



LEGAL MECHANISMS FOR COMBATING TRANSNATIONAL CORRUPTION AND ENHANCING ECONOMIC RESILIENCE IN SELECTED WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES

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The persistence of high-profile corruption scandals and broad complicity by public, and private actors highlight the imperativeness of an effective legal response. The lack of implementation and enforcement of anti-corruption laws pervade throughout West Africa, in spite of regional and international frameworks that are supposed to tackle corruption. This study is borne out by the broader ambition to critically analyse the applicable/legal set-ups in some West African countries and how beefing these frameworks can increase accountability, economic resilience and reduction in the level of corruption. It is in view of this that this study focused on West Africa and dissected existing legal frameworks that have been put in place to fight corruption, such as the United Nations Convention Against Corruption UNCAC, the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, and ECOWAS-specific protocols. In this regard, a doctrinal method of study was adopted, the data obtained through the observation of case studies of successful anti-corruption efforts and challenges in Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal, was analyzed through descriptive and analytical approach. The study therefore found that there is the need for harmonized anti-corruption laws, build institutional capacity, and sound economic policies to foster resilience. It was recommended that there is need for strategic reforms that reinforce legal mechanisms, regional economic stability, and adherence to global best practices toward an improved, transparent, and resilient economy in West Africa.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Corruption has been one of the most consistent impediments to achieve sustainable development, good governance, and economic resilience in West Africa. Transcending national borders with its wide-based resources and diverse cultures, corruption in the region disproportionately affects the public and private sectors. The effect of transnational corruption ranges from misappropriation of public funds to the loss of confidence by the public in governance and retard economic growth.¹ These socio-economic impacts not only retard sustainable development but also increase poverty and inequality, thus starting a vicious cycle of underdevelopment that is almost impossible to get rid of throughout the region. One cannot stress enough how important it is to handle corruption across borders in West Africa. Corruption deforms the rule of law and institutions, and discourages foreign investment, ultimately crippling economic progress.

In the fight to build resilience and establish economic stability, leveraging strategic positions and resources for a region requires combating corruption as one of its core means of building institutional trust. Besides, with the active participation of West African countries in regional and international trade, there is also an increasing pressure on these countries to strictly follow global anti-corruption norms.² Despite these myriad efforts, corruption remains a problem that considerably impedes good governance and development. The existing legal frameworks in some respects are comprehensive, but have yet to fully bridge the gap between theoretical aspirations and practical enforcement. Weak institutional capacity, inconsistent application of anti-corruption laws, and limited regional cooperation remain part of the challenges.³ These challenges necessitates for an effective legal mechanisms that could

¹ S Atuobi, *Corruption and State Instability in West Africa: An Examination of Policy Options* (RAIPTC Occasional Papers, 2007)

² ES Akpabio, CK Dike, ER Okoro & OA Oluwakemi, 'Corruption Syndrome and the SDGs' *Advances in human services and public health (AHSPH) book series* (2024) <<https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-2101-0.ch009>> accessed 24 November 2024

³ OECD, 'Preventing Corruption: Public Procurement' in *Government at a Glance 2009* (OECD Publishing, Paris 2009) 110–111.

fight corruption and at the same time improve economic resilience in the region. This work has two main objectives, first, it is aimed at the analysis of the regional and international legal frameworks as they are applied in the combat of corruption; their effectiveness and limiting aspects will be discussed. Secondly, the paper examines the interaction of legal mechanisms with economic resilience, underlining the role that harmonised laws, building institutional capacity, and appropriate economic policies play.

Transnational corruption has become a major obstacle towards sustainable development in the West African states by disrupting economic equilibrium, losing public trust and governance integrity. The continuity of the shadow economy and weak systems of justice complicate attempts to accomplish at least two of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including No8, decent work and economic growth, and No16, peace, justice, and strong institutions. From this perspective, the fight against transnational corruption is not simply a legal obligation – it is a stubborn necessity of a larger development plan. And, that sound legal systems that promote transparency, accountability, and international cooperation are necessary to lay the foundation for economic resilience, access to resources on an equitable basis, and an environment conducive to long-term, inclusive growth in the region. The importance of this research is manifold. Contributing from an academic perspective, this adds to the ever-increasing knowledge base on anti-corruption efforts in West Africa. It highlights the successes and challenges of regional and international legal instruments meant to curtail corruption. The study avails policymakers, legal practitioners, and regional organizations with valuable insights into recommendations for strategic reforms necessary for the tightening of legal mechanisms and ensuring economic stability. By addressing these critical issues, the study aims to pave the way for a more transparent, accountable, and economically resilient West Africa.⁴

⁴ TA Majekodunmi, BA Sogunle, MOJ Adeyemi-Balogun, GO Antai, KJ Onwubiko, & PA Aidonjite, 'Issues and Challenges Concerning Access to Justice in Nigeria: Clinical Legal Education Aid as a Panacea' (2024) 10(2) NIU Journal of Legal Studies 37–50.

2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Transnational corruption denotes acts of bribery, embezzlement, illicit financial flows, and any other form of corruption across national borders. The perpetration involves complicity by actors such as transnational corporations, foreign officials, and native elites; it is a multilayered phenomenon that transcends an individual state. Unlike localized corruption, transnational corruption works via sophisticated networks, usually out of the small omissions in regional and international governance systems.⁵ Examples include bribery in the award of government contracts, offshore tax evasion, and money laundering—all exploiting weaknesses in various anti-corruption enforcement mechanisms. The concept of sustainable development crystallized over the past several decades in a model for developing economies and achievement of environment sustainability, social cohesion, and sound governance. Sustainable development in West Africa, however, faces a big challenge through transnational corruption, assuming many forms such as bribery, illicit financial flows, and abuse of public office for private ends. Corruption reduces economy resilience through its deterrent effect in terms of attracting foreign direct investment, distorting competition in the marketplace, and miss allocating assets, and in its overall contribution, deepens inequality and poor living.

