

YIAGA Africa, IMS, Others Partner For Electoral Reform

Town Hall In Top Gear To Generate Ideas On Electoral Reforms

The series of efforts to boost Nigeria's electoral system by civil society organizations continues with a planned town hall meeting on Electoral Reform.

The activity is part of the European Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria, EU-SDGN, with YIAGA Africa collaborating with the Institute for Media and Society and other partners in the EU-SDGN project.

The Executive Director of YIAGA Africa, Samson Itodo, disclosed that the Town Hall Meeting that will be held live of Channels Television is "to harvest ideas on how to fix our electoral process."

He further disclosed, "that ...we'd like to amplify citizens' voices on electoral reform and create more time for stakeholders to engage."

For the institute for Media and Society, IMS, the aspect of the electoral reform to be addressed at virtual event is media related. IMS would push for a definite role to be given to the media in the electoral law. Not only that, the safety of



Dr. Akin Akingbulu, Executive Director of IMS.

journalists must be provided for in the Amended Electoral Act.

According to IMS, journalists and the media in general face numerous challenges during electioneering, which include harassment from state and non-state actors.

Accredited journalists have been reportedly arrested, detained, beaten, their tools seized, and sometimes sacked for doing their legitimate duty during elections.

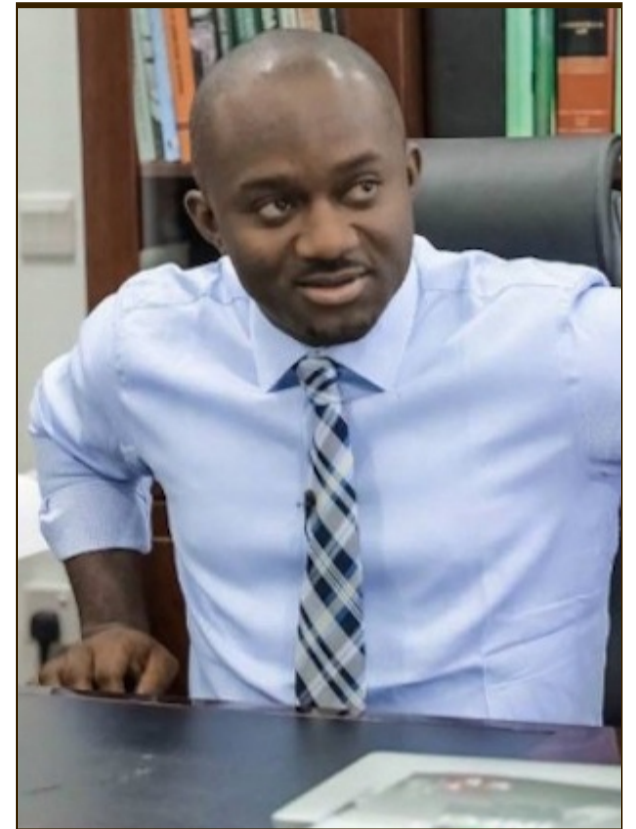
IMS is also in the forefront for the advocacy for the Independence of the broadcast media regulator, The National Broadcast Commission. It seeks an amendment of the 1999 Constitution and the NBC Act to truly ensure the independence of the commission, free from political interference.

Moreover, it advocates that the NBC embraces global best practices in its regulatory functions.

The planned Town Hall meeting by YIAGA and IMS, scheduled to hold on June 30 2020, will afford the CSOs the opportunity to bring to the fore the plight of journalists and the way forward for the media profession. Ensuing recommendations will be forwarded to the appropriate authorities for action.

Coming few months to the conduct of governorship elections in Edo and Ondo states in 2020, the virtual Town Hall would expectedly feature reforms that would deepen popular participation to make democracy a success for Nigerians.

For one the electoral reform bill presented to Government by Parliament in 2018 is yet to be passed. The electoral umpire, INEC, still has system's problems that need urgent resolution to make it



Samson Itodo, Executive Director of YIAGA

function unfettered by recurring challenges of logistics, sustained funding and staffing. Other areas for discussion include elections' security management, handling electoral offences and how to ensure the inclusion of under-represented groups like women, youth, and people with disabilities.

Expected at the meeting are the civil society, journalists, the academia, electoral officials and appointed and elected officials.

“As the largest democracy in Africa, Nigeria is the leader of West Africa in particular and the continent in general, hence the desire of stakeholders to see that she gets her democratic credentials right to serve as a strategic importance to others.”

