

Africa Women in Media
CONFERENCE

in partnership with

ARTICLE19



MEDIA & SUSTAINABILITY



5 – 6 December 2024



Dakar, Senegal

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«At AWiM23 we achieved an historic moment, the first time a community of media actors, academics, and leaders co-designed and adopted an instrument to address various forms of violence experienced by women journalists, and how media represents violence against women and girls. That instrument is 'The Kigali Declaration on the Elimination of Gender Violence in and through Media in Africa by 2034'. Over the last 12 months, we have put together an advisory committee to guide our work on the Declaration and launched the Declaration platform. Our partners, Fojo Media Institute awarded \$5,000 worth of grants in Rwanda to organisations and individuals implementing the Declaration. UNESCO, through the IPDC framework, supported us to launch our "TRAKD" project which will see us develop tools and resources to support newsrooms in their adoption of the Declaration. In addition to this, through support from African Women Development Fund, we started a two-year project on media coverage of violence against women and girls, in Burkina Faso, Benin Republic and Togo. We look forward to sharing more about these achievements and more during the conference.

For us at AWiM, 2024 has been a year filled with reflections; looking back on our journey over the last eight years (and what an incredible journey it has been) reflecting on this to plan a new future for AWiM. In June, we constituted a new Board and started work with a Monitoring and Evaluation consultant to determine the impact we have had, and the opportunities ahead of us. These insights are currently under review as we develop our strategic plan for the next five years. We envision a new AWiM, and the feedback of those who took part in our consultation has been valuable in developing our plans. Thanks to everyone who supported us in this process.

For these and many reasons, therefore, 'Media and Sustainability' feels a befitting theme for AWiM24. As with many of you, as an organisation we recognise our vulnerability to the environment in terms of financial sustainability, development goals and how this shapes agendas, and how we might adapt to and take advantage of emerging technologies and AI. How do we ensure that the work we and many others have done around gender equality and equity in and through media, are actively considered as new technologies, especially AI, are developed. How do we ensure we are represented and make the changing media landscape work for us?

These are some of the questions we are asking ourselves, because we recognise the struggle for gender equality in and through media did not start with us and will not end with us. But how can we ensure the questions that future generations of gender advocates ask are not the same ones we are still asking almost thirty years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action?

We have a tall task ahead of us, and hope to rely on your support as we work through this together.

We are grateful to our local partners, Article 19 West Africa, for the significant support they have provided to make AWiM24 a reality. Thanks to our Platinum Partners, Luminate, and all our other partners who have supported us over the years.

Here is to another fruitful year and to taking steps in the right direction.

Dr Yemisi Akinbobola & Bamidele Ogunleye,
Co-founders, African Women in Media

ARTICLE 19 Message at AWIM24

I would like to first welcome you all in Dakar, this beautiful capital city of the country of 'Teranga' Senegal, where we are very excited to co-host the African Women in Media Conference 2024 (AWiM24). This conference presents a critical opportunity to harness the momentum built through years of advocacy, innovation, and strategic interventions towards a gender-equal and inclusive media landscape. This year's theme, Media and Sustainability, aligns meaningfully with ARTICLE 19's 'Equally safe' feminist framework for women journalists and our core mandate, of working for a World where people everywhere can freely express themselves and actively engage in public life and media without fear of discrimination.

ARTICLE 19's mandate is a call to Think - do- propel human rights, with freedom of expression and access to information as pivotal anchors. This framework seamlessly complements AWiM24's vision of ensuring that 'African women have equal access to representation and opportunities in media industries and media content'.

By critically examining barriers such as violence against women journalists, inequitable representation, gendered misinformation, and vulnerabilities in digital spaces and infrastructure, we ignite conversations that redefine the role of media in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 16 on peaceful, just, and inclusive societies and Africa's collective vision for transformation under Agenda 2063 to create The Africa We Want. Yes, the Africa we Want.

The African Union's commitment to protecting women in media is exemplified through initiatives like the AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, which closely aligns with AWiM's Kigali Declaration on the Elimination of Gender Violence in and through Media by 2034.

At the continental level, these commitments represent significant steps toward ensuring women in media are protected, their voices amplified, and their work recognized.

This is further reinforced by strengthening effective frameworks like CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, alongside relevant policies and institutions.

While these commitments are historic, the journey has just begun. Their impact must be amplified through sustainable funding for women in media initiatives and continuous capacity building for women in the industry. These efforts collectively demonstrate a determination to empower women, ensure they express themselves in media, their voices are heard, and address systemic inequities.

AWiM24 is more than a conference; it is a shared commitment to rewriting the narrative of women in the media on the continent. As media evolves through emerging technologies and artificial intelligence (AI), we must prioritise gender equality and representation at the heart of these transformations. Through partnerships, dialogue, and actionable strategies, we envision a media landscape where women lead with resilience and impact.

This year, ARTICLE 19 Senegal and West Africa is honored by the women movement to chair the Working group of Women and Youth for peace and security. It is not just a position, but moreover a significant symbol of recognition of our long stand commitment for inclusive voices empowering people and communities with abilities to defend against gender-based discrimination, exclusion, violence and human rights violations and propelling voices for equally protected societies. Yes, women equally protected in media and digital spaces, in private and spaces, in civil and political spaces. At ARTICLE 19 we think, do and propel for it to happen, remain and sustain.

Our partnership with AWiM for the AWiM24 Conference and beyond is enrooted in this spirit.

Welcome again in Senegal, the land of Teranga, the heart of civilisation and culture, the country of the Poet President Senghor and Cheik Anta Diop, the land of lions. From the airport to Dakar Plateau through Corniche Street, you certainly witnessed the natural attraction of this country. As AWiM2024 takes us sooner to the deep discussions to learn, share and think for present and future under the conference theme of Medias and Sustainability, I would like to invite each and all of us to keep in the heart of thinking and discussion the threats that our globe is facing. As we engage in media and other spaces, let's use our voices to speak for our planet, making media inclusively friendly for women leadership and voices and to stand up for our environment. At ARTICLE 19, we have identified many environment and climate change relevant issues of interest for media, for women in media such as disinformation, civic participation, transparency and public accountability, protection of environmental defenders, gender and climate justice, technology and digital development and environment rights, media development, policy and practices towards environmental protection, international debates and policies and environment, etc. In a healthy environment, we will be healthier and work for inclusive healthier and sustainable media.

Welcoming you again in Dakar, ARTICLE 19 Senegal and West Africa would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude first to AWiM for this historic collaboration and to our partners and supporters including GIZ, Trust Africa, OSF, European Union, US Department of State, UNESCO, Open Society Foundation, META, Canal France International (PAGOF 1), Expertise France (PAGOF 2), Open Gouvernment Partnership, Organisation internationale de la Francophonie; and partners CESTI, GPD, IPAO, AHBN, Amnesty International Senegal, Press associations, sister human rights organisations, feminist organisations partners among others whose unwavering dedication enriches our collective journey. Together, let us continue to ask bold questions and seek sustainable solutions to achieve the Africa we all deserve

Here's to a transformative AWiM24 and the collaborative steps towards creating The Africa We Want.

Bulakali Nkuru Alfred
Regional Director
ARTICLE 19 Senegal and West Africa



ARTICLE 19

AWiM 24

CONFERENCE AGENDA

5 December 2024

8.00-8.30	Room	Registration	
8.30-9.00	Keur Damel (Main Plenary)	Welcome and Opening Remarks	Dr Yemisi Akinbobola & Bamidele Ogunleye (AWiM) Alfred Bulakali (Article 19) Wynne Musabayana (African Union) Marguerite Rosalie Ndiaye (AFMS)
9.30-10.30	Keur Damel (Main Plenary)	KEYNOTE Media Development Investment Fund Approaches to Media Sustainability	Speakers: Oluwadara Ajala Nolwazi Tusini Lebogang Maphada Sebenzile Nkambule
Break			
11.00-13.00	Linguere	Lights, Camera, AI: Current trends and the future of Artificial Intelligence in Media Business. Panel	Moderator- Scheherazade Safia Speakers: Rebecca Mutiso Keziah Githinji Diop Moussa
	Boardroom	ARTICLE 19 Digital Rights, Disinformation and Freedom of Expression in West Africa. Panel by Article 19	Moderator- David Díaz-Jogeix Speakers: Aissata Ndiathie Valerie G. Traore Moussa Fara Diop
	Keur Damel (Main Plenary)	Empowering Success: Case Studies in Implementing Effective Business Models for Media Organisations. Panel Workshop- Developing a Business Model & Product Strategy Panel & Workshop by Media Development Investment Fund.	Moderator- Dr Yemisi Akinbobola Speakers: Shirley Nirmala Govender Karen Thorne Dorcas Taiwo Angela Agowalke Speakers: Oluwadara Ajala Lebogang Maphada Nolwazi Tusini
	Signara	Gender and The Media in Senegal Panel by Inter-African Network for Women, Media, Gender and Development (FAMEDEV)	Moderator- Mame Woury Thoubou Speakers: Bator Fall Sokhna Dandio Bigué Bob Aïssatou GINETTE Badji
Lunch			
14.00-16.00	Boardroom	The Media Marketplace: Models, Practices and Lessons Learned in Media Business and Management Panel	Moderator- Anita Eboigbe Speakers: Phathiswa Magopeni Gaye Crossley and Glenda Daniels Evans Teddy Oundo and Victor Bwire Juliana da Penha Siphiwe Mohammed
	Keur Damel (Main Plenary)	Balancing Act: Charting a course for Media Sustainability through Regulation and Policy. Panel	Moderator- Dr Dinesh Balliah Speakers: ITO Misako Akharbach Latifa Wynne Musabayana Albertina Piterbarg

14.00-16.00	Signara	TRAKD: AI and Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence Workshop by AWiM	Facilitator: Queenter Mbori
Break			
16.30-18.30	Keur Damel (Main Plenary)	Theory in Practice: How Feminist and Decolonization Movements Shape Media Ecologies and Representation Panel	Moderator- Ireti Bakare-Yusuf Speakers: Marquita Smith Omega Douglas Leyla Burcu Dündar
	Boardroom	Mapping, Attracting and Retaining audiences in a changing Media Landscape Panel	Moderator- Victor Bwire Speakers: Folaranmi Folayan Dr Joyce Kirabo Rita Agha
	Signara	Representation and Media: Sustainable Development Through Media Narratives Panel	Moderator- Wairimu Nyathira Speakers: Doris Olumoko Gloria Edukere Christine Sayo Nkemngong Efuetti Mary

