

Dear Stakeholder,

*T*hank you very much for your continued support for the work of the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA). Your support keeps making us formidable in our efforts at promoting freedom of expression and democracy in West Africa.

We are glad to share with you highlights of some of the major activities undertaken by the MFWA and its partners in the month of August 2014. In this edition of The Gong-Gong, we feature specific activities undertaken in our free expression advocacy; media, democracy and development; and research and publication programme areas.

Specific highlights of The Gong-Gong for the month of August include

- ✿ Provision of Funds for Ghanaian Journalists to develop investigative stories.
- ✿ Interesting findings from Media Ethics Monitoring and Gender-Equality Monitoring reports
- ✿ Incidents of Freedom of Expression Violations in three West African Countries
- ✿ New appointments at the MFWA

Your feedback remains one of the most important resources to us and we hope to hear from you.

MEDIA, DEMOCRACY & DEVELOPMENT

Under our Media and Democracy programme, the MFWA this month awarded 10,000 Ghana Cedis (3,000 USD) to support eight individual Ghanaian journalists to develop investigative stories on health, corruption, education and the extractive sectors of the economy.

The recipients who were selected through a competitive process investigated topics ranging from the exploitation of Ghana's environmental resources, vulnerable populations such as women and girls; operations of CHIPS Compounds; and acts of financial misappropriation in the public sector among others.

To complement the funding support, the eight journalists were given editorial guidance throughout the development of the story until publication/broadcast from media experts who make up the MFWA's Editorial Steering Committee.

The funding support initiative is aimed at encouraging journalists to produce more

critical and investigative stories that prompt policy debates and/or action by government and duty bearers in the areas of education, health, extractive and corruption. Thus, it seeks to support the media to be more effective in playing their role as watchdogs of society. It forms part of our "Promoting Professional Standards and Enhancing the Watchdog role of the Ghanaian Media" project funded by STAR-Ghana.

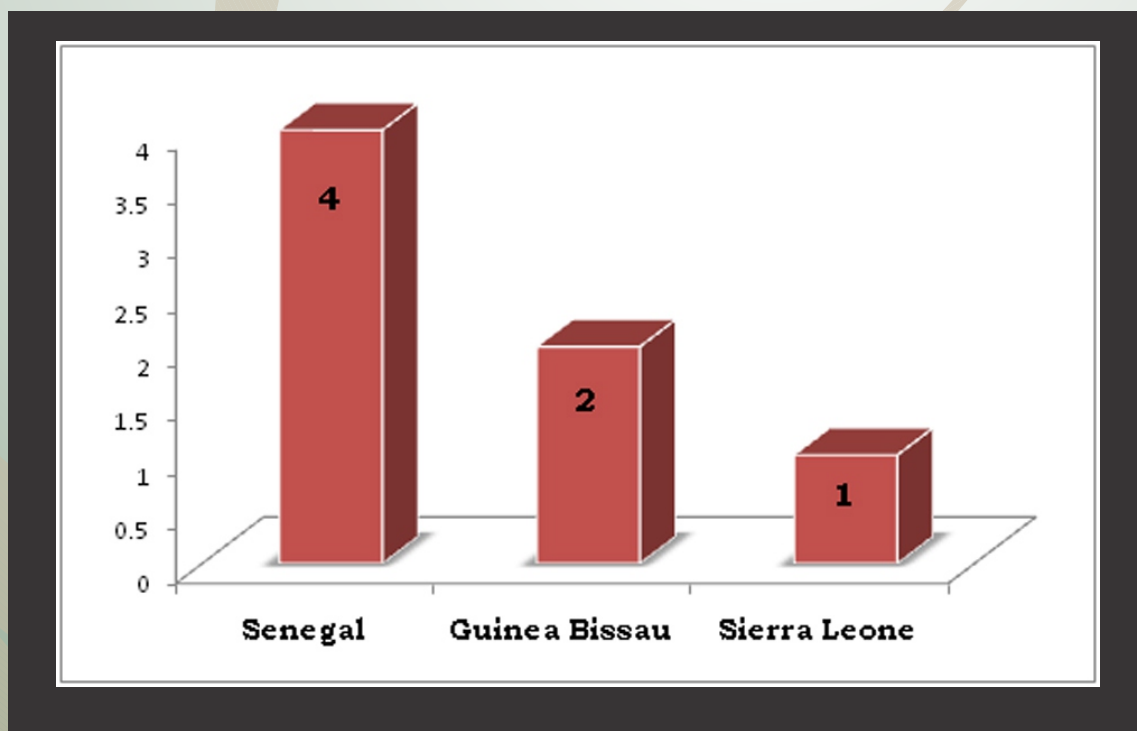
About 20 journalists from both state and private media (electronic and print) are expected to benefit from the funding by the end of the year.



