



Stakeholders Call for Broadcast Media Regulatory Reform pg 3

INEC, IPAC, WFD Seek More Internal Democracy in Parties pg 10

I N T E R V I E W

'The Nigerian Media Industry Is Quite Resilient' pg8



EDITOR'S NOTE.

It is a season of electoral reforms and Constitutional amendments in Nigeria and relevant stakeholders are participating in the process by submitting memoranda to the National Assembly, NASS.

The Institute for Media and Society, IMS, a media empowerment organization, has initiated two crucial memoranda to the proper committees of the NASS, namely the Joint Committee on National Independent Electoral Commission, INEC and Electoral Matters, and the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on the Review of the 1999 Constitution. To the first, the IMS sent a memorandum on Media Access For Political Parties

and Candidates During Election, and to the second, Reform on Broadcast Regulation in Nigeria. The details of these submissions make our cover story in this first edition in the New Year.

Still on reforms, some EU-SDGN

implementing partners such as the International Press Centre, IPC, the INEC and Westminster Foundation for Democracy, WFD, respectively, unveiled veiw points on burning issues in the electoral process in the country. IPC held a webinar on dissecting issues on gender inclusion in electoral reforms. INEC and WFD had an interactive meeting with political parties on issues of accountability and inclusiveness. The stories make interesting reading, as you would find inside the pages.

Our interview with the immediate past Head of Department of Mass

Communication at the University of Lagos, Professor Abigail Ogwezzy-Ndisika, brims with information on the dire state of the media during the COVID-19 pandemic and suggestions on what to do.

Your regular photo pages, as usual, capture the images of the present exclusively for your delight.

Editorial Team

Amos Esele
Editor

Shade Wesley-Metibogun
Editorial Assistant

Olusegun Samuel
Olaniyi Olaniyan
Contributors



*Please send your comments to
Media4DemocracyNG @ imesoimeso.org*

IMS Seeks Electoral, Constitutional Reforms for Media, NBC

The roles of the media in the electoral and democratic process are globally recognised to the extent that they are protected in international legal instruments.

With that position, the Institute for Media and Society, IMS, took the



Alh. Lai Mohammed,

opportunity of the on going electoral reforms and Constitutional amendment at the National Assembly to submit memoranda for the reform of certain sections in the Electoral Act, the National Broadcasting Commission Act and the Constitution, which it considered obsolete and inimical to effective media practice in Nigeria

The memoranda titled the *Reform of Broadcasting Regulation in Nigeria*, and *Media Access For Political Parties and Candidates During Elections*, were separately submitted to the Senate Ad-Hoc Committee on the Review of the Constitution and the National Assembly Joint Committee on the Independent National Electoral Commission, and Electoral Matters.

According to the IMS, key critical gaps exist in the Constitution and Act as already mentioned that are impeding the National Broadcasting Commission, NBC in the exercise of its regulatory functions and the media in Nigeria to effectively play their watchdog role to hold government accountable to the people, provide information and education to facilitate the participation of citizens in the electoral process and during elections.

For the media, “These gaps in The Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) and the National Assembly Bill to repeal the Act 2010, stand at the intersection of three rights: The rights of voters to receive information, the right of candidates and political parties to convey their messages and the right of the media to connect parties/ candidates and voters”, stated the IMS in its memorandum on media access for political parties and candidates during elections.

IMS in its memorandum on the reform of the broadcasting legislation in Nigeria, as it affects the NBC, stated, “There is obviously a need to intervene to strengthen the regulator as well as to enhance its independence and effectiveness.

“This is in part necessary to bring Nigeria’s broadcast regulatory framework into conformity with international law and international best practice. But there is also a crucial need to shield the regulator from political interference while at the same time ensuring that it remains accountable to the public through the Legislature.”

IMS first highlighted the issues involved, made observations on them and then stated its proposals in its memo on media access.

The issues as contained in the Electoral Act 2010 and the current NASS bill are included in Section 100, sub-sections 3&4 and Section 105. (3) of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended).

These sub-sections direct the media to allocate equal air time among political parties at similar hours of the day; instruct the public electronic media to allot equal air time to all political parties or candidates during prime times at similar hours each day, subject to the payment of appropriate fees; and orders the public print media to allot equal coverage and conspicuity to all political parties. Fines range from N 500, 000 to N1million for non-compliance.