6 December 2024

	Room	Registration	
8.00-9.00	Keur Damel (Main Plenary)	Opening and Welcome Remarks	
10.00-10.45	Keur Damel (Main Plenary)	Kigali Declaration: Commitments for sustainable change Plenary Session by Fojo Media Institute & AWiM	Moderator: Gail Jammy Speakers: Dr Yemisi Akinbobola Agneta Soderberg Jacobson Lindiwe Mugabe Susan Makore. Mamadou Thior. Doreen Umutesi
	Boardroom	The Metaverse Product and Sustainable Journalism. Workshop by Center for Collaborative Investigative Journalism (CCIJ)	Facilitator: Nelly Kalu
	Signara	AI and Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence Workshop by the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK)	Facilitator: Dr Robi Koki Ochlang'
Break			
11.00-13.00	Boardroom	Setting the AJENDA for a holistic approach to media sustainability Panel by WITS University and Africa Journalism Educators Network (AJEN).	Moderator- Dr Dinesh Balliah Speakers: Prof. Nancy Booker Christina Chan-Meetoo Elva Nziza Dr. Theodora Dame Adjijn-Tettey Prof. Margaret Jjuuko
	Keur Damel (Main Plenary)	Engaging Media as partners and Generation Equality Commitment Makers to advance gender equality in East and Southern Africa Panel by UNWOMEN	Moderator- Misako Ito Speakers: Aijamal Duishebaeva Molline Marume Dr Yemisi Akinbobola

11.00-13.00	Signara	African Media Sustainability: The Gender Equity Fix. Workshop by Big Cabal	Facilitators: Anita Eboigbe Temitayo Ishola
Break			
	Keur Damel (Main Plenary)	Practices in Media Coverage and Framing of Gender-Based Violence. Panel	Moderator- Christine Sayo Speakers: Bethlehem Negash Woldeyohannes. Blessing Udeobasi Ifeyinwa Awagu. Walrimu Nyathira
	Boardroom	Viable media business models in unviable media markets: Women-Led success stories Fishbowl Session by DW Akademie	Moderator- Rose Kimani Speakers: Imani Henrick Ferial Haffajee Obioma Okonkwo
	Linguere	The importance of addressing the sustainability of public service media and public interest content in South Africa Panel by SOS Support Public Broadcasting Coalition.	Moderator- Lister Namumba Speakers: Uyanda Siyotula Phathiswa Magopeni
	Signara	Soundscapes: From Storytelling to Sustainability Audio Media and Podcasts. Panel	Moderator- Juliana da Penha Speakers: Scheherazade Saffa. Kim Fox. Bernice Gatere. Anikeade Funke-Treasure Akintoye
19.00-21.00	Conference Gala & Dinner (By Invite Only)		



A platform that showcase African women experts across various industries so that media organisations can improve and increase their use of African women as expert sources in their content.



SCAN ME
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FEATURE STORY

“I CAN HARDLY HEAR HER VOICE”: HARROWING TALE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND BULLYING IN SUDAN

By: ESLAM ABUELGASI



Photo Credit: Freepik

“I cannot forget the painful memories of sexual harassment which made me depressed and then I was diagnosed with schizophrenia”

Bushra, a 35-year-old journalist, recalls the time she was sexually harassed by some Policemen while trying to cover a story at the Omdurman Market in Khartoum, Sudan. **“I was filming queues of people who wanted to get their money from the Bank of Khartoum and a police officer grabbed me and asked me why I was filming and whether I had a permit,”** she says.

Bushra explained to the Police that she was unaware she needed a permit to film with a mobile camera. The police officer then pulled her hand while she was screaming and more than three other policemen joined in the attack.

She said she began to resist fiercely so that none of them would catch her. Eventually, she surrendered and agreed to go with them to the police station.

“When we arrived at the police station, the station’s director asked for my ID card. I took out my card, and one of the policemen held it and touched my breast while extending my card to the head of the station.” Bushra said she was too exhausted to speak.

The police officer asked her to sit on the chair because of how tired she looked. Bushra said she felt that there was no point in talking, and wondered why a police officer who was supposed to protect her from harassment was the one committing the crime. **“The police officer asked for my mobile number, which I gave him. My last concern was to get out of the police station as quickly as possible, especially since my mobile phone was worn out and barely worked, and I did not even have enough airtime to call anyone”**, she continued. Bushra used her last airtime units to call her lawyer and told him that she was in the Souq Omdurman police station in Khartoum, Sudan. Unfortunately, the line went dead because her battery ran down.

Bushra said after the incident, she was diagnosed with schizophrenia, and she could hardly afford her medications at a time when there was a drug crisis sweeping across the Country. People in Khartoum state, Sudan, have become increasingly cut off from healthcare, due to the ongoing fight in the country. Not many medical facilities remained functional, depriving about three million people of healthcare services.

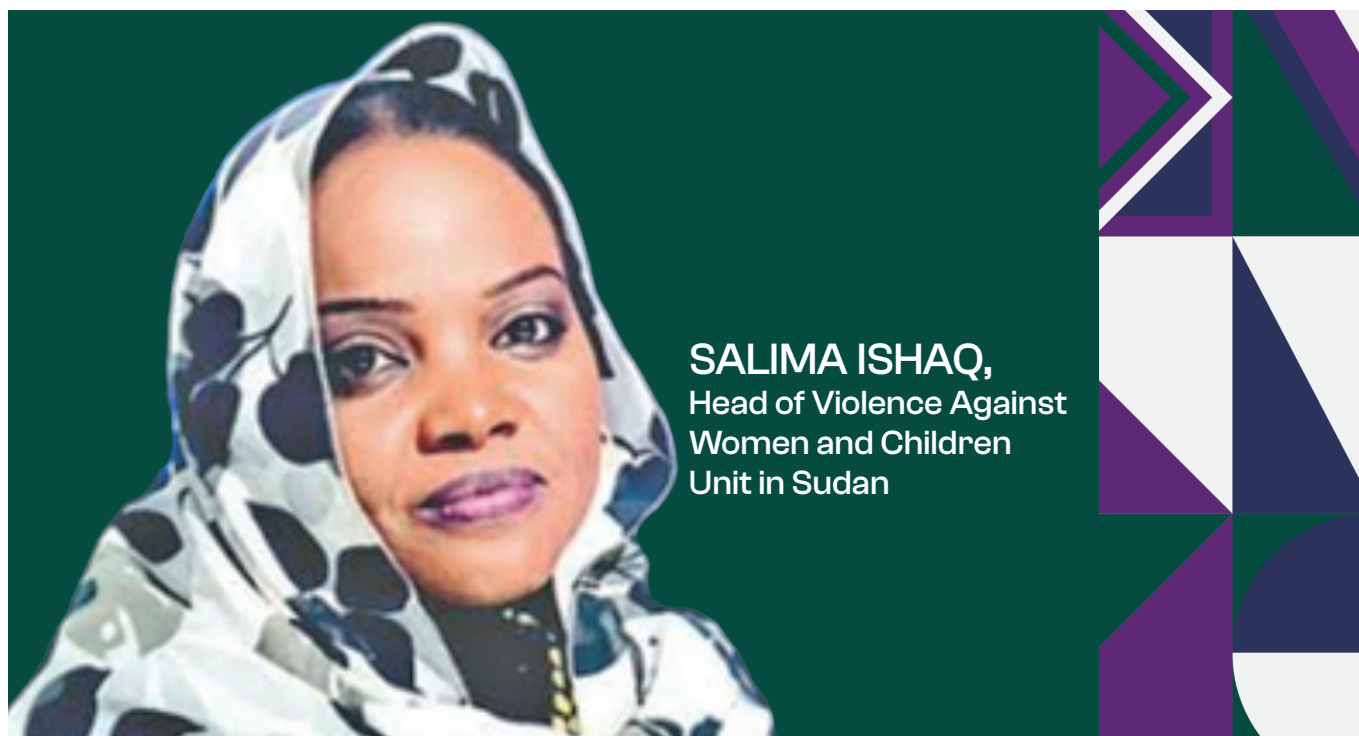
Although Sudanese society is conservative and Quran memorization schools are widespread, there is also a dark side to the Country. As a patriarchal society, women are afraid to talk about sexual harassment or even rape. They tend to suffer in silence so that they are not stigmatised by the society or killed for a sin that they have no power or strength over.

“I have been exposed to many situations in which I would scream and talk about sexual harassment, but many women looked at it with caution and skepticism” Bushra describes how most Sudanese women are in denial about being exposed to sexual harassment. When she started documenting her experiences and publishing them on Facebook, other women shared their own stories too but in disguise. These situations existed before the armed clashes between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces. The situation is worse in 2024 as it has become extremely difficult to identify the number of people that are often sexually abused.

The reality is that about seven million women and girls in Sudan are at risk of sexual and gender-based violence, according to Mohammed El Amin, the UNFPA representative in Sudan, who said that these crimes; including gang rape, have been repeated and their effects on individuals and society will last for many years.

The Sudanese draft constitution of 2019 guarantees equal civil, political, social, cultural, and economic rights for women and men. However, this equality is not currently feasible in the country.

In an interview with AWiMNews, Salima Ishaq, head of the Violence Against Women and Children Unit in Sudan, stated, “There are loopholes in the Sudanese criminal law regarding its implementation and procedures. We have started drafting the first law to combat violence against women in Sudan, but because the country is in a transitional phase, we cannot enact a new law without parliamentary approval, which must be given by the Sudanese people.”



SALIMA ISHAQ,
Head of Violence Against
Women and Children
Unit in Sudan

According to Ishaq, no current system or mechanism effectively protects women from gender-based violence in Sudan, where violence against women is often considered a norm. While violence against women is a serious crime punishable by law, this needs to be reinforced.

She explained that the draft law aims for the state to commit to procedures that provide mechanisms for protecting women from violence. Although no new principles have been introduced in the criminal law, it incorporates new terms related to domestic violence, economic violence, and psychological violence. Protection procedures have been enacted to distinguish the criminal law further, including provisions for safe housing, a survivor support fund, and a hotline for women to report incidents based on their preferences, aimed at facilitating reporting procedures. **“Pressure is now being mounted to ensure that these mechanisms are approved. A committee from all parties with representation from all parties and agencies, even the civil department.”** she noted

The head of the Violence against women unit in Sudan is hopeful that this will happen soon so that the protection measures will make the law more flexible, applicable, and implementable.

