

## CSOs Hold Media Roundtable Ahead of Electoral Reform Town Hall Meeting

Civil Society Organizations across Nigeria on Thursday held a Media Roundtable to discuss issues relating to the media and electoral reforms ahead of the Electoral Reform Town Hall Meeting scheduled for June 30, 2020.

Tagged, "Electoral Reforms: Media as Catalyst for Best Democratic Practice" as a prelude to the coming bigger event, titled YIAGA Africa-ECES/EU-SDGN Virtual Roundtable/Town Hall Meeting on Electoral Reforms", scheduled for June 30 on Channels TV and Radio Nigeria, the event which was organized by YIAGA Africa and other implementing partners in the European Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria-EU-SDGN project on June 25 was coordinated by the Director of International Press Centre, IPC, Mr. Lanre Arogundade.



Samson Itodo, Executive Director of YIAGA

In his opening remarks, Mr. Wilson Manji of the European Centre for Electoral Support, ECES, urged the media to continue to support efforts to reform the electoral process in the country. He pointed out that ECES was working with INEC and the National Assembly to reform the electoral process and urged the media to continue to support the initiative.

Manji noted the important role of the media in the advancement of democracy all over the world.

He said: "There is much electoral stakeholders can do when there exists loopholes in the electoral regime. We have to ensure that elections in Nigeria are transparent, successful and inclusive and in the long run engineer good governance."

The Executive Director of the Institute for Media and Society, Dr Akin Akingbulu, in his speech, noted that: "The importance attached to it (the event) can be seen immediately in the diversity of participation. Our media colleagues have been invited from all parts of the country, from various media platforms (print, broadcast, online) and from the various media sub-sectors-government, commercial and community sub-sectors. It is not often that this happens. The task at hand certainly calls for this rich diversity."

He said; "For more than 20 years, Nigeria has

been into another effort at building democracy. During this period, at least six general elections have been held, leading to putting citizens into elective offices at various levels of governance across the country."

Dr Abiodun Olufemi- Ogidan, a representative of the Nigeria Radio Coalition, who spoke on the topic, Challenges of Community/Campus Radio Stations in Promoting Electoral Reform Issues, said Community Radio has been identified as a strong platform for raising public awareness, promoting, upholding and building the principles of democracy.

She said: "For Media to achieve its role as a catalyst of best governance practices, no section of the media should be left out in participating in the electoral process, CR should be respected as a legal instrument that guarantee the right of freedom to hold opinions without interference; Community and Campus Radio Stations should be given fair opportunity to engage political issues so that citizens can seek, receive and source information and ideas through CR platforms"

Mr. Rotimi Oyekanmi, Chief Press Secretary to INEC Chairman, Prof Mahmood Yakubu, who handled the subject; Relationship between Critical Stakeholders and Electoral Reforms, said the Commission has been interfacing with critical stakeholders openly to devise a just electoral reform that eventually leads to the conduct of credible elections that is fair, equitable and free.

He identified the stakeholders to include the media, political parties, civil society organizations, the judiciary, development partners, registered voters and security agents.

Mr. Samson Itodo, Executive Director of YIAGA, Africa who took time to brief the participants on the main focus and engagements of his organization on the processes of electoral reforms in the



Dr. Akin Akingbulu, Executive Director of IMS.



Mr. Lanre Arogundade, Director, International Press Center, IPC.

