



AREWA RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

SPECIAL BULLETIN

2025 WORLD ANTI-CORRUPTION DAY

9 Dec 2025

Foreword



As we join the global community to mark World Anti-Corruption Day 2025, the Arewa Research and Development Project (ARDP) reflects with pride, gratitude, and renewed determination on our journey in promoting social accountability and fighting corruption in Northern Nigeria. From 2017 to 2024, with generous support from the MacArthur Foundation's On Nigeria Project, we implemented a range of innovative, inclusive, and community-driven initiatives across Borno and Zamfara States that have empowered citizens, influenced policies, and challenged the culture of impunity.

We deliberately chose to commemorate this year's occasion with a Special Bulletin to reaffirm our ongoing commitment to the values and gains that the MacArthur Foundation's project has helped to instill. We recognize that the end of donor funding must not mark the end of action. Instead, it should signal the beginning of locally owned, self-sustained accountability structures that keep public servants answerable to the people they serve.

Today, the spirit of civic vigilance burns stronger than ever in the North. From community-led budget monitoring in Zamfara to faith-based anti-corruption narratives in Borno, the ARDP approach has combined cultural relevance with technical insight. We are proud to have translated over 15 civic education publications into Hausa and Kanuri, convened dozens of town halls, and advocated consistently for fiscal transparency and citizen participation. But we know that the fight is far from over. The threats of elite capture, weak institutions, and rising insecurity continue to endanger the civic space.

Let this bulletin be both a record and a rallying cry. We honor our partners, especially the grassroots voices that made our work impactful. We appreciate the MacArthur Foundation not just for funding our ideas, but for believing in the transformative power of Nigerian civil society. Going forward, ARDP remains committed to deepening our alliances, strengthening local ownership, and adapting strategies to fit the changing civic landscape.

On this occasion, we call on all stakeholders – citizens, traditional and religious leaders, policymakers, and the media – to recommit to the values of **integrity, transparency, and justice**. Together, we can keep the flame of accountability alive.

Kabiru Sulaiman Chafe

Director, Arewa Research and Development Project (ARDP).



Highlights of ARDP's Anti-Corruption Work in Zamfara and Borno States (2017–2024)

Over a seven-year period, Arewa Research and Development Project (ARDP) played a pivotal role in reshaping how citizens in Borno and Zamfara States understand and engage with governance, public accountability, and anti-corruption. Through sustained activities under the MacArthur Foundation's "On Nigeria 1.0 & 2.0" initiative, ARDP mobilized traditional, religious, and civic structures to drive systemic change in some of the most fragile regions in Nigeria.

1. Promotion of Inclusive Civic Education through Language Localization

ARDP developed and translated over 15 publications into Hausa and Kanuri, significantly improving access to anti-corruption and social accountability materials. This enabled citizens with limited formal education to understand governance mechanisms, budget processes, and public procurement laws. The localization of content in familiar languages also bridged the trust gap between civil society actors and communities, thereby improving participation and knowledge retention.



2. Constituency Project Tracking and Fiscal Oversight

In collaboration with community-based platforms such as ZamTraka, ARDP led rigorous tracking, monitoring, and assessment of federal and state-level constituency projects in Zamfara and Borno States. Between 2020 and 2024, ARDP produced detailed performance reports and citizen scorecards, exposing contract inflation, abandoned projects, and poor-quality executions. These reports were not only widely disseminated but also featured on local radio programs in Hausa to stimulate public discussion and demand accountability.



3. Strategic Engagement with Islamic Scholars and Religious Leaders

ARDP recognized the influence of religion in shaping public perception. By collaborating with Islamic scholars in both states, it revived the anti-corruption ethos of 19th-century Islamic reformist literature. Sermons, study groups, and public lectures incorporated teachings from scholars like Usman dan Fodio and Abdullahi b. Fodio, emphasizing that integrity and justice are foundational values in Islam. This approach created a religious and cultural basis for civic accountability.

4. Multi-Stakeholder Town Halls and Advocacy Platforms

ARDP hosted over 10 large-scale town hall meetings and more than 30 targeted engagements involving CSOs, government officials, traditional rulers, media professionals, and citizens. These forums created inclusive spaces to debate budget performance, transparency in procurement, and access to social services. Stakeholder feedback from these meetings was documented and integrated into advocacy briefings and position papers.