According to IMS, the current NASS bill not only seeks to jerk the penalties to between N 2million and 5million but in addition, want to subject “Principal officers and other officers of the media

house to a fine of N2 million or to imprisonment for a term of 12 months.”

In its observation, IMS stated that the three sub-sections in the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended), lack clarity. They do not make the vital distinction between paid and direct access for candidates and political parties. In addition, it considers labourious the requirement that the media provide equal airtime, coverage and conspicuity to all political parties or candidates. The Institute contended that in the face of increased number of parties since the return to democratic governance in 1999, “it is unrealistic to require the media to provide “equal” airtime or space and “during prime times”, for all parties where there is a large number of them.

“Secondly, though international laws such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007), to which Nigeria is signatory, recognizes equitable media access to



Dr. Akin Akingbulu

political parties during elections, over the years, two prominent negative features of media coverage during elections have been: Denial of access to opposition parties by state-controlled media; poor access to marginalised and vulnerable groups: Women and People With Disabilities (PWDs) are grossly underserved in media access during elections.

Cont. On pg. 4

Cont. From pg. 3

According to the IMS, the newly introduced sub-section 100(6)(b) in the current NASS bill raises strong human rights concerns.

“Under the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended), Section 100(6) penalised a



Prof. Armstrong Idacahba

media house (corporate entity) which contravened the provisions on access (air time or coverage) for political parties and candidates with fines”

However, the current bill extends liability to “principal officers and other officers of the media house” and a penalty which is a fine of N 2 million or imprisonment for a term of 12 months.

While “Principal Officers” are usually the top executives of a media house, “other officers” usually cover personnel from GLOB, the entry level for fresh university graduates and lower end of the professional cadre in a state-controlled media house.

“The implication is that this provision of the bill seeks to penalize all the professionals, senior or junior, irrespective of their functions, for a contravention they would most likely know nothing about and for which they would not be responsible. This would be injustice.

The other memo, on broadcast media reform seeks remedial action on three key areas of Constitutional provisions, namely abolishing Presidential involvement in licensing of broadcast stations; Constitutional recognition for the NBC, the broadcast regulatory body ; and the transfer of collection and management of licence fees for ownership of radio and television sets from local governments to the NBC.

According to the IMS, while these concerns are important and legitimate considerations, experience in Nigeria and elsewhere have also shown that governments have frequently used regulation to restrict access to news and information by whole populations in an effort to control the views and opinions of citizens and members of the public. “In many cases, strict regulatory controls have also been used by some governments to prevent opposition political parties and figures from airing their views and opinions on matters of public importance.

It is therefore critically important that the regulatory framework adopted for broadcasting is such that it enables the country to fulfil legitimate regulatory objectives, including the management of the frequency spectrum and the protection of citizens and members of the public from harmful and/or illegal content.

The regulatory framework should therefore be guided by norms and standards that meet international best practice and are consistent with the protection of the right to freedom of expression as guaranteed by both the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, as amended, as well as the relevant regional and international human rights instruments.

Abolishing Presidential Involvement in Licensing of Broadcasting Stations

Section 39(2) of the 1999 Constitution, which vests the authority to grant broadcast licences in the President, should be amended to abolish presidential involvement in the process.

The proviso to Section 39(2) should accordingly be re-drafted to read as follows:

Provided that the establishment, ownership and operation of television and wireless broadcasting shall be licensed by the regulatory body in charge of broadcasting, in accordance with conditions laid down by an Act of the National Assembly.

The power to authorize licences should be vested in the regulatory body in charge of broadcasting.

Constitutional Recognition for the Broadcast Regulatory Body

That the regulatory body in charge of broadcasting should be made one of the Federal Executive Bodies recognised in Section 153 and listed in the Third Schedule to the 1999 Constitution. This is due to the critical role the broadcast

regulator plays as an essential tool in aiding the development of the country's democracy through ensuring the effective development and regulation of the nation's airwaves, which remains the most critical source of information for the generality of the citizenry. Making the broadcast regulator one of the Federal Executive Bodies in the Constitution would also guarantee it adequate funding for its operations.