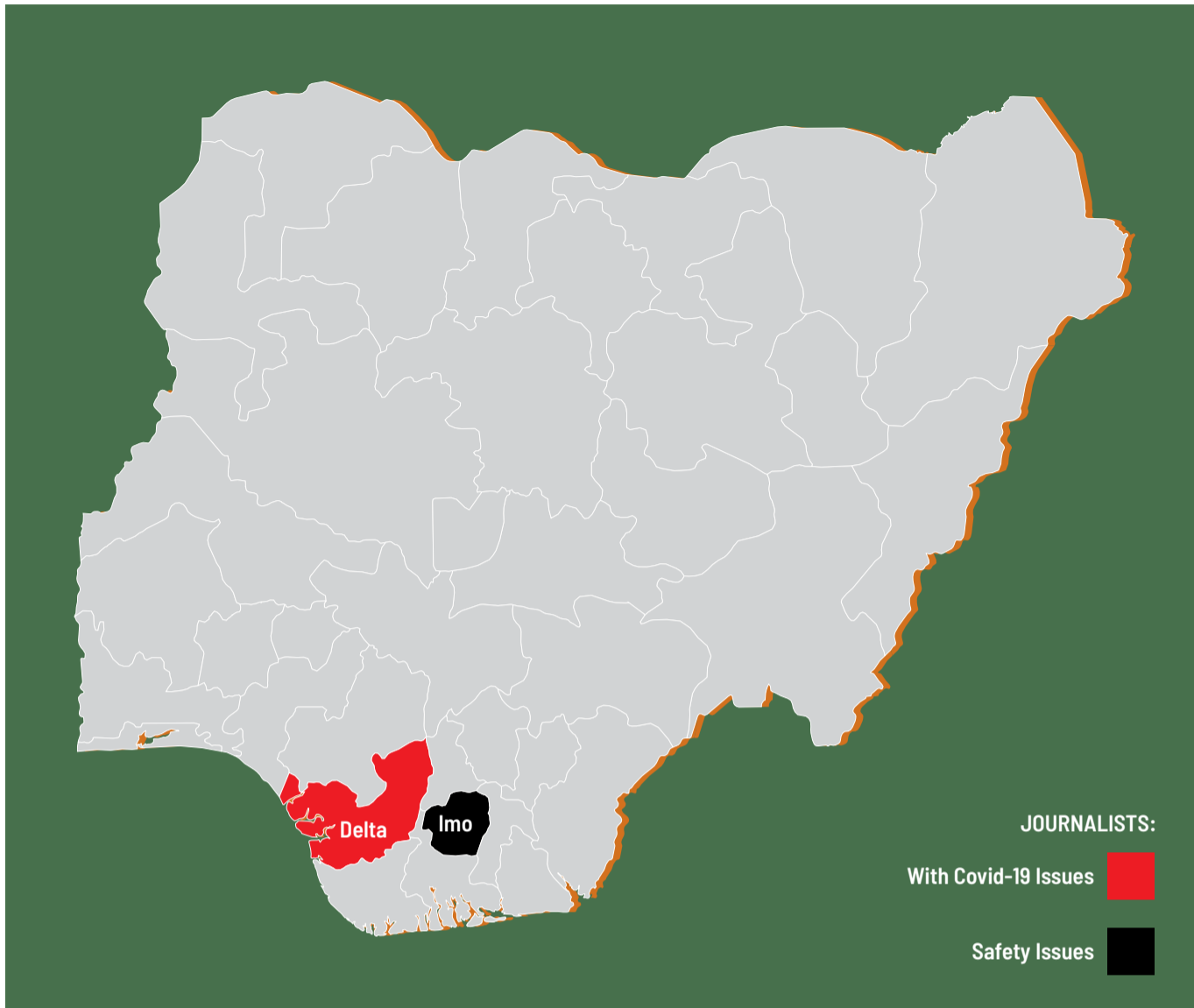
country, gave some background information on the state of electoral reforms and shared his reflections on the need to improve elections in the country. In his presentation titled, Reflections on Electoral Reforms, he highlighted critical areas crying for attention on electoral reforms. These are electoral participation which he noted had declined progressively through the years; dilemma of electoral reforms arising from, lack of political will, timing and unwillingness to pursue amendments for fear of losing elections and lack of political internal democracy in political parties.

"He said; "INEC must improve capacity to deliver on fair elections as compared to the 2015 polls. The 2019 elections were not the elections Nigerians wanted; they were not the elections Nigerians expected; and most importantly, they were not the elections Nigerians deserved.

"Nigerians need a national conversation on a new electoral design and framework that responds to prevailing socio-political and economic realities. INEC must improve its capacity to deliver credible elections and political parties must play according to the rules. Failure to do so could imperil Nigeria's 20 years democracy."

Admitting that electoral reform was a continuous process, he noted that there were logistical, organizational and technical difficulties with the previous elections in the country, which he hoped that INEC and other stakeholders would wish to address

Participants who shared their experiences agreed that there was still much more to be done on electoral reforms in the country and thanked the organizers for their timely intervention. In his concluding remarks, Mr. Arogundade urged the media to sustain the conversation on issues dealing with electoral reforms by doing follow-up stories regularly.



In a statement by the medium, persons who may have had contact with him recently, were urged to “duly self-isolate” for the next two weeks. It further called on the public to observe laid down precautions against contracting and spreading the disease.

**IMS Canvasses Definite Media Role In Electoral Reform**

**T**he Institute for Media and Society has called for the protection of the media in the performance of their duties, especially during the coverage of the electoral process.

