

Media Stakeholders Draw Lessons From 2015 Polls

To enhance broadcast media performance in the 2019 general election, stakeholders from the National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, and the Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria, BON, met on 12 and 13 September, 2018, in Kaduna, Northcentral Nigeria, to draw lessons from an assessment of broadcast media performance in the 2015 polls.

The 2-day event tagged: Lessons Learnt Retreat, reviewed the operating and regulatory climate of the media, the regulatory initiatives in the run-up to the 2015 general election, and the performance gaps of the broadcast media and the NBC. It was facilitated by the Institute for Media and Society, IMS. Professor Armstrong Idachaba, Director of Broadcast Monitoring, NBC, represented the Director General, Mallam Modibbo Kawu, while Mr. Umar Saidu Tundu Wada, Managing Director Radio, Kano, represented the Chairman of

BON, Mr John Momoh

Professional, policy and institutional issues came up for attention, discussion and recommendations at the retreat. Foremost among the challenges highlighted at the event were ownership control by government and private stations and ethical challenge dealing with self-censorship. Others were: influence of unregulated social media on both the media in terms of news coverage and on the actors such as politicians, shortage of manpower in NBC and the challenge between professionalism and commercialization.

Absence of programme post mortem, research units in broadcast stations, use of non-broadcast personnel to cover elections, lack of synergy between NBC, INEC and APCON were some of the other vital issues raised at the retreat.

To address these challenges, the participants made some far-reaching recommendations.

Their recommendations included training and re-training of broadcasters, conduct of assessment of media coverage of past elections before every new election, need for BON and NBC to sensitize owners of stations on the need to balance professionalism and commercialization, APCON to be involved in the regulation of jingles, peer review initiative for media stations and the need for IMS to hold training on NBC codes for broadcasters and workshop for media owners to sensitize them to see their stations as public trusts.



L-R: Mr Cyril Stober of the Nigerian Television Authority, NTA, Dr Akin Akingbulu, Executive Director Institute for Media and Society, IMS, and Mr. Umar Saidu Tudun Wada, Managing Director, Radio Kano, at the "Lessons Learnt Retreat", event, in Kaduna, recently.

NBC, BON Partner on 2019 Polls

To foster synergy between the National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, and the Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria, BON, and enhance professionalism in the broadcast media, the Institute for Media and Society, IMS, recently organized a one-day consultative meeting, which attracted teams from both organisations.

The meeting was part of the Component 4A of the European

Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria - Support to Media, EU-SDGN particularly to improve the professionalism of media practitioners and strengthen the relationship between NBC and BON, in an interactive atmosphere.

Continued on pg. 2

INSIDE: ➔

INEC 2019 Elections Time Table Pg8 | Journalists On Fair Polls Coverage -Pg6 | NGE's President Intev. -pg 3 | Photo News -pgs 4-5

Continued from pg. 1

Ibrahim Wada, Zonal Director of the NBC, Kaduna represented the Director General of the organisation, Mallam Modibbo Kawu, while Alhaji Umar Tudun Wada represented Mr John Momoh, Chairman of BON, at the meeting hosted by the IMS on September, 11 in Kaduna, Northern Nigeria Other dignitaries at the occasion included Mr Imeh Ufot, Chairman, Zone E of BON, and his Zone F counterpart, Mr Anthony Afia.

The meeting dealt with professional, policy and administrative issues that would improve the relationship between both organisations.

These issues were media management and professionalism under which matters of transparency, accountability in media operations, training, peer review and personnel exchange were x-rayed. Other issues at the meeting dealt with government policy in terms of challenges and progress associated with digital switch-over and fees as well as funding, licensing and regulation.

At the end of the meeting, the participants made some suggestions aimed at enhancing professionalism of media practitioners and strengthening the relationship between the BON and NBC.

Alhaji Tudun Wada, representative of BON, the NBC representative, Ibrahim Wada and Mr. Ufot expressed optimism that the meeting would improve dialogue both organisations for better working relationship.

Media Gatekeepers Undergo Training on 2019 Polls Coverage

Media coverage of elections in a diverse and young democracy such as Nigeria requires professionals who are constantly updated on the changing dynamics and peculiarities of the profession in a digital age.

