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EDITOR'S NOTE.

As the February 23 and March 9 polls in Nigeria approached, attention and focus, as usual, shifted to the media, a major player, among other stakeholders, in the electoral process.

The media's mandate is to hold government accountable to the people and in the process play a crucial role in public enlightenment and information dissemination in a fair, ethical and credible manner.

The Nigeria media is robust and varied. It has played a great role in the sustenance of democracy in the country since the emergence of democratic governance in 1999.

Like other stakeholders in the electoral process, the media faces professional, structural and logistic challenges that must be constantly addressed to ensure balanced coverage and reportage, efficiency and effectiveness.

Many local and international stakeholders have been offering assistance in this regard

In the local scene two foremost media NGOs in Nigeria, the Institute for Media and Society, IMS, and the International Press Center, IPC, occupy a pride of

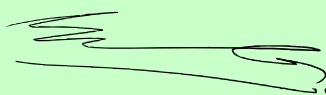
place. Under the European Union Support to Democratic Governance Project, EU-SDGN, both organisations have been providing capacity training, enhancing robust media engagement through facilitation of workshop and researches on the state of the media.

Recently, they organized a public presentation of a joint media monitoring report on the coverage of the 2019 electoral process: It is a comprehensive and fair assessment of the print and broadcast media, which we serve you in this edition.

Then there is an engaging interview of a veteran journalist on the role of the media during and after elections. She is Mrs Maria Odeh, a former Acting Director General, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, FRCN.

This is a bumper issue. Take my word for it. But confirm for yourself by delving straight into our new, repackaged newsletter for your delight.

Amos Esele



Editorial Team

Amos Esele
Editor

Shade Wesley-Metibogun
Editorial Assistant

Olusegun Samuel
Sunny Dada
Olaniyi Olaniyan
Contributors



Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,
Thanks for sending me a copy of your quarterly letter. I found the stories unique and enlightening, particularly on efforts by civil society organisations to assist the media on capacity training. The media play a very important role in keeping us informed on issues about our young democratic country and they need all the support they can get to make them more efficient.

Thank you
Mr Bassey Peters
MD, Paper Merchandise Limited
NEPA Yard, Church Village, Gowon Estate Ipaja, Lagos State

Dear Sir,
I enjoyed reading your stories and also like the quality of the copy. I hope you will be able to sustain the newsletter as I look forward to receiving future editions. BRAVO!
Mr Edward Oiku,
CEO, Sparkling Roses Limited, P.O.Box, 4432, Ikeja Lagos

Please send your comments to:
media4democracyng@imesoimeso.org

Media Workshop: IMS Enhances Capacity of NBC Staff On Global Trends



Facilitators and participants at the training workshops for officers and directors of the Nigeria Broadcasting Commission, NBC

To enhance the capacity of the National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, staff on global trends, especially ahead of the 2019 General Election, the Institute for Media and Society, IMS organized three separate training workshops for middle level, managerial staff and directors of the Commission.

The workshops, which followed a series of earlier consultative meetings between officials of both organizations, took place in Akwanga, Nasarawa State, in 27, 28, 29 and 30, November, 2018.

The NBC officials were drawn from the head office in Abuja and the regional offices across the country.

The first set of the trainings for Monitoring Officers on Global Trends in Broadcast Media Content Monitoring, held on November 27 and 28. The second, for NBC Policy, Legal and Enforcement Officers on Global Trends in Broadcast Media Regulatory Practices followed the earlier one immediately on November 29 and 30, also at Akwanga, Nasarawa State. Then, the third, for Directors of Commission took place on December 5 and 6.

Addressing the workshops, the Executive Director, Institute for Media and Society, Dr Akin Akingbulu, emphasized the important role of the regulatory body in ensuring broadcast media industry compliance with global best practices, adding that the aim of the training workshops was to enhance NBC's capacity to perform its mandate.

He noted that the media, as the Fourth Estate of the Realm, play a very crucial role in the society, and as such, efforts should be made towards strengthening their performance. He reiterated the need

for NBC to also improve on its performance by conforming with international best practices in broadcast media management.

Facilitators, Professor Victor Ayedun-Aluma of the Department of Mass Communication, University of Jos, Jos, Plateau State, and Professor Ayobami Ojebode of the Communication Department in the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, took the participants on various topics. These included the Place of the Regulator in the Broadcast Value Chain; The Regulator's World View; Trends in Broadcast Monitoring; Experience Sharing: Trends in Broadcast Monitoring, Growing a Critical Audience and Making Sense of Broadcast Monitoring.

