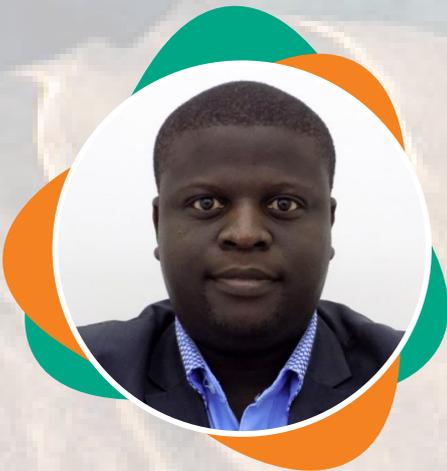


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By Nigel Nyamutumbu

ANNUALLY on February 13, Zimbabwe joins the global family of nations in commemorating World Radio Day.

The occasion to celebrate the milestones and reflecting on the challenges of the world most accessed medium was proclaimed an international day by the United Nations General Assembly in 2012.

Over the years, World Radio Day has grown to become a significant day on the media calendar.

Amid the pomp and fanfare associated with commemorative days especially among those behind radio, from the founders and owners, management, editorial team, producers and presenters that work tirelessly to deliver programming on every single hour and day without fail, there is despondent idealism on the future of radio broadcasting globally owing

Key considerations for the future of radio broadcasting in Zimbabwe

to a myriad of factors.

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco), the UN agency that takes lead on media freedom issues have linked some of the challenges of radio broadcasting to the declining professional standards of the content being produced on radio, sustainability challenges, lack of adaptability and failure to transform to the digital realities affecting the medium.

To this end, Unesco has themed the global commemorations "Radio and Trust" in recognition of how audiences are drifting away from the medium owing to the loss in credibility.

While recognising that radio remains the most accessed mainstream media platform, there is need to critically reflect on interventions that will safeguard the medium into the future.

Three thematic areas have been suggested by Unesco for reflection across the globe during this year's commemorations, including radio

and trust, accessibility and inclusivity with the third area being that of sustainability.

On the first thematic area, there is an argument for the respect of basic standards of ethical journalism, a critical area that radio broadcasters are grappling with in the present high-tempo digital age.

There is disjuncture between what audiences are consuming in real time through digital platforms and the content that is then packaged through radio.

Unesco argues that for radio to maintain listeners' trust, there is need to revert to the basic ethos of journalism; that of basing whatever is produced on verifiable information.

More often than not radio has now been subsumed by what is trending online and in the process the public interest role of holding power to account is lost.

On radio and access, the second thematic focus area for the global commemorations, there is an asser-

tion that for radio to maintain relevance it ought to be more inclusive, reaching out to specific audiences with specific needs.

There is need for radio to reach out to selected audience groups, serving the informational needs of all listeners, including persons with disabilities.

That way radio becomes a catalyst for integration and social participation.

In order to fulfill this obligation, radio broadcasters ought to embrace convergence, more so given the opportunities provided through digital radio platforms.

Radio broadcasters could be more innovative in catering for the needs of specific audiences, including but not limited to making use of sign languages or automated subtitles for hearing-impaired audiences when streaming.

While most radio stations are embracing convergence, they are not going as far as harnessing new audiences or tailor making information for persons with disabilities.

The third policy dialogue proposition by Unesco for this year's commemorations is on how radio can continue to compete on the economic market.

Like most businesses, radio faces an existential threat in so far as surviving the financial crisis that has been worsened by the scourge of the Covid-19 pandemic is concerned.

Radio broadcasters are seized with the critical question on how to transform their mass audience into financial sustainability.

This thematic area goes beyond defining the large audiences that radio commands and potentially grow, but further seeks to link the base of loyal listeners to financially sustainable business models.

It is not enough for the sustained existence of radio as the most accessed medium as an end in itself,

but for radio broadcasting to become an industry in itself with potential to be an economic development driver, steering the creation of jobs and contributing to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

All these three thematic areas that will take the global center stage in reflecting the future of radio are relevant for Zimbabwe.