The Executive Director of IMS, Dr. Akin Akingbulu stated this during a Media Roundtable Discussion held on Thursday, June 25, ahead of the Electoral Reform Town Hall organized by YIAGA Africa and other partners in the European-Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria, EU-SDGN, project.

He said: “This initiative provides a golden opportunity for citizens and institutions to work together to achieve desired changes. Talking of institutions, I see a dual position for the media. The first part is that as an important national institution, the media has a duty to contribute to the development of components or elements, which define and strengthen democratic practice, the electoral system, being one of them. The second is self-interest.

He continued: “The media should see in this initiative an opportunity to strengthen itself, to do a push-back, to secure reclamation and expansion of space, and to achieve a conducive environment for practice and professionalism. Journalists are physically attacked, arrested, detained and censored in the course of election duty.

In many media houses, especially the ones controlled by governments, it is a taboo to reflect content diversity during elections. In the broadcasting sector, where there is statutory regulation, the regulatory body is stripped of independence, meaning that there is no guarantee of professional, good practice over-sight and the media may not enjoy a level-playing field in regulation, during elections.”

**Imo Journalist Accuses Lawmaker of Assault**

**A** journalist in Imo State, Ike Nwosu, has petitioned the Commissioner of Police, CP, State Command of the Nigeria Police Force, Mr. Isaac Akinmoyede, over alleged assault by a lawmaker at the House of Assembly, Frank Ugboma.

The petition addressed to the CP stated that the lawmaker who represents Oguta constituency ordered his aides to beat him up and throw him out of the Assembly complex over a report, which the lawmaker claimed infuriated him. The lawmaker also said the journalist was creating enmity between him and the Majority Leader of the House, Uche Ogbuagu.

Ugboma, however, alleged that the lawmaker threatened to come after him and members of his family.

The petition reads in part, “My life is under threat sir, please intervene. Barr Frank Ugboma, member, Imo State House of Assembly, representing Oguta LGA, ordered his thugs to batter me in the presence of the security agents and members of the public over an allegation that a story in the Eastern Lead Newspaper originated from me.

“Sir, your intervention is imperative on the need to caution the man as my health conditions since the incident has worsened.

“If they had taken only my belongings such as the Itel phone, my reading glasses and the little cash on me without the torture, it would have been better. I therefore plead that Hon Frank should be cautioned.”

**Journalist Tests Positive for Corona Virus**

**A** journalist, Mr. Theophilus Onojeghen, has tested positive for coronavirus in Warri, Delta state. Onojeghen is Managing Editor of Niger Delta Today, an online publication.

Onojeghen, whose samples were taken at the treatment center located in Central Hospital, Warri days ago, got his test result on Friday.

He had contact with two patients, who are already receiving treatments, about three weeks ago.

Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) had announced that 106 persons newly tested positive for the virus in Delta. This brought the tally of confirmed cases in the state to 715, according to the NCDC.

## House of Representatives Probes DSTV, Others over High Tariff



House of Representatives

The House of Representatives has begun an investigation of DSTV, owned by Multichoice and some other cable and satellite television service providers in Nigeria over their high tariffs and for alleged cheating of its Nigerian subscribers by restricting them to prepaid plans.

Speaker of the House, Hon. Femi Gbajabamila, had earlier inaugurated an ad hoc committee to investigate the hike of subscription rates by Multichoice and other cable television service providers.

Chairman of the Committee, Hon. Unyime Idem, at the investigative hearing on Thursday, said the National Broadcasting Commission management was summoned to explain why DSTV and other service providers had refused to introduce pay-as-you-go policy as provided for in the NBC policy.

Idem said, "We also want to know the activities of the NBC as it relates to the industry to know exactly the support being given to these service providers so that it can comply with the yearnings of Nigerians."

He told the National Broadcasting Commission management in attendance the committee wanted to hear from them how the industry can be properly managed so that beneficiaries who are Nigerians can smile at the end of the day.

Responding to some of the questions, the acting NBC Director General, Armstrong Idachaba, agreed that the issue surrounding high subscription rates imposed by Multichoice has become contentious over the years.

Idachaba explained that the Corporation had amended the Act to prohibit exclusive rights of programmes by a service provider, with a view to reducing the level of monopoly in the creative industry, adding that plans are underway to introduce 'technological concept' to ensure that subscribers are not billed when they are not watching.

"The concept is easy to implement on mobile telephone with the use of data, while it is impossible to do same on the Pay TV service provider who subscribed to broadcasting live programmes at the International market. The challenge at hand was that the contents acquired by Multichoice at the international market was based on projected or assumed subscribers, and the technology will help in building content for signal distribution platform since it's continuous live broadcast," he said

Explaining further, Idachaba, told the lawmakers that on many occasions, the NBC had done comparative price analysis with South Africa, Ghana and Kenya. He said that contrary to view popularly held view, there was really no price difference based on exchange rates.

According to him, some times it comes out that what is charged in Nigeria is even much lower. He explained that the NBC tried to do as regulatory intervention over time was to de-emphasize the monopolistic tendency of MultiChoice as a key player.

He recommended that Nigeria vigorously pursue the question of de-monopolizing the sector in terms of content ownership in the interest of the vast Nigerians that desire the product.

Idachaba said that the idea of digital switch over, which had been hanging for so long must be completed so that television can penetrate into in rural Nigeria.

"When this is done, it is possible to distort the monopoly so that whatever content you have will go down the rural area so that everybody in Nigeria will have a bit of what the elite are watching; even if you cannot watch everything," he said.

## New NBC Code Hostile To Business, More Stakeholders Say

Comments, criticisms and suggestions have continued to trail the broadcasting code amendment release by the National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, to streamline the operations of the broadcast industry in the country.

In emotive responses, a lecturer with the Lagos State University, Dr. Tunde Akanni and Mr. Chris Ihidero, a multi-award winning Nigerian film and TV content creator and entrepreneur based in Lagos have added their voices to the growing stakeholder's clamour for urgent review by used personal experiences to highlight what they consider are shortcomings in the new code that would hurt creativity and business in the industry.

Narrating a personal experience regarding the reworking of the NBC code as far as 2017, Akanni said the Commission got an unsolicited offer to support the reworking of its Code that year.

According to him; "The support was to ensure conflict sensitivity as well as sensitivity to gender inclined issues. The resultant suggestions were directly shared with the NBC management for possible further scrutiny. Furthermore, on account of the multi-stakeholder's leaning of broadcasting, entailing what has come to be known as surrender value, the consultants, led by their anchor, took the campaign to the 2017 Kano Broadcasting Summit. The presentation, done by the anchor, was well received by the general house. But that was the end with that intervention."

He said what looks like another review opportunity of NBC Code is here in 2020 in form of major amendments, "but the 'closet culture' of NBC seems to have persisted."

He blames the recent shortcomings on what he considers "disregard for multi-stakeholder before NBC concluded another review."

Continuing in his observation, he said; "The Commission has publicly announced that it would, as with other broadcasting genres, regulate online broadcasting. Questions now arise: Do web/online services now fall within the jurisdictional domain of NBC not NCC? How will NBC rationalize that an online entity is "broadcasting, or streaming? Especially if such contents received by devices are connected/known to the service providers, which is clearly distinguishable to the notion of traditional broadcasting? What no one requires any expertise to know however is that AIT or

NTA has no known competence to ascertain or establish specific devices (TV-sets) tuned in and watching. It therefore cannot disconnect individual devices from receiving any of its output.

NBC, he suggests, should have appreciated the impracticability of its proposal if it had, rightly, sought to interact with stakeholders before unveiling the new code.

He faults the Commission insistence on rights holders, after making daring investment risks, to sub-license to other broadcasters, the contents they should have exclusive rights to. "NBC argues that the amendment was imperative to boost local content production and make broadcast sector a better level playing field. How illogical!", he concluded.

*For Chris Ihidero, the question is Why Does The NBC Want To Kill Local Content In Nigeria?*

He answers by saying that as a Nigerian content creator and investor, he expects the NBC to aid him and many like him in extracting maximum value from their creativity and entrepreneurship. "If the NBC is incapable of doing this, can the NBC at least not hammer the final nails into my career's coffin?"

"Recently, the National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, announced some amendments to the Nigerian Broadcasting Code (6th edition). Chief among the reasons for these amendments, according to the Acting Director General of the NBC, Dr. Armstrong Idachaba, is "...the protection and promotion of the local broadcast industry from monopolistic and anti-competitive behaviour...". In summary, the NBC seeks to prohibit exclusivity of content broadcasting. The amendment compels right holders to sub-license the content they have exclusive rights to, to other broadcasters. Finally, the NBC wishes to regulate the price at which the content is sub-licensed. The amendment was also deemed needed in order to boost local content production and make the broadcast sector a better level playing field, according to the NBC.

As a content producer, he said the amendments are problematic for him in the area of content production and distribution in the tough media space in Nigeria.

"For example: I have just concluded the production of 26 episodes of my first television series, after many years doing commissioned work by many international platforms. I am trying to sell this content to broadcast platforms like Netflix, IROKOTV, Canal+ and DSTV. I am at the mercy of these platforms because I have to live with the terms and whatever value they place on my content because the NBC has failed me in its statutory responsibility.

"If truly the NBC is seeking worthy intervention in the broadcast industry, the path to a truly vibrant local content drive does not lie in this so-called anti-monopoly quest.

As a way out, he suggests that the Commission widens its scope of consultations around the amendment of the broadcasting code, remain a neutral industry regulator and formally ban the sale of airtime in the Nigerian broadcast industry, "leaving broadcasters to live or die by their content creation and commissioning."

## We Amended Broadcasting Code to Protect Local Industry, Says NBC



Professor Armstrong Idachaba, Acting Director General of NBC

For the umpteenth time, the Nigeria Broadcasting Commission, NBC has repeated again that the decision to amend of the Nigerian Broadcasting Code (6th edition) was taken reposition Nigerian the broadcasting industry and to make it more responsive to emerging realities in the broadcasting industry.

The Acting Director General of the National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, Prof. Armstrong Idachaba disclosed this at a press briefing held on Monday in Abuja.

According to him, part of the objectives of the amendments were to protect and promote the local broadcast industry from monopolistic and anti/ competitive behavior; the stimulation of advertising revenue into the Broadcast industry and by extension the local creative industry.

For him, these objectives remain key and central to the development of broadcasting in Nigeria and the reform of the Broadcasting industry. Prof. Idachaba, while acknowledging the mixed reactions to the release of the amendment, stated that the Commission would take them into consideration for the growth and development of the broadcast Industry in Nigeria.

The DG, who decried the challenges confronting local broadcasters in the country vowed to protect their interest through the implementation of the new code. "Only recently on the 27th of March, 2020, I announced the release of some amendments into the Nigeria Broadcasting Code (6th Edition). "As stated then, part of the objectives of the amendments are the protection and promotion of the local broadcast industry from monopolistic and anti/ competitive behavior..."

## NBC: Amended Broadcasting Code Guarantees Profit for Foreign, Local Investors of Profit

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) has said the sixth edition of the Broadcasting Code Amendment guarantees maximum profits for foreign and local investors in the industry.

The Acting Director-General of the Commission Prof. Armstrong Idachaba stated this on Monday during a live Radio Programme "Day Break Show" on Capital FM, Abuja.

The programme also featured another stakeholder in the industry, Mr. Dimbo Atiya, the Chief Executive Officer of Innovative Television Kontent.

Idachaba said Nigeria, with large population comparative advantage is an investors' destination in the broadcast industry if things are done in the right way.

He said the new amendments to the code have taken care of all the impediments to profitable investments, without compromising national interest.

According to him; "We noticed challenges with the content distribution which the amendments have addressed. Some people are capitalizing on our large population to make profits without injecting what will develop the sector, thus there is a disequilibrium.

"These are some of the things we need to catch up with, to boost local industry and serve our own national interest. But in all that, the amendment guarantees profit maximization for both foreign and local investments.

"We believe that, what is yours is yours but you cannot keep it at the expense of national interest," he said.

He clarified that the Exclusivity Clause in the amendment does not means relegating profit making to the background.

"In Nigeria, we have over 700 broadcast stations, so, an investor

can make more profits in the country than given the right to a conglomerate," he said.

He added that the intellectual property clause allows rights sharing but discourages investors from putting survival instinct first, before national interest.

"You can still make your profit by sharing the rights to others. However, you cannot make a story in Nigeria and exclude Nigerians from enjoying it or exclude the owner of a content," he said.

Idachaba said the new amendments also capture rules regulating coverage of a pandemic and the need to give more air- time to enlighten the people in times of national emergency.

He said the amendment also addresses the challenge of surge of social media and how it has become a source for spreading fake news and creating panic.

The NBC boss said in addition to injecting fund to the creative sector by government, the industry would do better with institutional reforms.

Speaking in the same vein, Atiya, said the amendment was a good move and commended the government and NBC for being proactive in putting down the guidelines.

He, however underscored the need to tinker with the Exclusivity Clause in the Broadcast Code amendment.

"The Exclusivity clause in the amendment has become an issue for us. We put in our money into Nollywood and expect to have a return and turnaround but the Code says we must share our content to others. This is not proper. We can add timeline to the amendment such that, if I have a deal with MultiChoice or Netflix for 12 months, after it elapses, I can share the right or content. This is because MultiChoice or Netflix may not want to buy my content if they know I do not have exclusive right to it," he said.

Atiya called on government to assist investors in the sector with waiver, subsidy and low interest rate loans to reduce cost of production.

## Editor's Note

New public policy that is far-reaching often generates reactions from stakeholders, some hostile, some critical. The National Broadcasting Commission code, 6th edition, is one such policy. Almost two weeks since the Commission released the amendment designed to streamline operations in the industry, comments, suggestions and criticism have been trailing it such that it has remain topical in the media. That is why we have featured it on our business and policy pages, to exhaust the different angles to this all-important policy regulation of one of the key support and frontline industry in the collective fight against Covid-19 pandemic, broadcasting.

The coming virtual town hall meeting on electoral reform we hinted about in our last week edition was this week heralded by a webinar, held on Thursday. Tagged *Media As Catalyst of Best Democratic Practices*, it attracted interest groups and co-implementers of the European Union Support To Democratic Governance in Nigeria, EU-SDGN, project in Nigeria. YIAGA Africa hosted it. We bring you the seminal contributions from participants at that event in our opening page.

Journalists are still facing job-related maltreatment. If they are not getting arrested or kidnapped during coverage and reportage of events, they are bullied and threatened by appointed or elected officials. We have an eye-opening story for you on our page dealing with such issues.

Nigerians who had been complaining about the hike in subscription rates by MultiChoice may expect to have some relief in the days to come as the House of Representatives have waded into the matter. The seriousness of the event was underscored by the attendance of the industry regulation at a House of Representatives committee hearing, the National Broadcasting Commission, whose Acting Director-General explained the involved issues and what is to be done.

Corona Virus is surging to a frightening high in the country. Every day confirmed cases by the National Control Disease Commission, NCDC, shows that community transfer is helping to spread the pandemic faster than projected. There is no way for us to dramatise this worrying case than to keep up the posting the weekly NCDC data that gives a sweeping glance at the rising figures in all the 36 states in the country and the Federal Capital Territory, FCT, Abuja. Picture they say, tell. In the case with the Covid-19 data in the country, figures convince.

We hope that you find joy in reading the stories.

**The Editor**  
Institute for Media and Society, Nigeria

### NCDC Confirmed COVID-19 Cases by State, June 26, 2020

States Affected	No. of Cases (Lab Confirmed)	No. of Cases (on admission)	No. Discharged	No. of Deaths
Lagos	9,482	7,881	1,475	126
FCT	1,656	1,110	514	32
Kano	1,191	347	793	51
Oyo	1,188	842	337	9
Rivers	936	427	473	36
Edo	851	562	257	32
Ogun	733	263	453	17
Delta	715	534	159	22
Kaduna	668	346	312	10
Bauchi	493	103	378	12
Gombe	482	149	317	16
Borno	477	58	387	32
Katsina	459	170	267	22
Jigawa	317	120	191	6
Plateau	294	130	156	8
Abia	288	112	173	3
Imo	269	243	23	3
Ebonyi	264	41	222	1
Kwara	217	83	128	6
Ondo	206	120	67	19
Enugu	202	160	37	5
Nasarawa	198	78	112	8
Bayelsa	184	131	41	12
Sokoto	140	8	118	14
Niger	84	44	37	3
Osun	84	32	47	5
Akwa Ibom	83	38	43	2
Zamfara	76	0	71	5
Adamawa	73	30	37	6
Kebbi	71	23	42	6
Anambra	70	4	57	9
Yobe	56	3	45	8
Benue	47	31	15	1
Ekiti	38	8	28	2
Taraba	19	9	10	0
Kogi	3	3	0	0

#### Highlights

- On the 18th of June 2020, 745 new confirmed cases and 6 deaths were recorded in Nigeria.
- No new state has reported a case in the last 24 hours.
- Till date, 22,614 cases have been confirmed, 7,822 cases have been discharged and 594 deaths have been recorded in 35 states and the Federal Capital Territory.
- The 594 new cases are reported from 22 states - Lagos(159), Delta(106), Ondo(44), FCT(34), Edo(34), Oyo(33), Kaduna(33) Enugu(28), Katsina (25), Imo(22), Adamawa(15), Ogun(12), Osun(11), Abia(8), Rivers (6), Nasarawa(5), Bauchi(5), Niger(5), Kebbi(4), Ekiti(3), Plateau (1), Taraba(1)

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