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Strengthening Accountability Mechanisms in Nigeria's Immigration Service: Ensuring Functional Reporting Channels and Consumer Protection at Border Points

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Executive Summary

The Lagos–Seme border corridor remains a critical gateway for cross-border trade and movement within West Africa but continues to face longstanding concerns of harassment, bribery, and extortion involving border officials. Recent allegations against personnel of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) have renewed public attention on these issues, prompting the Comptroller-General to order an investigation and temporarily relieve affected commanders of their duties. The Service has also encouraged the public to report misconduct through designated hotlines and social media platforms as part of its accountability framework.

While these measures signal institutional responsiveness, concerns remain regarding the effectiveness of existing complaint mechanisms. There is limited evidence on the functionality, responsiveness, and accessibility of these reporting channels, particularly for vulnerable users such as traders and travellers at border posts. Reliance on hotline numbers and social media platforms, without clear public awareness or independently verified performance data, risks creating a gap between policy intent and practical enforcement. This raises questions about whether current systems are sufficient to deter misconduct and provide timely redress.

The situation highlights broader systemic challenges in border management accountability, where discretionary powers exercised by officials can create opportunities for abuse in the absence of strong oversight mechanisms. Weak complaint resolution systems may undermine public confidence, perpetuate extortion practices, and reduce trust in border governance institutions.

Given its constitutional oversight mandate, the National Assembly has a critical role in ensuring that accountability systems within border control agencies are not merely symbolic but fully operational, transparent, and effective. Legislative engagement is necessary to strengthen oversight, protect citizens from exploitation, and ensure that reporting mechanisms deliver measurable outcomes.

Accordingly, the National Assembly, through its Committee on Interior, may consider the following actions:

1. Undertake an independent assessment of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) complaint hotlines and digital reporting platforms, with a view to evaluating their functionality, response times, escalation procedures, and resolution rates.
2. Require the NIS to submit periodic reports detailing complaints received, processed, and resolved, while ensuring transparency in disciplinary actions and outcomes.



3. Direct the NIS to institutionalise clear operational standards for its 24-hour complaint mechanisms, including guaranteed uptime, prompt responsiveness, multilingual accessibility, and real-time escalation protocols for urgent cases.
4. Urge the NIS to collaborate with the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to implement sustained nationwide sensitisation campaigns on available reporting channels and to ensure prominent visibility of hotline information at all border posts and checkpoints.
5. Encourage NIS to consider the deployment and adoption of technology-driven monitoring systems, including body-worn cameras and digital complaint tracking dashboards, to enhance transparency, enable anonymous reporting, and provide protection for whistleblowers.

Background:

The Lagos–Seme border corridor remains one of Nigeria’s busiest and most strategically significant gateways, facilitating substantial cross-border trade and human movement across West Africa. Despite its importance, the corridor has long been associated with recurring complaints of harassment, bribery, and extortion by officials, highlighting persistent concerns about systemic accountability gaps.¹

Recent allegations of extortion involving personnel of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) along the Lagos–Seme border have further heightened public concern, particularly across social media platforms². In response, the Comptroller-General of the NIS ordered an investigation and temporarily relieved the affected commanders of their duties, reaffirming the Service’s stated commitment to discipline and accountability.

In addition, the NIS has encouraged members of the public to report misconduct through its official social media platforms and dedicated 24-hour contact lines. While this represents a commendable step, reliance on public advisories alone, without clear evidence of functionality, accessibility, and widespread public awareness, raises legitimate questions about the effectiveness of these reporting mechanisms.

Given the vulnerability of travellers, traders, and citizens at border points, there is a compelling need for proactive legislative oversight to ensure that accountability systems are not merely declaratory, but fully operational, responsive, and trusted by the public.

Issue:

Despite the establishment of official complaint channels by the NIS, there is uncertainty regarding their functionality, responsiveness, and accessibility to the general public.

¹ Angbulu, S. (2026, April, 10). Immigration boss suspends Lagos-Seme border commanders over extortion allegations. *Punch*. <https://punchng.com/immigration-boss-suspends-lagos-seme-border-commanders-over-extortion-allegations/>

² *ibid*



Reliance on social media platforms and hotline numbers, without clear evidence of effectiveness, widespread awareness, or independent verification, could risk creating a gap between policy pronouncements and actual consumer protection. Victims of extortion, particularly at border points, may lack the confidence, access, or immediacy required to report incidents in real time, thereby perpetuating misconduct and weakening accountability.

This raises broader concerns about whether existing internal mechanisms within the NIS are sufficient to deter misconduct, protect citizens, and ensure timely redress.

Rationale for Legislative Actions:

Border control agencies exercise significant discretionary powers over citizens and non-citizens, making them particularly susceptible to abuse in the absence of strong oversight. Effective complaint and redress mechanisms are therefore critical to safeguarding public trust and protecting individuals from exploitation.

Legislative oversight is necessary to ensure that:

- Reporting channels are functional, accessible, and responsive in real time
- Public institutions are held accountable beyond public statements
- Citizens are adequately informed and empowered to report misconduct
- There is independent verification of compliance and service standards

Without such oversight, there is a risk that reporting mechanisms may exist only in theory, with limited practical impact on curbing extortion and misconduct.

Recommendations to the National Assembly:

The National Assembly, through its Committees on Interior, is respectfully urged to:

1. **Conduct Oversight and Independent Verification:** Undertake an independent assessment of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) complaint hotlines and digital reporting platforms, with a view to evaluating their functionality, response times, escalation procedures, and resolution rates.
2. **Mandate Periodic Reporting:** Require the NIS to submit periodic reports detailing complaints received, processed, and resolved, while ensuring transparency in disciplinary actions and outcomes.
3. **Establish Minimum Standards for Complaint Systems:** Direct the NIS to institutionalise clear operational standards for its 24-hour complaint mechanisms, including guaranteed uptime, prompt responsiveness, multilingual accessibility, and real-time escalation protocols for urgent cases.
4. **Strengthen Public Awareness and Sensitisation:** Urge the NIS to collaborate with the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to implement sustained nationwide sensitisation campaigns on available reporting channels and to ensure prominent visibility of hotline information at all border posts and checkpoints.



5. **Leverage Technology for Accountability:** Encourage NIS to consider the deployment and adoption of technology-driven monitoring systems, including body-worn cameras and digital complaint tracking dashboards, to enhance transparency, enable anonymous reporting, and provide protection for whistleblowers.

Conclusion:

The recent allegations at the Lagos–Seme border underscore the urgent need to move beyond reactive disciplinary measures toward systemic accountability.

Legislative oversight by the National Assembly is critical to ensuring that complaint mechanisms within the Nigeria Immigration Service are not only well-publicised but genuinely functional, accessible, and effective. By institutionalising robust reporting systems and enforcing accountability standards, the legislature can protect citizens, restore public confidence, and strengthen governance at Nigeria’s borders.

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