

## Study Assesses Media Readiness For 2019 Election Coverage



Voters awaiting accreditation by INEC officials at a polling unit

With nine months to the 2019 general elections, the Nigerian media, particularly the broadcast media, is facing professional, political and economic pressures that may constitute obstacles to its capacity to provide fair, accurate and objective coverage of the polls.

This is the verdict contained in an engaging study, entitled: *Broadcast Media Readiness and Engagement of Electoral Issues Towards the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria*, researched by a team led by Professor Ayobami Ojebode of the Department of Communications and Language Arts in the University of Ibadan and recently published by the Institute for Media and Society, IMS, with the support of the European Union.

The study's forecast is derived from an assessment of the current state of the broadcast media and the views of stakeholders and media respondents in a survey conducted by the researchers.

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## Stakeholders Task Media On Gender Sensitiveness

To generate and discuss ideas for developing gender-sensitive guidelines for the media in Nigeria, the IMS organised a 2-day stakeholders meeting in Abuja on March, 27-28.

The event which was carried out through presentations, discussions and documentation of resolutions, attracted participants from the - academia, the media, NGOs and government agencies, cutting across the country.

The Executive Director, Institute for Media and Society (IMS), Dr. Akin Akingbulu, stated that bringing together relevant



Participants at the stakeholders meeting on developing gender-sensitive guidelines for the media, held in Abuja, recently.

stakeholders who understood media and gender issues in a critical discussion would help address identified gaps in media  
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A cross-section of participants at the validation meeting on gender-sensitive guidelines for the media, in Abuja, recently.

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Early warning signals of danger, according to the study, include inexperienced journalists who cover and report elections, a specialised area of journalism practice; and those who need training on hate speech, one of the low points of media coverage of the 2015 elections. Also challenging to the media is the heightened state of insecurity in the country.

Other signals of danger include citizens who depend on private stations for information but may not get proper attention, (29 per cent for private radio and 20 per cent for private television, compared to 18 per cent and 10 per cent for government-owned radio and television stations, respectively), delayed voter education by the media and social media as unregulated sources of information, (18 per cent say they turn to online platforms that upload videos and images).

Taking its cue from the poor media coverage of the 2015 elections, the study, which stated that, “to get the media ready for balanced, fair, and objective reporting of the 2019 general elections, relevant stakeholders must take certain urgent actions”, harped on proper training on election and conflict reporting, voter education, personal safety and security awareness for journalists to make them commit professionally to fair, accurate and balanced reportage.

It alerted donors, media managers and civil society organisations on the need to fill the identified skill-gaps by collaborating to organise capacity building workshops for media workers before and after the polls and urged participating media to recruit able representatives who would make best use of the training.

The study revealed the crucial role of radio and TV, as “still major sources of electoral information and education for majority of Nigerians”, contrary to the widespread belief that the social media has become the major source of information dissemination. It called on relevant stakeholders to support and strengthen radio and TV to “play this civic role in the election process”.

Interestingly, it noted that listeners and viewers placed more trust on information disseminated by private broadcast stations than from government-owned stations and called on CSOs to initiate a process to press for conversion of government-owned stations to “real public broadcasters because they lack credibility currently”. It urged the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, to “partner more with broadcast stations, both private and government-owned, to advance the quality and quantity of voter education and other forms of electoral information dissemination”, even after the election, as a realistic and practical step.

While calling on the INEC, the National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, and CSOs to work together to promote best practices in the areas of voter education, election reporting and announcement of results by broadcast stations, it advised the Federal Government to equip the NBC to monitor and deter erring stations, “than it is currently doing.

“Electoral violence and all forms of electoral malpractice are typically not a sudden outburst of savagery or fraud. Rather, they are the explosions of pent up tension, and carefully planned rigging. All forms of media unprofessionalism with reference to election coverage are also a process, rather than an event. What is comforting therefore is that these could be foreseen and possibly prevented if attention is given to the early warning signs,” the study concluded.

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reportage.

He encouraged participants to generate ideas that would be validated at a bigger meeting, leading to the development of a package on gender sensitive guidelines for the media in Nigeria.