This requirement was the crux of a baseline study conducted by the Institute for Media and Society, IMS, which identified some skill-gaps in media readiness for the coverage of the 2019 polls. Following the study, the IMS organized training for media managers, editors and other relevant stakeholders in the broadcast media ahead of the general elections in Nigeria.

For the training, it chose two locations in the Northern and Southern parts of the country from where managers and editors of selected broadcast media were drawn for the training on developing strategies, election coverage plans and implementation of codes of conduct for journalists in the electoral process in the country.

The first activity in the training took place in Osogbo, capital of Osun State, Southwest Nigeria, on September 17 and 18, 2018 while the second took place in Kaduna, capital of Kaduna State, in North Central Nigeria on October 17 and 18,

2018.

The facilitators for the training in Osogbo were Mrs Miriam Menkiti and Mr Ola Fajemisin, veteran broadcasters. They took the participants on various issues which included Election Coverage Planning and Introduction/Overview of Broadcast Media Performance in Previous/Recent Electoral Process.

Ms Maria Odeh, former acting Director General, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, FRCN and Mr Ola Fajemisin were the resource persons in the Kaduna event who took the participants on similar issues covered in Kaduna.

In his welcome address in the Osogbo workshop, the Executive Director Institute for Media and Society, (IMS), Dr Akin Akingbulu, stated that the focus of the event was the electoral process with the objective of improving on previous performances in the 2019 elections. He said; “specifically, we are working towards providing a fair, accurate and ethical coverage of the electoral process, we will also go on to engage capacity building for other segments in the industry”. According to him, the training would be done in the framework of EU-SDGN, which objective is to strengthen democracy in Nigeria.

Continued on pg. 7



Participants at the training for Media managers and editors held in Kaduna, Kaduna State, North Central Nigeria, recently.

The Media is More Prepared Than Politicians For 2019 Polls-Egbemode

Mrs Funke Egbemode is the President of the Nigerian Guild of Editors. She is also the Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief of *New Telegraph* Newspaper. In this interview with Media 4DemocracyNG, she asserts that Nigerian editors, managers of news in print, electronic and viable online publications are more than prepared than the politicians for the 2019 general elections. Excerpts:

The Guild of Editors recently held its annual conference in Asaba, Delta State, with the theme "Credible Elections, Sustainable Democracy and the Nigerian Media". Apart from its topicality, would you confidently say the media gatekeepers are prepared for fair coverage of the 2019 polls?

There is nothing like experience. Experience is what the gatekeepers have under their desks. Covering election is something they have done for years. Between 1999 and now, the gatekeepers have done their jobs. Even before the current crop of editors became editors, most of them had at one time or the other covered elections. I am sure the gatekeepers are more prepared than the politicians because they know what politicians have done over the years, they are the ones with the questions for the aspirants, the candidates and they know the terrain. They know what politics was



even during the military regimes. So yes, the gatekeepers are prepared to cover the polls fairly and accurately.

There had been some fears expressed among stakeholders about the quality of coverage the media is giving the electoral process, like voter education and public enlightenment of the electoral process for instance. Do you think the concerns are genuine?

The people who get the money for voter education should do their job using the media. If the politicians want to create awareness, we give space, if the NGOs and INEC want to push something out we do it for them without charging a dime. We give them space to air their views. If the Federal Government says something every day about voter education, the media reports it every day.

What would you consider the major obstacle to poll coverage by the media?

Insecurity. I don't know how many media organisations have insurance for their staff, especially the editorial staff. Insecurity can constitute stumbling block for the media to polls coverage. Covering an election in Lagos state is different from doing so in Borno state where you may not be able to get as much information for the media as you would like to have and give to your audience. You know the gatekeepers would deploy reporters to every state and if a state is volatile, there isn't much information they can get for their readers and audiences. How much

work the reporters or even independent observers can do, would be dependent on the security situation of those areas. For some volatile areas, there is little election observers can do in such unsecured areas. If a state is insecure, add the anxiety associated with election to it, it will make things worse. And then the main obstacles to fair polls coverage are the politicians themselves. If they are too ambitious, if they create an environment that makes it difficult for free and fair election to take place then it becomes difficult to ensure polls coverage, their action will hamper movement and it will become a problem to reporters.