Appreciative Group Showers Journalists With Palliatives As Seven Journalists Die In One Week

NUJ Declares Journalist Missing

The Anambra state Chapter of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, NUJ, has announced Barrister Mathew Onwuasoanya, a reporter with the National Light newspaper, missing. Anambra Newspapers and Printing Corporation is the publisher of the newspaper.

Chairman of the Anambra State Council of the NUJ, Comrade Emmanuel Ifesinachi in a statement on Wednesday said that Mathew 49 years, tall, fair in complexion has not been seen, neither in office nor at his residence in Ngodo, Nise in Awka South local government area of Anambra State, since the night of Friday 29, May, 2020.

Ifesinachi quoted the Managing Director of National Light Newspaper, Sir Chuka Nnabuife, as saying “We have been expecting the missing Onwuasoanya at work until his only brother, Mr. Oliver Onwuasoanya, arrived our office on Monday, June 8, 2020 and told us they are searching for him.

“Thereafter, we commenced action on the search for him. His brother has lodged complaints to Central Police Station CPS, Awka and the Commissioner of Police, CP's office with his photograph and vital information.

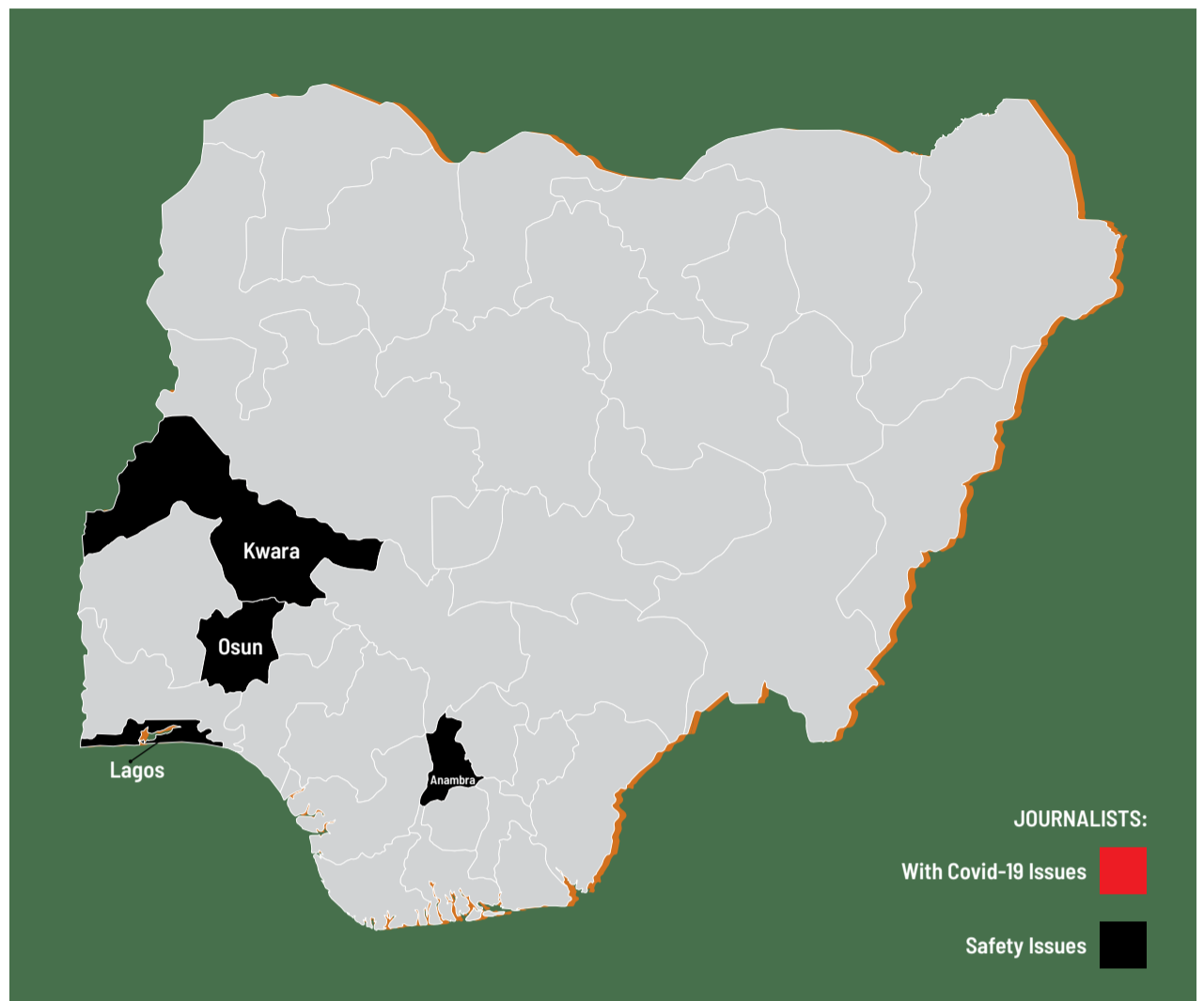
According to the statement, his neighbours told his brother that at about 2 am on May 30, two vehicles, a white Hilux truck and a Highlander with some gun-bearing men dressed in what looks like security men's uniform came and whisked him away.

