



Media Foundation for West Africa  
**2022 Annual Report**

Photo Credit: Facebook

# CONTENT

- 1** Message from the Executive Director

---
- 3** About the MFWA

---
- 4** MFWA at 25

---
- 6** MFWA Impact in 2022 at a glance

---
- 7** An overview of West Africa in 2022

---
- 10** Improving public sector transparency and accountability

---
- 11** Increased citizens-authorities' engagements

---
- 12** Improving transparency & accountability in governance through the use of ATI laws

---
- 14** Enhanced investigative journalism and information integrity

---
- 15** MFWA Fellowships

---
- 17** Special Convenings for 2022

---
- 21** Safety of Journalists and Freedom of Expression Situation in West Africa

---
- 24** Digital Rights

---
- 26** Improving our engagements across West Africa and Beyond

---
- 27** Some Resources

---
- 28** Acknowledgement

## Message from the Executive Director



### *Dear Cherished Stakeholder,*

I want to thank you for making time to engage with the work of the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) through this content. It is your engagements and feedback that continuously inform and shape our conceptualisation, design and implementation of the various interventions we undertake. So, we thank you for being a part of our journey so far.

March 2022 marked our 25th anniversary as an organisation that has been empowering voices for public good across West Africa. We are delighted that for over two decades, we have positively impacted the freedom of expression and media development landscape. This has contributed to expanding the frontiers of expression and the democratic credentials of the ECOWAS region.

We are, in particular, pleased about the investments we have made in strengthening the capacity of the media to contribute meaningfully to democratic processes by facilitating dialogue between citizens and authorities and holding duty-bearers to account. We are also delighted that through our work, access to information laws in Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone are being put to use by journalists and community members to seek information and to demand accountability. Additionally, we have contributed to peaceful elections in Ghana, Nigeria and Niger through media training workshops on elections; conflict-sensitive reporting; police-media engagements; and media monitoring of hate speech and indecent language during electioneering periods.

The year 2022 also marked the beginning of the implementation of our three-year strategic plan (2022 – 2024). Given the prevailing context and emerging issues, the strategy has been framed to help the organisation appropriately respond to freedom of expression, media development, governance and development challenges in the West African sub-region. Women empowerment is pivotal and a key cross-cutting area in our new strategy.

It is our expectation that the new strategy will help the organisation and its partners to contribute efficiently to addressing the democratic rollback across the West Africa region. In 2022, the democratic credentials of the region came under serious scrutiny as two coups d'état occurred in Burkina Faso and one attempted coup failed in Guinea Bissau. Also the activities of insurgents in the Sahelian region continue to pose security threat to other countries in the region. The implications of the situation on media and free speech are dire. In countries like Mali and Burkina Faso, a number of journalists have resorted to self-censorship.

In line with the above developments in the region, we engaged with our national partner organisations and called on the ECOWAS, AU and the UN to intervene. We also intensified our press freedom and freedom of expression advocacy which resulted in the release of two journalists in Nigeria and Senegal.

Our media and good governance work also facilitated dialogue between citizens and authorities in three districts in Ghana. In Liberia, Ghana and Sierra Leone, we empowered citizens and journalists to use their respective right to information laws to demand information and accountability from duty-bearers to enhance transparency and accountability in the public sector.

The journalistic products of our nonprofit

newsroom project, The Fourth Estate, and other trained journalists resulted in some supreme court judges and parliamentarians filling their assets as required by law. The publications also resulted in the dismissal and prosecution of culprits in a COVID-19 scandal about the clinic at Ghana's seat of government; and the suspension of a controversial promotional interview training by the Local Government Service of Ghana.

In the latter part of 2022, we convened three major conferences that brought together dignitaries and experts from across West Africa and beyond to discuss pertinent issues in the region. The outcomes from these events have been documented and shared with the relevant stakeholders to inform their interventions. At the institutional level, the outcomes are also shaping our strategies and tactics.

We were able to do these and many others with the support from our funding partners, national partner organisations, institutional collaborators and all the stakeholders we have engaged and/or worked with, especially You. Thank you. With your continued support, we are confident we can continue to make meaningful contributions to the democratisation processes in the region by empowering more voices for improved livelihoods and better societies.

We are grateful to you all.



## About the MFWA

The MFWA is a regional independent non-governmental organisation with a network of [national partner organisations](#) in all 16 countries in West Africa. The organisation is certified as being equivalent of a US public charity after going through Equivalency Determination process with NGO-source. Also, the MFWA has UN ECOSOC consultative status and Observer Status with the African Commission of Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR), and serves as the Secretariat of the African Freedom of Expression Exchange (AFEX). The AFEX network brings together the most prominent press freedom, freedom of expression and media development advocacy organisations in Africa.

