GSM TARIFF IN NIGERIA: Commercializing the Right to Communicate

Like the fanciful but unpredictable flight of a butterfly, the hope of many Nigerians to enjoy an affordable telecommunication services through the Global System for Mobile (GSM) telecommunications regime, has taken a flight through the sky.

The dream of many Nigerians for cheap telecommunication services may remain forever unfulfilled. No thanks to the high tariff regime rolled out by the two licenced private GSM providers, Econet Wireless and MTN Nigeria Communications.

This fear is accentuated by the antecedents of the third licenced GSM provider, government-owned Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL).

Although NITEL has promised to force down the prices through a combination of efficient services and rock bottom price regime, with its history of inefficiency and unreliability in the provision of telecommunication services, this promise must be taken with a pitch of salt.

A few days to the August 9 deployment deadline given the licenced operators by government, Nigerians waited with bated breath while each operator fine-tuned strategies and activities for rolling out the service and announcing tariffs. On July 27, MTN unveiled its tariff structure at an event in Lagos. The exercise left a bile in the stomach of prospective customers as it confirmed the fears that many Nigerians have expressed since the conclusion of the licence auction exercise in January. Some components of the tariff structure turned out to be possibly the costliest ever charged for GSM services in any country.

The company announced a connection charge of N20,000 including the Subscriber Information Modula (SIM) Card and airtime charge of N30 per minute for peak period. Off peak
rates are pegged at N20 per minute. The company fixed the cost of a handset at a minimum of N25,000, although it said subscribers were free to buy handsets from anywhere provided they are compatible with the MTN system. The company did not announce its charges for other services such as roaming and international services.

Econet Wireless in its revised tariffs structure released August 6 when it also began the roll-out of its GSM lines, said it will charge N15,000 as connection fees which includes a SIM card, while airtime per minute for peak period was fixed at N32. Off peak period calls will attract N19 per minute and international calls will attract between N125 and N145 per minute, depending on the country of the call. It also announced a pre and post paid tariff plan ranging from N23 to N45 per minute. Although the difference is minimal, the rates are below the charges that the company had earlier released on July 26. In its earlier tariff, Econet had fixed N35 per minute for peak period and off peak period calls for N24 per minute. It is apparent that it was compelled to make some concessions as a result of the adverse reactions that have trailed the original tariff structure.

According to the company, its initial operations will be limited to the cities of Lagos, Abuja, Kaduna, Port Harcourt, Onitsha and Uyo within the first six months. The second phase will witness an expansion to several other cities.

MTN, on August 8, flagged off its operation with the roll-out of 100,000 lines. It already has in place Mobile Switching Centres (MSCs) in Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt, which will facilitate connections through the 25 cell sites in Lagos, eight in Port Harcourt and seven in Abuja.

NITEL in its tariffs structure announced August 9, to coincide with the deadline for the roll-out, restored some hope to Nigerians in the low-income bracket. The company said its connection fee would be N10,000. And unlike the two other licenced operators, the company said its subscribers are not required to pay a monthly access charge. This would save its subscribers another N48,000, annually, made up of the N4,000 MTN and Econet subscribers are expected to pay. Although the company will begin its roll-out in three months time, it said subscribers will pay N22 per minute for airtime at peak period and N11 on off-peak period.

The company fixed charge for international call at N110 per minute. For subscribers to able to roam, they will have to make an unspecified deposit.

Given the higher rates announced by its competitors, NITEL's tariffs on its 120,000-line capacity, will be the cheapest among the GSM operators.

Between MTN and Econet, a GSM subscriber in Nigeria will have to part with between N40,000 and N45,000 to be on the way to enjoy the services. This is besides the N4,000 monthly rental charge payable whether or not the service is used by the subscriber.

Already, Econet and MTN officials are believed to be worried about the possible negative consequences of having much higher rates than their competitor, NITEL, and are thinking of a downward review of their tariffs. This is responsible for the marginal downward review by MTN of its tariffs. The companies, it was learnt, may announce further revised tariffs, which may be slightly higher than those of NITEL. They may also review the monthly rental charges of N4,000.

But it is suspected that while this is deemed necessary, the companies may have decided to carry on as it is now and play the wait-and-see game to evaluate the efficiency of the services that NITEL may provide, and consequently the challenge it will pose.

But in response to the adverse reaction to the tariffs announced by MTN and Econet, the Chief Executive of the Nigeria Communications Commission (NCC), Chief Ernest Ndukwe, assured Nigerians that the Commission would adopt measures to stimulate competition in the industry with a view to driving down prices.

But beyond relying on the government-owned NITEL to fix low tariffs for its services, a measure expected to bring Econet and MTN to their knees, the NCC has no other plan on how to achieve this objective. Besides, the efficacy of this strategy of trying to use NITEL to fix prices
is doubtful, especially on the short-run. This is because the number of lines available is far below the demand. Even in the long-run, NITEL will have to prove and guarantee efficiency in its services, to convince most Nigerians to do business with it.

Even while trying to restore hope to disappointed Nigerians that they could still enjoy affordable telecommunication services, Chief Ndukwe nonetheless justified the high tariff. He claimed that: "We did a study on tariff across countries and found out that tariffs don't come cheap at the beginning".

But available information indicate that the NCC boss was not entirely correct in his assessment. Except for NITEL's charges that have restored some measure of hope to Nigerians, subscribers who do business with Econet and MTN will have the burden of paying extremely high tariffs for GSM services. At the prices of N15,000 connection fee charge proposed by Econet and N20,000 connection charge by MTN, and N25,000 for an average handset, Nigerians will pay an average of N40,000 to N45,000, ($363) for a GSM line. This is very high compared to the charges in countries in other parts of the world presently enjoying the GSM services.

For instance, in South Africa, to acquire a GSM line, a subscriber pays an equivalent of N13,673 (about $124). This includes at least a Nokia 5110 handset and a starter pack containing the SIM card and cell phone number for connection. There are no monthly rental charges.

In Zimbabwe a subscriber pays about N28,000 to get similar package as in South Africa. A subscriber who already has a GSM compatible cellphone simply buys a starter pack for about N873 to get connected (see story on page 7).

In the interim, in order to cushion the cost of operations of the licenced GSM operators and encourage them to reduce their high charges, the federal government has reduced to five per cent, from between 15 and 20 per cent, the duties hitherto paid on telecommunications equipment. This is expected to be in operation for two years when it may then be reviewed. But it is impossible to predict whether the licenced operators will take this gesture into account in fixing their charges.

In addition to this effort to ensure efficient and cheap GSM operation in Nigeria, the government again invited all the players in the industry to a round table meeting on July 31. At the meeting, the government extracted assurances from NITEL that it would not play the spoiler by failing to interconnect Econet and MTN. NITEL reportedly gave assurances to the effect that it is capable of, and willing to, interconnect 100,000 lines from each company.

This regime of high GSM tariffs is definitely a disappointment for many Nigerians who had thought that the giant step taken at liberalizing telecommunications with the sale, on January 19, 2001, of four GSM licenses at an open auction, would further enhance their ability and right to communicate.

It is now generally accepted in human rights jurisprudence globally that the regulation and provision of telecommunication services raise important freedom of expression issues, which are protected under international and domestic human rights instruments. Although the telecommunication industry was traditionally concerned with technical matters rather than issues of content, with the movement towards convergence in telecommunications and the fact that content is increasingly being transported through telecommunication lines, that attitude has changed. One area where this is most evident is in the Internet which depends largely on telephone lines in many countries, including Nigeria, for operation.

Besides the issue of content, the question of technical capacity of the telecommunications industry, especially where the supply capacity of the industry falls below demand, is now a major freedom of expression issue. This view is based on the realization that the right of every person to express his or herself will be meaningless if there is undue limitation on access to the means of communication, which appears to have been the case in Nigeria for several decades.

This view has been supported by numerous judgments in several Commonwealth and European Union countries. Among these are the Court of Appeal of the Dominican Republic in

Nigeria must come to terms with this new spirit and work towards making it a reality in the country.

**World Bank Acknowledges MRA's Concerns Over Its Information Disclosure Policy**

The World Bank has acknowledged concerns raised by Media Rights Agenda (MRA) that the provisions of its Information Disclosure Policy are inadequate to guarantee transparency and accountability. But the Bank’s Vice President in charge of Operations Policy and Country Services, Ms Joanne Salop, said the Bank's position was dictated by the need to balance differing views on the issue.

According to Vice President Salop, the bank was now consolidating feedbacks on the review of the Information Disclosure Policy after conducting extensive consultations process that took place in 18 countries.

The bank's statement was in response to concerns raised by MRA in a letter to top officials of the Bank over the serious shortcomings in the Information Disclosure Policy and the fact that the document did not go far enough to guarantee public access to information held by the Bank.

MRA's Executive Director, Mr. Edetaen Ojo, wrote to World Bank President, Mr. James D. Wolfensohn, and Vice President Salop on April 17 saying that although the organization welcomed the on-going review, particularly the proposal to disclose more documents, it was concerned that the proposals failed to fully guarantee the public's right to know in accordance with international standards and suggested that the Policy required substantial revision to meet these standards.

But in a reply faxed from the Bank's headquarters in Washington, Mr. Salop said although the Bank noted MRA's concern that the policy did not go far enough to guarantee access to information, it was "balancing differing views on this issue" and was "encouraged by the movement in the general direction of more disclosure".

She said the overriding objective of the policy review was to operationalise the Bank's "longstanding commitment" to transparency, and welcomed the fact that MRA shared the same objective and was interested in seeing the Bank make concrete progress.

The Bank is in its final stages of decision making about what documents to disclose under the policy. The Board of Executive Directors of the Bank is scheduled to meet on August 23 to take a final decision on the policy.

The need for concerted efforts to ensure greater transparency and more effective access to information within the World Bank is in part dictated by the increasing level of public interest and demand for information on a variety of issues affecting the bank and its operations. In 1993, the Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank approved a revision to the bank's disclosure policy, expanding the types of documents that are made available to the public and establishing Public Information Centers (PICs), originally at the bank's headquarters in Washington D.C. as well as in Paris, France; and Tokyo, Japan. It also opened smaller information centers in all its country offices. In 1997, the PIC at the bank's headquarters was combined with the World Bank Bookstore and renamed the InfoShop.