Free Expression Rights Monitoring & Campaigns

We continued our freedom of expression (FoE) rights monitoring across the West Africa region in August. Seven reported cases of violations were recorded in the one-month period. The violations occurred in Senegal, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau. The frequency of violations in each of these countries has been presented in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: FoE Violations Recorded in Senegal, Guinea Bissau and Sierra Leone



The violations were in the forms of assault, arrest, fines and imprisonment. We condemn these incidents and urge authorities and individuals in these countries to respect the rights of journalists and all other citizens to free expression. We equally call on journalist to be judicious in their duties and respect the ethics of the profession.

We will continue to pursue our objective relentlessly to raise public awareness of, and redress violations of media rights and free expression through monitoring, documenting and disseminating information about abuses and attacks.

Research and Publications

In the month of August 2014, the MFWA continued its media monitoring activities and thus published two media reports:

- i. **Media Ethics Report:** This is a report that is issued on a monthly basis to highlight incidents of ethical violations in the Ghanaian media and recommending remedial measures. In the month under review, three major activities were undertaken in this area. First, the report on May that was issued the previous month was given further elaboration through TV discussions on *TV Africa* and *Multi TV* all based in Accra.

Secondly, the reports compiled from the months of June and July were jointly issued to the media and the general public. The report found among other things that in the month of June, ethical violations in the media reduced significantly from 141 in May to 80 in June. However, the incidence of ethical violations went up to 152 in July. Over the two month period, *Ghanaweb.com* news portal recorded the highest number of ethical violations followed by the Accra-based *Oman FM* and *Adom FM* respectively. The report also found that indecency in language was the most abused ethical principle especially among radio stations and the news websites monitored.

Whilst the above activities were ongoing, the 30 individuals recruited and trained for the exercise continued their day-to-day monitoring of specified radio programmes across the country in the course of the month of August.

The monitoring of ethical violations in the Ghanaian media forms part of the MFWA's project, "*Promoting Professional Standards and Enhancing the Watchdog Role of the Ghanaian Media*," which is funded by STAR-Ghana. The aim of the project is to contribute to improved professional standards in the Ghanaian media and support them to play a more effective role in fostering transparent and accountable governance in Ghana through critical and investigative reporting.

- ii. **Gender-Equality Monitoring Report:** This is another publication that is issued on a monthly basis. The monitoring exercise tracks and makes public the level of women's involvement and participation in public discourse on radio. In August, the findings of the July monitoring were published. The July report showed that women's involvement and participation in radio discourse on national issues had appreciated slightly from 17 to 22 percent, an increment which was quite significant for the exercise.

The 24 individuals trained for this project also continued their day-to-day monitoring and tracking of women's participation in the course of the month.

The monitoring and reporting of women's involvement and participation in public discourse on radio forms part of the project: "*Increasing Women's Voices and Participation in Public Discourse Programmes*." The project is being implemented by the MFWA in collaboration with the Foundation for Security and Development in Africa (FOSDA) with funding from IBIS in Ghana.

NEW on the MFWA Team



Byron Taylor



Venancious Ngmenkom Tuor

Two dynamic gentlemen joined the MFWA to augment the organisation's workforce: Byron Taylor to steer our sustainability initiatives and Venancious Ngmenkom Tuor to co-ordinate the activities of a continental network of freedom of expression organisations, which is hosted by the MFWA.

Byron Taylor heads MFWA's Consultancy Unit. Prior to joining the MFWA, he was the Chief Executive Officer of CSR Foundation Ghana and had also previously served as Executive Secretary for the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana. Byron Taylor was a Columnist for Weekend World newspaper formerly published by Global Media Alliance. In the USA, Byron Taylor worked as a marketing executive for Huntington Bank and also was a columnist for African Weekender magazine and the Star newspaper in Columbus, Ohio. He is an alumnus of the University of Ghana, Legon and also has undergone professional training in Financial Management and CSR Strategy and Management with Cornell University and McGill's Institute for the Study of International Development, respectively.

Venancious Ngmenkom Tuor is the Network Co-ordinator of the African Freedom of Expression Exchange (AFEX), a continental network of the most prominent freedom of expression organisations in Africa. He is a Bilingual (English and French) Communications Specialist who has worked with a number of international organisations for the past six years. He has had experience in carrying out communication and advocacy activities in the fields of agriculture/agribusiness, international trade and public health. Organisations Mr. Tuor has worked with include: African Connections; the USAID West Africa Agribusiness and Trade Promotion Project; IFDC Dutch-funded 2SCALE Project; the USAID West African Fertilizer Project; the United Nations Organization and Borderless Alliance West Africa. Mr. Tuor is a product of the University of Cape Coast and the University of Ghana.

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