That is the much they said.

Members of the public with useful information on his whereabouts are advised to call 07031318440.

Broadcaster Released After 45-day Detention

Mr Rotimi Jolayemi, the broadcaster who insulted the Minister of Information and



Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, in a song that went viral on social media, has been released by the Nigeria Police Force after spending 45 days in detention.

Jolayemi, the vice-chairman Freelance and Independent Radio Broadcasters Association of Nigeria (FIBAN), Osun state chapter had recorded an eight-minute audio critical of the minister and released via WhatsApp. He anchors a Yoruba radio programme, 'Bi aye se ri' on Osun State Broadcasting Service and Radio Kwara.

The audio started going viral, and days after, his wife and brothers were traced in Kwara where they lived and were detained by the police.

The police had charged him for acting in a manner that could cause 'annoyance' and 'hatred' for the Minister.

In the charge sheet marked, FHC/ABJ/CB/104/2020, the police alleged that Jolayemi on April 14, 2020, shared an audio file in a Whatsapp group, which subsequently went viral.

In the charge sheet signed by the Prosecuting Counsel, Prosecution Section, Joseph Ofor, the police said the act was in contravention of Section 24(1)(b) of the Cybercrimes Act 2015.

Osagie Obayuwana, president of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), in a statement condemned the arrest of his wife, Dorcas and two brothers in his place before he turned himself in. Dorcas, and his two brothers spent over a week in police custody before they were released.

Rights group, Amnesty International, had called on the police to release Jolayemi, who had spent more than five weeks in custody before he was finally arraigned in court on June 11, 2020

On June 11, 2020, a Federal High Court in Abuja ordered his remand in police custody.

At the trial, Jolayemi pleaded not guilty after he was arraigned on six-counts bordering on the alleged distribution of an audio file said to have caused annoyance, ill will, hatred, and insults towards the minister.

Stakeholders: NBC New Code Will Stifle Business

Against the backdrop of the new code issued by the National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, to streamline the operations of the broadcast industry, stakeholders have continued to react, insisting that it would impact the industry negatively.

Some say it would stifle creativity by proscribing exclusivity of contents. Others insist that it poses a threat to innovation and the consolidation of intellectual property rights, which are key to operations of a market economy. On the strength of these arguments, issues dealing with unpaid advertisements placed on broadcast stations by advertisers and the.

Taking a look at item 7.9.0 and 7.9.1(a) for instance, where the Code states “the broadcaster shall notify the Commission of outstanding and unpaid invoices whether used by itself or on its behalf, any advert on their platform after it has remained unpaid for a period of 44 days,” Mr Richard Akinnola, a lawyer and senior journalist reportedly said:

“The comment is that this is a blatant violation of the contractual obligations between the broadcast media and the advertisers.”

He said the “NBC cannot constitute itself as a meddlesome interloper in the contractual deals between broadcasters and advertisers. If for whatever reason, an advertiser defaults in its payment obligations to a broadcast station, the NBC has no right to interfere about this. It is at the discretion of the broadcast station if it wants to be flexible with advertisers in the payment of its advertisement placements.”

He also thinks that sections of the code dealing with the payment of royalty to the artiste and permit license from the owner of any artistic and musical works, clearly conflict with the duties and responsibilities of the Nigeria Copyright Commission.

An economist, 'Kanmi Ademiluyi considers the entire code “a not-so-cleverly-disguised assault on the

operations of an economy based on the efficacy of the market, but also a potential limitation on the plurality which anchors a democracy.”

He argued that the threat to innovation, the consolidation of intellectual property rights as well as the operations of a market-propelled economic system by the 6th National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) Code should not be allowed to distort the country's political economy.

For him, a robust defence of intellectual property rights as a gateway in innovation and content development is key to the development of market economy, which has been the of the continued success of places like Hollywood, Bollywood and other media markets.