All members of the governing body of the broadcast regulator should be appointed after open public hearings conducted by the National Assembly and they should also be accountable to the National Assembly in order to ensure that the broadcast regulator is fully independent of government.

That the overbearing presence of government officials in the governing body of the broadcast regulator should be addressed by removing representation of the security agencies and the Federal Ministry of Information from the membership.

The process of appointing representatives of the different interest groups that constitute the governing body of the broadcast regulator should include a requirement for consultation to be held with the various stakeholders in each of the named sectors of the Nigerian society.

Members of the governing body and staff of the regulatory body should have security of tenure and clearly defined conditions of service.

The functions of the regulatory body should include the exclusive power or authority to issue and revoke broadcast licenses, through a transparent process with clearly stated criteria that are publicly available. This function should not be exercised with reference to or under the instructions of any other authority but the decisions of the governing body in this regard should be subject to judicial review. Consequently, the proviso to Section 39(2) of the 1999 Constitution should be amended to reflect this principle of empowering the regulatory body to so act.

Collection and Management of Licence Fees for Ownership of Radio and Television Sets

The collection or management of resources that belong to the broadcasting sector should not be assigned to local governments. It should be an assignment of the broadcast industry.

Cont. On pg. 10

Gender Inclusion in Electoral Reforms Canvassed

On the backdrop of the ongoing electoral reforms and constitutional amendments at the National Assembly, Nigeria women, stakeholders and other women empowerment organisations are poised to make inputs that would enhance gender equality in political participation in Nigeria.

Towards this end, the International Press Centre (IPC), Lagos-Nigeria, held a virtual media roundtable on gender and electoral reforms in collaboration with EU-SDGN partners, YIAGA Africa, Nigerian Women Trust Fund, the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and Nigeria Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ). The webinar, held on Tuesday, February 10, 2021 with the theme: *'Dissecting the issues for gender inclusion in electoral reforms'*.

Mr. Lanre Arogundade, Executive Director of IPC gave the opening/welcome remarks, while Mrs. Mufuliat Fijabi, CEO of the Nigerian Women Trust Fund (who was represented by Ms. Lois Chinedu) and Mr. Samson Itodo, Executive Director of YIAGA Africa, respectively, gave perspectives on the background to the inclusive issues of gender in the ongoing electoral reforms.

Others who made presentations at the roundtable were Mrs. Rhoda Tyoden, National President of FIDA, Mrs. Ladi Bala, NAWOJ President and female politicians including two serving States of House of Assembly members (Hon. Adeteju Okuyiga of Ekiti State and Hon. Favour Tamomewo of Ondo State), gender activists, male and female journalists and editors from the broadcast, print and online media-across the six-geo political zone attended the roundtable.

In his remarks, Mr. Lanre Arogundade noted that IPC along with other EU-SDGN partners is interested in ensuring that the on-going electoral reform process leads to the passage of an electoral legislation that would serve as an enabling instrument to promote qualitative female participation in the electoral process while serving as mechanism that

enables more women to be elected.

Ms Lois Chinedu of NWTf on her part highlighted the three items of concern over women's limited participation, namely: Political party nomination, wherein women were rarely nominated; Campaign funds, in favour of men, as most male candidates spend more than what was stipulated in the Electoral Act, and the need for amendment in the Electoral Act, and the Constitution.

Ms Tyoden lamented the inadequacies of some reform processes, including voter education, which she noted often took no account of many burning issues. She said, though women were more in terms of population, yet they were lagging behind in the scheme of things.

Ms Ladi Bala lamented that the Nigerian

Act to promote women participation.

After the discussions, the participants recommended as follows:

- The National Assembly should ensure that affirmative principles are embedded in the electoral law, starting with the suggested amendments to sections 31, 87, 100 and 104 of the electoral law; Serious consideration should be given to the provision for electronic voting in the electoral law to aid women participation;
- That CSOs should urgently engage the National Assembly and INEC on the gender issues of concern in the ongoing electoral reforms;
- That women in politics needed to be groomed and mentored, funded to take political leadership positions; Women need to look at the internal



constitution from time immemorial have been gender-blind; gender-inclusivity had been largely missing. She expressed worries over the ineffectiveness of the National Gender Policy adopted in the year 2000 in addressing issues affecting women political participations.

