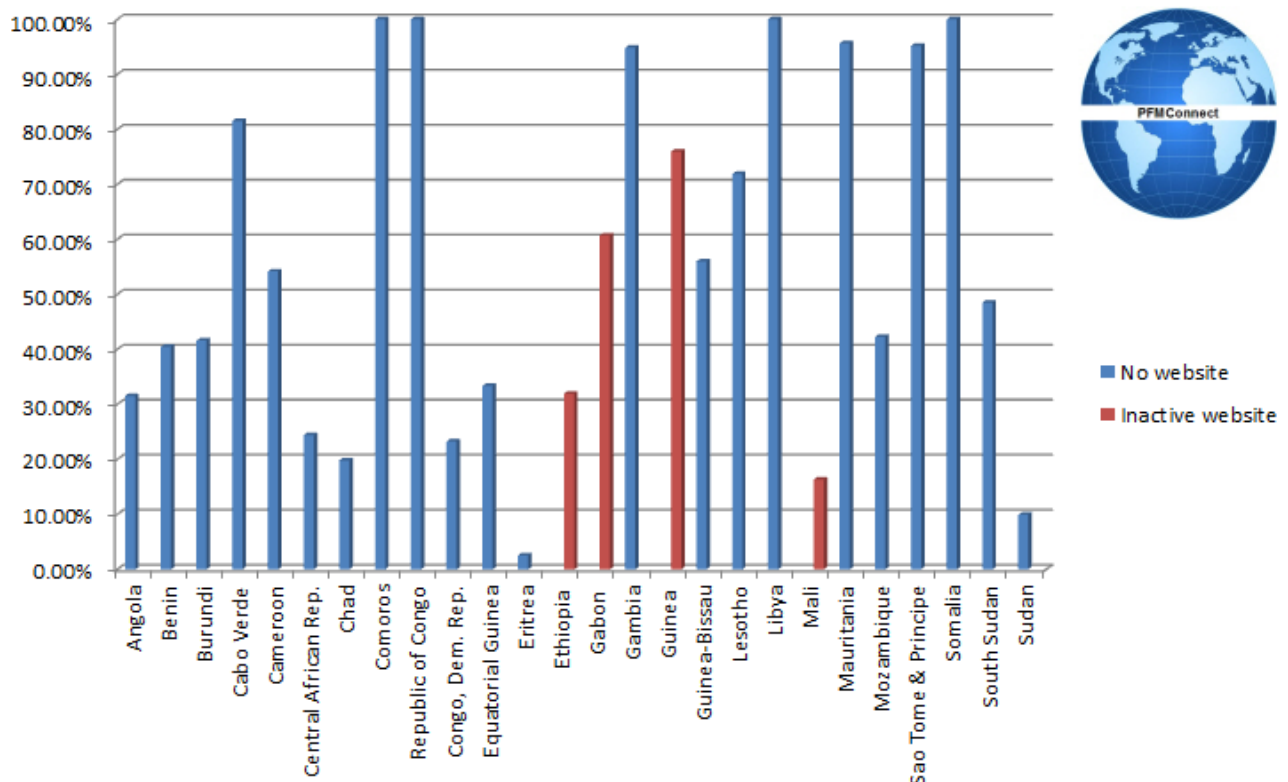
There are a number of ACAs with websites that do not have Facebook pages even though country Facebook penetration rates (total country Facebook subscribers divided by total country

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.



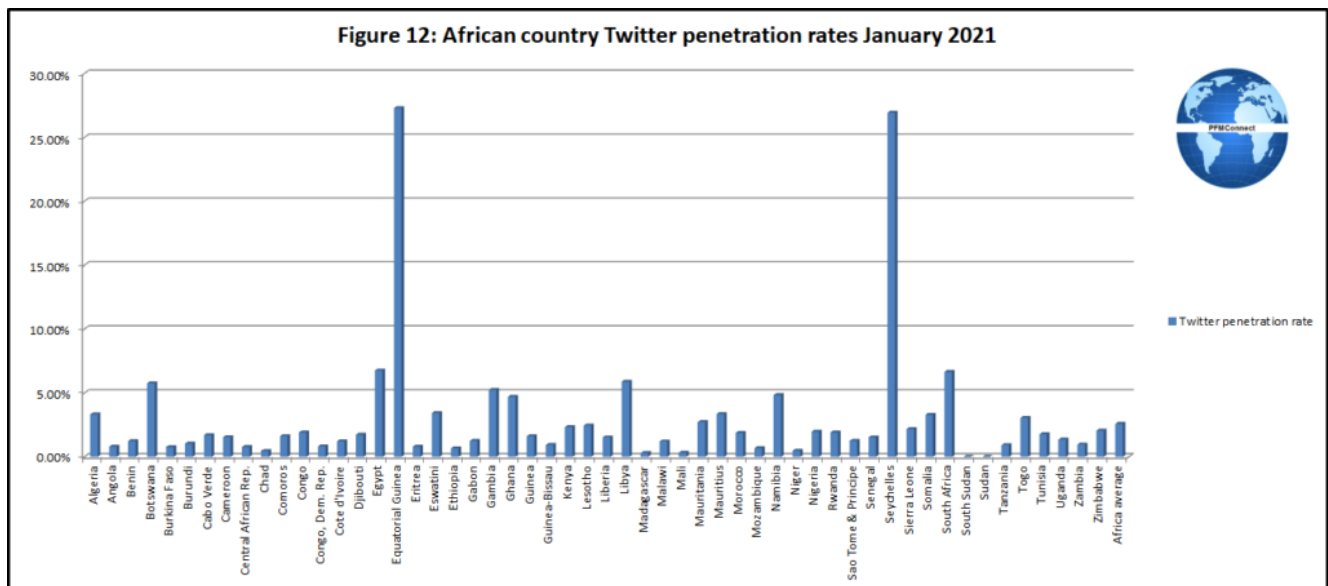
On the other hand, there are a number of countries where country Facebook penetration rates are relatively high but the respective ACAs do not have either websites or Facebook pages. This group of countries includes Comoros, Republic of Congo, Gambia, Libya, Sao Tome & Principe and Somalia. The relevant 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.



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.