A look at some West African countries such as Nigeria, Senegal and Ghana, one can assert that the incidence of transnational corruption is catalyzed by several factors that include weak institutional frameworks, porous borders, and a lack of proper regional coordination. The region's enormous natural resource wealth, among which are oil, gold, and diamonds, makes it highly susceptible to these criminal activities. In most cases, corrupt practices in the resource sector take the form of multinational companies bribing officials to gain favorable contracts or avoid taxes; this means countries are being defrauded of every much-needed dollar for development. Moreover, transnational corruption supports the seepage of public finance into foreign accounts, thereby

⁵ A Peters, 'Corruption as a Violation of International Human Rights' (2018) 29 *European Journal of International Law* 1251-1287.

keeping domestic resources at low levels and crippling public service delivery processes. Because transnational corruption is complex, states must therefore make efforts to create and apply strong legal frameworks such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption which have been adopted by most West African States.⁶ Transnational corruption must be dealt with cooperatively as no state can deal with it effectively unilaterally. Corruption starkly reduces governance through the lessening of the legitimacy of public institutions and weakening of the rule of law. Corruption in West Africa defines public policy making and proprieties private interests over the common good. This creates inefficiency in public administration wherein bribes and favoritism replace decision-making anchored on merit. In effect, as governance deteriorates it translates to weakening the trust of the public to institutions, which leads to political instability and social unrest. Equally bad are the economic implications of corruption.⁷

Corruption results in misallocating public funds away from vital sectors of education, health, and infrastructure, hence retarding economic growth and increasing inequality. Illegal cross-border financial flows originating from transnational corruption deplete foreign exchange supplies, destabilize the value of national currency, and hurt economic resilience. Lastly, corruption dampens FDI flows due to uncertainty over business conditions where competing firms cannot play on a level playing field. It follows, therefore, that economic resilience, or a country's ability to resist and recover from economic shock, equals good governance with transparent institutions.⁸ This because reducing corruption would better equip governments to allocate resources efficiently, create an enabling

⁶ GI Ayodeji, AF Kolade & ET Abiodun, 'African Union, Promotion of Democracy and Anti-Corruption Initiatives in Africa' (2023) 4 ABUAD Journal of Social and Management Sciences 1. <<https://doi.org/10.53982/ajms.2023.0401.01-j>> accessed 25 November 2024

⁷ CA Ighodaro & SO Igbiniedion, 'Corruption and Economic Growth in West Africa' (2020) 13 Jejak (Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Kebijakan) 265 <<https://doi.org/10.15294/jejak.v13i2.24228>> accessed 25 November 2024

⁸ Capital Markets Consultative Group, 'Foreign Direct Investment in Emerging Market Countries' (2003) <<https://www.imf.org/external/np/cm/cg/2003/eng/091803.pdf>> accessed 25 November 2024.

environment for businesses to flourish, and attract investment.⁹ Also, it can be added that such strengthening of the legal mechanisms for combating corruption was one essential direction toward better governance and increased economic resilience. Good anti-corruption laws are those that will stop the commission of corrupt acts and engender the restoration of public confidence in institutions as a way of engendering sustainable development. The preceding conceptual framework pinpoints a systematic linkage between corruption and governance with economic resilience. It therefore places emphasis on integrated legal and institutional responses that address root causes of corruption, while promoting transparent and accountable governance systems. The paper thus sets out to assess the efficacy of the current legal framework in dealing with transnational corruption, as well as its impact on the economic resilience of countries in West Africa.

Several key theoretical perspectives are underpinning this study in order to gain insight into the dynamics that influence corruption, governance, and economic resilience. This is essential in framing the problem, analyzing the dimensions, and proposing ways of seeking effective solutions. Therefore, Institutional theory stresses formal and informal institutions are central for structuring human actions and societal results. Institutions... they are laws, regulations and norms in which the economic activities take place, sacred governing, political also social. In this respect, weak institutional environments or poorly enforced institutions often create an environment in which corrupt practices find fertile ground. In West Africa, some of the main drivers for corruption include institutional weaknesses such as poor mechanisms for enforcement, lack of transparency, and ineffective accountability structures. Institutional theory supports the following strategies to help combat transnational corruption: enhancement of legal frameworks, capacity building within institutions, and overall anti-corruption culture.¹⁰

⁹ PA Aidonojie, T Mulegi, J Muwaffiq, AI Imiefoh, & GO Antai, 'International Laws Regulating Human Rights in Business Operations in Uganda: Issues and Challenges' (2024) 23(2) *FENOMENA: Journal of the Social Sciences* 131–144.

¹⁰ Atuobi (n 1)

This thus supports the focus of the research in terms of enhancing legal mechanisms and building resilience in institutions.

Governance theory is concerned with the structure, processes and practices by means of which authority is exercised, decisions are made, and programs implemented. Good quality governance: Transparency, Accountability, participation and governance subject to the rule of law. Corruption upsets these values, conditions a loss of confidence by the public, and distorts resource allocation adversely. In West Africa, governance theory underlines how corruption warps decision-making processes, undercuts the delivery of basic services, and diminishes state legitimacy. Effective governance mechanisms, underpinning strong legal frameworks, are paramount in the fight against corruption and in promoting economic resilience. This thus lays the theoretical basis upon which legal mechanisms, governance practices, and economic outcomes can be explored in the region. The economic theory of corruption places corruption within a cost-benefit analysis framework, wherein individuals or entities engage in corrupt conduct when perceived benefit outweighs the risks and costs. Low salaries, weak penalties, and the absence of oversight raise the potential for corrupt behavior. The emphasis of this theory lies in indicating economic incentives and disincentives to corruption. In the context of transnational corruption, the possibility of exploiting cross-border loopholes and, correspondingly, the low probability of detection and prosecution create an incentive for illicit practices. This theory is used by the research to now support calls for more stringent legal frameworks, harsher penalties, and wider regional cooperation to reduce the economic incentive of corruption.