To implement the criminal law, there must be a police and prosecution office specialising in combating violence against women to oblige the state to take measures to protect Sudanese women from gender

Back to Bushra's story. She explained that while she was at the police station, a large number of people from various Sudanese tribes were being arrested for murder, theft, and investigations. **"I felt that I had to get out of the police station as quickly as possible,"** she said. While waiting, she heard about a 10-year-old girl who had committed suicide by hanging herself in a room. "I was shocked. How could a girl not more than ten years old hang herself?" Bushra remarked. She wondered what could have driven such a young child to take her own life.

Suicide among children is a tragic and ongoing issue. According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent psychiatry, it is the second leading cause of death for children, adolescents, and young adults aged 15 to 24.

Sudan faces these unique challenges, and research suggests several possible reasons for a 10-year-old child taking her own life, including trauma from conflict and violence, child abuse, bullying, neglect, poverty, economic hardship, displacement, early marriage, and child labor.

The majority of children and adolescents who attempt suicide have a significant mental health disorder, often depression. As Bushra reflected on all of this, the head of the department asked her to leave, returning her identification card, stating that the station had bigger cases to handle. "I tried to tell him that I had been harassed, but he turned his face away to continue with his other duties." Bushra left the police station feeling sad and unwilling to see the body of the child who had committed suicide.

A few weeks passed since the harassment incident, and Bushra said she was tired of sitting at home. She decided to clear her mind and went to a café in Khartoum to meet some friends. However, she realised that she didn't have any friends left, or to be more precise, all her friends had left Sudan. She desperately needed companionship to help her cope with her situation.

The aftermath of sexual harassment can be traumatic, and survivors need support to heal from such experiences. Bushra decided to visit her uncle, Osman, who has been the oldest watch repairer in Sudan for over sixty years. Whenever she visited him, they would sit at a table on the sidewalk, chatting about the state of Sudan before he would accompany her to the nearest bus station to ensure she was safe. That day was different.

Bushra learned from the tea lady that Uncle Osman was sick and unable to come to work. She tried calling him, but his number was unreachable. After sitting in the café near his office for a while, she decided to return home. On her way home, she stood at the bus station waiting for a bus, but none were forthcoming. A motorcyclist convinced her to ride with him since there were no buses in sight.

Bushra hesitated but ultimately decided to accept the ride given the bus station's desolation. As she hopped on the

motorcycle, the man grabbed her handbag and placed it in front of himself. She realized she was in for a dangerous ride when he revealed a knife and a gun. Fearing for her safety, she thought of a plan to escape.

Suddenly, she pointed out a noise coming from the motorcycle. As soon as he stopped to check, she jumped off and ran down the empty streets.



Photo Credit: Javie-Allegue-Barros on Unsplash

Bashra was still terrified as she stood behind a board covered by an abandoned building. She knew she had to move to a safe place after the incident with the motorcyclist. She walked for about half an hour and then and then remembered that she knew someone who had a studio nearby. When Bashra got to the she narrated her ordeal to her friend who advised that it was too late to report the incident to the Police.. Her friend hailed a cab that took her home as it was already 8pm

Surviving rape, murder, and war twice, could be traumatic. An estimated **6.7 million** people face the risk of gender-based violence in Sudan, with displaced, refugees, and migrant women and girls at higher risks.

Most health centres in conflict-affected areas have been destroyed, looted, or are struggling to function due to staff displacement and the depletion of medicines and supplies. Exposure to sexual harassment during displacement is a common occurrence without a law protecting Sudanese women. They have to inevitably live with the trauma. Even if they try to confront the abuser, society holds her responsible for the harassment instead of confronting the offender.

Bashra recalls another time she was harassed inside an emergency shelter centre while She was too exhausted and sick from her trip from Omdurman to Halfa to join her family who had gone to Egypt as the circumstances of war which forced them to leave for Omdurman. Her passport expired, and she had to go to Halfa so that her brother could obtain an entry to Egypt. Bashra said she was harassed after arriving in Cairo.

'It is an unbearable pain and hell that no one can imagine. When my voice disappears, I can hardly scream. I scream internally and I can hardly hear my own voice, what pain is this, oh God!' She laments

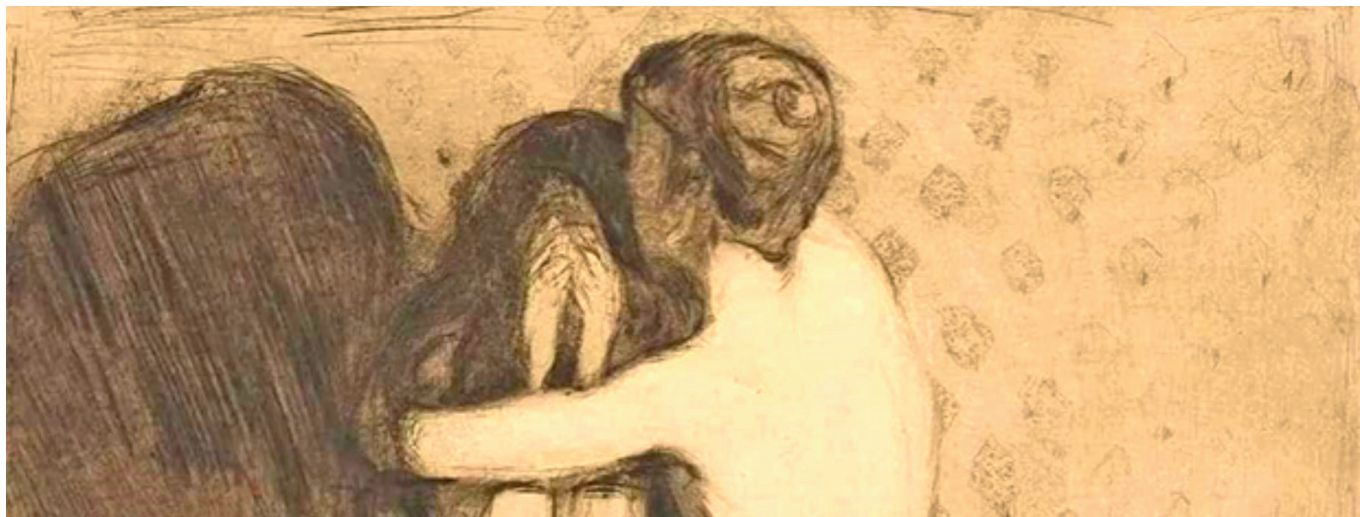


Photo Credit: Nax Zindel on Unsplash

Most Sudanese women are exposed to Gender-based violence in specific circumstances.

Just like Bashra who suffered sexual harassment many times in Sudan, 35- year Aamira was raped by a member of the Rapid Support Forces while she was inside a school in one of the Northern regions. She was displaced from Khartoum due to armed clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces militias.

According to Aamira, **“I joined the displaced families in a school whose doors were opened to receive the displaced after a difficult and tiring journey”**



After the Rapid Support Forces took over the Madani area, the Rapid Support Forces members entered the school and asked the displaced people where the Toyota Double Cabin car that was parked inside the school had come from.

Despite the displaced people's denial of knowing who the owner of the car was, the Rapid Support Forces members

insisted on obtaining the car key so that they could drive it. During the chaos that ensued Aamira one of the wives of the member of Rapid Support Forces, was taken and raped in front of her husband. After that, she was released.

Eventually, Aamira was able to fight for her rights and was paid for damages after the rape incident. With the money they paid her, she travelled illegally to Egypt. She found out she was pregnant in Egypt and did not know who the father was

When she gave birth to her son, she suffered from psychological trauma as a result of the rape and she became more isolated and afraid to communicate with people. The relationship between her and her husband became tense, as he became more silent. Despite explaining her story to the Refugee Commission, she did not receive any psychological support at all. Until now, neither her nor her husband or children received any psychological support from any organisation. Aamira currently faces eviction threats from her landlord due to the harsh financial conditions. She is unemployed and can barely provide for the basic needs of her children. Despite all the news of aid and support from the European Union and international organisations for countries that accept Sudanese refugees, she and her family did not get any financial or psychological support.

Refugees and displaced women require support in health, education, and improvement in security and protection. The Egyptian government and other governments in the Arab nations, need to organise programs that aim to provide essential services to refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations, especially in light of the increasing demands resulting from the influx of refugees from Sudan since April 2023.

Editor's Note: The names of the survivors have been altered in this report for their security.

“African Women in Media's Gender Stories Editorial Fellowship, supported by Fojo Media Institute”



Against WOMEN



AWiM Initiatives

Kigali Declaration on the Elimination of Gender Violence in and through Media in Africa by 2034

The Kigali Declaration stands as a shared commitment to address the forms of violence experienced by women journalists in Africa, and how media stakeholders represent and address gender-based violence. The Declaration was co-designed with a community of media actors, educators, policymakers and activists and adopted at the African Women in Media 2023 Conference, in partnership with Fojo Media Institute. For more information, visit: africanwomeninmedia.com/declaration :

Lobna Msilini, AWiM Program Support Coordinator.
Contact me at assistant@africanwomeninmedia.com



Source Her! Championing Women's Expertise, One Quote at a Time
[Sourceher.com](https://sourceher.com)

Source Her! was conceived in 2021 in partnership with Fojo Media Institute, with the primary aim of showcasing African women experts across various industries so that media organizations can improve and increase their use of African women as expert sources in their content.

Why is this important?

According to UNESCO's 2018 Women Make the News study, only 20% of all news sources are women. To address this, we encourage all media to remain steadfast in their commitment to enhancing the visibility of women as experts. SourceHer! makes that easier.

Over the past three years, we have diligently transformed this concept into a fully operational platform accessible at sourceher.com. We have since redesigned and redeveloped SourceHer! to be more interactive, ensuring user safety is a priority. The platform now features over 200 journalists and experts who contribute their expertise to a diverse range of industries. This interactive space facilitates connections between journalists and experts through an integrated messaging feature, enabling easier and more secure collaborations.

