



IMS, Civil Society Groups Seek Electoral Reforms

pg 3



IMS Partners NBC on Improved Broadcast Media Regulatory Framework

pg 3

INTERVIEW

A New Electoral Reform, Enforcement of Governing Laws Must Go Together - Cynthia Mbamalu

pg 8



EDITOR'S NOTE.

Media advocacy is having a field day in Nigeria as the country undergoes all kinds of reforms. Electoral reform, media reform and constitution amendment have dominated the civic space for a better part of 2021, turning public focus to law making processes by the National Assembly.

Against this background, media advocacy groups in the country have moved to deepen media reportage through training of journalists on modern trends in the digital age, engage relevant stakeholders to make inputs into the on-going reform processes and monitor every legislation to ensure compliance with agreed provisions.

As part of its contribution to these aforementioned democratization processes, the Institute for Media and Society, IMS, held webinars to collate views of stakeholders on the pending bill on the amendment of the NBC Act before the House of Representatives Committee on Ethics, National Orientations and Values. Then it submitted a proposal to the Committee ahead of a scheduled public hearing on June 16 and 17.

IMS also held focus group discussions on best media practices in Jos, the Plateau State capital, for journalists in the northern part of the country and in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital for journalists in the south. The report of these events form one of our major stories. It is on pages 4 and 10

The other stories deal with a 10-point agenda on Electoral Reforms jointly issued by eight EU-SDGN implementing partners as additional advocacy on reforms.



There is a concise report on it on page 3.

For our interview page, we bring you an interesting and informative interaction with Cynthia Mbamalu, Director of Programmes at Yaiaga Africa. She explains in detail the implication of an inclusive Electoral Act for good governance and why the electoral umpire, Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, must be truly independent to be able to discharge its duty freely and fairly.

Please send your comments to Media4DemocracyNG@imesoimeso.org

Editorial Team

Amos Esele
Editor

Shade Wesley-Metibogun
Editorial Assistant

Olusegun Samuel
Olaniyi Olaniyan
Contributors

Civil Society Organizations Demand Citizens' Priority In Electoral Reform



L-R: Dr Akin Akingbulu., ED, IMS, Mr Lanre Arogundade, ED, (m) IPC, Mr David Ayaele, ED, CCD, and other guests at an Electoral Reforms Press Conference held in Lagos.

Ahead of the 2023 General Election, some civil society organisations have called on the National Assembly to speed up the passage of a new Electoral Act.

The organisations are Albino Foundation, Centre for Citizens With Disability, CLEEN Foundation, Institute for Media and Society, International Press Centre, Nigeria Women's Trust Fund, Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism and Yiaga Africa.

In a ten-point demand document, Citizens' Top 10 Priorities On Electoral Act Amendment, the CSOs, under the European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria, EU-SDGN, pointed out the need for a credible, fair, inclusive and violence-free democratic process in order to strengthen the country's democracy.

Some of the demands include: strengthening the financial independence of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC. Specifically, the group called to be inserted in Section 3 of the new Act a new sub-section that states: "The election expenses due to the Commission for any general election shall be released to the Commission on a date not later than 180 days to the date appointed for the election".

The group further insisted on electronic accreditation and transmission of results and the use of electronic voting in the electoral

process. They also canvassed for amendment to allow voting by Nigerians in the diaspora and early voting by those on election duty.

To protect the physically challenged voters, it was recommended that Section 56 of the Act be amended to change the words "may" to "shall" to ensure that the Commission makes adequate provisions for People With Disabilities in the voting process.

To reduce the cost of nominations and

general election expenditures, the CSOs sought an amendment to Section 87 of the act for the nomination fees imposed by political parties not to exceed five million naira for presidential aspirant to the lowest N100,000 for councillorship aspirants. The other positions have amounts in between.

For inclusivity, Section 31 (1) of the act is to be amended with another subsection (2) to give room for the inclusion of youths, women and people with disability in the list of candidates to be sponsored for the election.

Electoral offenders, according to the group, should be made to face the wrath of the law, according to the Section 124 where stiffer sanctions were recommended by the CSOs for bribery and vote buying. It states: "Anyone convicted for this offence shall be liable on conviction to a maximum fine of N1,000, 000 and 12 months' imprisonment".