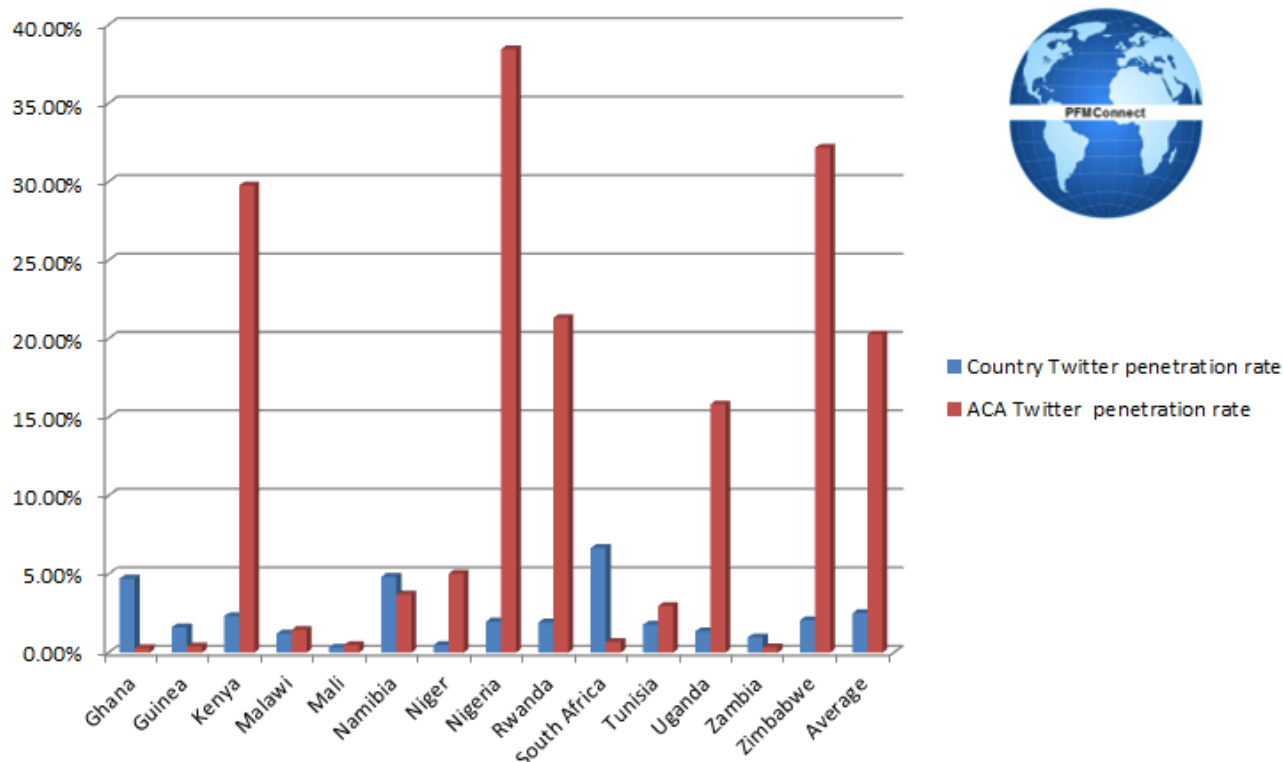
Table 6: Change in African ACA Twitter Follower numbers Mid-January 2021/Early May 2021

	% 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)

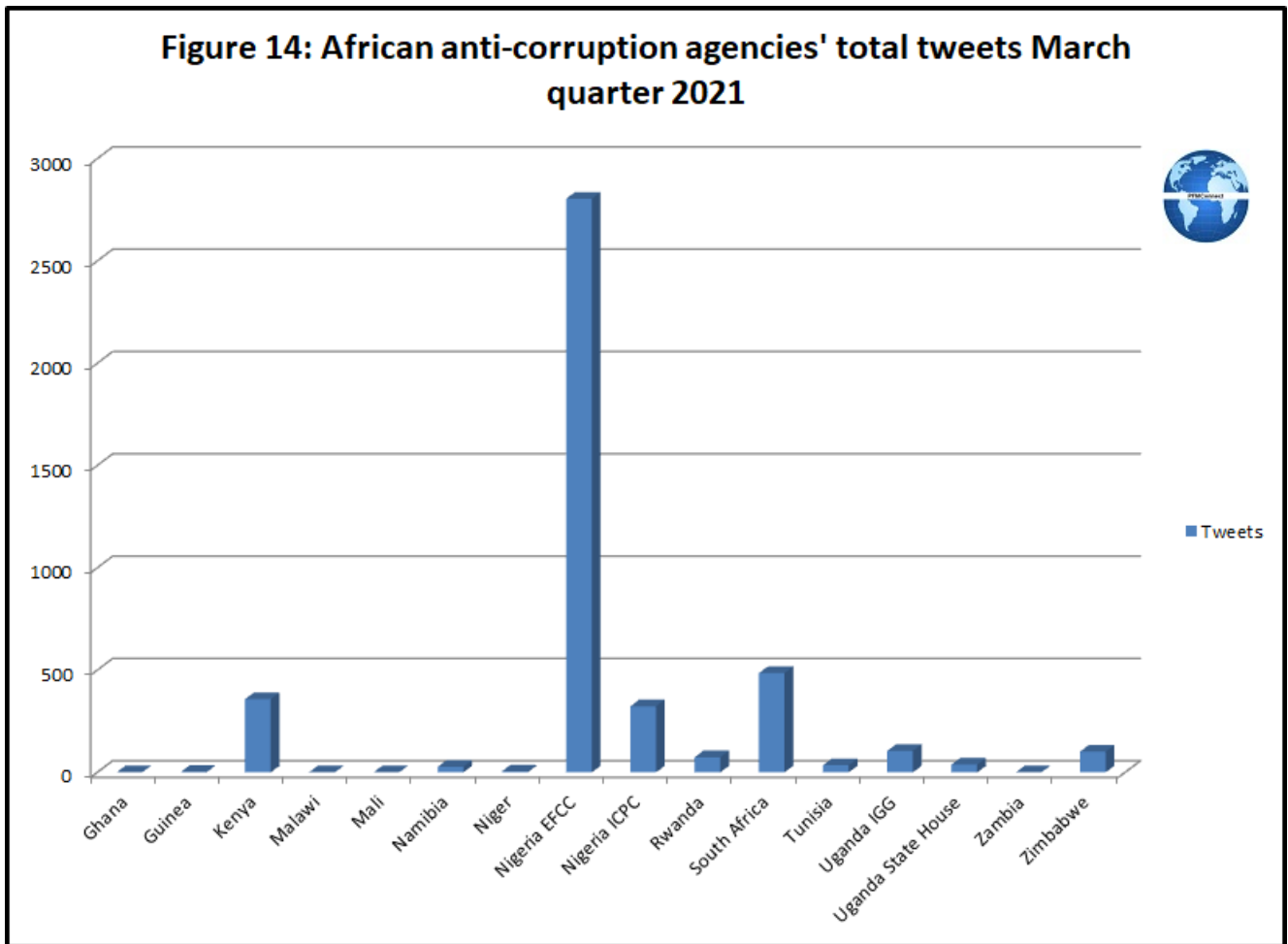


ACA Twitter follower penetration rates are currently very high in Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda and Zimbabwe.

