



Media Foundation for West Africa



# REPORT 2018

## WEST AFRICA MEDIA EXCELLENCE CONFERENCE & AWARDS (WAMECA) 2018

Impacting Lives through Media Excellence



# West Africa Media Excellence Conference and Awards (WAMECA) 2018

## **Introduction**

The West Africa Media Excellence Conference and Awards (WAMECA) is an annual event by Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA). The overall objective of WAMECA is to improve media professionalism and strengthen the media as allies for development in all sectors.

## **The Conference**

The Conference seeks to discuss the challenges of the media industry and ways to improve the performance of the media across West Africa.

## **The Awards**

The Awards seek to reward and inspire media excellence in West Africa as well as honour West African journalists who have produced works that are impacting lives and societies.

## **WAMECA 2018**

On October 12-13, 2018, the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) held the second edition of the West Africa Media Excellence Conference and Awards (WAMECA) at the Swiss Spirit Alisa Hotel in Accra, Ghana.

The 2018 edition of WAMECA was supported by the United States Embassy in Ghana, MTN-Ghana, Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA), DW Akademie, Stanbic Bank, Ghana and GCB Bank, with more than twenty media partners across West Africa.

This report presents highlights of WAMECA 2018 – the participants, speakers, key issues discussed and recommendations made.

## The Conference

### A. Opening Ceremony

The Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) on Friday October 12, 2018 held the second edition of the West Africa Media Excellence Conference and Awards.

The Conference brought together over 80 participants including leading media experts, journalists and editors, freedom of expression advocates and high-profile professionals from 14 West African countries and beyond.

The Conference presented for input and validation a draft report on media development in West Africa and to discuss issues of media financing and sustainability in the region.

#### **Some key personalities at the Conference were:**

- Mr. Roberto Quiroz - Public Affairs Officer, United States Embassy in Ghana
- Mr. Edetaen Ojo - Board Chairman of the Media Foundation for West Africa
- Mr. Paul Rothman – Assistant Partnerships Officer, Centre for International Media Assistance (CIMA)
- Ms. Hawa Ba - Senegal Country Officer, Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA)
- Mr. Raphael Lakpe - President, Conseil *National* de la Presse (CNP), Cote d'Ivoire
- Dr. Sani Kabir - President, Conseil Supérieur de la Communication (CSC), Niger

- Nana Kwesi Gyan-Apenteng - Chairman, National Media Commission, Ghana/ President, Africa Communication Regulation Authorities Network
- Heads of national partner organisations of the MFWA in West Africa

The Executive Director of the MFWA, Mr. Sulemana Braimah, in his introductory remarks acknowledged the presence of some key personalities and expressed his appreciation to all the supporters and media partners of the second edition of WAMECA.



*Mr. Sulemana Braimah, Executive Director,  
Media Foundation for West Africa*

In his welcome address, the Board Chairman of the MFWA, Mr. Edetaen Ojo, noted that although there are thousands of media institutions in the region, most of them are weak as a result of serious challenges that undermine their sustainability and ability to play an effective role in democratic governance. He emphasised the need for the media to be supported in order to strengthen it to play its role in ensuring transparent and accountable governance. He urged participants to contribute to develop common strategies to confront the multi-faceted challenges that threaten the media in West Africa.

## Remarks by Special Guests



*Mr. Roberto Quiroz, Public Affairs  
Officer of the United States Embassy  
in Ghana*

In an official statement, **Mr. Roberto Quiroz**, the Public Affairs Officer of the United States Embassy in Ghana, lauded journalists at the event for choosing the profession and for contributing positively to their societies. He noted the risks journalists face in performing their duties and reiterated the support of the United States for them. He urged journalists to continue pushing to ensure accountability and good governance.



*Ms. Hawa Ba, The Senegal Country Officer  
of the Open Society Initiative for West  
Africa (OSIWA)*

**Ms. Hawa Ba**, the Senegal Country Officer of the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), emphasised the pivotal role a free, independent and quality media plays in building a vibrant and sustainable democracy in West Africa. She noted that this role is however undermined by challenges such as attacks on journalists, infringement on the freedoms of the press and expression, and lack of sustainable funding for media organisations.

Ms. Ba applauded the MFWA for engaging media in both Anglophone and Francophone West Africa, state institutions and ECOWAS in its quest to help address the challenges confronting media in the region.



