



Media Foundation for West Africa



**REPORT 2020**

**WEST AFRICA MEDIA EXCELLENCE  
CONFERENCE & AWARDS  
(WAMECA) 2020**

Impacting Lives through Media Excellence

# West Africa Media Excellence Conference and Awards (WAMECA) 2020

## 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 2020**

From November 13-14, 2020, the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) held the fourth edition of the West Africa Media Excellence Conference and Awards (WAMECA) at the Swiss Spirit Alisa Hotel in Accra, Ghana.

The Conference was held on Friday, November 13. The Awards event followed on the Saturday, November 14, 2020.

The 2020 edition of WAMECA was supported by MTN-Ghana, the US Embassy in Ghana and Stanbic Bank Ghana with over fifty media partners across West Africa.

This report presents highlights of WAMECA 2020 – the conference, speakers, panelists, participants, award winners, key issues discussed and recommendations made.

## THE CONFERENCE

Due to COVID-19 and its several restrictions, the 2020 Conference was a hybrid version where more than 100 participants and speakers joined virtually with a few in person. The theme for the year was: **The Future of Journalism in Africa**. Participants included media professionals, human rights and freedom of expression advocates, journalists, academia and heads of civil society organisations (CSOs). There were also representatives from media development organisations as well as research institutions.

### Some key personalities at WAMECA 2020 were:

- Khadija Patel (Co-Founder, Daily Vox of South Africa)
- Baye Oumar Gueye (General Manager, Sud FM of Senegal)
- Bernard Koku Avle (General Manager, Citi Fm/ TV of Ghana)
- Simon Martha Mikina (President, Media Practitioners Association of Tanzania).
- Dapo Olorunyomi (Co-Founder, CEO and Publisher, Premium Times, Nigeria)
- Kouassi Selay Marius (Investigative Journalist and Media Trainer, Ivory Coast)
- Churchill Otieno (President, Editors Guild, Kenya)
- Samba Badji Dialimpa (Editor, Africa Check, Senegal)
- Léonce Gamaï (Co-Founder and Manager, Banouto, Benin)
- Sena Quashie (Director, Digital Strategy, Pulse, Ghana)
- Olave Orawo (Digital Marketing Strategist, Mdundo Africa, Kenya)
- Rodeny Sieh (Founder, Editor and Publisher, Front Page Africa, Liberia)

## Opening Remarks and Keynote Speeches



*Sulemana Braimah, Executive Director, MFWA*

The Executive Director of MFWA, Sulemana Braimah in his opening remarks said the theme of the 2020 conference was chosen prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic but was happy that it turned out to be the most relevant discussion in the context of COVID and the media landscape in West Africa. He praised journalists across the world and in West Africa for their sacrifices in reporting on COVID-19 and educating and informing the public even at the risk of their own lives.

Sulemana Braimah said the media's invaluable and indispensable role in the global fight against the COVID-19 made it apparent even to the most brutal dictators and media oppressors that, no other institution or group of workers could deliver the multifaceted requirements for combating the pandemic better than the media and journalists.

He however expressed concern that the media has not been spared from the ravages of the pandemic adding that the drastic impact on the pandemic on economies and businesses had had direct negative correlation on media advertising revenue and sales which have resulted in many journalists losing their jobs and many other media organisations shut down, while those still operating are struggling to remain open.

## Key Note Speeches

WAMECA 2020 had two keynote speakers: Senior Editor, Africa TV and Media Management Executive of the British Broadcasting Corporation(BBC), Vera Kwakwofi and Mr. George Sarpong, the Executive Secretary of Ghana's National Media Commission and lawyer.



*Vera Kwakwofi, Senior Editor, Africa TV and Media Management Executive, BBC*

Vera Kwakwofi commended journalists for adapting quickly and reporting on the COVID-19 emergency thus helping to tell the big story of the global pandemic in an effective way. This means that many reporters learnt new skills which made them versatile.