The organisation also works in partnership with other regional and international organisations through different networks such as

IFEX, the Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC) and the African Platform on Access to Information (APAI). It also works closely with the regional inter-governmental body, ECOWAS; and also engages frequently with mechanisms of the African Union (AU) and the UN.

In 2022, the MFWA celebrated 25 years of its existence. The organisation was set up at a time when the political landscape of the region was transitioning from autocratic rule to democratic dispensation. Against this context, the organisation worked through the late 1990s to promote and defend media freedom, freedom of expression and access to information rights in all the 16 countries to contribute to strengthening democratisation processes in the region.



**25 YEARS OF ADVANCING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION  
AND MEDIA DEVELOPMENT IN WEST AFRICA**

In its early years, the organisation's work focused more on advocacy for media reforms to help create an enabling environment for journalists and the media to work freely. Our advocacy interventions contributed to policy reforms, successful litigations, release of imprisoned journalists, payment of compensation to some abused journalists, and relocation of some journalists who could not remain in their countries of origin because of persecution and death threats. Additionally, the organisation has produced several Freedom of Expression (FOE) and media development reports,

papers, articles and documentaries on all the 16 countries in the region. These products have become advocacy tools for engagements and shaping policy.

Twenty-five years on, the organisation continues to champion advocacy for further expansion of the frontiers of expression both offline and online. Likewise, it continues to strengthen the capacity of the media and journalists to facilitate participatory, transparent and accountable governance, especially at the local level.

In line with that the organisation continues to empower journalists and community members with a better understanding of right to information laws and information request procedures so they can leverage the laws to demand accountability from state authorities.

It's been 25 years of understanding the dynamics in West Africa and making significant contributions to the relatively improved freedom of expression and media

landscape in the region. We remain resolute in our commitment to undertake more impactful interventions to make the environment freer for expression, participation in governance, democratic consolidation and improved societies.

The democratic gains made in West Africa over the last three decades are gradually being eroded. This is largely as a result of military takeovers

## Our contributions to improvement in the mediascape of West Africa over the past 25 years

<p><b>1.</b> Positive media law reforms</p>	<p><b>2.</b> Successful litigations for journalists</p>	<p><b>3.</b> Relocation of persecuted journalists &amp; release of imprisoned journalists</p>
<p><b>4.</b> Payment of compensation to some abused journalists</p>	<p><b>5.</b> Enhanced knowledge and awareness about Access to Information issues among government officials, journalists and the general public</p>	<p><b>6.</b> Development of framework for improvement in police-media relations, safety of journalists and media-sector reforms</p>
<p><b>7.</b> Improved transparency and accountability in local governance mechanisms</p>	<p><b>8.</b> Establishment of public-interest and accountability investigative journalism platforms, The Fourth Estate &amp; Fact-Check Ghana</p>	<p><b>9.</b> Publications on freedom of expression &amp; media developments</p>

# MFWA's impact in 2022 at a Glance

89

reports on freedom of expression and media developments

130

state and media actors trained on media freedom & freedom of expression

2

journalists released from prison following advocacy

77

radio stations resume broadcast after shutdown following advocacy

255

journalists and community members trained on ATI

160

ATI requests made by journalists & community members trained on ATI

46

news reports produced by fellows of the MFWA

30

journalist trained on illicit financial flows

212

public officers declare their assets following The Fourth Estate's reports






## An overview of West Africa in 2022

Democracy is to be under seige in West Africa. For the past two years in particular, the region has witnessed a downward democratic slide as a result of military takeovers of constitutionally elected governments, and the activities of terrorists groups and violent extremist organisations in the region. Specifically, in 2022 two coups d'état occurred in Burkina Faso and one failed attempt in Guinea Bissau. Mali and Guinea are also under military rule as a result of coups d'etat in 2021. Cote d'Ivoire and Togo are saddled with third-term and fourth-term governments respectively, through constitutional tweaks. Additionally, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and the rest of the Sahelian region continue to face existential threat from insurgent groups with possible spillover effects on other countries in the region.

The instability in the region, coupled with global economic crises characterised by rising inflation, high costs of goods and services, and the resultant poor livelihood and unemployment for the teeming youth, has further exercebated the precarious nature of the fragile and relatively nacent democracies in the region. As the issues in the region continue to evolve, the implications on relatively stable countries remain uncertain.