Deterrence theory is based on people being more unlikely to perform a breach of law or ethics if the perceived risk of detection and punishment is high. This theory, in the context of corruption, supports the notion that stringent anti-corruption laws, effective enforcement, and perceived sanctions against offenders can deter corrupt practices. These challenges in West Africa regarding efforts to address transnational corruption arise from the absence of mechanisms for enforcement and perceptions of impunity among corrupt actors. Deterrence theory, therefore, underlines the development of strong legal institutions and

consistent application with effectiveness of anti-corruption laws across the region.¹¹

Social norms theory holds that the societal expectations and cultural norms of a place provide the wellspring for creating individual and collective behavior. In regions where corruption has been normalized or perceived as necessary to get by dysfunctional systems, combating corruption requires a shift in societal attitudes. This means that efforts at tackling the cultural underpinnings of corruption in West Africa are core to creating long-term change. High societal acceptance of corruption is a level at which legal mechanisms cannot intervene effectively.¹² Social norms theory is used to enlighten the recommendation for public awareness campaigns, education, and community engagement as accompanying strategies to the legal one. Resilience theory is generally employed to describe the capability of systems, institutions, and societies to resist and recover from shocks or crises. Economic resilience in this context refers to the capability of a country to absorb the negative impact of corruption, sustaining growth and development. In this respect, the research applies the theory of resilience to explore the ways in which legal mechanisms could enhance the economic and institutional capacity of the West African state in general. Reducing corruption promotes better resource allocation, attracts investment, and provides a sound environment for economic growth.¹³ Put together, these various theories provide a multidimensional framework for understanding transnational corruption in relation to economic resilience in West Africa. Institutional, governance, economic, deterrence, social norms, and resilience theories interfacing underline that corruption is complex and that its defeat requires multifaceted approaches.

These perspectives are integrated in this research to develop comprehensive legal and institutional reforms, with an emphasis on the critical role played by regional and international cooperation to attain

¹¹ Z Momoh, 'Political Economy of Public Choice and Corruption' (2022) 9 *The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention* 2349 <<https://doi.org/10.18535/ijsshi/v9i011.02>> accessed 25 November 2024

¹²*Ibid*

¹³*Ibid*

greater economic stability and resilience. Rose-Ackerman¹⁴ places the role of UNCAC as the most promising source of a comprehensive legal template for fighting corruption within an international framework. She points out that international protocols first need to be domestically aligned if they are going to work properly. Mbaku¹⁵ *Corruption in Africa: Causes, Consequences, and Cleanups* deals with the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption as an important tool in combating corruption but points out the limited enforcement capability of this agency. Dell¹⁶ discuss the role of anti-corruption protocols specific to ECOWAS, underlining their strengths in fostering regional cooperation, and identifying bottlenecks in enforcement due to weak compliance from member-states. Tanzi and Davoodi,¹⁷ in their work on corruption and public finances, show how corruption leads to inefficient public spending and reduces economic growth. They provide a global perspective but emphasize developing economies like those in West Africa. Epaphra & J Massawe¹⁸ highlights the adverse effects of corruption on foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows in sub-Saharan Africa, noting how perceptions of corruption deter international investors. Abugre et al¹⁹ discusses the role of illicit financial flows in undermining fiscal stability and exacerbating economic vulnerabilities in Africa. Existing literature provides a solid foundation for understanding the legal and institutional dimensions of combating corruption in West Africa. Nevertheless, there

¹⁴ S Rose-Ackerman, *Corruption and Government: Causes, Consequences, and Reform* (Cambridge University Press 1999) 31.

¹⁵ JM Mbaku, *Bureaucratic and Political Corruption in Africa: The Public Choice Perspective* (Krieger Publishing Company, Malabar, FL, 2000) 12.

¹⁶ G Dell, *Anti-Corruption Conventions in Africa: What Civil Society Can Do to Make Them Work* (Transparency International 2003) <<https://uncaccoalition.org/resources/advocacy/anti-corruption-conventions-in-africa.pdf>> accessed 25 November 2024

¹⁷ V Tanzi & HR Davoodi, *Corruption, Growth, and Public Finances* (IMF Working Paper No. 00/182, November 2000) <https://ssrn.com/abstract=880260> accessed 26 November 2024.

¹⁸ M Epaphra & J Massawe, 'The Effect of Corruption on Foreign Direct Investment: A Panel Data Study' (2017) 4(1) *Turkish Economic Review* 19-54.

¹⁹ C Abugre, A Cobham, R Etter-Phoya, A Lépissier, M Meinzer, NF Monkam, & A Mosioma, *Vulnerability and Exposure to Illicit Financial Flows Risk in Africa*. (2019) *Tax Law: International & Comparative Tax eJournal*.

are still serious gaps, including limited focus on the specific challenges of transnational corruption in West Africa and its linkage to economic resilience. Equally, there is little integration of economic resilience approaches within the discussions of anti-corruption mechanisms. Additionally, authors failed to discuss the failure to explore innovative approaches, such as technology-driven enforcement tools and cross-border cooperation models. This study tries to fill in these gaps, contributing to the development of a fuller understanding of how legal mechanisms combat transnational corruption and improve economic resilience in West Africa.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AGAINST CORRUPTION IN WEST AFRICA

Corruption is one of the deep-rooted challenges in West Africa that corrodes governance, economic progress and public confidence. There has been substantial progress in the region towards the implementation of legal frameworks to address corruption at national, regional and international levels.²⁰ These mechanisms aim to harmonize anti-corruption laws, strengthen enforcement and build regional and international cooperation.²¹ Key legislation overview include; The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) adopted in 2003 is the most comprehensive international anti-corruption convention. It is very high for member states of ECOWAS because all member have ratified it. The Convention urges a robust international coordination and implementation of appropriate anti-corruption preventive policies that could cover effective codes of conduct for public officials, transparent public procurement systems, and criminalization of relevant criminal offenses including corruption, bribery, embezzlement, and money

²⁰ L Briguglio, G Cordina, N Farrugia & S Vella, *Economic Vulnerability and Resilience: Concepts and Measurements* (WIDER Research Paper No 2008/55, The United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER), 2008) accessed 26 November 2024.<<https://www.wider.unu.edu/publication/economic-vulnerability-and-resilience-concepts-and-measurements>> accessed 26 November 2024

²¹ GO Antai, 'Universality versus Cultural Relativism in International Human Rights: A Case Study of the Anti-Homosexuality Act of Uganda 2023' (2024) 11(2) IAA Journal of Management 1–14
<https://doi.org/10.59298/IAAJAM/2024/112.11400.00> accessed 25 November 2024.

laundering. It likewise contains provisions as to assets and property acquired as a direct result of corrupt conduct, as well supporting International Cooperation in the investigation and prosecution of corruption. The UNCAC has informed the creation of anti-corruption laws and policies with West African states, including Nigeria's EFCC for example. The UNCAC is widely signed and ratified by all ECOWAS member states. By November 2020, the UNCAC boasts of 189 member states. Among the 54 African countries, 45 member states have ratified the Convention. Almost all the member states in West Africa have ratified the UNCAC. It brings together governments, the private sector, civil society, and the international community in an effective international legal framework against corruption.²² However, it should be emphasized that the said UNCAC does not really carry a binding regulatory framework on reporting by entities on measures to combat corruption.