They are more so relevant at a time that the country's radio broadcasting sector is at the crossroads, given the opportunities presented by the historic licensing of community radio stations, yet Zimbabwe remains seized with pertinent issues that need to be attended to.

For this submission, I suggest five broad areas that include the transformation of the state broadcaster, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) to a genuine public broadcaster, the need to review the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA), the issue of convergence and embracing new technologies that enhance the quality of our radio services, sustainability and conditions of service and the question of high quality journalism.

The solutions to the above issues are critical in redefining the future of radio broadcasting in Zimbabwe.

Underpinning the interventions required to reshape the agenda of radio broadcasting is political will and a shift from an archaic culture of control and interference to that of inclusivity, meritocracy and maintaining high standards of professionalism.

For instance, there is no question that the Zimbabwean citizenry has lost trust in the ZBC, more so due to its biased political coverage.

The often used counter narratives to this assertion are bogus audience surveys that are not based on any tested empirical methods.

Realistically, the public broadcaster's market share is dwindling and there is clear need to rebuild trust and confidence, something that

our courts have categorically ruled upon.

Transforming the public broadcaster is also a constitutional imperative.

Government also needs to stick to its word on the question of reforming the broadcasting regulatory framework.

The Broadcasting Services Act is no longer fit for purposes, technology has outdated certain provisions of the law, much as other issues relating to the licensing framework, independence of the regulatory authority and taxation need to be addressed.

The need to address issues of professionalism, quality content, convergence and sustainability cannot be overemphasized.

Zimbabwe needs to move with the times and digitising the radio broadcasting service can only make it more relevant and a critical cog in the development matrix of the country.

Ultimately, there is need to buttress the point that the airwaves belong with the people.

The future of radio broadcasting can only be imagined if the services provided through the medium resonate with the audiences it serves.

****Nigel Nyamutumbu is a media development practitioner, currently serving as the head of the secretariat of a network of media professional associations and support organisations, the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe (MAZ). He can be contacted on +263 772 501 557 or njnya2@gmail.com. This article was first published by the Accent, a MAZ initiative***



By Committee to Protect Journalists

THROUGHOUT the pandemic journalists have played a crucial role informing the public about the risks of Covid-19.

The global situation continues to evolve, and many countries are increasing or relaxing travel restrictions and safety measures as coronavirus variants of concern are identified, and as the Covid-19 vaccination programme gathers pace.

Basic Covid-19 mitigation

- ❖ Consider getting a Covid-19 vaccination, if available, in advance of any assignment. You may still be able to transmit the virus, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- ❖ Try to work in well-ventilated areas with a fresh air flow whenever possible.
- ❖ Stay two meters or six feet from others whenever possible to observe social distancing.
- ❖ Face masks should be worn if social distancing cannot be maintained for a prolonged period. Additional personal protective equipment is sensible in higher risk areas.
- ❖ Wash your hands regularly.
- ❖ Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer gel as necessary.
- ❖ Sanitise all equipment regularly.
- ❖ Try and limit the number of people you are exposed to through work.

Digital and physical safety: Reporting during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2022

Digital security

Journalists have faced a range of challenges communicating with sources and colleagues during the pandemic, including insecure remote offices.

Many journalists who report on public health measures such as vaccinations and mask requirements have encountered hostility online from people who oppose them.

For a more secure home working environment:

- ❖ Update your devices regularly.
- ❖ Use a password manager and turn on two-step verification.
- ❖ Think about where you are storing your documents and try to separate work and personal accounts.
- ❖ Use an end-to-end encrypted messaging app, such as Signal and WhatsApp. Turn on disappearing messages when needed.
- ❖ Copy or back up content from your messaging apps on a regular basis.

Better protect against online abuse

- ❖ Review your online data and take steps to remove information that could put you or others at risk, such as family photos.
- ❖ Check the privacy settings on your accounts and remove content that you feel could be used to target you.
- ❖ Turn off location tracking on social media and other accounts.
- ❖ If in the United States, sign up to data removal sites to have your address and other personal information removed from public databases.
- ❖ Develop a process for docu-

menting abuse and speak to your newsroom about any messages that could indicate a physical threat.

