LAGOS BUSINESS SCHOOL
PAN-ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

CASE CODE

BudgIT:

The Dilemma of the Anticorruption Crusader

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Prof Bongo Adi prepared this case as a basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either an effective or an ineffective handling of an administrative situation.

PROLOGUE: THREE DAYS THAT SHOOK A CRUSADE

On Friday, 13 September 2019, a brief news item on The Cable — one of Nigeria's sharpest digital newspapers — stopped the country's civically active social media users mid-scroll. Oluseun "Seun" Onigbinde, the co-founder and director of BudgIT, Nigeria's foremost civic technology organisation and the country's most dogged digital anti-corruption watchdog, had been appointed Technical Adviser to the Minister of State for Budget and National Planning. The government that had just hired him was the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari — the very government whose budget performance, fiscal sleights-of-hand, and corruption record BudgIT had spent years dissecting, exposing, and broadcasting across Nigeria's digital public sphere.

Almost simultaneously, Seun deactivated his Twitter account — the platform from which he had spent years firing data-backed critiques of the Buhari administration, challenging its corruption credentials and exposing the yawning gap between its anti-corruption rhetoric and the hard numbers that BudgIT extracted from public documents. The news had been reported thus by The Cable: "Seun Onigbinde, Buhari's critic, gets FG appointment — and deactivates Twitter account."[i] Nigeria's "twittersphere"[ii] erupted. [iii]

While some hailed the move as a pragmatic step — the anti-corruption crusader finally getting a seat at the table he had been scrutinising from the outside for nearly a decade — others screamed betrayal. Seun had been, for many Nigerians, not merely a civic technologist but a moral compass: a man who held government to account with its own data, relentlessly, without apparent political allegiance.

He had been, as his critics in government acknowledged, a vocal opponent of the Buhari administration's fiscal record.[iv] Now, his past tweets condemning that same government were being recirculated alongside screenshots of an earlier public statement he had made about joining the government — a statement that now seemed to mock his current position (see Exhibit 2). For many of his followers, his acceptance of the appointment was a dent in his integrity.[v]

The Buhari Media Organisation (BMO), the ruling party's media arm, wasted no time. It condemned the appointment of Mr Onigbinde, who, it said, lacked "honour and integrity for accepting to serve in a government he criticised."

Pro-government voices were vociferous in their attacks on the appointment and demanded that the government rescind it. Even within the government itself, Seun's principal — the Minister of State for Budget and National Planning, Prince Clem Agba — came under intense pressure from his colleagues to let Seun go.[vi] In Seun's own words: "It was the minister who invited me, and since he was under pressure as well to remove. I think it was not tenable for me to stay in the space."[vii]

Three days after the appointment was announced, precisely on 16 September 2019, Seun resigned. His letter was dignified and depoliticised:

"It is clear that recent media reports about my appointment have created a complex narrative, which I believe would engender an atmosphere of mistrust, as I planned to proceed. Upon further reflection on the furore that has been generated by my new role as the Technical Adviser to the Minister of State for Budget and National Planning, I humbly resign the appointment… My sincere interest is to see a Nigeria that grows and optimises resources for the benefit of all Nigerians."

The response was as polarised as the original appointment. The Buharists treated the resignation as vindication — they had driven out a hypocrite who had condemned the government and then tried to join it. Those who dismissed any critique of the Buhari administration as the "wailing of wailers" saw Seun's retreat as the restoration of a moral order they believed he had violated.

But a quieter, perhaps more thoughtful group argued that Seun had squandered something rare: the chance to fight corruption from the inside, with direct access to the very ministry whose budget BudgIT had spent a decade interrogating from without. What emerged was a confounding scenario in which truth and empirical objectivity became captive to party sentiments, and Nigeria's civic space grew ever more hostile to objective critique.[viii] [ix]

The episode crystallised a dilemma that confronts every social activist who achieves sufficient visibility to attract the attention of the very power structure they are challenging: Can you fight corruption from the inside? And if you try — and the attempt collapses under political pressure — what, precisely, have you lost?

FROM BANKING TO BATTLEGROUND — THE MAKING OF SEUN ONIGBINDE

Seun Onigbinde grew up with a reputation for excellence. Attending Loyola College, Ibadan — one of Nigeria's elite Jesuit secondary schools, which has long maintained a culture of rigorous academic discipline — he graduated in 2001 with nine distinctions in the West African Examinations Council certificate, the best-performing student in his cohort. He earned a bachelor's degree in Electrical and Electronics Engineering, but rather than pursue a career in his field, he gravitated toward finance, joining one of Nigeria's elite commercial banks, where he worked in strategy and public-sector financial management for 5 years.

Those five years in banking proved formative in ways Seun could not have anticipated. At the time, public sector funds constituted the lifeblood of Nigerian bank deposits, and transactions involving government budgetary allocations were a daily reality of banking life.[x] What he

observed in the flow of public money through the banking system seemed to crystallise a growing conviction that something was deeply wrong with Nigeria's relationship between government and public funds. A former lawmaker, Babatunde Ogala, later captured the dynamic with disturbing candour:

"The institutions in Nigeria today, in my opinion, that support corruption are the banks. I was a member of the House of Assembly. On the day after my election, before the inauguration, four banks offered me loans of ₦100 million each. I looked at my salary. My salary as a member of the house came to ₦700 [thousand]. How was I going to pay for that over the next four years? They didn't ask me… Nobody, no political office holder, no civil servant, no public servant can actually dip their hands in the till without the funds going through the banking system. It is about the bank helping them to hide the funds."[xi]

Seun's inspiration to start BudgIT — to intersect public spending data with citizen empowerment — may have been fired by exactly such observations. Already equipped with an engineering degree, a passion for data analytics, and a growing sense of civic responsibility, he sought, as he would later describe it, something "with greater responsibilities for society."