Each month, the InfoShop receives an average of about 4,000 direct requests for information by individuals appearing in person, as well as by telephone, fax, e-mail or regular mail. The Bank's website also has external traffic substantially above the websites of all other
development related organizations and agencies, including those of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), several United Nations agencies, and other multilateral development banks. In July 2000, the bank's website received about 230,000 new visitors requesting the equivalent of about 238,000 books, each containing 200 pages of text. The total number of visitors to its website is estimated to be equivalent to crowding 1,150 new customers into the InfoShop on every working day. Similar interest in information emanating from the World Bank has been demonstrated in its other information offices. In all, the bank has to deal with more than two million requests for information each year.

Although the bank's Information Disclosure Policy endorses the fundamental importance of transparency and accountability to the development process and acknowledges that broad dissemination of information is essential for the effective implementation and sustainability of its lending and non-lending services, it nonetheless contains seven broad categories of information which may be excluded from disclosure. These are summarized as follows:

* Where information is provided to the Bank on the understanding that it is proprietary or confidential;
* Where disclosure would violate the personal privacy of staff members, and thus such information may only be disclosed to the extent permitted by the Staff Rules;
* Where, in the Bank's judgment, disclosure could impede the integrity and impartiality of the Bank's deliberative process and the free and candid exchange of ideas between the Bank, its members, and its partners;
* Where, in the Bank's judgment, disclosure would be detrimental to the interests of the Bank, a member country, or Bank staff; for example, disclosure that would have a significant adverse effect on Bank-country relations;
* Where proceedings of the Board are, under the Board's Rules of Procedures, confidential;
* Where, in the Bank's exercise of sound financial management practices, it does not disclose certain financial information for prudential reasons; and
* Where disclosure would be impracticable for the Bank or its members for reasons of excessive cost or logistics.

But in its April 17 letter to the Bank, MRA argued that the right of every person to access information held by public bodies, including the World Bank, is a fundamental human right, not a privilege and therefore urged the Bank to seriously consider broadening its review of the Policy to incorporate the elements outlined by the organization.

Specifically, MRA had noted that the World Bank's Policy did not provide for any independent review of refusals to disclose information and contended that respect for the right to access information could not be guaranteed unless individuals have a right to appeal to an independent body against any refusal to disclose information because, in the absence of a review body, there would be no independent check on whether a refusal to disclose information is in accordance with the applicable law or policy.

Remarking that the implementation of the right to know requires clear process guarantees, including requirements that decisions be made in a timely fashion in order to prevent undue delay in the provision or refusal of information and that refusals be accompanied by written reasons, it noted that Bank's Policy failed to recognise these guarantees since it had no timelines for disclosing information and no requirement to provide written reasons for any refusal to disclose information.

Besides, MRA argued, under international law, a refusal to disclose information is legitimate only where the refusing body can show that the information relates to a legitimate aim listed in the law or policy, where disclosure could harm that aim, and where the harm to the aim is greater than the public interest in having the information.

It noted that in general, the exceptions on information to be disclosed contained in the Bank's Policy do not serve legitimate aims, that some of the exemptions are not subject to a harm test and that none are subject to a public interest test, observing rather that for some
information, the Bank appeared to have ceded full control over the designation of the information as secret to member States, instead of applying these objective tests. It cited as an example the fact that information that is provided to the Bank on the understanding that it is "confidential" cannot be disclosed, unless the source has consented.

MRA also suggested that exceptions should always be subject to a public interest test and noted that the Bank's Policy exempts information where disclosure would be detrimental to the interests of the Bank or to a member country or Bank staff. It argued that although any information exposing corruption would be detrimental to one of these interests, it is nonetheless clear that it should, in many cases, be subject to disclosure.

The organization noted that the Bank's Policy did not provide protection for whistleblowers, arguing that civil servants and other individuals in the public sector sometimes have access to information which may expose official wrongdoing of a very serious nature, but would be afraid to release it because they may face legal or employment-related sanctions. According to MRA, it is increasingly being recognized that protection for individuals who release such information, usually referred to as whistleblowers, was crucial to the exposure of the wrongdoing and to public accountability.

It therefore recommended that the Bank's Policy on Information Disclosure be revised so as to rectify these shortcomings.

In her reply, Mr. Salop said the Bank encourages and undertakes public disclosure when preparing almost all major operational policy and sector strategy papers, adding that the Disclosure Policy review process was one such example, while the preparation of the environmental strategy was another.

According to her, the Bank has been making progress on other documents. She cited a decision by the Bank's Executive Directors in April this year that the disclosure of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and Interim PRSPs would take place before discussion by the Board and said the Chairman's Summings Up of PRSP/Interim PRSP discussions and Heavily-Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) discussions will also be discussed.

Mr. Salop acknowledged the specific suggestions made by MRA in its letter for checks and balances, including the issue of protection for whistleblowers who release information related to official wrongdoing; an independent body to review failure to disclose information by the Bank, the requirement for written explanation for refusal to disclose information, and the requirement that all exceptions be subject to harm and public interest test. She said the issue of protecting whistleblowers and their information was more appropriately addressed in the Bank's Staff Manual and other policy documents relating to the conduct of investigations by the Bank. She promised to convey MRA's proposals to Mr. Maarten de Jong, the Director of the Bank's new Department of Institutional Integrity, for further consideration.

She said the Bank was also collating all the comments and suggestions received for presentation to its Management and the Board of Executive Directors and that MRA's comments and suggestions would be included in that presentation.

The latest indications are that the Bank's staff have recommended against some of the most important openness demands of non-governmental organizations and press groups, which have been campaigning for the institution of a more transparent and accountable process.

If the Bank adopts the recommendations of the staff, it would mean adopting a policy which allows countries to prevent the release of the primary documents guiding policies in their countries, particularly the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS).

In addition, the staff are reported to have rejected a suggestion by the Group of Seven that the Bank should release drafts of the CAs and Project Appraisal Documents (PADs). This idea was considered a way of enhancing public participation and the Bank's legitimacy. But Bank staff turned this down, citing "reputational risks", as their reason.
Also secret under the staff recommendations would be the mid-term reports and other documents evaluating Bank projects and documents describing the conditions of Bank lending in individual countries for structural adjustment.

The minutes of the Bank's board of directors will also be secret.

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GSM Tariffs: An Unjustifiable Venture

The much anticipated rollout of the Global System of Mobile Communication (GSM) is right at the doorsteps of Nigerians, signaling the hope that Nigeria is about to break into the communication highway.

Two of the three licensed operators of GSM operation in Nigeria, Econet and MTN, launched their operations just days before the August 9 deadline set by the Federal Government for the three network to begin business. Government-owned Nitel made it on the nick of time on August 9.

Some of the expected benefits of GSM operation to Nigeria were that more Nigerians would have access to the telephone, which hitherto was the exclusive preserve of people in the high-income bracket. It was also anticipated that the GSM would improve the country's poor teledensity ratio. For instance Nigeria, according to the International Telecommunications Union has a teledensity ration of 250 people to a telephone line as against the minimum standard of 100 people to one telephone lines.

Besides, exposing more Nigerians to telephone services, it was expected that the arrival of GSM operations would also act as a springboard for the technological development of Nigeria since telecommunication is one of the pillars of development. These are in addition to the hope that the GSM regime would expand the scope of Nigerians to boost their freedom of expression.
These expectations almost evaporated when the licensed operators, one after the other announced their tariffs. MTN said a subscriber would need about N50,000 for his line to be activated. There is also a monthly rental of some N4,000 and dial charge of N30 per minute.

Econet, on its part, charges N32 per minute for peak periods beside activation and rental charges, which is almost at par with MTN charges.

These tariffs are clearly higher than what obtains in other parts in the world, especially in Zimbabwe and South Africa where Econet and MTN have their roots. One question that immediately springs to mind is that why do South Africans and Zimbabweans, whose combined population is not up to that of Nigeria, enjoy lower tariff regime for GSM services while Nigeria with her huge population, which is supposed to be a bigger market, has been inflicted with what has been described as excessive tariffs?

It is more worrisome when it is realised that this tariff regime came despite the fact that the licensed GSM operators enjoy tax holidays and other incentives, such as the reduction on import duty payable on telecommunication equipment, from the Government.

This favourable government policy did not make any impression on the licensed operators that stuck to their guns, arguing that prices would crash when more Nigerians hook on to them.

Recent history and available evidence have shown that Nigerians economy is peculiar. When prices are announced, the much vaunted market forces rather than push prices down tend to hike them.

With this scenario, it is clear that telephone, which is supposed to be available to more Nigerians, would continue to be the exclusive preserve of high-income earners.

What interest us, as a free expression organisation, is that this is another assault on free speech, because without access to communication facilities like the telephone, free speech suffers.

LETTERS

Good News From ACHRP

I was cheered to read your story titled: African Commission Declares Niran Malaolu's Trial Unjust (Media Rights monitor V01. 6 No. 5 for May 2001).

I am particularly impressed by the role of Media Rights Agenda played and must commend your effort in achieving that land-mark decision.

The only issue that left a bile in my stomach after reading the story was the attempt by the present Nigerian government headed by President Olusagun Obasanjo to thwart the decision by arguing that the laws under which the journalist was tried was validly made. Such actions leave one unfortunate impression: That this government would readily do a similar thing to a journalist.

Once again, kudos to the African Commission on Human and Peoples Right and MRA’s tenacity for the landmark declaration.

Matthew Ozah
The Guardian
Rutam House
Isolo-Lagos

Improve On Your Circulation

I remain an avid reader of your journal, Media Rights Monitor. I always enjoy its specialised contents from the beginning to the end. I also cherish keeping it for reference purposes.
My only problem with it is that it gets to us in Abuja pretty late. As such, we read you long after publication, when the good stories, facts and other information contained therein would have become stale. I wish you could improve on your circulation, by making it timelier.

I trust you can do even better, given your knack to perfect whatever you are involved in.

Thank you.

Abiodun Adeniyi
The Guardian
Abuja Bureau

Editor’s Note
Dear Mr. Adeniyi,

Thank you for the kind words and confidence reposed on us. We are quite aware of the problem and have mapped out strategies to improve on our circulation.

Thank you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT
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EXECUTIVE WATCH: Nigerians Doubt President Obasanjo's Motive For The Recent Cabinet Reshuffle

Nigerians have expressed hope that the recent cabinet reshuffle will energise the government although opinions were divided on whether the exercise was politically motivated, as is being suggested in some quarters, or meant to drop dead woods for fresh ideas, as the government has assured.

The government was, however, warned that except it takes into account the character of men and women it appoints into Ministerial and other top political offices, in terms of openness, accountability, humility and dedication to duty, drops and publicly prosecute those found fraudulent to serve as deterrent to others, the country will never get out of the woods.

These were the opinion of most Nigerians in a public opinion poll recently conducted by Media Rights Agenda under its Executive Watch project.

In addition to the above, the dominant view of respondents was that the government must ensure that ministerial nominees should be based on professional qualification rather than political consideration, and that government should learn to set goals and targets for ministers and presidential advisers, while routinely evaluating their performance.

When President Obasanjo appointed his ministers and advisers at the inception of his administration two years ago, political observers were quick to note that the appointees were largely composed of faces that had been in and out of political offices for decades. They wondered what fresh ideas, after years of being recycled, the appointees would have to inject into governance.

As criticisms continued to trail the performance of most of the ministers and advisers, the president in a cabinet reshuffle on January 10, 2001, dropped 10 ministers. This did not appear to have solved the problem. For instance, assessment of the first two years of the government, scored the cabinet low.

In another cabinet reshuffle on June 12, 2001, the president dropped four more ministers as well as four presidential advisers. Not only that, the president explained that "the wave of change in his cabinet would be a continuous exercise, based on the continuous monitoring of the ministers and other advisers to see how far they have performed".
Yet, some commentators were of the view that the reshuffling was not far reaching and had left virtually all the faces they considered lacking in ideas behind.

Out of the 8,000 questionnaires issued, 7,163 were filled and returned. This shows a return rate of 89.5 per cent and hence a mortality rate of 10.5 per cent.

Regarding the question which asked: "Do you consider the recent cabinet reshuffle by President Olusegun Obasanjo a solution to the poor performance of the cabinet?", the response pattern shows that 4,242 (59.2 %) respondents out of the total respondents, indicated 'Yes', while 2,401 (35.5 %) answered 'No'. The 520 others (7.3 %) were undecided.

In the question which asked thus: "In your own opinion, which of the two views below would you say accounts for the poor performance of the present government?", respondents were given two options to choose from. These are: A: "Poor performance of the ministers and the presidential advisers", and B: "The government lacks focus and direction".

Out of the total respondents, 3,728 (46.6 %) chose option A, while 2,873 (35.9 %), chose option B. Five hundred and fifty-two others (seven percent), were undecided.

Given the closeness of the percentages of the respondents who chose either option A or B, it seems safe to conclude that the alleged poor performance of the government was attributed to lack of focus on the part of the government and the failure of the ministers and special advisers.

In response to the question: "Do you think if President Obasanjo brings in younger and more energetic people into his cabinet, his government would perform better?", majority of the respondents, precisely 4,459 (52.1 %), said 'Yes', while 2,068 (40.1 %), said 'No'. Six hundred and thirty-six others (7.8 %), were undecided.

In response to a question which asked: 'Do you support the view that the cabinet reshuffle exercise was politically motivated to secure President Obasanjo's success in the 2003 election rather than improve efficiency in governance?, 3,268 (45.6 %) respondents, answered 'Yes', while 3172 (44.3 %), respondents answered 'No'. The remaining 723 (10.1 %) respondents were undecided.

Some commentators have suggested that the desire to secure a second term of office for President Obasanjo in the 2003 elections was the real reason behind the reshufflement.

The outcome of the survey on this issue show that there is a fifty-fifty per cent chance that the average Nigerian does not believe that the cabinet reshuffle predicated on the need to actually deliver the dividends of democracy, which reason the government offered for the exercise.

Asked to suggest ways by which the cabinet could be made to perform better, respondents had a list of eight discernable options.

Top on the list of options is the suggestion that Ministers or Advisers should be composed of men and women of transparent character, accountable, full of humility, and dedication, suggested by 2,241 respondents; Ministers or Advisers found wanting should be dropped and tried publicly to serve as deterrent to others, suggested by 1,177 respondents; Ministerial nominations should be based on professional qualification rather than political consideration, suggested by 1,010 respondents; and Setting goals and targets for ministers and presidential advisers, while evaluating their performances to see that they are accomplishing their targets within time limits no matter the distraction, was suggested by 798 respondents.

Other options are: Re-orientation of the ministers and advisers to rediscover their positions as the protectors of people's rights and interests, suggested by 222 respondents; Creating ways and media through which the president can have direct contact with the masses and listen to them, suggested by 184 respondents; The government should initiate better policies and implement them to the letters, suggested by 118 respondents; and Continuous reshuffling of ministers and advisers, suggested by 84 respondents.

However, 1,331 other respondents were undecided or their responses were not useful.
MEDIA MONITORING PROJECT: Media Surcharges Nigerians

The Nigerian print media has been accused of surcharging the Nigerian people through instances of puffed-up nonsense, which lack any substance and which they pass on as news, even as the broadcast sector is weighed down by technical, social and infrastructural problems. Similarly, many editors have been accused of deliberately engaging in unprofessional and unethical practice of blurring the line between editorial matter and advertisements.

These were the findings of Media Rights Agenda in its second Media Monitoring Reports released recently. The two reports, each covering the print and electronic media, covered the month of June 2001. It include the monitor of nine broadcasting stations made up of four radio and five television stations and fifteen print titles made up of 10 dailies and five weekly magazines.


The reports noted that to a remarkable degree, its findings in the print media during the month of June 2001 are fairly similar to those of May 2001. For example, the figures for monitored reports in each publication either remained constant or showed a slight increase.

It added that in the area of general performance of the print media, it is also almost the same, noting that matters, issues and events which pertain to democratic governance and politics generally continue to receive a lot of attention.

While commending the print media for this, it noted that even more noteworthy is the continuing effort by the editors to write the news in a fair manner. This is to say that instances of malicious bias have become less common.

As in the earlier reports, the monitoring exercise covered four variables. These are democracy, political issues, human rights and public accountability. The data generated in the month showed that of the newspapers, The Punch recorded the highest number of democracy-related reports (216), while the same newspaper also published the highest number of political news (111). ThisDay published 19 human rights-related news in June, the highest, while the same newspaper also published the most reports related to public accountability (38).

In comparative terms, The Punch (22.7%) and The Comet (21.4%) devoted the most space to the four monitored variables as compared to overall news volume. For newsmagazines, The Source (34.6%) and Newswatch (34.5%) recorded the highest figures.

Overall, the 15 monitored titles devoted 15.6% of their space to news relevant to the project. The report noted that these figures were based strictly on news reports and exclude feature-length articles.

The vast majority of publications managed to appear on the newsstands at the appropriate time. However, various production glitches including illegible reports, blotchy printing, wrong story and photo captions, poor quality newsprint and unimaginative page planning which turns newspaper pages into a dreadful gray blur, were prevalent.

On the editorial side, the report observed that many of the monitored reports were puffed up nonsense which lacked any substance. The report accused many editors of deliberately committing the unprofessional and unethical practice of blurring the line between editorial matter and advertisements.

On the basis of the monitored reports, the three tiers of government and their functionaries were the most heavily projected, and the scope of most reports was limited to Nigeria.

In the broadcast sector, the report observed that the television stations monitored accurately reflected the pressures associated with the sector such as the huge start-up costs, high running costs, the do-or-die battle to attract paid commercials, lack of public power supply and
the dearth of good professionals. All these had telling effects on the quality of broadcasting. For example, throughout the month, several stations abruptly went off air due to power failure.

On the editorial side, the report said that like the print media, broadcast station managers have virtually erased the dividing line between news/features and commercials.

In the first week of June, the stations were generally guilty of not using sound-bite in their morning news so as to lend more credence to their reports.

The report accused some broadcast media of skipping some news programmes.

It also said the broadcast media generally promoted government at all levels to the detriment of other organisations and even the political parties, registered or otherwise. Although Democracy Issues received much airtime, the sub-variable Recognition of Opposition had relatively few reports.

The effective use of sound-bites is yet to improve generally especially in the morning bulletins. This trend continued in the third week. For instance, the three stations monitored in Kaduna, (FRCN, KSMC, NTA) did not employ sound-bite and government received the most mentions while only four (4) human rights reports were carried with 335 seconds duration, out of a total 340 news items with duration of 6139 seconds on the three stations.

In instances when there were use of sound-bite, the news turned out to be further enriched. For instance, RN2 Lagos in its 7 am news on June 29 when Major Al-Mustapha (rtd) was accusing former military leader General Abubakar of meddling in the 1997 coup investigation. The station’s use of sound-bite added life and credibility to the report.

A notable trend in June was that although the broadcast media carried more reports on democracy generally, (690 compared with 593 in May), less airtime was actually devoted to the reports with 899.8sec (15hours) in June compared with 999mins 28sec(16 hours, 7mins) for the 593 democracy reports in May.

There was reduction in the number of detailed reports on the airwaves with many sketchy items crying out for follow-up.

In the radio sector, five radio stations were monitored during the month covered by the report. These include Radio Nigeria 2, Lagos; FRCN Kaduna; KSMC Kaduna; Aso FM in Abuja, and Raypower 100.5 FM, Lagos. There were a total of 4314 news reports on radio with a duration of 106 hours (6347 minutes). Out of the total news reports, 1944 were relevant to the issues being monitored and they covered a duration of 40 hours, 47 mins (2416 minutes, 46 seconds).

In the television sector, there were six stations monitored. These are NTA 2 Channel 5, Lagos; NTA Kaduna; NTA Abuja, Channels Television, Lagos; Murhi Television, Lagos; and Minaj Television, Obosi.

There were a total of 2706 news reports on television covering a duration of 100 hours, 9minutes (6341 minutes). Of this total, 673 were relevant to issues being monitored and they lasted a duration of 19 hours, 44 mins (1166 minutes).

Taken issue-by-issue, under Democracy Issues, 690 news items were monitored with 15 hours (899 min,8sec) duration. Radio stations had 420 news reports with a duration of 7 hours, 13 mins(427 mins 53 sec) while TV stations broadcast 270 reports of 8hours duration; Political Issues had 962 news items of 19 hours duration (1139 mins35sec). On radio, there were 677 items for this variable with duration of 10 hours 12 mins(607 min 13 sec).

For the same variable, television stations broadcast 285 reports with duration of 9hours (532 min 22sec). There were 135 news items under the Human Rights variable with a total duration of 3hours. Under it, Radio stations recorded 80 news reports in 1 hour, 22 mins(73minutes) while TV stations aired 55 reports in 104 mins, 43 sec. A total of 157 news items were carried by the broadcast media on the Public Accountability variable in a total time of 3hours, 28 mins (196 mins, 8sec). Of this total, radio stations accounted for 113 reports in 2 hours, 3mins(121mins, 53sec) while television aired 44 items in 1hour, 25 mins (75mins).
In terms of mentions, Government at all levels got the Highest Positive, the three registered political parties (AD, APP, PDP), got the Least Positive, other political organisations got the Highest Negative, and the masses got the Least Negative. The government at all levels was the Most Promoted.

Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory emerged as the area that generated the most news stories, followed by Lagos and Edo states in that order.

Regarding scope of reports, North Central came tops, followed by South West, South South, and South East.

Specifically, the report noted that Radio Nigeria 2 in Lagos routinely used voice-overs and its reports lacked sound-bite. It also noted that many of the station's reports during the month were not balanced as they were one-sided and often needed follow-up. For example, in the 8am news of June 28 in the report of Bola Ige's supposed involvement in the N2.3 billion NEPA scandal, only the National Assembly's accusation was highlighted while the minister's defence was omitted. Also, between June 11 and 16, out of 58 reports, 42 needed follow-up or clarifications.

Also, some of the station's news sounded as if they were lifted from the newspapers, headlines and all. There were examples of these from June 1 to 6 during the 8am and 9am news.

The report said the station gave considerable coverage to government at all levels as well as the masses and their preoccupations. However, the heaviest focus was on political issues with democracy trailing; while human rights sometimes did not receive any coverage. The station ranked first in the number of public accountability reports it carried (31) with a duration of 1633 seconds (27 mins, 22sec). On the whole, RN2 needs more balanced reports.

The report then recommended that editors do everything they can to consult all sides to a dispute before going to press and bear in mind that one-sided stories damage the credibility of journalists and journalism.

It also recommended that editors should undertake to always label advertisements and advertorials rather than the deliberate passing off of some advertisements as editorial matter.

INSIDE THE NEWSROOM: No Army General Is Behind AIT - Lawal

A revolution occurred in the Nigerian broadcast media soon after the 1992 liberalisation of the sector via the Nigeria Broadcasting Commission (NBC) Decree of that year. The event saw private participation in the sector which raised the number and responsiveness of the sector. In this whole exercise, Raypower Radio FM 1 and African Independent Television (AIT), owned by Daar Communication Limited stood out as standard bearers.

It was not to be a long uninterrupted sweet song. Late in year 2000, the stations went off air when creditors of DCL pounced on their facilities to the re-coup the hefty loan it had taken to shore up the fortunes of the stations.

The absence of Raypower and AIT was an opportunity for some of its rivals, including government televisions network Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), to dig deep into the niche of the stations.

After rain comes sunshine. And on its coming back, the stations have been working hard to reclaim their dominance of the airwaves. Part of the salvage mission plan has been to go into alliance with some television stations to expand their reach.

The questions most people ask are: Where did the huge sum for DCL's revival come from? Is television all about entertainment as the stations seem to be suggesting by the avalanche of soaps, music and sports on their belts?
In this interview with Ayode Longe of the MRA Monitor, the General Manager of Daar Communications Mr. Ladi Lawal talks about these and the future of Daar Communications.

Excerpts

For about a year Daar Communications’ broadcast stations - radio and television - were off air and now they are back on air. How has it been since their return?

It's been highly challenging because it is not easy to come from the dead and begin the process of rebuilding your prime position because that is the target that we have set for ourselves for both the radio stations and the television network. We are putting in elaborate dedication and a great deal of tenacity in ensuring that we catch up with lost time and lost grounds. It has been for us a greater presence of mind in terms of professional expectations and the professionalism we've brought to bear in our work.

Do you have the data of the percentage of your programmes in terms of news and current affairs, documentaries and entertainment for the stations? It seems so much emphasis is placed on entertainment?

Well, not on my fingertips, but I can attempt a general estimate because the programming of the stations follow a discernible pattern. Ray Power 100.5FM is essentially a large dose of entertainment spiced with tidbits in terms of relevant information and information that are socio-culturally relevant and of course, developments around the world to be brought to attention of listeners at home. In terms of percentage spread, I would say that for music on Ray 100.5FM, it plays a large dose of that I think it should take about 75% of the spread. Then other programme types, that is, news and other information related programmes take up the remaining 25%. But this is a reverse on RayPower 106.5FM where the percentage spread in terms of programming is almost 75% of news and news programmes or news related programmes, when you put the combination of both the local production and BBC input. Then you have the remaining 25% going essentially to music.

Then on AIT, you have very close to the situation you have in 106.5FM radio. But essentially AIT is spreading itself out on all areas of broadcasting from news production to sports programming, to soaps and drama presentations, to instructional television and very little amount of music and some little dose of entertainment in terms of light hearted presentations. But if you are going to group soaps and drama as entertainment then in that case the percentage will go higher in that regards. That is the kind of spread you have on AIT and I think in that order, news talk programmes, talk shows, all will account for about 60% to 65% of what goes on and the remaining 35% to about 40% will be shared between drama/soap presentations and very little entertainment programmes that you have in terms of musicals.

When I talk about entertainment, I should want to restrict my definition to musicals, sports; news itself as far as I am concerned has its own entertainment values. But then talking in more conventional manner, instructional television programmes account for about five percent of AIT programming.

Have you been able to return your programmes to satellite transmission?

Oh! Absolutely yes, we transmit on satellite. There is no way we can transmit simultaneously in Lagos and Abuja without being on satellite because the same programmes are run at the same time in both stations (cities).

That is to say AIT is received throughout the whole world right now?

Absolutely. Yes.

There is this information circulating that Daar Communications was revived by loans from some retired Army Generals running to millions of dollars. Can you help clarify that?

I am not aware of that assertion. I am not aware that any such assertion was made. If it was made, you've not told me the source. I don't know from where that was picked up. But if there
are such assertions, it is not known to us in Daar Communications. We are not aware of any such help from any such Generals or groups.

Are you aware of how the money was raised to pay the loan?
Absolutely, why not. That was why I am saying I am not aware of any such assertion. But I am aware of the fact that a Financial Consulting group - The BGL Ltd - worked on repackaging financially Daar Communications just like we in broadcast operations worked on the repackaging in terms of the programmes. That is what I am aware of and they were unable to get public placement because of course the company was in financial crises at a point they think it was not attractive to go public and of course there were some other obligations in terms of the number of years the company must attain before going public.

But there were other options taken to them. There were the options of private placement or outright sale but they were able to get a number of individuals who believe that you can have a new beginning that is what I am aware of.

So more or less, Daar Communications Ltd can be regarded as a private shareholding?
Well it remains a wholly indigenous company. A group of persons coming together to assist an entrepreneur, an investor that had problems paying off his debts. That is how the loan was negotiated and paid off. So to that extent, they will also have some interest until whatever agreements that are between them are also tied up. But the ultimate that I am aware all parties are looking up to is to go public. So it is actually not owned by anyone of them. What they have just done is to bail it out of recession, stabilize and then place it before the public.

What is the market situation in terms of competition for advertisement since your return?
The advertising environment in Nigeria is said to be a multibillion naira industry. But in terms of how many organisations are getting a chunk of the multibillion, then you have to look at what percentage of the multibillion naira they are able to get, that is the second aspect of it. Then the third, and I think most important aspect of it, is that advertising does not begin and end with messages put through the electronic medium, it also includes the newspapers, it includes the billboards, it includes other promotional forms that they may want to adopt.

But when you talk about multibillion, how much of the billion comes into the broadcast sector? That is the issue. The atmosphere generally is not as healthy as I think it should because if you look at the industry, as it relates to broadcasting, you still find out that the private entrepreneurs are running side-by-side with government-owned stations which are publicly funded to run after the available advertisement revenue. It then means that one group is better positioned than the other and so the group that is better positioned in terms of government subventions can afford not to charge economical rates in the industry and that puts the others who necessarily must bear their own cost at a disadvantage. Therefore I would say, to that extent, the atmosphere for getting advertising revenue is not as healthy as it should be, I think it could be better and there are a lot of efforts in that direction to ensure that we look at it in a realistic manner and ensure that economic rates are charged for services provided. That is when the industry can develop and grow.

But in terms of advertising revenue, I would say that Daar Communications Ltd is in the thick of sourcing for revenue, providing services in order to get revenue and so far, its been able to do that. But the industry could be better than what it is right now.

That brings us to the July 11 meeting between IBAN and the Management of the NTA. Who where those present, what were the issues discussed and what were the outcome or decisions reached?
I did not attend the meeting. But there was nothing else to discuss, but the single point agenda was how to run the industry without one sector undercutting the other, that people should look at their costs and how realistic the rates that should apply in the market should be.
One is looking at the economies of operations. Essentially. I think there is the realisation that there is no way the industry would survive if you don't bring into consideration the economies of operations and what they do.

**Are you aware if they came out with a consensus position?**
Yes! There was the understanding that the industry must not be allowed to collapse.

**Can you tell us about AINET?**
This thing they call AINET, I like to call it AIT National Network. That's just it, maybe the acronym for it is AINET. It is essentially a project begun by Africa Independent Television about some two, three years ago and this was re-launched in the year 2001. Essentially, it is to bring in major television stations operating in all the 36 states of the federation to come into a collaboration with Africa Independent Television in the production and transmission of programmes. That is what AINET is all about.

**How many stations are presently partners in the network?**
So far effectively there are 23 television stations that have signed up and another 43 radio stations. But essentially all the states of the Federation except maybe for Ogun and Lagos States. Ogun State has expressed its interest but has said for now, for certain reason, it would not join the network. But it has signified its intention of joining the network in the future. But Ogun State was in the former arrangement before AIT was shut down. But you know, not all the states of the federation own television stations.

The AINET arrangement is even right now being looked at as going beyond state stations. It is looking at even bringing in private television stations. Its concept is being expanded to include private television stations which have quality programming that we can integrate in our operations in order to produce local programmes with international appeal this is the entire concept of AINET. It is to further the frontiers of broadcasting in Nigeria and AIT is just acting as the pivot for the efforts and again, it is better placed to further its objectives because of its satellite facilities because transmission will not be restricted but can be expanded. That is why AIT plays a very prime role in the concept that is meant to develop Nigeria's broadcasting primarily.

**Is the Network restricted to news programmes alone?**
Absolutely not. The AIT network arrangement embraces different programme types but the emphasis is for news, documentaries and drama presentations. And in drama presentation, where it has decided to choose, is to look at historical dramas that can be regarded as epics and drama situations that tell the story of the African better. The history of the African could be better appreciated through the eyes of African broadcasters themselves. A number of such historical epics have been lined up for production and it only depends on how far and how speedily we can begin to actualise the dream of the network. But to answer your question, the programme type cuts across all those areas - news, documentaries and historical drama presentations.

The AINET arrangement before re-launch emphasized collaboration in news, but what is going on now has gone beyond that level. The Nigeria/Ghana March, AIT beamed it and it was picked by a number of States including Rivers State. Even sports is also included in our consideration.

**What are the envisaged benefits to the Partners?**
I think the greatest benefit to everybody in it is that there will be greater challenges for us in terms of broadcasting. That means a lot of professionalism will come into our works. It also then means that we will be showcasing our works internationally and taking them to all segments of Nigerians. Other benefits are that you can get your programme to many more people than you ever dreamt of and that also translate into bigger and wider advertisement audience.
Is the AIT network in competition with the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) which claims to reach so many millions of Nigerians?

In terms of its concept, that consideration did not come into focus. In terms of its concept, what I have stated earlier is what we are looking at. But then if now in reality that becomes what it is, if in reality it becomes an alternative national network, it also underscores the essence of coming up with the concept so it is going to help broadcasting in the long run.

How does the network operate? How do you gather, process and broadcast news and what are the stakes of the partners?

There is absolute freedom in newsgathering. Every reporter whose organisation is a part of the network does his own work independently and sends it to the network desk. The network desk is based in Lagos and it is processed for quality and other news considerations. It is processed to ensure there are no obscenities and all such offensive materials to the sensibilities of television viewers.

In terms of content and character it remains the original perception of the reporter that sent it. I think in the states they are expected to have their own crop of network reporters whose focus is to feed the network desk. There are also those we call network monitors who are basically raised from the operating centre here in Lagos and placed in bureaus to see the kind of news and programming coming up from the state stations as some might be of interest that perhaps the network reporters there have not probably had time to look into and all that. They can pick that one, investigate it further and report it, independent of even the network reporter from whom it originated.

Who makes the decision on what news story to air?

Well, we've not had any cause to reject any story that has been sent by any reporter. A reporter in the network only needs to fill up his airtime. If he has five minutes in a 30 minutes bulletin, he tries to produce a report reflecting his own area to cover that time. There is no policy of rejection, I think the report will only be rejected on the grounds of quality and if proper attention has not been placed on professional considerations like fairness, like balance and accuracy. If a report indicates that the Nigerian state gained independence in 1947 you know that obviously is factual error. We won't say that because it is from a network reporter it should go. We would draw the attention of the reporter to the fact that there must have been an error. So at the network desk in Lagos we have the responsibility to all such considerations. But like I said, nobody tampers with the essence of the report.

For advert, we take intra-news programme adverts. That is, if we are going from one transition to the other, the period in between, commercial advertisement can be taken, but not as part of the news. There is a distinctive break for commercial as opposed to being the news. If we have one hour to do the news, five or ten minutes of the one hour is for commercial considerations and there are transmissions that break the news before the commercials.

How do you share the revenue that accrues from adverts carried on the network?

There is an agreement amongst the partners. After the deduction of production and other costs, every partner then becomes an equal partaker.

How do you broadcast your network programmes; do partners link up with AIT?

Yes, that is what they do. There is what we call the network belt. The network partners link up with Lagos at that period. If you are unable to do so for whatever reason you advise the network desk on reasons why you were unable to hook up. But it is not on record that any station has not been hooking up.

But even when you have signed the convention to be part of the network, you are also free to opt out of certain belts of it. And you may also wish to take the belt you want to take. What is important is for us to be able to know which belts you are taking. We then know the character of your station what you think not what I think that you want. Some stations may just
say okay, we are not taking the soap belt; the drama presentation, we are not taking it any longer but they would continue to take the news belt. But that does not remove the soap belt from the network arrangement. There are other network partners who would be taking it at that time. The state stations that are in the partnership are owned by state government there could be other considerations and that is why there must be a more enduring arrangement for a viable national network.

That is why we are saying the AIT as a global satellite television has the resources to set up bureaus all over the country so that it can be able to control its own transmission that this is our national programme for the entire Nigerian territory and so the bureaus in the states will link up at that time because they are also controlled by it. Whereas the state-owned stations at that time may say I am not hooking up but the bureaus in those states would still link up. The process of setting up the bureaus side by side the state stations have also been started by AIT and hopefully by end of December we would have firmed solidly in about six, seven states in all the geopolitical zones in the country and then we can have an effective coverage of the whole country independent of even members of the network partners. But that does not exclude them from the network arrangement because they also have their own audience in their own states. Even if there are ten television stations in one particular state each station will have its own audience.

But then if you want to achieve the culture of network programming and network viewing there should be such a network as we are talking about that will ensure that at the same time, all of us can receive some form of information about what is going on in Sokoto state, in Rivers State, in Bauchi, in Lagos State, in Kwara State, in Kogi State, at the same time without waiting till next day to read the newspapers to find out or waiting till the third day or fourth day before papers get to certain areas or not even getting the information at all because newspapers do not even get to the people in these rural communities. By means of radio and television, information has reached far larger number of people at the same time. But that does not stop them from tuning in for local information about their own area. Then in terms of documentary presentation I am able to understand and appreciate the vast nature of Nigeria from the different documentary presentations that will come during the documentary belt of the network.

**Could you explain the Internet services you intend to go into?**

AIT also hopes to provide bandwidth to ISPS and cyber cafe operators. In fact there are so many things we can do with the facilities we have. But I am not going to talk of what we can do or the capacity we have but I am talking of what we are into now. What we are doing now is restricted to the ISPS and we want to do stranding on mobile telephones whereby you can listen to our stations and pick whatever information you want at any time. These are the projects ahead of us. But the capacity we can build on the Internet is quite enormous. Until it comes up I don't want to be talking about them because we are not doing them yet. There are several things we can do with our facilities including telephony.

**International Media Organisations Write Obasanjo Over Prosecution Of Journalist**

The World Association of Newspapers and World Editors Forum, which represent more than 17,000 publications in 93 countries, and the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), have written to President Olusegun Obasanjo expressing what they called "serious concern" at the prosecution of a journalist, Nnamdi Onyenwa, on charges of criminal defamation.

Mr. Onyeuma, editor of the weekly Glamour Trends, was on June 8 arrested by armed policemen at the offices of Millennium Communications, which publishes the Lagos-based
magazine. The officers fired their guns in the air to disperse employees before arresting Mr. Onyeuma. He was subsequently driven to Abuja under heavy police escort.

Mr. Onyeuma's arrest followed an article entitled, Secrets Behind Obasanjo's Trips, that appeared in the magazine's June 6 edition. The article alleged that President Obasanjo receives US$1 million in allowances for each overseas trip, and that as at 30 May, the president had amassed US$58 million in allowances over two years.

Shortly after the article appeared, President Obasanjo wrote a letter to the office of the Inspector General of Police stating that these allegations were not true and called on the police to institute an investigation.

Mr. Onyenwa was detained for more than 11 days pending investigation of the case, although Nigerian law mandates that no suspect should be held for more than 24 hours without formal charges. Mr. Onyeuma was arraigned on June 19, when he was charged with publishing false information and criminally defaming President Obasanjo, thereby committed an offence punishable under section 392 of the Penal Code Law. He was released on bail.

While calling on President Obasanjo to discontinue the prosecution of Mr. Onyeuma and that all criminal charges against him be dropped, they urged the president to use the opportunity to ensure that defamation is decriminalised in Nigeria and replaced with appropriate civil remedies.

In the letter dated July 6 and signed by Roger Parkinson, President of WAN, and Gloria Brown Anderson, President of WEF, they said that the criminal law is a wholly inappropriate means of dealing with the issue of defamation, and that such practice contravenes a number of international agreements. It then re-stated its belief that a civil award of reasonable damages is adequate and appropriate relief in all proven cases of libel.

The CPJ, in its own letter dated July 2, expressed similar concerns. It added that while Nigeria's vibrant press is once again covering important political and economic issues under the president's administration, journalists still face legal restrictions and periodic hostility. It observed that although press freedom is guaranteed in Section 22 of the Nigerian Constitution, harsh criminal defamation laws remain in the books. Moreover, publishers can be jailed for up to three years and fined substantial sums for failing to register with the newly formed government Press Council.

Meanwhile, Mr. Onyeuma has sued the Inspector General of Police (IG), Mr. Musiliu Smith claiming N10 million damages for violating his fundamental human rights.

In the suit pending before a Federal High Court, Abuja, Onyeuma is asking the court to declare that his arrest and detention were a breach of his rights to freedom of expression and the press." He further wants the court to hold that the act was an infringement on his rights to freedom of movement, unconstitutional, null and void.

For the alleged act of violation of his rights and illegal detention, Onyeuma is praying the court to award him N10 million as exemplary damages against the Inspector General and Attorney General of the Federation.

Onyeuma also urged the court to declare the "invasion of his business premises on June 8, 2001 by fully armed policemen acting on behalf of the IG and his subsequent harassment, brutalisation and deportation from Lagos to Abuja illegal and unconstitutional".

The suit filed by Onyeuma's counsel, Chief Fred Agbaje, contends that the alleged "harassment and brutalisation in this era of democratic governance when the Rule of Law is supposed to be the order of the day, is not only embarrassing but also wicked and illegal".

He is also challenging the legality of what he called his "hurried arraignment" before a Magistrate's Court in Abuja for the "bogus offence of Criminal defamation".

He indicated that the conditions and manner under which he was arrested were not justifiable under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999. He added that unless
the court grants him the remedies sought, "the applicant and other journalists could be further subjected to more arrest and detention by the Inspector-General". Hearing in the matter is yet to be fixed.

**Give Women A Chance**

A plea has been made to media owners and managers to provide an enhanced welfare package for Nigerian journalists to make them incorruptible and able to play greater role in politics, economy and the media. The call came at the end of a five-day workshop on investigative journalism organised for women editors and other female journalists. The workshop under the theme: "The Media and the Campaign Against Corruption," also recommended that government should provide easier access to information to ensure that journalists play their role meaningfully in the anti-corruption crusade. Participants, therefore, urged the National Assembly to expedite action on the proposed bill on freedom of information act in order to remove the encumbrances in the way of journalists seeking information in the interest of the Nigerian public.

The workshop recommended that since women have been adjudged as being less prone to corruption, they should be encouraged to participate in all aspects of the socio-political and economic life of the nation and advocated that female journalists should be encouraged to maximise their potentials so that they could impact positively on the anti-corruption crusade with their natural instinct.

They counseled that alongside the training and re-training of journalists in investigative journalism, journalists should also educate themselves on the ethics and code of conduct of the profession, the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act 2000 as well as other relevant legal instruments existing in Nigeria. The journalists advised colleagues in the industry to be thorough in their investigation and reportage of corrupt practices to complement the efforts of the commission.

In carrying out their assignments, they urged journalists to see their role as members of the fourth estate of the realm in the anti-corruption crusade, as very vital. They emphasised the need to empower the media to perform their role as the watchdog of the society effectively through skill development in investigative journalism so that journalists could better undertake the investigation into corruption in an ethical manner. The participants also argued that the media must be self-regulatory and police itself to rid itself of corrupt practices.

Participants at the workshop called on the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission to live up to the expectations of Nigerians and ensure that it did not become a toothless bulldog.

Jerry Gana, minister of information and national orientation, in his opening address said that the planning and execution of the workshop were very timely and strategic in view of the extremely important role which investigative journalism must play in the campaign for eradicating corruption in the society.

"It is expected that investigative and developmental journalism will take a firm root and expand in Nigeria thereby providing a strong and sustainable base, not only for urgent struggle against corruption, but for the promotion of democracy, good governance and development," he said.

Ian Ferguson, Canadian high commissioner to Nigeria, said that the gender approach was a welcome innovation to show that women journalists might have a different perspective on some issues and face special challenges in the work place. Ferguson, however, said that the CIDA's participation in the workshop was to help in fostering stronger watchdog role for the Nigerian media, among other things.
NPAN, IBAN May Settle Out Of Court

There are indications that the newspaper owners, under the auspices of the Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN), and the Independent Broadcasting Association of Nigeria (IBAN) who have been in court over the daily review of newspapers on the air waves, may settle out of court after all.

This indication was given by counsel to NPAN, Mr. Tayo Oyetibo, on July 23 at the resumed hearing of the suit at a Federal High Court in Lagos.

Mr. Oyetibo, told the presiding judge Justice Abdullahi Mustapha that he had received a letter from the defendants proposing an out of court settlement. As a show of good faith, IBAN, he said, had agreed to stop the review of the newspapers by July 20.

In the letter, signed by Dr., Raymond Dokpesi, chief executive of African Independent Television (AIT) and chairman of IBAN, and addressed to his counterpart in Minaj Broadcasting International (MBI), Chief Mike Ajegbo, Dokpesi said IBAN members agreed to shelve the review to facilitate an out-of-court settlement.

In the letter captioned: "Press review - discontinuation" Dokpesi said: "I wish to inform you that after the meeting that was held with the executives of Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN) on the amicable resolution and out-of-court settlement of the on-going court case on the above subject, it was mutually agreed that press reviews on radio and television stations should be discontinued effective Wednesday July 18, 2001 or at the latest Friday July 20, 2001.

"Please note that this action became imperative to ensure the economic survival of the print media and indeed the entire media industry.

"On our part in IBAN, we should demonstrate a strong willingness to make any sacrifice towards the continued existence of the media industry as we are now being required to.

"This development should therefore not constitute a weakness but collective strength for the promotion of the interest of the media industry".

On the strength of the letter Justice Mustapha adjourned the case till July 27 to enable the parties report on the terms of settlement to the court.

The defendants were represented in court by Mr. Edwin Anikem and Deacon Dele Adesina.

HALF-YEAR REPORT: 33 Journalists Killed - WAN

As the year 2001 crosses the mid-point, a total of 33 journalists and other media workers have been killed so far. Most of the killings were in Latin America and Asia. The World Association of Newspapers (WAN) say the perpetrators derived pleasure from killing. The report said that eleven of the killings took place in Latin America, with Colombia alone accounting for eight. In Asia, nine journalists have been killed this year, with five of them slain in the Philippines.

According to the report, "although the number of journalists killed in warfare has declined from previous years, there is a disturbing increase in what appear to be retributive attacks". The report added that Colombia is the most dangerous place in the world to practice journalism, and in the Philippines, where separatists may have been responsible for some of the murders this year.

It also fingered Spain in the heart of the European Union, where Basque terrorists have been targeting journalists.

Other countries where the report say journalists and other media workers have also been murdered are in Algeria, Mexico, Angola, Bangladesh, China, Costa Rica, France, Indonesia, Iraq, Kuwait, Macedonia, Nigeria, Paraguay, Serbia, Somalia, Thailand and Ukraine.
Thirty-three journalists were killed in the same period in year 2000, when a total of 53 journalists were killed during the course of the year, according to WAN's figures.

But the 33 journalists killed during the first six months of this year fall substantially below the 43 killed in the same period in 1999, when wars in Yugoslavia and Sierra Leone counted for the toll.

Soon after WAN's release of these numbers two more murders took place. On 22 July, police in Bangladesh recovered the mutilated body of Ahsan Ali, a correspondent for the Dainik Jugantor newspaper in Rupganj, and Colombia community leader and broadcaster Eduardo Estrada Gutiérrez was on July 16 assassinated in the municipality of San Pablo, in the Bolívar department.

Ahsan had been missing since leaving his house on 20 July. His killing may be linked to a land dispute with a relative. However, his wife claimed Ashan had also received death threats five days before his death from Meher Ali, a local leader of the Chattra Dal movement, the student-wing of the Awami League, who has similarly been accused of attacking two other journalists.

Eduardo Estrada Gutiérrez was assassinated by unknown individuals as he was heading home with his wife after attending a family gathering. Estrada Gutiérrez, fifty-three years old, was the president of the Association for the Development of Communications and Culture in San Pablo (ADECOSAN) and was working to set up a community radio station in the municipality.

A number of locals believe that members of the right-wing paramilitary United Self Defence Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia) are responsible for the murder.

Open Electronic Conference on HIV/AIDS Holds In Nigeria

Journalists Against AIDS (JAAIDS) Nigeria has began a six-months long Open Electronic Conference on key HIV issues on the Nigeria-AIDS electronic Forum (www.nigeria-aids.org/eforum.cfm)

The exercise will include open discussion of key HIV-related issues among HIV/AIDS activists and advocates as well as governmental, non-governmental, multilateral and community-based organisations in the Nigeria.

According to JAIDS, the principal objective of this project is to build effective networking, stakeholders' participation and transparency in the implementation of the HIV/AIDS Emergency Action Plan (HEAP) as well as the general response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Nigeria.

It is also intended to enhance national exchange of information and experience between HIV/AIDS workers and organisations, the private sector, community organisations, PWAs, the media etc in Nigeria, and as well highlight good practices and promote multi-sectoral partnerships.

Further, the exercise is intended to facilitate stakeholders’ participation in the HIV/AIDS policy making and implementation process, through encouragement of open discourse on issues among forum members, and serve as a forum for polling opinions, evaluation and feedback on legislation, interventions, strategies, projects etc by governmental and non-governmental agencies and encouraging stakeholders' input into these processes.

It is further to encourage openness, transparency and accountability in the national response to HIV/AIDS, facilitate the formation of a broad-based national response to HIV/AIDS and serve as a model for an exchange forum and communication network on HIV/AIDS in the West African sub-region.
To moderate the exercise, it has six correspondents, including a person living with HIV, representing each of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria, as well two co-moderators overall moderators.

To join in the discussions, please send an email to: susbcribe-eforum@nigeria-aids.org or visit: www.nigeria-aids.org

**BBC Trains Nigeria Sub-Editors**

The gate-keepers of some Nigerian print media organisations, sub-editors, had some practical lessons on their work recently. It was at the occasion of a training organised for them by the British Broadcasting Corporation, BBC, between July 16 and 20, in Lagos.

The training covered such areas as news value and judgment, editorial policy, correcting copy, headline and caption writing, using outside sources, libel and pictorial defamation etc. Marian Hens, a seasoned and experienced journalist and senior trainer from BBC World Service Training in London coordinated the course. She advised participants to practicalise the knowledge they gained in their respective newsrooms.

Participants were selected from 10 media organisations. They include Daily Times, Daily Sketch, Thisday, National Interest among others. They expressed their appreciation for the training promised to put the knowledge they acquired into practice in their newsrooms.

**Eighteen Press Freedom Organisations Decry State of Press Freedom In Southern Africa**

Eighteen press freedom organisations led by the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), have signed a joint appeal highlighting recent press freedom violations in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). They are all IFEX members. In a 29 June letter to Namibian President and SADC Chairperson Sam Nujoma, the organisations expressed grave concern over the Botswanan government's ban on advertising in the Botswana Guardian and the Midweek Sun, the Swazi government's ban on The Guardian and The Nation and the Namibian government's ban on the purchase of The Namibian by government institutions.

In Botswana, a government official confirmed on May 1 that the government had decided to withdraw its advertising from the Botswana Guardian and the Midweek Sun due to the newspapers' critical reporting, according to the appeal. The two newspapers are currently challenging the advertising ban in the courts.

On May 30, Namibian President Sam Nujoma ordered a total ban on government purchases of The Namibian. The directive came on the heels of a December 5, 2000, decision to ban government ministries from advertising in the newspaper on the grounds that it maintained an "anti-government stance," according to the letter. The government-affiliated National Youth Council of Namibia and the country's ruling party, the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), have since joined the boycott of the newspaper. The government is the country's single biggest advertiser.

In Swaziland, the Minister of Information banned The Nation magazine and The Guardian newspaper on May 4. Both publications are known to support democratic government in Swaziland and are critical of King Mswati III's rule by decree since the suspension of Swaziland's constitution in 1973. The country's High Court ruled on 18 May that the closure of The Nation was "illegal." A verdict on The Guardian closure was imminent when, on June 22, the king signed a decree allowing government ministers to ban publications without providing any reasons and without legal proceedings.

According to the joint appeal, the actions of the Botswanan, Namibian and Swaziland governments contradict the freedom of expression principles enshrined in the African Charter on
Human and People's Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Windhoek Declaration on the establishment of a free, independent and pluralistic African press.

The eighteen organisations are calling on President Nujoma to withdraw the ban in his country and, as the SADC chairperson, "to remind southern African governments of the commitment they made when signing these regional and international instruments that promote freedom of expression, including media freedom."

Malawan Journalists To Receive Compensation

A Malawan judge, Ombudsman Enock Chibwana, on June 28, awarded two Malawian journalists compensation for being unlawfully detained two years ago. The benefiting journalists are Daily Times acting chief reporter Mabvuto Banda and the late Malawi News editor Horace Somanje 30,000 Malawi Kwacha (approximately US$395).

Banda and Somanje were arrested on June 21, 1999, following the publication of a Malawi News article that quoted opposition supporters encouraging the army to take over the government. The opposition supporters, who had gathered outside the High Court in Blantyre to contest election results following alleged vote-rigging, said they could not endure five more years under President Bakili Muluzi and the ruling United Democratic Front.

Despite protests from local and international media groups, the two journalists spent two days in jail, only to have the charges of inciting mutiny dropped a year later. In his ruling, the Ombudsman stated that "it is not a crime to report on events; it is absurd, backwardness and bad governance to arrest such neutral journalists." The award comes too late for Somanje, who died on June 23.

If the government pays, it would be the second recent case in which African journalists have been compensated for having suffered human rights violations. In June, Albert Mukong, a Cameroonian journalist and human rights activist who took his case to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, received US$137,000 from the Cameroon government in compensation for the abuses he suffered.

Tunisian Journalist Arrested For Criticising Regime

The Tunisian authorities on June 26 arrested and detained journalist and human rights activist Sihem Bensedrine for criticising the regime on a London-based television programme, according to Reporters sans frontières (RSF) and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Bensedrine, editor of the online magazine Kalima, secretary-general of the Observatory for the Defence of Freedom of the Press, Publishing and Creation (OLPEC) and spokesperson for the National Council for Liberties in Tunisia (CNLT), was detained at Tunis airport upon her return from France.

Her arrest follows a 17 June appearance on Al Mustaquilla television, during which she raised the issue of corruption in Tunisia. Bensedrine is charged with "undermining the authority of the judiciary" and "spreading false information with the aim of undermining public authority".

To increase public awareness of Bensedrine's arrest, some 20 members of RSF and Tunisian activists occupied the Tunisian tourist office in Paris on June 28 and 29. The protesters have continued to put posters of Bensedrine on the tourist office's windows daily and handing out information about the arrest in front of the both the tourist office and the Air Tunis agency in Paris.

Tunisian President Zine Al-Abdine Ben Ali appears on both CPJ's list of the "Ten Worst Enemies of the Press" and RSF's list of "Thirty Press Freedom Predators."
African ISP Association Formed

Internet Service Providers in various African countries have formed an umbrella organisation known as afrISPA. The formation took place at a recent ISP Forum held at the ACT 2001 Summit. The association is expected to represent the interests of member ISP associations in negotiations with international, regional and national Government bodies.

It will also seek to influence African IT and Telecommunications policy, in order to create a positive regulatory environment for the development of the Internet in Africa. One of the first tasks of the group will be to reach out to all ISPs in Africa, and encourage the formation of national ISPAs, where these do not yet exist.

Speaking on behalf of the group, Eric Osiakwan, Secretary of the Ghana ISPA, said that the formation of the group was the outcome of intense discussions regarding internet development during the ISP Forum, which brought together over 70 ISP representatives and other interested parties from across Africa. "This is an important step forward for Internet development in Africa. It is vital for ISPs across the continent to co-operate together to promote their common interests in relation to IT and telecommunications regulation; to exchange knowledge and information; and where appropriate, to develop national Internet exchanges to reduce international communication costs."

ATTACKS ON THE PRESS IN JULY 2001

Journalist Assaulted By Security Operatives

A journalist with the Akwa Ibom Newspaper Corporation, publishers of the Pioneer newspaper, Mr. Okon Sam, was on April 23, assaulted by security operatives on the entourage of President Obasanjo. The incident took place at the main gate of the International Conference Centre Abuja during the extra-ordinary meeting of the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP).

Sam who along with many other journalists, Cameramen and Photographers, had gone to cover the ceremony, were harrased at the gate by security men on the entourage of the president who ignored the press identity cards that the journalists conspicuously displayed on their chest. They brushed aside attempts by the journalists to show that they were duly accredited to cover the event and Sam was punched and butted with gun (shettima AK47), which the security man turned into a cane.

As a result, Sam sustained injuries on his head and arm, which was also dislocated. Similarly, his mini tape-recorder was damaged and his clothes were torn.

He was subsequently hospitalized at both Abuja and Uyo where doctors diagnosed that he had internal bleeding.

Principal Locks Up Journalists

A school principal in Abeokuta, the Ogun State capital on July 17 "arrested and detained" two journalists in her Onikolobo office, accusing them of unnecessary intrusion. The journalists are from The Post Express newspapers and Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN).

The journalists were in the school premises to investigate why the JSSIII pupils in the school, were writing their examinations on bare floor when they were rounded up by the principal and some members of staff. The situation in the school contradicted the claims made at various times by Governor Olusegun Osoba of Ogun State that his administration had purchased thousands of chairs and desks for secondary school pupils in the state.
The principal was further incensed when she learnt that the journalists had already taken pictures of the pupils while they were writing their examination without chairs and tables. She then ordered that the journalists be locked up in her office.

She refused to listen to the journalists' explanations that their investigation was in the interest of the public and threatened to hand them over to the police for prosecution.

They finally let off following the intervention of some officials of the National Examination Council (NECO) and other persons who were marking scripts in the school, which is a NECO centre.

She rebuffed attempts by other journalists who came with intent to speak with her instructing her staffers not to allow any journalist inside the premises.

The vice-principal, Mr. Farounbi told journalists that he was too busy to facilitate any meeting with his principal.

Security Agents Haunts Journalists

The management of Insider Weekly magazine has alerted the public to harassment by persons suspected to be security agents against its editors and reporters.

The weekly magazine based in Lagos in a statement signed by its management said that in Abuja and Kaduna "our senior editors are being trailed by people we suspect to be security agents". The statement added that in Lagos on July 19, the trend took a dramatic turn when a man who identified himself as Ben Ojo working for the Nigerian Customs Service called at the organisation's business premises. The man demanded evidence of payment of Customs duties on the cars and trucks the organisation purchased several months ago from the open market.

In addition to the visit by Mr. Ojo, the statement added that its editors had received several anonymous calls threatening them over a story that appeared in the magazine some weeks earlier titled: Stella Obasanjo's Sex Scandals.

One of such calls was said to have been received July 20, at exactly 7.40p.m. The caller threatened to deal with the magazine's editors.

Government Officials Break into Media Offices

Officials of the Jigawa State Chieftaincy Department led by the Special Adviser to the Governor on Chieftaincy matters, Alhaji Abdulkadir Adamu sometime during the month of July broke into the flat housing Daily Times and news Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Dutse the state capital.

Alhaji Adamu, the Sarkin Sanun Kazaure ordered his men to break into the office claiming that the state government had allocated the block housing the media houses to the Department. The officials who capitalized on the inability of Daily Times official to sustain their presence and restructure their apartment damaged the media organisation's property.

The officials equally attempted to throw out NAN properties, but they were stopped by NAN officials who were present at the time. The government officials locked the Daily Times part of the offices and left with a promise to begin re-structuring work on it soon.

Correspondent Alleges Threat To His Life

Mr. Murphy Ganagana, the National Interest newspaper correspondent in Benue State on July 18 petitioned the Director of the state’s States Security Services (SSS), alleging a plot by some people to eliminate him.

He alleged in the letter that following the publication of a front page story in the National Interest of July 14 titled: Contract Scam Rocks Benue State, which he wrote, some unknown persons whom he suspected to be hired thugs began to trail him wherever he goes.
Mr. Ganagana, who subsequently went into hiding, stated in his petition that prior to the said publication, the State Commissioner for Information, Mr. Tevhemba Shija had warned him not to publish the story.

He said in his petition that; "I wish to state categorically that in the even of any physical attack on my person or any member of my family, the Benue State government should be held responsible."

**Governor Threatens Journalists With Sharia**

Dr. Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso, of Kano State issued a stern warning to journalists in the state during the month of July, to report true happenings in the state or be arraigned at a Sharia court. He spoke at a parley with the correspondents chapel of the State’s Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ).

The governor expressed disappointment with alleged attempt by some journalists to discredit his administration saying that his administration would not ignore negative reports. He said he wants peace in Kano but claimed some media reports are anti-peace and development.

**Media Correspondents In Zamfara Allege Persecution**

The Correspondent’s Chapel of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) in Zamfara State, on July 26 alleged incessant persecution of its members by the Director of Press to the Governor, Mallam Bashir Sanda.

The Secretary of the Chapel, Mallam Mohammed Sabiu said that "Many of our members have gone underground following allegations of anti Islamic or anti sharia activities by the government."

In a letter to the governor on July 26, Mallam Sadiu said the director recently ordered the arrest of a journalist of one of the dailies and that he was "in the habit of threatening members of the correspondent chapel saying he could influence their transfer or dismissal."

He added that the director of press does not invite journalists when there are official functions. He recalled that the chapel had in December 1999 written to the director to mend his ways, but observed that he has, unfortunately, not changed and continue to consider the press as an enemy.

The journalists, therefore, threatened that beginning from July 27 they would begin to boycott all government house activities as long as Sanda remains the director of press.

The Commissioner for Information, Ibrahim Dan Galadima, however, said that government had not ordered the arrest of any journalist and promised to look into the matter.

**Varsity Students Attack Newspaper Office**

Over a thousand Students of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko in Ondo State on July 25 attacked The Punch newspaper office in Akure, the state capital, threatening to Lynch the state correspondent, Mr. Tunde Adesola. The student’s unruly behaviour followed the publication of a story in its July 24 edition under the caption: Adefarati Advises Students On Use Of English.

On July 26, the students repeated their visit to the newspaper's office in protest over another publication in the day's edition of the paper of a story titled: Polish Your English, Adefarati Tells Students. They vandalised the office and destroyed several copies of the paper.

The publications followed Governor Adefarati's disappointment and admonition of the students of the University to improve in their use of English at two different occasions.

The invading students question The Punch's rationale for publishing the story asking if it was the only newspaper in Nigeria. They also boasted that as university students, they 'can do and undo.'
The Nigerian Union of Journalists in the state in a letter to the governor condemned the attack describing the students' act as ignoble as the publications were based on the truth. In the same vein, the governor condemned the attack.

**Journalists Barred From Election Venue**

Scores of journalists including those who traveled from as far as Lagos who thronged the Eagle Square, Abuja to monitor the elections of the 29 National Sports Association were on July 31 turned back from entering the venue.

Policemen manning the only gate leading to the venue told the newsmen that only a few would be allowed into the venue of the elections. They said they were acting on the instructions of the Ministry of Sports and Social Development, organizers of the elections.

After over three hours of persuasions and protests, an information officer in the Ministry came out and read a list of journalists who would be allowed entry into the Square.

**JOURNALISM / PRESS FREEDOM AWARDS**

**Applications sought for Natali Prize for West African Journalism**

Applications are currently being received for the Natali Prize for West African Journalism. The prize seeks to encourage reporting which recognizes the value of human rights and democracy in the fight for fair and just social and economic development. The competition is organised by the countries of the European Union in honour of the late Lorenzo Natali, Vice President of the European Commission with special responsibilities for development issues.

The Prize is awarded to print journalists who have demonstrated a striking insight and particular dedication to the reporting of human rights issues within the context of the development process.

Application form and rules for the competition can be obtained from: mfdafrica@sentoo.sn, waja@africaonline.com,gh, bettina.peters@ifj.org

Deadline for application is OCTOBER 26. Applicants need submit only ONE ARTICLE, else will be disqualified.

**Senior Fellowship For International Peace Available**

The United States Institute of Peace is receiving applications for the 2002-2003 Senior Fellowship competition in the Jennings Randolph Programme for International Peace. Fellowships are awarded annually to scholars and practitioners from a variety of professions, including college and university faculty, journalists, diplomats, writers, educators, military officers, international negotiators and lawyers.

The Institute funds projects related to preventive diplomacy, ethnic and regional conflicts, peacekeeping and peace operations, post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation and related topics.

Fellows reside at the Institute for a period of up to ten months to conduct research on their projects. The competition is open to citizens of all nations. Women and members of minorities are especially encouraged to apply.

The deadline for applications is September 17, 2001.

For more information, contact rap21@wan.asso.fr

**CAMECO Seeks Staff Member For Africa Desk**

The Catholic Media Council (CAMECO) is receiving applications for a vacant position at the Africa Desk. Applicants should possess a proven track-record in the field of communication and/or journalism.
The work consists of the evaluation of media projects and facilitating the final decision of European agencies concerning the effectiveness and feasibility of their projects. Currently, the printing area and the setting-up of community radio networks is the demand and priority in the respective African regions.

Applicants should have university degree or relevant professional experience in the field of media/communications. They should also have significant experience in the religious and social situation in African countries and the ability to work collaboratively in a multicultural setting. Excellent command of English, some Portuguese and German would be helpful and the successful applicant will be based in Germany.

For more information, contact rap21@wan.asso.fr

Groups Seeks Details For Gender Consultants Database

Gender and Development information unit at the Institute of Development Studies in the United Kingdom, is currently compiling an on-line database of contact details for worldwide gender consultants (and specialist organisations). The database will primarily be used by development co-operation agencies seeking specific skills and knowledge beyond their own areas of expertise. They will be able to search for gender experts by name, organisation, specialisation (subject, sector, region, country), geographical location, and language capabilities.

The gender consultants database will be accessible through genie (gender information exchange), a new web site featuring gender mainstreaming resources from donor agencies and their partners. It forms part of the new BRIDGE programme to facilitate the exchange of information and resources on gender and development.

Interested persons are requested to send their details to the BRIDGE gender consultants database then access the on-line form at http://www.genie.ids.ac.uk/resource1.htm.

In the alternative contact Emma Bell on e-mail: E.Bell@ids.ac.uk

WAN Gives Golden Pen Awards

The World Association of Newspapers (WAN) at the World Newspaper Congress and World Editors Forum, held from 3 to 6 June in Hong Kong, presented its 2001 Golden Pen of Freedom to imprisoned Burmese journalists San San Nweh and U Win Tin. Both journalists, imprisoned for their support of Burma's freedom movement, have suffered unspeakable hardships and are in poor health, says WAN.

Prison authorities have offered to release them if they renounce all political activity, and both have refused to do so. The prize was accepted on their behalf by Burmese actor and democracy advocate Aung Ko, who said: "U Win Tin and San San Nweh will never lose their heart and never change their mind for the cause which is noble to them."

The events included a round-table gathering of some of the world's "press freedom heroes" -- from Albania, Armenia, Colombia, Czech Republic, Malaysia, Pakistan, Russia, Spain, Syria and Zimbabwe - to discuss success stories from some "hot spots" in the fight for freedom of expression.

2001 Hellman/Hammett Grants Honour Persecuted Writers

Twenty-seven writers from 20 different countries have been awarded the Hellman/Hammett grants in recognition of the courage with which they have faced political persecution, by the Human Rights Watch (HRW).

Among the recipients is Chadian investigative journalist Daniel Bekoutou, whose reports played a key role in the international effort to hold Chadian dictator Hissène Habré accountable for crimes against humanity.

The awards also recognise Russian journalist Grigory Pasko, who faces a prison sentence of 12 to 20 years for his writing on the dumping of Russian nuclear waste in the Sea of Japan.
This year's recipients of the grants, which totalled US$175,000, also included: Aung Pwint (Burma), Mikel Azurmendi (Spain), Bei Ling (China), Bui Ngoc Tan (Vietnam), Chan Mony (Cambodia), Mridula Garg (India), Carmen Gurruchaga (Spain), Kong Bun Chhoeun (Cambodia), Moncef Marzouki (Tunisia), Gemechu Melka Tufa, pen name Motii Biya, (Ethiopia), Dunya Mikhail (Iraq), Octovanius Mote (Indonesia), Hasan Mujtaba (Pakistan), Maria Petreu (Romania), Pham Que Duong (Vietnam), Esmat Qaney (Afghanistan), Wang Yiliang (China) and Sanar Yurdatapan (Turkey).

Other recipients remain anonymous because of the dangerous circumstances in which they are living.

The annual grants began in 1989 when the estates of American authors Lillian Hellman and Dashiell Hammett asked HRW to design a programme for writers in financial need as a result of expressing their views.

HRW notes that Hellman and Hammett were both interrogated in the 1950s about their political beliefs and affiliations; Hellman by the House Un-American Activities Committee and Hammett by Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, "whose communist paranoia helped fuel nearly a decade of anti-Communist 'witch hunts'." Hellman had trouble getting work for a number of years and Hammett, her long-time companion, spent time in jail.

APC Awards Africa Hafkin Communications Prize

The first Association for Progressive Communications (APC) Africa Hafkin Communications Prize in recognition of outstanding and creative uses of information and communication technologies was awarded last month at the African Communications and Technology (ACT) Summit gala dinner to the Bayanloco Community Learning Centre in Kaduna State. The prize is an initiative of the Fantsuam Foundation.

APC launched the Africa Hafkin Prize to reward outstanding African initiatives that successfully use information and communications technology (ICTs) for development. The theme for the Hafkin Prize in 2001 is: women-led, women-informed, women-inspired initiatives. The USD$7,500.00 Hafkin prize is open to civil society organisations, government institutions, educational organisations, community-based groups, networks, social movements or individuals anywhere in Africa. Besides being women-centred, qualifying initiatives must demonstrate the creativity of their use of ICTs (especially the Internet) and the success of their work in terms of mobilising participation and building capacity. Only initiatives that have been developed and implemented from within Africa, and by people and institutions that are based in Africa, are eligible. The Prize will be awarded again in 2002.

“...the right to express oneself freely is still fundamental to (our) democracy... (freedom of expression) not only means preventing censorship and countering infringements of the free word... [it] also
means broad and good public discussion, in particular through the mass media”

Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg, May 3, 2001
On the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day

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