

## Importance of Media Professionalism In Election Coverage Stressed At Workshop

Media stakeholders have canvassed professionalism in the coverage of the upcoming governorship election in Ondo State on October 10, 2020.

The International Press Centre, IPC, and the Institute for Media and Society, IMS, implementing partners of Component 4, Support to Media, under the European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN) Project, organized the one-day media stakeholders' roundtable on the 2020 Ondo State governorship election with the theme, "Professional, inclusive and Conflict Sensitivity Reporting of the Ondo elections", aimed to strengthen the media to provide fair, accurate, and ethical coverage of the electoral process in Nigeria.

The event, which took place in Akure, the Ondo state capital on Wednesday, September 24, drew stakeholders drawn from the media and academia, to also analyze the coverage of previous elections and seek better performance by the media.

The select audience of 40 media stakeholders included the representatives of the Ondo State councils of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, NUJ, National Association of Women Journalist, NAWOJ; online journalists, political reporters/correspondents; broadcast media presenters and editors.

The main thrust of the roundtable was to engage the media in Ondo on fair, balanced coverage and language sensitive and conflict sensitive reporting of the election.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Akin Akingbulu, the Executive Director of IMS, who restated that the activity was a part of Component 4 of the EU-SDGN project, which is Support to Media, pointed out that the pillar aims to strengthen the media to ensure free, fair and ethical coverage of the electoral process in Nigeria. He disclosed that there were other implementing partners working on other Components of the EU-SDGN project and noted that the success of the Ondo State governorship election, with the media playing a critical role, will further strengthen democracy in Nigeria.

He urged all participants to take active part in the discussion and at the end come up with recommendations on the media professionalism.

In his goodwill remark, the Chairman, NUJ, Ondo State represented by the secretary Leke Adegbite, described the activity as timely and buttressed his point with instances during the 1983 and 2007 elections in the state when the media fueled the already volatile situation. He cautioned the media and journalists to report responsibly and avoid causing crisis.

The Chairperson of the state NAWOJ, Doris Olumoko thanked the organisers for the event and promised that the union would continue to sensitize the women to play active part in the upcoming governorship election. She lamented that women have been relegated to the background in politics, citing the case of recent Edo State governorship election where only one woman was candidate with just three others as deputy governorship candidates.

The roundtable had three sessions. Session one, with the topic, "Understanding and Using the Nigeria Media Code of Election Coverage and the Ondo Governorship Elections" by Mr. Lanre Arogundade, Executive Director, IPC, was presented by Mr. Ayo Aluko-Olokun, Editor, Nigerian Democratic Report, NDR.

The second session had two presentations. The first presentation on the topic, "Towards Professional, Inclusive and Conflict Sensitivity Reporting of the Ondo Elections: Issues from IPC Media Monitoring Report and Expectations of the Media on Election Coverage", was facilitated by Prof. Tokunbo Adaja, HOD, Mass Communications Department, Joseph Ayo Babalola University, JABU, Ikeji-Arakeji, Ondo State.

The second presentation on "Ensuring Fair Reportage of the Ondo Elections: Issues for Broadcast Media Coverage from IMS Monitoring of Media and Elections Reportage" was facilitated by Prof. Ayobami Ojebode, Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Oyo State.

A brief presentation on talking points on broadcast media elections coverage was also facilitated by Dr. Akin Akingbulu, Executive Director, IMS.

The four-hour programme also entailed a stakeholders' engagement and interactive session on the topic: "Re-focusing Perspectives: Proactive Measures to Ensure More Professional Reporting and Coverage of the Ondo Electoral Process".

### Observations:

The Workshop identified and noted the following:

- Majority of the Journalism reports in Ondo State have proved to be professional; the media in Ondo State should therefore ensure that this trend is maintained through the entire electoral process, including the coverage of post-election issues.

- The citizens of Ondo State largely depend on the media for information; hence it is imperative for the media in Ondo to ensure fair and equitable coverage of all issues on the elections.
- There is the need for the media in Ondo to continue to be neutral in their analysis and reportage of the elections.