In 2011, Seun left the bank. Partnering with Joseph Agunbiade, a physicist by training, the two men walked into the Co-Creation Hub (CCHub) hackathon in Lagos with an idea: deploy data analytics and infographics to make Nigeria's public budget accessible, comprehensible, and actionable for ordinary citizens. The name they gave their project at that hackathon was BudgIT.

The early years were lean. A seed grant from the Tony Elumelu Foundation in 2012 — one of twenty awarded to technology ventures targeting social challenges faced by average Nigerians — provided critical initial runway. "That grant was crucial in our initial stage," Seun acknowledged. "A lot of people think it is small, but I believe it is a seed that came in time." The validation from the Foundation's network was, Seun said, "grossly rewarding and one of the best things that can happen to a young entrepreneur."

BudgIT's founding insight was deceptively simple: that the Nigerian government's annual budget — a document running to hundreds of pages of dense technical language — was the primary instrument through which public resources were allocated, misallocated, and ultimately stolen. As Seun framed it, "the budget is the first element in the corruption chain… what is not budgeted is difficult to be siphoned or mismanaged." If citizens could read the budget, they could ask the right questions. If they could ask the right questions, they could demand accountability. The barrier was not a lack of willingness — it was comprehensibility. BudgIT's mission would be to demolish that barrier, one infographic at a time. By 2017, the international philanthropic community had taken notice: the Omidyar Network and the Gates Foundation together committed $3 million in grant funding to BudgIT's expansion.[xii]

CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA'S NEW DEMOCRACY

Nigeria's return to civilian rule in 1999, after sixteen years of military dictatorship, carried enormous expectations for democratic dividends. Those expectations ran headlong into the entrenched reality of one of Africa's most systemic corruption cultures. Nigeria has a long history of civic activism, with civil liberty organisations and civil society groups leading actions against military rule, motivating citizens to take action and organising street demonstrations. The media, labour unions, professional bodies, and the organised private sector all played roles in expanding the civic space and pressing for political and economic reform across the generations.

Despite the establishment of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) under President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration (1999–2007), and the proliferation of anti-corruption civil society organisations, including Transparency in Nigeria (TIN), Zero Corruption Coalition, and Convention on Business and Integrity, corruption barely abated.[xiii] By 2018, Transparency International ranked Nigeria 140th out of 180 countries on its Corruption Perception Index with a composite score of just 27 out of 100 — identical to its 2017 score, indicating near-zero progress in the fight against graft.

The most dramatic government-led anti-corruption effort before the democratic era was General Buhari's War Against Indiscipline (WAI), launched during his first period as military head of state in 1984. Inaugurated in March 1984 and running until September 1985, WAI was programmatic in design and ambitious in scope, seeking to attack social maladjustment and widespread corruption across Nigerian society. But it was, structurally, a top-down exercise — a government imposing discipline on citizens while largely ignoring corruption within the regime itself. Some observers characterised it as "an exhortation from the military command at the top to the people below."

The military regime that emerged from WAI's era proved to be among the most corrupt in Nigeria's political history, reaching its nadir under General Sani Abacha,[xiv] whose loots — estimated at between $3 billion and $5 billion of public funds[xv] — continue to be repatriated to the national treasury decades after he died in 1998.[xvi]

The anti-corruption civil society movement that emerged in the democratic era faced its own structural limitations. Most organisations engaged the government through communiqués, press releases, legal petitions, workshops, and conferences — channels that a determined government could easily ignore. Governance scholar Asobie (2005) delivered the definitive indictment of this approach:

"From the perspective of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), the war against graft in Nigeria is yet to start. It will begin with CSOs planning their own programmes, sourcing their own funds, and taking the initiative in executing them. It will start when CSOs can muster enough strength to compel the President, Vice-President, governors of states and deputy governors of states, to shed their pretence or immunity and declare their assets publicly… At present, we are caught in a merry-go-round of workshops, conferences, summits, interactive sessions, or 'hot lines' and monitoring of what the

government is doing. CSOs of the NGO type are at risk of becoming mere agents of the state or extensions of state programmes."[xvii]

A new wave of citizenship activism began making its mark in the 2010s, deploying Gene Sharp's three classic strategies of non-violent social action — protest and persuasion, noncooperation, and intervention — in more targeted and digitally amplified ways. Organisations such as YIAGA Africa, Enough is Enough, Follow the Money, and BudgIT used different tactics to advance transparency and accountability, exploiting the reach and speed of social media to pressure the government in new ways. But it was BudgIT that most thoroughly answered Asobie's challenge — not by massing in conference halls, but by putting government's own numbers in citizens' hands.

