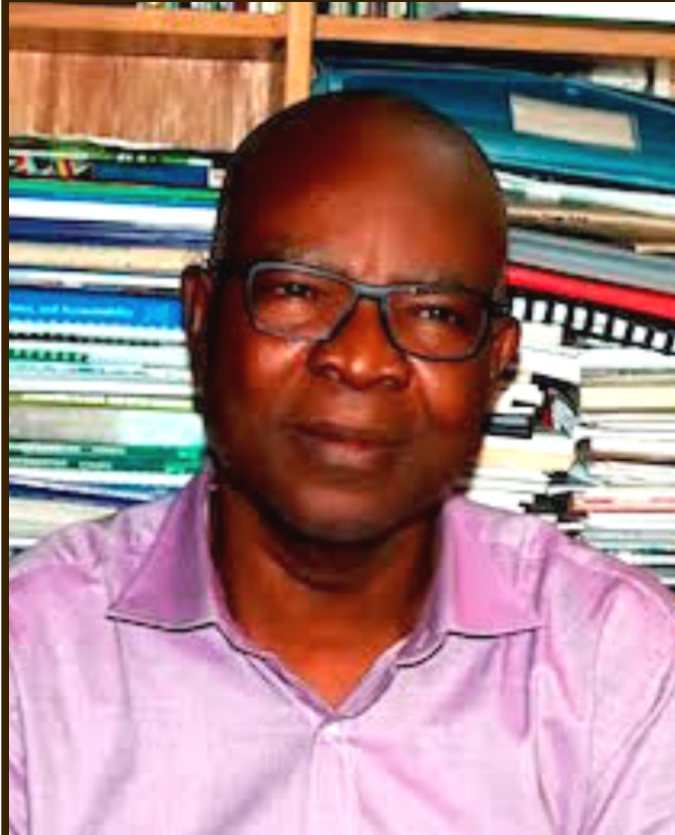


“Infodemics” Behind Misinformation, Disinformation on Covid-19, Says IMS Executive Director, Akingbulu



Dr. Akin Akingbulu, Executive Director, Institute for Media and Society, IMS.



Dr Benson Oluigbo, Executive Director of CLEEN Foundation.



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

The Executive Director Institute for Media and Society, Dr Akin Akingbulu has blamed what he termed “infodemics” for the prevalence of misinformation and disinformation as the world battles the COVID-19 Pandemic.

In a tweetchat organized by CLEEN Foundation on Friday, May 15, with the topic: Curbing Misinformation and Disinformation on Covid-19: The Role of The Media, Dr Akingbulu, who was one of the panelists, noted that loads of information, much of which is false, ascendancy of citizen communication and vested interests were among the factors that have led to prevalence of false news.

He added that foreign actors, also, who have diverse interests to protect and polarization in the system, contribute to the twin evil of misinformation and disinformation.

According to Akingbulu in his tweet: *“Infodemic: loads of information, much of which is false. Ascendancy of citizen communication, pre-eminence of vested interests and foreign actors also, who have diverse interests to protect: Some kind of polarization in our system. People come from various backgrounds with positions to guard and project.”*

Another panelist and Director of the International Press Centre, IPC, Mr Lanre Arogundade said Covid-19 pandemic was a

crisis situation and during crisis truth was always the first casualty.

He added that many Nigerians are witnessing this kind of pandemic for the first in many years after the flu pandemic of 1918-20, hence the panic surrounding Covid -19.

He said, “Covid-19 and panic reaction to it have thus fuelled all kind of opinions and theories including conspiracy ones.

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“For example, one would have expected health communication experts to be part of and central to the operations of the Presidential task force on Covid-19,” he said

On her part, a broadcaster, Affie Bassey agreed that a kind of global infodemic has emerged as a result of the need for information. “So people just share and forward whatever info they receive without verification.”

She further pointed out that government’s non-response to issues at the right time may also be a contributing factor.

“Addressing issues that concerns the nation on time, no matter how minute it may seem, is one important way of quelling fake news.” She said, adding, “one of the driving factors I’d say is not enough information given out by those who are responsible for giving out accurate information. In my work producing content for Radio and TV stations, one of the hardest tasks is getting people”.

Imo Suspends Journalist For Demanding Three Months Unpaid Salaries.