L-R: Dr Akin Akingbulu, Executive Director of the Institute for Media and Society, IMS, Professor Ayobami Ojebode, Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Mr. Ayo Aluko-Olokun, Editor, Nigerian Democratic Report, NDR, Mr Leke Adegbite, Secretary, Ondo Council of NUJ at the one-day media roundtable in Akure, Ondo state on Wednesday

### Recommendations:

In view of the forthcoming Ondo State election, the following recommendations were made to serve as a guideline to the media in the reporting and coverage of the Ondo Elections:

- Journalists covering the Ondo election would find it professionally enriching to read, digest and make use of the provisions of the Nigeria Media Code of Elections Coverage in reporting of the Ondo electoral process and the election;
- There is need for Journalists covering the Ondo elections to be guided by the Media code in professional and ethical coverage of the elections;
- The media to ensure that balanced reporting of all political parties is guaranteed and candidates are given equal access to the media.
- Journalists in Ondo State were urged to exhibit high standard of professionalism in order to earn and sustain public confidence.
- Journalists were enjoined to embrace the principle of multi-perspectivism in covering the elections, particularly in engaging and presenting all available views, opinions and perspectives;
- Journalists were urged to make their reports more inclusive and robust by providing platforms for the voiceless (youths, women, the poor, the needy, PWDs, etc);
- Journalists were reminded to explore and exploit the provisions of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) in getting and disseminating correct information that will enable the citizenry make informed decisions or choices.
- Journalists covering the Ondo elections were encouraged to ensure they were conflict sensitive in reporting the elections so as not to be caught in the web of violence and electoral based conflict and be will-kitted in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- INEC was reminded of the need to make accreditation process of journalists covering the Ondo State Governorship Election a thorough one to ensure that fake journalists are not given accreditation.
- Security agencies were asked to provide adequate security for journalists during the upcoming Governorship Election.



Dr Akin Akingbulu, Executive Director, IMS, delivering his opening remarks at the event.

## Edo Election: Media Coalition Condemns Attack On Journalists

**A**t least five journalists were attacked during the Edo State governorship election on Saturday 19 September, 2020, according to reports.

According to a group, The Coalition of Whistleblowers Protection and Press Freedom, CWPPF, the attacks on journalists during the Edo State elections was condemnable.

According to the body, in a statement, "in several attacks during the just concluded elections which held on the 20th September 2020, journalists suffered physical attacks, detention, destruction of work tools and work products and denial of access."

The coalition also mentions specific attacks on journalists including the "brutal attack and detention of Samson Adenekan, a reporter with Premium Times and Nathaniel Offel of GeeTV by thugs for taking pictures and recording videos of the irregularities at the Ward 10 (Uzairue North East), Polling Unit 1 of Etsako West local government in Iyamho area of Uzairue."

"The actions of the journalists were in no way out of order and according to eyewitnesses, not only were security personnel present during these attacks, they did nothing to intervene or apprehend the attackers.

"Several other journalists and observers were denied access to their designated monitoring and observation centres. They are Samuel Ajala, Maxwell Osita, and Alamu Dolapo, among others, who were denied access to the collation centre at Okha Local government by security personnel with no clear reason but which represents a blatant abuse of power and a breach on the constitutional rights of the journalists from performing their statutory functions in an election setting."

Citing a 2019 address by the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Professor Mahmood Yakubu in praise of the media, the group noted that the electoral

process is incomplete without the crucial role that the media plays.

"The electoral act also emphasises the importance of the role and the protection of journalists during elections. It is, therefore, the duty, as a law enforcement agency, for the Nigerian police and other security personnel to protect journalists in the line of duty at all costs."

The coalition called for the investigation of the attack against journalists and election observers during the September 20 Edo elections and urged the Inspector-General of Police and the Independent National Electoral Commission to ensure that the security and safety of journalists and election observers is given priority in future elections.

"All law enforcement agencies should be mandated to protect journalists and observers during elections to promote a free and fair election and further strengthen the country's democracy," the statement concluded.

## Attack on Journalist: A/Court Adjourns Suit Against GTB, Police

**T**he Court of Appeal sitting in Abuja on Tuesday adjourned hearing of a case of assault and enforcement of fundamental human rights filed against the Guaranty Trust Bank, GTB, the Nigerian Police Force, NPF, and six others by a journalist, Desmond Utomwen, to 5 November, 2020.

When the matter came up for hearing on Tuesday, the Court noted that the appellants' brief of arguments were not served on the police, the Inspector General of Police and other police officers joined in the suit.

The Court therefore directed that the respondents should be served before the next adjourned date.

