



Jul 10, 2020 11:55 BST

Anti-corruption research delivering results

A leading expert in Anti-Money laundering from Northumbria University, Newcastle, has presented some of the initial findings of her research into money laundering and the proceeds of corruption in Nigeria to an international audience.

Dr Jackie Harvey, Professor of Financial Management and Director of Business Research at Northumbria's Newcastle Business School, was speaking at a virtual workshop hosted by the *Royal United Services Institute* (RUSI). She addressed delegates from the National Crime Agency's International

Corruption Unit, World Economic Forum, the global Financial Action Task Force, the West African regional action task force against money laundering, together with agencies and third sector pressure groups from Nigeria and the UK.

Professor Harvey's research project: *Practical interventions for uncovering and identifying 'Beneficial Ownership' as a mechanism to recover the proceeds of corruption – A Nigerian case study*, has been investigating whether current international anti-corruption frameworks can be better targeted to reduce opportunities for the proceeds of corruption to be moved across the globe. She, along with other presenters from OpenOwnership, were able to advise delegates on the workshop that the Nigerian government has given its commitment to a range of anti-corruption (AC) measures, including the creation of a public central register of the beneficial owners of companies. It has also committed to the creation of a platform for information sharing and coordination amongst AC and security agencies and to bring forward a Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) to allow for non-conviction based confiscation powers and improved management of recovered assets.

The workshop focused on some of the practical operational issues involved in register creation and the challenges around verification of the identity of beneficial, rather than simply legal, owners of companies. The research pointed to the difference between being compliant versus being effective. Indeed, there appears to be little problem with collecting data, a lot of information (almost too much in some cases) is collected on beneficial ownership by different agencies, what is missing is the institutional capacity to bring it together in a timely and useable form for those who need to make use of the information.

Reflecting on the success of the event, Professor Harvey commented: "The beauty of a virtual workshop was that we were able to bring together a geographically remote group of influential people who could feedback on our research and suggest future areas of investigation. I am grateful to RUSI for hosting the event and to OpenOwnership for their contribution".

Professor Harvey's research is supported by The Global Integrity Anti-Corruption Evidence Programme ([GI-ACE](#)) - a partnership between Washington DC-based anti-corruption and open governance organisation Global Integrity, and the UK Department for International Development (DfID). Together with 14 research partners around the world its aim is to

generate new and operationally relevant evidence to help policy makers, practitioners and advocates design and implement more effective anti-corruption initiatives.

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