In his contribution, Mr Samson Itodo, who spoke on the lacuna created by the constitutional provisions, revealed that politicians have cultivated the habit of citing the constitutional provisions in sections 40-42 which prohibit gender inequality to argue against making needed amendments to the Electoral

party mechanism of their political parties and assess how to overcome the issue of godfatherism that is limiting their chances; there is need for experienced women to mentor and support other women so that when women in offices are leaving, they should be able to hand over to other women.

They called on the media to publish special reports on the inclusive issues of women in the electoral process to aid the passage of amendments that would advance female participation; NAWOJ should sensitize women to support and vote women.

Activities by IMS and other Implementing Partners



Parliamentary Staff of the House Committee on Public



Participants at the 2020 PLAC Training for Interns re-enacting a plenary session at the Model Legislative Assembly



Ms. Cynthia Mbamalu, 2nd Left, Programme Coordinator, Yiaga Africa with some other top officials during an advocacy visit to the National Assembly



Participants at the ECES training of electoral officers in Gombe State.

Events, People and Places at the EU-SDGN acti



Mrs. Mufuliat Fijabi , Executive Director of NWTf addressing participants at the Public Presentation of two publications on the review of CVE activities elections.



Participants at a Training Workshop for the Secretariat of the Petitions sponsored by the European Union



Participants at a roundtable for political parties organised by NIPSS in Abuja



Stakeholders at a Roundtable of Policy Makers on the Participation of Women in Politics organised by PLAC



Participants at the 2020 PLAC training for Interns

The Nigerian Media Industry Is Quite Resilient, Says Expert

Professor Abigail Ogwezzy-Ndisika was until recently the Head of Department of Mass Communication at the University of Lagos, where she teaches.

In this interview with Media4DemocracyNG, she spoke about the important role played by the media in democratic governance in the country, the need for stakeholders and government to support the media in times of crisis and the government insistence on regulation of the social media as an attempt to gag the media. Excerpts:

were able to migrate to the Internet for online education during the COVID-19 lockdown. Nowadays children are smart, using IT for Instagram, WhatsApp and other social media platforms. See how Nigerian youths were able to raise fund during the #EndSARS protest.

In our department we have been teaching online journalism since we won a World Bank grant in 2019. Students have laptops and none of them submits assignment in long hand any longer. We have a newsroom that is multi-media and digital. Our photo lab is digital. So our students are market ready by the time they graduate.

Don't you think there is a world of difference between the theory we acquire in school and the practice in the outer, professional media world, particularly in the developing world where the rule of law is observed in the breach.?

That is the linkages and market readiness we were talking about earlier. The

the students have made an editorial and commercial success out of the publication. They also go out to canvass for adverts. They go to radio and TV stations outside for internship, do presentations and pitch for accounts.

Remember that our school is located in Lagos, which is the hub of the media industry. This affords the students the privilege to interface with the media industry. Another important factor is the requirements for staff recruitment. Lecturers are encouraged to belong to organisations, which make it vital for them to teach the students according to the sequencies they practice.

The media in the country are passing through tough times courtesy of the Corona Virus pandemic. What measures would you recommend to ensure they remain in business?

Well, I think we have to be realistic about what we do. People should multi-task

because things can change unexpectedly. There is no profession that was not hit by the Corona Virus pandemic. Many media organisations were doing well before COVID-19. I would prefer cut in salaries to retrenchment so people can stay in employment until things get better. Also, media focused NGOs with good funding should empower journalists by commissioning them to do stories. Avenues to be consultants on media related work should be explored. Media owners

have to be more professional in the way they treat their workers because the workers held the organization in the past. New media have democratized the media industry and we have to be more creative and focused.

Cont. On pg. 9



Prof Ogwezzy-Ndisika

As a trainer of future media professionals, how would you rate their fitness for the new world of information technology?