A man in a green beret and military uniform is speaking at a podium. He has a beard and is looking slightly to the left. In front of him are several microphones, including one with a 'ORINA' logo. The background shows other people in military uniforms and a window with a white frame.

As part of efforts to manage and control information flow and public discourse, some governments (both military juntas and democratically elected governments) are deliberately shrinking civic spaces through acts of repression, abuse of journalists, and clampdown on dissenting voices and accountability crusaders and activists. This has seriously impacted on free speech (offline and online), participation in governance processes, and effectiveness of civil society operations and policy advocacy.

Given the fluidity of the context, the MFWA intensified its freedom of expression advocacy to highlight abuses against journalists and make recommendations for redress. We also empowered voices to be more assertive in demanding transparency and accountability from duty-bearers. Through our monitoring, documenting and reporting of freedom of expression violations; joint interventions with our national partner organisations; and the facilitation of engagements between citizens and authorities, significant milestones were achieved in 2022. The milestones achieved contributed to policy advocacy towards improving the democratic environment in the region. This report provides details about the milestones achieved in 2022.

Photo credit: BBC.com

**Between August 2020 and September 2022, five coups d'etat were staged in West Africa, with one failed attempt**



**Two coups d'etat occurred in Mali**



**Two coups d'etat occurred in Burkina Faso**



**One coup d'etat occurred in Guinea**



**One failed coup attempt in Guinea Bissau**



## Improving public sector transparency and accountability

In spite of the vast resources West Africa is endowed with, the region is largely underdeveloped due to a number of factors. Key among these are: corruption, weak accountability mechanisms, and unequal and unfair distribution of state resources. These challenges fester largely as a result of repression of expression, which by extension, limit participation of individuals in governance processes and demand for accountability from state officials.

In response to this challenge, our strategic goal for 2022 – 2024 is to ensure that “the right to freedom of expression is respected, protected and promoted in West Africa; with enhanced transparency and accountability in governance through quality journalism, increased public access to factual information

(both online and offline), and increased civic participation in governance.” In line with this goal, the MFWA in 2022, carried out a number of projects and activities that contributed to improving transparency and accountability in the public sector in Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone. This was done by improving citizens-authorities’ engagements; access to information held by public institutions; enhancing investigative journalism and information integrity.

The MFWA also trained 30 journalists and enhanced their knowledge on the issue of Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) to enable them produce more informed journalistic reports. Likewise a public forum was held to deliberate on the issue of IFFs with key state institutions and how the media can help in the fight against the challenge. Already, the media have published a number of stories following the IFF training and the forum which are highlighting the issues for further engagements by key state institutions.



## Increased citizens-authorities' engagements

In Ghana, we brought citizens and local government authorities together in three separate districts to discuss development issues and the utilisation of public resources. These were mainly in the form of [town hall meetings](#) with live radio broadcasts. We also facilitated similar engagements through radio programmes which featured local authorities and community members. In all the three districts, the engagements helped to bring citizens and duty-bearers closer. This helped in fostering accountability on the part of authorities.

At the national level, a number of forums were organised to bring together citizens and authorities to dialogue on a number of governance issues. For example, a [public forum on asset declaration](#) was organised in Ghana. The forum brought together state and

non-state actors to discuss the issue of non-compliance with Ghana's Asset Declaration law. The law has been identified over the years as one of the loose ends in the fight against corruption in the country.

The forum was convened following revelations in a series of reports published by the organisation's [Fourth Estate](#) journalism project. The Fourth Estate's reports revealed that several senior government officials in both the present and past governments had failed to declare their assets as required by law. Subsequently, a group of Ghanaians [filed a petition](#) with the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) asking for investigations to be conducted into the revelations from the publications.

# Improving transparency & accountability in governance through the use of ATI laws

Access to public information fosters active citizenship in governance as it facilitates appreciation of performance, expenditure patterns, procurement procedures, and implementation of policies. It also makes it possible for the public to demand accountability from duty-bearers. In a number of West African countries, even though right to information laws have been passed, they are largely not functional.

The MFWA has, therefore, been empowering journalists and community members in a number of countries on how to use their

respective RTI laws to seek information, and apply the information received to demand transparency and accountability. In 2022, the MFWA built the capacities of 120 community members in Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone to enhance their capacity in using the RTI laws of their respective countries to demand information from state institutions. The trained community members made over 60 requests for information in their respective countries. As a further step to facilitate the use of the RTI laws, the MFWA simplified the RTI laws in Liberia and Sierra Leone to ease reading and comprehension.



