

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION



REPUBLIC OF GHANA

CONCEPT NOTE

ON THE

**STAKEHOLDER FORUM TO REVIEW THE IMPACT OF
MEDIA SUPPORT PROGRAMMES**

NOVEMBER, 2023.

1.0 Introduction / Background

The role of the Media in promoting democracy and human development is of paramount importance. Independent media outlets empower citizens, foster transparency, and uncover instances of abuse of power. Ghana's media landscape has undergone a significant transformation with the adoption of the 1992 Constitution, which enshrined principles such as Freedom of Speech, the Right to Information, and the establishment of the National Media Commission (NMC). Consequently, Ghana has witnessed the proliferation of diverse media outlets, including 707 FM stations, 164 TV stations, and numerous newspapers authorized by the National Communications Authority (NCA) as of the first quarter of 2023. Simultaneously, there has been a substantial increase in internet and social media usage.

While Ghana's media has received commendation for its freedom and independence, concerns have been raised regarding declining professionalism and ethics, resulting in a decrease in public trust and calls for government intervention, which could potentially undermine press freedom and the media's watchdog role. Concerns have also been raised in regard to attacks on journalists and their safety in general. There has also been, in recent times, a surge in the promotion and airing of unwholesome, harmful or offensive media contents within the nation's media landscape.

In response to these challenges, the government through the Ministry of Information initiated the Media Support Programmes aimed at fostering a conducive and secure environment for media practitioners and enhancing their capacities. This also forms part of the Ministry's mandate to support the public communications ecosystem in the country.

Notably, on August 30, 2021, the Ministry of Information organized a Development Partners' Conference to engage key stakeholders and development partners to strategize support for media through these programmes. The conference had two primary objectives: to secure financial and technical support from development partners and establish collaborative dialogues with members/partners to exchange strategies and set priorities. The event saw the participation of about sixty representatives from diverse groups, including UNDP, UNESCO, USAID, GIJ, NMC, PRINPAG, Goil, MTN, MiDA, the U.S Embassy, Canadian Embassy, Norwegian Embassy, Institute of Financial and Economic Journalists (IFEJ), private organizations, and banks.

2.0 Description of Programmes

2.1 Media Capacity Enhancement Programme

In January 2022, training of journalists in various modules was organized for **fifty-eight (58)** journalists under the first cohort of the Media Capacity Enhancement Programme (MCEP). The programme is designed to address media capacity challenges to enhance its role as the fourth estate in governance. The Programme was organized by relevant stakeholders constituted as the Working Committee namely: the National Media Commission; the Ghana Journalists Association; the Ghana Institute of Journalism; the Institute of Public Relations – Ghana; Private Newspaper Publishers Association of Ghana; Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association; the University of Ghana School of Information and Communications Studies and the Ministry of Information. Findings from the survey conducted after the training indicated that participants appreciated the modules prepared for the training and found it to be of significant relevance in their related fields of work.

Additionally, on 31st January 2022, the Ministry of Information (MoI), in partnership with the UNDP held a first media training of **thirty-two (32)** journalists to strengthen the capacity of journalists through mentorship and content to engage with the agreement on the AfCFTA to inform the public, and more importantly to shape how Ghana leverages the agreement.

2.2 Coordinated Mechanism for the Safety of Journalists

To combat crimes against journalists and uphold SDG 16, the program adopts a multi-stakeholder approach endorsed by the UN. It aims to create a safe environment for journalists and media workers, including inter-agency mechanisms and legislation development. The Office of the Coordinated Mechanism for the Safety of Journalists was established under the auspices of the National Media Commission (NMC) with the support of the Ministry and other key stakeholders such as UNESCO. This office since its establishment in May 2021, has been able to resolve a number of issues including the investigation and resolution of an attack on Citi TV/FM journalists.

2.3 Industry Support through Global Partnerships

The Ministry has also identified the International Fund for Public Interest Media (IFPIM) as a key partner in funding Public Interest Media in Ghana and in Africa generally. The Ministry wishes to take advantage of this opportunity to partner IFPIM to provide the needed support the industry requires.

2.4 Collaboration with Stakeholders to Contain Egregious Media Content

Also, as part of initiatives to support the Media, the Ministry supported the National Media Commission (NMC) and the National Communications Authority (NCA) to launch a Broadcast Content Complaint Center with toll-free number, **0800 419 666**, on 31st October, 2023 that allows the public to report egregious media content they find within the media space. The call center does not only facilitate complains but also signifies a joint commitment to responsible journalism, addressing concerns and enhancing the quality of information dissemination. The event saw the participation of key stakeholders like the Media foundation for West Africa (MFWA), International Fund for Public Interest Media (IFPIM), Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association (GIBA) among others.