I rate them high with all due respect to their intelligence. They are digital natives, you know. They were born in an era of telecommunications. A further testimony to that is to note how children

students we train here are globally competitive. I say this with all sense of responsibility. Here, they produce a paper called the Unilag Sun. We have a radio and a TV station. Since 2019 when we got the World Bank grant, our digital studios with camera and audio-visual equipment, are up and running. I tell you,

Cont. From pg. 7

I also think the government should bail out the media during crisis as they have done to other sectors like aviation. It is the general value that we attach to the media that determines how government is treating the media. That is why they are funding the aviation sector because they use it regularly. They forget that if the media fail to report daily many of us may be afraid to come out of our homes because we do not know what is happening.

Do you think it was professionally right for media owners and managers to appeal to government for funding support as they did recently?

I understand the Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria, BON, Newspapers Proprietors Organisation, NPAN, the Nigeria Union of Journalists, NUJ and the Nigerian Guild of Editors, recently met with government to seek funding considering the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the industry. There is nothing wrong with that as long as it is a one-off thing. It would not affect their editorial independence and watchdog role as the Fourth Estate of the Realm. I also think, data service providers and social media platforms and online hosts such as Google should be able to contribute some percentage of their profit to the media industry to be socially responsible.

The dust was yet to settle over the addendum to the sixth edition of the Nigeria Broadcasting Code which many stakeholders consider detrimental to creativity and financial independence of content producer, when the NBC slammed a N9 million fine on some TV stations for reports considered inciting. What is your take on it?

The organizations should be given the right of fair hearing. All over the world citizen journalism is what is thriving. The TV stations acknowledged all the stories they aired. Besides, the stories were already in the public domain and they also have their audiences. You cannot gag

the air. If the regulator felt strongly about what they did, then it should take them to court.

The NBC said it fined the stations not for reporting the youth protest but for airing content that were inciting and thereby violated sections of the broadcasting code.

We are in a democracy and not under a military regime. If we want to live in an authoritarian regime let us come out and say so. Government would always find ways to justify their actions. We have freedom of speech. Protest is a legitimate right. Some of the stations had their reporters covering the protest and went on to stream the coverage live. We live in an era of media convergence. In the new society of today, the people also set agenda for the media. If the security agencies had provided protection for the protesters we probably would never had come to the destruction and looting of private and public property that happened. Look at what happened during the elections on the United States of America where the media coverage was streamed live. Anyway, you cannot be the censor and judge in your own case. I think they are trying to intimidate the media. I do not think the duty of the regulator is to fine stations because their relationship is a mutually beneficial one. They should have a point of convergence and hold discussions regularly to resolve any problem.

The fear of social media misuse by all comers has heightened the call for its regulation. Would is you view on this?

Those calling for regulations are jokers. You can padlock the air and people would still find a way to breathe. When the youths in Nigeria were protesting, similar actions were going on in some parts of the world. Nigeria is a country with almost 200 million persons. It is a democracy, not a monarchy. We can speak through any platform. There are enough rules and regulations in our statutes to regulate social media. If I say anything wrong, it can be tracked and I am taken to court. They are not going to have it funny if they implement any wrong policy around the media. I think what is happening now is that the people are now able to give feedback on governance because of social media. I would advise that those in authority should use social media as a tool in engaging with the people because they

cannot be everywhere at the same time.

As a practitioner and teacher, do you think social media would see the end of newspapering as we used to know it?

No, it will not in my humble opinion. Even in the US Newsweek, as an example, stopped publishing hard copy, started publishing online and then came back to hard copy. What is happening now in Nigeria is that the newspapers are driving traffic to their online platforms. We are now in an era of convergence. The hazard of doing all things online such as the weakening effect reading online has on our eyes, the lack of sustainable data and poor electricity supply in the country will still make reading pages attractive.



Ndisika-Ogwezzi

What would be your professional assessment of the media in Nigeria today?

I tell you the Nigerian media are quite resilient. With the harsh economic environment, I think they are doing their best though I think it could be better. The digital switchover is still riddled with issues. Government should be more deliberate with the development of the industry. Nextfix, DsTV, GoTV are very active in Nigeria. Globalisation has diversified media audiences, but the aforementioned platforms are also getting money out of the system. So we have to develop our platforms. But in terms of content, the media is quite Okay. That is why I think the NBC, the Ministry of Information Technology and Digital Economy, the National Institute for Technology Development Agency, NITDA, should come together and devise the software and platform for content providers.