For offending media organisations, it was recommended that Section 100 (6) of the Electoral Act 2010 be retained for any violation of the provisions of the section but that the erring station be punished and not the journalists or broadcasters working in the station.

IMS Partners NBC on Improved Broadcast Media Regulatory Framework

The Institute for Media and Society, IMS, under the Support to Media Component of the European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN) Project, organised a consultative meeting with the National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, in a bid to engage the regulator on issues around the broadcasting regulatory framework and thereby strengthen regulatory practice in Nigeria.

Delivering his opening remarks at the consultative meeting, which was facilitated along with Dr. Tunde Adegbola, Executive Director of African Languages Technology Initiative, ALT-I, the Executive Director of IMS, Dr. Akin Akingbulu, appreciated the management and staff of the NBC and

other stakeholders in attendance for their support towards strengthening the media industry in Nigeria, particularly in their drive towards upholding ethical practices.

He noted that the media component 4A of the EU-SDGN being implemented by IMS sought to achieve four results, namely:

- i). Professionalism of the Media
- ii). Deepening Delivery of Civic and Voter Education
- iii). Strengthening the Regulator to Perform its Mandate.

Cont. on page 5

IMS Organises Focus Group Discussions

Improved professionalism of the media in the coverage of the electoral process in Nigeria was on the front burner recently during the Focus Group Discussions, FGD, held in the country.

The Institute for Media and Society, IMS, under the European Union Support to Democratic Governance, EU-SDGN, Component 4A- Support to media held the events at two geopolitical regions in Nigeria, one in the south and the other in the north.

The northern focus group discussion held in Jos, Plateau State capital on May 6, 2021 while the southern leg took place in Port Harcourt, Rivers State capital on April 15, 2021.

The events drew participants from the media, Civil Society, academia, broadcast media regulator and media industry groups. The theme of the FGD was : *Trends and Challenges in fair, accurate and ethical coverage of the electoral process in Nigeria.*

In his opening remarks, Dr. Akin Akingbulu, the Executive Director of Institute for Media and Society, said the FGD was to provide an avenue to discuss issues that affect the media in the coverage of the electoral process in Nigeria and to address them. According to him, the activity was timely as the country was getting ready for another round of elections.

He said the ideas and recommendations generated from the discussions would be used as a viable guide for further engagements and capacity- building activities for media professionals.

Akingbulu explained that the support to media component of the EU-SDGN Project implemented by Institute for Media and Society (IMS) was tailored towards achieving four key result areas, namely:

- i). Ensuring professionalism of the media
- ii). Diversifying and deepening delivery of civic and voter education
- iii). Strengthening the regulator to perform its mandate.
- iv). Focussing the media towards coverage of marginalised groups.

For him, the achievement of these objectives would contribute to strengthening the media to provide fair, accurate and ethical coverage of the electoral process in Nigeria. Dr. Akingbulu also stressed the need for engagement of critical stakeholders.

Stakeholders at both events noted that the media have played critical roles in

strengthening the electoral process across nations of the world by providing platform for participation of stakeholders and citizens, disseminating vital information on electoral issues and playing the role of the watchdog in ensuring that citizens abide by the constitutional provisions guiding the electoral process.

The participants agreed that the media should be professional in carrying out their responsibilities in adherence to international best practices. They also raised the problems that had led to the performance of the media in fair, accurate and ethical coverage of the electoral process in Nigeria, and suggested the removal of such factors to ensure better performance.

The media stakeholders called for a holistic approach in identifying issues militating against media professionalism while efforts should be made to address the issues. They also called on media practitioners to uphold the ethics of the profession in the discharge of their duties, more importantly within the framework of the electoral process and shun sharp practices that could erode the trust reposed on them by citizens.

Other issues discussed at the FGD revolved around democratic governance in Nigeria. Some of the participants stated that Nigeria's democratic governance remain stagnant while others upheld that some progress have been made though below citizens' expectations.

They also identified factors hindering democratic governance in Nigeria , some of which include:

- Insufficient realisation of the dividends and expectations of democratic governance.
- Gross violation of the rule of law and constitution by those in authority.
- Democratic governance processes yet

to reflect the wishes of the citizens.