Twitter posting and engagement performance

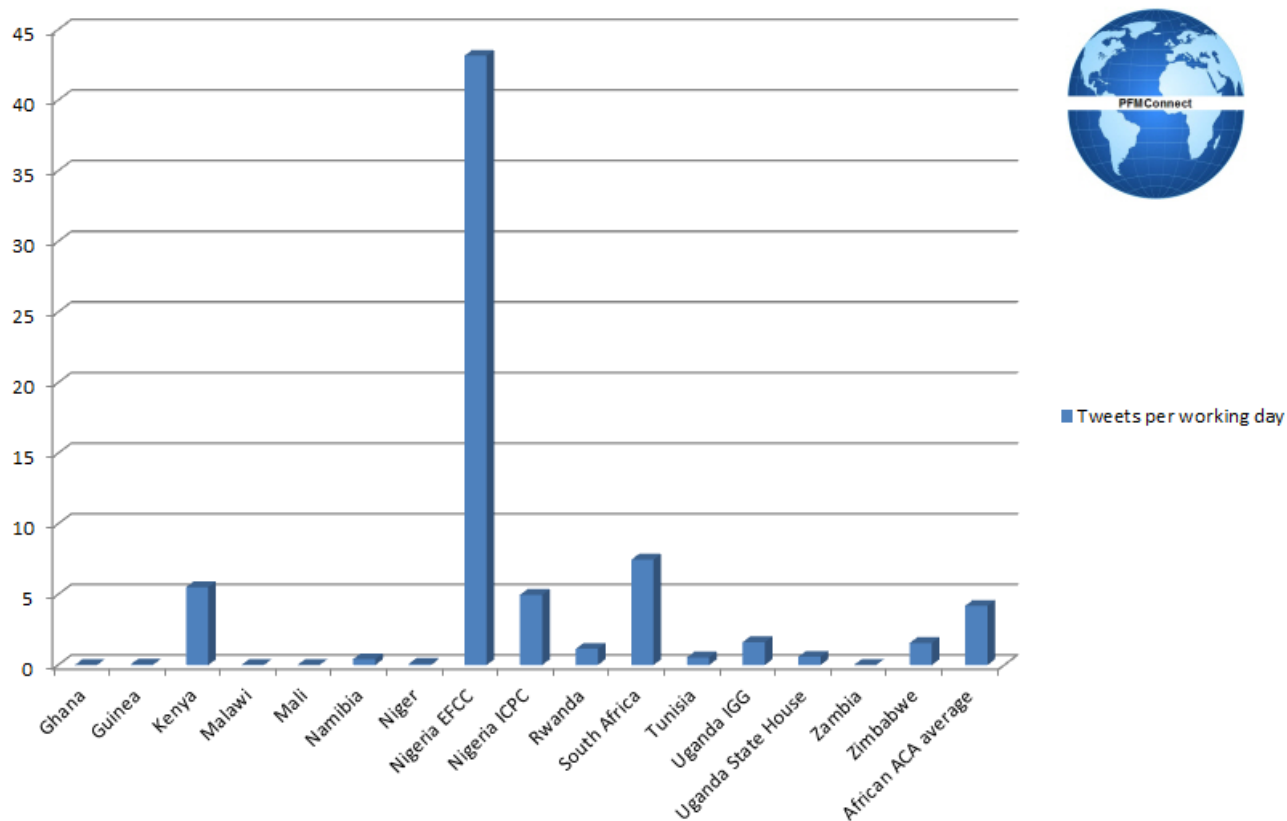
Trends in Twitter posting and engagement performance for the sixteen African ACAs with Twitter pages in the 2021 March quarter were examined.

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.



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



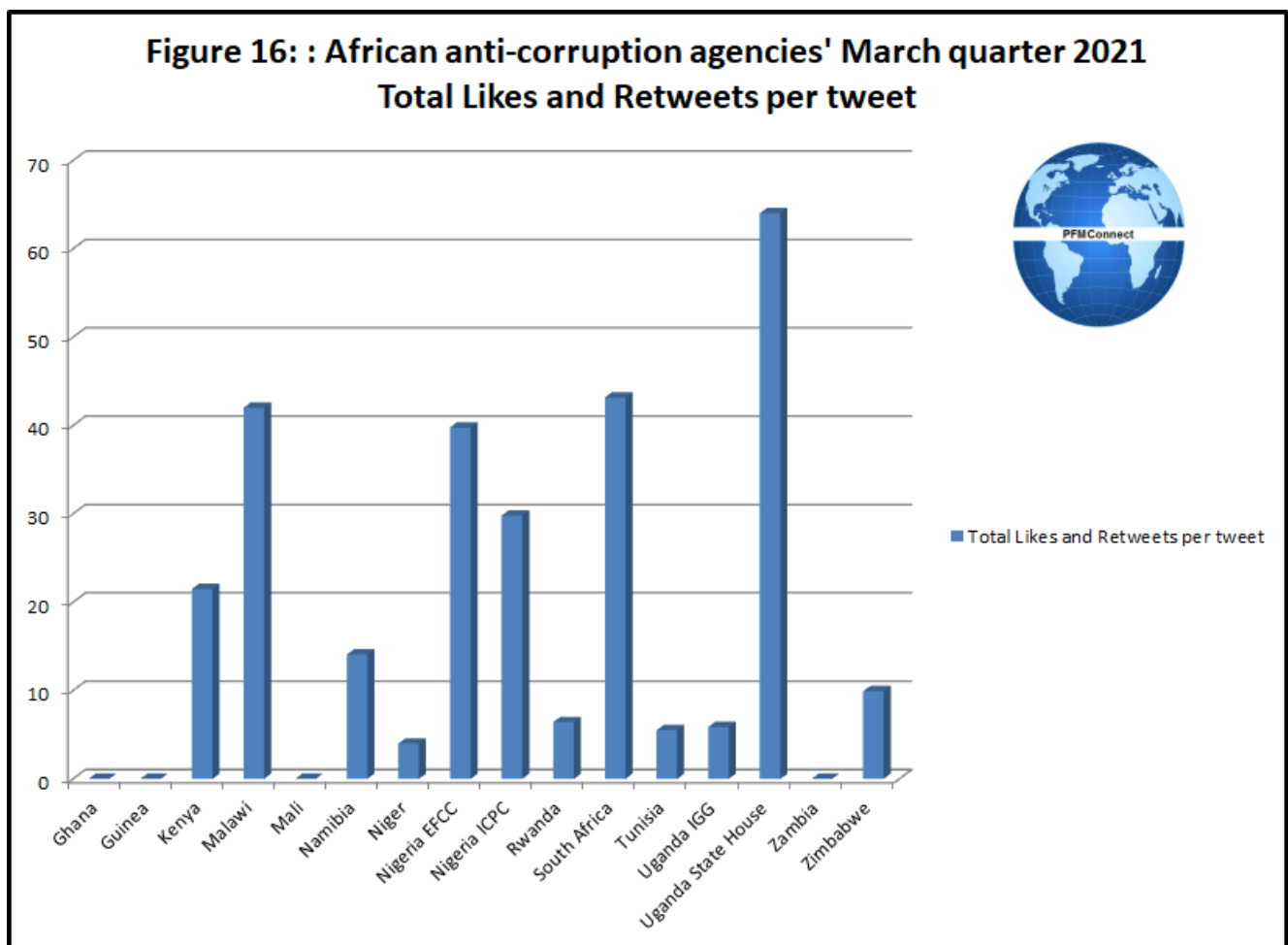
The figure derived for average tweets per day of 4.19 tweets per day for African ACAs with Twitter pages during the 2021 March quarter is relatively high average compared with a corporate brand median of 0.86 tweets per day quoted by Social Media Perth in a post on 1 October 2020 (<https://www.smperth.com/resources/twitter/twitter-statistics/>).