Joy A. Adigwe Lead, Source Her! Contact me at joy@africanwomeninmedia.com



Her Media Diary Podcast

Her Media Diary podcast is a product of African Women in Media, that explores various topics related to women in media, journalism, and communication. The podcast, hosted by Dr Yemisi Akinbobola serves as a platform to amplify women's voices and experiences within the media industry, addressing issues such as gender equality, media representation, leadership, and the evolving role of women in shaping media narratives. It features conversations with female media professionals, journalists, academia and leaders who share their insights, challenges, and successes in the field. The podcast aims to foster meaningful discussions that inspire change and advocate for a more inclusive and equitable media environment. It's a space for storytelling, knowledge sharing, and advocacy, connecting real-life experiences with broader social and policy issues affecting women in the media industry.

Blessing Udeobasi, Podcast Producer. Contact me at: blessing@africanwomeninmedia.com



Scan to Listen

AWiMLearning: Promoting Lifelong Learning and Empowering Women in Media
awimlearning.com

With an unwavering focus on inclusive storytelling, AWiM, through AWiMLearning, consistently provides practical and actionable learning content to empower media professionals in better representing the voices and experiences of women. Our work boldly addresses a pivotal question: «What would the media landscape in Africa look like if women and women's perspectives took center stage in news and storytelling?»

Guided by unyielding feminist principles, we develop content, interact with learners, and forge partnerships with determination. Our courses tackle crucial issues such as Reporting Violence Against Women and Girls, Young Women in Politics, gendered perspectives in environmental journalism, Peace & Conflict reporting, and Ethical Reporting on gender issues, aiming to uncover and dismantle systemic barriers women face in the media.

These courses equip journalists with practical skills to implement in their daily reporting. At the core of our expansion is the establishment of strategic partnerships across the content.

Irene Odera, Programmes Officer AWiMLearning,
contact me at irene@africanwomeninmedia.com

AWiMNEWS

Awimnews.com

Amplifying the Voices of Female Journalists through good storytelling

AWiMNews is a dedicated platform committed to amplifying the voices and stories of African women. At African Women in Media (AWiM), this mission lies at the heart of our organization's core values. Our platform features meticulously curated content, ensuring that female journalists contribute their unique perspectives to issues that have been historically marginalized in global media coverage.

In the current year, AWiM News has proudly presented a compelling series titled «Reports on Violence against Women and Girls» (VAWG series). This initiative is part of the larger AWiM 'Reporting Violence Against Women and Girls' project, supported by the esteemed Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism. The primary aim is to combat the prevalent underreporting of women's experiences related to violence. Our goal extends beyond mere reporting; we strive to inform, challenge, and positively impact the lives of women in society.

During April to September 2024, more than 30 female journalists based in Nigeria submitted their pitches, leading to the commissioning of 16 compelling story ideas, with all of them published on the AWiM News website. Our platform is enriched by the contributions of female journalists from across Africa, including Eswatini, Sudan, Kenya, Malawi, Egypt, South Africa, Ghana Gambia, reporting on diverse gender-related issues.

Juliet Obata, AWiMNews Editor. Contact me at
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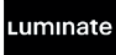
MEDIA AND GENDER VIOLENCE





















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Kigali,
Rwanda

Empowering Eswatini: Rural Women Crafting Their Paths

By Nokukhanya Musi - Aimienoho



Photo Credit: Nokukhanya Musi - Aimienoho

Theresa Mavuso, a 61-year-old grandmother with 10 children and 12 grandchildren, had her work cut out for her when her husband suddenly took off, leaving her with 10 young children.

Her husband, who was the sole breadwinner, lost his job as a security guard and then left the house under the pretense of going to look for employment but he never returned.

It was a difficult time for her, as she was only a school dropout who managed to make it to primary four, because her parents had no money to pay for her school fees. She had to get married at a young age.

Theresa's husband was gone for 10 years, leaving her, an unemployed, stay-at-home mother and wife to fend for herself and her children.

Speaking about the difficulties faced by the family during that time she says, **“It was a very tough time for me and my children. We had nothing. We could not even afford to buy the basics. There was no soap and sugar. It was a hopeless situation .”**

Left with no means to provide for her family, and no jobs available, she turned to what she knew best; basket weaving. It is a skill that was taught to her by her mother as a child.

Despite the difficulties she faced as a single parent, Theresa never lost hope and would often trek up to the mountaintops with other women in her community to collect the grass needed for their baskets.



Eswatini women, particularly those in rural areas, have faced their own unique struggles. With an unemployment rate of 35% and limited access to secondary education for women, opportunities are scarce.

In a conversation with Mandlenkosi Dlamini, a Financial advisor, he explains that the informal sector had always been a major contributor to the economy of Eswatini **«The informal sector provides both income and employment to many. However, the recent downturn in the formal economy has exacerbated the difficulties faced by these workers. Inflation, currency depreciation, and low consumer confidence have severely impacted their earnings.»**

He mentions that it is crucial to consider targeted assistance for these micro and small businesses, perhaps in the form of tax breaks, affordable credit facilities, and skills training, to ensure that they can weather challenging periods and continue to play a significant role in the country's economic recovery.

He addresses the importance of traditional crafts in Eswatini, saying, **«besides the informal sector, we must also recognize the value of local craft, which not only embodies the rich cultural heritage of Eswatini but also provides an opportunity for economic growth»**

As an example, the sales of traditional baskets and weaving products generated over \$1.2 million in revenue in 2019. The government and private sector must explore ways to promote these traditional arts and crafts, perhaps through marketing campaigns targeting tourists or subsidies for raw materials and equipment.»



Moreover, he points out that the vital role of women in Eswatini's economic landscape cannot be ignored.

He further said that recent data implies that women make up nearly half of the informal sector workforce and play a crucial role in household income generation. Efforts to support informal traders and promote traditional crafts must therefore include a gendered lens, ensuring that women have equal access to opportunities and resources. For instance, providing women with access to microfinance services and financial literacy training could significantly enhance their entrepreneurial potential

Today, Theresa is a shining example of the power of resilience and determination in the face of adversity. Through the skill of weaving, Theresa was able to provide for herself and her children and also put them all through school.

A 2024 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report says the country has around 7 000 sex workers currently trading in towns and townships, due to poverty and unemployment.

According to the reports, young women involved in sex work were compelled by the basic need to enhance their livelihoods while others are school dropouts who resorted

to the trade to earn a living.

Unlike many of the girls her age, Simangele chose not to turn to prostitution.

Instead, she opted to focus her energies towards refining her craft and launched a successful weaving business and as a result, she found a sustainable source of income and a renewed sense of purpose.

As her business grew, so did her confidence.

Simangele found that her baskets, crafted with traditional techniques and infused with her own personal style, resonated with customers.

The stories of Theresa Mavuso, Simangele Mathonsi - Kunene and Zodwa Dlamini are just some of the hundreds of other stories that reveal the deeply entrenched issues such as teenage pregnancy, gender inequality, poverty, and the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS are among the many issues plaguing Eswatini's rural communities

Amidst the pervasive poverty and high HIV/AIDS rates in Eswatini, one of the most devastating effects has been the increasing number of vulnerable children.

With 27% of the population HIV positive, poverty-stricken families and child-headed households have been left struggling to survive

Yet, in the face of these insurmountable odds, rural women are proving their resilience by weaving their traditional craft into a powerful tool for empowerment and progress. They are not only preserving their cultural heritage but also building a better future for their families and communities.

By creating beautiful and intricate woven products, Women like Therese are able to earn a steady income and contribute to the local economy.

Beyond economic benefits, weaving has also become a symbol of hope and a means of preserving cultural identity for Eswatini's women.

The vibrant colors and intricate patterns of their baskets, mats, and other woven products are a source of pride and a celebration of their unique heritage.

The work of Eswatini's rural women is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

Through their skill, dedication, and unwavering determination, they are creating positive change for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Just like Theresa, Simangele is another example of other rural women who are talented artisans, breadwinners, and businesswomen who use their craft to overcome some of the challenges of rural living.

When Simangele's aunt, her only caregiver passed away while she was still at school, her future seemed uncertain. With limited resources and support, prostitution seemed like the only viable option for Simangele. But her aunt, a skilled basket weaver and pillar of support, presented her with an alternative path—the art of weaving.

By embracing her heritage and honing her craft, Simangele not only found a way to support herself, but also took pride in her own unique talent.

Years later, she got married but faced a new dimension of challenges when her husband could not secure stable employment.

Together with her husband who worked temporary jobs and supported her the best way he could, she honed her skills, reared chickens, and saved enough money to start building their family home.

In the face of economic uncertainty and societal pressures, Simangele's unwavering spirit and entrepreneurial drive led to a flourishing weaving business and the beginnings of a new family home.

She challenges the misconceptions surrounding handicraft businesses and dismisses the prevailing perception held by many young girls and women that prostitution is a viable option.

She urges other young women to pursue their passions and not compromise their dignity.

As Simangele's story illustrates the power of entrepreneurship, another tale of resilience emerges in the rural community. It is the story of Zodwa Dlamini, a 66-year-old grandmother who has also faced her own share of challenges.

Zodwa's journey started with the sudden departure of her husband, leaving her to care for their five children as a single parent.

In the face of abandonment, Zodwa turned to basket weaving, a skill also passed down to her by her mother. The income from weaving allowed her to provide for her children and her craft blossomed into a thriving business. But Zodwa's challenges did not end there.

After a long painful ordeal of tending to her sickly child, she eventually discovered that she and her youngest child were living with HIV/AIDS and that she had been infected by her husband.

As Zodwa grappled with the shock and stigma of her diagnosis, she found solace in a community of rural women basketweavers, a safe space where she and other women with HIV/AIDS were supported and empowered.

Through workshops and training, they learned how to manage their health, build sustainable businesses, and break down the barriers of stigma. Yet, Zodwa's story is not only about surviving, but also about thriving.

Her courage, resilience, and entrepreneurial spirit have helped her build a life for herself and her children, while also creating a ripple effect of positive change in her community.

Clinical psychologist Celeste Jacobs-Richards explains that financial stress can severely impact mental health, leading to depression, anxiety, and hopelessness.

She has observed that women like those in Gone Rural BoMake who tap into their creative potential and cultural roots can find not only a financial lifeline but also a powerful source of pride and emotional support, fostering resilience and empowerment.