In Ghana, we convened a public forum bringing together the trained community members, the RTI Commission, the Ministry of Information and other officials to deliberate on matters arising from the implementation of the RTI law. The forum enabled the community members to share their experiences directly with the relevant stakeholders. The organisation also documented the experiences of the community volunteers in [a report](#) that has been widely publicised. Following the issues raised at the forum, the organisation was invited by the Ministry of Information (the oversight ministry for the RTI implementation) to share further insights and to discuss ways of improving access to information, particularly at the local governance level. The Minister of Information subsequently [praised the MFWA for its work](#) in promoting access to information on the floor of Ghana's Parliament.



“ Let me commend the civil society organisations in particular that have made it a point to test the system for information at various ministries, departments and agencies (MMDAs), and with your permission let me mention, for example, the Media Foundation for West Africa, The Fourth Estate that have done a lot of these applications ”

**Hon. Kojo Oppong Nkrumah,**  
Minister of Information, Ghana



The RTI Commission also acknowledged the work of the organisation during the 2022 International Day of Universal Access to Information with a [citation](#).

Apart from the community members, the advocacy on RTI also focused on empowering the media to use RTI laws to gather information for investigative reporting, particularly around issues of governance, transparency and accountability. A total of 135 journalists were trained on how to use RTI laws to seek information. The trained journalists, together with journalists at the organisation's Fourth Estate, made over 100 RTI requests, and used the information received to produce critical stories.

Additionally, journalists from The Fourth Estate filed 33 complaints with Ghana's RTI Commission on requests that were denied unjustifiably by some public institutions.

Some of the petitions filed with the RTI Commission resulted in decisions compelling the defaulting state institutions to supply the information requested. In January 2022, for example, the RTI Commission

imposed a fine of GHC50,000 (about US\$8,000 at the time) and [GHC30,000](#) (about US\$5,000 at the time) on the Ghana Fire Service and the Health Facilities Regulatory Agency (HeFRA) respectively, for failing to grant information requested by The Fourth Estate. The following month,

February 2022, the Ghana police was also [fined GHC50,000](#) for a similar breach. Several other institutions that had initially refused to grant access promptly granted requested information once they realised petitions had been filed against them.

## Enhanced investigative journalism and information integrity

In 2022, a number of capacity building interventions were carried out to empower journalists to do more investigative reporting. Journalists at The Fourth Estate, for example, went through series of trainings and subsequently published a number of investigative reports. The report included one on asset declaration by public officials which [compelled](#) superior court judges, parliamentarians and ministers to file their assets as required by law. Another investigative report prompted enquiry by the office of Ghana's President into a COVID-19 test scandal that was uncovered at the health facility at the presidency. Those implicated were subsequently [dismissed and prosecuted](#). Other stories led to the Local Government Service of Ghana [suspending](#) a controversial training for promotion interviews; and an [assurance](#) from the Postal and Courier Services Regulatory Commission to tackle online fraud.

Also, as part of its commitment to promoting information integrity, Fact-Check Ghana, a fact-checking project of the MFWA, conducted a number of investigations that debunked claims from government officials in Ghana. Fact-Check Ghana also debunked a number of social media claims and hoax videos, and provided a number of explainers and facts about topical and controversial issues of concern to the public.





# Fellowships

## Next Generation Investigative Journalism Fellowship

As part of efforts to groom young investigative journalists, the second cohort of the MFWA's Next Generation Investigative Journalism (NGIJ) Fellowship was taken through a five-month intensive training. The Fellows were mentored and equipped with skills from experienced and accomplished journalists in the Ghanaian media industry and beyond. The Fellows, who were 13 in number, were from Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

So far, 23 young journalists have benefited from the NGIJ Fellowship. The Fellows have

produced 46 reports that have been published by The Fourth Estate and [Fact-check Ghana](#). Such reports have included [one](#) highlighting financial malfeasance at the local governance level; one on the controversial award of a salt mining concession and its impact on vulnerable community members; and [another](#) on a questionable government sanitation contract. [Another](#) report highlighted some major public projects across Ghana that have been abandoned by governments despite significant payments.