At the end of the training for media monitoring officers, the participants shared experiences and disclosed that the information and knowledge update received at the training had opened their eyes to understand the challenges facing the broadcast regulator and what to do to assist it to comply with global best practises.

The second two-day training workshop for NBC Policy, Legal and Enforcement Officers on Global Trends in Broadcast Media Regulatory Practices, which brought together officers of the Commission from the Abuja headquarters and from the Auchi Office in Edo State, was very strategic given the importance of policy, legal framework and enforcement to the work of the Commission as a broadcast regulatory body.

Again, Professors Ayedun-Aluma, and Ojebode facilitated the sessions. The contents of the workshop included Legal Framework for Broadcast Regulators; a

Communication Strategy for Public affairs in a Regulatory Agency; Global Trends in Regulatory Enforcement.

Ayedun-Aluma pointed out the importance of regulation of the broadcast media in Nigeria and the need for NBC to re-strategise its operations to conform to international best practice.

According to him, skill gaps identified in broadcast regulatory practices must be filled as that would create an avenue for best global practices in regulations.

Professor Ayedun-Aluma reiterated the need for inclusion and strict adherence to policies, procedures and processes in the regulatory framework, which would continuously strengthen the regulatory practices, as well as broadcast media performance.

In his presentation, Ojebode called on officers of the regulatory body to work towards developing a more viable communication strategy which would enhance internal and external operations, as well as consider developing evidence-based and research-driven policies, which would guide decision making at various stages of regulatory practices of the commission.

In their response, participants expressed their appreciation to the European Union (EU) and the Institute for Media and Society (IMS) for efforts made so far towards strengthening the capacity of NBC to perform its functions effectively. They observed that broadcast media regulatory practices in Nigeria have lots of challenges, which according to them could only be resolved through constant stakeholders' engagements and capacity development.

Regulation of broadcast content was the surest way for the Commission to contribute to a viable broadcast industry given the power of the broadcast media to influence its public for ill or good, the participants agreed.

At the the third workshop for Directors of NBC, which was declared open by Akingbulu, the officials identified a number of challenges, mandates and recommendations proposed for an effective and efficient regulatory practice.

The Director General of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), Mr Modibbo Kawu, expressed appreciation to the European Union and the Institute For Media And Society (IMS) for the fruitful partnership and for giving priority attention to the NBC.

He was represented by Barrister Alheri Saidu, Director of Legal Services Department and secretary to the Commission. Saidu expressed the hope that the workshop would contribute to the overall performance of NBC in the coverage of the electoral process and appealed to the EU and IMS to continue the partnership.

FACT CHECK: Is The Media Providing Fair, Accurate Coverage To The Electoral Process?

Media capacity and readiness to cover elections fairly and ethically will continue to be a subject of study, debate and discussions considering its information dissemination and public enlightenment role. The crucial role of information spread and public concern for its proper processing in the democratization process in a young democracy such as Nigeria gets proper attention with the approach of every election.

That was the case at a public presentation of a joint media monitoring report on the coverage of the 2019 electoral process and media stakeholders' roundtable on the media, facilitated by the Institute of Media and Society IMS, and the International Press Centre, IPC under component 4: Support to Media of the European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria, EU-SDGN, Project.

Before a participatory audience comprising media stakeholders, communication experts and media managers presented the reports and explained the importance of ethical, fair and equitable coverage of the 2019 poll for the deepening of the democratic process in Nigeria. The roundtable took place in Lagos.

Profession Ayobami Ojebode of the Communication Department in the University of Ibadan, Dr. Abiodun Ogidan, Dr. Akin Akingbulu, Executive Director of IMS, Mr. Lanre Arogundade, Director, IPC, and Mrs Funke- Treasure Durodola, Assistant Director, Programmes at the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, FRCN, made presentations at the joint IMS and IPC outing.

Ayobami who reviewed the first quarter monitoring report covering the months of June to August for the electronic, print and online media identified strengths and weaknesses in the coverage of the political process by the selected media outlets and made recommendations for improvement.

In their welcome addresses, Dr. Akin Akingbulu, and Mr Arogundade, said the Lagos gathering was part of the media-specific event that both organisations carried out in the preceding year under the EU-SDGN project.