She observed that transparency and accountability of governments during press briefings helped build trust between the governments and citizens in many countries. This helped the media to be effective in relaying information to and educating the people.

Sharing experiences about how the BBC has approached its coverage of the pandemic, Madam Kwakwofi said the broadcast giant adopted a number of innovative strategies. Along with changing their broadcast catalogue, they aired home schooling programs and opened their archive for their audience to watch old programmes. The BBC further introduced COVID Facebook Live and COVID-19 Minute, which brought it closer to its audience. This was part of an initiative to repurpose old

programs to fit the on-going situation and to make the audience feel safe. These innovative programmes helped build trust and shatter myths.

Mad. Kwakofi stated that public education and robust interrogation should be the journalist's role in reporting anything pertaining to COVID-19. She said journalists need to be trustworthy sources of reliable information and medium for debunking fake news and disinformation by fact-checking claims made about the pandemic.



*Mr. George Sarpong, Executive Secretary of Ghana's National Media Commission and lawyer*

Mr. George Sarpong in his address technological advancement on the media landscape said the migration to digital terrestrial broadcasting promises to produce the single most phenomenal impact on broadcasting and the right to information.

He said there was the need for sensitisation of the public and all stakeholders of the implications of the digital migration, which is not merely a technology issue but a media freedom issue. He also recommended that research and advocacy be carried out to build the capacity of players in the broadcast industry and freedom of expression organisations to understand the issues and make vital inputs into the process before the politicians and technocrats in charge end up formulating repressive broadcasting policies.

## **A. Presentations and Panel Discussions**

### **I. Panel Discussion: Navigating Crisis- Covid-19 and the Media**

The session focused on the effect of the pandemic on the media as regards news gathering, distribution, journalists' safety, public trust in the media, sustainability and media freedom; Opportunities the pandemic revealed and how the media can take advantage as well as lessons gleaned from crisis useful for the future

It was moderated by **Journalist, Shamima Muslim**, with the following as panelists:

- **Khadija Patel (Co-Founder, Daily Vox of South Africa)**
- **Baye Oumar Gueye (General Manager, Sud FM of Sengal)**
- **Bernard Koku Avle (General Manager, Citi Fm/ TV of Ghana)**
- **Simon Martha Mikina (President, Media Practitioners Association of Tanzania).**

#### **Action Points/Recommendations**

- Contingency plans, proactive policies and practices should be incorporated in media management.
- There is the need for media diversification content-wise and for the creation of platforms for content distribution to increase revenue streams.



- Media organisations should look into investing in non-media sectors such as agriculture and consultancy to generate revenue.
- It is important for media organisations to enhance their reputation and brand appeal by building trust with their audience through credible and factual reporting.
- Capacity building is key in order to adapt to the changing times especially when it comes to content creation.



*Shamima Muslim (Journalist), Ghana; Simon Martha Mikina (President, Media Practitioners Association of Tanzania); Bernard Koku Arle (General Manager, Citi Fm/ TV of Ghana); on stage whiles Khadija Patel (Co-Founder, Daily Vox of South Africa) & Baye Oumar Gueye (General Manager, Sud FM of Senegal), joined via zoom*

## II. Panel Discussion – The Future of Journalism in Africa

The session focused on how journalists in Africa and their organisations could survive the impact of Covid-19. It was moderated by **Journalist, Nana Ama Agyemang Asante** with the following as panelists:

- **Dapo Olorunyomi (Co-Founder, CEO and Publisher, Premium Times, Nigeria)**
- **Kouassi Selay Marius (Investigative Journalist and Media Trainer, Ivory Coast)**
- **Churchill Otieno (President, Editors Guild, Kenya)**
- **Samba Badji Dialimpa (Editor, Africa Check, Senegal)**

### Action Points/ Recommendations/ Takeaways

- Networking and collaboration among journalists and media organizations as well as story sharing will make a greater impact in the media sphere.
- Journalists should take into consideration the competing interest for clicks and views with personal blogs and vloggers on social media, which blur the lines between journalism and social media activism while advocating for digitization.
- With the surge in mis- and disinformation brought on by social media it presents an opportunity for traditional media to step in with credible information; winning public confidence.