For more information, see CPJ guides on removing personal data from the internet, protecting against targeted online attacks, and other resources.

Reporting on protests

Journalists in some countries have been verbally and physically attacked by anti-vaccination and anti-lockdown protesters, according to The Conversation.

Some news organisations have increased security measures following death threats, and numerous offices have been stormed by protesters.

- ❖ Expect significant hostility and verbal abuse from crowds protesting covid mitigation measures such as vaccination, masking, or lockdown mandates.
- ❖ Prepare to exit the situation quickly if necessary to avoid physical harm.
- ❖ Reporters have been targeted for wearing masks at such events. Balance the risks from airborne viruses with the risk of unwanted attention.



Zimbabwe: Request for fair and balanced coverage during elections

By Misa Zimbabwe

MISA Zimbabwe has written to the chief executive officer of the Zimbabwe Broadcasting

Corporation requesting for the state broadcaster's implementation plan for fair and balanced coverage of political parties during elections.

The letter comes at a time when the country is headed towards by-elections on March 26, 2022 as proclaimed by President Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Below is the full version of the letter:

January 21, 2022

Ms Adelaide Chikunguru
The Chief Executive Officer
Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
HG44 Highlands
Harare
Zimbabwe

Dear Madam,

Adelaide
Chikunguru



Ref: Request for implementation plan for fair and balanced coverage of political parties during elections

Compliments of the new season.

As the by-elections proclaimed by President Emmerson Mnangagwa for March 26, 2022 beckon, immense responsibility is thus thrust on the media to comply with the constitution in terms of its coverage of different political parties and interests.

The Zimbabwe Electoral Act also states how the media should conduct itself during elections.

It is in that regard that the High Court of Zimbabwe and several election observer missions came up with several recommendations on how the public media, ZBC and Zimpapers, should cover the country's elections following the conclusion of Zimbabwe's 2018 harmonised elections.

The public broadcaster is thus duty-bound to duly comply with the relevant court order to that effect while also taking into account recommendations made by the various election observer missions.

For instance, in his judgment in June 2019, High Court judge Justice Joseph Mafusire said ZBC and Zimpapers had breached Section 61 of the constitution which provides for freedom of expression and media freedom through its coverage of the 2018 elections.

He ordered ZBC and Zimpapers "to ensure their communications do not show bias in favour of one political party or its candidates and that they exercise impartiality and independence in their duties".

Several reports by election observer missions to the 2018 elections made similar findings, notably the African Union Election Observer Mission, SADC Electoral Observer Mission and EU Election Observer Mission, among others.

The SADC report noted that the public broadcaster and the State-

owned newspapers were in favour of one political party, contrary to the relevant provisions of the constitution, the Electoral Act, and the Revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, which requires State-owned media to be impartial.

In 2016, Chief Justice Luke Malaba who was then deputy chief justice extensively quoted the Electoral Act in the *Majome vs Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation* case during which he said:

"Section 160G of the Electoral Act requires a public broadcaster to afford all political parties contesting elections such free access to its broadcasting services as may be prescribed.

"... the public broadcaster is required to act in an independent and unbiased manner in the selection and presentation of television and radio programmes.

"There is a provision prohibiting ZBC as a public broadcaster from acting in a manner that favours the viewpoints of one political party whilst shutting out, as a matter of policy, viewpoints of other political parties on matters of national interest."

Misa Zimbabwe, by virtue of this letter, and in the context of the right to access information as provided for by the Freedom of Information Act, is therefore kindly seeking the following information as the country prepares for the March 2022 by-elections, and most importantly, ahead of the 2023 national elections:

1. What progress has been made in complying with Justice Mafusire's court order and the recommendations by election observer missions?
2. Have you developed an implementation plan to comply with the afore-mentioned court order?
3. If not, what are the challenges being faced?

We hope our questions are in order and look forward to your favourable

response in that regard.

Thank you for your kind consideration and all the best in 2022.