Ojebode presented the report in three phases.

According to him, there are five reasons we need the media in



Prof. Ayobami Ojebode displaying some of the publications presented to the public at the joint IMS/IPC stakeholders' meeting, held in Ikeja, Lagos recently.

elections: "Our politics splits us... there are wounds of history that have not become scars yet... evidence of misinformation abounds, there are still gates without keepers; and the Media are not perfect judges...".

He said because we all leave in a noisy world, the media help us to make sense of our noisy world ... focusing on what matters, and discarding the inconsequential.

First, he took television, then radio, print and on-line publications. The broad media monitoring was conducted by the IMS, while the research on print and on-line media was conducted by the IPC.

For TV, Professor Ojebode said 16 television stations with 1600 coded items were monitored from four locations in the country during the July-August-September, 2018, period. For radio, 14 stations were monitored during the period.

Except in the area of sound bite, commentary and interviews where the monitored TV stations performed better than the radio stations in their reportage, the findings were similar for the broadcast media in all other areas covered by the research.

According to Ojebode, for TV and radio, unbalanced stories outnumbered balanced stories and 80 per cent of the reports were drawn from the urban/cities, while gender balance in the stories was a far cry, because "men top sources of stories" and "it is also a man's world".

"He said: "On campaign grounds, for instance, it is the women who are singing, dancing and sweating, while those doing the talking on the podium are the men and invariably those the

reporters report". This, according to him, is how status are conferred on the men only, leaving them to influence the electoral process. Such status conferral, he argued, can also be transferred to other areas in the society such as agriculture where the women do most of the farming but the men, for societal reasons, are the spokespersons".

In another instance, the research found that political party issues top the list, "which is understandable in an election year," said Ojebode,

"But why should the media score low on voter education during the same period," he quipped and added, "this is a low side for broadcast media."

Continuing, he said about radio, "Most stations broadcast news reports. Vox pop, discussions, commentaries were less. Issues of what and how is left to the listeners, leaving us with information with no correlation. This can only raise fears because they may not know how to respond to issues".

The findings on on-line publications were not markedly different. For the print media, many of the reports on electioneering were inside stories with only 11 per cent getting to the front pages

As with the broadcast media, the print under reported and misreported women, "even on their personal issues," said Ojebode.

Only one out of the 10,389 reports dealt with PWDs.

INEC had a good coverage, though the focus was on its budget and campaign financing complaints and about under age voting.

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Election Coverage: Journalists Undergo Training On Marginalized Groups

The sustained call by media stakeholders for more media attention and mention of marginalized groups such as women, youths and people living with disabilities in its coverage of elections was the subject of a workshop organized by the Institute For Media And Society, IMS, at the close of the preceding year.

The limited participation of these active segments of the population in the electoral process tended to affect its credibility.

For the Institute for Media and Society, IMS, the workshop which aimed to improve media engagement in promoting women, youth and marginalised groups in politics, was a necessity.

Coming well ahead of the 2019 general election, the training workshops took place in two central locations- Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory for the media in Northern Nigeria and Benin City, the Edo State capital for the media in southern part of the country was timely.

The media training for broadcast journalists on public sensitization for participation of women, youths and people with disabilities, PWDs in the electoral process which held in Abuja had participants drawn from the three geo-political zones in the North with two facilitators. It took place on the November 19 and 20 2018 while the southern leg held in Benin City on November 22 and 23, 2018.

The workshop in Abuja was declared opened by the Programme Manager of IMS, Mr Sunny Dada.

In his remark, Mr Dada informed the

participants that the central aim of the workshop was to improve the capacity of the media to promote the inclusion and active participation of marginalized groups in the electoral process. He said the marginalized groups which include, women, youths and people with disabilities, have been given inadequate coverage by the media in the electoral process.

He described the workshop as an opportunity for the participants to gain first-hand knowledge that would boost their reportage and encourage the participation of marginalised groups in the electoral process. He appealed to the participants to ensure that lessons learned from the workshop, were passed on to their colleagues at their workplaces.

According to him the EU-SDGN Project

Mrs Funke Treasure-Durodola, an Assistant Director of Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, FRCN, and Professor Ifeoma Dunu of the Mass Communication Department Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra state facilitated the workshops in Abuja and Benin-City.

Participants also had the opportunity to share experiences through group work and presentations.