- Citizens' loss of confidence in the electoral process and broader democratic governance.
- The undemocratic decision by policy makers that are not in line with the constitution without minding the grave



implications for the polity.

- Continued disrespect for the rule of law has further threatened the fundamental human rights of citizens.
- Widespread distrust of government by the citizenry.
- Worsening insecurity due to poor governance.
- Suppression of the media and shrinking civic space has continued to affect democratic governance in Nigeria.
- Weak systems and institutions have continued to threaten Nigeria's democratic governance.
- The state and non-state actors whose behaviour in the electoral process are largely determined and influenced by the nature of the government in power.

The stakeholders identified structural defects in the system as major threats that have continued to influence the behaviour of institutions. One of such structural defects is politically motivated appointments of top management of institutions, which affects the independence and professional conduct of appointees with lingering impact of corruption.

Cont. on page 10

Cont. from page 3

iv). Focussing the Media towards improving coverage of marginalised groups: people with disability, women and youths.

While appreciating the commitment of NBC to participating in the activities implemented by IMS under the EU-SDGN Support to Media component, Akingbulu expressed optimism that all engagements with the regulator so far had helped in strengthening the expertise of the regulator and also encouraged good relationship with the industry groups, particularly the Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria (BON).

He emphasised the need to bring together a wide range of stakeholder

In his response, the Secretary to the NBC, Dr. Igomu Onoja, who led the Commission's team, acknowledged the essence of IMS' support to the Commission, which, according to him, had helped in improving its performance.

He observed that broadcast media regulation as a core mandate of the Commission has impacted positively on media practice across the country. He further noted that the Commission was being confronted by a number of challenges in the course of executing its mandate.

These challenges are the deliberate violation of broadcasting code by some media organisations, inadequate funding and general insecurity in the country.

concerns, the discussion team said stakeholders in their individual contributions played up the need for NBC to raise its game in the licencing process, which according to them had created mistrust and allegations of lack of transparency. This, they said, was evident in the inability of the Commission to give applicants information on the status of their application.

Responding to these concerns, Onoja noted that a review had been done to address gaps identified in the licensing process. These, according to him, included preliminary request to the Commission which affords applicants the opportunity to have an idea of the availability of broadcast frequency in the locations for which licence is being requested before the purchase of application form

Correspondence with applicants on the progress of their application

Onoja observed that under the new arrangements put in place by the Commission, applicants were expected to get response to their preliminary inquiries within one week. While noting that it might not be easy for the Commission to advertise availability of frequencies given the financial implications, he stressed that when applicants write their request to the Commission to state interest in applying for broadcasting licence, they will be adequately advised on frequency availability, as well as other information which they need to know.

He expressed concern that many applicants only apply for licences in urban centres such as Lagos, Abuja and other big cities within the country which they considered economically viable. He noted that the locations in question no longer have available frequencies.

Onoja stressed the dissatisfaction of the Commission with some license holders who refused to use licences acquired in various locations across the country, thereby depriving others the opportunity of having access to such licences.



LR: Dr. Tony Anigala, Dir. Broadcast Monitoring, NBC, Dr. Tunde Adegbola, ALT-I, Mrs. Ladi Bala, NAWOJ Nat. President and Dr. Akin Akingbulu, ED, IMS at the IMS/NBC stakeholders meeting in Abuja

groups involved in the electoral process to engage issues of concern emanating from Nigeria's electoral process, affecting the media and the regulatory body.

Akingbulu pointed out that the assessment of the broadcast media and the regulator's performance in the 2019 elections and the coverage of other wider democratic governance issues have helped in no little way in understanding gaps that should be addressed.

He pointed out that the consultative meeting would further help stakeholders to engage on issues in the broadcasting regulatory framework on which IMS had developed a memorandum

Onoja maintained that NBC was ready to further collaborate with stakeholders, particularly in the area of capacity building and dialogue to ensure cooperation within the industry, thereby providing an improved regulatory environment in line with international standards.

He enjoined IMS to continue in its efforts towards strengthening media capacity, thereby supporting the improvement of professionalism of practitioners.