Issues raised and discussed at the meeting for subsequent validation included:

- Societal perspectives of power relations with respect to gender society.
- Labelling of women which leads to their discouragement to actively participate in the democratic process.
- Presence of societal inhibition against women taking public spaces in society.
- Use of money to induce support of citizens and in the polity at large.
- Zoning system which limits chances of women participation in political parties.
- Insufficient political support of women by fellow women and low level of mentoring of women by fellow women in leadership positions.
- Lack of access for women in political participation.
- Poor women engagement of the media
- Limited participation of women in the internal democracy of political parties.
- Absence of leadership experience due to exclusion of women from active decision making process in the polity at large
- Low gender mainstreaming and poor implementation of gender policies
- Violent environment involving politicians, government, women and citizens at large
- Under-utilized gender policy frameworks by regulatory bodies

*.... Validation Meeting also followed at the same venue on April 30.*

Discussions, analyses and endorsements were adopted to validate the issues generated at the earlier stakeholders meeting held on March 27 - 28

The meeting identified key issues considered central to the reportorial and programming capacity on gender by the media.

On this note, the stakeholders identified three areas for validation, namely, accessibility and visibility, portrayal and language.

*Accessibility and visibility by the media:* Stakeholders noted the inadequate allocation of airtime to women politicians by the media and agreed that appearance and projection of women politicians in media content such as news, talks, documentaries, commentaries, were grossly inadequate compared to time allocated to their male counterparts.

*Portrayal by the media:* Stakeholders also discussed and agreed that the media was unfair in the portrayal of women politicians negatively. They identified issues of stereotypes such as the identification of women politicians as 'sex objects' instead of 'news subjects.'

*Language:* Participants also described as unacceptable the language content in the media description of women. They particularly decried the use of certain derogatory words against women politicians, which marginalise and limit their chances in the electoral process.

At the end, it was agreed that a programme on gender sensitive guidelines would be produced and made available to guide media practitioners in the coverage of the electoral process.

On the role of the media in promoting gender mainstreaming within its fold and in the society at large, the stakeholders noted that the media plays a big role in actualizing



From left, Dr. Abiodun Ogidan of Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, FRCN, Ibadan and Prof. Abigail Ogwezy-Ndisika , H.O.D, Mass Comm Dept., Unilag at the stakeholders meeting for developing gender-sensitive guidelines for the media, in Abuja, recently.

gender mainstreaming, beginning with the media itself.

For these issues to be achieved, the stakeholders tasked the media on improving the active participation of women within the media work space and to be more gender responsive in media practice and coverage of the electoral process.

Other areas deserving media attention, according to the stakeholders, are the importance of women, youths and participation of people living with disabilities in the media and political space.

For the IMS, the meeting presented the opportunity to prepare a formidable

advocacy document for an effective and efficient engagement at the policy

**Stakeholders urge the media to be sensitive to gender roles in the polity, grant visibility to women politicians and portray them in uplifting and inspiring language in their reportage**

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Participants at the stakeholders meeting for developing gender-sensitive guidelines for the media, in Abuja, recently.

# Images and Sights of IMS Activities in



The facilitator, Dr. Babatunde Ojebuyi, Splash 105.5 FM and Lagelu FM staff at the support to Media Audience Research Training in Ibadan.



A cross-section of participants at the stakeholder's meeting on developing gender-sensitive guidelines for the media, held in Abuja.



Participants at the Splash FM support to Media Audience Research Training in Ibadan.



A cross-section of participants at the stakeholder's validation meeting on developing gender-sensitive guidelines for the media in Abuja.



Dr. Akin Akingboye, the support to



Applicants undergoing test for recruitment as media monitors in Lagos.



Participants at the Splash FM support to media Audience Research Training in Ibadan.



Other media monitor applicants undergoing test in Lagos.



A cross-section of participants at the stakeholder's validation meeting on developing gender sensitive-guidelines for the media in Abuja.

# in Strategic Locations Across Nigeria



Meeting on developing gender-sensitive guidelines for the media, recently.



The facilitator, Dr. Ojebuyi making a point during the Support to Media Audience Research Training at Splash FM 105.5, Ibadan.



Dr. Ojebuyi addressing staff of Splash FM at the Media Audience Research Training.



Participants at work during the stakeholders meeting on developing gender-sensitive guidelines for the media.



Meeting on



Participants after the stakeholder's validation meeting on developing gender-sensitive guidelines for the media, held in Abuja.