Let's look at another concern about the media, which is gender mainstreaming. Stakeholders are concerned that fair hearing and reportage by the Nigerian media is weighed against women than the men just as it is hard for women to break through in the newsroom setting. What is your take here?

There are all kinds of factors responsible for what is happening to female politicians but they need to get a grip and start to do things differently. It is important that they do the right thing, it is important that they understudy the men, whether we like it or not, men have been there for too long for us to say ok we have arrived, you need to move over and give us space. Like Asiwaju Bola Tinubu said, power is not served a la carte. You need to go after it, you need to demand it, and put your feet down.

Continued on pg. 7

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Images and Sights of IMS Activities in



A group of participants in discussion during the training on coverage of electoral and broader democratic governance in Nigeria, held in Kano, recently



Participants at the Kano workshop



Another group of participants in discussion during the training in Kano, recently



Participants at the Benin workshop



Mr Bayo Bodunrin at the Benin City workshop



Participants at the workshop for journalists, held in Benin City Edo State, Southsouth Nigeria



Participants at the 2-Day workshop on coverage of electoral and democratic governance, held in Kano, Kano State, Northwest Nigeria



Participants in group discussion at the Osogbo workshop.



Participants at the training for media managers and editors held in Kano

in Strategic Locations Across Nigeria



o workshop



Participants at the training for media managers and editors held in Osogbo, Osun State, Southwest, Nigeria.



odunrin of AIT, facilitator (right) and participants at the workshop for journalists, in City Edo State, Southsouth Nigeria



Participants at the training for media managers and editors held in Osogbo



al and broader west Nigeria, recently



s held in Osogbo.



Participants at the training for media managers and editors held in Kaduna, Kaduna State, Northcentral, Nigeria

Journalists Identify Obstacles To Fair Polls Coverage



Participants at the 2-Day workshop on coverage of electoral and broader democratic governance, held in Kano, Kano State, Northwest Nigeria, recently

Ahead of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, journalists have identified obstacles that may affect adequate, ethical and objective coverage of the polls. In their review of broadcast media coverage of the 2015 and recent elections, the journalists who participated in the training on coverage of electoral and broader democratic governance held on 24 and 25 October in Kano State, Northwest Nigeria and in Benin-City, Southsouth on 15 and 16 November, admitted that the media performed poorly in the area of coverage and reportage. They identified flaws in the area of ownership, capacity training, planning and regulatory codes. According to them, privately owned media served primarily the interest of their owners while over-commercialization of media contents, inadequate training for media practitioners on the coverage of electoral process and poor remuneration for journalist were major defects. Others were poor planning by media owners, absence of self-regulatory guidelines by the media and poor access of journalists to regulatory codes.

The Executive Director, Institute for Media and Society (IMS), Dr Akin Akingbulu, while giving his address at the 2-day workshop, stated that, the media play a very important role in the electoral process, being the institution saddled with the responsibility of informing the

citizens; and as such, there was the need for journalists to be well equipped. He also encouraged journalists to see capacity building and knowledge sharing as very crucial to media performance, particularly in its engagement of the electoral and broader democratic governance process. He reiterated the commitment of IMS towards ensuring that capacity of journalists was built, as a way of strengthening professionalism of the media in Nigeria.

The participants were divided into two groups, with each of them tasked to identify challenges associated with election coverage and broader democratic issues and proffer solutions to them. The first group identified threats such as accountability in budget, motivation, government interference, security challenge, non-availability of modern equipment, lack of awareness on the part of journalists as major challenges facing the profession.

The second group identified ownership influence, logistics challenge, lack of voter education, policies that limit participation of people living with disabilities, money influence on journalists as challenges associated with election coverage.

At the end of the workshop, the participants revealed that their capacity

had been strengthened in the coverage of electoral, broader democratic governance issues, and in the use of media codes for election coverage. They were also able to demonstrate ability to step-down knowledge acquired within their individual organizations and beyond.