5. Advocacy for Policy and Institutional Reforms

Although not primarily a capacity-building organization, ARDP's work consistently influenced fiscal and governance reforms in both states. For instance, ARDP advocacy contributed to improved public access to Budget Performance Reports in Zamfara, as well as enhanced collaboration between CSOs and MDAs in Borno. By engaging officials through informal consultative platforms, ARDP reinforced the need for state-led anti-corruption policies grounded in citizen trust and transparency.

6. Support for Local CSO Resilience and Strategy Development

Recognizing the fragile civic space in the North, ARDP helped build adaptive strategies for local CSOs to sustain anti-corruption work post-MacArthur funding. Through consultative meetings and peer review sessions, ARDP encouraged cross-learning among civil society actors and emphasized the need for collective resilience, context-specific tactics, and independent resource mobilization strategies.

7. Consistent Commemoration of World Anti-Corruption Day

Every year since 2017, ARDP marked 9th December with public education campaigns, media appearances, community dialogues, and stakeholder meetings in Borno and Zamfara. These annual commemorations reinforced the visibility of anti-corruption efforts and reminded the public of their role in ensuring accountable leadership.

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Community Voices

“Voices from the Frontlines of Accountability”

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📍 Imam Muhammad Sani Liman, Zamfara State Islamic Cleric:

“We began to teach in our Friday sermons that corruption is not just a legal crime, but a moral failure with consequences in this life and the hereafter. ARDP gave us the knowledge and the platform to preach this message in a language our people understand.”

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📍 Mahmud Umar Mahmud, Youth Advocate, Gusau, Zamfara State:

“Before ARDP’s town halls, we had no idea how state budgets were prepared or what constituency projects meant. Now, we not only understand but we track and ask questions. Young people here are awake.”

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📍 Alhaji Hamza Salihu, Ministry of Economic Planning, Zamfara State:

“The awareness created by ARDP made our people more demanding of transparency. As a public official, I had to change how we communicate. We now publish expenditure reports and hold regular community briefings.”

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📍 Ms. Patricia Patrick, Women Leader, Borno State:

“Corruption affects women the most – in hospitals, markets, schools. ARDP helped us organize and raise our voices. Today, women in our community are not afraid to speak to power.”

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📍 Shuaibu Dauda, CSO Partner, Maiduguri. Borno State:

“What made ARDP different was the way they respected local culture and language. They didn’t impose ideas – they translated them. That’s why the message stuck.”

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These voices reflect the real-world, people-centered transformation that ARDP’s anti-corruption programming has seeded in Northern Nigeria – beyond metrics and reports, into the hearts of communities.





Post-Project Momentum – What ARDP Is Doing Now

“Beyond the Grant: Sustaining Integrity and Accountability in Northern Nigeria”

Although the MacArthur Foundation’s *On Nigeria Project* officially concluded in December 2024, the Arewa Research and Development Project (ARDP) continues to press forward with the mission to reduce corruption and promote social accountability. Guided by the enduring principles developed during the project years, ARDP has not slowed down. Rather, it has evolved — expanding its partnerships, deepening community engagement, and embedding accountability practices within the governance structures of Borno and Zamfara States.

Strengthening Strategic Partnerships

ARDP is actively collaborating with local CSOs, traditional institutions, religious leaders, and reform-minded public officials to institutionalize anti-corruption efforts. These partnerships are structured around local ownership and sustainability, with shared frameworks for tracking public service delivery, especially in education, healthcare, and constituency projects.

Ongoing Monitoring and Tracking

Through its trained civic monitors and partner networks (including ZamTraka in Zamfara), ARDP maintains a grassroots-based monitoring mechanism for budget implementation and public procurement. This framework ensures continued civic oversight even in the absence of external donor support. Communities are encouraged to flag anomalies, document grievances, and engage local representatives through ARDP’s reporting channels.

Sustained Citizen Engagement through Local Languages

Building on the success of Hausa and Kanuri translations of key anti-corruption materials, ARDP has continued this practice. New audio-visual tools, community radio engagements, and simplified budget literacy materials are being circulated across rural communities. This effort ensures the message remains inclusive, accessible, and relatable — particularly for women, youth, and other marginalized groups.

