Media and Content

(Terms of reference)

Original is in French

Background and justification

The International Program for the Development of Communication (IPDC) is still the only multilateral framework of the United Nations system to mobilize the international community to debate and ensure the progress of the media in developing countries, especially those from West Africa. It aims to establish favorable conditions for the development of free and pluralistic media. The increase in the number of Internet users has led to a change in the sector. Now users can become actors. Apart from professionals who convert newsprint to online newspapers, democratization through blogs and forums where anyone can express their opinion on a political, social or economic issue makes everyone a kind of amateur journalist. This situation further complicates the accuracy of content, because the distance between the common Internet users and journalists is now reduced to its simplest expression.

The extensive literature review reveals that IPDC’s actions have had an impact in promoting the independence and pluralism of the media, the development of community media and radio and television organizations, the modernization of national press agencies and the training of media professionals. With the advent of information and communication technologies for a decade, the function of the media, the profession of journalist and that of communicator have become as above mentioned more complex and blurred. Information and communication specialists have noted that the credibility of these trades has often been called into question by the fact that there are people who make inappropriate use of the information.

"To provide support to projects, the IPDC criteria of selection are based on the following priorities:

- support the pluralism of the media (especially community media) and their independence (improvement of self-regulation and professional standards);
- promote the safety of journalists;
- combat hate speech in the media, including social media; promote the practice of journalism specializing in the coverage and management of conflicts and / or promote intercultural / interreligious dialogue among journalists;
- support the reform of the law favoring the independence of the media;
- conduct media assessments and research based on UNESCO's Media Development Indicators (MDI), Gender Sensitive Indicators for Media (GSIM) or Journalists' Safety Indicators; and
- build the capacity of journalists and media managers, (building on UNESCO's Model Curriculum for Journalism Education).

"The IPDC also supports the application of the universality of the Internet indicators in a constantly changing world where digital technology imposes a new global governance order on everyone.
The job of the information and communication specialist can be summed up in this assertion drawn from the intervention of Ms. Nnenna Nwakanma, in Paris in 2016 at the occasion of the IPDC conference: "access to information is like access to life, information is life. Access to information [...] helps level out all forms of inequality". Everything is put into play to inform and be informed. But informing requires learning, techniques, prerequisites, and codes of conduct in finding the information to be disseminated. With the internet, the first shadows of doubt and certainty have invaded the written and audiovisual media space. The paradigm shift is amplified with the advent of social networks where the false and the true coexist permanently.

Where does information come from? How does one ensure its veracity before spreading it? How are the sources of information protected?

While it is common to recognize with Ms Nnenna Nwakanma the need to "enjoy free, full and permanent access to the internet", it is no less important to consider the throes of misinformation and intoxication. The value of the content is the guarantee of professional information.

The online press is the most sought-after source of real-time information today. This press, using or not sophisticated means puts in breath its audience which it captures and maintains. Its ease of access, the freedom it offers to its target, in addition to the dissemination capacity it has there is fear of the extent of the damage in case it distils false information on a sensitive subject. Self-regulation is therefore recommended for online media even if the function has a code of ethics, and the sector regulated by an independent authority.

The work of the media professional and his quality can give life, or simply be life. However it may change into something else to become counterproductive. The right information must be disseminated to the right recipient at the right time. Media professionals will be invited to share with the West African Internet community the gains in facilitating access to information and disseminating information as well as the threats posed by Internet.

The dissemination of false information has made the bed of some media professionals in the West African sub-region and it is important to find a way out of this professional deviance. Self-regulation by peers is one of the solutions to overcome the repeated suspensions of the media in this Internet era.

**How is this sub theme important for the WAIGF?**

In each of the ECOWAS countries, the issues related to the suspension of press organs, particularly in the pre-election, post-election and governance crisis periods are very high. The causes of this state of affairs and the actions to be taken to avoid them should be shared between media professionals and the Internet community in West Africa. The information flop is due particularly to the poor sources of information, the non-evaluation of the veracity of sources and the lack of professionalism observed among communicators.

Over the last four years, several training activities have been offered to media professionals on the issues of development and peace in West Africa. Already in 2015, the regional organizations through an international symposium on the media for sustainable development held in Niger, has led the media to engage in the support of African countries for the realization of the post 2015 agenda. the media are vectors for the implementation of national policies. They contribute to the reduction of inequalities for the inclusive and equitable provision of basic social services of sustainable development goals in West Africa. It is the media that raises awareness among people and decision-makers through communication on monitoring and evaluation of the the SDGs implementation in all countries. They design, produce and broadcast programs and content adapted to local realities. In fact, they have
national and regional platforms for implementing the SDGs. But to succeed in its mission, the media professional needs free and fair access to information. As a result, we agree that media and information literacy becomes the instrument for achieving the 17 SDGs. Information and media skills empower individuals and enable them to take a more active part in the social, cultural, economic and civic life in society. Therefore, we must "promote the mastering of information and media, essential individual competency in the growing flow of information."

Main objective
To understand the operations related to the quest for information channeled through the media in the era of Internet and social media journalism in West Africa.

Specific objectives
- To discuss the techniques of collecting journalistic information in the internet era
- To present the mechanism of self-regulation of information related to media ethics
- To report cases of information crises observed in ECOWAS countries, particularly during election periods
- To show the role of the media for peace and development
- To discuss the phenomenon of fakes news in the ECOWAS region

Expected results
At the end of the panel on this sub-theme, the West African community can easily determine the relationship between content and media quality in West Africa. In this regard,

- the techniques of collecting press information, radio and television would be exposed;
- the self-regulatory mechanisms put in place by the networks of media professionals would be presented;
- examples of situations of information crisis are exposed; and
- the role of the media in the culture of peace and development are exposed; and
- les informations non fondées sont explicités avec des propositions pour en réduire l’impact dans les pays de la CEDEAO.
- Fake news are made explicit with proposals to reduce their impact in ECOWAS countries.

Intervention methodology
A panel and presentations will be organized in relation with academia, regulators and online press professionals, with the highlighting of contributions for the community.

Date and venue
The panel will be held during WAIGF 2019, to be held from 26-27 July in The Gambia.

Panelists
The panel may consist of representatives of the following institutions:

- Academia
- Associations of Media Professionals and Communicators
- Press Owners or Journalists
- Media Regulatory Authorities

The moderator will have at the beginning of the session five (05) minutes to introduce the subject and will then give the floor to panelists to present the substance of their reflections around the following:
1. What are the best techniques for collecting journalistic information in the internet age?
2. How do you self-regulate information related to media ethics?
3. What are the major cases of information crises observed in ECOWAS countries, especially during elections?
4. How to understand the role of the media for development and peace?

The order of intervention will be as follows:
   (1) Ms. AFFOUDA Adimi Aladjobi Pascaline, Benin
   (2) Mr. Peterking Quaye, Liberia
   (3) Ms. Haddija Jawara, The Gambia

**Sub-Theme Coordinator**
Dr AMESSINOU Kossi,
Director for West Africa, African ICT Foundation
Email: kossi.amessinou@fgi.bj; amessinoukossi@gmail.com
Tel: +229 95196702
WhatsApp: +229 99389817