Cont. From pg. 4

Section 1(b) of the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution which empowers local governments to collect radio and television licence fees should be repealed.

Section 1(b) referred to above should be re-worded to give the power of

collection and management of licence fees to the regulatory body in charge of broadcasting.

The re-worded provision should be located in another part of the constitution where the regulatory body in charge of broadcasting is recognized or listed as a federal executive body.

would limit multiple voting and voting by proxy. The introduction of e-voting will enhance the integrity of elections and citizens' participation, they contended.

The group stated that Section 124 of the Electoral Act should be amended to impose stiffer sanctions for bribery and vote-buying.

They also recommended that section 100(6) of the Electoral Act which should be amended to ensure penalty for violating the provision of the Section are restricted to the offending entity (the media house). It should not be extended to journalists, broadcasters and other workers of the media house.

It was also recommended that on the conduct of security personnel on election duty as seen in section 29(3) of the Electoral Acts should be amended to read "security personnel deployed for the purpose of the registration of voters or elections shall abide by the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) Code of Conduct and Rules of Engagement for Security Personnel on Electoral Duty. Any Security personnel who violates the Code of Conducts and Rules of Engagement on Electoral duty commits an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a demotion in rank, dismissal, fines or imprisonment."

The CSOs further called for early voting for Nigerians on essential duty insisting that Section 25 of the Electoral Act, 2010 should be amended by inserting a new subsection (3) to read; 'In an election into any of the offices in subsection (1) and (2) above, the commission shall allow a person to apply for and cast a special vote prior to election day, if, on election day, that person cannot vote at a polling unit where they register as a voter because: "such a person being a member of an accredited observer group; such a person being accredited media personnel; such a person being on duty as a member of the security agency on duty as it relates to an election or such a person being on duty as an official of the election management body."

The call also includes voting right for Nigerians in diaspora.



Civil Society Organisations Demand Citizens' Priorities Electoral Reform

Some civil society organisations, CSOs, including the European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria, EU-SDGN project implementing partners have drawn up some citizens' top ten priorities proposals that should be given prominence in the ongoing Amendment of the Electoral Act.

These priority areas include strengthening the financial independence of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC; publication of polling unit level results on the Commission's website and protecting the voting rights of visually impaired voters. Others are the reduction in the cost of nomination of political parties' aspirants so as to, "promote inclusion in political party primaries and reduce the influence of money in our elections."

The proposed total fees, charges, dues and any payment imposed by a political party on an aspirant are N100,000 for a ward councillorship aspirant in the states and FCT to N1million for a senatorial aspirant, N2million for governorship and N5 million for a presidential aspirant.

The issue of promoting the inclusion of women, youths and persons with

disabilities in politics was also proposed. "Every political party shall include women, youths and persons with disabilities in the list of candidates it seeks to sponsor in an election, provided that not more than two-third of the candidates shall be the same gender."

"Section 87 of the Electoral Act, 2010 should be amended to ensure that the list of delegates eligible to vote in all party primaries and conventions are made up of not less than 50 percent of any gender.

"Section 100 of the Electoral Act, 2010 should be amended to compel public media (broadcast and print) to grant marginalized groups, particularly women, youths and persons with disability (PWDs) special discounted airtime/advert rates during election campaigns.

"Section 104 of the Electoral Act should be amended to provide that the Chairman and the Vice Chairman are not of the same gender, and the age qualification for the Chairman and the Vice Chairman shall be 25 years.

Other proposed amendments deal with the use of electronic voting in the electoral process which they think

WFD Partner INEC On Voter Education

Ahead of the 2023 general elections, the nation's electoral umpire, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), partnered with Westminster Foundation for Democracy, WFD to organise workshops on two areas critical to electoral processes in the country.