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

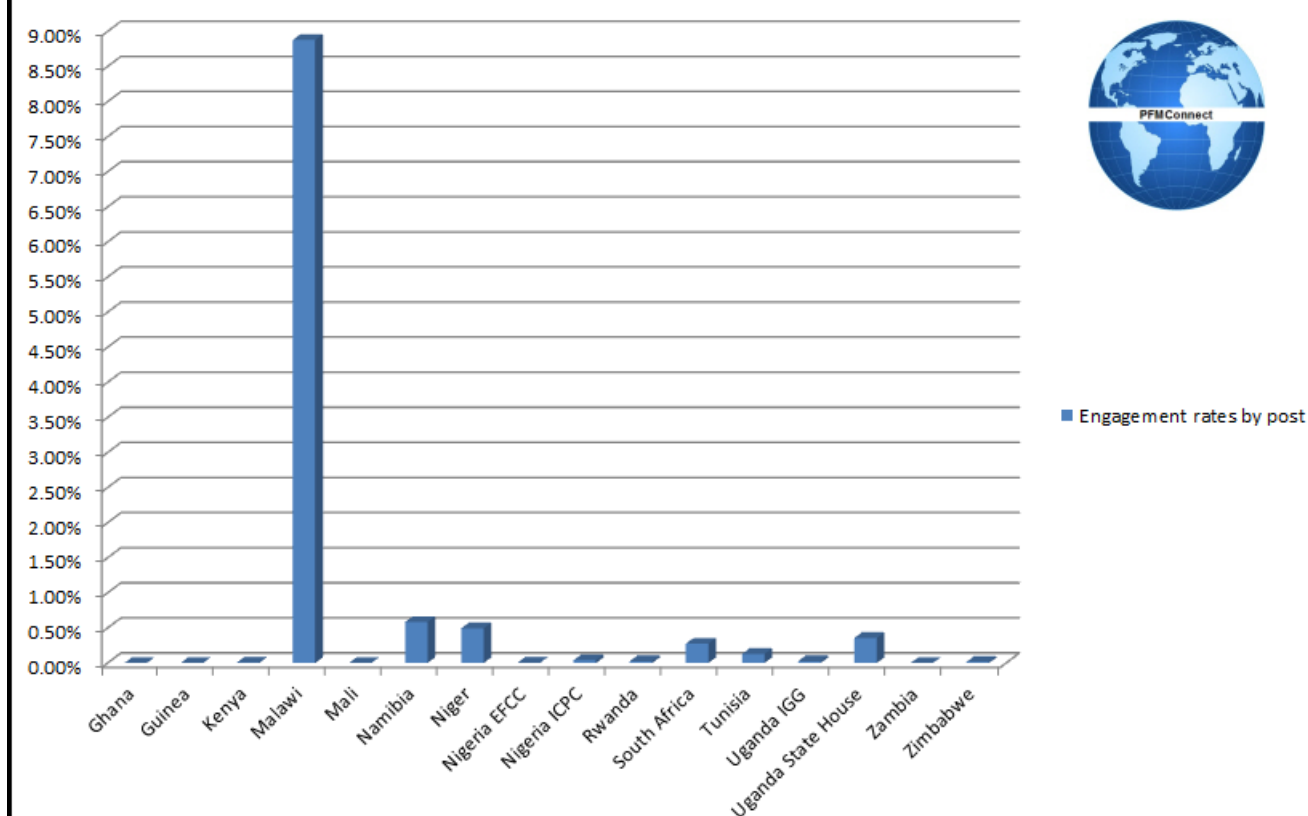
methodology as recommended by Social Status (<https://www.socialstatus.io/twitter-engagement-rate-benchmark/>). This data has been derived on a two-step basis.

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.



