In May 2016, Nigerian President Buhari announced a commitment to create a beneficial ownership register and included it in Nigeria’s Open Government Partnership Action Plan in December 2016. This outcome marked an important signal of BO’s relevance to non-OECD countries. Four years following the initial commitment, President Buhari signed the Amended Companies and Allies Matters (CAMA) Bill, including the requirement to disclose persons with significant control of companies in a register of beneficial owners to enhance corporate accountability and transparency.

Additionally, a well-known civil society activist – who was accessible to grantee partners – was appointed to the head of CAC and acted as a strong champion within Nigeria’s government.

OGP played a critical role in Nigeria as a global, purposeful, multi-stakeholder partnership that connects governments to local civil society and the private sector. OGP enabled a broad based civil society coalition to form and amplified the agendas that Nigerian civil society partners had established for themselves.

Grantee partners provided sustained education of parliamentarians and policy makers between 2016-2020. They prepared arguments and provided input into draft legislation. They built close relationships with the media (especially investigative journalists) to be the first to know about breaking news related to anti-corruption and BO, to write op-eds, influence narratives, and participate in interviews, but also to educate the media on how to use the Registry once in place. Grantee partners such as CISLAC (Transparency International’s chapter in Nigeria) aimed to broaden the narrow ‘niche’ appeal of BOT through public education campaigns.

MacArthur and OSF, as well as OSIWA (OSF’s West-African regional foundation member), had important technical subject matter expertise, as well as access to key political actors in Nigeria’s government. They brought this to bear through direct diplomatic engagement, messaging, brokering of discussions, and direct support to key actors such as the Head of CAC.
BIGGEST LESSON LEARNED

President Buhari and his cabinet were committed to make serious inroads into transparency and corruption by passing a bill on BO. The Nigerian government was motivated to model this commitment as a geopolitical leader on the African subcontinent, which resulted in a BO champion spearheading the relevant agency (CAC) and enabling OGP resources to complement the strong political commitment in an effective way.