Discussions: Issues, Concerns and Response from the Regulator

Licensing Issues:

Speaking on licencing issues and

Cont. on page 12

Events, People and Places at the EU-SDGN activities



Participants at the 'Stakeholders Engagement on the Transparency of the Electoral Process' organised by the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, NIPSS, Kuru, Jos recently



Participants at the Focus Group Discussion, FGD on Trends and Challenges of Fair, Accurate and Ethical Coverage of the Electoral Process in Nigeria



L-R: Dr Akin Akingbulu, ED, IMS; Mr Lanre Arogundade, ED, IPC, (m); Mr David Ayaele, ED, CCD and other guests at an Electoral Reforms Press Conference held in Lagos.



Legislative Interns at work



Mallam Shehu Garba, Presidential spokesperson at the NIPSS Conference, in Kuru, Jos



Participants at the FGD on Trends and Challenges of Fair, Accurate and Ethical Coverage of the Electoral Process in Nigeria organised by the IMS

Activities by IMS and other Implementing Partners



on Trends and Challenges of Accurate, Ethical Coverage of Disability in Nigeria organised by the IMS in Port Harcourt, River State



Participants at a One-Day Awareness and Sensitization Work-shop on Disability Inclusion Guild for the Officers of the INEC organised by the Albino Foundation in Abuja.



t a workshop



Accurate, Ethical Coverage of Disability in Nigeria organised by IMS in Jos Plateau State.



Participants at a One-Day Awareness and Sensitization Work-shop on Disability Inclusion Guild for the Officers of the INEC organised by the Albino Foundation in Abuja.

A New Electoral Reform, Enforcement of Governing Laws Must Go Together, Says Yiaga Africa

Ms Cynthia Mbamalu is the Director of Programmes at Yiaga Africa, a citizens' political right and civic participation advocacy group. In this interview with Media4Democracy NG, she explains the importance of gender-friendly electoral reform and enforcement of relevant laws for an inclusive electoral process in Nigeria as well as the usefulness of the EU-SDGN project for democratic governance structure in the country. Excerpts:

How would you describe the current state of electoral reforms in Nigeria?

Electoral reform is an ongoing process which requires collaborative efforts to ensure the reform process produces a citizen-responsive law. Currently, Nigerians are waiting on the National Assembly to present the Electoral Amendment Bill from the joint committee to be presented for third reading in the National Assembly. The delay in presenting this amendment bill is a threat to the passage of an Electoral Act Amendment Bill into law that will enable a credible electoral process.

The Nigerian Senate promised to deliver on a new electoral reform by March 2021. We are in May, two months after and there is still no word on it from the federal lawmakers. What is your view on this development?

There is no justification for the delay and the National Assembly is failing the Nigerian people by delaying the

electoral reform process. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and other stakeholders were hopeful that the Electoral Act Amendment Bill will be passed into law early enough to enable INEC conduct the November 2021 Anambra State governorship election with the new Electoral Act. However, two months after the proposed timeline of March 2021, Nigerians are yet to be presented with the new electoral law. This poses certain threats to the conduct of credible elections in Nigeria. It may also worsen citizens' lack of trust in the electoral process and key institutions like the National Assembly and the INEC.

Yiaga Africa is in the forefront of advocacy for electoral reform and the call for a new Electoral Act. Do you think a new law will end electoral malpractices in Nigeria?

Yiaga Africa believes that a law is only as good as its implementation in achieving its goal. The challenge of electoral malpractice will be best addressed by both the presence of a new legal framework for elections that extensively addresses electoral malpractice and an efficient system of enforcing the law to deter abuse/malpractices.

One of the biggest gains of Yiaga Africa's advocacy for the youths is the signing into law of the Not Too Young to Run Act, but there are still challenges for the youth to make it into mainstream politics in Nigeria. What would you suggest they do to make a headway in Nigerian politics and governance processes?

Cont. on page 9



Mbamalu

Cont. from page 8

Young Nigerians must realize that politics is local. It is a game of number, a competition between ideas and relevance and an interplay of power. Accordingly, for more young people to win election, the Nigerian youth will need to register to become members of a political party and begin building relevance within the party. This is because political parties are the recognized platforms for contesting elections in Nigeria. Considering that elections require that the people vote for you, young people will need to build social capital by being present, engaging the people and providing solutions to some challenges in their communities. Understanding that politics is local will enable young aspirants/candidates learn to deploy strategies and tactics that suit their local contest in the regions they seek to contest election.