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**



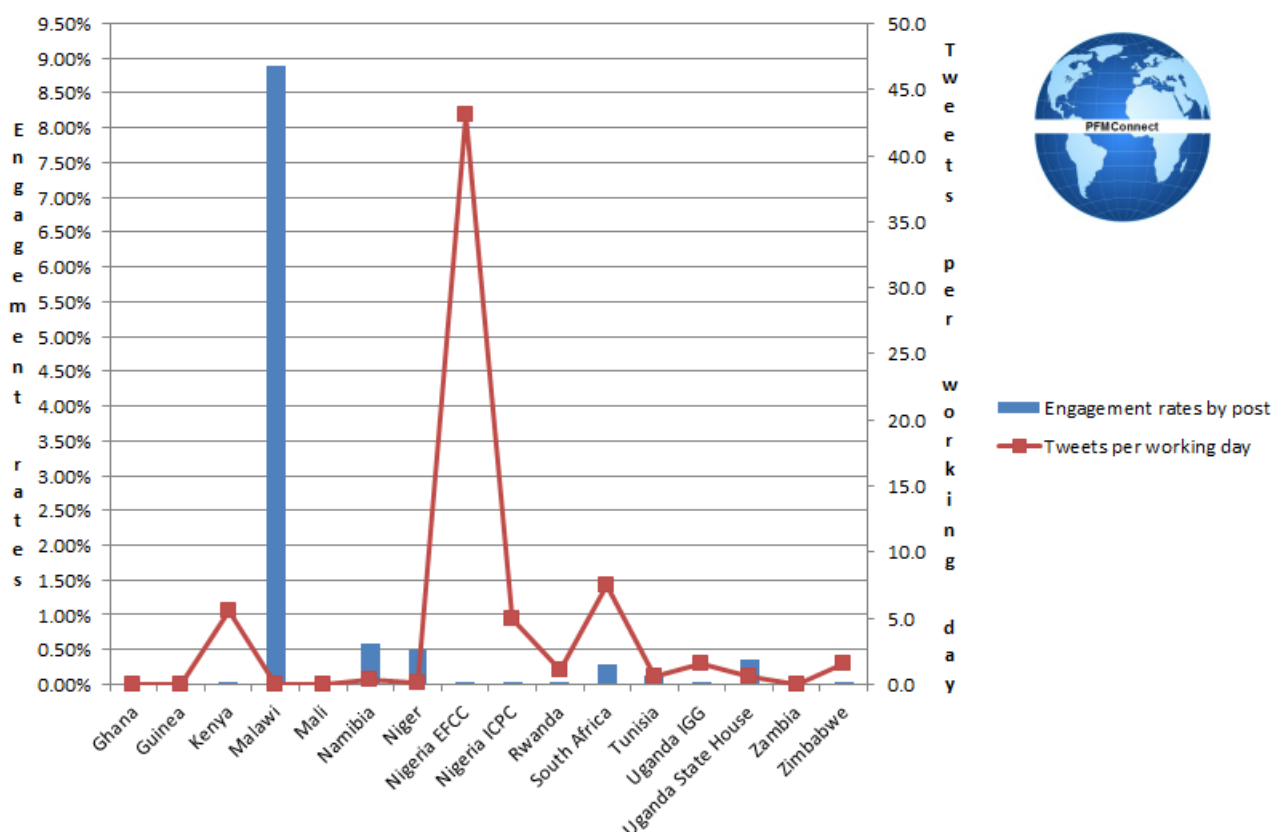
The data for African ACAs' Twitter followers as at early May 2021 and engagement rates by post in the 2021 March quarter included in Figure 17 is also presented in Table 7.

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.

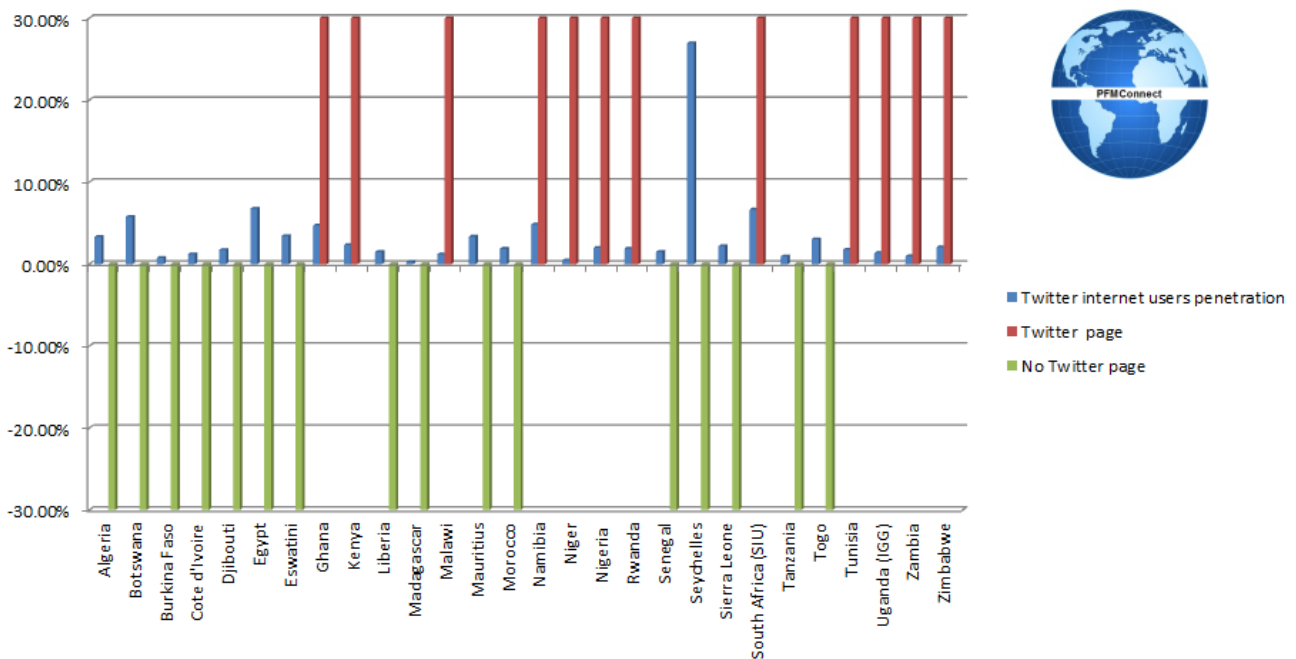
While some ACAs have recorded reasonable engagement levels, improved content in tweets by a number of ACAs should have a favourable impact on overall engagement levels. Numerous African ACAs could also increase their tweeting frequency.

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.