*Mr. Paul Rothman, Assistant Partnerships Officer with the Centre for International Media Assistant (CIMA)*

**Mr. Paul Rothman**, Assistant Partnerships Officer with the Centre for International Media Assistant (CIMA) said his outfit was excited to be working with stakeholders at the conference because West Africa presents the best opportunity for advancing and improving the media landscape in Africa.



## Keynote Address and Official Opening of the Conference

Nana Kwesi Gyan-Apenteng, the Chairman of the National Media Commission, Ghana and President of the Africa Communication Regulation Authorities Network, in his keynote address commended the MFWA for instituting the WAMECA, an event he said establishes the MFWA as one of the most important media institutions in the world.

He noted that although media in the region has become pluralistic, quality remains a challenge.

Exciting benchmarks that motivate and challenge journalists are therefore needed to stimulate journalists. Nana Gyan-Apenteng said WAMECA provides a benchmark that is exciting, motivates and challenges journalists. He emphasised the need for participants to publicise the event in their respective countries.



*Nana Kwesi Gyan-Apenteng, the Chairman of the National Media Commission, Ghana and President of the Africa Communication Regulation Authorities Network*

## B. STRATEGISING FOR MEDIA DEVELOPMENT IN WEST AFRICA

The Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) presented a draft report on media development in West Africa for input and validation by participants at the Conference. The report highlighted seven common challenges the media in West Africa face, identified areas of priority for future intervention and collaborative strategies needed for future media interventions.

	Topic	Narration
1	Challenges media faces	Seven common challenges identified were: policy and legal framework, media business and sustainability, professional and institutional capacity, media ownership structures, media in good governance, new media and its implications, and safety of journalists.
2	Areas of priority for future intervention	<p>This was categorised into three areas: media freedom, media sustainability and media and governance.</p> <p>The top three priority areas of intervention under the media freedom trope were professional development, legislative reforms and reforms of regulatory bodies.</p> <p>Under media sustainability, management training, , identification of funding models and local content</p>

		<p>were selected as deserving priority attention.</p> <p>Media literacy, the need for a regional framework on Right to Information and media independence emerged as areas that needed to be prioritized in developing media to contribute to governance.</p>
3	Collaborative strategies	<p>Going forward, the following collaboration strategies were recommended by participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene regional regulatory bodies</li> <li>• Get African Commission involved</li> <li>• Networking: Sub-regional collaborations</li> <li>• Collaborations of journalists with CSOs</li> <li>• Harmonise ECOWAS laws on media, RTI</li> <li>• Develop trans-border media/telecoms policy</li> </ul>

### C. PANEL DISCUSSION: Media Financing and Sustainability in West Africa

Mr. Sulemana Braimah moderated the panel discussion on *Media Financing and Media Sustainability in West Africa*. The panelists were:

- Ms. Hawa Ba - Senegal Country Officer, Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA)
- Mr. Lanre Idowu - Chief Executive Officer, Diamonds Publications Ltd
- Mr. Andrew Danso-Aninkora - President, Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association

**The following were key points and recommendations made by the panelists:**

- There is a need for regulations that will keep the media, especially the private media, in line and also sustain it. Advertising and sponsorship as sources of funding for private media are no longer reliable as a result of the small market that the media operates in.
- The ongoing global economic crisis has led to massive layoffs in the media sector. Media organisations as a result need to devise ways of surviving. They must try to remain relevant and unique, understand their audience and keep evaluating themselves to be able to survive
- Media owners must study the market well before venturing into the field. There is a need for media organisations to adopt new innovations and market models in order to survive.
- The media must produce quality and interesting content to attract audiences

## THE AWARDS

The second edition of the West Africa Media Excellence Awards was held on the evening of Saturday, October 13, 2018. The awards ceremony honoured journalists across West Africa whose works are impacting society.

The ceremony brought together over 200 guests including editors, journalists, academics, heads of CSOs and corporate organisations.

### **Guest of Honour at the Awards:**

Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas – Special representative of the United Nations Secretary – General and Head of the UN Office for West Africa and Sahel (UNOWAS)



## Special Guests at the Awards:



Dr. Remi Ajibewa – Director of Political Affairs, ECOWAS



Mr. Femi Falana – Respected Lawyer and Human Rights Advocate in Nigeria



Mr. Edetaen Ojo – Board Chairman, MFWA



Prof. Kwame Karikari – Board Member, MFWA



Dr. Sani Kabir – Chairman, Conseil Supérieur de la Communications, Niger



Mr. Raphael Lakpe – Chairman, Conseil National de la Presse, Cote D'Ivoire



Dr. Owen Kaluwa – Country Representative for World Health Organisation



Mr. Paul Rothman – Assistant Partnership officer, Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA), USA