WEAPONISING DATA — BUDGIT'S ANTICORRUPTION STRATEGY

Founded in 2011 at the CCHub hackathon in Lagos, BudgIT was the first independent anti-corruption effort in Nigeria that operated entirely without workshops, conferences, seminars, or street protests. It did not deploy placards. It leveraged infographics — clean, shareable visual representations of government budgets, implementation gaps, unexecuted projects, misallocated funds, illicit spending, suspicious line items, and budget padding — and disseminated these online and offline across Nigeria's growing social media landscape.

The infographics BudgIT produced were not mere data visualisations. Seun conceived them as "graphicomemes" objects that combined the factual precision of data journalism with the viral, emotionally resonant qualities of internet memes. They were, as he described them, "mind-bombs that are emotionally laden and stir the moral conscience of viewers, deriving their power from their quick spread and online virality." An infographic showing that a senator's constituency development fund — publicly appropriated for a named road or school in a specific community — had been absorbed with no project to show was not merely informative. It was an accusation, documented with the government's own published data, and formatted for instant sharing on Twitter, WhatsApp, and Facebook.

Sousveillance: Turning the Watchful Eye Around

BudgIT's approach embodied what scholars call "sousveillance" — the monitoring of authority by citizens rather than the monitoring of citizens by authority.[xviii] Where conventional surveillance runs downward from the state, sousveillance runs upward from the citizenry. As the concept's originator observed: "Surveillance, from the French for 'watching over,' refers to the monitoring of people by some higher authority — the police, for instance. Now there's sousveillance, or 'watching from below.' It refers to the reverse tactic: the monitoring of authorities… by informal networks of regular people."[xix] BudgIT's infographics were precisely this: the instruments through which Nigerian citizens became "underseers" rather than subjects of oversight, ushering in a new regime of sousveillance that government officials — accustomed to operating budgets in comfortable obscurity — found genuinely threatening.[xx]

Rather than the hierarchically imposed discipline of military-era anti-corruption campaigns (order from above), BudgIT overturned the power dynamic entirely, empowering citizens to enforce accountability from below using the government's own published data as the weapon. By providing what Seun called "brutal facts," BudgIT eliminated every duplicity, perversion, and ambiguity in the public policy debate — leaving politicians who had comfortably pocketed constituency funds nowhere to hide.

Tracka: From Infographics to Ground-Level Accountability

In 2014, BudgIT extended its methodology from the digital to the physical with the launch of Tracka. This project-monitoring platform allowed any Nigerian citizen to report, photograph, and track the implementation status of capital projects listed in government budgets. By 2020, Tracka was operational in 20 of Nigeria's 36 states. Its significance extended beyond technology: it transformed BudgIT's constituency from passive consumers of infographics to active participants in civic oversight, with BudgIT's project officers supporting communities offline to communicate directly with their elected representatives.

The community-level results were concrete and verifiable. In Iwoye-Ilogbo, BudgIT discovered that a budget allocation for a school construction project had gone unspent. Staff engaged local community leaders, filed letters with the responsible ministry, and publicised the abandoned project through their media networks. By October 2014, construction had resumed; the building was completed in February 2015. In Ivbiodehen, BudgIT's intervention led to the delivery of a solar-powered motorised borehole serving 10,000 community residents. In Usumutong, a critical road project was completed in December 2014 after BudgIT applied sustained public pressure.

By 2020, BudgIT had tracked 1,469 constituency projects across the country: 475 completed, 144 ongoing, 536 not yet started, and 42 abandoned — data that gave citizens and journalists precise, project-level leverage over their elected representatives. The organisation reached over 5 million Nigerians through digital and physical channels, responded to more than 8,000 unique data requests, and expanded into offices in Sierra Leone and Ghana. Its State of States report had become the authoritative reference on subnational fiscal governance in Nigeria, cited by governments, media, civil society groups, and international bodies, including the World Bank, DFID, and the African Development Bank.

BudgIT also drove legislative transparency milestones. The #OpenNass campaign, co-launched with Enough is Enough in 2013, culminated in 2017, when the National Assembly published the breakdown of its own expenditure for the first time, in greater detail than had ever been made available. The Fix Our Oil Nigeria campaign used infographic-led social media activism to raise public debate around the Petroleum Industry Governance Bill. These were not communiqués or conference resolutions — they were measurable shifts in the behaviour of public institutions under citizen pressure.

DRAWING FIRE — THE PRICE OF TRANSPARENCY

BudgIT's growing influence was not universally welcomed. While some state governments and agencies recognised the value of its data analytics work and commissioned the organisation for legitimate consulting projects, many in government viewed BudgIT's activities as an existential threat. Tracka was particularly dangerous to lawmakers whose constituency development funds had been quietly diverted rather than deployed for their stated purposes. Tracka's ability to identify, by project name and by politician, exactly which appropriations had gone unspent or been misapplied gave ordinary citizens a precision instrument of accountability that legislators had never previously faced.

The first serious confrontation came in December 2017. Moses Motoni, a BudgIT project-tracking officer working in Bida, Niger State, was arrested by security forces on what BudgIT described as a trumped-up charge of inciting citizens against the state. Two legislators allegedly ordered the arrest — Senator Sani Mohammed of Niger South and his colleague, Representative Faruk Muhammadu, irked by Motoni's constituency sensitisation work. The hashtag #FreeMotoni trended across Nigeria's social media. Motoni was released within 24 hours.[xxi] But the episode served as an unmistakable warning: BudgIT's work had created enemies willing to deploy state power against its staff.