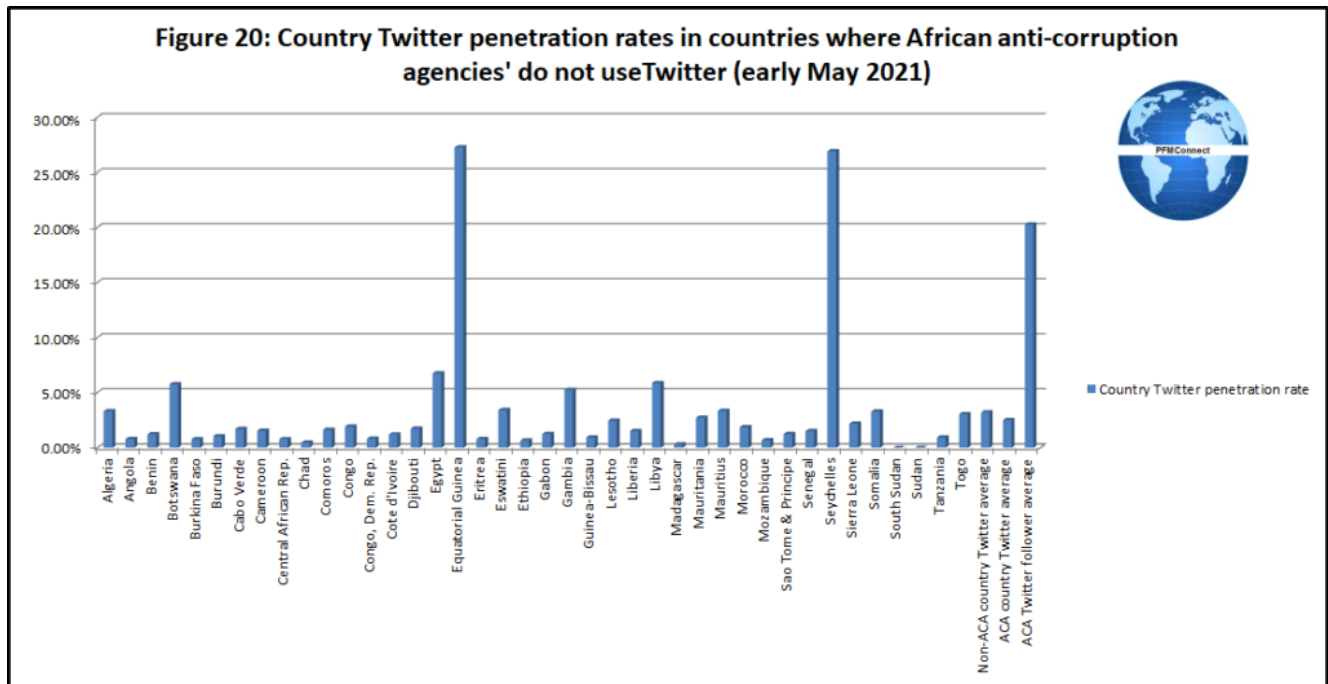
There are several ACAs with websites that do not have Twitter pages even though country Twitter penetration rates (total country Twitter subscribers divided by total country internet users) are relatively high. This group of countries includes Botswana, Egypt and the Seychelles. The relevant data is 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.



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 its 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.

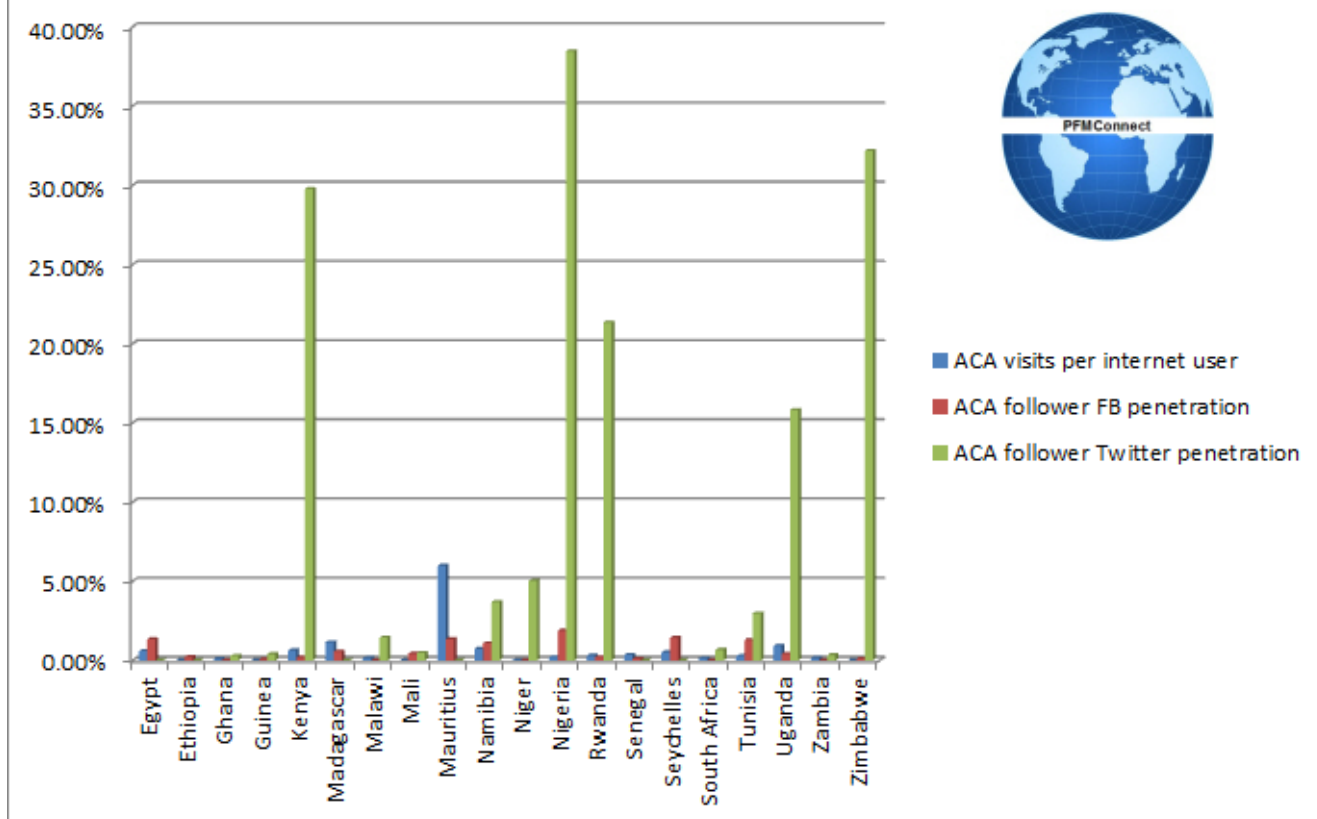
New IMF financial support arrangements to African countries which include the strengthening of anti-corruption frameworks could hasten improvements in African ACA online reporting in the near to medium-term.

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.