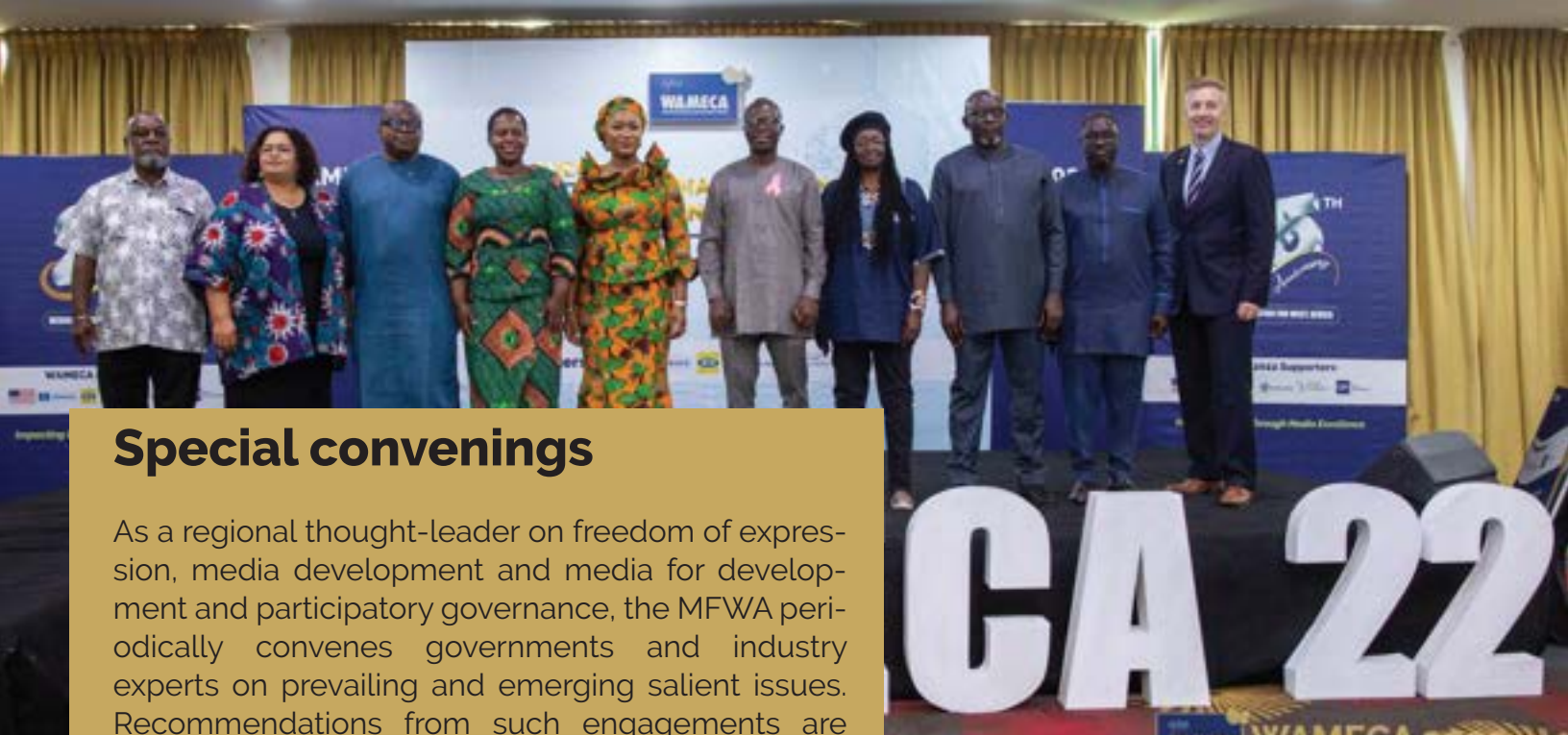




## Climate Change Journalism Fellowship

In the last quarter of the year, the MFWA introduced a new [journalism fellowship](#) project, Climate Change Journalism Fellowship. Through a competitive process, 10 senior journalists from 10 West African countries were selected to participate in the 5-month Fellowship – November 2022 to March 2023. The 10 beneficiary journalists were selected from Benin, Burkina Faso,

Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. Already, the Fellows have had a number of engagements with climate change experts who have also taken them through a number of training sessions (virtually). They are also billed to benefit from a 3month-month residential programme in Accra from January to March 2023.



## Special convenings

As a regional thought-leader on freedom of expression, media development and media for development and participatory governance, the MFWA periodically convenes governments and industry experts on prevailing and emerging salient issues. Recommendations from such engagements are collated and shared to inform advocacy and policy interventions. For 2022, the organisation organised three such convenings – the West Africa Media Excellence Conference and Awards (WAMECA), a regional forum on [democratic recession](#) in West Africa, and a national forum on human rights situation in Ghana.