The sessions that featured at the workshop centred on five key areas, namely, overview of broadcast media engagement of marginalized groups in the electoral process in Nigeria, patterns of media coverage of marginalized groups in the electoral process.

Others are; planning media sensitization on participation of



Mr. Sunny Dada, IMS Programme Manager (sitting, middle), sitting to his left is Prof. Ifeoma Dunu, facilitator, and at the extreme is Mrs Funke Treasure-Durodola, facilitator, and participants at the training of broadcast journalists on public sensitisation for participation of women, youth and PWDs in the electoral process, in Benin-City

was designed as a special intervention project by the European Union to reinforce democracy in Nigeria, adding that the media could only assist to achieve the specific objective, if every segment of the society, especially the marginalized groups, were given adequate coverage in the electoral process.

women; youths and PWDs in the electoral process; strengthening media platforms and sensitising the public on participation of women, youths & PWDs in the electoral process and steps in planning media sensitization campaign.

An Array of Personalities, Facilitators organised by IMS in Akwanga, Abuja And



Mr. Lanre Arogundade, Director, IPC, Dr. Abiodun Ogidan of FRCN, Dr. Akin Akingbulu, Executive Director, IMS and Mrs. Funke Treasure-Durodola of FRCN, at the public presentation of Media Monitoring Reports on Coverage of 2019 Electoral Process, in Ikeja, Lagos.



Participants at the NBC Training workshop for Policy, Legal and Enforcement Officers in Akwanga, Nasarawa State.



Participants at the training of Broadcast Journalists on public sensitisation for participation of women, youths and PWDs in the electoral process in Benin-City, Edo State.



Participants at the Training Workshop for Monitoring Officers of the NBC in Akwanga, Nasarawa State



Participants at the training workshop for Monitoring Officers of the NBC in Akwanga, Nasarawa State.



Participants at the training of broadcast journalists on public sensitisation for participation of women, youths and PWDs in the electoral process, in Abuja



NBC staff at the training workshop for Monitoring Officers.



Prof. Ayobami Ojehode, (Fourth left), followed by Dr. Akin Akingbulu and Prof. Victor Ayedun-Aluma, with Policy, Legal and Enforcement officers of NBC at the Training workshop, in Akwanga, Nasarawa State.



Participants at the IMS/IPC public presentation of Joint Media Monitoring Report on Coverage of the 2019 Electoral Process.

Participants and Facilitators at three events in Benin City and In Lagos by IMS and IPC.



Participants, Legal and Enforcement officers in Benin City



Participants at the Training Workshop for Monitoring Officers of the NBC in Akwanga, Nasarawa State



Participants at the NBC Director's Training in Akwanga, Nasarawa State



Participants at the public presentation event of IMS/IPC Media Monitoring Reports on Coverage of 2019 Electoral Process, held in Ikeja, Lagos recently



Participants at the Training Workshop for Monitoring Officers of the NBC in Akwanga, Nasarawa State



NBC Staff and facilitators after the training in Akwanga, Nasarawa State.

'The Media Still Has More Work To Do On Election Coverage'

Mrs Maria Odeh is former Acting Director-General of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, FRCN. In this interview with Media4Democracy NG, she draws on her professional experience, managerial competence to outline the ABC of media coverage of election and calls for more professionalism. Excerpts:

The 2019 general election is few weeks away and much is expected from the Media in terms of fair and accurate coverage. As a seasoned media professional, would you say the media is adequately prepared to cover the polls?

We may say that the media is ready to cover the general election, because in their day to day functions they report activities of political institutions and because election is one of the critical processes for renewing those institutions, the media must be abreast of developments leading up to the elections, but I cannot be categorical about their being adequately prepared because many of the problems that have always hindered the media from achieving set objectives still exist and cannot be done away with within the few months that we have before the election.

For example?

Take the tendency to personalise state-ownership of government run media, at federal and state levels, as exemplified by the recent incident during the election in Ekiti state, (where the state owned broadcast station had to be shut down because of flagrant infringement of the NBC code and the electoral act by the management of the station and state actors) and cases where opposition parties were denied access to state-run broadcast stations.

Another question is whether the media

is ready to report fairly on all candidates, parties and issues. How far, for instance is our pre-election reportage reflecting the unprecedented number of parties and candidates or are we focusing on just

could be a referendum on the ruling party.

You worked in the broadcast media. During the 2015 elections some popular TV and Radio stations ran materials considered unprofessional and defamatory by the National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, particularly about the character of some presidential candidates. Do you expect some improvement in 2019?