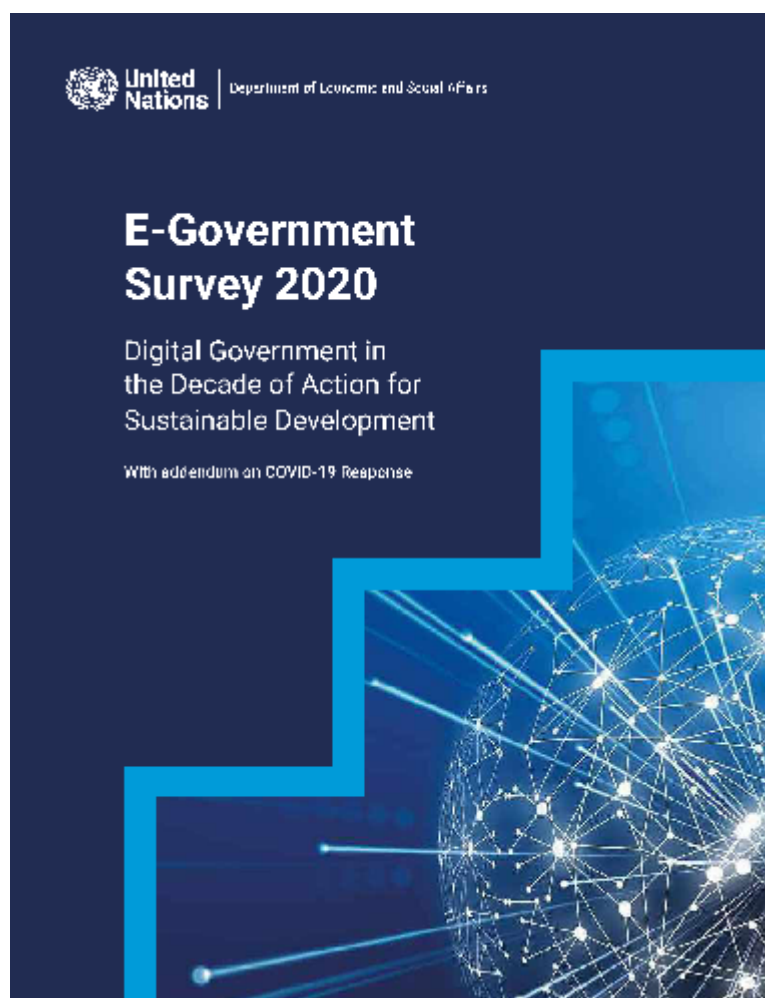
African ACA stakeholders can make an immediate non-financial contribution to the expansion of digital media use by African ACAs by actively encouraging ACAs to publish their key reports online and using their social media pages to explain their work and successes.

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.

World e-government coverage remains limited



World e-government coverage remains limited according to the 2020 edition of the [United Nations E-Government Survey](#) which was released on 10 July 2020 (1). This is in spite of most countries and municipalities currently pursuing digital

government strategies, many with innovative initiatives.

The 2020 ranking of the 193 UN Member States in terms of digital government – capturing the scope and quality of online services, status of telecommunication infrastructure and existing human capacity – is led by Denmark, the Republic of Korea, and Estonia, followed by Finland, Australia, Sweden, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, the United States of America, the Netherlands, Singapore, Iceland, Norway and Japan.

Among the least developed countries, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Cambodia have become leaders in digital government development, advancing from the middle to the high E-Government Development Index (EGDI) group in 2020. Mauritius, the Seychelles, and South Africa are leading the e-government ranking in Africa. Overall, 65 per cent of Member States are at the high or very high EGDI level.

In responding to the health emergency, governments have put in place new tools, such as dedicated COVID-19 information portals, hackathons, e-services for supply of medical goods, virtual medical appointments, self-diagnosis apps and e-permits for curfews. Many countries were quick to deploy tracking and tracing apps, and apps for working and learning from home.

Innovative digital government responses to COVID-19 include online dashboards in Canada and Australia to share information and track emergency responses. In China, chatbots are used to assess patients' risk of being infected. A community engagement app in Estonia allowed local governments to directly interact with their constituents, including through sharing COVID-19 information, posting photos and videos and

even organizing virtual events. In Croatia, a “virtual doctor” is powered by artificial intelligence and developed by technology firms in cooperation with epidemiologists. In London, the use of cameras, sensors and AI algorithms, normally intended to control traffic, now measures distance between pedestrians to control social distance.

E-government progress still hindered by digital divide

As a development tool, the E-Government Survey examines countries’ strengths, challenges and opportunities, and informs policies and strategies. The 2020 edition found that progress has been made across all regions, even in the least developed countries. Over 22 per cent of countries were promoted to higher levels of e-government development.

Yet, despite the gains and major investments in e-government by many countries, the digital divide persists. Seven out of eight countries with low scores are in Africa and belong to the least developed countries group. The regional average index scores for countries in Africa are almost one third lower (at 0.3914) than the world average EGD of 0.60.

Alongside these trends, the COVID-19 pandemic has now not only reinvigorated the role of digital government in its conventional delivery of public services and in ensuring business continuity, it has also brought about innovative ways in managing the crisis, such as in contact tracing, e-health, online learning, and remote working.

About the UN E-Government Survey

The UN E-Government Survey, published by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), is prepared over a two-year period following an established methodology. It looks at how digital government can facilitate integrated policies and services across 193 UN Member States. The Survey supports countries' efforts to provide effective, accountable and inclusive digital services to all and to bridge the digital divide and leave no one behind.

(1) This blog is an amended version of the accompanying [UN press release](#)

The case for an international online public service academy



by [David Fellows](#) [1]

Introduction

The purpose of this post is to consider how digital communication could be developed for the provision of structured professional education for public servants in developing countries using an academy model. This proposal is based on the proposition that there is a widespread need for professional training to improve administrative effectiveness through a general grounding in the nature of public administration and its place in society; the study of key aspects of public sector management, relevant techniques and organisational values; and the examination of reform objectives and the means of achieving them.

Why open learning for developing countries? Well, a campus format bears a heavy cost-base and brings the practical difficulties of assembling the teaching staff necessary to deliver the standard of professional education required. It also incurs the loss of students from the workplace for substantial periods of time, together with the costs of student travel and accommodation. The positive advantages of an open learning format include the flexibility of study time demands on student availability and, potentially, the benefits of an international experience for participating students given their interaction with students and teachers from around the world. This kind of initiative is not irrelevant to developed countries but I suggest that the priority and funding model should address the needs of developing nations first and foremost.

Geographical reach

The use of digital communication provides for flexibility of student and teacher location. Seminars and staff meetings could be held online, academic material developed collaboratively over document handling systems, and student

work could be dealt with by email or in-house systems. This would not be far removed from how most higher educational institutions are developing staff/student communication even where they are campus-based.