Most importantly, the Ministry as part of the launch of the call center facilitated the establishment of a joint Code of Conduct and Ethical Guidelines from the National Media Commission (NMC), Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) and the Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association (GIBA). This initiative aims to reinforce accuracy, fairness, and responsibility, fostering the highest ethical standards within the industry.

2.5 Campaign to combat Misinformation and Disinformation

In an effort to combat disinformation and misinformation within the media landscape in Ghana, the Ministry through the Information Services Department launched the www.ghanatoday.gov.gh as a website dedicated to fighting and fact-checking information. The Ministry has also begun a media literacy project aimed at educating and equipping citizens with skills to verify the accuracy of information they come across and also foster an informed and responsible community. On 19th October 2023, a high-level International Conference was held in Accra under the theme "Impact of Disinformation on Electoral Integrity, Peace and Security in Africa" where issues of

mis/disinformation were highlighted as major threats to peaceful elections and to the media ecosystem in general. In collaboration with other major stakeholders, the Ministry is developing a national action plan in dealing with this canker which has gradually permeated our media space.

The Ministry is also collaborating with OFCOM to learn key lessons from them in relation to their Online Safety Act which was recently passed in the UK. The Act places legal responsibility on tech companies to prevent and rapidly remove illegal content, like terrorism and revenge pornography. They will also have to stop children seeing material that is harmful to them such as bullying, content promoting self-harm and eating disorders, and pornography.

After years of implementation of some of these programmes, it has become important to assess their impact and to take stock of our collective effort to improve their implementation.

3.0 Format/Scope of the Forum

The forum is scheduled for Tuesday, 7th November, 2023 at the Conference room of the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) at 2pm under the theme; *‘Assessing the Impact of the Media Support Programmes’*.

The Forum will begin with a plenary session where participants will be registered, welcomed and receive opening remarks from the Hon. Minister for Information. This will be followed by a presentation on all programmes being implemented at the Ministry. After which a detailed presentation on the Media Support Programmes will be done outlining the key achievements, challenges and the way forward.

The presentation will lead to an open discussion among stakeholders present, including representatives from media organizations, Government bodies, and academia. The moderator shall facilitate the discussion on the effectiveness of the Media Support Programmes, their impact on media development, and potential areas for improvement. The opportunity will also be given to all participants to ask questions, make comments and provide recommendations in relation to the various issues discussed.

Finally, the Chairperson for the Forum will give her remarks and present a summary of the insights and feedback gathered during the discussions.

Find below a copy of the Program Outline;

TIME	ACTIVITIES	ACTION BY
1:45 pm – 2:00 pm	Arrival and Registration	All Participants
2:00 pm – 2:05 pm	Opening Prayer	Programme Officer George Amoako- Acheampong
2:05 pm – 2:10 pm	Welcome Address	Chief Director

		Mrs. Charlotte Morgan-Asiedu
2:10 pm – 2:20 pm	Opening Remarks	Minister for Information Hon. Kojo Opong Nkrumah
2:20 pm – 2:40 pm	Presentation on Ministry of Information's Programmes	Technical Advisor Jesse Agyepong
2:40 pm – 3:00 pm	Presentation on Media Support Programmes	Head, PPBME Mawuli K. Segbefia
3:00 pm – 3:30 pm	Open Forum	All Participants
3:30 pm – 3:40 pm	Insight /Feedback	Chairperson Prof. Audrey Gadzekpo
3:40 pm – 3: 50 pm	Closing Remarks	Hon. Deputy Minister Hon. Fatimatu Abubakar
3:50 pm – 3:55pm	Closing Prayer	Planning Officer Raymond A. Addo

4.0 Key Stakeholders

The Forum would be organized in collaboration with relevant stakeholders including representatives from media organizations, government bodies, NGOs and academia. The following are the targeted stakeholders for the forum;

- National Media Commission (NMC)
- Ghana Journalists' Association (GJA)
- Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA)
- Ghana Independent Broadcasters' Association (GIBA)
- Private Newspapers Publishers' Association of Ghana (PRINPAG)
- University of Media, Arts and Communications (UNIMAC)
- International Fund for Public Interest Media (IFPIM)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- Journalists and Editors from the various media houses

5.0 Objectives of the Forum

1. To assess the impact and effectiveness of existing Media Support Programmes.
2. To identify gaps and areas for improvement in these programmes.
3. To engage relevant stakeholders in a collaborative dialogue to enhance Media Support Initiatives.

6.0 Expected Outcome

1. To assess the outcomes and impact of various media support programmes, focusing on their contribution to media sustainability, independence, and freedom of the press.
2. To compare and contrast different programmes to determine best practices and areas in need of reform.
3. To identify and analyze key challenges faced by media organizations in the current environment and how media support programs address these challenges.
4. To involve a diverse range of stakeholders, including media organizations, government bodies, civil society, and donors, to provide a holistic perspective.
5. To develop concrete recommendations for the enhancement and redesign of media support programs.