- Media managers should consider experimenting new business models such as audience subscriptions and customizing content to suit the interest of their consumers.
- Mental health of journalists is key and should be given great attention as well as employment insurance for journalists. This will guard journalists and enable them do their best.



*Nana Ama Agyemang Asante (Journalist); Dapo Olorunyomi (Co-Founder, CEO and Publisher, Premium Times, Nigeria); Kouassi Selay Marius, Investigative Journalist and Media Trainer, Ivory Coast; Samba Badji Dialimpa, Editor, Africa Check, Senegal on stage whiles Churchill Otieno, President, Editors Guild, Kenya joined via zoom*

### **III. Panel Discussion on: Digitization without monetization - Tech and Media Sustainability in Africa**

The session, focused the declining advertising revenues that have forced mainstream media to experiment with different digital transformation strategies in reaching audiences as well as garnering revenue to sustain the process of news production. It was moderated by **Sulemana Briamah, Executive Director, Media Foundation for West Africa** with the following as panelists:

- **Léonce Gamaï (Co-Founder and Manager, Banouto, Benin)**
- **Sena Quashie (Director, Digital Strategy, Pulse, Ghana)**
- **Olave Orawo (Digital Marketing Strategist, Mdundo Africa, Kenya)**
- **Rodeny Sieh (Founder, Editor and Publisher, Front Page Africa, Liberia)**

#### **Action Points/ Recommendations/ Takeaways**

- Once digitized, media organizations should figure out a way to incorporate payment collection options on their various platforms such as mobile money or mpesa.
- Monetization of data collected from the digitization of media is key, which is the module social networking sites such as Facebook have adopted. They sell data collected from users back to users who are their consumers.

- Technical know-how is key when it comes to digitization so the best content or features can be downloaded without exhausting users' data.
- Subscription modules should be tweaked to suit audience and the kind of access they have to the media organisation's data and gadgets as well as internet accessibility.
- It is important to monetize insights gathered by journalist rather than leaving them to the fate of social media and bloggers.
- A technological side should be considered when trying to generate revenue from digitization because the technical know-how is key to maximizing revenue.



*Sulemana Briamah (Executive Director, Media Foundation for West Africa); Léonce Gamai (Co-Founder and Manager, Banouto, Benin); Sena Quashie (Director, Digital Strategy, Pulse, Ghana); Rodeny Sieh (Founder, Editor and Publisher, Front Page Africa, Liberia whiles Olave Orawo (Digital Marketing Strategist, Mdundo Africa, Kenya) joined via zoom*

## The Awards



The fourth edition of the West Africa Media Excellence Awards was held on the evening of Saturday, November 14, 2020. The Awards ceremony honoured journalists across West Africa whose works are impacting society. The ceremony brought together over 100 guests (in-person) including editors, journalists, academics, activists, heads of civil society organisations (CSOs) and corporate organisations and about 200 guests virtually.

## Special Guest



*His Excellency Abdourahmane Diallo, UNESCO Country Representative in Ghana*

The Special Guest for the awards ceremony was UNESCO Country Representative in Ghana, His Excellency Abdourahmane Diallo. He reaffirmed UNESCO's commitment to promoting press freedom and freedom of expression.

Mr Diallo commended the finalists and winners for their outstanding works which he added is even more laudable in view of the psychological pressure of longer working hours amidst the risk of infection and the trauma of reporting on COVID-19.

## Message from WAMECA 2020 sponsors

The Counsellor for Public Affairs at the Embassy of the United States in Ghana, Virginia Elliot said her outfit was proud to be associated with the event which seeks to promote media excellence. She said a vibrant and professional working in a free environment is the bedrock of democracy. The United States will thus continue to support press freedom across the world commended the MFWA for promoting media excellence through the WAMECA initiative.