Social capital includes the support base that can provide different types of resources needed to campaign and win an election. Early planning and engagement is important, especially in a country where elections are competitive. Nigeria is in need of competent leaders who care, young people need to show that they provide something different and that they are an alternative to the poor leadership in Nigeria. Accordingly, Nigeria needs young competent leaders with the requisite capacity and character to inspire confidence in young voters and voters in general to vote for the young candidate.

What specific challenges has Yiaga Africa faced during the implementation of the EU-SDGN Project and what lessons have you learnt?

Considering that Yiaga Africa project focused on providing support to the National Assembly and Electoral Reforms, some of the challenges are majorly a political process challenge. Other challenges were created by the

COVID-19 pandemic and the security situation in Nigeria. Learnings from the project include the need for flexibility in programme implementation and dynamism to adjust within the political climate.

The projects would end in 2022. Given the current state of things in Nigeria, would you support the view that the EU come up with a fresh project based on a critical evaluation?

I will suggest the next phase of the EU project should be informed by the evaluation and learnings from this project phase. Such program designing should consider retaining programmes that recorded some successes especially those that should be consolidated to maximize results and introducing new project ideas that seek to meet current needs.

Yiaga Africa has been advocating transparency in the electoral process with "Watching the Vote" but has also received backlash from politicians as a result. Do you intend to continue to seek greater transparency and participation in the electoral process?

Yes, we do. Our responsibility is to the people who deserve to exercise their rights in a credible and transparent electoral process.

Citizens' participation gives credibility to the electoral process, do you see the 2023 general election having early voting, electronic voting and transmission of results, diaspora voting, etc?

I believe that the new Electoral Act should adopt these citizens' priority demands.

Women are mostly marginalized in politics and wider governance processes in Nigeria. How can this

be reversed?

We need legal reforms like the amendment of the Constitution to provide for constitutional guarantee to ensure women representation in both elective and appointive offices. We need reforms within our political parties for increased women representation. Nigeria requires joint and collaborative efforts that adopt a multi-pronged approach of advocacy, social reorientation and civic education targeted at promoting gender equality and women political leadership.



Mbamalu

The move by the National Assembly to reserve special senatorial slots for women is generating reactions from the public. What is your take on this?

The proposal you are referring to must be the bill to amend the constitution to create additional seat for women in the National Assembly and State Assemblies. This is a constitutional amendment issue.

“ There is no justification for the delay and the National Assembly is failing the Nigerian people by delaying the electoral reform process. ”

Cont. from page 4

• Loss of public interest by government institutions and deviation of public institutions from their constitutionally-assigned roles as a result of undue manipulations by the executive arm of government.

The stakeholders also harped on the shrinking space for civic and voter education in the media because of the censorship by their owners who are often politicians and government officials who are out to propagate their political interests. They observed that the widely reported impartiality of security operatives often used by politicians and the incumbent government to suppress opposition during the electoral process has continued to raise concerns, while inducement of citizens by politicians has continued to stifle the electoral process.

They also noted that the broadcast media regulatory agency has a tendency to act in adherence to the interest of the government in power. This notion, according to them, was evident in the way the regulator reacted to issues covered by the media which tend to expose the lapses of the government in power, even when such issues were reported by the media in a bid to safeguard public interest.

The stakeholders upheld that such unprofessional practices of the broadcast media regulator could result in loss of confidence in it. This action, according to the stakeholders, negates the principle of media freedom and the role of the media as a watch-dog of the society.

On broadcast media regulation within the framework of the electoral process, the stakeholders agreed on the need for regulation to prevent unprofessional acts of media organisations who use the electoral process to disseminate political messages which have the tendency of heating up the polity.

Given that the media survive through commercial incomes such as political broadcast, stakeholders were of the view that political messaging and coverage of political activities during the electoral process must be handled with professionalism

Urging the regulator to make efforts to ensure that the broadcast media in Nigeria operate in line with international best practices, the FGD participants urged the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) to carry out its regulatory obligations transparently with a sense of public

interest and avoid biases which could present them as tending towards the government's interest as against public interest.