# 'Media Workers Need Sustained Capacity Training to Nurse Our Democratic Institutions'

*Professor Ayobami Ojebode is the Head, Department of Communications and Language Arts in the University of Ibadan. In this interview with Media4DemocracyNG, he explains why media workers must undergo sustained training to enable them deliver on their mandate as democracy watch-dogs. Excerpts:*



Prof. Ayobami Ojebode

*In your study, **Broadcast Media Readiness and Engagement of Electoral Issues Towards the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria**, you noted that though regulatory agencies have wielded the power of sanction and fined erring broadcast stations for flouting regulatory codes, particularly during and after elections, they have been unable to prevent a recurrence of the breach of the codes by stations. What is to be done in such instance?*

It is hard to speak on behalf of the NBC. I however, think that some of the stations commit these breaches without being noticed by the NBC. And some, it is widely alleged, belong to powerful politicians. To sanction such stations is to invite the wrath of government on the NBC – at least in the last dispensation.

*There is something in what you said about the need for a peer review body among private station owners. Could you explain further?*

The idea of a peer review body is not

originally mine but, I think, Mr Edetean Ojo's. (Executive Director, Media Rights Agenda). I fully support it though. If we have a cohort of broadcast station owners, members might act to informally and indirectly pressure one another on matters of staff welfare and even conformity to the Code.

*It is an interesting finding you made that media practitioners rated their stations high in the area of election coverage despite professional challenges facing them. Wouldn't this kind of mind set affect the capacity for training?*

I think media workers showed a high level of skilfulness in analysing their problems. They would not allow their low and infrequent pay to influence their assessment of the worth of their stations' output. I do not think the mind set would influence training. Training should identify the specific areas of weakness and seek to develop them on those.

*Radio, your study revealed, is the darling choice of the electorate contrary to the widespread belief in the popularity of the new media and online publications. Would you say radio should be given a deserved priority considering the short time between now and the conduct of the 2019 polls?*

Certainly, it is too early to sing a requiem for radio. Politicians know this very well and they use that knowledge during campaigns. Only the elite use the new media. The masses, teeming in their millions, do not joke with radio. If we want to truly engage with the people, radio is the way to go.

*What would you say about the duration of capacity training for media workers?*

What we have right now is sporadic training of media workers. We need sustained, regular and ongoing training to deepen the democratic values of the nation and help nurse and nurture our institutions.

*Capacity training appears to contain a missing link in the area of feedback from participants. What is your take on this?*

I absolutely agree with this. We all know that post-workshop evaluations only reveal what participants feel at the heat of the moment. Yet, that feeling matters little compared with what happens back in the office and three to four months after they return to their offices. I think donors should insist on long-term and unsolicited evaluations. And they should make funds available for that.

*Donor countries particularly from the EU are supportive of Nigeria's democratisation process. How would you assess the impact of their support through the years?*

I would say that the support coming from the EU donors have helped to deepen our roots with reference to our democracy. I very much think they have succeeded in strengthening the media and civil society.

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“ We need sustained, regular and ongoing training for media workers to deepen the democratic values of the nation and help nurse and nurture our institutions. ”

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# Radio Staff Undergo Training in Media Audience Research

Media readiness for professional coverage of the 2019 polls received a major boost with an audience research capacity training for staff of the News/Current Affairs and Programmes units of Splash 105.5 FM and its sister station, Lagelu FM in Ibadan, from April 26 to March 8.

The event featured a 12-day training on Media Audience Research Reporting and Field Work.

The focus of the training was to improve Splash 105.5 FM audience programming in preparation for the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Dr. Akin Akingbulu, Executive Director of IMS, which anchored the training, stressed the need for capacity training for media institutions and identified four key areas under the support to the media of the EU-SDGN project on media training. These include; improving media professionalism;

to improve media engagement in civic and voter education; to strengthen the media regulatory body to enable it to better perform its mandate; to strengthen the media to give attention to the participation of marginalized groups in the electoral process and governance.

During the training, which was supervised by Dr. Babatunde Ojebuyi of the University of Ibadan, the staff were assigned to different roles in the media audience research process. The roles included developing media audience research tools (questionnaires), data gathering and collation exercise, analysis of data collated and research reporting.



Facilitator, Dr. Babatunde Ojebuyi, Splash 105.5 FM and Lagelu FM staff at the Support to Media Audience Research Training

## Media Monitoring Centres Come on Board

The Institute for Media and Society, IMS, has set up four media monitoring centres ahead of the 2019 general elections.

The centres are strategically located in Lagos, Port Harcourt, Yola and Kaduna. They will serve as points to track media coverage of the electoral process before, during and after the 2019 general elections.

Private, commercial and government-owned radio and television stations will be tracked by media monitors, who have been recruited and trained, for content on political and current affairs programmes on political trends broadcast in English and indigenous languages of the various locations.

The Executive Director of the Institute for Media and Society, Dr Akin Akingbulu, disclosed that the centres were selected after due consideration of geographical diversity.