*Virginia Elliot, Counsellor for Public Affairs,  
The Embassy of the United States in Ghana*



*Georgina Asare Fiagbenu, Senior Manager for  
Corporate Communications at MTN Ghana*

Senior Manager for Corporate Communications at MTN Ghana, Georgina Asare Fiagbenu, in her remarks, said the media as a platform for information sharing and dissemination is life-enhancing, just as telecommunication is and commended all the nominees and winners for their that impact society positively.



## Here are the Winners of WAMECA 2020



*Manasseh Azure (R), Ghana, Winner Anti-Corruption Reporting Category & Overall Best Journalist for WAMECA 2020, receiving his award from UNESCO Country Representative in Ghana, His Excellency Abdourahmane Diallo (L)*



*Story Title: Case Congestion in Lagos Courts Hinder Access to Justice*



*Story Title: Bribery for Sale*



*Story Title: The sinking houses of Adeniji Adele*



*Story Title: Médicaments illicites: du poison en vente libre au Sénégal*



*Story Title: INVESTIGATION. Thugs rule in Rivers markets, force multiple illegal taxes on petty traders, as govt feigns ignorance*



*Story Title: Sad tales of Nigerians who lost phones and bank savings to hackers*



*Story Title: Grounded Wheels*



*Fisayo Soyombo (R), Ghana – Winner Investigative Reporting Category, receiving his award from Virginia Elliot (L)*



*A rep of the Nigeria Embassy in Ghana receiving an award on behalf of Kelechukwu Iruoma of Nigeria from Affail Monney, GJA President (L)*



*A rep of the Nigeria Embassy in Ghana receiving an award on behalf of Innocent Duru of Nigeria from Georgina Asare Fiagbenu (L)*



*Moussa Ngom (R), Senegal – Winner Telecommunications and ICTs Reporting Category, receiving his award from Affail Monney, GJA President (L)*



*A rep of the Nigeria Embassy in Ghana receiving an award on behalf of Funke Busari of Nigeria from Professor Kwame Karikari (R)*



*A rep of the Nigeria Embassy in Ghana receiving an award on behalf of Olatunji Ololade of Nigeria*

## PHOTOS FROM WAMECA 2020



*Mr. George Sarpong, the Executive Secretary of Ghana's National Media Commission and lawyer speaking at the Conference*



*Nana Ama Agyemang Asante, Journalist moderating a session at the Conference*



*Susanne Fuchs-Mwakideu – Country Representative, DW Akademie at the Conference*



*Shamima Muslim, Journalist speaking at the Conference*



*Simon Maritha Mikina (President, Media Practitioners Association of Tanzania, making a point at the conference*



*Kouassi Selay Marius, Investigative Journalist and Media Trainer, Ivory Coast at the Conference*

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*A cross-section of participants at the Conference*



*Dapo Olorunyomi (Co-Founder, CEO and Publisher, Premium Times, Nigeria) at the Conference*



*Samba Badji Dialimpa (Editor, Africa Check, Senegal), at the Conference*



*A cross-section of participants at the Conference*



*His Excellency Abdourahmane Diallo UNESCO Country Representative in Ghana, giving his speech at the Awards*



*Virginia Elliot, Counsellor for Public Affairs at the Embassy of the United States in Ghana giving her speech at the awards*



*Sulemana Braimah, Executive Director, Media Foundation for West Africa giving his open remarks at the Awards*



*Senior Manager for Corporate Communications at MTN Ghana, Georgina Asare Fiaqbenu speaking at the Awards*



*Susanne Fuchs-Mwakiden – Country Representative, DW Akademie at the Awards*



*WAMECA 2020 finalist Beryl E. Richter of Joy News, Ghana at the Awards*



*Affail Monney, GJA President at the Awards*



*Mcs for the Awards, Abigail Larbi Odei & Rachad Bani Samari*



WAMECA 2020 was supported by The United States Embassy in Ghana,  
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