### West Africa Media Conference and Awards

On October 22-24, 2022, the MFWA organised the sixth edition of the West Africa Media Excellence Conference and Awards (WAMECA). In line with the organisation's current strategy which places women's empowerment at the centre of its work, the 2022 WAMECA focused on discussing the role of the media in women empowerment. Some of the specific topics discussed included how to ensure 50/50 equal voices; representation and participation in governance; how legacy media can mainstream women empowerment; practical experiences of some women leaders in Africa; and how to improve women's participation in digital spaces, among others. The event brought together dignitaries, government officials, diplomatic missions, regional and international experts, academia and other relevant stakeholders from across Africa and beyond. The Keynote Address for the conference was delivered by the Second Lady of the Republic of Ghana, H.E. Mrs. Samira Bawumia.





Tessy Igomu Nigeria (L), over-all winner of WAMECA 2022, receiving her certificate from Ambassador Virginia E. Palmer of the US Embassy in Ghana



Session - experiences of women leaders in Africa



Session - mainstreaming women empowerment in legacy media



Photo of panelists - session on improving women's participation in digital spaces



Some WAMECA 2022 Awardees



Session - women in the art industry



## Regional Conference on Democratic Recession in West Africa

The organisation convened a two-day regional conference on democratic recession in West Africa and its impact on the media's role in governance and development. The forum brought together participants from across all the 16 countries in West Africa, including key stakeholders such as the regional inter-governmental body, ECOWAS, government officials, heads of freedom of expression and media development organisations in the region, civil society, academia, and the media. The forum made a number of recommendations, including a proposal for ECOWAS to work with civil society to initiate a strategic response to the democratic rollback in the region.





**Godfred Yeboah Dame**  
Minister of Justice & Attorney General, Ghana



*Cross-section of participants at the forum*

## **National Forum on the State of Human Rights in Ghana**

In commemoration of the 2022 International Human Rights Days, the MFWA organised a national public forum on the theme: The State of Human Rights in Ghana: Progress, Challenges and Way Forward. The event brought together key personalities such as the Commissioner of CHRAJ; Chargé d'Affaires at the Delegation of the European Union to Ghana; Chairperson of Ghana's National Commission on Civic Education and Mr. Charles Abani, UN Resident Coordinator to Ghana. The keynote address for the forum was delivered by Ghana's Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Godfred Yeboah Dame. Participants at the forum made key recommendations which were documented and publicised.

# Safety of Journalists and Freedom of Expression

## Situation in West Africa

The safety and security of journalists are critical to the watchdog role the media play in society. Acts of intimidation, harassment, threats, physical attacks and other forms of abuses often cow journalists and media organisations to self-censor. Promoting and protecting the safety of journalists and media organisations, as well as the respect and protection of expression by all, is thus, a critical component of MFWA's work. The organisation, therefore, undertakes a number of strategies to promote and protect the safety and security of the media, and where there are violations, take measures to seek remedies.

In 2022, a number of actions were undertaken to improve the safety of journalists conditions in the region. Particularly, in Burkina Faso and Mali, recognising the implications of military regimes and insurgency on the safety of journalists and the media, the organisation convened a meeting with its national partner organisations and issued a [joint statement](#) with recommendations to address acts of repression in the two countries and the rest of the Sahelian region.

A number of periodic [reports](#) were also issued to highlight press freedom and freedom of expression developments in the region. Altogether, 89 reports on incidents of violations and significant media development issues were published.

Another intervention the organisation embarked on to further improve the media and FOE landscape was to [train 130 state and media actors](#) on media freedom and freedom of expression in Guinea Bissau. The training workshop has contributed to increasing the knowledge and appreciation of the police, military, regulatory bodies, the judiciary, the Human Rights Commission and media on human rights norms and media rights issues. It has also facilitated collaboration between state actors and local media actors in the country. A tailored Training Manual on media and freedom of expression (including digital rights) has also been developed to serve as a reference material to the beneficiaries of the training and their colleagues.



*Participants at a training workshop on media and freedom of expression (for state and non-state actors) in Guinea-Bissau*

## Redress Actions

Whenever the rights to freedom of expression and media freedom are abused, the MFWA undertakes a number of advocacy actions to get redress. In 2022, the advocacy with partner organisations for redress contributed to the release of detained journalists in [Senegal](#) and [Nigeria](#).