The incident exposed a fundamental tension in BudgIT's operating environment. The same government that claimed the strongest anti-corruption mandate in Nigeria's democratic history — President Buhari had swept to power in 2015 precisely on this platform — was the government whose fiscal record BudgIT was holding up for public scrutiny. BudgIT's empirical critique of the administration's budget performance was, almost inevitably, interpreted by government supporters not as an objective analysis but as partisan opposition. Highlighting glaring gaps between anti-corruption rhetoric and the hard numbers in government documents surely did not go down well with some in the ruling party's top echelons.

Yet BudgIT was not alone in facing this structural dilemma. Most civil society organisations operating in Nigeria's politically fractured environment confronted the same perception problem: that evidence-based critique of an incumbent government is automatically coded as opposition politics, regardless of the empirical basis on which it rests. BudgIT's response had always been to let the numbers speak — but, however irrefutable, numbers are not immune to partisan reinterpretation. The events of September 2019 would demonstrate just how acute this vulnerability had become.

THE SEPTEMBER STORM IN FULL

The appointment that detonated on 13 September 2019 had not come entirely out of nowhere. Seun had been giving signals that he was open to new professional experiences. In his own framing, the role was carefully bounded: a six-month technical advisory engagement, underwritten by an international development agency rather than a direct government salary, focused on budget reform, development planning, and revenue growth in support of Minister

of State Prince Clem Agba. He had, he noted, performed similar work with his co-founder Joseph Agunbiade in 2013–14 under the DFID-FEPAR programme for the National Assembly Budget and Research Office. He explained his decision publicly:

"Friends, I have accepted to take up an advisory role underwritten by an international development agency for an initial period of six months. I believe that, to protect BudgIT's reputation, I need to take an operational break and make my new position public. In a technical advisory role, I shall support the Minister of State for Budget and National Planning, Prince Clem Agba, on budget reform, development planning, and revenue growth. It is similar to a task Joseph Agunbiade (my BudgIT co-founder) and I worked on in 2013–14, under the DFID-FEPAR program for the National Assembly Budget and Research Office."

On its own terms, the statement was measured and reasonable. But in the combustible atmosphere of Nigeria's politically partisan social media sphere, reasonable framing was not enough. What transformed the appointment into a social media conflagration was the simultaneous deactivation of his Twitter account. To his hundreds of thousands of followers, this was not a precautionary measure — it looked like an erasure of the evidence, a digital act of self-censorship that suggested either guilt or co-optation or both. The optics were punishing.

Two distinct camps formed with remarkable speed. Those who were broadly sympathetic to the Buhari government saw Seun as a hypocrite who had condemned a government and then tried to join it for personal gain — "going back to his own vomit," as some tweets put it. Those aligned with civil society and civic technology were more conflicted. Still, many shared the view that Seun's independence — the precise quality that had made BudgIT credible — could not survive even a temporary alignment with the government he had publicly criticised. The BMO's condemnation, paradoxically, demonstrated that Seun had managed to antagonise both sides simultaneously: too compromised for civil society, too adversarial for the ruling party.

The resignation letter, issued three days later, attempted to re-establish the moral high ground. But Seun's own acknowledgement that his principal had come under irresistible pressure from within the government to remove him raised a further question: was this a principled resignation, or a forced exit dressed in principled language? The answer mattered not only to Seun personally but also to the credibility of the institution he had built.

THE DILEMMA EXAMINED

The September episode did not merely embarrass Seun Onigbinde. It crystallised a dilemma that runs through the history of civil society engagement with political power across every governance environment — but that is particularly acute where corruption is systemic, political polarisation is extreme, and institutional trust is low.

The Personal and Ethical Level

At one level, the dilemma is personal and ethical: can a person who has built their public identity — and their organisation's reputation — on radical independence from government accept a government appointment without compromising both? Seun's resignation suggests that in the Nigerian context of 2019, the answer was no, at least as judged by the court of social media opinion. But social media opinion is not the same as ethical reasoning. The more challenging question is whether accepting the role was, in itself, ethically indefensible — or whether the problem lay not in the decision to accept, but in the manner and the moment.

Seun's own past public statement on joining the government — which was recirculated virally the moment his appointment was announced (see Exhibit 2) — made the optics nearly impossible to manage. A civic leader who publicly commits to independence acquires, in effect, a public covenant with the community that has placed its trust in them. Breaking that covenant, even for defensible reasons, extracts a credibility cost that may be very difficult to recover.

The Institutional and Strategic Level

At a deeper level, the dilemma is institutional and strategic: what is the most effective way for a civil society organisation to advance its mission of holding government accountable — by maintaining rigorous independence outside the system, or by seeking access and influence within it? The "outside game" gives an organisation like BudgIT credibility, freedom to criticise, and an identity as a voice of citizens against power. The "inside game" offers access to information and decision-makers, and the opportunity to shape policy directly rather than critique it after the fact.