The Imo State Government has ordered the indefinite suspension of a senior editor with the Imo Broadcasting Corporation, Mrs Ottih Vivian, who had earlier been queried for reportedly complaining of non-payment of her salaries and that of her colleagues.

Ottih, had on May 4 taken to her Facebook wall to post her plea publicly to the state government to pay her colleagues and herself their over three months salaries.

Acting Director-General of IBC, Mrs Osuchukwu S.O issued her a query, after which the government directed that she be suspended indefinitely.

DSS Detains, Releases Journalist On Bail

Saint Miepano Onitsha, a Bayelsa state based news blogger has been granted bail by the Department of State Security, DSS after he was arrested over the a publication of false news on the collapse of the alleged N7 billion Isolation Centre located at the Federal Medical Centre, Lokoja in Kogi State.

Onitsha, owner of the naijalive.com was arrested on Sunday for publication of the reports the DSS considered was targeted to tarnish the image of the State Governor, Gov. Yahaya Bello.

Journalists Tests Positive For Coronavirus

Journalists as frontline staff reporting the activities surrounding Covid-19 are falling victim to the virus. On Tuesday, Nasir Ibrahim, a journalist working with Abubakar Rimi Television, Kano tested positive for COVID-19, alongside his wife.

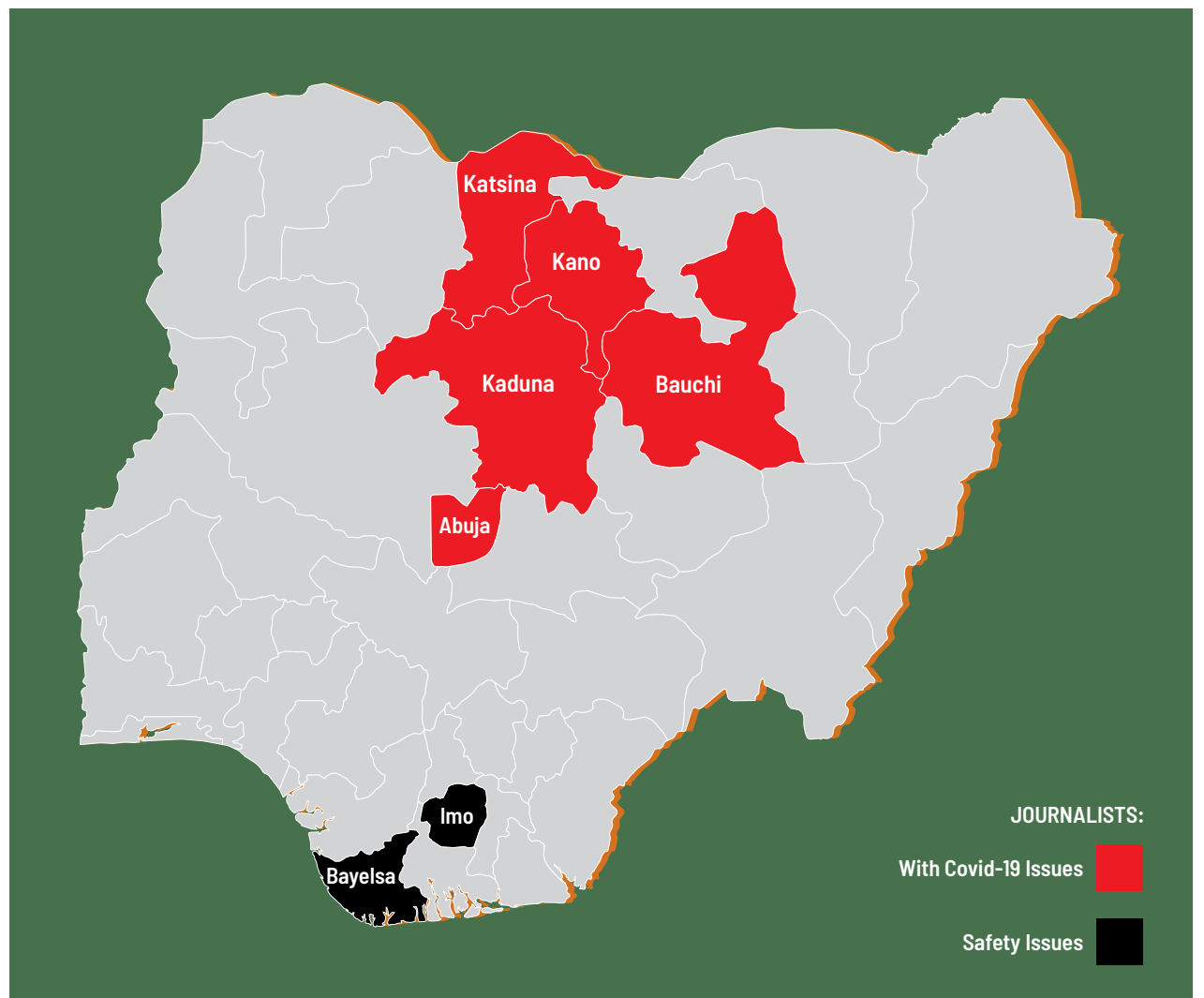
Nasir Ibrahim reportedly said he developed the symptoms following an official engagement with a former media aide to President Umaru Yar'Adua, Rabi'u Musa, in Kano.

Mr Musa died from coronavirus symptoms while awaiting his test result on May 2. Mr Ibrahim voluntarily submitted himself for testing after suspecting that he may have been exposed to COVID-19.

Also in Bauchi State, a radio journalist, whose name the committee on COVID-19, headed by Deputy Governor, Bala Tela, refused to disclose to the press, tested positive for the virus on Saturday. Mr Tela said the journalist has been taken to the isolation centre.

Meanwhile, a Journalist based in Kaduna, Ayinde Saoga, who also tested positive for the virus, has been treated and discharged from hospital.

Also, founder of DAAR Communications, Plc Chief Raymond Dokpesi was on Thursday



discharged from University of Abuja Teaching Hospital, Gwagwalada Isolation Centre, Abuja, where he had undergone treatment for coronavirus infection. Dokpesi was discharged with two of his grandchildren.

Chairman of DAAR Communication, Raymond Dokpesi Jr, who had earlier tested positive for the virus and was treated at the Gwagwalada Isolation Center, Abuja, has been discharged.

THISDAY Dome COVID-19 Testing, Tracing, Treatment Centre Inaugurated



THISDAY Dome Testing, Tracing and Treatment Centre situated at the Central Business District in Abuja was on Tuesday commissioned by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Boss Mustapha, who also doubles as Chairman of the Presidential Task Force on Covid1-9.

Minister of Health, Dr. Osagie Ehanire, had said at the previous days' daily briefing of the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 in the nation's capital that:

“The THISDAY Dome treatment centre, a project of the Coalition Against COVID-19 (CACOVID) is complete and ready for commissioning on Tuesday. This centre is fully self-contained, coming with a PCR Laboratory, a fully equipped ICU and an incinerator. This over 270-bed facility adds a tremendous boost to the FCT capacity and capabilities.”

The Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Mr. Boss Mustapha, lauded the private sector-driven initiative powered by THISDAY Media & Technology Group and the Sahara Group.

The treatment centre is fitted with foundation wards and ICU centre complete with ventilators, X-ray and dialysis.

Others facilities include 54 gene testing mobile lab complete with reagents, and a scalable ability to perform 200-1,000 tests per day. The center is capable of accommodating about 360 patients with potential to hold up to 500 patients, with further needs.

In addition, it would boast of a rapid tracing App for COVID-19 contact tracing as well as 98-room hotel and conference centre for medical staff for six months.

The project is endorsed by the PTF on COVID-19, the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA), Federal Ministry of Health, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and CBN.

COVID-19 IMPACT MEDIA HOUSES

Default in payment of salaries and allowances of staff predated Covid-19 crisis in some media houses. The situation has however become complicated with virtually all the major media houses unable to meet their normal obligations. While the media houses are yet to officially unveil their next move, practitioners are restless as they are beginning to see signs of incoming job loss or work without pay. The distress cuts across the print, electronic, online and broadcast media.

According to *Media Career*, staff of these organisations expressed uncertainty about their future and seemed prepared for the worse. Grouping them according to geo-political zones in the country, only three zones of Southwest, North-Central where almost all the organizations are located as headquarters or branches, come into play.

This survey featured **seven print media, three electronic and one online publication** from the southwest zone, while the North Central has **two print, two electronic and one online publication**.

For the **Southwest zone**, the media featured are *THISDAY, BUSINESSDAY, Vanguard, Tribune, The Punch, Sun* and *The Telegraph* for the Print media; *Channels TV, TV Continental, Arise TV* and *AIT, ICIR* for electronic and *The Cable* for Online media. For the **North central zone**, *AIT, Channels*, for electronic, *Daily Trust, Blueprint* and *Leadership* for the print media; *Premium Times* for online media.



Apart from the African International Television, AIT, where salaries have accumulated and payment is paltry, some of the other visible mediums like Channels, Television Continental, TVC, have adopted cut cutting measures to stay afloat.

Editorial sources at Channels say they have not been paid for the month of April while “there is no word yet from our HR on the decision to slash or take compulsory leave. There hasn't been a delay in the past.”

According to the staff, “We got our April salaries paid, but everybody is walking on eggshells. As we speak five of our colleagues are on three months suspension for playing a wrong video on air or something like that.”

The staff said the current thinking among staff is that the management “is cutting down costs without actually saying so, adding that, any infraction now, you get suspended for three months or your salary is docked. “Those on suspension include one of our news editors, a deputy editor and another HOD of a department.”

For their counterparts in TVC, “there have been issues before now as regards salary payment as they (management) claimed money isn't coming in as much but we were still getting paid. But since April, there has been a wage slash of 25% for those earning N100,000 and above. 20% for those earning between N70,000 and N100000, 15% for those earning between N30,000 and N70,000 and for those below N30,000 there's no cut.”

AIT paid staff N30,000 across board for the current salaries. This excluded past salaries.



The story is not markedly different in Daily Trust newspaper where there has been 50% salary cut for those on level 13 upward; 30% reduction for others, and cancellation of annual leave for everyone. The reduction also affects allowances. This is for the first three months: April, May and June.

For the Nation, those earning N65,000 below got full payment, while those earning above N65,000 got half payment. If you earn more than N100,000, 50 per cent was paid.

Blueprint newspaper has paid a fraction of the March salary in April. “But efforts are being made to pay the balance. Staff payment has been consistent for a year now. April salary was paid last week, and data allowance has been paid weekly to the online and editorial staff.”

Leadership: Salaries have been delayed for some time now and there is no sign of payment with the impact of covid-19 pandemic.



The initial rumour at the Telegraph office was that there wouldn't be the salary for April because there were no sales, let alone adverts. But the MD surprised everyone and directed 80% payment though management argued for half salary, which was 50% of our salaries.

As at the time of going to press, the Sun and the Tribune newspapers were yet to pay April salary though no reason was given for the

delay by the management. For the Vanguard, “ there has not been any improvement. The company has only paid weekly transport claims a few times, but salaries remain unpaid. The backlog is now six months.

“Many people are ready to leave if only they will get paid. The NUJ and NUPPRO have been engaging management to no avail.”

Though under the same ownership, THISDAY newspaper and Arise TV have different treatment for staff of both organizations. The newspaper paid December salary in March. “We are yet to receive any salary for this year. Three weeks ago, the Chairman sent a memo to all staff saying that some people have been receiving salary without input. But the TV has paid staff up to date.”

At The Punch, April was paid promptly “but what we are not sure of is what will happen next based on the memo by the MD. There is apprehension as we all await letters from the Admin,” said the source.

BUSINESS DAY has not been paid for the month of April. “There is no word yet from our HR on the decision to slash or take compulsory leave. There hasn't been a delay in the past.”



Unlike the traditional newspapers, the online arm seems to be doing well for the obvious reasons of accessibility and immediacy promoted by digital technology.

Lagos- based Cable and its Abuja counterpart, Premium Times, blaze the trail. For the Cable, staff payment has been consistent for a year now. April salary has been paid while and data allowance has been paid weekly to the online and editorial staff.

Also Premium Times has paid our salaries up to date. “They also paid us transport allowance during the COVID crisis too.

“Salaries are paid as and when due. March salary on March 23 and April salary on the 21st. Data allowance doubled during the lockdown. No salary cuts. Salaries were increased across the board in February before COVID-19.”

The Lagos based ICIR 102.3 FM has continued to pay salaries to staff and allowances to NYSC youth corps members and interns. Salaries up till April fully paid, including additional allowance to staff to cover fuel, data and communication.

Nollywood Stakeholders Fault FG's Composition of Committee On Covid-19



The Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, (left); and the Acting Director General of the National Broadcasting Commission, Prof. Armstrong Idachaba, at a meeting with the Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria in Abuja, recently.

Nollywood stakeholders have kicked against the composition of a committee inaugurated last Wednesday by the Minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed to advise the Federal Government on the best way to mitigate the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic on the creative industry.

"It's a welcome and thoughtful approach to positive intervention and in alignment with other progressive governments the world over, who having appreciated the impact of the pandemic on their creative sectors, developed palliative programs as a support net.

"However, there are processes and approaches indicative of a transparent and equitable desire to ensure that the needs and requirements of the target sectors are achieved", said stakeholders of the industry who maintained in a statement that the committee was not representational enough for a sector with 20 guilds and employs 2.5 million Nigerians

besides its global reach.

Eighteen presidents of Nollywood associations took the stand on behalf of the sector during the week. They included Ralph Nwadike, Association of Movie Producers, AMP, Fred Amata, directors Guild of Nigeria, DGN, Emeka Rollas, Actors Guild of Nigeria, AGN, Yinka Ogun of Script Writers Guild of Nigeria, SWGN, Daisy Madu-Chikwendu of Association of Nollywood Core Producers, ANCOP, Yinka Oduniyi of The Independent Television Producers' Association of Nigeria, ITPAN, and Israel Eboh of The National Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioners, NANTAP.

During a meeting with the Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria, BON, last Wednesday in Abuja, Mohammed the membership of the Committee to include Ali Baba of Comedy, Film,

and TV as Chairman; Anita Eboigbe of News Agency of Nigeria, NAN, as Secretary, Bolanle Austen Peters of Film and Performing Arts at TerraKulture; Charles Novia of Television and Independent Producer, TeenTV and Segun Arinze, an Actor and Producer, as members.

Others are Ali Jita, an Actor and Musician; Baba Agba-Film Director of BCI Studios; Kene Okwuosa of Cinema and Distribution, Filmhouse; Efe Omoregbe of Record Labels and Collective Rights Management, Hypertek/Now Muzik; Prince Daniel Aboki of Radio and Film at CoolFM/WaZoBi; Chioma Ude of Streaming at Envivo; Olumade Adesemowo of Television and Platform at FreeTV; Dare Art Alade of Livespot Entertainment and Hajia Sa'a Ibrahim of Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria, BON.

This composition of the committee is made up of individuals and this would end up pitching practitioners against the guilds and associations in the industry, the 18 presidents of the Nollywood associations said in their statement.

According to them, an industry that makes US\$2Billion annually with a contribution of 2.3 per cent to the nation's GDP, ought to be accorded better treatment.

They said: "If really the government is serious about this noble initiative, we then respectfully call on the Minister of Information, Alhaji Lai Mohammed to reconstitute the committee to reflect the actual representatives of the industry.

"We hold this truth to be self evident that Nollywood has leadership founded and anchored on their Guilds and Associations and we urge the Honourable Minister of Information or any other representative of the federal government, its parastatals and agencies planning any intended dealings with Nollywood to humbly but officially do so through the Guilds and Associations."

Will FG Committee on Implementation of White Paper Spare NTA, FRCN, VON?

In his reaction to the continued shortfall in government revenue courtesy of Covid-19 pandemic and its effect on global oil price volatility, President Muhammadu Buhari has ordered that the White Paper on the Stephen Oronsaye Report on the rationalization of ministries, agencies and parastatal, submitted in 2014, be brought out and implemented by October 2020 as a way to reduce cost of governance.

Already a presidential committee is in the works to work out ways to implement the recommendations by the set date. While the public awaits the outcome of its report, there are uncertainty that the government, intent of cost cutting measures post Covid-19, may implement the 90 per cent recommendations contained in the White Paper.

Though the Minister of Labour and Employment, Dr. Chris Ngige, has assured the public that the merger and scrapping of MDAs, will not lead to job losses, the fact that the media is currently struggling under the impact of Covid-19, has raised fears about the fate of the public-owned media, particularly the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, FRCN, the

Nigeria Television Authority, NTA and the Voice of Nigeria, VON, which were also a subject of recommendation by the White Paper Report.

The White Paper on section 143 of the 180 –page document, under the title Federal Ministry of Information made three recommendations on the proposed merger of the FRCN, the VON and the NTA.

In the first Instance, headed FRCN recommendation, it recommended that the FRCN and VON be merged. To achieve this, it recommended that the enabling law of the FRCN be amended while that of VON repealed. The ensuing consolidation of the merger between the FRCN and VON, it suggested, should be merged with the Nigeria Television Authority, NTA to be become known as Federal Broadcasting Corporation of Nigeria, FBCN, administered by an appointed Managing Director under a single governing board. Under the new arrangement, two departments, one each for radio and television was to be created and administered by an Executive Director, one of whom should be

made Chief Executive of the proposed FBCN. In the second instance headed Voice of Nigeria recommendation, the White Paper proposed the same measures for the FRCN. It was in the third one dealing with the NTA that it proposed that the selection process for the positions of the Managing

Director and Executive Directors be transparent and competitive, while the enabling laws of the NTA and FRCN, VON be repealed and a new one enacted to accommodate the proposed merger. Also, it recommended that the proposed FBCN be partially commercialized.

Interestingly, the government rejected the recommendations and directed that the NTA should remain as a stand-alone agency to be fully commercialized by 2013.

Will the government, desperate to tackle the economic plunge following the devastating impact of Covid-19, spare the NTA, VON, NAN? The answer will keep blowing in the wind until October 2020.

Editor's Note

This publication is a child of necessity. The Covid-19 pandemic has knocked every areas of human life, forcing people to adopt creative response to march on in their respective areas of activity.

As a major media NGO that deals with issues relating to the media and society, the Institute of Media and Society, IMS, has to sustain its conversation and interventions with media stakeholders in the midst of the ravaging virus. This publication is one of the means to do that.

Indeed, with the increasing movement of human activities into the information super highway of the Internet, this e-publication is one whose time has come. It will be published weekly as a slim, quick read e-newsletter especially packaged for online readership.

It deals with stories on media and society related issues in the areas of policy and regulation, safety of journalists, media coping strategies during Covid-19 and, off course, the inescapable virus itself in the area of regular update.

In this first edition, we have packaged some stories for your delight.

During the week, Nollywood stakeholders kicked against last Wednesday's inauguration of a committee by the Minister of Information and Culture to advice the Federal Government on its intervention in the creative. What did the White Paper on the Stephen Oronsaye report on the trimming of the country's ministries, agencies and parastatal say about the Nigeria Television Authority, NTA, News Agency of Nigeria, NAN, and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, FRCN, as the Federal Government moves to set up a panel to implement the report? Rights of Journalists across the country are still been violated with impunity while Media houses are reeling from the blow of Covid-19, and journalists, as frontline workers covering the pandemic fall victim to viral infections.

These and more are the stories we have for you in this edition. Enjoy, while we await your feedback.

The Editor
Institute for Media and Society, Nigeria

NCDC Confirmed COVID -19 Cases by State, May 15, 2020

States Affected	No. of Cases (Lab Confirmed)	No. of Cases (on admission)	No. Discharged	No. of Deaths
Lagos	2,099	1,525	541	33
Kano	753	633	87	33
FCT	379	290	82	7
Katsina	224	183	29	12
Bauchi	207	179	25	3
Borno	191	151	20	20
Jigawa	176	169	4	3
Ogun	134	72	57	5
Gombe	124	36	87	1
Kaduna	114	94	17	3
Sokoto	112	59	40	13
Edo	92	60	27	5
Oyo	73	55	16	2
Zamfara	73	50	18	5
Kwara	56	43	12	1
Osun	42	8	30	4
Rivers	33	25	5	3
Yobe	32	28	3	1
Kebbi	31	16	11	4
Nasarawa	29	23	5	1
Plateau	25	21	4	0
Delta	22	9	9	4
Adamawa	21	14	7	0
Ondo	19	7	11	1
Taraba	17	16	1	0
Akwa Ibom	17	3	12	2
Ekiti	15	5	9	1
Enugu	12	10	2	0
Niger	10	8	2	0
Ebonyi	9	9	0	0
Imo	7	5	2	0
Bayelsa	6	3	3	0
Benue	4	4	0	0
Anambra	2	1	1	0
Abia	2	1	1	0

IMS CONTACT DETAILS

No. 3 Emina Crescent
off Toyin Street, Ikeja Lagos
+234 (0) 903 294 3342

info@imesoimeso.org
imesoimeso@hotmail.com

 imesoimeso.org

 /imesoimeso

 /imesoimeso

 /in/imeso-imeso