The appellants also filed a motion for leave of court to file their reply brief out of time. The three-man panel of court of appeal led by Justice Stephen Adah therefore adjourned to November 5 for hearing of appellant's applications and the substantive appeal.

Utomwen filed the suit following his brutalization in December, 2009 by men of the Nigerian Police Force, NPF, and members of Staff of Guaranty Trust Bank, GTB.

The journalist, who was a former staff of TheNEWS magazine was arrested and locked up at the Garki Police Station while covering a protest by some customers of the Garki, Area 3 branch of GTB over alleged unauthorized withdrawal of funds from their accounts.

In October 2013, a High Court in Abuja presided over by Justice Peter Kekemeke awarded damages of N100m against GTB and other defendants.

But the defendants appealed the judgment.

However, the case only came up seven years after at the Court of Appeal.

Utomwen, in the suit, asked the court to declare that his fundamental human rights had been violated when he was obstructed from working; had his equipment forcefully taken; and was attacked and hit with gun butts until he was unconscious, before being bundled into a police vehicle and detained for several hours without access to medical treatment.

For two years and 10 months, Utomwen relentlessly sought justice. The case passed through two judges before reaching Justice Peter Kekemeke, who declared the actions violated the journalist's right to freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment, right to own moveable and immoveable property, and right to freedom of the press and expression as protected in sections 34, 39, and 44 of the 1999 Constitution.

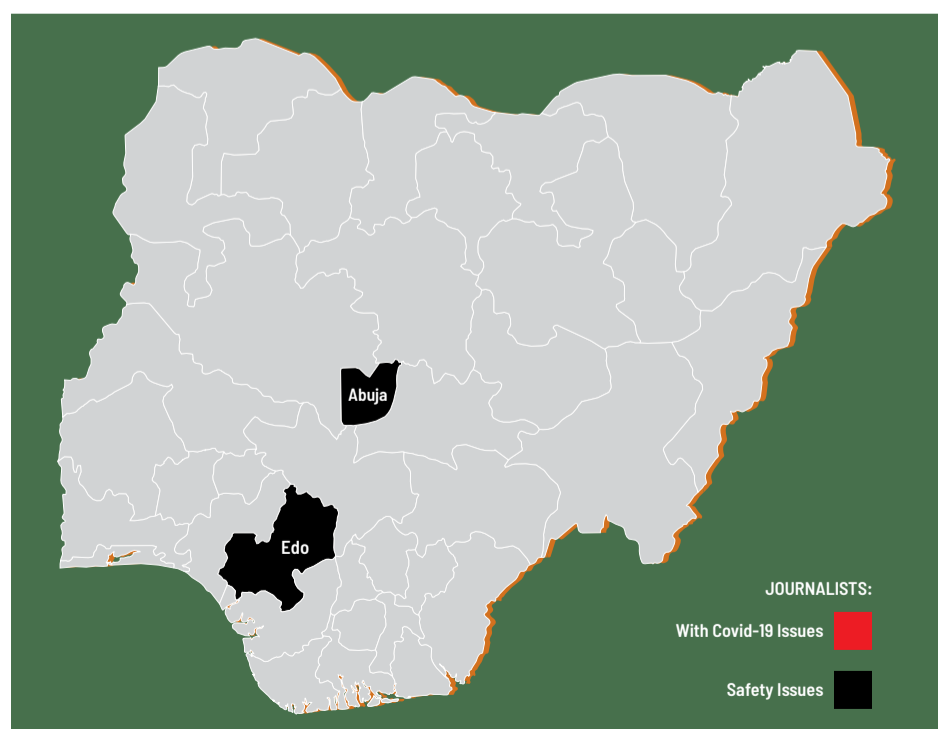
"My lawyer had to ask the previous judge to disqualify herself and the case be reassigned because it was unnecessarily being stalled. That led to this judgment," Utomwen said.

Ugochukwu Ezekiel of Festus Keyamo Chambers, who took up Utomwen's case on a pro-bono basis, sought a garnishment order against the police and the bank, and filed to enforce the court's judgment.

The Nigeria Union of Journalists, NUJ, a party to the lawsuit, unflinchingly supported Utomwen and refused all entreaties to settle out of court.

Organisations such as CPJ, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and others, continue to put the situation on the front burner.