The African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC) convention is a dedicated regional anti-corruption policy instrument for the African continent. It constitutes a moral commitment on the part of the signatory states to fight corruption, first and foremost, among themselves. The convention declares that it is not only a form of defense against cases of corruption committed transnationally, but mandates state to criminalize corruption and all related practices. According to Article 5, the convention is to be met by the States Parties by adhering to the rules in compliance with their national legislation or having or changing legislation to ensure compliance with these rules. It also establishes that if there is no national law, the transnational corruption offense is considered a crime punishable by the States Parties and, if appropriate and necessary, such national laws have to be established. ECOWAS has also put in place regional instruments to fight corruption and increase economic resilience through the Protocol on the Fight against Corruption, 2001, that establishes a regional benchmark for fighting corruption among member states of ECOWAS; promotes coordination in investigating and prosecuting corruption-related offenses;

²² GO Antai, BO Ajah, DC Onyejegbu, OS Nwonovo, CF Onoh, OA Enweonwu, & DE Agwanwo, 'An Examination of the African Response to International Crimes and Extradition vis-a-vis Inter-Regional Cooperation' (2024) 3(2) *African Journal of Law and Justice System* 5–16.

and allows the harmonization of laws against corruption in member states. It encourages the creation of independent anti-corruption institutions within the member states. By creating common standards, the protocol strengthens the ability of ECOWAS member states to collectively combat corruption, fostering an environment that promotes transparency, accountability, and good governance. This benchmark serves as a foundation for member states to assess progress, align strategies, and prioritize the eradication of corruption, which remains a critical obstacle to sustainable development in the region. A core element of the protocol is its emphasis on coordination in investigating and prosecuting corruption-related offenses. Corruption, often transnational in nature, requires cross-border collaboration to effectively address its complexities. The protocol encourages member states to cooperate by sharing information, resources, and expertise. This cooperation aims to dismantle corruption networks that operate across borders and ensures that offenders cannot evade justice by exploiting legal and jurisdictional gaps. By fostering regional partnerships, the protocol strengthens the capacity of states to investigate complex corruption cases, secure convictions, and recover stolen assets.

Another aspect of the ECOWAS protocol is its call for the harmonisation of anti-corruption laws within the ECOWAS region. Given the diversity of legal systems among the member states, aligning these laws is essential to eliminating disparities and closing loopholes that can be exploited by corrupt individuals and organizations²³. Harmonization ensures that anti-corruption measures are consistently applied across all ECOWAS countries, creating a level playing field and reducing opportunities for regulatory arbitrage. This legal uniformity also facilitates smoother collaboration between member states in tackling corruption. The protocol place emphasis on the importance of establishing independent anti-corruption institutions in each member state. These institutions are envisioned to operate autonomously, free from political interference, and with adequate resources to perform their duties effectively. They are tasked with investigating corruption allegations,

²³ ME Umo, RA Akwagiobe, GO Antai & CE Ekpe, 'Transboundary Trafficking of Africans for Inhuman and Exploitative Labour: The Nigeria Experience' (2024) 6(2) Kampala International University Law Journal 258.

enforcing anti-corruption laws, and promoting accountability at all levels of government and society. Independent anti-corruption bodies play a pivotal role in restoring public confidence in governance systems and ensuring that corruption cases are handled impartially and transparently. Member states are encouraged to invest in training programs for law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, and anti-corruption bodies to enhance their skills and effectiveness. Public awareness campaigns are critical for educating citizens about the negative impacts of corruption and the available mechanisms for reporting corrupt practices. An informed and engaged citizenry is indispensable in the fight against corruption, as it holds public officials accountable and demands integrity in governance²⁴.

3.1 Gaps in Existing Laws

The existing legal framework have a strong structure for combating corruption as it extensively address preventive action, criminalization, asset recovery, as well as international cooperation but without specific provisions linking anti-corruption methods with sustainable development aims, such as reduction in poverty, environmental protection, equitable resources distribution, as well as sustainable economic planning. AUCPCC as well as ECOWAS frameworks don't adequately cover institutional as well as policy interface synergies between anti-corruption methods as well as environment governance values, social justice, as well as specific enforcement mechanisms ensuring reinvestment into assets. Additionally, even though UNCAC addresses anti-corruption assistance towards sustainable development in broad terms, its modalities for application do not adequately provide state parties with a way forward towards mainstreaming sustainability into national anti-corruption plans or regional cooperative arrangements. These Legal framework also do not adequately cover hydrocarbon sector corruption risks, infrastructure development, as well as public-private partnerships—drivers for sustainable development in West Africa. Insignificant or no consideration is given towards inclusive stakeholders' involvement, particularly from

²⁴ PA Aidonjje, GO Antai, YA Aleshinloye, M Huraira, KI Maifada & R Babirye, 'The Prospect, Legal, and Medical Issues in Integrating AI in Medical Practice in Uganda' (2024) 6(2) Kampala International University Law Journal 189.

civil society actors, as well as marginalized groups, in order to promote oversight on anti-corruption measures' application in ways leveraging economic resilience in a sustained manner. Ineffective enforcement, loose monitoring, as well as absence of measurement mechanisms, as well as lack of a specific regional framework harmonizing anti-corruption enforcement with sustainability goals, remain major drawbacks within chosen West African nations.

4. CASE STUDY ON ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS IN WEST AFRICA

Anti-corruption efforts in West Africa have gained significant attention due to the pervasive impact of corruption on governance, economic development, and social stability in the region. These initiatives aim to address systemic challenges such as weak institutions, poor enforcement of anti-corruption laws, and a lack of political will, which have historically allowed corruption to thrive. Regional organizations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have taken steps to foster cooperation among member states through protocols and frameworks targeting corruption. However, implementation remains a challenge, highlighting the need for stronger institutional mechanisms, cross-border collaboration, and civil society engagement. This case study explores the successes, limitations, and future prospects of anti-corruption measures in West Africa.

4.1 Ghana Anti-Corruption Journey

Ghana has made its mark as one of the most progressive countries in West Africa on corruption and can, without much fuss or dispute, be considered as the country with the leading anti-corruption frameworks within the region. Domestic laws and institutions are shaped by commitments on UNCAC as well as. The Auditor-General was established by the 1992 Constitution of Ghana and was created to audit yearly all public accounts. Ghana also vests the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) with powers to investigate corruption -related offenses. There is also the Public Procurement Act (2003) passed in order for accountability as government procurement

procedure is known to be corrupt. Section 92 of the Act imposes criminal penalties for offenses such as bid rigging and collusion. The Public Procurement Act has brought more transparency in the awarding of government contracts even as Ghanaian procurement processes are becoming more transparent and competitive thus reducing if not eliminating corrupt practices.

Also there is the Economic and Organized Crime Office (EOCO) which is an independent body established in 2010 to inquire and prosecute economic crime such as corruption, money laundering, etc. As well as the Office of the Special Prosecutor (OSP), created in 2018 which is an independent agency established to inquire and prosecute prosecution of corruption against public officials, politicians or the state. The independence of EOCO and OSP has been visible the several cases they handled were appropriate checks-and-balances against corruption in Ghana²⁵. These agencies act as active monitors of corruption cases, transparency, and developers of governments; they play a considerable role. The OSP, therefore, is of particular importance for the treatment of highly sensitive and high-profile corruption cases in an attempt to create a much-needed free hand for the prosecution of corruption without being political. In Ghana, there is are vibrant civil societies that keeps scrutinizing and pushing government wings for transparency. Other major players that have done most to shine light on corruption is through raising consciousness and advocating for reforms include the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD), and Transparency International Ghana. Great investigative journalism has been done through the media; there are endless examples of corruption, and from this, a public discussion that leads to action. More particularly, Ghana has been proactive with her international partners and other organizations, including the World Bank and the UN, to ramp up her own anti-corruption work. This encompasses technical assistance, capacity-building engagements, and the promotion of international anti-corruption benchmarks²⁶.

²⁵ O Anku-Tsede, R Arthur & MO Amankwah, 'Special Prosecutor: Panacea or Facade to Institutionalised Corruption in Ghana?' (2022) 9(1) Cogent Social Sciences. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2161185>

²⁶ Ibid

4.2 Analysis of Nigeria's Legal Framework and Anti-Corruption Agencies

At the very least, Nigeria has underneath a sound and multi-faceted legal framework-local and international conventions included-under which it can use to fight corruption. The country has established several anti-corruption institutions, including the Economic & Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission & Others Related Offenses Commission (ICPC). While these steps were taken, corruption still is rife in Nigeria due to enforcement challenges, political machinations, and broader economic tenacity.²⁷ The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria as amended in its present form vests the Nigerian Police Force, Office of the Attorney General and National Assembly among others in investigating corruption. The EFCC is responsible for investigating and prosecuting corruption, money laundering, economic, and financial offenses. The commission has extensive powers such as freezing assets,²⁸ arresting suspects and prosecuting anyone, individuals or companies caught in corruption by the commission. The ICPC investigates and prosecute public officers tainted with corrupt practices that includes corruption, bribery etc. The Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal is mandated to enforce the Code of Conduct applicable for Public Officers and disallow unethical conduct. As such, it provides it with powers to institute proceedings in the event of violation of the said code. One of the primary legal instrument is the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offenses Act, 2000 (CPORA). The Act under section 8 criminalizes the act of accepting gratification by public officers in the course of their official duties. More so, section 9 extends liability to persons offering such gratification thereby establishing a dual culpability approach. Also, Section 19 of the Act targets abuse of

²⁷ CJ Nebeife, ME Chinwuba & JO Onwuanibe, 'ECOWAS Regional Integration and Trans-Border Security Management in Nigeria' (2022) 3(1) *Journal of Contemporary International Relations and Diplomacy* 379-387.

²⁸ JE Edet, GO Antai & OO Itafu, 'Sovereign Immunity from Legal and Arbitral Proceedings and Execution against the Assets of a Sovereign State: The Evolving Paradigm' (2022) 18(1) *The Calabar Law Journal* 30-44.

office, thereby penalizing public officers who use their office to confer an unfair advantage on themselves or others²⁹.

4.3 Case Study of Senegal: Anti-Corruption Laws, Agencies, and Evaluation of Reforms

Senegal is often regarded as one of the most politically progressive, and transparent countries in West Africa as compared to its neighbors. As such, the nation has come a long way in devising a legal and institutional framework to address corruption. Senegal anti-corruption efforts have been largely anchored on both local legal orders as well as international commitments to fight corruption. Senegal has the legal backdrop to battle corruption as part of its constitution, penal code and a number of anti-corruption laws empowers it. The Constitution stipulates the establishment of anti-corruption bodies and provides that citizens have a right to transparency and accountability from public servants. Some of these offenses such as bribery, embezzlement and abuse of power are now defined as felonies in the Criminal Code (1980). In Senegal, one of the most important constitutional legislation is Anti-Corruption Act, 2003; Anti-Corruption Act provides a legal basis for corruption prevention. Criminal offenses and their sanctions like bribery, money laundering, abusing public office, are included in the list. Also, criminal penalties for corrupt practices are identified.³⁰The Office of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (OFNAC) established in 2011 with the core aim of interrogating corruption in public and private offices from all its officials as well as advising the government on anti-corruption policy and transparency. The establishment of the watchdog body is a major leap in professionalizing the fight against corruption in Senegal OFNAC thus far prevent public money from being mismanaged, and fights against corruption in all its forms- public and private. However, the capacity to investigate is sometimes hindered by its limited financial and human resources.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ C Chance, 'Africa Anti-Corruption Guide 2024'

<<https://www.cliffordchance.com/content/dam/cliffordchance/PDFDocuments/african-ti-corruption-guidebook-2024.pdf>> accessed 25 November 2024

Senegal also rely on a Court of Account (Cour des Comptes), which is the body responsible for auditing public expenditure and investigates cases of embezzlement of public funds. The Court of Accounts makes reports about government expenditures, and its recommendations which is often times the starting point of further investigations or reforms. Though it is not a prosecutorial body, it remains a very important engine of government finance transparency. Countries like Senegal are signatories to international conventions, such as UNCAC and AUCPCC, which makes provisions for states to domesticate national anti-corruption frameworks and state-to-state cooperation such as mutual legal assistance for the purpose of prosecuting corruption related offenses.