«By transforming their traditional art into merchandise, these women connect with their heritage and create a ripple effect of positivity. This not only improves their mental health by providing a sense of accomplishment and self-sufficiency, but also empowers younger generations to follow in their footsteps, paving the way for a brighter future,» she explains.

Jacobs - Richards highlights that financial struggles, while debilitating, can serve as a catalyst for self-discovery and growth.

«Creative expression and cultural knowledge hold immense power in overcoming adversity,» she says.

The stories of these women are not just tales of individual triumph, but also a tapestry of resilience and hope in a landscape marred by deep-seated issues.

These stories are of women who were empowered to become talented artisans, breadwinners, and businesswomen to overcome some of the challenges of rural living, enhancing the lives of their families and communities in the process.

«The Gone Rural BoMake project, with its focus on art as a vehicle for personal and community transformation, is testament to this concept. By building supportive networks and fostering economic independence, the women in this initiative are breaking the cycle of poverty and anxiety, demonstrating that financial stress can be overcome with resilience, resourcefulness, and the harnessing of their inherent talents.

«These women are charting a course for themselves and their communities, one that values both creativity and cultural heritage,» Jacobs - Richards concludes.

Amidst the struggles and triumphs of these resilient women, there is a unifying force that binds their stories together: Gone Rural BoMake, an initiative that has brought ancient weaving techniques into the modern era, imbuing them with newfound value in international markets.

The global demand for Gone Rural's innovative products, which combine ancient weaving techniques with modern designs, has opened new doors for these women.

Their baskets and textiles, infused with traditional Swazi heritage, are now sought after by international retailers and consumers alike, from high-end boutiques in Europe to eco-friendly shops in the United States.

Gone Rural has helped these women not just to survive, but to thrive, while also preserving their culture for future generations.

Since its inception in 1992, Gone Rural has supported over 780 artisans across 13 remote communities, providing sustainable income and education opportunities to women in need.

What started as a single thread of hope has now woven a web of change, radiating out from the remote hills of Eswatini to the global marketplaces that covet these unique, handcrafted pieces.

The reach of Gone Rural's impact extends far beyond the borders of Eswatini. In rural communities across the country, women are discovering their own voices and carving out new paths.

Their success is not just financial, but also deeply personal—the result of finding their own strength and forging their own futures.

Through Gone Rural, these women are redefining what it means to be a woman in Eswatini, shattering traditional notions of gender roles and making their mark on the world.

Community development expert and Fair Trade Operations Manager Jeanine Bello notes that the success of Gone Rural's artisans is a testament to their resilience and determination, but it also speaks to the impact of the organization as a whole.

She says by fostering entrepreneurship and preserving traditional weaving techniques, Gone Rural is creating a cultural legacy that will endure for generations to come.

«The positive impact of Gone Rural's work in rural Eswatini communities is undeniable. Over time, the organization has steadily grown, not only providing women with sustainable livelihoods, but also creating a ripple effect of positive change for them and their communities. From humble beginnings, Gone Rural has become a beacon of hope and a catalyst for transformation,» she points out.

Nestled in the rolling hills of Eswatini, Kalamgabhi is a rural community that has long struggled with poverty and limited economic opportunities.

But with Gone Rural's support, the women of Kalamgabhi are finding a new source of pride and prosperity.

Sozabile Dlamini, a respected community leader from Kalamgabhi, explains the transformative impact of Gone Rural.

«It can be a struggle to find work in our community, but Gone Rural has created a pathway for women to earn a steady income and support their families. Gone Rural is more than just a business; it is a source of pride and hope, a lifeline in a community where opportunities are few and far between,» he says.

The traditional division of labor in rural communities, where men migrate to cities for work while women remain at home, is being challenged as more women take on the role of sole breadwinners.

Financial advisor Mandlenkosi Dlamini says, **«The informal sector has always been a major contributor to Eswatini's economy, providing both income and employment to many. However, the recent downturn in the formal economy has exacerbated the difficulties faced by these workers. Inflation, currency depreciation, and low consumer confidence have severely impacted their earnings.»**

He mentions that it is therefore crucial to consider targeted assistance for these micro and small businesses, perhaps in the form of tax breaks, affordable credit facilities, and skills training, to ensure that they can weather challenging

periods and continue to play a significant role in the country's economic recovery.

He addresses the importance of traditional crafts in Eswatini, saying, «Besides the informal sector, we must also recognize the value of local craft, which not only embodies the rich cultural heritage of Eswatini but also provides an opportunity for economic growth. As an example, the sales of traditional baskets and weaving products generated over \$1.2 million in revenue in 2019. The government and private sector must explore ways to promote these traditional arts and crafts, perhaps through marketing campaigns targeting tourists or subsidies for raw materials and equipment.»

Moreover, he says that the vital role of women in Eswatini's economic landscape cannot be ignored

According to recent data by the UN, women make up nearly half of the informal sector workforce and play a crucial role in household income generation. It is estimated that women represent 48 per cent of the 281 million international migrants. **«Despite limited disaggregated data on remittances, gender inequalities in the labour market, and gender wage gaps globally, Women migrant workers remit substantial portions of their earnings, sending as much or even more than men»**

Efforts to support informal traders and promote traditional crafts must therefore include a gendered lens, ensuring that women have equal access to opportunities and resources. For instance, providing women with access to microfinance services and financial literacy training could significantly enhance their entrepreneurial potential

«More and more women are staying in their villages and starting their own businesses. They are raising their children, tending their fields, and earning their own incomes. They are proving that a woman can be both a mother and a business owner. She can be a provider and a nurturer,» Gogo Simelane says.

And so, as these women weave their baskets, they also weave a tapestry of hope, resilience, and cultural pride. Theirs is a story of transformation, of breaking down barriers, and of creating a better future for themselves and their communities.

It is a story that speaks to the power of inclusion, of empowerment, and of what is possible when women are given the tools and resources they need to succeed. Their stories are a testament to the power of women to create positive change, to shatter stereotypes, and to build a brighter future for themselves, their communities, and their country.

Editor's Note: The names of the survivors have been altered in this report for their safety.

This story is part of the African Women in Media's (AWiM) Gender Stories Editorial Fellowship, supported by Fojo Media Institute

Violence against sex workers is violence against all women

By Jessica Onyemauche

'I never expected sex work to be this dangerous. My first experience was when the police came to our business premises, we all ran for cover, and I almost died. This happened in Port Harcourt Rivers state, South-South Nigeria,' she remembers.

Sonia, a 41-year-old full-time sex worker, tells the heartbreaking story of how she nearly drowned while being pursued and beaten up by the police, as she reflects on her earliest memory of violence in the commercial sex work service.

She said she got caught the same night and was beaten 'blue black' by the policemen who got her, and other girls arrested. 'They took videos of us and threatened to air them on television for the world to see', she said. 'It was that or we paid bail. In the end, I paid N30,000 for bail', she sighs.

It is estimated globally, that more than 40 million people work as sex workers. Despite this large number, these women are ostracized, marginalized, experience every form of discrimination in societies where they operate. Universally, sex workers have a 45- 75% chance of experiencing sexual violence on the job



But Policemen are not the only perpetrators of this violence. These sex workers have kidnappers, ritualists, rapists, thugs, and other dangerous criminals in the society to contend with. One of such cases can be seen in a report by Punch that details the horrible death of a sex worker at the hands of ritualists. These horrifying details showing how sex workers are murdered and displayed on social media with neither dignity nor remorse. It is common for people to assume it is a way to caution people to desist from living wayward lives.



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How we killed commercial sex-worker for ritual – Suspect

27th June 2024



Ogun State Commissioner of Police, Abiodun Alamutu

Photo Credit: Punch Newspaper

Sonia goes ahead to tell another bitter tale of abuse that she suffered at the hands of the owner of the brothel. 'The brother of the owner of the brothel came to see him and he instructed me to take him to my room and take care of him without pay,' she said.

She is constantly forced to obey what the owner of the brothel says because she has no other place to go if she is thrown out and the crushing fear of paying a 'fine' out of the little she earns.

What transpired after letting the owner's brother into her bedroom left Sonia shocked. "I left him in the bedroom and went into the bathroom to wash up, when I came out, I found out that he used his car keys to punch the condoms I brought out. I immediately asked him to get out of my room and he reported me to the owner."

After receiving this report, the owner asked some group of area boys to flog Sonia twenty strokes of cane and she also paid a fine of N50,000.

This is the sad story of an average sex worker trying to make a living.



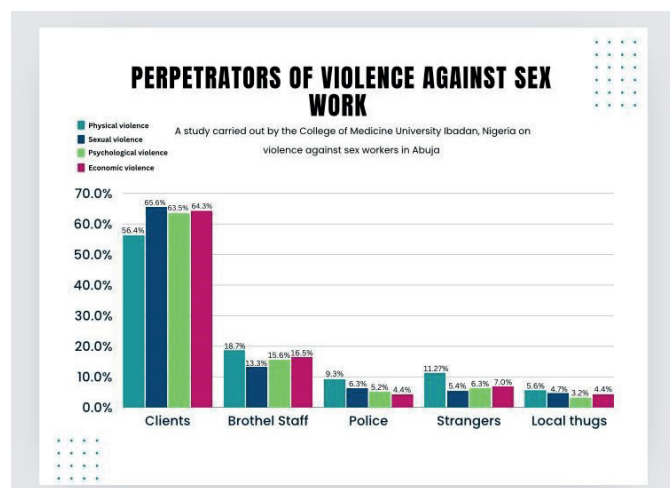
Sonia later joined the Nigerian Sex Work Association, a non-governmental organization established with the key objective to support and empower vulnerable women, particularly those involved in sex

work, adolescent girls, and children. She was made a Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis champion through the association. She said she received training on safety and security from the association.

Sonia's experience on the job is not different from that of Blessing Idoko, 31. She got her own **'initiation of fire'** from her client. After the usual negotiation, 'I told I only offer safe sex services which entails the use of condoms and lubricants, and he agreed. After the first round, he removed his condom and demanded my service without them,' she recalls, bitterly. **«I declined, and he got so furious. I couldn't understand why". She narrated how he struggled with and beat her and still forced himself on her without using a condom. He verbally abused her saying profanities like, 'I paid you therefore, I own you, and I can do as I please with you.' I just thank God I did not get infected',** she said.

