

# The Impact of Safe Journalism and Gender Equality on Democratic Governance in Nigeria

The Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO in collaboration with UNESCO Regional Office Abuja organized a two-day training workshop for journalist and media practitioners on the Impact of safe Journalism and Gender equality on Democratic Governance in Nigeria. The Workshop which took place at the Nigerian Army Resource Centre in Abuja from the 13<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> of June 2023 was attended by participants from selected government and private secondary schools in FCT, students of Institute of Journalism, journalists from radio houses, newspaper houses, television stations, as well as online publishers, security personnel's, media regulatory bodies, Federal Ministry safe of Information and Culture and the Federal Ministry of Education.

It is on record Nigeria media is faced with myriads of challenges in fulfilling its duty as the watchdog of the society due to security threats, issue of ownership, economic problem, lack of adherence to professional ethics and gender imbalance. Freedom of press operations is essential to democratic constructiveness, good governance, unalloyed citizens' rights, active citizens participation in the political process, overall effective functioning of the governing system and the entire nation building. The safety of journalists engenders a free and independent media sector, which is the bedrock of informed societies. On the other hand, instances of gender inequality are clearly visible within the media industry in Nigeria, and democracy as a whole, is at risk if fewer women's voices are being heard due to compromised safety. It is in the light of these myriads of problems and challenges that UNESCO has put together this workshop on the **Impact of Safe Journalism and Gender Equality on Democratic Governance in Nigeria**.

The objectives of the two-day training workshop is to among others, enhance the capacity of journalists and media practitioner's on how to stay safe while in the line of duty, reappraise strategies for the Media to promote good governance, create public awareness about gender imbalance in journalism as well as sensitize the public on the importance of safe media and good governance

In his welcome address. Mr. Adeleye Adeoye, Director, Department of Educational Planning, Research and Development in the Federal Ministry of Education welcomed the participants and assured them that the workshop is designed to equip the media practitioners with the necessary skills and knowledge require to carry out their assignment in a safe and conducive environment. The Permanent Secretary, Mr. Andrew David Adejo who declared the workshop opened enjoined all the participants to brain storm and find workable solutions to the challenges militating against the safety of Media practitioners in the



Mr. Adeleye Adeoye, Rep. Perm, Sec. FME



Dr. Olagunju, Secretary General, NATCOM



Mr. Chris Isiguzo, Nat. President, NUJ



Participants at the Workshop

# NATCOM-UNESCO WORKSHOP



**Group of all participant on day 1**

discharge of their duties efficiently and effectively. According to him, it is only through the activities Media practitioners that the society can be thoroughly informed about the activities of Government and so when their safety is threatened it becomes a problem not only against them but also against the society as a whole. The Permanent Secretary also used the opportunity to appreciate UNESCO for always been at the forefront of creating a better, peaceful and safe working environment. In his goodwill message the President

of the Nigerian Union of Journalist, Comrade Chris Isiguzo commended NATCOM-UNESCO for coming up with such a workshop that will help equip Journalists and other Media Practitioners on safety and gender inclusion while also decrying the numerous challenges the average journalist face daily in the cause of carrying out his/her legitimate duty. According to him, journalists are been maimed, killed and kidnapped across the world in the cause of carrying out their legitimate duty and this has become so rampant and a serious

cause for concern for governments across the world and especially in Africa. He encouraged other international Agencies to emulate UNESCO by helping to escalate these challenges so that lasting solutions can be proffered. In During the two- day workshop the following papers were presented: Safety of Journalist; A Panacea to Sustainable Democracy presented by Mr. Dapo Olorunyomi ; Standard Ethical Practice of Journalism in Africa and the World presented by Dr. Inya Ode; Improving Governance in Nigeria through the Media by Prof. Abiodun Adeniyi and Gender Equity in Journalism by Rafatu Salami.

## **Following extensive deliberations, questions and answers, the participants Noted that;**

- Journalism is the lifeblood of a deliberative democracy through which a society debates on how to reform its institutions and face the future;
- Journalism's first loyalty is to the public, its audience and its obligation is to the truth;
- Truth is the cornerstone of journalism and every journalist should strive diligently to ascertain the truth of every event;
- Violence against journalists is both an act of violence against an individual and society;
- Journalism thrives on the principles of inclusiveness, transparency and accountability; and
- Good journalism breeds equity and justice.

## **Agreed that:**

- Journalism should be characterized by the value of truthfulness and accuracy;
- There is need for journalism to be dedicated and channeled to the public purpose and interest;
- Evidential and fact-based truth is the only standard for reporting truth in journalism;
- News should be shared in the interest of the public without breaching broadcasting code/ethics;
- The media plays a vital role in enforcing good governance; and
- The greatest challenge to women in journalism is workplace sexual harassment;
- for safety, journalists should learn to obey constituted authorities in the course of their duties, particularly, the military and paramilitary forces.

After the two-day discussions, deliberations and syndicate sections the Participants therefore Recommended the following as way forward.

- The ethics of journalism need to be upheld by the practitioners of the profession to ensure they stay within the confines of the law and guiding principles;
- The need for global, national and local bodies to work collaboratively to restrain attacks against journalists for democracy to thrive;
- That subtle discriminations against journalists need to be addressed, so as to ensure that they are protected from unnecessary contention;
- That there should be an equilibrium between the gatekeepers and the media practitioners;
- That advocacy and political actions need to be carried out on the danger's journalists face in the discharge of their duties;

- That Journalists should regulate and verify news that are shared to the general public to curb misinformation and disinformation;
  - The need for judiciary reform that takes care of cases that threaten the safety of journalists locally and nationally;
  - The need for journalists to partner with organisations that promote safe journalism, and also sign up to national and international newsletters for updates on current trends;
  - A follow-up workshop for media house owners and other relevant stakeholders to secure national buy-in of the approved recommendations of this 2-day workshop
  - Media organisations should promote gender equality in reportage, education and training of journalists;
  - Organizations should put gender policies in place and be constantly reviewed in line with emerging trends;
  - There should be more advocacy for women participation in journalism;
  - Journalists should ensure balance between their professional and personal life; and
  - Media organisations should provide a safe working environment for journalists, as well as safety gadgets when covering crisis-laden areas;
  - The need for journalists to create good relationships with the public relations units of both military and paramilitary forces, in order to ensure easy and timely access to help in times of chaos or crises;
  - Journalists should be encouraged to be active members of NUJ; and NUJ should be strengthened to support members, particularly females who may be facing harassment at their places of work;
  - Insurance for journalists should be enhanced considering the increased risks and hazards they are constantly exposed to;
  - Due diligence should be observed by journalists through ensuring that only the truth is published;
  - The need to put in place, more advanced technology towards curbing cyberbullying.
- In his vote of thanks, the Secretary -General of NATCOM-UNESCO Dr. Lateef Olagunju Idowu Lateef thanked all the participants for their presence, contributions, deliberations, dedication and commitment to the success of the workshop. He enjoined all the participants and media practitioners to work hard to ensure that they put to practice all the knowledge acquired during the workshop as this will go a long way to help promote democratic governance that will enhance peace and development in the country. According to him, being equipped with the right information in real time is capable of changing the way the world is viewed by individuals. He added that the invaluable role of the media in promoting democracy, can only thrive and develop when information management and dissemination is democratized while the promotion of gender equality in all aspects of society, including in journalism, is vital to the development of the nation and building a robust democratic governance in Nigeria. At the end of the two-day workshop a certificate of participation was presented to all the participants by NATCOM-UNESCO.