4.4 Challenges in the Effectiveness of Legal Mechanisms for Combating Corruption in West Africa

One major challenge in the fight against is that most countries lack the political will to effectively enforce the measure against corruption, which results in selective prosecutions or simply inaction. This in return affects the credibility of anti-corruption efforts and erodes public confidence. Anti-corruption institutions and judiciary bodies are very often affected by high levels of political interference, especially when high-ranking officials are involved in investigations. Investigations can be manipulated by governments to target political opponents while protecting allies. This in-turn results to lack of enforcement measures against corruption. West Africa's anti-corruption agencies are as a matter of fact highly underfunded, understaffed and under-resourced. Agencies such as Nigeria's EFCC and Ghana's CHRAJ often time struggle to manage complex cases due to resource crunch in some cases.³¹ This incapacity limits their ability to conduct thorough investigations and secure convictions. While corruption often transcends borders, regional cooperation in combating it remains weak. In the absence of effective mechanisms for intelligence sharing, mutual legal assistance, and coordinated cross-border investigations, the ability to address

³¹ GhanaWeb, 'National Cathedral: CHRAJ Recommends Forensic Audit and Possible Prosecution of the Board of Trustees' GhanaWeb (November 26, 2024) <<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/National-Cathedral-CHRAJ-recommends-forensic-audit-and-possible-prosecution-of-the-Board-of-Trustees-1961410>> accessed 26 November 2024

comprehensive transnational corruption is limited. This is problematic in light of the interconnectedness of West African economies and criminal networks. Corruption in some West African societies is rather deep-seated and has often been regarded as the rule rather than the exception. Nepotism, clientelism, and bribery, among other practices, have been widely accepted and are thus very hard to tackle. The cultural resistance to changes in this regard further complicates efforts to ensure transparency and accountability.³² Illicit financial flows, money laundering, and asset concealment often take place across borders; detection and recovery require highly technical and complex legal and technical capabilities that most West African countries lack. Anti-corruption legislation is often enforced in a non-uniform manner, where lower-ranking officials are punished and senior ones are left unscathed. The selective use of such legislation makes it less effective as a deterrent, with the associated perception of unfair treatment under the law. The judiciary which is one of the key elements for anti-corruption enforcement—is very susceptible to manipulation and being corrupted itself. In addition, judges may be subject to political pressure or implication in corrupt practices, further weakening the integrity of the legal process.³³ In West Africa, widespread poverty and economic instability create a milieu in which corruption thrives. Small remunerations for public officials in conjunction with ineffective controls lure them into corrupt activities. Recovery of assets is a key factor in anti-corruption efforts, yet most West African countries lack the legal and technical capacity for asset recovery. With weak frameworks for tracing and repatriating wealth illicitly acquired, corrupt individuals retain their gains at the expense of justice and economic recovery.³⁴

³² H Holmén, *State, Cooperatives and Development in Africa* (Nordic Africa Institute 1990) 23

³³ I Amundsen, *Political Corruption: An Introduction to the Issues* (Chr. Michelsen Institute, 1999) 17

³⁴ *Ibid*

5.0 INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING IN CURTAILING CORRUPTION TOWARDS ATTAINING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL

There is need for institutional capacity building in the war against corrupt practices and aligning countries with the SDGs, particularly in West Africa with numerous institutional deficiencies. The linkage between sustainable development and institutions is directly captured in SDG 16, which is aimed at the advancement of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, global justice for all, and the establishment of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels³⁵. In terms of the war against transnational corruption, it is the establishment and internalization of the legal, regulatory, and enforcement architecture against detecting, preventing, and prosecuting corruption that crosses borders and erodes economic resilience³⁶. There exist several reasons that contribute to the growth of corruption in most West African nations, including the lack of a fitting institutional framework, technical know-how and political interference, etc. and a dearth of coordination among anti-corruption agencies³⁷. Building such capacities, in a holistic manner, will entail comprehensive legal reforms, investing in human resources and IT and creating strong inter-agency linkages within and across the borders. Legal instruments should be globally oriented, as the UNCAC, but also contextually sensitive to the particular socio-political context of countries. Investing anti-corruption agencies with the legal powers, financial resources and the operational autonomy they need to investigate and prosecute free from political interference³⁸.

³⁵ N Dasandi and S Jankin, *AI for SDG-16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: Tracking Progress and Assessing Impact* (United Nations Development Programme 2019)

³⁶ PD Farah, 'The Transnationalization of Anti-Corruption Law (Preface)' (22 September 2020) *Transnational Law and Governance Series*, gLAWcal Series, Routledge Publishing (New York/London, May 2021) xix–xxvi <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3856343> accessed 24 November 2024.

³⁷ E Ahmad, MA Ulla and Muhammad Irfan Arfeen, 'Does Corruption Affect Economic Growth?' (2012) 49(2) *Latin American Journal of Economics* 277.

³⁸ OG Izevbuwa, PA Aidonojie, AI Imiefoh, E Obieshi, & GO Antai, 'Concept of Automated Income Tax in Edo State Nigeria: Learning from the American System' (2004) 10(2) *NIU Journal of Legal Studies* 19–36.

Furthermore, capacity building for institutions should enable cooperation amongst West African governments on information sharing, harmonization of procedures and processes, and provision for mutual legal assistance on corrupt acts. Regional entities such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) should be used for advocating peer review mechanisms and technical support for member states³⁹. The media and civil society should be enabled for effective participation in watchdog functions for instilling a culture of accountability and ethics in governance. With enhanced institutional capacities, West Africa countries are capable of not only preventing corruption but also fostering an environment for growth, foreign direct investment, and sustainable development. Effective and good institutions form the basis of healthy economies through ensuring the application of the rule of law, protection of public assets, and citizens' trust in the government. Building institutional capacities is therefore not only technical in requirement but the key in the policy and legislative framework of fighting transnational corruption as well as achieving the overall aspirations of the SDGs⁴⁰.