These areas are review of the voter's education manuals and the challenges of inadequate voter education. The first workshop, which held on February 10, 2021, addressed the challenges of inadequate voter education. The second workshop which held for five days at Keffi, Nasarawa state, from January 12 to 16 January, 2021, reviewed the Voter Education Manual and frequently asked questions (FAQs)

The next general election poses a lot of challenges for INEC, especially in a country with over 200 million people and over 84 million registered voters. There would be logistic and administrative challenges for the electoral umpire if adequate steps are not taken to begin addressing them now, according to the organisers of the workshops. Additionally, they stated that voter education and partnership with relevant stakeholders to engage the electoral process deserves attention, especially now that electoral reforms and Constitutional reforms are ongoing at the National Assembly, NASS.

According to WDF country's representative, Adebowale Olorunmola, "Ballots that are rejected during the vote count are widely attributed to inadequate civic and voter education.

"To put this in context, over one million votes cast in the Nigerian

presidential election in 2011 were rejected during counting; mainly because the ballots were wrongly marked. The rejected votes constitute about 3.2 per cent of all votes cast in that election. According to observers, this figure is high and could have been markedly lower with adequate voter education."

He stated that, "At the same time, there have been rapid decline in the turnout of voters in elections across Nigeria. For instance, the voter turnout in the 2019 presidential election dropped to 35 per cent from 44 per cent in the 2015 elections. That 44 per cent turnout was also a decline from 54 per cent attained in the 2011 polls. Indeed, statistics show that the voter turnout for Nigerian presidential elections has been dropping since 2003."

Other issues that have been linked to inadequate voter and civic education in Nigeria, according to WDF, Chief include poor participation in voter registration, lack of understanding of voting procedures, underage voting, and election violence.

Tackling the challenges:

Improving voter education is one of the five key goals listed in the 2017-

2021 INEC Strategic Plan. With this, INEC aims to achieve increased voter turnout during elections, improved voter knowledge of the permanent voters' card and how to get one, and a reduced number of invalid votes at elections, as well as encouraging ethical voting.

With these goals in mind, WFD and INEC convened a five-day workshop to review the voter education manual and frequently asked questions (FAQs) in Keffi, Nasarawa State – from 12th to 16th January 2021.

During the workshop, participants worked on an enhanced and improved training resource that supports voter education providers and a revised voter education manual from which to develop digital learning tools to reach out to young people.

Participants in the workshop

Modules in the manual for voter education trainers covered practical aspects of how to conduct voter education, as well as information about the electoral and political party system in Nigeria.



Participants at the public presentation of two publications on the review of Continued Voter Education, CVE, activities during elections.

INEC, IPAC, WFD Seek More Internal Democracy in Parties

For the umpteenth time, the Electoral umpire, the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC and relevant electoral stakeholders have harped on the need for internal democracy in political parties in Nigeria.

At a workshop on political parties organized by the Commission's Election and Party Monitoring Department and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy in Abuja, early February, 2021 spokesmen of Commission and the Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC) called on political parties "to embrace inclusive politics in order to strengthen policymaking and sustainable democracy in the country."

For Mr Aminu Idris, Head, Department of EPM, INEC, lack of internal democracy in most political parties affects due process and inclusiveness with a telling effect on governance.

He said: "One of the biggest challenges affecting political parties is internal democracy whereby political parties don't allow members to fully participate in their activities.

"If you run a party and you don't allow members to participate then the political party cannot grow. Political parties need to play the role they ought to play which includes

enhancing democracy to make it sustainable and to be seen as a tool of governance."

Idris submitted that the Commission would continue to make sure parties operate their own constitution, relevant provisions of the Electoral Act as well as the Constitution of the country.

National Chairman of (IPAC), Leonard Nzenwa, supported Idris's position and stated that the continued "assault on the sanctity of democratic principles, practices and culture" was not peculiar to Nigeria and gave assurances that the "body would continue to work to make political parties healthier, inclusive and more accountable."

According to him; "Working to strengthen democracy around the world has never faced challenges like we are currently having now from China to India, Russia to the United States, the Democratic Republic of Congo to Sudan, and elsewhere.

"One of the biggest challenges affecting political parties is internal democracy whereby political parties don't allow members to fully participate in their activities."



Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, INEC Chairman

DISCLAIMER

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents are the sole responsibility of the *Institute for Media and Society*, and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

Funded by The



European Union

Copyright © 2018. All rights reserved

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

EU-SDGN IMPLEMENTERS:

