Freedom House, MRA Launch Human Rights Training For Nigerian Journalists

The United States-based international human rights organization, Freedom House, and Lagos-based free expression organization, Media Rights Agenda (MRA), have launched an 18-month project to improve media coverage of human rights in Nigeria.

As part of the project, Freedom House is also opening an office in Nigeria, headed by a prominent Nigerian journalist, Mr. Dapo Olorunyomi. The office will be based in Lagos.

The Nigerian Human Rights Reporting Programme is designed to enhance public awareness of human rights issues and increase the quantity and quality of information about key human rights issues in Nigeria that is available to advocacy organizations and the public. Specifically, the programme will identify key human rights issues in targeted states; create a cadre of journalists in some of the areas of the country most prone to human rights violations that are trained in recognizing, investigating, and providing balanced reporting on key human rights issues; improve the quality and quantity of human rights reporting; and build links between journalists and NGOs in order to better educate the public about human rights issues.

The programme began in July with a two-week assessment mission to Lagos, Rivers and Plateau States as well as Abuja to identify possible programme partners, gather information for conducting the programme, and determine those topics most appropriate to the needs of each state.

The assessment team consisted of Ms Paula Schriefer, Programs Director at Freedom House’s Washington office; Mr. Edetaen Ojo, Executive Director of Media Rights Agenda (MRA); Dr. Mircea Toma, Vice President of the Academia Catavencu’s Media Monitoring Agency in Bucharest, Romania; Ms Teo Zabava, a Programme Manager at the Media Monitoring Agency, Bucharest; and Mr. Dapo Olorunyomi, Nigeria Project Director for Freedom House.

The assessment team mission began in Lagos and Abuja where the team met with government officials, including Lagos State Governor Bola Tinubu; human rights and media support NGOs, including the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights (CDHR), the Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), the International Press Center (IPC); professional organizations such as the Lagos State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ); journalists from the print and broadcast media, international human rights organizations working in Nigeria, such as Global Rights: Partners for Justice and the National Democratic Institute for
International Affairs (NDI); donors such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the MacArthur Foundation; and representatives of the United States Embassy.

The team then travelled to the capital cities of two of the three states targeted by the programme, Port Harcourt and Jos, which have ongoing human rights concerns and where the need for comprehensive media coverage and informed public debate is particularly acute.

During the state assessments, the team met with human rights organizations, local NGOs addressing areas of human rights concerns such as women’s issues, prisoners needs, or ethnic/religious tolerance, state-owned and private media organizations, state councils of the NUJ, and government officials directly involved with issues of concern. The goal of the assessment was to better understand local human rights priorities, identify potential NGO partners and identify potential applicants for journalism training.

To assess the weaknesses in current human rights reporting in the target states, the assessment mission will be followed with a training of local NGOs to conduct media content monitoring in their home states. Part of the objective of the assessment trip was to identify NGOs in each of the target states that have the interest and capacity to conduct media content monitoring. Representatives from these NGOs will be invited to apply for a content monitoring training course to be conducted in Lagos by Media Rights Agenda and Dr. Toma.

The intensive course will provide an introduction to human rights issues and train NGO representatives in the methodology for selecting media outlets to monitor, accurately monitoring media stories, and reporting on and disseminating results. By including representatives from diverse areas of the country, the course will also build linkages between activists that share common objectives and introduce participants to in country resources upon which they may draw for their work.

NGOs represented at the training will be eligible to apply for a small subgrant to conduct a 60 day content monitoring project in their own state. Each project will specify the media outlets to be monitored, the specific subjects to be monitored, the methodology for insuring an accurate survey, and a plan for presenting the results to key local constituencies.

At the end of the monitoring, grantees will be required to produce a comprehensive written report of their findings and to present these findings to key local constituencies in a variety of formats which might include discussion sessions, workshops, or public fora in which journalists, Human Rights NGOs, state and local political leaders, religious leaders, and the public are invited to participate. In addition, Freedom House will publish the results on its website so that they may serve as a resource for journalists, researchers, and NGOs.

Using the assessment and media monitoring projects to tailor the process, Freedom House will conduct a set of three-day workshops for locally based journalists in each of the target states. The initial workshops will focus on defining human rights generally and examining relevant human rights standards for issues of particular import to that state, basics of a balanced news story, techniques and resources for investigating key human rights issues, and strategies for investigating human rights issues in adverse conditions.

Freedom House will also use the feedback obtained from the media content monitoring, workshop evaluations and during subsequent mentoring to design follow-on workshops for the final six months of the programme. The second set of workshops will build on the skills imparted during the first set and allow participants to more knowledgeably discuss their challenges and successes in reporting on human rights issues since the initial training.

Because most Nigerians receive their news from radio, the workshops will include a substantial number of radio journalists while also incorporating print and television journalists who have the potential to influence decision makers. The primary target for the trainings will be journalists who have not participated in similar trainings so as not to duplicate the work of previous implementers.

The training will be conducted by Freedom House’s Nigeria Project Director, Mr. Dapo Olorunyomi, and an experienced trainer from the Balkans, Mr. Nebojsa Spaic, who is executive director of the Media Center in Belgrade, Serbia. This combined team will tap the U.S. tradition of investigative journalism and the Balkan experience of successfully reporting on human rights issues despite risks to personal safety and uncommunicative or openly hostile governments.

As part of the project, on World Press Freedom Day, May 3, 2005, Freedom House will launch its 2004 edition of the Survey of Press Freedom to bring public attention to the challenges that Nigeria’s
media still face and the continued need for improved human rights coverage. Freedom House will organize a press conference and panel discussion to discuss the results of the survey and present the findings of the state-level media content monitoring programmes to a national audience.

Established by the United Nations in 1991, World Press Freedom Day honors the fundamental principles of freedom of the press and the key role that free and responsible media plays in any democracy. The Freedom House’s annual Survey of Press Freedom, has evaluated the level of press freedom around the world for the past 24 years.

Freedom House will cap the programme by launching Nigeria’s first annual “Human Rights Reporting of the Year” Award. This award will publicly acknowledge the work of those journalists committed to furthering public dialogue about human rights issues by providing accurate, unbiased, and thought provoking radio, television, or print coverage. In addition to providing needed recognition to those journalists at the forefront of human rights reporting, the award will also encourage other journalists to explore these issues and lend prestige to the media houses that support quality human rights reporting.

The award will be announced through journalism resources, such as MRA’s monthly journal, the Media Rights Monitor, and the Institute for Media and Society’s listserv; announcements to journalists unions, media houses, and human rights organizations; and paid advertisements. Journalists and media houses will be invited to submit up to three stories per candidate on specified human rights related themes. Broadcast journalists will be invited to present audio or video tapes of their work or written transcripts.

A review panel consisting of the Freedom House Nigeria Project Director, representatives from respected human rights organizations, and respected journalists or media rights advocates will evaluate the submissions and award first, second, and third prizes for most effective human rights reporting. In order to reach an objective determination, efforts will be made to ensure that the awards panel is ethnically, religiously, and geographically diverse. Winners will receive a cash prize and will be honoured at a dinner that includes international and domestic media advocates.

The award is being modeled upon the successful Freedom House “Young Journalist of the Year” Contest in Romania. Initially funded through a USAID grant, the contest is now in its fifth year and is entirely funded through corporate donations.

The yearly awards ceremony is covered by Romania’s leading national media outlets and is well respected in that country’s media community. Nigerian and foreign corporations operating in Nigeria as well as other donors will be approached about funding subsequent years of the award.

Freedom house is America’s oldest non governmental organisation dedicated to promoting and defending democracy and freedom worldwide. It has a long history of conducting US training programmes and targeted programmes to support democratic governance.

Between March 22 and 26, 2004 in conjunction with MRA, it conducted a series of two-day trainings focused on investigative reporting for junior to mid-level print and broadcast journalists from throughout Nigeria in Abuja and Lagos. The workshops, which were interactive included discussions, case studies, simulated sessions and practical fieldworks designed to strengthen journalists’ ability to produce quality investigative pieces.

Mr. Roderick Macdonel, a Media Consultant with the World Bank Institute facilitated the trainings while Mr. Edetaen Ojo facilitated discussions on the campaign for a regime of Freedom of Information legislation in Nigeria.

Young Journalists Call For Orientation For New Entrants

The Nigeria Young Journalists Network (NYJN) has called for in-house retraining and orientation for new entrants into journalism profession to provide the right foundation for their chosen career. The Network was established following a two-day training conference by Media Development Network (MDN) in Lagos.

The NYJN also joined in the call for the quick passage of the Freedom of Information Bill pending before the House of Representatives. They noted that lack of access to information was a major hindrance to the practice of the media profession in the country. They stated that there was need for the freedom of the press and other rights to be guaranteed to encourage new journalists to make the profession a life long career. The Network also advocated for more room for self expression by new
comers into the profession instead of the hostile environment which members said presently persists in many newsrooms.

Thirty-nine journalists drawn from media houses and media training institutions in Lagos participated in the Young Journalists Conference organized by MDN at the new Secretariat of the Lagos State Chapel of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) in Alausa, Ikeja from June 30 to July 1. Training sessions included lectures, questions and answer sessions, discussions, and group works.

Those who facilitated the training included Ms Ibiba Don-Pedro, the immediate past CNN Journalist of the year Award winner and former reporter with *The Guardian* Newspapers; Mrs. Ibim Semenitari, a senior assistant editor with *TELL* magazine; Ms Joke Kujenya, Executive in Charge Media Mentors; the Lagos State Chairperson of the NUJ, Mrs. Funke Fadugba; the International Editor of *Financial Standard* newspapers, Segun Dipe; Wale Fatade, former *Guardian* and *Daily Independent* reporter currently a Ford Foundation grantee pursuing a Post Graduate study in Columbia University in New York; and the Executive Director of Media Development Network, Lekan Otufodunrin.

There were three plenary sessions on the first day. Ms Ibiba Don-Pedro, who has won several international media awards, in her keynote address on the theme of the conference, Making a Success of Media Career, shared her experience on how she transformed from being a fashion designer to an award winning journalist.

She advised participants to be determined to succeed in their career despite the various challenges which she said they can surmount with industry and courage. She urged them to shun corrupt practices in order to be able to hold the government and other news subjects accountable to the people.

Don Pedro urged participants to thoroughly investigate their stories and avoid long rambling reports to meet the standards to win international awards.

To win international awards, she said Nigerian journalists should avoid long rambling reports that are not thoroughly investigated. CNN judges according to her have observed that Nigerian journalists write too long reports that do not have much substance.

To be successful in the profession she advised the participants to know their strong points and work hard at it.

Otufodunrin, in his paper titled Understanding and Fulfilling Your Purpose in Journalism, stated that journalists need to have a purpose for being in a profession irrespective of whether they came into it by choice or circumstance. To be able to fulfill their purpose in journalism, he said journalists should ask for divine direction, read widely, seek counsel from superiors in the profession and network with colleagues.

In her own paper, Ms Joke Kujenya spoke on Achieving Success through Mentoring. She stressed the importance of young journalists having mentors who can help them succeed in their career. She also encouraged young journalists to get to know veterans in the profession and as well learn from them how they succeeded and otherwise.

The issue of “brown envelope” (cash bribe) generated a lot of debate, especially considering the poor welfare package in the industry. Participants however reach a consensus that it was unethical and a betrayal of the peoples trusts by the journalists who seek and receive them.

Five papers were presented the second day with Mrs. Ibim Semenitari of *TELL* magazine kicking it off with a paper on Best Practices in the Media.

According to her, professional journalism should be factual, honest, fair, complete and consistent. While acknowledging that Nigerian journalists face peculiar challenges in view of the nation’s economic realities, she nonetheless urged practitioners to face it with tenacity of purpose and clarity of vision.

Mrs. Funke Fadugba advised participants to brace up to make journalism a better profession than they met it. She urged them to be ready to learn from their senior colleagues and shun unethical practices that have been the bane of the profession.

Segun Dipe’s paper titled Online Journalism: How to Make the Best Use of the Internet noted that becoming Internet literate is a major requirement for being an outstanding journalist in the present age. He listed various online resources which he said journalists can now use to make worldwide contacts and boost their career. He noted that there are more journalists outside the profession than inside it because of lack of new technology skills.

Wale Fatade, a guest speaker spoke on the need for journalists to properly equip themselves if they desire to excel in the profession. According to him, they should acquire personal computers and buy
relevant books. He also advised them to shun corrupt practices which he said could hinder their ability to live up to expectations.

The last paper for the day was a presentation on Career Options in the Media presented by Lekan Otufodunrin. He stated that contrary to widespread beliefs, a career is much more than a full time job. He said a career includes permanent or casual contracts, freelance, consultancy, post retirement activities, development activities, voluntary work or any charitable activities. Specifically, he said, career options in the media include working full time for a media organisation, freelance writing, consultancy, Advocacy, Publishing, Teaching, Public Relations and Advertising.

Quoting Rebeca Tee, a leading expert on career management, Otufodunrin stated that “to make the most of all the career choices that face you during your working life, be clear about your goals, alert to opportunities and quick to make key decisions when necessary.”

Participants also visited the Financial Standard Newspapers office and were received by the General Manager, Ray Echebiri who advised them to be diligent in their work and acquire necessary experience without which they cannot excel in the profession.

“You can get to the top very fast but that means you have to learn very fast too,” he stated after briefing participants on the operations of his company.

At the end of the conference, participants split into group discussions. After group discussions the Nigerian Young Journalists Network was formed to ensure continuous learning process through exchange of information by the facilitators and participants.

For group discussions, participants were divided into three groups and asked to look into five major questions and come out with recommendations and solutions.

The questions are: What are the problems facing young journalists in media organisations in Nigeria? How can media organisations solve the problems? What can make young journalists make journalism a life-long career? What are the lessons learnt at the conference? What other topics should be included in future trainings?

After the group discussions, each group presented their recommendations and solutions which were adopted by the participants.

Participants identified the following as some of the problems facing young journalists: Lack of formal education in journalism; Lack of in-house training programmes for employees; Lack of orientation programmes for new employees; Lack of basic skills in computer operations; Wrong orientation due to lack of mentors resulting in quick exit from the profession; Lack of encouragement from experienced journalists who believe they know everything; Inadequate knowledge of media laws; and Poor financial reward.

They proffered the following solutions to the problems: Improve salary package and better condition of service; Proper orientation for young journalists on house styles and other policies; Basic skill training should be provided for non-journalism graduates; Young journalists should be deployed to areas of competence based on education background; Senior journalists should be mentors not tormentors; Provision of Insurance policies to protect journalists; and Media associations should protect the interest of young journalists and provide proper orientation for them.

Participants also listed some conditions which can make young journalists adopt journalism a life-long career to include motivation in terms of regular training and awards; Provision of necessary tools like computers and cameras; improved condition of service including better working environment, insurance and medical cover and prompt payment of salaries; exposure to national and international events; and guarantee job security.

They also identified the following as topics of interest in future training. They are Media laws; Interviewing skills; How to get story ideas; Feature writing; and Experiences of veteran journalists. Other identified topics include Investigative reporting; Computer skills; and Discussions with current and past editors.

Some of the participants spoke about their perceptions of the training. Nurudeen Obalola, Sports Correspondent with Saturday Punch said: ‘Journalism was becoming a big bore until I attended the Young journalists’ conference. Thank God I came because I have found a new belief through inspiring stories of some of the resource persons. There is a whole lot to reap from journalism; you just have to know where to look.’
Elvis Eromosele of Business Times said: “MDN’s Young journalists’ conference provided for me inspiration to make up my mind that journalism is a veritable profession. I want to remain a journalist, I want to influence my generation and I want to leave a mark for posterity.”

Another participant, Godwin Aikhighe of Sports Souvenir noted that: “The conference exhaustively brought to the fore the salient gains in the profession. It is a step taken in the right direction, especially coming at a time information is the life blood of all facets of human development.”

Mr. Lekan Otufodunrin, Executive Director of Media Development Network, organizers of the training said the inauguration of the network is a positive development which will assist in improving the standard of media practice in the country.

He revealed, in a chat that MDN will soon inaugurate the NYJN and it will facilitate contact between the members. He also disclosed that the Network has an online forum through which members post questions and exchange information. He said MDN will also do follow up workshops on some of the professional areas and issues identified during the first training. He added that MDN is also putting together an orientation package for media neophytes and that members of the Network will also be taken round to press freedom organisations for familiarization, among other programmes.

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International Symposium To Debate Editorial Independence Of Public Broadcaster During Conflicts

The Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy (PCMLP) of the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies in Oxford, the United Kingdom is organizing an international symposium to address the issue of Broadcasting Governance and Conflict: Editorial Independence in International Perspective during its Oxford Media Convention holding in January 20, 2005.

The Rt. Hon. Tessa Jowell MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport will give the keynote speech while the identities of other speakers will be disclosed later.

According to the organizers, the symposium is coming following one of the most acrimonious conflicts with Government in the history of the BBC for which reason the Corporation has now tabled proposals for a reformed governance structure.

This international symposium, organizers said, looks at the structural and policy questions that arise from the Hutton Inquiry and its aftermath.

They added that: “Coming at a time when the Government is considering the new BBC Charter, the debate will examine the BBC’s proposals, look at similar conflicts that have occurred between governments and broadcasters worldwide, and look at new international models for governance of public broadcasters.”

Some confirmed Speakers who are expected at the symposium include: Stephen Whittle, Controller, Editorial Policy, BBC; John Lloyd, Editor of FT Magazine and author of What the Media Are Doing to Our Politics; Monroe Price, Annenberg School for Communication; Herbert Ungerer of the European Commission; and Damian Tambini, Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy. Others are Paddy Coulter, Reuters Foundation Programme, Oxford University; Daphne Skillen of Soros Foundation; Andrei Richter, Moscow Media Law and Policy Institute; and Dr Joan Barata of the University of Barcelona.

Interested participants are encouraged to book their places online at http://pcmlp.socleg.ox.ac.uk/forthcoming.htm.

Electronic Media Reach Accord On Broadcast Of Athens 2004

Radio and television stations in Nigeria have for the second time reached an accord in the generation and broadcast of signals from the venue of this year’s Olympic holding in Athens Greece.

Under the aegis of the Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria (BON), representatives of electronic stations in Nigeria met at the premises of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) on July 15 and following fruitful deliberations entered into collaboration for the coverage of the Olympiad and sharing of proceeds by the stations.

BON agreed that NTA will hold fort and provide signals for television stations while the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) will hold fort and give signals to radio stations. It agreed to universal rates for adverts.

Ms. Grace Egbagbe of the NTA revealed that BON bought the broadcast right and agreed that stations should generate revenue and pay back, adding: “Profit maximization for the benefit of the industry is the basis for this arrangement.” She added that profits from the account will be shared by all organizations.
She promised Nigerians will enjoy the best of personnel from across the stations who would be doing analyses of the games while BON will also have simultaneous cuts from events venues some live, some delayed.

Transmission and retransmission of signals of national and international sporting events have been subjects of controversies in the country. The controversies have been who has the right to transmit, retransmit, or sell transmission right. On each occasion, the station with the hand on the pie dictates the terms.

NTA had always sought to gain undue advantage over other stations in order to corner the lion share of advert revenue. To this end it gives very stringent terms to stations which want to pick signals from it.

The All African Games tagged COJA 2003 held in Abuja, Nigeria in October 2003 and the African Cup of Nations (Tunisia 2004) early this year are the most recent cases. The conditions given by NTA in both cases were the same. They were stringent, restrictive, anti-business, anti-competition, and monopolistic. In both cases, neither the BON nor the nation’s broadcasting sector regulator, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) made any attempt to set matters right. They both turned a blind eye.

The case of Tunisia 2004 similar to COJA 2003 is instructive. The right to the broadcast signals of Nokia 2004 in Nigeria went to NTA through OSMI a sports marketing organisation which got the right from a Benonois partner Hensen. OSMI decided to use NTA.

Some of the conditions given other stations include: That Independent Broadcasters will re-transmit the Nations Cup in 2004 via NTA signals; That a single promo will be made available by OSMI to Independent Broadcasters; That joint account between OSMI and Independent Broadcasters will be opened with a sharing formula of 30-70 per cent in favour of Independent Broadcaster; That MOU be entered between Right holder and Independent Broadcaster to avoid breach and that a three to five minute studio branding window be made available to Independent Broadcasters (3-5 minutes before half time and 3-5 minutes after to assist in maintaining the individual stations’ identity.

OSMI and NTA also gave independent stations a list of reserved non competing sponsorship categories from which they could not take advert during their retransmission of signals of the Nokia games. These were GSM telecoms, alcohol beverage and carbonated and energy drink, money transfer and financial services, mobile telephone equipment, motor vehicles, and electrical household goods.

The same NTA which holds tight to signals of event for which it has original right to broadcast in Nigeria, had attempted on other occasions to defy other firms’ sole rights to broadcast signals of these events whenever it fails to obtain the original rights to beam signals of these event in the country.

Prior to the June 2000 European Cup (UEFA 2000) competitions, NTA’s marketing consultants, Sports Vision, started canvassing for adverts for broadcast during the UEFA 2000 championships. It claimed to have concluded plans with Canal France International (CFI) to beam signals of the events. But TV Africa called NTA to order saying NTA was “making deliberate and overt attempts to subvert TV Africa’s attempt to market the 2000 UEFA European Football Championships … in Nigeria”. It threatened to sue NTA.

Again in 2002 NTA also attempted to walk over the rights purchased by TV Africa to signals of the 23rd edition of the African Nations Cup (Mali 2002) football tournaments. BON had stepped in claiming TV Africa was attempting to deny majority of Nigerians watching the matches, and to commercially exploit Nigerian sponsors to maximize profit. The NBC had to step in to diffuse tension and confusion saying stations that were interested in beaming signals of the tournaments should reach an agreement with TV Africa.

In Abuja on April 2, 2002, these recurrent controversies were seemingly resolved when at a meeting of TV Africa and television Nigerian stations under the aegis of BON agreed on the modalities for the broadcast of signals of the Korea/Japan 2002 World Cup in Nigeria. Among the conditions agreed to at the meeting were: that signals shall be provided through decoders provided by TV Africa; total advert time for each match, subject to extra time, shall be nine minutes for all sub-licensees, and four minutes for TV Africa; they were also to carry TV Africa’s logo and commercials; and that subscribers shall not carry adverts that are competing with those of the sponsors.

These agreed conditions seemed to be a good start which observers believed would serve as benchmarks for the transmission of such events in the future. But COJA 2003 and Tunisia 2004 proved them wrong.

With the new agreement, it is hoped a new standard will be set which would be fine tuned and applied fairly in spite of whoever secures the original rights to market these events. If the present
agreement goes well and is applied to all such events, rights to broadcast signals of national, international and continental sporting events will no longer be subjects of controversy.

Lagos ‘Unheard Voices’ Speak Out

The International Press Centre, (IPC) Lagos on July 12 launched a 28-minute documentary film titled We Speak For Us which is part of its project designed to highlight the plight of the unheard voices and the under-reported in our society and get them to speak for themselves.

In the documentary, inhabitants of these seemingly forgotten and abandoned communities speak out on their plights in their languages and with the passion of their hearts while the camera took viewers on tour of the communities and the realities of the lives they live. Lives in communities subjected to abandonment by successive governments. Though, the communities are a stone throw from Apapa, a high-brow, very industrialized part of Lagos State, they are without social amenities like tarred roads, pipe-borne water, public schools, electricity and health institutions. These communities totally lack government presence.

At the media launch of the film, representatives of these communities, Non Governmental Organisations and the media were in attendance to view the documentary. They gave suggestions and commitments towards alleviating the plights of these communities.

Media Rights Monitor spoke with Mr. Tunde Aremu, Senior Programme Officer at the IPC who is handling the project. He revealed the intentions of the project, how far IPC has gone in it and aspects of the project still remaining. See story below We Have Empowered Them To Speak For Themselves.

Excerpts of the interview are reproduced below.

We Have Empowered Them To Speak For Themselves - Tunde Aremu

How far have you been able to get these unheard voices heard through the project?

We can’t say we have actually achieved that end. What we have done now is that we have already activated the process through which we are going to get them heard. We are trying to get them to start speaking for themselves which they have started now. They also have to go through tutelage.

The first thing is to actually make them appreciate the need to speak out, to let the world know what their problems and issues are. We started that by having an advocacy training programme for them.

The other aspect is to create avenues through which they could speak for themselves, that is getting the media workers to start acknowledging that fact that these people also have a right to be heard, that they have things to say. What we have also done in that project is to bring to a roundtable media workers, journalists, programme presenters, programme producers, some of them independent producers and NGO workers who work with the media.

Part of it is that we are also hoping to send materials collated from that roundtable to some trainers of journalists. Let them know we have also discovered that there are also some problems even in the training journalists. Some of them go through schools of Journalism and got wrong the concept of authority. They wrongly assume that those who have the authority to speak on such issue, are people in position of power, not necessarily people who are stakeholders.

So as I said, we have started in actually getting them to speak for themselves. They have started that and now they are eager to speak for themselves, which is the first step.

How far have you gone, how much is remaining?

We have taken the first few steps, we have not started running yet and we have to run. We have to take giant leaps all over the country. We have to first of all get some of the representatives of these communities at the Local government level, at the State level and even at the National Assembly to start seeing themselves as owners of those issues and problems that are being raised.

We don’t want to come from that point of view that people have always had that they are irresponsible. We want to take it from the point of view that they met problems on the ground that are overwhelming, that they don’t know how to approach those problems, how to solve them. But since we have suggestions now, we are approaching them and we are also taking them along as, not just advocacy.
supporters but even as advocates because it is their issue. They are the ones who will actually go out and get advocacy supporters. For instance there is nothing wrong for the Senator representing the Lagos West Senatorial district where they belong to get the other senators from Lagos State and from all over the federation to back a bill saying that certain things have to be done in these communities. There is nothing wrong with their representative at the House of Representatives for Amuwo-Odofin Local Government Area to get other honourable members from Lagos State and from all over the federation to sponsor a bill.

Apart from that, they can also mount pressure on relevant authorities to do something for the communities. That is why I said they have part of the kinetics to get their representatives to see the issues as their own issues and also get involved in getting advocacy supporters.

**On which [TV] stations do you hope to broadcast the documentary?**

We have already broadcast it on AIT [Africa Independent Television] and MITv [Murhi International Television]. Next is LTV 8 [Lagos Television Channel 8] which belongs to the Lagos State government.

The project is not to fight any authority that is why we want to take it to relevant agencies. And we are also coming from the standpoint that the problem is not that the Lagos State government or whichever authorities that are supposed to provide these amenities are irresponsible. Our standpoint is that either they are not aware of the problems or they have not been given accurate information because the communities themselves didn’t know before now how to articulate their issues, how to project their problems to the outside world so they didn’t know the magnitude of the problems there, and by the time we get them to see it, they are going to respond favourably.

**What of the NTA [Nigerian Television Authority]?**

Yes, we are going to approach the NTA too. And let me also tell you, one of the approaches is that we also want the TV stations to be reporting more on developmental service aspect of media work which is being neglected in Nigeria.

Most of us grew up as young children knowing NTA for instance, as one of the stations you could rely on for that.

I also remember growing up in Ibadan, where we had WNTV [Western Nigeria Television], WNBS [Western Nigeria Broadcasting Service] and later NTV [Nigeria Television] before it became NTA. At least these were stations we knew then as stations which were doing works on developmental issues. But we know most of them no longer do that.

There is what we call LTP now (Let Them Pay). We also have to go through the process of re-orientation and initiating projects like this is one of the ways in which you can do that. It is not like you are going to get people into the classrooms and start re-orienting them. This is also one of the processes.

**Do you have any plans to take the film to international audience?**

Yes, and already the funders have also shown interest in giving it to the BBC, that is why the input, at the level of competence of the people who have handled the shooting and editing is very high. For instance, the production manager is actually an experienced director. It shows you the calibre of people we worked with. He is one of the best trained film directors in the country. So it shows you the calibre of people we used. We got the best cameramen around, the best cameras around, we used the high end digital cameras.

Some of the researchers in the team are also some of the best researchers around and even the fees we paid them do not actually commensurate with what they packaged. They did it out of the enthusiasm we generated.

**Is there any aspect of the project to bring in the government?**

Not just government but relevant government agencies. Apart from that, we will also bring in corporate bodies as well. Corporate bodies take so much from the communities.

For instance take the case of Nigerian Breweries Limited in its recently concluded reality TV show, the Ultimate Search. They actually used one of the communities. It is a project that gulped tens of millions of Naira. They have to give something back to the community.

**How much work is remaining now for the project?**

There is so much work still left to be done. We have been on the field, but we are going to intensify effort. As I said earlier on, we are going to meet with relevant agencies including those of government and other bodies like ministries and parastatals at the federal and state levels, and beyond these, meet with corporate bodies

And then constant, continued media presence. Whatever we do, we have to take the media along.
There are still communities we need to focus on.

*What roles do you have for other civil societies?*
We see the whole issues as our collective issues. We are going to involve more organisations.

### Press Freedom Groups Condemn Attacks On Nigerian Journalists

Three international freedom of expression and press freedom groups: the World Association of Newspapers (WAN), World Editors Forum (WEF), and the International Press Institute (IPI) have written to Nigerian leaders to express their concerns over, condemn, and call for investigations into attacks on some Nigerian journalists in the course of carrying out their duties.

In a joint letter to the governor of Kano State, Alhaji Ibrahim Shekarau, WAN and WEF expressed their serious concern at the arrest on July 4, detention and subsequent trial in court of Mr. Kola Oyelere in Kano for allegedly publishing false information. They also expressed serious concern over Mr Oyelere’s claims to have been tortured during his detention.

WAN and WEF reminded the governor that if Mr. Oyelere is jailed, it will constitute “a clear breach of his right to freedom of expression, which is guaranteed by section 39 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution and numerous international conventions, including Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”. They added that, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights considers that “detention, as punishment for the peaceful expression of an opinion, is one of the most reprehensible ways to enjoin silence and, as a consequence, a grave violation of human rights”.

The groups called on him to do everything possible to ensure, among other things, that all criminal charges against him are dropped. They also urged him to fully investigate Mr. Oyelere’s claims to have been tortured and to prosecute anyone found responsible.

The letter dated July 8, 2004 was signed by Seok Hyun Hong and George Brock, Presidents of WAN and WEF respectively and copied to Mr Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General and Mr Koichiro Matsuura, the Director-General of UNESCO.

The IPI through its letter of 28 July 2004 signed by Johann P. Fritz, its Director, to President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria condemned the battery of Babajide Johnson and Mr. Uja Emmanuel in Makurdi, the Benue State Capital on July 21.

While condemning the batteries, IPI asserted that assaults on journalists by police officers are not only reprehensible, and a breach of the criminal law, they also communicate to others that journalists can be treated with contempt.

IPI reminded the President that the media plays a fundamental role in society, especially when reviewing and assessing the work of the executive and its agencies, including the police force. It said the assaults revealed “a blatant disregard for this role and will only serve to undermine the credibility of the police force in Benue state”.

It called on the relevant authorities to investigate the assaults on Emmanuel and, if necessary, to bring criminal charges or suitable disciplinary proceedings against the perpetrators. It also invited President Obasanjo to condemn the assaults and communicate to all state governments the importance of upholding press freedom in a democratic society.

Mr. Kola Oyelere, the Kano State correspondent of the *Nigerian Tribune* newspapers; Mr. Johnson Babajide, *Nigerian Tribune* newspapers correspondent in Makurdi, the Benue State Capital; and Mr. Uja Emmanuel, *The Sun* newspapers correspondent in Makurdi in July were subjected to various forms of severe assault because of what they published (see full details below: Attacks On The Press In July 2004).

### NUJ Expresses Concern Over Threat On Journalists’ Lives In Benue

The Benue State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) expressed concern over the spate of threats and attacks against journalists in the state.

In a statement issued on July 28 signed by Ben Bem Mnguito and Owojecho Omoha, chairman and secretary respectively, the Council said it “has received complaints from some of its members that
they are being intimidated and harassed by some persons in the state to the point that journalists now fear
their own shadows.”

The statement said: “while the union will not condone unethical behaviour by any of its
members, it will go to any length to defend its members performing their legitimate duties as watchdog
of the society.”

The council called on the Police Commissioner and the Director of State Security Service (SSS)
in the state “to safeguard the lives and property of journalists.”

The Council issued the statement one week after the Benue State correspondent of the
Nigerian Tribune newspapers, Johnson Babajide was abducted by some political thugs allegedly with the
supervision of a top government official. It was the same day Mr. Uja Emmanuel, The Sun newspapers
correspondent was beaten up on the orders of an Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), Mr. H. C
Ugwu. His camera and tape recorder were also destroyed.

Prior to these incidents, Mr. Daniel Lor, ThisDay newspaper correspondent had petitioned the
Police Commissioner, alleging threats to his life by aides to Governor Akume and some unknown men
whom he claimed had been visiting his residence at odd hours.

**Parliamentarians Call For Greater Access To Information**

Commonwealth Parliamentarians meeting in Accra, Ghana, agreed that free access to government
information is vital for the development of an informed and functional democratic society. They
advocated the development of a basic set of standards to which the Commonwealth could aspire in
promoting access to information.

The Study Group on Access to Information, which met from July 5 to 9, comprised some 20
members from the Parliaments and Legislatures of Fiji Islands, India, Nigeria, South Africa, and Trinidad
and Tobago, British Columbia and Scotland who participated in the event hosted by the Parliament of
Ghana. The Study Group was jointly organised by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)
and the World Bank Institute (WBI).

The delegates noted in their recommendations that: “Freedom of information is a fundamental
human right, and a cornerstone of democracy and good governance. Recognition of this key right is
essential to empowering all members of society, including Parliamentarians, to strengthen Parliamentary
democracy, to reversing practices of government by the few and to improving the relationship between
Parliament and the media.” They believe that these measures will promote transparency in governance.

Among other proposals drafted by the group are that public bodies should be required by law to
publish and disseminate a wide range of key information in a manner easily accessible to the public; that
urgent steps be taken to review and, as necessary, repeal or amend, legislation restricting access to
information; and that the public should be made aware of their right to access information.

During the study tour, the delegates shared their experiences in the promotion, adoption and
implementation of freedom of information legislation and regimes.

The meeting was launched by Peter Ala Adjetey, Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana. He said:
“Opening windows for more freedom to access information has enabled civil society to prevent the
misuse and waste of public funds, and prevented governments from gravitating towards despotism.”

Delegates interacted with World Bank representatives through video conferences. The Study
Group was assisted by representatives from the CPA Secretariat, the Commonwealth Human Rights
Initiative and Article 19, a UK-based non-governmental organisation involved in human rights. The
Study Group recommendations are available on the CPA website at www.cphaq.org.

**AWMC Produces Resource Directory for African Women Journalists**

African Women’s Media Center (AWMC), a project of the International Women’s Media Foundation,
has produced an online directory of resources for women journalists who seek professional
development opportunities in Africa. It includes training resources, networking links and press freedom
organisations.
The only comprehensive guide of its kind, this directory lists a host of resources critical to women seeking to strengthen their skills as journalists and to enhance their professional standing within the media.

Because women are often excluded from informal networks within newsrooms, and from access to information about training and resources, it is important that they have a set of tools developed specifically to meet their needs. The AWMC Resource Directory for African Women Journalists has been designed as a vehicle to link women to the institutions and opportunities that can offer them support, training, knowledge and connections. The directory is meant as a tool for women to develop their careers and reach out to their colleagues - both women and men - on the continent.

From Angola to Zimbabwe, women are recognizing the value of learning from each other. While men often enhance their visibility and career opportunities through socializing with male colleagues after work, this kind of networking is still considered inappropriate for women in many cultures. Women’s media associations offer women the opportunity to discuss common work concerns and develop strategies for overcoming personal and professional obstacles.

Over the past decade, a number of strong and active women’s media networks have been formed in Africa. Some of the continent’s most successful groups such as the Tanzanian Women’s Media Association (TAMWA), the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) and the West African Media Network (WAMNET) have expanded to offer their members training, access to career resources and a “unified voice” in larger journalists’ unions.

The directory offers among other things, a list to encourage women to contact and join associations in their own countries. It is also meant to encourage alliances among organisations in order to share advice on fundraising, organisational development, outreach and ideas for successful programme activities.

In addition to networking through women’s media associations, women journalists also need to increase their visibility with male colleagues. The list also includes contact information for African national and regional media associations. “It is important that women’s voices are heard and that their issues are placed on the agenda of these associations as well,” AWMC said.

**Report Finds Poor Whistleblower Protection At World Bank**

The Government Accountability Project (GAP), a private watchdog group on July 8 warned World Bank employees not to rely on the bank’s system for protecting staff members who blow the whistle on internal misconduct, saying the system tends to be a trap managers use to keep embarrassing information from reaching the public.

GAP said in a report that the bank failed 16 of 24 tests the group uses to assess a public institution’s friendliness to whistleblowers. The bank nevertheless looked good next to three related organizations: the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Asian Development Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. Those banks scored even worse, the GAP said.

“The bottom line is real clear: We cannot responsibly recommend that a whistleblower risk retaliation by working within any of the banks’ systems...,” said Tom Devine, the GAP’s legal director. He said further: “By and large, these whistleblower systems are a trap in terms of identifying employees who have evidence which could threaten the institution. They are a vehicle for advance warning to internal management that they may be liable for something, and they’re not reliably safe channels.”

A World Bank spokesman, David Theis, in his reaction said the report was based on outdated information but expressed satisfaction that the bank scored higher than other development banks. He said: “We’re pleased to see that the World Bank received the highest rating of all the multilateral development banks.” He added: “As we continue to work with the GAP to get them the most current information, we’re hopeful that their next review will be even more favorable.”

The GAP is a public-interest law firm formed in the 1970s to defend the rights of whistleblowers after a government employee, Daniel Ellsberg, angered the Nixon administration by going public with a secret government history of the war in Vietnam. It began focusing on the World Bank and the regional development banks last year amid rising Congressional concern about corruption and mismanagement in the banks’ administration of development loans around the world.
In its current report, the group praised the World Bank for many of the steps it has taken to fight corruption, including establishing a telephone hotline for whistleblowers and telling staffers they have a duty to report misconduct. Some of those steps have led to criminal convictions for fraud and the recovery of stolen or misappropriated funds totaling hundreds of thousands of dollars, it said.

Devine said he was especially impressed by the work of the Ombudsman in the bank’s Office of Institutional Integrity, which he called “the only office within any of the banks that we would recommend whistleblowers can safely make disclosures.” But the high standards of that office, he said, don’t extend across all of the bank’s departments.

Meanwhile, Devine said, the unit of the bank that was set up to protect the rights of employees tends to fail whistleblowers miserably. “The Administrative Tribunal - where whistleblowers get their day in court - is one that we would warn people against exercising rights,” he said. “They’re almost guaranteed to be in a worse position. No one has won during this millennium, and some of the decisions have been almost vicious attacks on whistleblowers who were vindicated in terms of their dissent.”

The tribunal’s tendencies, the GAP report said, were starkly illustrated in a 2002 case in which a bank vice president, Manuel Conthe, complained that he had been demoted after criticizing the leadership of World Bank President James Wolfensohn. In internal documents, Conthe had described the bank as “poorly organized, not well managed and inimical to good performance.”

The tribunal, after what the GAP said was a “secret” trial in which Conthe wasn’t allowed to question hostile witnesses, concluded that his demotion was the result of his own failings as a manager - not his criticism of Wolfensohn. Still, it awarded Conthe $20,000 to reimburse a third of his legal fees because it found the bank’s human-resources department had subjected him to an arbitrary performance review.

The GAP report faulted Wolfensohn, who has led the bank since 1995, for what it calls a failure of “committed institutional leadership” to make the bank friendly to whistleblowers. It asserted “the president’s positive rhetoric and even the expert work of his staff is overshadowed by facts.”

The report said Wolfensohn “rarely appears to exercise his power to reinstate prevailing employees, preferring to exile them with a severance payment.” That, GAP officials said, has a chilling effect on potential whistleblowers since most World Bank employees are foreign citizens who could lose their authorization to work in the U.S. if they were fired by the bank.

“In most of these cases the whistleblowers lose even if they win...,” Devine said. “The usual procedure is to give them two or three years’ salary if they prevail for an unjust firing. That’s not going to do it for people who work at institutions like the World Bank, where they’ll be deported if they don’t keep their job.”

Conference To Examine The Role Of Media And The Information Society

The Moroccan government and ORBICOM (the International Network of UNESCO Chairs in Communication) are holding an international conference in Marrakech in November 2004 on the role of media and the information society in Africa and the Arab States.

Intended as a follow-up to the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which took place in Geneva, Switzerland, in December 2003, the conference is expected to attract 100 representatives of media organisations, free-expression and press freedom groups. It will take place from 22 to 24 November.

The aim of the conference is to examine how the media fits into the Declaration of Principles and the Action Plan that arose out of Geneva and its role in implementing the recommendations in Africa and the Arab States. Participants will also attempt to draft a common position on Internet governance that will be sent to a working group created by the UN Secretary General.

Panel discussions will assess the media’s position regarding Internet governance, press freedom on the Internet and women in the media, among other issues.

Further information about the conference and other things are available on the website: http://www.orbicom.uqam.ca/mediaconference/index.html.

The Conference is organized by ORBICOM, the Ministry of Communication and the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Telecommunications of the Kingdom of Morocco, with the support of the Federal Office of Communication (OFCOM), Switzerland, UNESCO and the Department of Public Information of the United Nations.
Scholars Establish Interest Group For Holistic Journalism Development

A group of scholars concerned with the study of journalism have formed a Journalism Studies Interest Group (JSIG) to promote journalism theory and research as well as professional education in journalism.

The JSIG was formed at the International Communication Association’s (ICA) annual conference held in New Orleans in the United States in May 2004 by a group of over 100 active scholars concerned with the study of journalism.

The initiators of the JSIG reflect a wide range of scholars affiliated with academic institutions around the world who devote a great deal of research to journalism studies. At the recent ICA conference in New Orleans, the ICA board unanimously voted in favour of the establishment of a JSIG.

Journalism is becoming an increasingly autonomous field of study. Universities and colleges worldwide have responded to this trend with the formation of independent schools of journalism, while the scientific community has created two new international journals in the field, Journalism and Journalism Studies.

Journalism studies cuts across traditional academic boundaries. The new group emphasises the interdisciplinary nature of the field. However, while journalism is studied across the field, the individuals behind these different research endeavors often have no forum to communicate with one another.

The first task for the Interest Group will be to provide a platform with journalism’s study as its foundation from which scholars employing different kinds of theoretical and methodological approaches can engage in dialogue. Another important aim is to facilitate empirical research and bring more coherence to research paradigms. In so doing, the interest group would further support the professionalisation of journalism studies and journalism education. The overall purpose of the Interest Group is to promote journalism theory and research as well as professional education in journalism.

Interested Journalism stakeholders who want to get involved are encouraged to contact the JSIG Chair, Thomas Hanitzsch (Ilmenau University of Technology) thomas.hanitzsch@tu-ilmenau.de for more information on how to get involved. They can also sign up for the JSIG mailing and discussion list, how to become a member and manuscript reviewer for the upcoming conference sessions at ICA New York 2005.

OSCE To Hold Conference On Internet Media Freedom

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has scheduled a conference to discuss ways of guaranteeing media freedom on the Internet.

Scheduled to hold in Amsterdam from 27 to 28 August, the conference will bring together ARTICLE 19, free expression groups, journalists, legal experts and consultants.

The conference will focus on best practices in legislation regarding the Internet.

Proceedings of the conference are expected to be compiled into a handbook that will be published by the OSCE later this year. Research will also be carried out on Internet legislation and hate speech laws in OSCE member states.

It is a follow-up to a 2003 conference, hosted by the OSCE, which released a set of recommendations on respecting media freedom on the Internet. Further information about the conference are available at its site http://www.osce.org/events/fom/amsterdam/.

ATTACKS ON THE PRESS IN JULY 2004

Correspondent Petitions Security Agencies Over Alleged Threats To His Life

The Benue State correspondent of Thisday newspaper, Mr Daniel Lor, on June 21 petitioned security agencies in the state alleging threat to his life by some aides of the Benue State governor, Mr. George Akume.
Mr. Lor addressed his petition to the state director, State Security Services (SSS); the Assistant Inspector General (AIG) of Police Zone 4; the Inspector General (IG) of Police, Mr. Tafa Balogun; civil rights groups, national and states officers of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ).

He said further in the petition that an aide to the governor had two months earlier, sought to know his residence and that on another occasion, the governor singled him out and made uncomplimentary remarks about his person. He also said that strange people have been detected hiding in his compound and that his movements are being monitored. He said: “I am constrained to conclude that my personal security is in danger of being compromised.”

Governor Akume’s Chief Press Secretary, Chief Tahar Agerzua, however in his reaction described the allegation as false, saying the governor has always maintained a cordial relationship with journalists including the petitioner whom he said was given government sponsorship to attend a professional course in 2001.

Police Arrest And Detain Two Journalists

Two correspondents, Mr. Lawson Heyford of The Source magazine and Mr. Okafor Ofiebor of the TheNews magazine were on July 9 arrested by the police in Port Harcourt, Rivers State over their association with a man, Pastor Joe Alatoru, who was seeking probe of two top police officers whom he alleged demanded and obtained bribe from him. Pastor Alatoru was also arrested.

At about 1 pm on the fateful day, the police team, led by one Kenneth of the Rivers State Government Special Operations Squad, swooped on the journalists and Pastor as they were leaving the office of Shell Petroleum Development Company and arrested them.

In an interview with Mr. Ofiebor, he disclosed that they were arrested following their stories on the allegation of bribery and coercion which Pastor Alatoru leveled against the police officers whom the Inspector General of Police had mandated to investigate a case of perversion of justice.

Okafor said the police first took them to the office of Operation Fire-for-Fire, the nation’s special anti-crime Police Squad, and later to the police zonal headquarters.

One of the police officers told the journalists that they were under instructions to arrest and detain Alatoru in Port Harcourt pending the arrival of a special team of policemen from Abuja to take him to the Federal Capital Territory to face trial for allegedly trying to frame up senior police officers.

Mr. Ofiebor said he was released after eight hours in detention with instructions that he should report back the following day. Mr. Heyford said he was released on July 11.

Journalist Arrested, Detained And Tortured

Mr. Kola Oyelere, the Kano State correspondent of the Nigerian Tribune newspapers was on July 4, arrested by the Kano State Police Command. He was detained, tortured and on July 5 charged with publishing false information at a Kano Chief Magistrate Court.

The Sunday Tribune of July 4 in its front page published a lead story titled Panic in Kano … as Fresh Crisis Looms, which Kola co-authored with the Abuja Correspondent, Mr. Bankole Makinde.

Kola was declared wanted on July 4 by the State Commissioner of Police, Alhaji Ganiyu Dawodu before his arrest. He was charged with publishing false information in contravention of Sections 74, 114, 139, 140, 392 and 397 of the Penal code.

The presiding judge in the matter, Mr. Ibrahim Umar Fagga adjourned the matter to July 29, 2004 after listening to submissions from both the plaintiff and complainant.

A Police officer who identified himself as Rufai Inusa told journalists that Mr. Oyelere was arrested on the orders of the State Police Commissioner and that he will not be released until investigations are completed.

Rufai Inusa and a female Police officer drove Mr. Oyelere away in a Honda car with registration No. KANO LA 621 NSR to an unknown destination after the adjournment of the matter.

When he was able to speak to journalists, Mr. Oyelere told them: “they refused to allow me eat any food or [drink] water since Sunday afternoon when I was detained at the State CID cell. I was subjected to all sorts of torture during interrogation. In fact they did not allow me to even take my typhoid drugs.”
He was released on July 8 and ordered to report on July 9 to the Chief Magistrate Court that heard the matter in order for the police to decide whether to drop the charges against him or continue with the case.

On July 9, the police wrote to the Chief Magistrate Court to withdraw the case. Though there was no formal proceedings in the Court on the 9th, Kola said he saw the Magistrate, Mr. Ibrahim Umar Fagga in his chambers. He said Mr. Umar Fagga asked him to report back at the Court on July 12 when the Court would formally strike out the case against him.

Journalist Abducted, Brutalised and Detained

The Nigerian Tribune newspapers correspondent in Makurdi, the Benue State Capital, Mr. Johnson Babajide, was on July 21 at about 6.30am abducted from his home in Ankpa ward, Wadata area of the capital. He was taken to the Benue State Government House where he was seriously brutalized by political thugs and then dragged to the State police Headquarters. He was later forcibly driven to Gboko, Governor George Akume’s hometown, another town about 100 kilometers from Makurdi, during which trip he was subjected to further humiliating beating for allegedly writing a false story.

Johnson said he was abducted from his home by about 20 political thugs supervised by Mr. Tahaz Agerzua, the Chief Press secretary to Governor George Akume of the State and taken to government house. When he realized that he was going to be mistreated, he tried to escape whereupon the thugs pounced on him and beat him to pulp. He was drenched in blood from injuries he sustained from the beating. He was then dragged to the police headquarters where he was detained and later forced to go to the governor’s hometown.

Johnson had authored a story in the July 18 edition of The Sunday Tribune in which he reported that armed Tiv (a tribe in Benue State) militias that were used in the Kwande crisis were engaged in a gun duel at the governor’s house in Gboko.

Journalist Battered, Work Equipment Destroyed

Mr. Uja Emmanuel, The Sun newspapers correspondent in Makurdi, the Benue State Capital was on July 21 battered by a combination of policemen and political thugs allegedly on the orders of an Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), Mr. H. C Ugwu. His camera and tape recorder, both worth about N60,000.00 (US$460) were destroyed.

Mr. Emmanuel, along with other journalists had gone to the State Police Headquarters in Markurdi to enquire about the whereabouts of an abducted journalist, Mr. Johnson Babajide of the Nigerian Tribune newspapers by armed thugs of Nigeria’s ruling party, the People’s Democratic Party (PDP).

Mr. Emmanuel said in a telephone interview with Media Rights Monitor that at the Police Station, he was confronted by Mr. Ugwu who accused him of writing stories about crisis in Kwande (a local council in Benue State) that portrayed the State Police Commissioner as incapable of stemming the crisis. Thereon, the ACP seized his camera and tape recorder which he smashed on the ground and ordered his men and the thugs to deal with the journalist. Thereafter, policemen and political thugs acting on his orders beat him up.

Prior to this encounter, the journalist had been receiving telephone calls warning him to desist from writing on the Kwande crisis.

Mr. Emmanuel also disclosed that the same ACP had earlier told journalists that the police could not curtail the activities of the militias because the militias were using more sophisticated arms.

Boasting in arrogance, Mr. Ugwu asked the journalist to: “Go and invite the Senate Committee on Kwande Crisis to also investigate me,” indicating that nothing can be done to him.

Mr. Emmanuel said he informed his lawyer about the incident.

Football Club Supporters Batter Journalists

Some journalists who went to cover a Pro-League Division one football match between Nitel Football Club of Lagos and Bussdor Football Club of Port Harcourt were on July 24 mercilessly beaten by over 100 supporters of Nitel Football Club at the Onikan Stadium Lagos venue of the match.
The supporters swooped on the journalists and attempted to confiscate recorded tapes of the match from them.

Mr. Alfred Okoloigwe of Mastersports International, presenters of Sports Extra on the Lagos-based Africa Independent Television (AIT) was beaten to a state of stupor, writhing in pains and was later rushed to a hospital for treatment.

Information gathered from journalists claimed that officials of Nitel instigated its supporters to recover the tapes because of fears expressed by referees to them over the content of the recording by the journalists. The match officials, reports have it, had turned match rules upside down in order to ensure that Nitel won the match.

The unruly supporters had made their first unsuccessful attempts at confiscating the tapes midway into the second half only to storm the press gallery at the end of the tournament to achieve their aim.

The hooligans beat the journalists with various weapons. Mr. Ooloigwe was beaten until he fainted. His VCR tapes were destroyed and then they turned to Emma Njoku of The Sun newspapers, Collins Udoh of Kickoff magazine, and Christian Okpara of The Guardian newspapers.

Various items found on the bodies of the reporters were stolen from them including various sums of money, mobile telephone handsets, midget recorders, and other possessions.

Policemen who were present at the venue refused to come to the aid of the journalists in spite of their pleadings claiming they were there to protect the players.

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**MEDIA / PRESS FREEDOM AWARDS**

**Health Reporting Course For Nigerian And Ethiopian Journalists**

Nigerian and Ethiopian broadcast reporters interested in learning about reproductive health issues can sign-up for a training course organized by the Southern African Broadcasters Association (SABA).

Scheduled for September 13 to 30 in South Africa, the course will examine reproductive health rights and their impact on population and gender. Participants will be expected to produce broadcast programs that raise public awareness of the issues.

Broadcast reporters from India, Pakistan and the Philippines are also eligible to attend. With support from the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD), selected journalists will have the chance to share their own experiences and perspectives with their African colleagues.

Though deadlines have not been announced, availability is however limited.

Interested participants should contact SABA project manager, Ntombi Mhangwani, at mhangwanin@sabc.co.za or telephone (+27-11) 714-4694.

The San Francisco-based Institute of International Education is funding the program.

**Research Grants Available For African Journalists**

African journalists interested in pursuing research projects in Europe can now apply for a study grant from the Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) in Sweden.

The NAI grants allow African journalists to undertake a one-month intensive research or writing project at the institute’s library in Uppsala, Sweden. They will also have access to the Uppsala University Library and the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, which house extensive African collections.

The grant, which covers travel expenses to and from Uppsala, accommodations, and a small stipend for living expenses, is also open to journalism lecturers or authors researching textbooks.

Applications are available and can be downloaded at http://www.nai.uu.se/stip/sstip/application03.pdf.

Closing date for receiving of completed applications is October 1 for grants awarded between January and June 2005.

NAI serves as a research, documentation and information center on modern Africa for the Nordic countries in Europe.

Further more information can be obtained from Caroline Kyhlbäck, NAI’s grant coordinator, at caroline.kyhlback@nai.uu.se or telephone, (+46-18) 562-200.
Gleitsman Foundation International Activist Award

The US-based Gleitsman Foundation is seeking nominations for the 2005 International Activist Award to honour exceptional individuals who struggle against social injustice.

The award is open to individuals anywhere in the world, outside the United States, whose “vision and courage inspire others to join with them in confronting and challenging injustice,” says the foundation. It is not presented posthumously, nor is it given to organisations. Two individuals will share a US$100,000 cash prize and a specially commissioned sculpture created by award-winning U.S. artist Maya Lin.

The International Activist Award has been established to honor individuals in the international community who have inspired change and motivated others in the realm of social activism. The $100,000 award is presented every other year, alternating with the award presented to activists in the United States.

Winners of the award are determined by an international Board of Judges after reviewing nominations solicited world-wide. Nominees are recognized for accomplishments outside of the United States, with citizens from all countries eligible.

The International Activist Award is designed to recognize and honor widely varying forms of positive social activism.

The Honorees must demonstrate exceptional perseverance, selflessness and leadership in striving to combat social injustice in their community, nation or the world.

Causes involved may run the activist gamut from human rights to hunger to free speech to ethnic tolerance, among numerous others. No preference is given to those individuals who have attained international media attention; the Board of Judges bases its decision solely on the level of conviction, tenacity and impact demonstrated by the nominee.

Nominations can be made online at: http://www.gleitsman.org/intForm.html.

Established in 1989, the Gleitsman Foundation is a non-profit organization that recognizes and encourages leadership in social activism worldwide.

WWICS Fellowships in the Social Sciences and Humanities

The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars awards academic year residential fellowships to individuals with outstanding proposals in a broad range of the social sciences and humanities on national and/or international issues topics that intersect with questions of public policy or provide the historical and/or cultural framework to illumine policy issues of contemporary importance.

Fellows should be prepared to interact with policymakers in Washington and with Wilson Center staff who are working on similar topics.

Applications from any country are welcome. Applicants with outstanding capabilities and experience from a wide variety of backgrounds (including government, the corporate world, and the professions, as well as academia) are eligible for appointment. Stipends provided in 2001 ranged from $29,500 to $73,000. In 2002-2003, the Center expects to be able to award a few fellowships at a higher stipend level, up to a maximum of $85,000.

Fellows are provided private offices, access to the Library of Congress, Windows-based personal computers, and research assistants.

Interested applicants should contact Selection and Services Office, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004-3027; Tel: (202) 691-4170; Fax: (202) 691-4001; E-mail: fellowships@wwic.si.edu; Web site: http://www.wilsoncenter.org

Deadline for submission of completed application is October 1.
“The Press, Radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people.”

Section 22, Nigerian Constitution 1999

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