Utomwen reiterated that his fight for justice was not for the money but the profession of journalism; protection of journalists whose rights to duty have continually been infringed upon and the freedom of the press.



## Lagos Entertainment Industry Owners Lament Over Bad Business As Gov Sanwo-Olu Pledges To Help



**Babajide Sanwo-Olu**  
Lagos State Governor

**T**he negative effects of the COVID-19 impact on the media businesses in Nigeria has not gone unnoticed.

While the Newspaper Association of Nigeria, NPAN, the Nigeria Union of Journalists, NUJ and the Nigeria Guild of Editors, are putting heads together to forward a package to the Federal Government following the official directive to that effect, the entertainment industry in Lagos, the hub of amusement activities in Nigeria, have cried out to the Lagos State governor to come to their rescue before the industry collapse, courtesy of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

During a virtual meeting with Lagos State governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, on Tuesday, the members appealed for quick re-opening of the sector and generous tax-holidays, "as no one in the film industry has earned a revenue in the past six months", according to a film-maker and one of the participants at the meeting, Omoni Oboli.

In his response, Governor Sanwo-Olu said his government was concerned about the economic impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on the entertainment industry, particularly the cinema sector and promised to work with the association to achieve a win-win situation. Governor Sanwo-Olu during a virtual meeting with members of the Cinema Exhibitors Association of Nigeria, CEAN, and other key stakeholders in the film industry reiterated his administration's commitment to work with the creative industry.

He gave assurances that his government would do everything to ensure that the sector thrives in the state.

During the meeting, representatives of CEAN expressed concern about their sector, appealing to the governor to reopen the cinemas and the sector generally for

business. They promised to adhere strictly to the laid-down COVID-19 safety guidelines.

Moses Babatope on behalf of the association, said the cinema owners were ready to re-open and also requested that the governor should set up a film office whose function would include liaising with foreign investors while also serving as a major hub for the film industry in Lagos.

Governor Sanwo-Olu told the film industry experts that he would ensure that government continues to protect their interest, promised to look into all their requests and return back to them in due course.

## Facebook To Open New African Office in Lagos

**T**he popularity of Facebook in Nigeria has attracted the media giant to open an office in the country.

Facebook said recently that it would be opening an office in Lagos, Nigeria, as part of its continued commitment and ongoing investment in Africa.

Facebook said that this would be its second office on the African continent and disclosed that the opening of the new office was aimed at supporting the entire Sub-Saharan Africa region.

The office, it said, was expected to become operational from next year with a full compliment of a team of expert engineers to build for the future of Africa and beyond.

It said the office would be home to various teams servicing the continent from across the business, including Sales, Partnerships, Policy, Communications as well as Engineers. According to Facebook's Head of New Product Experimentation, Ime Archibong: "The opening of our new office in Lagos, Nigeria presents new and exciting opportunities in digital innovations to be developed from the continent and taken to the rest of the world.

"All across Africa, we are seeing immense talent in the tech ecosystem and I am proud that with the upcoming opening of our new office,

## Inside Media Business

we will build products for the future of Africa, and the rest of the world, with Africans at the helm.

"We look forward to contributing further to the African tech ecosystem.

"The investment of the new Facebook office follows the 2018 opening of NG\_Hub, its first flagship community hub space in Africa. The hub was opened in partnership with CcHub, and the 2019 opening of a Small Business Group (SBG) Operations Centre in Lagos, in partnership with Tele performance, "Archibong said.

Kojo Boakye, Facebook's Director of Public Policy, Africa said that the new office in Nigeria presents an important milestone, which further reinforces the company's ongoing commitment to the region.

"Our mission in Africa is no different from other parts of the world, which is to build community and bring the world closer together.

"I am excited about the possibilities that this will create, not just in Nigeria, but across Africa," Boakye said.

The policy director said since the opening of its first office in 2015, Facebook had made a number of investments across the continent, aimed at supporting and growing the tech ecosystem. Boakye noted that the support includes the recent rollout of its SMB Grants programme in Nigeria and South Africa.

He said this was aimed at supporting over 900 businesses by providing a combination of cash and ad credits to help small businesses as they rebuild from COVID.

Nunu Ntshingila, Regional Director, Facebook Africa, said: "We are delighted to be announcing our new office in Nigeria.

"Five years on from opening our first office on the continent in Johannesburg, South Africa, we will continue to invest in and support local talent, as well as the various communities that use our platforms. The office in Lagos will also be key in helping to expand how we service our clients across the continent," Ntshingila said.

## FG to Revisit New NB Code, Says VP Osinbajo

Following the controversy and criticism that trailed the release of the reviewed Nigeria Broadcasting Code sixth edition, Vice President, Yemi Osinbajo, has said there is need to revisit the amendment of the broadcasting code.

Osinbajo during a virtual chat with Facebook's Vice President of Policy and Communication, Nick Clegg, said there was activity around trying to take a second look at the amendment of the code as there were complaints that it was anti-business competitive.

He said; "Basically, what it says is that if you have a licensed product for TV or film, you're expected to share it with other platforms," he said, adding;

"I understand the argument of those who say this is a violation of copyright and intellectual property, which is a very strong point. And this is why I think we are going to take a second look at it and see where there are ways of moderating it to be more acceptable and so as not to stifle the work of very hard working, creative people."

According to him, the government was dealing with uncharted territory because some of what they were seeing was entirely new.

He however commended the regulatory authorities for doing a decent work of grappling with the newness of what they were faced with.

"One thing that is certain is that change in tech space is so rapid, you frequently find that regulators are really just chasing after the innovations to see how best to regulate without stifling these companies," he said.

Osinbajo also said that there was activity around trying to ensure access to funding while improving the business environment and environment for tech companies to operate.

He revealed that the government was in the final stages with the African Development Bank concerning its \$500m fund.

## FG Commercialising NFC - Mohammed

The Federal Government has given reasons for embarking on the commercialization of the Nigerian Film Corporation, NFC. The aim is to address the agency's teething challenges and reposition it for improved performance.

The Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, while inaugurating a Steering Committee for the Reform and Commercialisation of the Corporation in Abuja



**Lai Mohammed**  
Minister of Information

during the week, said the move was part of government's reform in Abuja.

Mohammed disclosed that the federal government has engaged the services of a Business Development Consultant to conduct due diligence on the corporation and sector and recommend a strategy that is suitable for its reform and commercialisation.

He said the NFC, which was established with a mandate to plan, promote, organise and coordinate the development of the Nigerian motion picture industry, has not been able to meet up with its statutory functions.

The Minister noted that since its establishment, the Corporation has faced several challenges including the inability to engage in commercial film production.

Listing the weaknesses of the Corporation, the minister said the law establishing NFC limits its operational functions such that it cannot leverage the private sector-led growth of the industry.

He added that the National Film Institute (NFI), a unit in NFC, is not empowered to leverage its technical and professional capabilities for commercial purposes and revenue generation.

Other areas of weakness of the agency, according to Mohammed, included the NFC's civil service structure, which comes with bureaucratic limitations, budgetary constraints, and operational inefficiency.

He said; "A critical look at the existing organizational structure shows that NFC is over-bloated and needs to be restructured to reflect its purpose.

"NFC has obsolete equipment, with some dating back to colonial times."

The minister noted that the reform of the Corporation will help in the efforts of the government to reposition the nation's film industry, Nollywood, and make Nigeria the capital of entertainment in Africa.

## Policy and Regulation

Relying on International Monetary Fund data, Mohammed said Nollywood is the second largest employer of Labour and contributed N893 billion to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2015. The minister noted that Nollywood could perform better if the NFC is restructured and needed infrastructure and an enabling environment. He noted that apart from wealth and employment creation, promoting film industry would help to build inclusion and reduce social tension.

Earlier, Mr Alex Okoh, the Director-General of the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE), defended the policy direction of the government. He noted the tremendous potentials of the film industry to reposition the nation's economy, the government needed to play a prominent role.

Okoh said that the government is reforming the NFC to take the leading role in harnessing the potentials in the sector. He, however, clarified that the reform process "is not a privatisation of the corporation but the commercialization of this important enterprise and agency of government".

"The clarification is that in this reform process, there is no transfer of ownership, no sale of shares, and no privatization of the entity. "It is basically to ensure the resident value of the enterprise and its commercial viability," he said. He said the steering committee is chaired by the minister would consider and approve the recommendations submitted by the project delivery team for the commercialisation of the corporation. Other members of the steering committee inaugurated by the minister are, Okoh, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Culture, Mrs Grace Gekpe, and the Managing Director of NFC, Chidia Maduekwe.