Organizers, participants and the hosts agreed that the training workshop for journalists from selected radio and television stations within states in Northern Nigeria on coverage of the electoral and broader democratic governance issues had contributed to strengthening the capacity of the media to provide fair, accurate and ethical coverage of the electoral process.

They said this was a step in the right direction, as the media would become more professional in carrying out their duty, thereby securing more trust from citizens. It is also expected that with more professionalism of the media, citizens would be able to get the right information which would inform their decisions positively, thereby contributing towards good governance.

It is expected that compliance to broadcast media regulations would be achieved as more media practitioners are now abreast of the guidelines provided by the regulatory agency,

UPCOMING IMS ACTIVITIES

- Continuation of Advocacy on review of NBC Act
- Strengthening broadcast media platforms to sensitize the public on women, youths and PWD participation in the electoral process
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- Media Stakeholders Meeting
- W/shop for NBC Media Monitoring Staff
- W/shop for NBC Legal, Policy and Enforcement Staff



Egbemode

Continued from pg 3

me in 1989, I am the only woman still standing. And they are not dead. They had to fall back because their partners wanted them to. They have become successful businesswomen outside of the newsroom. Their husband wanted them to open a shop and start going to China and Dubai and buying and selling. So you cannot hold anybody responsible for what has happened but the men.

Great. A related question to that is the supposed threat to media survival posed by social media. The concern now is that they purvey "fake news", and should be regulated or censored heavily. What is your

take on this?

First, I think we should not learn from the followers of Trump, (President of the United States of America). There is nothing like fake news. There is gossip and there is news. Gossip has been there for ages, but news is news. There is nothing like fake news. It is either news or gossip. The social media is a challenge, though. It is a new thing, just like when television just arrived and challenged radio. We all had to find a way to get used to this new thing because our world is a changing one. Social media as it is it will not be the same in a couple of years, there will be advancement. Social media is part of the change that has come upon our world and upon our industry; let us get into it. The traditional media should find a way of converting it into an advantage and strength. It is a challenge and we must face it.

There are female politicians men are afraid of, whether they are doing bravado or not, there are female politicians in this country that wield power. It is important for us to continue to encourage our women. The men did not get there overnight. And when the women begin to hold the reins of power our country would be better for it. The men have squandered their goodwill.

Why is it there are no sufficient women in the media industry? Is it not still about gender issue?

It is about the insensitivity of men. That there are not enough women in the newsroom, it is because of the men they marry. I got into journalism as a single woman and I have seen plenty. I know the number of women that were with me in the newsroom then. Looking back now, those who were in the newsroom with

Continued from pg 2

He further stated that the component in the EU-SDGN project is called Support to Media, adding, "in this component, IMS is working to achieve; enhancement of professionalism in the media, deepening the delivery of civic and voter education, strengthening the regulatory body, strengthening media engagement of public education for increased participation of women, youths and people with disabilities". Dr Akingbulu noted, "For this workshop, we have brought solid professionals to help facilitate. We will draw from their rich experience and add more and go back to do a great job in the electoral process. Osun governorship elections is coming shortly. We hope that our colleagues covering the elections will also have knowledge and skills from here to use during the exercise. Let us give full attention to this activity and ensure we also have fun"

He also harped on the watch-dog role of the media in information dissemination and information gate-keeping by managers and editors to provide fair, accurate and ethical reportage, particularly the coverage of the electoral process in Nigeria.

For the participants, it was time for frank talk. They argued that the media performed poorly in the coverage of the 2015 polls going by their self-assessment and assessments of international observers. They gave a number of reasons for this poor rating: Public and private-owned media serve the interest of their owners; over-commercialization of media contents; inadequate training for media practitioners on the coverage of the electoral process.

Through group work presentations, the participants had the opportunity to share ideas and experiences, and test their understanding of the training content.



Facilitators and some participants at the training for media managers and editors held in Osogbo, Osun State, South West Nigeria, recently.



Prof. Mahmood Yakubu INEC Chairman,

2019 Election Timetable

Collection of PVC ends a week to general elections on February 16, 2019

Presidential
FEBRUARY 16, 2019

National Assembly
FEBRUARY 16, 2019

Governorship
MARCH 2, 2019

State Assembly
& FCT Council
MARCH 2, 2019

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