“Dangerously, swathes of provisions in the code prohibit exclusivity, ominously compel content sub-licensing to competitors and empowers the NBC to determine sub-licensing fees in the event of a dispute. These provisions will certainly inhibit investments in Nigeria's potentially rich and relatively untapped local content production sector.”

He said that eroding proprietary rights by making exclusivity illegal and compelling sub-licensing of content and regulating price will clearly stifle private enterprise with the sort of interference, which begins by distorting markets and eventually kills them off.

The NBC management has scheduled a stakeholders meeting where it hopes to address some of these issues that have attracted comments and criticisms among the discerning members of the public.



FG Orders Stations to Encrypt Broadcast Signals

New NBC Codes Still To Undergo Stakeholder's Input before full Implementation

The federal government has ordered all broadcasters transmitting Free- To-Air satellite services in the country to encrypt all the broadcasting signals on their platform.

A statement by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) said this is to guard against the infiltration of unwholesome content by criminals from within and outside the country.

“The Commission has monitored in recent times the transmission of Free-To- Air satellite signals with unwholesome content into the country,” the statement, which was signed by NBC's Assistant Director of Public Affairs Antia Ekanem said.

It said some of the channels broadcasting illegally into the country seek to threaten Nigeria's core values and deliberately seek to undermine its unity and peace.

It said: “Section (2) of the National Broadcasting Commission Act CAP N11, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004, states, “No person shall operate or use any apparatus or premises for the transmission of sound or vision by cable, television, radio, satellite or any other medium of broadcast from anywhere in Nigeria except under and in accordance with the provisions of this act.

“In view of this, all broadcasters transmitting Free-To-Air satellite services MUST encrypt all broadcasting signals on their platform.”

Minister Commends Media for Role in Information Dissemination

The Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, has commended the Nigerian media for their support for the ongoing fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Minister, who made the call on Tuesday at a virtual meeting with the Newspaper Proprietors' Association of Nigeria, NPAN, also appealed for more media support for the Federal Government's efforts to tackle the pandemic, saying the Government needs the media now more than ever.

"The government is very grateful to the media. You have done a lot to bring our message (on the pandemic) to Nigerians," he said, quoting a poll as showing that 99% of Nigerians are aware of the pandemic while 95% said they have received information on how to protect themselves.

"You see, the truth of the matter is that as long as there is no vaccine or drug for Covid-19, the only way we can all survive is through the Non Pharmaceutical Intervention, which is actually anchored on advocacy and public sensitization and there is no way you can do this without the media in whatever form, whether it is the print, electronic or the New Media."

He said even though the Federal Government is facing huge economic challenges due to dwindling revenue, he would consider the requests by the association to mitigate the effect of the pandemic on its members.

In his remarks, the Chairman of NPAN, Chief Nduka Obaigbena, said the media has continued to sensitize Nigerians on Covid-19 on all platforms, even in the face of drastic reduction in revenue.

He called on the Minister to enact a policy that will ensure that some online platforms pay for the original content they generate from the various media outlets in Nigeria.

"In Australia, the Government has intervened in ensuring that Facebook, Google and Twitter pay for original content by journalists and media practitioners as a matter of policy," he said, urging the Minister to do the same for the Nigerian media.'

The requests by the NPAN for mitigating the effects of the pandemic include a soft loan, tax relief and other fiscal incentives as well as an increased patronage of the media by the government.



The Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, at a virtual meeting with the Newspaper Proprietors' Association of Nigeria, NPAN, in his office in Abuja on Tuesday.

NBC To Engage Stakeholders In Talks On Grey Areas of New Code

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) announced a re-endorsement of the controversial regulation, contrary to his widely publicized promise to engage stakeholders critical of its recently released code.

The Commission's re-endorsement was in reconsideration of some of the amendments considered irksome by industry stakeholders.

The code, issued on May 27, proposes sweeping amendments to how the industry will function when it takes effect. But the amendments provoked angry reactions from industry stakeholders, who were furious that the code was finalized without stakeholder consultation. They accused the NBC of seeking to jeopardize investments as well as kill creativity in the industry via provisions to regulate exclusivity,

mandate sub-licensing and control prices at which creators sell their content.

Evidently stung by stakeholders' complaints, the NBC, in a statement issued on Friday and signed by Ekanem Antia, Assistant Director, Public Affairs, said its board would meet during week and "smoothen the rough edges of the new amendments".

