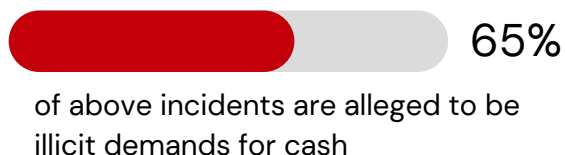


Nigerian Ports: Enhancing Transparency and Efficiency

The Nigerian maritime industry plays a pivotal role in the country's economy. Concurrently, vessels faced with corruption risks during vessel clearance processes in the seaports are constantly being addressed through collective efforts between the Nigerian Government, MACN, and its local partner the Convention on Business Integrity (CBI). This article sheds light on the challenges faced, in particular, with the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) and how these are being addressed.

With support from the Nigerian government, local and international private sector actors, civil society, MACN and CBI have made notable strides in Nigeria. The Collective Action has increased transparency and efficiency in vessel clearance processes and strengthened governance frameworks, facilitating a more conducive business environment in the country. However, the risk of corruption still looms large for vessels navigating the Nigerian Immigration Services.

MACNs anonymous incident data collected over the past year (Sept/22-Sept/23) shows that almost half of the reported incidents in Nigeria have involved immigration officials.



The consequences for the industry are significant, causing both delays for vessels and threats of fines for alleged non-compliance.

In addition to the anonymous incident data, MACN receives feedback and complaints directly from vessel Captains on their experience calling Nigerian ports through MACN's local HelpDesk, which has been active since 2019. →

956

Pre-Arrival
Notifications Received

135

Cases have been
escalated as incidents

98%

Of all incidents have
been successfully
resolved

The HelpDesk in Nigeria has been widely used, with close to a thousand pre-arrival notifications (PANs) received. 135 of these PANs have been escalated as incidents, of which 104 have involved immigration officials – representing 77% of all escalated cases.

The majority of the experiences shared are associated with fines imposed for alleged improper crew documentation and non-compliance of immigration officials with the Nigerian Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Nigerian Port Process Manual (NPPM).

The primary challenge stems from alleged improper documentation of crew members, due to ambiguities in the Nigerian Immigration Act and varying interpretations by individual immigration officials regarding what constitutes a valid travel document – for example seafarers discharge books, crew contracts, and other similar documents.

The severity of the challenges is linked to the fact that all immigration offences, no matter how serious or trivial, carry a penalty of two thousand dollars, inclusive of stipulated fines and other sanctions detailed in the 2015 Immigration Act.



NOVEMBER 2022
MACN's Local Partner, Soji Apampa of CBI, proudly displaying the Outstanding Achievement Award from the Basel Institute alongside former Vice-President of Nigeria, Yemi Osinbajo.

It is evident that these challenges pose a serious threat to the efficiency of the maritime industry in Nigeria. To mitigate these, a solution landscape was adopted by the Nigerian government in its seaports, enhancing transparency and integrity which warranted strategic initiatives for implementation. These are a result of several years of advocacy and engagement with the office of the Vice President of Nigeria and key governance agencies by MACN and CBI. →

Addressing the challenge

The challenges faced by vessels during immigration clearance in Nigerian seaports are significant, but not insurmountable. MACN's Collective Action methodology, together with CBI and various other stakeholders, has made substantial progress in improving clearance processes in Nigerian seaports. With continued dedication, collective efforts through training, sensitization, and monitoring, there is hope that these challenges will be mitigated, contributing to smoother operations in the Nigerian maritime industry. Below is an overview of the strategic initiatives of the ongoing collaboration.

1. New guidance document for seaport operations:

The Nigerian Ports Process Manual (NPPM) promotes transparency and efficiency in the seaports' business environment and is designed to facilitate the ease of doing business.

2. Reforms to boost transparency and efficiency:

The NPPM led to the formation of the Port Standing Task Team (PSTT) which ensures implementation of the NPPM and SOPs.

The PSTT has been efficient in implementing successful policies like the formal registration of every agency official boarding a vessel, and the enforced Joint Boarding of Vessels by customs and immigration officers. This policy has improved port transparency, cut inspection times, and ensures that officials must board vessels together and complete their inspection within 30 minutes of boarding or formally request for an extension of time.

This streamlined approach limits the opportunity for unethical practices during clearance and document inspections.

3. Specialised training to enhance compliance standards:

Specialised training was anchored by MACN and CBI in partnership with the Technical Unit on Government and Anti-Corruption Reforms (TUGAR) which is the leading agency in empirical based policy making and implementation of anti-corruption and governance initiatives. The aim of this training was to build the capacity of compliance officers within their respective agency functions in line with national rules and regulations. This helps increase standards and accountability within agencies like the Nigerian Immigration Service.

4. Commitment for the Nigeria Immigration Service to foster ethical operations and accountability:

Recognising the importance of changing the mindset within the NIS, efforts have been made to promote ethical standards and address gaps in the Immigration Act. A committee has been recently established within the NIS to clarify the definition of a valid travel document, thus reducing ambiguity and potential sources of corruption. There is commitment from the leadership to give the tone from the top to individual officers and stress the importance of integrity during operations.



SEPTEMBER 2023

The Federal Ministry of Transportation in partnership with the MACN and CBI convened the fourth Compliance Roundtable on evidence of data driven compliance with attendance from heads of Nigerian Government Agencies, private sector and civil society.



SPRING 2023

Participants of the 'Compliance Function and Leadership' training module, where 187 command level port officials received integrity training to detect, prevent, and respond to compliance risks while promoting best practices.

"The maritime sector is the crucial engine for revitalising and fortifying Nigeria's overall economy. It is imperative that the industry and port authorities work collectively to achieve operational efficiency within the port sector by following procedures, tracking compliance and building an integrity culture."

Soji Apampa (CBI), MACN Local Partner

The initiatives taken by the Federal Government of Nigeria, in partnership with MACN and CBI have paved the way for enhanced transparency, efficiency and compliance standards within the maritime industry. As a result, we are witnessing a significant reduction in inspection times, improved port transparency, and increased accountability among officials.

While challenges remain, the progress achieved so far is a testament to what can be accomplished through collaboration and collective action, leading to a smoother and more reliable operational environment in Nigerian ports.

Interested in learning more about MACN's initiatives in Nigeria?

We welcome you to reach out to the secretariat directly, or visit our [country page](#) for insights on our local partners, project developments and continuous updates.

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