Mr. Selorm Adadevior – CEO, MTN-Ghana

West Africa Media Excellence Conference and Awards (WAMECA) 2018



Mr. Louis Kuupen – Assistant Country Director, United Nations development Programme (UNDP-GHANA)



Ms. Lara Taleverdian – Political Officer, US Embassy in Ghana



Mr. Lanre Idowu – CEO, Diamond Publications Ltd., Nigeria, WAMECA 2018 Judge



Mr. Samba Badji – Former Senior Producer, BBC French Service, WAMECA 2018 Judge



Ms. Elizabeth Ohene – Former Editor, Focus on Africa, BBC, WAMECA 2018 Judge

Eight awards including the overall best journalist were presented. Manasseh Azure Awuni of Multimedia Group Limited, Ghana was adjudged the overall best West African Journalist for 2018. The winners took home a plaque, a certificate and cash prizes.

**The winners for the various categories were:**



Manasseh Azure Awuni (Right), Multimedia Group Limited, Ghana – Anti-Corruption Reporting Category & Overall Best Journalist



Victor Ekwealor, Techpoint (Left), Nigeria – Business Reporting Category



Richard Kwadwo Nyarko (Right), Multimedia Group Limited, Ghana - Telecommunications and ICTs Reporting Category



West Africa Media Excellence Conference and Awards (WAMECA) 2018



Emma Morrison (Left), Multimedia Group Limited-Ghana, receiving the award on behalf of Seth Kwame Boateng, Best Reporter-Health



Anthony Akaeze (Left), TELL/ICIR, Nigeria – Investigative Reporting Category



Nabaloum Abdel Aziz (Right), Sidwaya, Burkina Faso– Human Rights Reporting Category



Adam Alqali (Right), African Newspaper, Nigeria – SDGs Reporting Category

# WAMECA 2018 in Pictures

## The Conference



*Roberto Quiroz, Political Affairs Officer, United States Embassy in Ghana, speaking at the Conference*



*Hava Ba, Senegal Country Officer, Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), speaking at the Conference*



*Paul Rothman, Assistant Partnership Officer, of the Centre for International Media Assistance (CIMA), USA, speaking at the Conference*



*Edetaen Ojo, Board Chair, Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), welcoming participants to the Conference*



*Nana Kwasi Gyan-Apenteng, Chairman, National Media Commission, Ghana/ President, Africa Communication Regulation Authorities Network, officially opening WAMECA 2018*



*A cross-section of participants at the Conference*

West Africa Media Excellence Conference and Awards (WAMECA) 2018



*Will Fitzgibbon, International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), Australia, making a submission*



*Arlinda G. Neves, A Semana, Cape Verde, making a submission at the Conference*



*Laura Schneider, DW Akademie, Germany, at the Conference*



*Group photo of Investigative Journalists and Facilitators across West Africa who were present for the Conference*



*Samba Badji, Internationally acclaimed journalist from Senegal, supporting the publicity of WAMECA 2018*

# The Awards



*Guest of Honour, Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of UN Office for West Africa and the Sabel (UNOWAS), delivering a statement*



*Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas presenting the Overall Best Journalist award to Manasseh Azure of Multimedia Ghana*



*Edetaen Ojo exchanging pleasantries with Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas*



West Africa Media Excellence Conference and Awards (WAMECA) 2018



*Dr. Remi Ajibena, Director of Political Affairs, ECOWAS, at the Awards*



*Selorm Adadevoh, CEO, MTN-Ghana, making remarks at the Awards*



*Guests at the awards*



*The Sensational Wulomei Band entertaining the audience with traditional music*



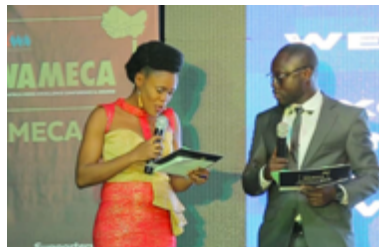
*Cross-section of Guests at the Awards*



*Award finalist with friends*



*Sulemana Braimah, Executive Director, MFWA, welcoming dignitaries at the Awards*



*MCs for the Awards Ceremony: Abigail Larbi Odei & Nathan Quao*



*The MFWA Team behind WAMECA 2018*

**Impacting Lives through Media Excellence**

[www.mfwa.org](http://www.mfwa.org)