Well, I do hope that we have learnt from our mistakes and that the media would be more circumspect.

Don't forget that some of those offensive broadcasts were not necessarily about the contestants; some were about persons who were not even on the ballot.

The way out, is to carry out our duties in line with our professional ethics with a sense of duty to the public which we serve and by insisting that all actors

play by the rule. We should just uphold the tenets of professional practice and do things the right way, while also insisting that everyone plays by the rule.

How often should media editors and managers under go training to equip them with skills set for the job?

Media, especially the electronic media, is dynamic. The rapid and unpredictable nature of technological development and the social environment make it pertinent that training should be regular and on-going, if the media is to fulfil the purpose for its existence and be abreast of global best practise.

Specifically, what would you consider the major obstacle to fair poll coverage by the media?

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the two so called prominent parties? Media is social visibility and just as people use the media as the gateway to public life, so do issues become socially visible and relevant if the media bring them to public attention and consciousness.

Other problems that may hinder adequate preparation are, poor funding, poor remuneration for practitioners, inadequate training, high cost of running the media, which invariably affects the quality and quantity of content.

As much as I am impressed by the preparations so far, I don't think that enough is being done in terms of voter education and engaging the electorate in terms of finding out what their expectations are and also in terms of getting their opinions about promises kept and the like because an election

Continued from pg. 4

In his general remarks, Prof Ojebode stated that the report showed diversity in coverage while he urged the media to “do more conflict sensitive reporting, focus more on issues rather than strategy, sleaze, tactics and tackles.”

In her own contribution, Dr. Ogidan said “Prof. Ayobami Ojebode has told us that women views are missing in reportage. We are aware that political women are under reported and also in all level of development and society. We cannot deny the fact that women have made giant strides development. That is why in the book: Gender Sensitive Media Guidelines for the Coverage of the Electoral Process, is designed to be a professional tool for journalists in Nigeria”.

Mrs Durodola, expressed shock that radio reports lack sound bite.

She said, “it is a slap on the face to hear the report that radio lacked sound bite for a medium that is based on sound bite. What is the recorder meant for? I think it a failure of leadership in radio.

Taking on that point, Dr Qasim Akinreti, Chairman of the Lagos chapter of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, NUJ, said tools need to be given out to stations to assist them...”. He then asked why community radio was not included in the research.

To answer that question, Dr Akingbulu said the exclusion was deliberate. “There are 52 licensed community radio in Nigeria with 22 grassroots radio recently approved by the government, meaning the subsector is expanding. They are just coming up. What we are doing now is to help them develop capacity, broaden broadcasting skills. May be in the next two or three years, they would be able to engage this process”.

The issue thrown up by the researches were remediable, according to Mr. Arogundade of IPC. He urged the media to take the media code of conduct seriously.

“These codes do require us to give prominence to other groups such as women, youths, and people with disability.

The outing ended with the presentation of four publications, two apiece by the IMS and the IPC: Broadcast Media Readiness and Engagement of the Electoral Issues Towards the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria; Guiding Principles for Broadcast Media Coverage of the Electoral Process in Nigeria; Gender Sensitive Media Guidelines for the Coverage of the Electoral Process In Nigeria and Reporting Elections and Democratic Accountability: A Resource Manual.

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My thought on this is captured by a section of the preamble of The Nigerian Media Code of Election Coverage, which states that, 'Conscious that the effective performance of these important roles requires the observance of the highest standards of professionalism, maximum compliance with regulatory frameworks and deference to the public good and interest' This provision captures the interest of all stake holders, so failure to adhere to the basic principles of journalism is the greatest threat to fair coverage of the election.



Maria Odeh

There is the issue of gender mainstreaming. Women are said to be less reported in the media than their male counterparts while many who are journalists find it hard to break the glass ceiling in the newsroom. From experience, would you say these views could be substantiated?