Neither strategy is obviously superior, and neither is without risk. An organisation that stays permanently outside may achieve moral credibility at the cost of policy influence. An organisation that moves inside may gain influence at the cost of credibility. The decision is further complicated by the timeline: what looks like co-optation in the short term might look like strategic wisdom in the long term, and vice versa. Seun's resignation resolved the immediate credibility crisis but left the strategic question unanswered.

A Polluted Civic Space

Nigeria's specific political environment added a layer of complexity that transcended normal insider-outsider calculations. In a political culture in which any critique of the incumbent government is routinely dismissed as the "wailing of wailers" — the social media epithet applied to anyone who questioned the Buhari administration — BudgIT's empirical work had always risked being weaponised by political actors on both sides. For Buharists, BudgIT's data-driven exposure of budget failures was opposition propaganda. For government critics, BudgIT's acceptance of a government advisory role was evidence of co-optation. In neither case were the facts, as such, the primary consideration.

As Seun himself observed, what emerged was "a very confounding scenario where truth and empirical objectivity became victims of vested interests and were captive to party sentiments."

The promotion of transparency and accountability in governance was perceived by some as part of opposition politics, thereby exacerbating the perennial tension between the sincere promotion of good governance and the incumbent party's framing of such promotion as a partisan act. Nigeria's civic space, he noted, "has become polluted with political poison and tending towards 'who that is not with us is against us.'"

The Asobie Challenge, Revisited

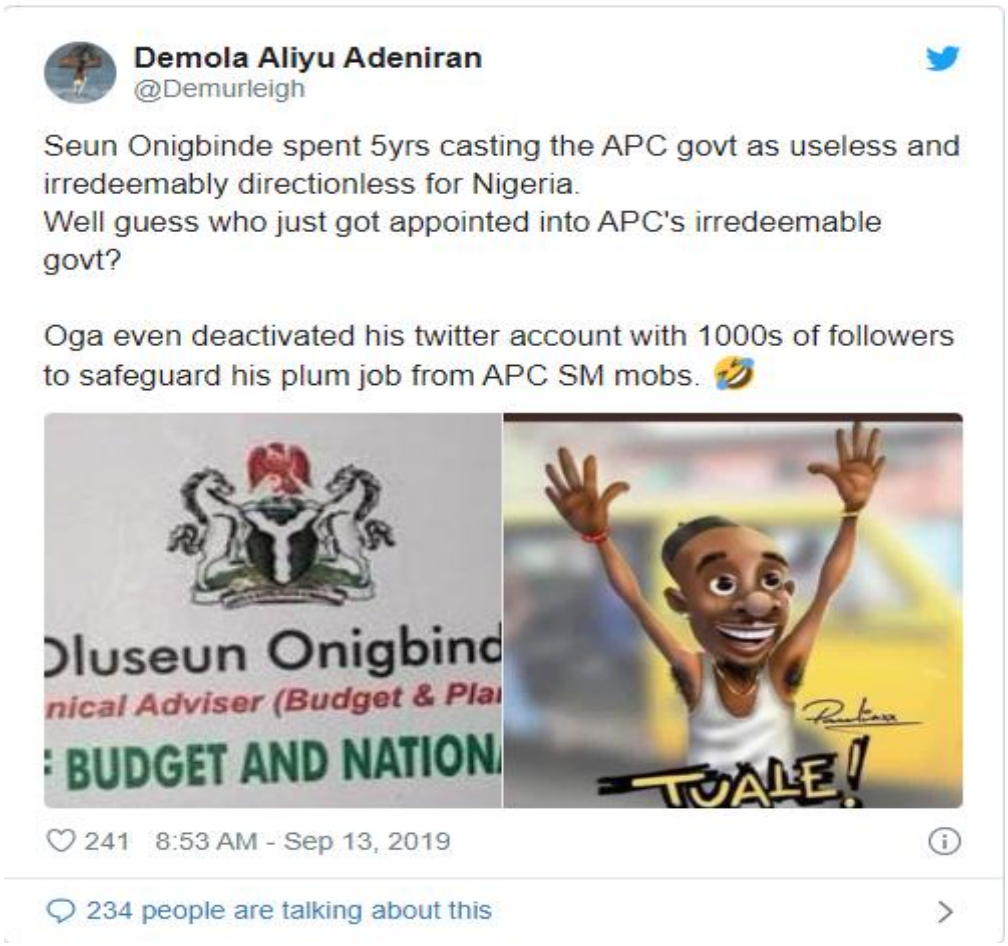
Two decades after Asobie's indictment of Nigeria's CSO sector, BudgIT had come closer than almost any other organisation to meeting his challenge. It had moved beyond workshops and communiqués to deliver tangible community outcomes: schools built, boreholes sunk, roads completed, public money traced. It had forced a measure of fiscal transparency at the subnational level that had not previously existed. It had raised the political cost of budgetary opacity for individual legislators in ways that earlier anti-corruption organisations had never managed.