6.0 EVALUATION OF ECONOMIC RESILIENCE AND IMPACT OF ANTI-CORRUPTION MEASURES IN WEST AFRICA

Economic resilience is seen as the potential capacity of an economy to face different or adverse external shocks and still recover. With corruption weakening public institutions, draining resources, and hindering development. Most West African nations, like Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal with various levels of corruption have influenced their economic performance and its resulting resilience. Ghana a politically relatively stable country in West Africa has had an excellent economic

³⁹ C Goredema, "Evaluating the Effectiveness of Mutual Legal Assistance and Extradition in Africa" (2024) Research Paper <<https://enact-africa.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/pages/1710926630501-research-paper-43.pdf>> accessed 24 November 2024

⁴⁰ A Adebayo, B Ackers, O Erin & A Adegboye, 'Governance Quality and Sustainable Development: Insights from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in Africa' (2025) *Public Organization Review* <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11115-025-00810-7>

performance throughout most of the recent decades, however corruption is still an inescapable problem. Corruption sabotages economic resilience and misappropriation of resources, inefficient public service delivery mechanisms, weak system and rampant governance. Particularly, corruption has a disproportionately larger impact on the public sector given that billions are unregulated and diverted from infrastructure or education to health. Most of the time, huge amounts of public funds get transferred into the pockets of a few individuals, impeding the investment in basic sectors like infrastructure and social services. Corruption in Ghana undermines public institutions' credibility and efficiency. Weak public procurement systems where officials use their power to buy shoddy work or overpriced services making public investment low and economic stability vulnerable. Corrupt practices also erode investor confidence, as businesses suffer from delays, escalating costs and lack of predictability in regulatory environment that inevitably result from corrupt practices. Despite all these, Ghanaian economy has showed some resilience primarily as a result of institutional reform and structural adjustment.

Some of the major anti-corruption steps Ghana has taken includes constitution of the Commission on Human Rights⁴¹ and Administrative Justice, creation of Serious Fraud Office (SFO). Ghana's implementation of the UNCAC and AUCPCC, basically means that it has pledged to combat Corruption itself. Establishment of the Public Procurement Authority enhanced transparency in government spending and helped in arresting the frauds that were bleeding the economy. Yet political interference and a lack of actual enforcement of anti-corruption legislation still form huge barriers. Corruption in local governments and judiciaries has weakened the effective reforms and thereby weakened anti-corruption policies to increase resilience of its economy as a whole. Ghana in essence has progressed much but corruption continues to suppress the full economic function and resilience of the country.

⁴¹ GO Antai, T Mulegi, EK Barongo, C Ekpenisi, EC Kisubi, & IC Okonji, 'Exploring Mechanisms for Enforcing Human Rights within the Context of International Law: Issues and Challenges' (2024) 10(1) NIU Journal of Legal Studies 59–70 <<https://ijhumas.com/ojs/index.php/NIUJLS/article/view/1943>> accessed 24 November 2024

Nigeria is among the top largest economies in Africa. Corruption is however remains a significant block toward achieving full economic wholeness. Rich in oil revenue and has badly managed these same resources. Diversification of the economy from oil is has been hampered by corruption as funds meant for diversification projects are misappropriated, making the economy's oil over-dependence and letting it very vulnerable to oil price shocks. It has also led to wastage of much-needed funds in infrastructure and public services across Nigeria as a result of corruption. All the bad roads, patchwork electricity supply and under-invested educational and health system stunting long-term economic growth while never allowing for sustainability. Corruption also leads to wealth not being equitably shared as state resources get stolen by elites instead of spending on programs that protect the poor. This widens the divide and erode social cohesion further breaking down of the economy's resilience. The impact of all these has collectively soured Nigeria, making it more vulnerable to economic shocks and less capable of bouncing back from a crisis. Nigeria has passed several pieces of legislation as part of the battle against corruption as well, from the EFCC to the ICPC among others. The agencies at the core of investigations into corruption and prosecutions based on these particularly have often proved a little less fruitful. On top of UNCAC and AUCPCC⁴² and other regional frameworks that seek to combat anti-corruption offenses is a bundle of attempts, the establishment of the Whistle-blower Protection Program and the National Anti-Corruption Strategy has, so far, been a sure step toward making the system more transparent. Inadequate efforts to combat corruption ultimately reduce Nigeria's economic resilience. The diversion of public funds for personal gain inhibits economic diversification and translates into missed opportunities for sustainable development. Nigeria's economic resilience remains fragile mainly as corruption still influences governance and stability in reverse manners.

Senegal has been one of the most stable and peaceful countries among West Africa with higher rates of human development than most other nations in the region. Corruption, however, remains an issue for them regarding economic resilience, most definitely in important sectors

⁴²*Ibid*

like public procurement, natural resources management, and the judiciary. The mismanagement of public procurement and the awarding of contracts to politically connected individuals have resulted in inefficient resource allocation.⁴³ This curtails the government's capacity to invest in important infrastructure and social services. Natural resources such as oil and gas⁴⁴ are among Senegal's natural resources that contribute to economic growth, the country has been afflicted with corruption to keep this wealth from becoming anything other than a source of short term resilience. Poor management of resource revenues usually keeps the resource curse and environmental degradation at high level needlessly. Corruption undermines faith in the institutions of government, which is central to build an environment where economic stability can flourish. When the public realizes a siphoning of public resources to private hands, then they begin to decrease their own engagement in future private activities to bolster the gainful activities that facilitate sustained economic growth at large from within.

Nevertheless Senegal has shown some economic resiliency due to replication and quite good macroeconomic policies whereby replication dampened corruption from taking deeper roots. Senegal has however tried to curb corruption by creating the National Anti-Corruption Office (OFNAC) and IFP repression Court (CREMF). And, together with Senegal being part of the UNCAC and AUCPCC⁴⁵ have helped slightly curb the fight against corruption. The government also stirred measures to promote accountability by public officials such as property declaration for public servants. While anti-corruption measures have somewhat enhanced the economic resilience of Senegal, major obstacles exist in terms of enforcement and capture by the same entrenched interests represented in

⁴³ GO Antai, DE Okpong, M Jufri, AI Imiefoh, C Ekpenisi, & PA Aidonojie, 'The Igbo Apprenticeship Model and Practice: A Legal Examination of the Contractual Status of the "Nwa Boyi" in South-East Nigeria' (2024) 9(3) *NIU Journal of Humanities* 127–138.

⁴⁴ EC Kisubi, G Adenyuma, GO Antai, & VT Mbeli, 'Utilitarianism in Uganda's Oil and Gas Sector: Balancing Utility and Responsibility for Environmental Justice' (2024) 6(1) *Kampala International University Law Journal (KIULJ)* 190–207 <https://kiulj.kiu.ac.ug/article-view.php?i=115&t=utilitarianism-in-uganda%E2%80%99s-oil-and-gas-sector-balancing-utility-and-responsibility-for-environmental-justice> accessed 25 November 2024

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

state politics. To secure the long-term economic resilience for these countries, much more needs to be done to strengthen anti-corruption efforts and pursue institutional capability in addition to rooting out systemic challenges. The low quotient of corruption therefore calls for more engagement by the international community, regional bodies such as ECOWAS and civil society which must support these countries on their journey to eradication corruption for sustainable economic growth.⁴⁶

7.0 FINDINGS

Findings reveal that effective legal framework against the transnational corruption can contribute significantly to sustainable development in West Africa to promote good economic management increase in investor confidence and reducing the illegal financial flows. The application of anti-corruption legislation consistent with international norms has contributed to observable improvements in institutional transparency and accountability. These laws when enforced enable proper use of public resources, prevent leakages of development resources and contribute to economic sustainability and accumulation by providing an enabling environment for long-term and inclusive economic growth and development. Nevertheless, the impact of such legal tools is limited by ineffectual enforcement institutions, political control, and cross-border jurisdictional constraints, thus underscoring the necessity for regional convergence of anti-corruption legislation and more effective international legal cooperation. Also, there are significant discrepancies in enforcing these frameworks due to varying political wills, inadequate institutional capacity, and a lack of cross-border cooperation. While the conventions provide important tools for the fight against corruption, these are often rendered ineffective in practical realities due to the absence of vigorous machinery for enforcement and accountability. These case studies demonstrate that, although progress has been made on several fronts, corruption is a deeply entrenched phenomenon that requires sustained effort, political will, and regional cooperation to combat effectively. One important lesson learned from the studies is how crucial

⁴⁶*Ibid*

building institutional capacity is in strengthening anti-corruption measures.

In West Africa, anti-corruption agencies are generally underfunded and lack institutional capacity. It found that the legal framework would do little if the institutions were bereft of resources (people, equipment and legal know-how to investigate and prosecute corruption). The study also highlighted that judicial independence has been growing stronger with respect to anti-corruption enforcement however, political influence corrupts judicial system,⁴⁷ making anti-corruption measures vulnerable. It was noted in the research the utmost necessity for cross-border cooperation in tackling transnational corruption. The nature of corruption in West Africa is often cross-border in financial flows, so shared intelligence, mutual legal assistance, and international collaboration are essential. The research found that while there have been some successes in this area, such as collaboration through ECOWAS, more needs to be done to facilitate seamless cooperation between countries in the region and to establish stronger legal frameworks for cross-border corruption cases.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to the transnational corruption challenge and the need for enhanced economic resilience in some West African countries, a range of legal measures are proposed. There should firstly be an exhaustive harmonization of laws on anti-corruption throughout the sub-region to close the legal gaps that are used by transnational players. This can be realized by adopting a regional anti-corruption framework based on ECOWAS legal order providing that the standards of transparency, accountability and judicial co-operation must be uniform. Second, domestic legal regimes must be shored up to enable robust anti-corruption institutions (e.g., judiciary, law enforcement, financial intelligence units) to carry out investigations, prosecutions, and adjudications of

⁴⁷ GO Antai, 'Methods of Judicial Cooperation and the Procedure for Enforcement under International Law: Identifying the Nexus between Theory and Practice' (2024) 4(3) *Newport International Journal of Current Research in Humanities and Social Sciences* 80–88 <<https://doi.org/10.59298/NIJCRHSS/2024/4.3.8088>> accessed 25 November 2024.

transnational corruption cases free from political meddling. Third, there is the requirement of improved mutual legal assistance and extradition mechanisms between West African countries to allow for joint investigation and repatriation of proceeds of crime. Legal frameworks should foster transparency in public procurement and fiscal governance, accompanied by binding sanctions on both corporate and public sectors engaged in cross-border corrupt activities. Transparent and accountable budget management of the public purse ensures that money is directed optimally to priority sectors for sustainable development, including in health, education, infrastructure, promoting economic resilience, reducing poverty and contributing to inclusive growth in accordance with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

Legal reforms should require beneficial ownership of companies to be disclosed and should introduce strict anti-money laundering provisions following international standards, like those recommended by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). A successful enforcement of such legal strategies would enhance the battle against transnational corruption and build sustainable economic resilience in the West African sub-region. in West African countries and increase their economic resilience in mining, infrastructure, and natural resources sectors. This will lead to a higher level of cooperation between national authorities, regional bodies and international organizations to counter corruption across borders and increase member states accountability. At the same time, it is vital to reduce political interference in judiciary as anti-corruption agencies are adequately funded. The top step for countries would be to emphasize transparency in public procurement and financial management of public sector. Reforms in public financial management, and oversight by citizens contribute to a reduction in corrupt practices and the appropriate use of funds for economic resilience. This may involve investment in digital platforms, such as e-government and electronic procurement systems that promote transparency and accountability. Data analytics and AI tools can detect corruption patterns through record and transaction analysis, thereby increasing investigative capacity within anti-corruption agencies. Regular monitoring, evaluation, and independent auditing of anti-corruption efforts are necessary for effectiveness. Clearly established benchmarks and performance indicators at national and regional levels can track progress and hold governments accountable. West African

governments should implement legislative reforms addressing prevention and prosecution of corruption, including strengthening asset declaration laws and protecting whistle-blowers. These steps are necessary to fight corruption effectively and guarantee that resources are used in the most effective interventions.

9.0 CONCLUSION

In West Africa, despite progress in legal frameworks and institutions, challenges in enforcement, political will, and institutional capacity hinder anti-corruption efforts. Stronger cross-border cooperation, judicial independence, and robust frameworks are crucial for combating corruption and promoting sustainable development in the region. Effective enforcement of laws established under UNCAC, the AUCPCC, and ECOWAS protocols are vital. However, without political will and institutional support, the potential of these frameworks remains unrealized. Regional stability and prosperity require not only legal tools but also structural and institutional backing. Cross-border cooperation; shared intelligence unit, coordinated West African states actions to curb corruption must be in place as corruption hurts economic resilience by excluding resources, discouraging investment and stifling growth. Countries like Nigeria, Senegal and Ghana still have deep-rooted corruption in their systems and this prevents any long-term economic stability.