Rather than dwell on whether women are reported less than men in the media, I would worry more about how women are portrayed in the media, and that of course is a subject for another day. Don't forget that media is social visibility and getting media attention is subject to several factors, by no means the least of which is whom you are,

what you do, where you are and the opportunities that are available to you. As for women not being able to break through the glass ceiling in the media, I am fortunate to have got into the profession when several women were already in management positions where I worked. For example the Controller, Northern Operations of the then Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, who oversaw operations of the whole northern region of the organisation when I joined, was a woman, the late Mrs Afiniki Hamman. Also, there were doyennes such as Mrs Eno Irukwu, Mrs Marie Irikefe and Mrs Stella Bassey, who all rose to director

or deputy director levels in the then NBC and of course we grew up, listening to stories about the exploits of another doyenne, Theresa Bowyer, Women's editor of the New Nigerian newspaper in the sixties. All these were women that we looked- up to and did not only aspire to be like but to surpass. Of course later, we had Bilkisu Yusuf, first female editor of the now rested Triumph Newspaper and the New Nigerian Newspaper, the Remi Oyo, first female director general of the News Agency of Nigeria, first female president of the Nigerian Guild of Editors, NGE and first female presidential spokes person in Nigeria, and Gold Oruh, former director news of Nigerian Television Authority. Others are,

Dr Victoria Ezeokoli, former executive director at NTA, Princess Banke Ademola, zonal director FRCN, and Victoria Olumudi, zonal director, NTA. Today we have the likes of Funke Egbemode, former editor of Sunday Sun newspaper, managing director of The New Telegraph newspaper and the incumbent president of the Nigerian Guild of Editors and Zainab Okino, editor-in- chief of the Blue Print newspaper, among others. I have never been bogged down by my gender because I had the privilege of being trained by the best, the mass communication department of the University of Lagos, the BBC and BBC trained trainers and all the way emphasis was on passion for the

2019: Broadcast Media Improves On Election Coverage

IMS quarterly reports of the contents of broadcast media, October 2018 -February 2019

In preparation for the coverage of the 2019 election, the broadcast media presented some themes to the public in a way that revealed slight changes in their reportage since the dawn of democratic governance in 1999.

This revelation is contained in quarterly reports of the contents of broadcast media by the Institute of Media and Society IMS as part of the European Union Support to Democratic Governance, EU-SDGN, project. The report covers October to December, 2018 and January and February 2019.

The second quarterly report of the project (covering October, November and December, 2018) deals with how the broadcast media in Nigeria, participated in the preparations towards the 2019 general elections, while the second quarterly report deals with participation of broadcast media in the coverage of election. They reveal the themes broadcast media stations presented to the public.

The report also sought to show how well the stations covered the different constituents of the society especially women and people living with disability; how much voter education the stations presented to their audience and instances of extreme speech in their broadcasts

Programme types of broadcast media contents

For the month of December, 2018, Phone-in programmes took 1.6% of the broadcasts while the percentage of commentaries/analysis was 2.0%. News reports were the highest with 74.6%, followed by discussions (16.0%) and interviews (5.7%).

The percentages allotted to discussions, interviews and commentaries on radio and television stations in December fell short of expectations given the fact that the electoral body had declared that campaigns and submission of forms by political parties should commence.

Quality political discussions and critical analysis of campaigns and manifestoes cannot be obtained in news reports; instead media stations used their interviews and discussion programmes, plus commentaries, analysis and phone-in opportunities to dissect manifestoes challenge political aspirants and candidates and assist the citizens in presenting opposing arguments.

Thematic focus of broadcast media

contents

In political broadcasts on radio and television at a period when campaigns started, the reports found that coverage were still very low in the area of voter education at 10.0%, voter registration 8.1%, campaign promises 10.1% and election administration 17.9%

However, coverage of issues related to women and PWD's was lower at 1.6% and 0.9%, respectively

As observed in the months of November and December critical coverage of voter education, voter registration and campaign promises were relegated at the time when parties were starting their campaigns and submitting nomination forms. This unfortunate development showed that stakeholders involved did not understand the complexity and enormity of the 2019 general elections.

Visibility of actors in the contents of broadcasts

As usual, greater visibility of men (76.4%) over women (23.7%) was found. Surprisingly, women voices and their appearances could not command visibility in a nation where millions of women join campaigns and vote for political candidates during elections. This was also, because the percentage of women as party candidates was very low.

It was almost impossible for people with disabilities (2.9%) to get some coverage in the broadcasts where able-bodied individuals got 97.1% of the visibility. This shows that the opportunity or freedom allowed people with disabilities to actively participate in the electoral process is still low.