In another significant milestone, the Government of Guinea Bissau, through its Ministry of Social Communication, [restored on air](#), 77 radio stations out of the 79 [shut down](#) for non-payment of license fees. This followed [engagements](#) and a proposal made by the

MFWA, its partner organisation in Guinea

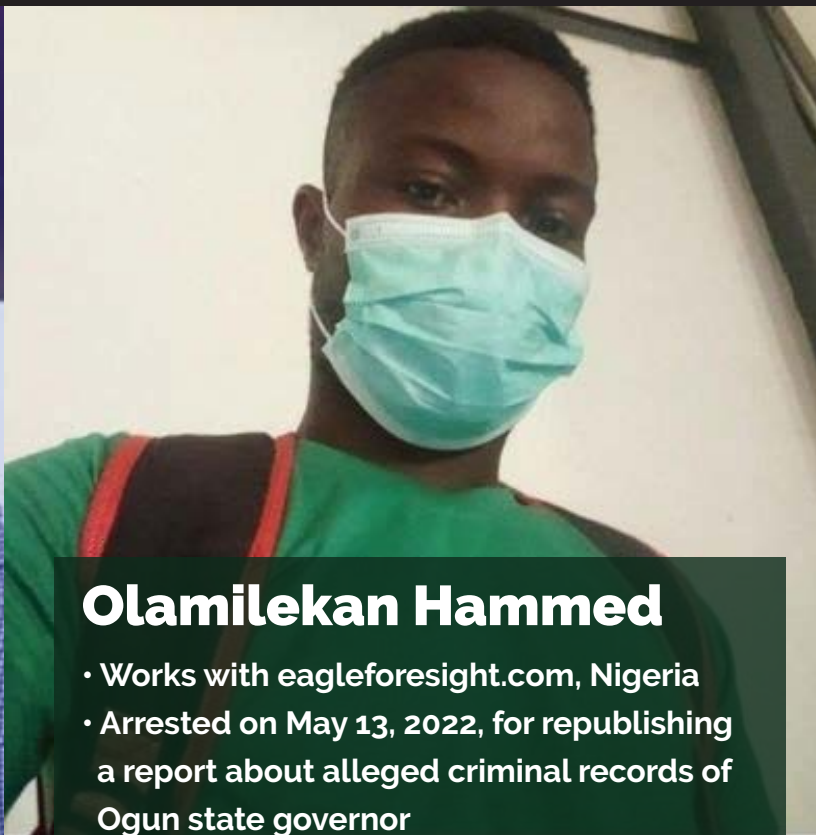
Bissau (SINJOTECS) and the network of community radio stations (RENARC) to the Ministry to allow a staggered payment of the debts owed by the affected radio stations. The government agreed to allow the stations to re-open while they honoured their obligations according to the agreed plan.

In Sierra Leone, following interventions on the need for media freedom, the President announced his government's commitment to ensuring media freedom, including a promise to introduce state-funding support for the media sector. This culminated in the adoption of a comprehensive framework on media freedom in the country.



### Pape Alé Niang

- Director, Dakar Matin, Senegal
- Arrested on November 6, 2022 for disclosing information of a military nature without authorization
- Released on December 14, 2022
- Re-arrested on December 19, 2022, for commenting on the case.
- Released on January 10, 2023



### Olamilekan Hammed

- Works with eagleforesight.com, Nigeria
- Arrested on May 13, 2022, for republishing a report about alleged criminal records of Ogun state governor
- Spent 138 days in prison
- Released on September 27, 2022





## Meeting with the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa

As secretariat of the African Freedom of Expression (AFEX), the MFWA successfully [organised](#) the 2022 AFEX Annual General Meeting in Lusaka, Zambia, which also hosted the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, Commissioner Ourveena Geereesha Topsy-Sonoo. The meeting gave members of AFEX and other freedom of expression and media development organisations the opportunity to highlight freedom of expression and access to information challenges in the respective countries to the Commissioner. Commissioner Topsy-Sonoo indicated her

readiness to work with civil society organisations to safeguard and sustain freedom of expression rights in Africa.

The MFWA also collaborated with AFEX members on the production of country reports, press statements and analytical write-ups on freedom of expression developments across Africa. Altogether, 22 publications were produced and publicised on the AFEX website and social media platforms, as well as the respective AFEX member platforms.

## Digital Rights

In line with MFWA's strategic plan and the cross-cutting theme of women empowerment, the work on digital rights in 2022 focused on building and strengthening the capacities of women in digital skills, as well as improving cyber awareness among the general public.



username

\*\*\*\*\*

OK

## Empowering women with digital skills

Research has shown that digital illiteracy is one of the factors hindering women's uptake of ICTs and the internet for economic advancement. As a contribution to addressing this challenge, the MFWA equipped 30 female entrepreneurs in Ghana with digital marketing skills to improve their business. They were also empowered with digital tools to safeguard themselves and their businesses while engaging online.



together government, civil society, academia, media and the general public. The forums made recommendations on how civil society and the media could complement the work of the CSA in making Ghanains cyber-literate.

