



"This conference felt different to other conferences I have attended - there was no time to zone out, not even for a second! Everyone was so engaged from the first panel to the last panel!"

"A door has been opened to strengthen collaboration and build a community of practice through Collective Action in Southern Africa."

Key takeaways from the first
**Southern Africa Anti-Corruption
Collective Action Forum**

Coming together to build an inclusive
community of practice to fight corruption

“There is power in numbers. When like-minded individuals speak in one voice, the world listens.”

– Joe Ching’ani, Country Chairperson, CoST Malawi

On the 31st of May 2023, 65 participants from all over Southern Africa came together for the first-ever Southern Africa Anti-Corruption Collection Action Forum. The Forum offered an immersive Collective Action experience that allowed participants to learn about regional best practices, share and exchange common experiences and, most importantly, work together to identify opportunities for collaboration in the fight against corruption moving forward.

Strong representation from the private sector, civil society and government enabled an open discussion across stakeholder divides, laying the foundations for more inclusive and robust approaches to preventing and fighting corruption.

A special thank you to our local partners, the [Ethics Institute](#) and the [Southern African Anti-Corruption Network \(SAACoN\)](#), for their invaluable support and contribution to the success of the Forum.

The Forum was organised with the support of the Siemens Integrity Initiative.

Bringing the region together

“Collective Action should be everyone’s business.”

– Participant

1. Business plays a crucial role in fighting corruption

In many Southern African countries, the perception persists that it is the government’s responsibility to fight corruption. One of the first takeaways of the Forum was that it is essential to recognise that effectively combatting corruption cannot be achieved by governments alone. Establishing transparent and collaborative partnerships between the private sector and the government is pivotal to developing impactful corruption prevention strategies and working towards achieving sustainable economic growth.

The first panel discussion at the forum emphasised the leadership role that businesses can play in setting standards to promote responsible business. The discussion showcased how successful Collective Action approaches can strengthen governance structures within private sector institutions. The Corporate Governance Ratings System in Nigeria and the Kings IV Principles of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange highlight how private-sector institutions such as stock exchanges are creating new incentives for companies to elevate their efforts and drive a transformation in institutional culture in the region and beyond.

“You don’t fight corruption by fighting corruption. You fight corruption by building strong and well-governed institutions with great ethical cultures.”

– Professor Deon Rossouw,
Chief Executive Officer,
The Ethics Institute



Panel 1

Status quo of governance in the region

How can institutions like the stock exchange play a pivotal role in strengthening corporate governance structures?

Speakers

- Andre Visser, Director: Issuer Regulation,
Johannesburg Stock Exchange, South Africa
- Soji Apampa, Co-founder and Executive Director,
Convention on Business Integrity, Nigeria
- Professor Deon Rossouw, CEO, The Ethics Institute | *moderator*

[Watch the recording](#)

2. Coordinated efforts are needed for effective whistleblowing systems

Collective Action emerged during the discussions not only as an essential tool to address corruption but also as a promising approach to redress the significant challenges faced by whistleblowers in the region.

In the second panel, influential whistleblowers and whistleblowing experts from South Africa shared their experiences and assessments of the current legal framework, identified gaps in whistleblower protection, and discussed strategies to overcome the pervasive fear of retaliation.

Both the panelists and participants unanimously agreed that a more coordinated effort involving all stakeholders is essential to foster the much-needed transition toward a culture where speaking up is encouraged both within companies and public institutions.

Civil society also plays a crucial role, not only in holding public and private institutions accountable but also in assisting them in collaboratively establishing and effectively implementing standards and good practices for whistleblowing.



Panel 2

Changing the culture on whistleblowing for the private and public sectors through Collective Action

Speakers

- Cynthia Stimpel, Executive Director, The Whistleblower House, South Africa
- Masauso Lungu, Executive Director, Centre for Ethics and Public Integrity, Zambia
- Chantelle de Sousa, Director, Chantelle de Sousa Attorneys, Southern African Anti-Corruption Network (SAACoN)

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This message was echoed in the [keynote speech](#) from Ms. Mosilo Muthepu, former CEO at the Trillian Financial Advisory, in which she shared her experience of being the key whistleblower breaking one of the biggest state capture scandals in South Africa's history.

“Collective Action starts with individuals with a sense of morality, integrity and, most importantly, bravery to act.”

– Mosilo Muthepu, [Watch here](#)



3. No need to re-invent the wheel: We can learn from one another and build on existing platforms, methodologies and tools

Another key takeaway was that there are plenty of well-established initiatives in the region that have withstood the test of time. These offer valuable lessons that should be captured to allow others to benefit and continue to build on them. Notably, the prevalence of transparency initiatives in the region was emphasised in key sectors, including in Infrastructure, extractives and fisheries.

Participants highlighted the potential to harness synergies and harmonise their efforts to amplify their collective impact and voice in the region.



Panel 3

Lessons learned and the way forward for Collective Action transparency initiatives in Southern Africa

Speakers

- Sven Biermann, Executive Director, Fisheries Transparency Initiative, Seychelles
- Joe Chingani, Multistakeholder Group Chairperson, CoST Infrastructure Transparency Initiative, Malawi
- Ian Mwiinga, Head, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, Zambia
- Scarlet Wannewetsch, Collective Action Specialist, Basel Institute on Governance

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Breakout sessions

The importance of building on existing tools and available resources was at the heart of the interactive breakout sessions. Leading regional organisations presented their training tools, methodologies and opportunities for engagement with the participants. The focus was on how to build on and strengthen the existing compliance and integrity infrastructure.

Discussing needs and sharing tools

In interactive sessions, participants were presented with anti-corruption tools available in the Southern African region to support their work.

- Training tools for compliance officers: [NBI Ethical Leadership & Anti-Corruption Course](#); [Ethically Aware Supplier Induction program \(EASI\)](#).
- Assessment and certification tools for companies and governments: [Ethics Officer Certification Programme \(EOCP\)](#); [Ethics 1st certification](#); [ISO 370001](#).
- Collective Action tools: [The Integrity App due diligence tool for SMEs](#); [Alliance for Integrity/GIZ TIP programme](#); [Citizens Watch App](#).

[Watch the recording](#)



4. Coming together to celebrate achievements is also an important part of Collective Action

Collective Action is not just about overcoming problems, but also about coming together to celebrate achievements in the fight against corruption. For this reason, the Forum included the first regional Collective Action award, which aimed to:

- celebrate inspiring examples in Collective Action and create an opportunity for identification with the Collective Action community of practice;
- encourage organisations and companies to engage in Collective Action to advance business integrity; and
- raise awareness of Collective Action approaches and generate prestige for the approach among peers as well as the general public.

Award ceremony

CoST Uganda – the Ugandan chapter of the global Infrastructure Transparency Initiative – was presented with a prestigious Anti-Corruption Collective Action Award for its outstanding achievements in tackling corruption and raising standards of business integrity in the region.

“This Award is not just for CoST Uganda but for the government, private sector and civil society partners that have worked together to increase disclosure and undertake assurance processes to give meaning to disclosed data, and more importantly the government’s commitment to implement recommended reforms. This Award inspires us to continue on this path.”

– Gilbert Sendugwa, Senior Regional Manager for Africa, CoST

The other two finalists – the [Fisheries Transparency Initiative](#) and [MozUp Enterprise Development Center](#) – were also praised for their untiring efforts to bring business, government and civil society together to address specific corruption challenges in the fisheries sector and among Mozambican small businesses.

Call to action

The fruitful discussions concluded with a resounding call to action from all participants to scale up collaboration amongst the relevant stakeholder groups, existing initiatives and networks to shift the status quo of corruption in the region.

Given the pervasive nature of corruption and the corrupt networks that underpin it, concerted efforts from all stakeholders are required to build a resilient, committed and active community of anti-corruption practitioners.

While there is still a long road ahead, the forum has demonstrated the potential in the region. For everyone interested in continuing this discussion, the key takeaways can serve as useful building blocks to further identify a pathway for action to build a Collective Action community of practice in Southern Africa.

An emerging pathway to build a Collective Action community of practice in Southern Africa

Acknowledge and strengthen the role of the private sector in the fight against corruption

Capture and build on existing platforms, methodologies and tools

Come together regularly to strengthen stakeholder relationships, leverage synergies and celebrate achievements

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