While thanking those who contributed to the new code, the NBC said it had become obvious that more voices need to be heard and that stakeholders who have ventilated their opinions be given adequate audience. Acting NBC Director-General on Monday addressed a press conference in Abuja where he re-endorsed the code.

According to Idachaba, the loudest criticisms have been around Sections 6.2.8, which seeks to regulate exclusivity in sports broadcasting rights and 9.0.1, which compels right holders to any popular content to sub-license to other operators, including competitors.

Idachaba said; "Nigeria is a democracy and democracy should permeate all spheres of our national life. Multi-stakeholder engagement is a key element of democracy"

He explained that not one line of the code has been reconsidered or reworked and as such, it cannot be taken that NBC re-looked the code.

“You see, the truth of the matter is that as long as there is no vaccine or drug for Covid-19, the only way we can all survive is through the Non Pharmaceutical Intervention, which is actually anchored on advocacy and public sensitization and there is no way you can do this without the media in whatever form, whether it is the print, electronic or the New Media.”

Editor's Note

The subject of electoral reform as the first step to making the Nigerian electorate participate fully in governance has always attracted the attention of stakeholders.

But timing is crucial to achieve the desired impact. That is why timing for advocacy on electoral reforms to make the desired impact is the driving force behind the Town Hall being organized by YIAGA and the Institute for Media and Society, IMS for stakeholders at the end of the month.

Preparations for the town hall are in top gear and we thought we should give you, dear reader, a gist of the event. That is the import of the highlights of the event in our opening story.

Covid-19 has entered the community phase in its spread and made every member a frontline defender while the media alongside medical workers have changed roles as the last line of defense in the fight against the scourge. Yet unlike resident doctors who are currently on strike over pay and poor working tools, the media is out there giving coverage to the pandemic. Some are dying, a few are getting some palliatives but the looming threat of business collapse, despite adopted cost cutting measures, downsizing, forced leave for staff, is yet to be addressed. Stakeholders during the week lobbied the Minister of Communication and Culture for government funding support during a virtual meeting but there is no concrete commitment from the government.

We bring you the stories of the personal and business travails facing the media as Covid-19 pandemic bite the industry harder.

Contending stakeholders and the National Broadcasting Organization, NBC, are planning to meet and fine-tune controversial areas in the new code the Commission handed down satellite content service providers last week. We bring you details of this and the accompany story on the order by government that TV and radio stations must encrypt broadcast signals henceforth. Enjoy.

The Editor
Institute for Media and Society, Nigeria

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

States Affected	No. of Cases (Lab Confirmed)	No. of Cases (on admission)	No. Discharged	No. of Deaths
Lagos	7,896	6,406	1,382	108
FCT	1,451	1,021	402	28
Kano	1,170	414	706	50
Oyo	764	474	281	9
Edo	729	538	160	31
Rivers	721	407	288	26
Ogun	586	215	356	15
Kaduna	513	217	286	10
Borno	464	101	333	30
Gombe	447	243	191	13
Bauchi	438	105	322	11
Katsina	426	171	233	22
Delta	400	279	104	17
Jigawa	317	121	190	6
Ebonyi	234	97	137	0
Imo	205	181	21	3
Plateau	186	67	114	5
Nasarawa	178	98	74	6
Kwara	177	71	100	6
Abia	173	153	20	0
Sokoto	135	6	115	14
Bayelsa	111	80	28	3
Ondo	105	48	42	15
Enugu	95	62	28	5
Zamfara	76	0	71	5
Kebbi	67	27	34	6
Anambra	66	13	44	9
Niger	66	31	33	2
Yobe	56	3	45	8
Osun	51	2	45	4
Akwa Ibom	48	6	40	2
Adamawa	42	1	37	4
Benue	36	25	11	0
Ekiti	30	4	24	2
Taraba	18	8	10	0
Kogi	3	3	0	0

Highlights

- On the 18th of June 2020, 745 new confirmed cases and 6 deaths were recorded in Nigeria.
- No new state has reported a case in the last 24 hours.
- Till date, 18,480 cases have been confirmed, 6,307 cases have been discharged and 475 deaths have been recorded in 35 states and the Federal Capital Territory.
- The 745 new cases are reported from 21 states- Lagos(280), Oyo(103), Ebonyi(72), FCT(60), Imo(46), Edo(34), Delta(33), Rivers(25), Kaduna(23), Ondo(16), Katsina(12), Kano(10), Bauchi(8), Borno(7), Kwara(5), Gombe(4), Sokoto(2), Enugu(2), Yobe(1), Osun(1), Nasarawa(1)

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