Although women and PWD were not visible, issues about young Nigerians gained visibility (81.0%)

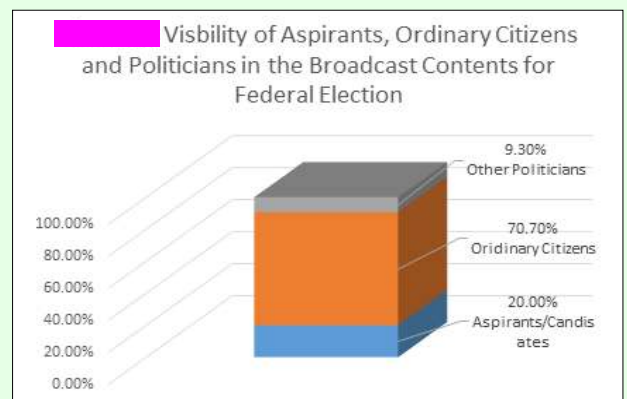
However, the young people were not directly in the broadcasts as news makers and analysts; people were instead referring to or talking about them and their issues as critical to the success of the general elections.

In close to 70% of the coverage, politicians were focused on above other

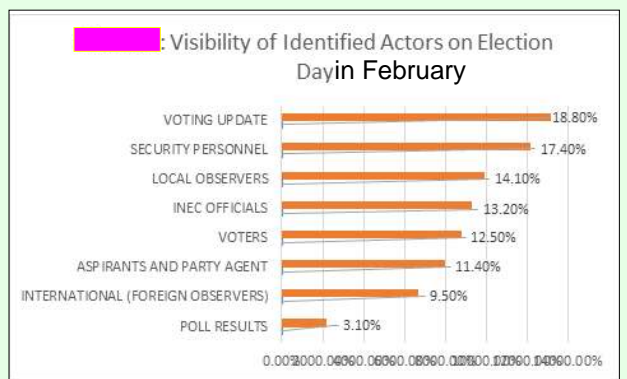
citizens (30.3%). This is not strange because politicians were the main actors in the electoral process and at that time they were campaigning and submitting forms, radio and television stations focused on them to get news reports.

On the visibility of agencies of government in political broadcasts, the data showed that focus was extensively beamed on the executive arm of government, 52.6% vis-a vis the Legislature at 39.9% and the Judiciary at a low 7.6%

The difference between the visibility of INEC (39.0%) and that of security



From the chart above, the voice of the citizens were more heard, and this is the ideal in any true democratic state. 70.7% of broadcast contents were focused on ordinary citizens, while 20.0% were concentrated on the major aspirants/candidates during the presidential and NASS elections.



agencies (26.1%) was about 13%, while other government agencies got 26.4%.

Also, the attention of political broadcasts was concentrated on the activities of civil society and faith-based organisations (82.7%), while community-based organisations and traditional rulers got (17.3%) as participants in the electoral process.

Law Criminalises Discrimination Against PWDs



"An officer who approves or directs the approval of a building plan that contravenes the building code, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of at least N1, 000, 000 or a term of imprisonment of two years or both."

"Discrimination is prohibited in public transportation facilities and service providers are to make provision for the physically, visually and hearing impaired and all

persons howsoever challenged. This applies to Seaports, Railways and Airport facilities.

"The rights and privileges include education, healthcare, priority in accommodation and emergencies

"Furthermore, all public organisations are to reserve at least 5 per cent of employment opportunities for these persons."

The 27-year jinxed policy that excluded Persons With Disabilities, PWDs from mainstream Nigerian society was broken on Wednesday, January 23 when President Muhammadu Buhari signed into law a legislation that would criminalize common discriminations against persons with disabilities.

It is known as Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act.

Provision of the law are :

"This Act prohibits all forms of discrimination on ground of disability and imposes fine of N1, 000, 000 for corporate bodies and N100, 000 for individuals or a term of six months imprisonment for violation concurrently

"It guarantees right to maintain civil action for damage by the person injured against any defaulter.

"It provides for a five-year transitional period within which public buildings, structures or automobile are to be modified to be accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities, including those on wheelchairs,"

"Before erecting any public structure, its plan shall be scrutinised by the relevant authority to ensure that the plan conforms with the building code.

"A government or government agency, body or individual responsible for the approval of building plans shall not approve the plan of a public building if the plan does not make provision for

accessibility facilities in line with the building code.

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Balanced coverage

Most of the reports by the media stations for January and February were balanced at 86.4% as against 13.6% that were not balanced. Balanced reporting for both private and public broadcast stations was also very high.