There may be merit in some courses being directed to regional groupings of students in order to provide greater focus on regional issues and it would make sense to do this using tutors who are immersed in the regional context. There may even be merit in some courses being run on a purely national basis. It would certainly be important to ensure that student study programs are aligned to the needs of the employing governments, possibly reflected in the nature of assignments or course options.

There could be a single worldwide institution with regional coordination to foster government relationships and accommodate periodic student workshops, although this is not essential in order to gain advantages from this format. There could be regionally based institutions or some states could operate primarily on a national basis.

Student body

The students would be permanent officials of the public service in developing countries. There could be extensive flexibility about study arrangements including varying amounts of office time allowed for study purposes. This would be part of the arrangements to be agreed with the institution, and individual student study programs would take this into account.

Students could be encouraged to come together regularly online on a national or international basis to discuss their needs and course provision. Academic staff could join such meetings on request. Regular physical meetings of students could be possible on a national or departmental basis as well as at occasional regional workshops.

Prospectus

Initially the prospectus should be developed around core governance-related topics: policy development; management and leadership (including roles and responsibilities of politicians and officials); human resources (including capacity development, appointment processes, records); public financial management; law; ethics; and economics (as a more contextual subject). Student programs could identify specific elements to be taken at a more advanced level (e.g. taxation or international trade). Some elements could be country specific.

The student program-based approach should allow flexibility in syllabus scheduling to reflect the time commitment made by each student. This does not mean that study would be unscheduled but that work schedules would be agreed with employers and students with the intention of building student cohorts around particular schedules. Tutors would be assigned to support each student cohort in making the necessary progress.

Courses would have action-oriented elements so that demonstrable benefits are gained for client governments from each program of study. Relevant benefits would be stated at the outset and evaluated in student assessments and satisfactory course completion would be formally certified.

In addition, short courses on service specialisations could be developed or a mentoring service could be provided for newly promoted administrators.

The foundations

There is no need to create a completely new institution. There are a variety of bases on which the proposals could be founded. Various universities, civil service colleges and development agencies (e.g. the [new online Public Financial Management Course](#) just launched by the International Monetary

Fund) around the world could establish the kind of institution proposed as an adjunct to their existing courses and program. Doing so would also provide the governance and administrative arrangements on which to base the new institution.

There is also no need to make extravagant claims about the possible size and scope of the institution. It could perhaps take a modest group of nations and development partners as a starting point. It is interesting to note that three conventional universities in the UK offer online Masters of Business Administration (MBA), one of which offers a two year course, and the others are more flexible with UK citizens forming a minority of each student body (ranging from 11% to 48%). In addition, the [UK Open University Business School](#) offers two and three year MBAs worldwide.

Nor is there any necessity to suppose that the starting point would be located in the northern hemisphere amongst the traditional developed nations. There would simply need to be familiarity with the concept of an open online college. Is the [Singapore Civil Service College](#) a prospective starting point? Could India launch an online Civil Service College to satisfy its own needs, while also attracting students from further afield?

Client state engagement in governance arrangements would also offer the opportunity of using the institution to further South–South collaboration and the greater ownership of development philosophy by the developing nations.

Funding the academy

The academy model is capable of being funded jointly by client governments and development partners. Cost-sharing could be flexible. Costs could be contained through collaboration agreements with appropriate institutions and the variety of expertise achieved in this way would add to the benefits of the model. The cost-benefits of online education have been demonstrated by existing institutions and must be exploited

for this purpose.

The set-up cost would depend to some extent on the institutional foundations. Digital infrastructure costs would be scalable through agreement with application service providers with concessionary pricing being sought particularly at the outset.

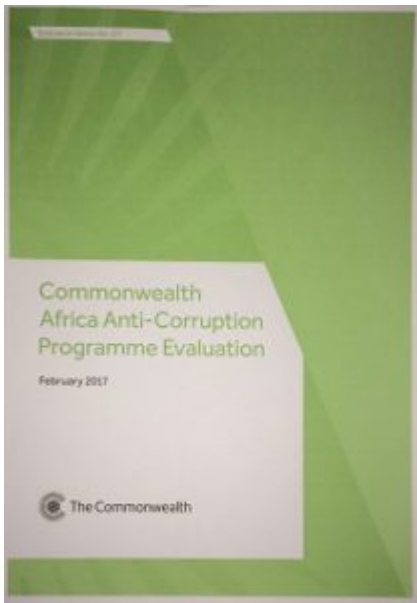
Conclusions

The purpose of this brief note is to suggest that it is now possible to provide extensive and high quality professional training for the public servants of developing countries with courses delivered predominantly via digital technology. It is further suggested that such an initiative would be cost-effective and possibly developed incrementally out of an existing institution(s).

At the current time capacity development has fallen out of favour with development partners due to the lack of clear linkage to measurable reform. I suggest, however, that without increased professional development for government officials the very ambition of improving state institutions is fundamentally flawed. It is for those engaged in the formation of new institutions to demonstrate the effectiveness of such initiatives through the delivery and assessment mechanisms that are embedded within them.

[1] The author is a Co-principal of PFMConnect. A slightly abbreviated version of this blog is available at the [Devpolicy Blog](#) of the Development Policy Centre based at the Australian National University's Crawford School of Public Policy.

Commonwealth Africa Anti-Corruption Programme Evaluation



Background

Last year the Commonwealth Secretariat commissioned PFMConnect Ltd to undertake an independent evaluation of its Africa Anti-Corruption Programme.

Stakeholders consulted

Views were obtained through discussions with officials from Commonwealth Africa countries, the Commonwealth Africa Anti-Corruption Centre in Botswana (<http://www.thecaacc.org/>) and at the Secretariat in London (<http://thecommonwealth.org/>). Online interviews were held with others that there was not time to visit. In addition, past participants of the Africa Anti-Corruption Centre capacity-building programmes were asked to complete an online survey giving their impressions of the training they had received, including its subsequent effectiveness back in the workplace.

Future programme development

Those interviewed produced an array of interesting ideas for the future development of the Commonwealth's Africa Anti-Corruption Programme and attested to the value of the training offered. The evaluation report can be obtained [here](#).

Amongst other things, the evaluation report suggests that anti-corruption agencies in Commonwealth Africa could be even more effective in their work if they formed a broader alliance with other national governance units possibly including auditors, procurement authorities, competition agencies and financial system administrators. Greater use of digital technology is advocated in support of regional collaboration and training. Proposals are also made for extending such support elsewhere within the Commonwealth with priority being given to smaller states.

The Commonwealth Secretariat is now considering the report with its various stakeholders before decisions are taken about the best way to develop the Commonwealth's anti-corruption agenda.