We also produced three advocacy papers on women rights online issues in Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The papers highlighted emerging issues and challenges to women's online engagements. They also made recommendations for improving women's rights online in the respective countries.

A number of [articles](#) and [policy briefs](#) on the issue of digital rights and cybersecurity were also published to create awareness and propose remedies. Other issue-specific writeups that were produced on digital rights and related issues included how Sierra Leone's Cybersecurity and Crime Act has been used to prosecute journalists and other individuals; [Ghana's passage of an e-levy Bill](#); [ECOWAS Court of Justice's order to Nigeria](#) to align its cybercrime laws to conform to international laws; and [threats by Burkina Faso's authorities](#) to punish social media users for "subversive publications."

## Improving Cyber Awareness

As part of efforts to build cyber awareness among Ghanaians, a forum was organised about Ghana's Cybersecurity Act. The forum brought together Ghana's Cybersecurity Authority (CSA) and members of the public to discuss the implementation of the Act and challenges being encountered within the cyberspace in Ghana. Another forum on the role of Civil Society in ensuring human rights respecting implementation of Ghana's Cyber Security Act was organised. This also brought

## Improving our engagements across West Africa and Beyond

As part of efforts to improve MFWAs engagements on freedom of expression and media development issues across the region, the organisation continues to collaborate with its national partner organisations to better understand the context in the respective countries, identify emerging issues, learn, and discuss interventions that could best address identified issues.

We also continue to invest in getting the requisite staff who can complement efforts at reaching and engaging our constituents in the francophone, lusophone and anglophone countries in the region. In the year under review, two francophone staff from Benin and Gabon were recruited to join the team. This has contributed greatly to improv-

ing our communication with publics in all countries in the region. It also helped in improving the participation and engagements in the 2022 edition of WAMECA. Additionally, a Director for research and advocacy was recruited to help ensure wider reach and greater visibility for the organisation's research, advocacy and documentation of impact stories.

We have also improved our communication and visibility outreach by investing in our website to improve user experience, web traffic and site security. In addition, we have improved the diversity of our content to include additional videos and infographics to make our content more engaging and interactive.



## Some Resources

1. **The Media, Press Freedom and the Democratic Recession in West Africa: Trends, Challenges and Recommendations**, <https://www.mfwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/POLICY-BRIEF-The-Media-Press-Freedom-and-the-Democratic-recession-in-West-Africa.pdf>
2. **Ghana tops in Freedom of Expression violations in West Africa during first quarter of 2022**, [https://www.mfwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/-FoE-Monitor-Jan-March-2022-final\\_Updated-1.pdf](https://www.mfwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/-FoE-Monitor-Jan-March-2022-final_Updated-1.pdf)
3. **Senegal, Ghana losing their shine as press freedom champions**, <https://www.mfwa.org/senegal-ghana-losing-their-shine-as-press-freedom-champions/>
4. **Essentials of the Right to Access Information Act – Sierra Leone**, <https://www.mfwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/RTI-Toolkit-book-Sierra-Leone.pdf>
5. **Essentials of the Freedom of Information Act –** <https://www.mfwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/RTI-Toolkit-book-Liberia.pdf>
6. **Guaging local authorities responsiveness to right to information requests**, <https://www.mfwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Access-to-Information-Q2-report-cover.pdf>
7. **Join the praise-singing or hold your tongue: The new normal for the media in Mali**, <https://www.mfwa.org/join-the-praise-singing-or-hold-your-tongue-the-new-normal-for-the-media-in-mali/>
8. **FOE violation in 2nd Quarter: Nigeria overtakes Ghana in race to the bottom**, <https://www.mfwa.org/foe-violation-in-2nd-quarter-nigeria-overtakes-ghana-in-race-to-the-bottom/>

# Acknowledgement

The MFWA is grateful to our funding partners (listed below) for supporting the work of the organisation through thick and thin. We also appreciate the contributions of all our national partner organisations for collaborating with the MFWA to promote and defend freedom of expression and media development in the region.

The MFWA is also grateful to its national partner organisations (listed below) for their cooperation and collaboration in promoting freedom of expression and media development across West Africa.



Media Foundation for West Africa  
32 Otele Avenue, East Legon,  
Telephone: +233 (0) 302 555 327

Twitter: @TheMFWA

Facebook: Media Foundation for West Africa

[info@mfwawest.org](mailto:info@mfwawest.org)

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



[@themfwa](https://twitter.com/TheMFWA)



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



[themfwa](https://www.facebook.com/MediaFoundationforWestAfrica)