Blessing Idoko also speaks of times when she has seen non-sex workers get roped in the chaos. **«During police raids,' she says, 'as long as you are a woman, and you exist in that area you will definitely get arrested'"** she mutters. This speaks to a gender stereotype often harbored by some misogynists who believe every woman is a potential 'woman of the street'

An academic study conducted in Abuja, Nigeria, to determine the rate of violence against female sex workers, reported that more than half of these women experienced gender-based violence within six months. Sexual violence was the most common type, while other forms of violence included physical and psychological violence. They also reported that the main perpetrators of gender-based violence are clients, brothel staff, and policemen.



Morenikeji Savage, a lawyer who is also a gender rights advocate discusses the position of the law on prostitution. "It is illegal in all northern States that use the Penal Code and

Sharia law (Islamic law). In southern Nigeria, the activities of pimps or madams, underage prostitution, and the operation or ownership of brothels are penalized under sections 223, 224, and 225 of the Nigerian Criminal Code, she emphasized.

According to Savage, the law is adamant about human rights and Nigeria is a signatory to several international treaties and agreements on the protection of human rights. In addition, the Nigerian constitution prohibits discrimination and exploitation based on gender and several policies promote the empowerment of women. She added that although these measures are in place, enforcing the law is a major issue.

There have been several instances where the police get sex workers arrested even when sex work is not illegal in the state and numerous examples of how these women have been denied of their basic human rights.

For instance; in a viral clip posted on 26th of September, 2023, which trended on most social media platforms, officials of Delta State Government raided a building suspected to be a brothel and arrested many young women labelled as sex workers.

On the account of an X user, @sabradioloonline, someone was saying to the young ladies: "don't cover your face". It was alleged that illicit items were recovered from them in their quarters in Sapele, Delta state, South-South Nigeria

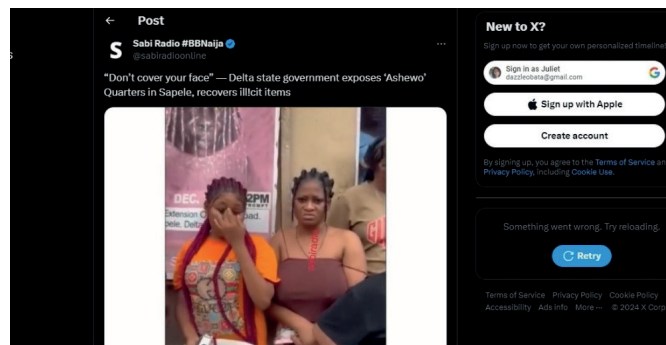


Photo Credit: @sabradioloonline on X

On May 2019, officials of the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) raided a popular night club, Caramelo, and arrested 34 women. A popular gossip blog "Instablog9ja" reported that the ladies according to preliminary investigation, were strip dancers and not commercial sex workers as alleged by the Police

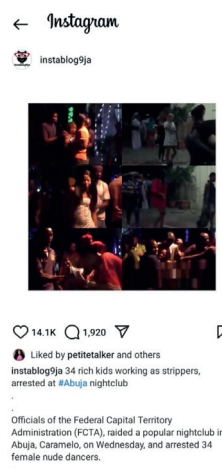


Photo Credit: Instablog9ja

VIOLENCE AGAINST SEX WORKERS IS VIOLENCE AGAINST ALL WOMEN



Two weeks later, the internet was awash with trending story of the arrest of another set of 70 women from different nightclubs in Abuja and detained at the Utako Police Station. The assault did not end there, they even raped the women. A sex worker who was allegedly arrested that night gave a detailed account to Sahara reporters, saying, **‘they were raped by the Police who wore pure water sachets instead of Condoms’**.

Arrested Abuja ‘Prostitutes’ Narrate How They Were Raped By Policemen Who Wore ‘Pure Water Sachets’ As Condoms



May 2, 2019
Sahara Reporters, New York

Regarding this crime against humanity, the Federal High Court judge in the FCT, Binta Nyako, ruled that sex work is not a crime, and she ordered the respondents to pay N1.6 million as damages to the affected women.

It also raised alarming concerns on the international scene. More than Seventy-two women organizations, activists, scholars, civil society, and human rights organizations in Nigeria strongly condemned this raid and the sexual harassment that followed.

SURVIVING AS COMMERCIAL SEX WORKERS

«Many women turn to sex workers out of economic necessity; as a means of survival and to support their families’, she says. “Secondly, there is limited access to education and high unemployment rates, often exacerbated by gender discrimination, which leaves women with few options. Sex work can become one of the only ways to achieve financial independence in these situations,” says Amarachi (not her real name), the National Coordinator for the Nigerian Sex Workers Association

She said survivors of sex trafficking often remain in sex work due to lack of alternatives, the psychological and social impacts of their trafficking experience. They may find it challenging to reintegrate into the society and secure traditional employment, leading them back to sex work as a means of survival. Likewise, marginalized groups, such as LGBTQ+ individuals, migrants, and ethnic minorities, often face systemic discrimination and barriers to traditional employment, having sex work as a more accessible option.

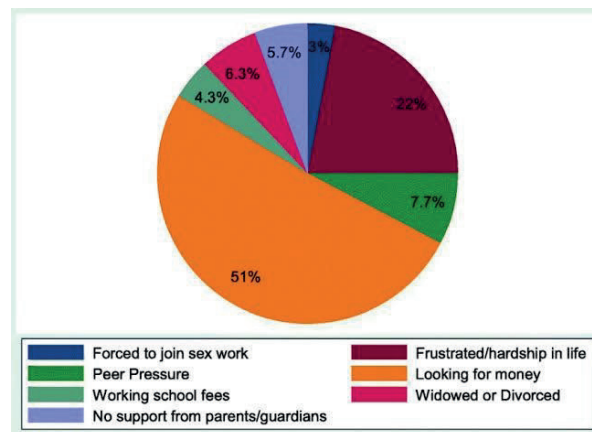


Photo credit: International Union of Sex Workers

TRIGGERS OF VIOLENCE

In a qualitative enquiry in Kenya, it was uncovered that sexual and physical violence was pervasive among female Sex Workers and that it was commonly triggered by negotiations around condom use and payments. Not only that, but other triggers are also pressing financial needs, gender-power differentials, the illegality of trading in sex, and cultural subscriptions to men’s entitlement to sex and money. These triggers show universality of violence against sex workers and at large, gender-based violence.

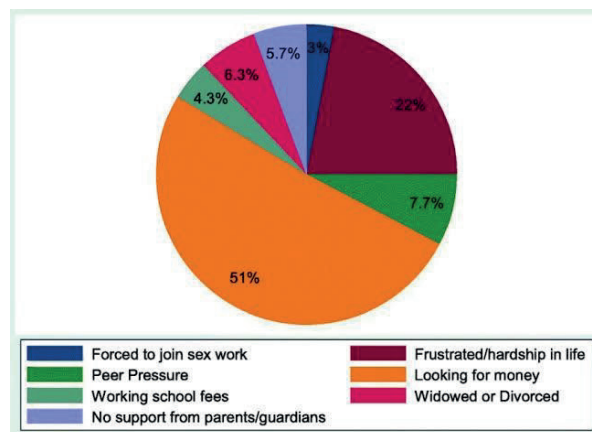


Photo credit: An image from an academic study conducted in Abuja

VIOLENCE AGAINST FEMALE SEX WORKERS IS VIOLENCE AGAINST ALL WOMEN

Kiki Mordi, the CEO of Document Women, a curative media platform dedicated to battling erasure by documenting women’s stories, speaks on why she believes that violence against female sex workers is violence against all women. **«This is because this violence is synonymous with the notion that it boxes women and ascribes respect based on societal constructs’, she observes. A woman is just one accusation away from being a sex worker anyway and it is not even about the way they dress. A bias harbored, lives on”** She explains.

She believes that no profession is safe for a woman and that many times, even female bankers, online vendors, social media content creators, and others were accused of being sex workers because they were women.

As a founding member of a feminist coalition in Nigeria, Kiki affirms that this violence must be taken as a feminist issue. She wonders if male sex workers are treated the same way as their female counterparts; 'If the answer is **'No 'then it becomes a feminist issue. Men are not just guilty of violence against sex workers, they are also the main customers of sex workers. Yet, they are nowhere to be seen when the police intrusion happens'**' she asserts

According to her, the root of any gender-specific problem stems from the fact that society does not see women as equal to men. They do not see women sex workers as equal to male sex workers, they do not see women as equal to their counterparts. Kiki proffers gender equality as a crucial solution to the brutality female sex workers face. She further explained that violence represents the broader misogyny and sexism that affect all women, regardless of their occupation.

Savage on the other hand underlines decriminalization as a way the law can be used to mitigate this violence **"Sex workers often face violence due to the stigma and criminalization associated with their work"**, she explains. **'While no federal laws in Southern Nigeria explicitly criminalize the sale of sex, the vague policies are against sexual commerce. It does not stop decriminalization'**. She insists that the justice system must ensure that sex workers have equal access to justice when crimes occur, and this is very crucial. This includes very good effective investigation and stern prosecution of crimes committed against sex workers, as well as measures to prevent further victimization of sex workers during legal proceedings



Photo credit: A study on the Global epidemiology of HIV among female sex workers

Creating economic opportunities and social programs to provide alternative livelihoods for sex workers who wish to leave the industry was a proffered solution by many researchers. A study run by the College of Medicine University, Ibadan tells us that about half (148 or 48.4%) were willing to leave the job if they were given an alternative source of income. Of this group, 23.0% were willing to be traders, 23.0% wanted to go back to school, 11.5% would like to have a shop of their own where they could be hairdressers, tailors, or caterers, 8.1% wanted to work in an office, while 20.9% would like to get married and be homemakers. Grassroot education has also proven to be a key to eradicating this violence. A study aimed to assess the impact of grassroots invention records that there were higher reports of gender-based violence among female sex workers after the grassroots intervention than at the baseline, in which most cases of violence were underreported.

ENDING STIGMA FOR SEX WORKERS

After decriminalization comes destigmatisation, even after the law is gone, women are still prone to harm if stigma continues to pollute our society.