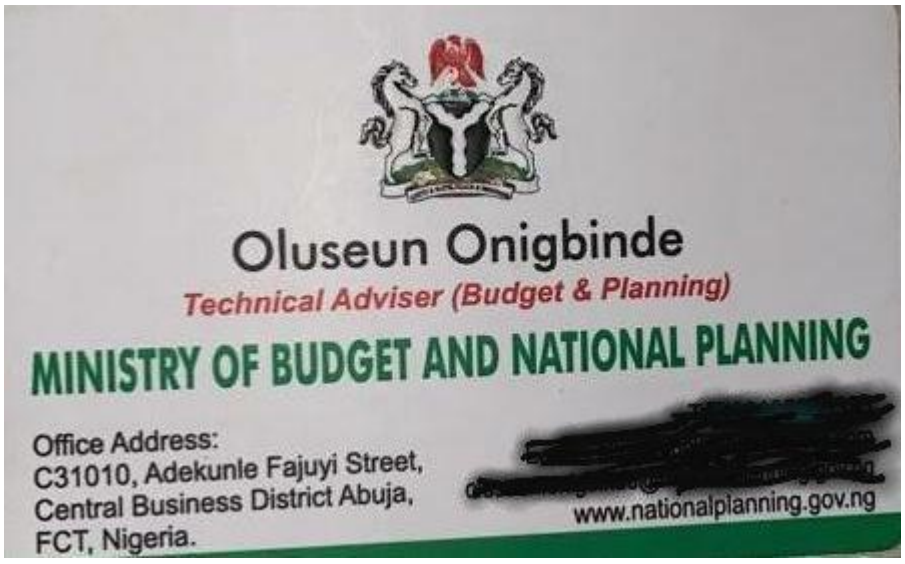
And yet the September 2019 episode suggested that BudgIT's leverage was approaching a ceiling. The organisation had sufficient visibility to attract government attention — as evidenced by Minister Agba's invitation to Seun — but insufficient insulation from political pressure to engage government directly without triggering a crisis. The same social media power that had amplified BudgIT's accountability campaigns turned, with devastating speed, against its founder the moment he appeared to cross the line from critic to insider.

Should Seun have accepted the appointment? Should he have stayed and weathered the storm, trusting that the work he could do from within would ultimately vindicate the decision? Should he have declined the offer entirely, preserving his independence at the cost of influence? And what does the answer say about the future of anti-corruption activism in Nigeria — and in every democracy where civil society organisations face the same choice between moral authority and practical power?

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Sample Tweet on Seun's Appointment

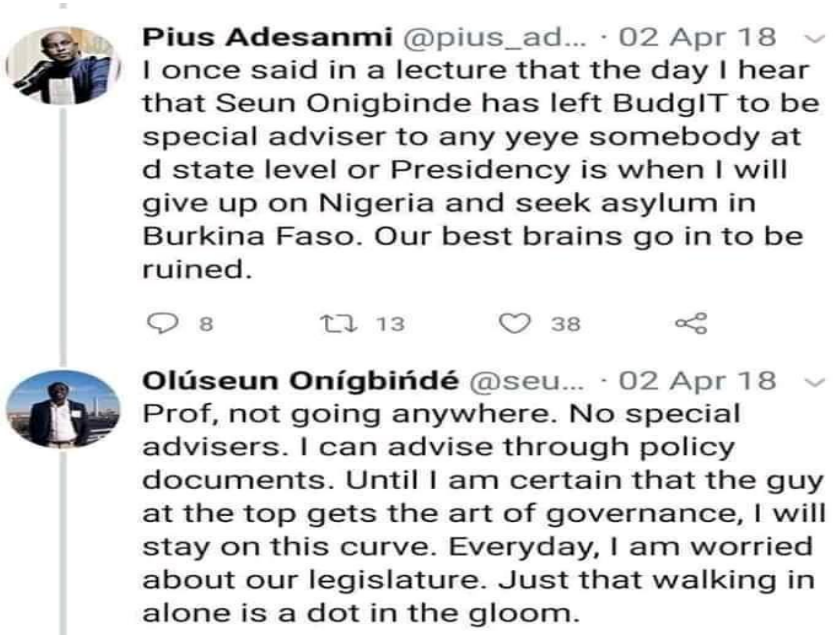




[Screenshot of Twitter reaction to Seun Onigbinde's appointment as Technical Adviser to the Minister of State for Budget and National Planning, showing the immediate public outcry and debate that erupted on 13 September 2019. The tweet captures the polarised response — some congratulating Seun, others accusing him of betrayal of his anti-corruption mission.]

Source: Twitter/X, September 2019.

Exhibit 2: Seun's Earlier Public Statement on Joining Government



[Screenshot of Seun Onigbinde's earlier tweet in which he publicly stated his position on the question of joining the Nigerian government — a statement widely interpreted as a commitment to independence from government service. This tweet was widely recirculated the moment his appointment was announced, dramatically intensifying the backlash against his acceptance of the advisory role.]

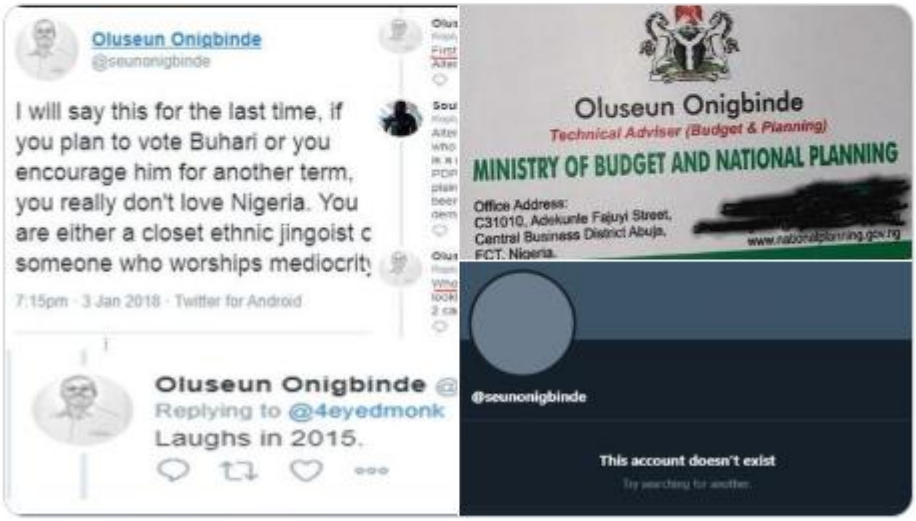
Source: Twitter/X (archived screenshot), circulated in September 2019.

Exhibit 3: Sample Twitter Response to Seun's Appointment

Dr. Guendouzi (The Cerebral Assassin)
@fimiletoks

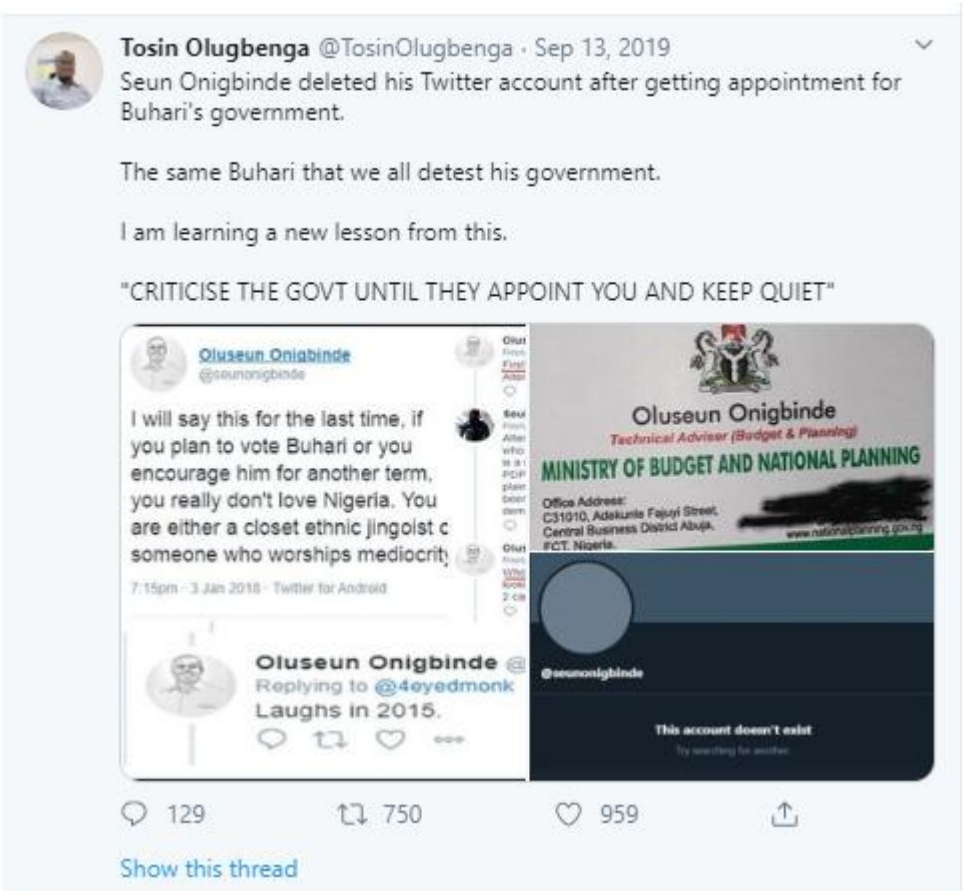
Seun Onigbinde, you are singing in another tune now? Do you now love mediocrity? Seems you are now a closet ethnic jingoist..you hate Nigeria now? Whayasay?

Those guys you called e-rats fought against all odds to keep this govt in power so that your likes can hold that card..



9:40 AM · Sep 13, 2019 · Twitter for Android

158 Retweets **216** Likes



[Screenshot of public Twitter commentary responding to the appointment, illustrating the range and intensity of reactions across Nigeria's civic and political social media communities — from accusations of hypocrisy and sell-out to expressions of disappointment from longtime BudgIT supporters and measured defences from those who saw the advisory role as a pragmatic and legitimate choice.]

Source: Twitter/X, September 2019.

APPENDIX: TACTICS OF ACCOUNTABILITY ACTIVISM IN NIGERIA

Tactic	Description	Nigerian Examples
Budget Tracking & Infographics	Extracting, analysing and visualising public budget data to make government spending comprehensible to ordinary citizens; exposing gaps between appropriations and actual project delivery.	BudgIT's annual budget infographics; State of States reports tracking fiscal performance across Nigeria's 36 states.
Project Monitoring (Tracka)	Deploying citizen-facing platforms that allow community members to photograph, report and track the progress of capital projects listed in government budgets; creating verifiable, crowd-sourced accountability records.	BudgIT's Tracka platform, operational in 20 states, has 1,469 projects tracked as of 2019.
Social Media Campaigns (Hashtag Activism)	Using viral hashtags, tweet storms and shareable graphics to mobilise public pressure on specific issues of fiscal malfeasance or policy failure, amplifying citizen voices to force government responses.	#FreeMotoni (2017); #OpenNass (2013–2017); #FixOurOil campaign; BudgIT's constituency project exposés.
Town-Hall Sensitisation	Conducting offline community meetings and sensitisation sessions to explain budget allocations to citizens in specific constituencies; equipping community leaders to write to the government and demand project completion.	BudgIT community engagements in Iwoye-Ilogbo, Ivbiodehen, and Usumutong that led to the delivery of government-funded projects.