## IMS, NBC Hold Consultative Meeting

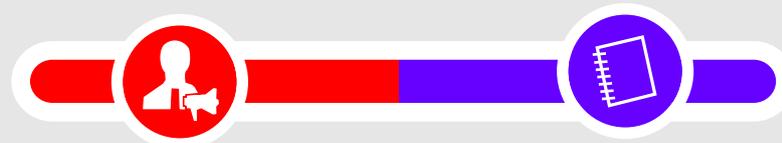
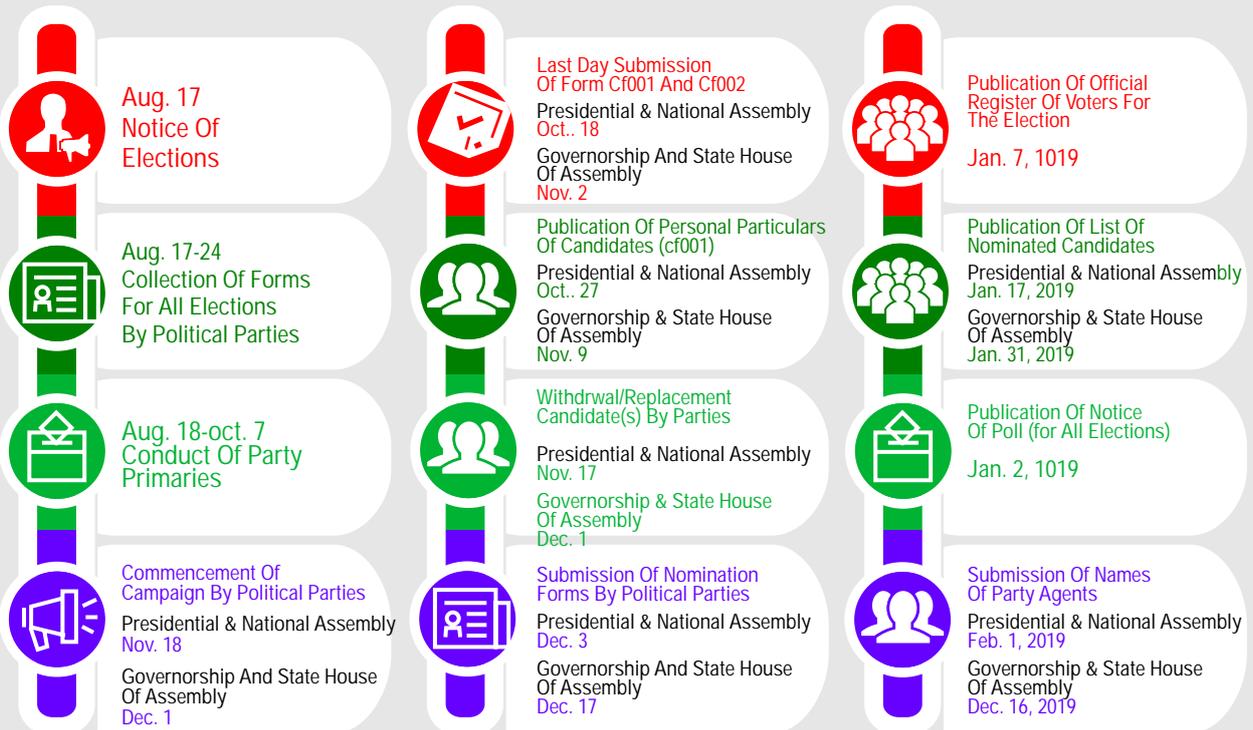
The IMS and the National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, held a consultative meeting in Ilorin, Kwara State on March 7, to agree on a work plan for activities designed to help achieve enhanced capacity of the media regulator to perform its mandate in the electoral process and broader democratic governance.

Issues identified and discussed at the meeting included the review of the NBC Act, training of NBC staff, collaboration between the NBC and the Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria, BON, on the coverage of the 2019 elections.

The Ilorin meeting followed the earlier meeting held in Abuja on February 19 which discussed issues related to support the broadcast regulator in the EU-SDGN project.



# 2019 GENERAL ELECTION GUIDELINES



**Last Day For Campaigns**  
 Presidential & National Assembly  
 Feb. 14, 2019  
 Governorship & State House Of Assembly  
 Feb. 28, 2019

**Dates Of Elections**  
 Presidential & National Assembly  
 Feb. 16, 2019  
 Governorship & State House of Assembly  
 Mar. 2, 2019

Source: INEC

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