Extreme speech

There were some examples of hate speech and incitement as reported in the broadcast media.

Examples are:

"PMB [President Muhammadu Buhari] is mentally unfit" - Ikenga Ugo-Chinyere (spokesman CUPP)

"PMB is inept and clueless" - Reno Omokri (SA to former president Goodluck Jonathan)

"Atiku is an attack dog, he attacks like a dog and eat dog mandate" - Tobi Jonas

Uche Secondus, chairman of the People's Democratic Party set the tone for possible post-election violence when he said during a campaign in Rivers State:

Let me on behalf of the leadership of my party at the headquarters warn INEC, if you want to cause crisis in Nigeria, then rig the election.

In this situation, Mr Secondus was implying that if PDP lost in a rigged election, it would resort to violence, rather than head for the court of law.

Some noticeable trends

The visibility of some key actors within

the quarter, January to February, showed some variance from that of the last quarter, October to December.

The visibility of INEC dropped (from 49% in October to roughly 20% in December) as other agencies of government such as the security agencies became more actively involved in the electoral process. Voter education rose sharply from 5% in November to 22% in December. It seemed that as the elections drew nearer, it became important to educate the electorate and the broadcast media, sensing this, increased their discussion on voter education. It may as well be that more voter education activities were going on and the media simply covered these. Unfortunately, the coverage of PWDs remained abysmally low.

Cases of extreme speech were few but rising as electioneering progressed. The reports recorded three in October, 10 in November and 18 in December.

None of the political broadcasts adopted documentaries, talk shows or phone-in formats in dealing with politics and elections during the months under review on the selected radio and television stations. Radio had no debates but television had some. Commentaries and analyses were generally few which raises the important point of the poor performance of the broadcast media with reference to their surveillance role. Elections are critical and one expected that the media would use commentaries and analysis as tools for the education of the electorate.

2019 Poll: EU Observation Team Canvases Media Openness

The EU Election Observation Mission, EOM team that participated in the 2019 election in Nigeria took turn to issue reports as the election progressed. In an interim report on the role of the media before the conclusion of the general elections on March 9, the EU team under the leadership of the chief observer Maria Arena, a member of the European Parliament, emphasized equal coverage by government and privately owned media stations.

For the team, the federal government-owned radio (FRCN), which has a reported audience of 90 million, as well as leading commercial broadcasters at national and regional level, equitably divided airtime between the APC and PDP. Lively radio talk showed fact-checking projects assessed candidates' statements against statistical data and economic viability, adding to voters' awareness and fostering public accountability. It said that after the postponement of the polls, electronic media, called for active participation, and documented how voting materials were safeguarded in state capitals, thereby improving trust in the integrity of the process.

The report noted that systemic drawbacks curtailed pluralism in the media, except in a few states. Key obstacles to freedom of the media include vague legal

provisions, the media's financial dependence on government advertising at state level, and cumbersome and costly licensing requirements for broadcast media

Stating that media coverage of the campaign was highly polarised, it observed that most state-owned, state-level radio stations monitored served the interest of the incumbent governor.

"Eight out of nine stations afforded up to 85 per cent of their news to the governor and the presidential candidate he endorsed. This negatively affected voters' access to independent reporting, particularly in areas without commercial channels. There were several cases of candidates being denied access to radio broadcasts. Consequently, voters had limited access to diverse information, key to make an informed choice.

"The NBC issued warnings related to

alleged hate speech in paid-for programmes to four leading TV news channels. EU observers received credible first-hand information on state and partisan actors harassing journalists in a number of fiercely contested states. In such conditions, self-censorship is inevitable."

According to the august body, for the growing population of internet users, 111 million in December 2018, online media and social networks were important platforms to impart and access information. This was demonstrated in vigorous political discussions, and online space giving an alternative platform to journalists from traditional media to express their views anonymously. EU EOM analyses found that multiple Twitter accounts, which were relatively easy to establish, appeared to have been strategically used in a coordinated way to amplify partisan

messages. "Nigeria lack specific data protection laws, leaving personal data, collected by several state institutions including the Nigerian Communications Commission and INEC, potentially vulnerable to potential abuse. Positively, civil society and media houses were involved in several fact checking initiatives to counter disinformation," it concluded.



L-R: Chief Observer Maria Arena, Press Officer, EU Election Observation Mission, Nigeria 2019, Sarah Fradgley.

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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 90 32943342

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

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

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