Legislative Engagement & Policy Advocacy	Partnering with legislative bodies and government agencies to improve data quality, reporting standards, and public access to fiscal information; providing technical support for transparency reforms.	BudgIT's partnership with the National Assembly Budget and Research Office, support for the Petroleum Industry Governance Bill hearings, and the Kaduna State Open Contracting initiative.
Whistleblowing & Investigative Exposé	Combining open data with whistleblower information to expose specific acts of corruption or fiscal misconduct, producing investigative reports and short documentary content for wide dissemination.	BudgIT's video documentaries on governance failures, Ebola Fund Watch, constituency project exposés referencing specific legislators.
Earned Income & Institutional Consulting	Generating revenue by offering data analytics and visualisation services to public and private sector clients; funding independence through earned income to reduce reliance on donor grants.	BudgIT Co (data analytics subsidiary); Civic Hive co-working space; data visualisation services for government agencies and development partners.

REFERENCES

[i] https://www.thecable.ng/seun-onigbinde-buharis-critic-gets-govt-appointment-deactivates-twitter-account retrieved 20 February 2020.

[ii] Now "X", after "*Twitter*", the social media platform was acquired by Elon Musk.

[iii] http://www.thecable.ng/seun-onigbinde-buharis-critic-gets-govt-appointment-deactivates-twitter-account retrieved 20 February 2020.

[iv] The Cable reported Seun's appointment under the headline: "Seun Onigbinde, Buhari's critic, gets FG appointment — and deactivates Twitter account." See http://www.thecable.ng/seun-onigbinde-buharis-critic-gets-govt-appointment-deactivates-twitter-account retrieved February 2020.

[v] twitter.com/TosinOlugbenga/status/1172433065274044416 retrieved 20 February 2020.

[vi] thecable.ng/breaking-seun-onigbinde-resigns-over-outrage-on-appointment retrieved 20 February 2020.

[vii] Interview with Seun Onigbinde via Skype, conducted by the authors, 13 February 2020.

[viii] "Wailing" is a term popularised on Nigerian social media from 2015 onward. Buharists applied it to critics of the Buhari administration, whom they labelled disgruntled supporters of the defeated Peoples Democratic Party. Any critique of Buhari's policies was dismissed as "wailing" and its author branded a "wailer."

[ix] Enweremadu, D.U. (2012). *Anti-corruption campaign in Nigeria (1999–2007): The politics of a failed reform.* African Studies Centre, Leiden.

[x] Akanbi, F. (2013). "Nigeria: Bankers fret over new policy on public sector deposits." *ThisDay*, 28 July 2013

[xi] nairametrics.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/VID-20190119-WA0001.mp4 retrieved 3 March 2020.

[xii] Ekwealor, V. (2017). "BudgIT raises $3 million grant from Omidyar Network and Gates Foundation." techpoint.africa/2017/01/25/budgit-raises-3-million-dollars/ retrieved 3 March 2020

[xiii] Enweremadu, D.U. (2012) *op.cit.*

[xiv] Agbaje, A. and Adisa, J. (March 1988). "Political education and public policy in Nigeria: The war against indiscipline (WAI)." *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 26(1): 22–37.

[xv] Abacha is estimated to have looted between $3 billion and $5 billion of public funds during his time as head of the military junta that ruled Nigeria from 1993 to 1998. See transparency.org/news/feature/returning_nigerians_stolen_millions.

[xvi] aljazeera.com/ajimpact/nigeria-recover-300m-stolen-military-ruler-200204173243435.html

[xvii] Asobie, A. (2005). "The anti-graft war in Nigeria: An agenda for civil society." Paper presented at the 1st Stakeholders Summit on Corrupt Practices and Financial Crimes in Nigeria, Kaduna, 23–25 November 2005.

[xviii] "Surveillance, from the French for 'watching over,' refers to the monitoring of people by some higher authority — the police, for instance. Now there's sousveillance, or 'watching from below.' It refers to the reverse tactic: the monitoring of authorities… by informal networks of regular people, equipped with little more than cellphone cameras, video blogs and the desire to remain vigilant against the excesses of the powers that be."

[xix] Hoffman, J. (2006). "Sousveillance." New York Times Magazine, 10 December 2006. nytimes.com/2006/12/10/magazine/10section3b.t-3.html retrieved 25 February 2020.

[xx] Fernback, J. (2013). "Sousveillance: Communities of resistance to the surveillance environment." *Telematics and Informatics*, 30(1): 11–21.

[xxi] https://www.thecable.ng/manhandled-cuffed-kaduna-abuja-released-budgit-staff-recounts-ordeal retrieved 20 February 2020.