In their overall assessment of the media performance, the media stakeholders noted that not much had been done in the area of civic/voter education and political debate which according to them would go a long way to help sensitise the public adequately for the electoral process.

They stressed the need for the media to dedicate time and resources towards their corporate social responsibility, particularly in the area of public enlightenment. They noted that providing media space and opportunity to promote inclusion of smaller political parties, people with disabilities, women and youths in politics would help take care of the marginalised sections of the society in the political process.

Addressing participants at the event on the issues around adherence to the provisions of the media regulatory code, the representative of the broadcast media regulator, NBC's Director of Broadcast Monitoring, Dr. Tony Anigala, at the event, noted that media professionals have not done enough in the area of compliance to the regulatory code, as they often fail to adhere to its provisions.

Dr. Anigala noted that media regulatory codes were developed by media stakeholders to effectively guide professionals. He expressed dissatisfaction that many practitioners still violate the provisions of the code in a bid to satisfy their selfish interests. The various sharp practices perpetrated by some media practitioners have become a serious concern for the regulator, particularly violations related to the coverage of the electoral process.

The NBC officials reiterated the commitment of the commission to ensure that media practitioners were adequately monitored and guided to avoid such violations that could wreak havoc in the polity. He observed that most infractions committed by broadcast organisations emanated from political

broadcast, adding that the infractions were borne out of the greed of the media to make money during the electoral process, not minding the implication of their actions on national security.

The NBC called on media managers to ensure that their stations were not used as platforms to heat up the polity, while also reiterating the need for broadcasters to be abreast of the regulatory code, thereby strengthening professionalism and integrity of their organisations. The regulator assured practitioners of its renewed effort towards promoting best practices in the industry.

In the area of equitable media access to political parties, Anigala called on media organisations to provide enabling environment and opportunity for participation of political entities to avoid marginalisation of some political parties, which could amount to unfair treatment. The zonal director maintained that representation of political parties in political broadcast must be of equal status to ensure that contributions were not one sided.

While further engaging discussions on equitable media access for political parties as stipulated in the broadcasting code, stakeholders urged NBC to do a review of this area of the code given the realities and practicability of compliance. They noted that it is not practicable to give equal media access to political parties, as a result of different challenges such as unavailability and unwillingness of a good number of political parties to participate in media programmes.



Participants at the FGD

Lesson Learnt

Some of the lessons learnt at the FGD which took place in Jos, Plateau State and in Port Harcourt, River State include:

Cont. on page 11

Cont. from page 4

-Involvement of media stakeholders in discussions around issues affecting the media would go a long way in strengthening media performance in future coverage of the electoral process.

-Media stakeholders must understand their roles and adequately engage to perform such roles as expected.

In the end, the stakeholders also came up with general and specific recommendations for each media stakeholder. Among the general recommendations enumerated include:

- Provision of grant and support to the media through public funding approach to allow for independence.

- Capacity building for professionals around the electoral process should be intensified.

- Editorial integrity to be upheld by media organizations.

- Conscious effort to be made to strengthen self-censorship within media organization.

- Advocacy to be strengthened by CSOs and other critical stakeholders to help strengthen support for the media.

- Independence of the broadcast media regulator should be upheld to allow it performs its mandate without interference.

· There is the need for the establishment of an independent body/council charged with the responsibility of appointing leadership of government-owned media organizations to enhance the independence of such organizations.

- Media regulatory framework should be strengthened.

- Media disciplinary mechanisms should be strengthened to curtail excesses of practitioners as well as improve professionalism.

Some of the specific recommendations for media stakeholders include:

Media Industry Groups:

· The FGD identified the need to raise the bar for media practitioners as a critical way of bridging the knowledge gap especially on media code of ethics.

· Training and mentoring of young journalists and other media practitioners should be prioritized by media organizations to raise the competencies of journalists and quality of media reporting.

· Media organizations should have 'Compliance Unit' or 'Ethical Desk' as an internal regulation mechanism and compliance with code of ethics

· Persons with disability and other marginalized groups should be included in the coverage of electoral processes

· Media should support the advocacy on the administrative independence of INEC by actively collaborating with the Civil Society and other stakeholders to bring the issue to the front burner at the National Assembly

· There is need to create a conducive and favourable working environment for journalists: this would include: life insurance for journalists

· The media should focus on regaining its position as an agenda setting institution for the nation

· Media should hold frequent engagement with electoral actors and government officials as a measure for correcting negative perceptions of the

media

· Media needs to raise its voice in the face of injustice and legal challenges faced by media organizations and practitioners

· There is the need to adopt investigative journalism as a tool for holding electoral actors accountable

· There is need for the media to build alliances within and across the profession as a means of effective handling of challenges faced by media organizations or practitioners

Media Regulator:

1. Media regulator should ensure heads of media organizations are qualified and competent to occupy such positions.

2. The NBC should review the broadcasting code to reflect modern trends and challenges in the broadcast media ecosystem.

3. Broadcast media should give adequate access and coverage to persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups in the electoral processes.

Involvement of Media stakeholder in discussions around issues affecting the media would go a long way in strengthening media performance in future coverage of the electoral process.

- Traditional media should improve their social media engagements

- Media owners should be socially responsible to their staff.

- Media disciplinary mechanisms should be strengthened to curtail excesses of practitioners, as well as improve professionalism.

There is the need to adopt investigative journalism as a tool for holding electoral actors accountable There is need for the media to build alliances within and across the profession as a means of effective handling of challenges faced by media organizations or practitioners.

Government:

· Government should not politicize the appointment of the leadership of the media regulatory agency, while persons with adequate knowledge of the media industry should be considered for such leadership position.

- Safety and insurance of media practitioners should be given top priority during the electoral Process.



Participants at the Focus Group Discussion, FGD on Trends and Challenges of Accurate, Ethical Coverage of the Electoral Process in Nigeria organised by the IMS in Port Harcourt, River State.

Cont. from page 5

On the delay in the processing of applications, the secretary observed that, in some instances, applicants used addresses that were not traceable in their application, which often made it difficult for officers to inspect proposed location of broadcast stations as provided in the applications.

Participants maintained that NBC could strengthen its licensing correspondence by putting to use its website as a platform to communicate vital information to applicants. They also implored NBC to publish the names of broadcast media operating in the country and their frequencies on its websites.

Issues around unavailability of broadcast media in some parts of the country, infiltration of foreign media frequencies into such locations and its security implications for the country:

The NBC team noted that the Commission had tried its best to encourage setting-up broadcast stations across the country by reducing licence fees and solicited for the support of stakeholders to address this issue. Also brought to the attention of the regulator during discussion was the absence of local broadcast media in many locations in the country which encourages inhabitants to listen to foreign media content rather than local stations.

Stages of Licensing:

Stakeholders called for a review of the

long licencing processes which is currently in many steps, which they said was too cumbersome. They advised the commission to deploy technology and also remove the involvement of the presidency from the broadcast licencing which should have been the sole responsibility of the NBC.

They expressed dissatisfaction with the undue interference by the government who often used their influence to issue broadcast licences to their political cohorts. Stakeholders observed that this practice has led to politicisation of the media which has impacted professionalism.

On the issues related to content regulation, stakeholders noted that the new amendment to the NBC Code 6

requires private/commercial broadcasters to allot "a minimum of 20 per cent of weekly broadcast hours to public service programmes on emergencies, current trends and issues". It provides further that "such programmes shall be given prominence during family belt and shall not be less than 120 minutes per transmission day".

This regulatory provision, according to stakeholders, is unfair to the broadcast media, which relies on private funding to run their operations. They maintained that interfering with such crucial programme time-belt of the media could have adverse effect on their finances, particularly at this harsh time.



DISCLAIMER

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents are the sole responsibility of the *Institute for Media and Society*, and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

Funded by The



European Union

Copyright © 2018. All rights reserved

All comments, opinions, enquiries and other requests should be directed to

The Editor,

Media4DemocracyNG, Institute for Media and Society, IMS, 3, Emina Crescent, Off Toyin Street, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria.

Tel: + 234 9134273590

E-mail: media4democracyng@imesoimeso.org, info@imesoimeso.org Website: www.imesoimeso.org

For more information log on to www.democracy-support.eu/nigeria

EU-SDGN IMPLEMENTERS:

