

Citizen's Quick Guide for Monitoring Corruption Cases in Courts

Transparency Information Technology Initiative (TransparenIT) | Nigeria

Introduction

Corruption is a pervasive issue that undermines the integrity of institutions and affects society as a whole. Acts of corruption deny citizens essential services of health, education, water and social welfare, and the perpetrators of corruption often go unpunished due to corruption in the justice system or slow dispensation of justice. One way to address this is by trial monitoring of corruption cases in courts to reduce delays in trials, promote judicial accountability and ensure justice is served. This quick guide will help you understand how to effectively monitor corruption cases in courts as a concerned citizen.

What is trial monitoring?

Trial monitoring refers to the process of systematically observing, documenting, and analyzing legal proceedings, typically in courtrooms, to assess the fairness, transparency, and adherence to legal standards during a trial. The goal of trial monitoring is to evaluate the role(s) of stakeholders, including the court and the state, identify challenges and causes of delays in trials and recommend ways and means to reduce delays, improve efficiency and achieve speedy conclusions of cases without compromising fairness.

Who can monitor trial?

Trial monitoring is often carried out by independent organizations, civil society groups, legal experts or concerned citizens to provide an external and objective perspective on the trial process.

An ideal trial monitor should demonstrate objectivity in the monitoring process, avoid interference with legal processes and outcomes and uphold confidentiality by not disclosing information obtained from confidential sources.

How to monitor trial

Follow these important steps to monitor corruption cases in court effectively and advocate for judicial accountability and reforms:

- Keep yourself updated on corruption cases in your area or state and identify cases of interest to monitor. You can get information from our database at www.corruptioncases.ng or by following media reports and updates by anti-corruption agencies.
- Know your legal rights as a citizen - the right to access public information, the right to attend court sessions and the right to express your opinions on matters of public concern, among others.

- Attend open court hearings on corruption cases you are interested in monitoring. Court proceedings are generally open to the public, and your presence can serve as a check on the proceedings.
- Take notes on important details of the case during court hearings, such as case numbers, names of defendants and witnesses, dates and significant developments, and document any irregularities, violations of extant laws or suspicious behaviour you observe during the proceedings. You can use our simplified case monitoring template, accessible at www.transparencit.com.
- Analyze and review your notes on cases, and provide recommendations to solve the issues you identified delaying the case to the relevant authorities, like the National Judicial Council, including evidence or information suggesting corruption within the judicial system.
- Engage stakeholders in the judiciary, legislators, policymakers and civil society organizations to advocate for greater transparency and accountability within the judiciary.
- Use social media and local meetings to raise awareness about corruption cases and the importance of monitoring them to encourage fellow citizens to get involved in the fight against corruption.
- Collaborate and work with other concerned citizens in your area or civil society groups who share your interests in monitoring the cases.
- Be mindful of your personal safety and security when engaging in corruption case monitoring activities.

Citizen oversight action on the judiciary will help ensure that justice is served impartially and that corrupt practices are exposed and addressed squarely. It will also promote trust in the judicial system and foster an environment where corruption is less likely to thrive, ultimately contributing to a just and accountable society where everyone is equal before the law.

TransparencIT is a civic tech organization fostering courtroom openness, social justice and citizen engagement in Nigeria.