Amarachi, the National Coordinator for the Nigerian Sex Workers Association, proposes ways the stigma for sex workers can be stifled in our society:

- Launch campaigns to educate the public about the realities of sex work, challenging misconceptions and stereotypes.
- Highlight the humanity, rights, and diverse experiences of sex workers. Incorporate comprehensive sex education in schools that include discussions about sex work, emphasizing respect, consent, and the decriminalization of sex work.
- Encourage the media to portray sex workers in a respectful and nuanced manner, avoiding sensationalism and stereotypes.
- To sum it up, support sex workers in telling their own stories through various media platforms.
- Beyond the immediate impact on sex workers themselves, the consequences ripple outward, affecting public health, social cohesion, and economic stability.



The Nigeria Federal Ministry of Health, HIV/STI integrated biological and behavioral surveillance survey conducted in 2007 shows that over one-third of sex workers in Nigeria are infected with HIV,

and in some cities, 50% of all brothel-based sex workers are HIV-infected. The stigma that plagues sex workers make them uninterested in going to hospitals, even though they are more vulnerable and experience many more health risks. When asked for her opinion about this survey, Sonia, one of the sex workers interviewed by AWiM news confirmed that healthcare practitioners increase the price of the fee once they notice you are a sex worker, or they start to treat you differently.

Sandra Okpara, a clinical chaperone and health communications strategist, said it is important that female sex workers have access to healthcare confidentially, without the fear of judgement. "These risks do not just affect sex workers; they pose a broader threat to community health and well-being", she said.

Derby, a mental health specialist suggests ways a traumatized and abused sex worker can heal. She said healing is a process which starts by accepting and admitting that you need help. 'That is when one is more inclined to seek solutions', she said.

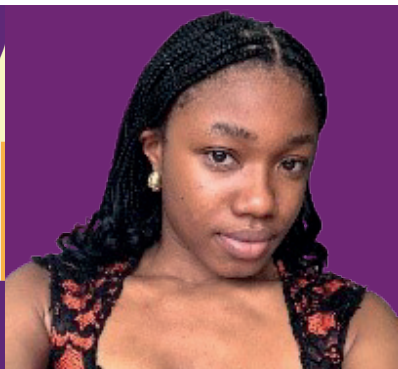
As a mental health specialist, Derby suggests sex workers need to adopt certain coping mechanisms and stress management techniques like crying; as weird as it sounds, she says it is an effective coping mechanism. It helps to actually express certain emotions. And in cases specific to this, it's important for them to know that it is okay to cry.

Another one is being in a supportive network; family, friends or generally people who are not toxic to their mental health. She says it is best to surround oneself with love or people willing to help. "There is also something we call PMR (Progressive Muscle relaxation]'. She explained that it is a form of therapy which involves tightening and relaxing of the muscle groups, one at a time, in a specific pattern

Editor's Note: The names of the survivors have been altered in this report for their security.

JESSICA ONYEMAUCHE is a freelance journalist focused on reporting women-centered and cultural stories. She has worked for prestigious publications like Native magazine, carefree magazine, Working Classist, Amaka Studio, and many more. Her work echoes her feminist and pan-Africanist stance.

This story is part of the African Women in Media (AWiM) 'Reporting Violence Against Women and Girls' project, supported by the Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism and MacArthur Foundation.



END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Reporting Violence Against Women and Girls' project, supported by the Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism

Let's amplify the voices of survivors, empower communities, and end gender-based violence.

For more details: <https://bit.ly/awimnewsreportingviolence>



Tips On Crafting Compelling Ideas: Lessons from My Creative Process

By Dr. Jackline Lidubwi

As a seasoned television producer, I often generate story ideas by observing trends and understanding the issues affecting my community. I also pay close attention to what my target audience finds most engaging.

However, my work has not always been smooth sailing. When I worked at Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), I was tasked with revamping one of Kenya's oldest comedies, *Vioja Mahakamani*. My goal was to give the show a youthful twist to attract younger audiences, based on the belief that youth had significant influence and purchasing power, which could boost KBC's ratings. Unfortunately, replacing the old cast with younger actors led to a backlash, and we failed to retain the show's original audience.

This was a frustrating experience. Seeking to improve, I attended training at the Radio Netherlands Training Institute, where world-class media experts taught us how to generate impactful story ideas. This experience transformed my creative process, equipping me with techniques for developing strong ideas, understanding target audiences, and employing effective mapping strategies—skills I now share with you.

Understanding Your Target Audience

To create stories that captivate and engage, it's crucial to have a deep understanding of your target audience. You need to know who you are talking to, what they believe, and why they believe it. This goes beyond broad categories like age or gender. Instead, focus on the specific beliefs, behaviors, and emotional payoffs that drive your audience.

Here is how to do it:

- **Identify Your Audience:** Define the specific group you want to reach. For instance, rather than targeting "young people," narrow it down to "young entrepreneurs in Nairobi."
- **Understand Their Beliefs and Behaviors:** Research what your audience believes and why. Consider the cultural, social, and economic factors that shape their views.
- **Emotional Payoffs:** Determine the emotional rewards your audience seeks, such as a sense of belonging, validation, or empowerment.

Mapping Your Audience

One valuable tool for understanding your audience is "mapping." This technique helps you visualize and analyze the factors influencing your target group. Remember, no program appeals to everyone. Productions that overlook the beliefs and feelings of their target audience are bound to fail. A good map is based on thorough research, not assumptions or stereotypes.

Here are tips for effective mapping:

- **Understand Beliefs and Behaviors:** As mentioned earlier, research the factors driving your audience's beliefs and actions.
- **Identify Emotional Payoffs:** Know what positive feelings your audience derives from their actions.

To create an effective map:

- **Formulate a Target Question:** Start with a specific question about your audience's behavior. For example, "Why do young entrepreneurs in Nairobi prefer online marketplaces over traditional retail?"
- **Identify Influencers:** List the key factors or communities that shape your audience's behavior, such as peers, cultural norms, economic conditions, or media.
- **Agreed Realities:** Understand how your audience perceives how these influencers view them. For instance, young entrepreneurs may believe using online platforms makes them appear innovative.
- **Emotional Payoffs:** Pinpoint the positive feelings your audience gets from their behavior. In this case, it could be a sense of modernity or efficiency.

Research

Maps require research. The best approach is to interview your target community about their beliefs and emotional rewards. Social media is also a goldmine for discovering insights. By studying tweets, comments, and images shared by your audience or their influencers, you can get a fuller picture of their perspective. Pay attention to the language your audience uses, as this will help you understand how they communicate and think.

Generating Story Ideas

Once you have mapped out your audience, you can start brainstorming ideas that will resonate with them. Here are a few strategies:

- **Tap Into Current Trends:** Stay informed about the latest trends and issues affecting your audience through social media, news outlets, or community events.
- **Leverage Personal Stories:** Personal stories are compelling. Look for individuals within your target audience who have interesting experiences to share. These stories can humanize broader issues.
- **Explore Untold Stories:** Look for gaps in media coverage. What stories aren't being told? Identifying these gaps can lead to unique, impactful content.
- **Use Data and Research:** Incorporate data, studies, or expert opinions to add depth and credibility to your stories.

Crafting the Story

With a solid idea in hand, the next step is to turn it into a compelling narrative. Here's how:

- **Strong Lead:** Start with a captivating lead—an intriguing fact, a powerful quote, or a vivid description.
- **Clear Structure:** Organize your story with a logical structure: an introduction, body, and conclusion. Make sure each part flows smoothly.
- **Engaging Content:** Use quotes, anecdotes, and vivid descriptions to keep your readers hooked.
- **Balanced Perspective:** Include multiple viewpoints for credibility and depth.
- **Call to Action:** End with a call to action or thought-provoking conclusion to leave a lasting impression.

After returning to KBC with these insights, I developed *Abled Differently*, Kenya's first disability-specific program, which has won numerous awards and continues to be a powerhouse of disability-related information. It has been on air for over 10 years and remains a vital resource for the disability community.

For journalists, developing compelling story ideas is more than routine—it's the cornerstone of good journalism. A well-crafted story idea not only determines the longevity of a production but also its ability to resonate with audiences. By following the approaches outlined above, journalists can elevate their stories and foster meaningful connections with their audiences.

A portrait of Jackline Lidubwi, a woman with dark skin and braided hair, wearing a green top, against an orange background.

Jackline Lidubwi is a multi-award-winning communications professional with over 20 years of experience in journalism, media training, and management across public and non-governmental sectors.

Lidubwi serves as Project Coordinator for Clean Air Catalyst in Nairobi with Internews Earth Journalism Network. Previously, she led the Inclusive Media Project at Internews, training journalists across Sub-Saharan Africa (Tanzania, Kenya, Liberia, DRC, and Côte d'Ivoire) on inclusive reporting and participation of Persons with Disabilities.



“OUR IMPACT IN YOUR WORDS”



**Nokukhanya
Musi
AIMIENOHO**

is a female Print, Radio, and T. V Media Practitioner based in Manzini in the Kingdom of Eswatini. She is also widely published, and her articles have been featured on online publications and websites across the African continent and the US.

HER WORDS:

Thanks to AWiM and the FoJo Media Institute, I will be able to develop an impactful story on 'Empowering Eswatini: How Rural Women Are Crafting Their Own



**Mwape Zulu
KUMWENDA**

is the Managing Director of Crown Television, in Lusaka, Zambia. She shares how she has implemented the Kigali Declaration.

HER WORDS

My project helped to achieve gender balance in management at Crown Television, with three women and three men in leadership roles. Currently mentoring women journalists as sub-editors, making Crown Television the only media house in Zambia with gender-balanced management. The Kigali Declaration inspired structural changes and goals for gender parity, including creating a gender policy.



**Jessica
ONYEMAUCHE**

is a freelance journalist from Nigeria, focused on reporting women-centered and cultural stories. She has worked for prestigious publications like Native magazine, carefree magazine, Working Classist, Amaka Studio, and many more. Her work echoes her feminist and pan-Africanist stance.

HER WORDS

African Women in the Media in Collaboration with the Wole Soyinka Center for Investigative Journalism gave me the opportunity to bring life to a topic I deeply care about. In exposing the violence that impacts sex workers and women at large, I learned so much. I learnt new writing techniques, how to conduct interviews, the proper structure for an investigative essay and so much more. I still hold lessons from our first meeting dear to me.



**Dr Dinesh
BALLIAH**

is the Director of Wits Centre for Journalism, Johannesburg, South Africa. She shares how she has used the Kigali Declaration in her teaching.