The Director of Information and Communication of BPE, Dikko Mohammed, will serve as the Secretary to the committee. NFC, established by Decree No. 61 of 1979, is 100 per cent owned by the Federal Government and has its registered office in Jos, Plateau State.

It was established to distribute documentary films on different aspects of Nigeria's socio-cultural and political life and provide film services for the Federal Government. The Corporation is to train young talented Nigerians in the art of film making, conducting research into Nigerian films, and provide technical and financial support to the film industry and practitioners. NFC is also established to regulate and organise professional practice in the film industry.

## Editor's Note

With the successful conclusion of the governorship election in Edo State last week, all stakeholders' attention has refocused on Ondo State where the governorship poll comes up on October 10.

The relevant stakeholders who pulled all the stops amid the deadly impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to actively participate in concluded election by holding advocacy workshops, virtual and town hall meetings to enlighten, sensitize and educate all the actors, particularly the media and journalists, whose reportage and coverage of the electoral process, was crucial to the successful outcome of the poll, have moved to Ondo to repeat their awesome performance.

The broadcast media regulator, the National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, the Institute for Media and Society, IMS and the International Press Center, IPC, have literally pitched tent in Akure, the Ondo state capital for this onerous duty. During the week the IMS and IPC kicked-off some activities in Akure, the Ondo state capital. We bring you incisive report of this active involvement of IMS and IPC, in our opening story.

With the maximum-security presence in Edo state during the election-31,000 police men and women, over 2,000 National Security and Civil Defense Corps, NSCDC, journalists were still assaulted. The painful aspect of it was that the assault took place under the watchful eyes of the police.

Following that is a chilling reminder that the assault on journalists is a recurring event, as you would find out from a court case on assault instituted by a journalist since 2009.

It is time to exhale for critical stakeholders opposed to sections of the recently launched Nigeria Broadcasting Code 6. Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo, disclosed during the week that there is need to revisit the amendment to the Code.

Enjoy.

### The Editor

Institute for Media and Society, Nigeria

## NCDC Confirmed COVID-19 Cases by State, September 25, 2020

States Affected	No. of Cases (Lab Confirmed)	No. of Cases (on admission)	No. Discharged	No. of Deaths
Lagos	19,174	3,723	15,246	205
FCT	5,644	609	4,958	77
Plateau	3,373	831	2,511	31
Oyo	3,248	893	2,316	39
Edo	2,620	27	2,486	107
Kaduna	2,389	85	2,268	36
Rivers	2,305	50	2,196	59
Delta	1,801	100	1,652	49
Ogun	1,796	44	1,724	28
Kano	1,737	22	1,661	54
Ondo	1,620	40	1,545	35
Enugu	1,289	102	1,166	21
Ebonyi	1,038	1	1,007	30
Kwara	1,028	48	955	25
Abia	881	26	847	8
Gombe	864	97	742	25
Katsina	848	3	821	24
Osun	826	25	784	17
Borno	741	2	703	36
Bauchi	692	14	664	14
Imo	566	337	217	12
Benue	481	58	413	10
Nasarawa	449	111	325	13
Bayelsa	397	5	371	21
Jigawa	325	6	308	11
Ekiti	317	16	295	6
Akwa Ibom	288	8	272	8
Niger	259	15	232	12
Anambra	237	5	213	19
Adamawa	234	20	198	16
Sokoto	162	1	144	17
Taraba	95	16	73	6
Kebbi	93	1	84	8
Cross River	87	4	74	9
Zamfara	78	0	73	5
Yobe	75	8	59	8
Kogi	5	0	3	2

### Highlights

- On the 25th of September 2020, 213 new confirmed cases and 2 deaths were recorded in Nigeria.
- Till date, 58,062 cases have been confirmed, 49,606 cases have been discharged and 1,103 deaths have been recorded in 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory.
- The 213 new cases are reported from 17 states - Lagos (51), Plateau (51), FCT (29), Rivers (18), Ondo (12), Oyo (9), Osun (8), Gombe (7), Ogun (7), Kaduna (5), Enugu (4), Edo (3), Jigawa (3), Kano (3), Benue (1), Delta (1), Sokoto (1)
- A multi-sectoral national emergency operations centre (EOC), activated at Level 3, continues to coordinate the national response activities

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