Participation in Current Policy Dialogues

ARDP continues to be consulted by policymakers, state-level working groups, and civil society coalitions focused on governance reform. Recently, the organization contributed to a roundtable convened by the Borno State House of Assembly on budget transparency and took part in Zamfara’s civil society forum on constituency project reform.

Knowledge Dissemination

Reports generated between 2021 and 2024 — such as those on federal legislators’ project implementation and state budget performance — are being used as reference materials by advocacy groups, media houses, and researchers. ARDP also plans to compile and digitize these outputs as a publicly accessible knowledge repository.

“Our work did not end with the funding cycle. It only entered a new chapter — one defined by community-driven integrity, continued vigilance, and the belief that Northern Nigeria can rise through accountable governance.”

(Kabiru Sulaiman Chafe, Director, ARDP.)

Call to Action – Looking Ahead

“The Struggle Continues: Reclaiming Governance through Collective Action”

The conclusion of a major funding cycle is not the end of a movement. For the Arewa Research and Development Project (ARDP), it is a turning point – a moment to double down on the values that have shaped our journey since 2017: integrity, vigilance, collaboration, and public ownership of governance reform.

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As we commemorate World Anti-Corruption Day 2025, we call on all stakeholders – from village communities in Borno and Zamfara, to media professionals, faith leaders, policy advocates, youth coalitions, and women’s associations – to rise with renewed urgency. The cost of corruption is not abstract. It is felt in empty classrooms, malfunctioning hospitals, broken roads, and lost trust. The burden is heaviest on those who have the least.

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Yet, the tide is turning. Over the past seven years, we have seen that change is possible when citizens act, when communities speak with one voice, and when leaders are held accountable. We have seen young people using mobile phones to track constituency projects. We have seen traditional leaders endorsing transparency campaigns in their emirates. We have seen radio callers demanding receipts, records, and results.



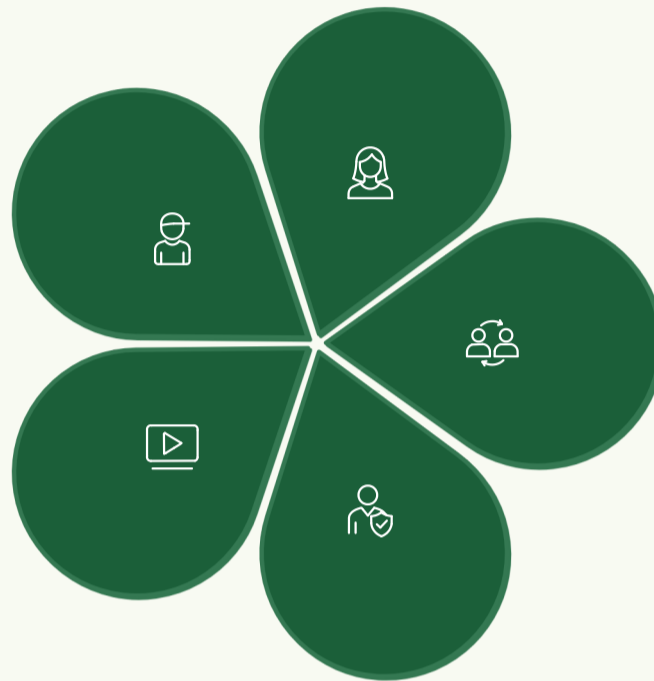
Now, we must build on this momentum.

To the youth:

You are not just the future. You are the present force that can disrupt cycles of impunity. Get involved. Ask questions. Organize.

To the media:

Keep the spotlight on. Your work informs, inspires, and instigates action.



To women and girls:

Your voice matters in public finance, in policy, and in protest. Demand inclusion. Challenge exclusion. Raise your hands – and your voices.

To civil society organizations:

Stay united. Share tools. Build coalitions that outlast grants and elections.

To policymakers and reformers:

Integrity is not a political risk – it is a public duty. Be the reason trust is restored.

ARDP will continue to stand with all who fight corruption. We are committed to training more civic monitors, producing simplified governance materials, and amplifying the voices of those often silenced.

As we look ahead, we affirm this truth: Corruption is not invincible – when people act with courage, integrity, and unity, governance can and will be reclaimed.

Together, let us make governance work for the people, not despite them.



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