HER WORDS

My Project was committed to clearing pathways for women in media, addressing structural barriers created by male-dominated spaces. Kigali Declaration as a teaching tool in ethics classes has helped to highlight the necessity of gender parity and ethical practices in journalism

Advancing the safety and rights of women journalists in political and democratic Coverage

By Janet GBAM

Introduction

Journalists in Africa face increasing persecution for reporting on political and democratic issues. Women journalists, in particular, are the most vulnerable, enduring unprecedented levels of harassment, physical harm, and imprisonment simply for reporting the truth. Tragically, some have even lost their lives.¹ This piece explores the multifaceted threats to journalists in Africa, focusing on the heightened risks for women, and examines the legal and political mechanisms used to suppress press freedom. It further examines safeguards for protecting the rights of women journalists involved in reporting on political issues across Africa.

Vulnerabilities of Women Journalists

Journalists reporting on political and democratic issues often clash with powerful entities that perceive their work as a threat to political and economic control and influence. As a result, journalists who expose corruption, human rights abuses, or undemocratic practices become targets. This adversarial relationship between the press and the state is not new, but the suppression methods have increasingly become more sophisticated and brutal. Institutions like the state security agencies and legal systems have become viable tools weaponised against journalists.² The consequences of dissent from journalists against governments include charges such as defamation, incitement, sedition, dissemination of fake news, endangering national security, and violation of cybercrime laws commonly used to stifle dissenting voices.

While all journalists in Africa face significant risks, women journalists encounter additional layers of vulnerability. They are often subjected to gender-based violence, including sexual harassment and assault, both online and offline. According to a report by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), women journalists in Africa are disproportionately targeted for harassment and intimidation, further endangering their safety, and

undermining their professional credibility and career advancement. The resulting impact of these risks further increases vulnerabilities and induces fatigue, anxiety, self-censorship, and the inability to perform their jobs and by extension affects their economic situations.

Several legal frameworks exist for promoting the rights of women in Africa. For example, Nigeria is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (MAPUTO Protocol) but has been recorded as contributing to an unsafe environment for women in contrast with fundamental human rights and the provisions of these laws among other international instruments to which Nigeria is a signatory. Manifestations of these suppressions have been both online and offline, with women further facing discrimination in newsgathering - production and sexual harassment.³ In Uganda, journalists have been charged with incitement and defamation for reporting on government corruption and mismanagement. Similarly, in Tanzania, authorities have used cybercrime laws to detain and prosecute journalists with critical dissenting voices to the government. Online harassment and censorship can sometimes lead directly to mob violence in physical spaces.⁴ Harassment encountered on social media often translates into real-world consequences for women journalists.⁵

The implication of silencing critical women's voices in political reporting in Africa

The persecution of journalists has far-reaching consequences beyond the immediate harm to the individuals involved. When journalists are silenced, the flow of information is disrupted, and the public's ability to make informed decisions in democratic and political settings is compromised. This erosion of press freedom undermines democracy and allows corruption and abuse of power to flourish unchecked. The specific targeting of women journalists aggravates gender inequality in the media industry. The fear of harassment and violence can deter women from entering or remaining in the profession, leading to a lack of diverse perspectives in news coverage. This, in turn, affects the quality and comprehensiveness of information available to the public.

Furthermore, the silencing of critical women's voices in reporting on political and democratic issues in Africa has significant and far-reaching implications, including perpetuating gender stereotypes. For example, issues affecting women are often overlooked by an already men-dominated media landscape. For a robust democracy to thrive, women journalists who cover political issues as they intersect with gender-based violence, climate change, digital rights, health, and education for women must never be silenced. Silencing these voices further means that issues of critical social, political, and economic concern to women will not be reported, and when reported will be grossly biased and skewed to the disadvantage of the women, further perpetuating inequality.

Safeguard and protection for women journalists both online and offline

The task of safeguarding and protecting the voice of women journalists in political reporting must be prioritised by all stakeholders. Governments can safeguard and protect women journalists by implementing and enforcing comprehensive legal frameworks, and domesticating laws that criminalise acts against women journalists. For example, laws such as the Protection from Harassment Act in South Africa provide legal recourse and protection orders against stalking and harassment. Affording victims of harassment an effective remedy against such behaviour and introducing measures to enable the relevant organs of state to give full effect to the provisions of the Act, Furthermore, specific laws like the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPP) in Nigeria have also served as protection mechanisms for women. Additionally, governments can provide regular training for police and judicial officers on gender-sensitive approaches to violence against women journalists. In Kenya, the National Gender and Equality Commission works to promote public gender education and mainstreaming of gender considerations to ensure the protection of women in media through policies like the Media Council Act, which sets standards for professional conduct and safety in journalism.

Conclusion

Journalists in Africa, especially women, face severe threats including harassment, physical harm, and imprisonment for their political reporting. Women journalists endure additional gender-based violence, sexual harassment, and intimidation, both online and offline, undermining their safety and career advancement. Despite legal protections like CEDAW and the MAPUTO Protocol, countries like Sudan, Uganda, and Tanzania remain dangerous for women journalists. Silencing journalists disrupts information flow, undermines democracy, and perpetuates gender inequality, deterring women from the profession and skewing news coverage. To protect women journalists, comprehensive legal frameworks, gender-sensitive training for law enforcement, and public gender education are essential measures



The graphic features a portrait of Dr Yemisi Akinbobola, a woman with dark curly hair wearing a white blazer over a yellow top. To her right is the title 'Her Media Diary.' in a large, stylized purple font, with a small silhouette of a person holding a microphone. A vertical decorative bar on the right side contains various geometric patterns in orange and purple. At the bottom, a dark purple banner contains the text 'Sharing the lived experiences of African Women in Media...' in white. To the right of this text is a QR code with an arrow pointing to it and the text 'Scan to Listen' below it. A small 'billy' logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the QR code.

Host
Dr Yemisi Akinbobola

Her Media Diary.

Sharing the lived experiences of African Women in Media...

Scan to Listen

Summary of podcast series on the

Kigali Declaration

As part of this year's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, AWIM Through Her Media Diary podcast produced a 4-part episode series in conversation with some of the signatories of the Kigali Declaration on the Elimination of Gender-based Violence, to find out how they have reflected the tenets of the declaration in their work as media practitioners.

Episode 31 of Her Media Diary features Regine Akalikumutima, a remarkable teacher turned media owner and gender activist from Rwanda. She shares her personal experiences and involvement in the Kigali Declaration, a pivotal step in combating gender-based violence in media across Africa



Her journey into media was sparked by the challenges she observed as a teacher. Many of her students struggled with issues stemming from their home environments, where gender imbalance and conflict were prevalent. This motivated Regine to launch her first radio program, "Tuliri Rwanda," meaning "Let us educate for Rwanda," which paved the way for her career in journalism.

Her Media Diary Episode 32 features Sarah Mawerere, a senior broadcast journalist at Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC). She shares her experience growing up in the rural Busoga Region of Uganda, where she faced numerous challenges, including the loss of both parents at a young age. Despite these hardships, she pursued her dream of becoming a journalist, inspired by the voices she heard on Radio Uganda as a child.



The Kigali Declaration on the Elimination of Gender Violence in Media in Africa has been a significant influence on her work. Sarah sees it as a call to action, urging media houses to ensure that their content is gender-sensitive and that the voices of both men and women are represented equally.

Episode 33 of the podcast features Mwape Kumwenda, an accomplished journalist and co-founder of Crown TV, Zambia with over 10 years of experience. She shares her experience growing up in Kabwe, Zambia where she witnessed firsthand the vulnerabilities faced by women and girls in her community. This early exposure to gender-based violence fueled her passion for justice, initially leading her to aspire to become a lawyer. However,

circumstances led her to journalism, where she found a powerful platform to amplify the voices of the voiceless.

Mwape's story speaks to the need for women in media to rise to the top of their careers to ensure adequate representation and ultimately reduce gender-based violence in and through the media.



Episode 34 of Her Media Diary podcast features Melkamsew Selomon, a journalist with over 15 years of experience and also a Board Member of the Ethiopian Media Women Association (EMWA).

Melkam shares her inspiring journey from growing up in Addis Ababa to becoming a prominent journalist and advocate for gender equality in media. She discusses her early life challenges, her pursuit of education, and her transition into journalism.

Melkam's path to journalism was not a straightforward one. Despite excelling academically, she faced personal challenges, including an early pregnancy that temporarily derailed her educational aspirations. However, her determination and the support of her family enabled her to persevere, eventually leading her to the University of Addis Ababa, where she got her bachelor's degree in foreign language literature and Master's degree in communication and journalism.

Scan the QR code beneath to listen to the full episodes.



AWiM JOURNALIST WINS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD



**Juliet
Buna**



We are pleased to recognise Juliet Buna who was awarded 'Runner-Up, Best Reporting in Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, West Africa' at the CJID Excellence in Journalism Awards. This was for her investigative story titled "Culture of Silence: How fear obstructs justice for Survivors of sexual abuse in Ondo school". A project she did with AWiM as part of the Reporting Violence Against Women and Girls Project, supported by the Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism and MacArthur Foundation.

Here is what Juliet said about her award:

"The title of my winning story, "Culture of Silence: How Fear Obstructs Justice for Survivors of Sexual Abuse in Ondo School," reflects the grim reality of how silence perpetuates injustice for victims of gender-based violence (GBV). This culture of silence doesn't just affect adults but also the young, as seen in my investigation.

The teenage survivors in my story initially shared their experiences, but fear forced them to withdraw their testimonies. Their parents, who had once consented to the interviews, also pulled out, along with a former school teacher who had connected me to the case.

At one point, I was left with nothing but a draft—a story without sources. As a journalist, I was devastated. But journalism has taught me that sometimes, the most compelling story lies where there seems to be none.

Determined, I reframed the narrative, focusing on the culture of silence, the obstruction of justice, and the fear of intimidation by perpetrators. This perspective not only highlighted the systemic failures that silence survivors but also shone a light on the need for accountability.

Thanks to African Women in Media for the support, the report is part of AWiM' Violence Against Women and Girls project.

As we mark the 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), I urge us—especially female journalists—to persist in telling these stories. Let's amplify the voices of the voiceless, uphold the ethics of our profession, and remain guided by ethical considerations in reporting VAWG. These stories must be told; they are vital for change."

Read
Juliet's story
here:

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