



## **MEDIA RELEASE:**

# **Launch of Integrity Namibia**

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Today, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) is launching new project called Integrity Namibia. Integrity Namibia aims to take the IPPR's anti-corruption work to an exciting, new level.

Over the past 20 years - the IPPR has published a range of papers as part of our anti-corruption research programme. These have focused mainly on policy and legal reforms that could make a significant difference - whistleblower protection, public procurement reform, public enterprise accountability, and extractive industry transparency, among others.

We have also sought to focus on the roles that can be played by key bodies and sectors such as the media, the courts, the auditor-general, civil society, and the private sector.

Proposals for reform have had a mixed reception while calls for sectors to become more involved and assume certain levels of responsibility have met with goodwill but little action.

It has often been a case of one step forward and one step or sometimes two steps back. We have seen an improved Public Procurement Act replace the old, deeply flawed Tender Act. But the new system has been mired by non-compliance and loopholes that can still be exploited for corrupt ends.

Reform of minerals and petroleum legislation has been in the works for years - but no draft new laws have been widely circulated. We urgently do need laws that are up to speed with 21<sup>st</sup> century developments - not least on transparency and accountability. We saw a glimmer of hope when the new

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Harambee plan launched a year ago mentioned a commitment to meeting the governance standards set by the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). But the governance challenges raised by the discovery of oil off the Namibian coast, if it proves to be a commercial prospect, will be huge.

Perhaps most frustrating is the case of the Whistleblower Protection Act, which was passed in 2017 but has not yet been implemented. Civil society has also been campaigning for the past ten years for an Access to Information law. Now that an ATI bill is in parliament we are concerned that it may face the same fate as the whistleblower law once passed - waiting years for implementation due to a claimed lack of resources.

We would like to use this occasion to call on government, as a demonstration of its political will, to explicitly include the costs of setting up a whistleblower protection office in the 2022/23 budget due to be tabled in the coming days.

These experiences of limited progress and continuing frustration have led us to believe that we need to take our anti-corruption work to a new level. We need to challenge complacency and inaction at government level. But we also need to seriously step up our anti-corruption game across various non-state sectors.

Looking at the corruption situation more broadly in Namibia, the country is in a grave situation but not a hopeless one. We are clearly on a slippery slope. Adding to the frustrations is the fact that a number of high-profile corruption cases have either not yet resulted in arrests or are the subject of drawn-out court procedures. Such cases include the Fishrot investigation, the collapse of the SME Bank, the Kora Awards missing millions, the payments to UK-based lawyers, the August 26 scandal, and corruption in the government medical aid scheme, among others. Other cases have collapsed in court (such as the Teko Trading case) or have resulted only in political demotions rather than criminal investigation (such as Polytechnologies arms deal). Namibians often also point to longer-standing cases such as the Namibia Liquid Fuel case and the GIPF Development Capital Portfolio controversy as examples of apparent impunity where no action was taken against wrongdoers despite evidence being presented in the media.

One worrying aspect that has emerged more clearly since the exposure of the Fishrot case, is the existence of 'untouchables' - people who are

considered too politically connected to be arrested or even investigated. This situation of impunity cannot be allowed to continue.

In response to this situation, we have designed a three-year project to be called Integrity Namibia, which is funded by the US Embassy.

The overall aim of Integrity Namibia is to establish a sustainable National Anti-Corruption Network operating across civil society, private sector, the media, traditional authorities, faith-based organisations and other non-state actors.

The project will over a period of three years build a national network of non-state actors that are committed to tackling corruption in Namibia. This will involve a national mobilisation campaign alongside a series of research-based interventions including publications and other activities on key policy, legal and practical issues that will inform the mobilisation work. The project will also include the establishment of an online Whistleblower reporting platform.

We will start by reaching out to various sectors of Namibian society to discuss how they see such a national network operating and what role they could play via a series of consultation meetings and focus group discussions.

This will be followed by bi-annual regional conferences to bring all the possible partners in a national network together. Ultimately, we will hold a national conference to launch the network.

At the same time, we won't be neglecting our core function as a think tank and will also be making research-based interventions in the forms of publications and activities.

Finally, in the absence of an official operational whistleblower reporting system we will be launching our own whistleblower platform to receive reports of corruption and other wrongdoing in a confidential and secure manner.

In closing, two quotations are worthy of your consideration,

*The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.*

Often attributed to Irish statesman Edmund Burke although its origin is actually not clear.

*Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.*

Martin Luther King Jnr.

The corruption situation in Namibia has become so grave that we need the different sectors of society to stand up. We need the private sector to stand up, we need lawyers to stand up, we need the churches to stand up, we need civil society to stand up, we need traditional authorities to stand up, we need academia to stand up.

We need sectors that have already been doing a good job, such as the media, to stand up and make a deeper commitment.

Our hope is that Integrity Namibia will be one effective means for this to happen.

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