Yours Sincerely

Tabani Moyo
National Director

CC:

cc. Chairperson, Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, Justice Priscilla Chigumba

cc. Speaker of Parliament of Zimbabwe, Honourable Jacob Mudenda

cc. Chairperson, Zimbabwe Media Commission, Professor Ruby Magosvongwe

cc. Chairperson, Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, Dr Elasto Mugwadi

cc. Minister of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services, Honourable Senator Monica Mutsvangwa

cc. SADC Executive Secretary, H.E. Elias Mpedi Magosi

cc. Chairperson, African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat



Misa director elected to the Africa Freedom of Information Centre board

By Misa

MISA regional secretariat director Tabani Moyo was elected into the Africa Freedom of

Information Centre (AFIC) Governing Council (the board) at its elective Annual General Meeting held virtually on 27 January 2022.

Moyo, who is also the national director of Misa Zimbabwe, was elected vice chairperson of the seven-member general council for a two-year term.

AFIC is an African network of about

50 civil society organisations and think tanks across 23 African countries.

It is based in Kampala, Uganda.

“We are grateful that the peoples of Africa, through the network’s membership, made this call for us to serve, which we accept with humility.

“The task at hand, given the complexities facing humanity in the age of pandemics, natural disasters, migration pressures, melting economies and inward-looking administrations globally, requires collaborative efforts and being outward-looking while tackling localised issues,” said Moyo.

“At Misa we appreciate the challenges we face and will do our best in consolidating solidarity and collaborations with like-minded and progressive entities in this age where democracy and leadership, in general, is on retreat.

“Once again, I’m grateful to the membership for bestowing this leadership mantle on us as fellow governing council members for the two-year tenure of office, which, hopefully, will position Africa’s media development agenda and complexities on the global stage.”

Misa is also a member of the Multi-Stakeholder Co-ordinating Team of the Southern African Development Community Internet Governance Forum (SAIGF) and the Global Forum for Media Development Steering Committee.

The organisation also serves on the IFEX Governing Council.



Tabani Moyo



By SAEF

Media coalition welcomes Botswana amendments to new Bill

THE coalition of Southern African journalism organisations in Gaborone recently, led by the Botswana Editors' Forum (BEF), to investigate the country's controversial new Criminal Procedure and Evidence Bill has welcomed the Botswana government's amendments to the Bill.

The government released amendments which reinstated judicial oversight over surveillance, interceptions and seizures.

It also criminalised the abuse of these powers and introduced a new committee, headed by a judge and with extensive powers, that will oversee undercover investigations.

The coalition of organisations representing journalists across the SADC region gathered in Gaborone at the invitation of BEF.

It came in response to the government's plan to push through parliament a law that would have threatened the work of journalists and the country's media freedom and free expression.

The coalition was led by the BEF and included the Press Council of Botswana, Misa Botswana, the Southern African Editors' Forum (SAEF), the Media Institute of Southern Africa, the Campaign for Free Expression (CFE) and the WAN-Ifra Media Freedom Committee.

This group asked to meet the president and other government officials

to discuss their objections to the Bill.

It was a strong show of solidarity that highlighted the concern with a draft law that African Editors Forum chair Jovial Rantao called "draconian".

The government's latest amendments to the Bill removed clauses that would allow authorities to surveil citizens and conduct undercover operations without a warrant for up to 14 days.

It went further and criminalised the abuse of these powers, with penalties up to life imprisonment.

The new Controlled Investigations Co-ordination Committee will coordinate such investigations and also "protect the interests of interception subjects and targets".

The committee will be headed by a judge and has strong powers to "impose administrative sanctions, award compensation, issue and follow up enforcement procedures".

Its decisions will have "the same effects as a judgement of the court".

"In our view, this is not a perfect Bill, but we are prepared to live with it as part of a trade-off that citizens make in a democratic society to help the state fight modern-day crimes like financial terrorism and money-laundering," said Spencer Mogapi of BEF.

"I want to thank media colleagues from the region and abroad who came to show solidarity with us in Botswana at a time when we felt that the future was all dark," he said.

"We appreciate that the government heard the concerns and quick-

ly made changes to improve the Bill. It is a very positive sign when governments respond in this way.

"From a Bill that threatened media freedom, Botswana now has one that regulates covert investigations. It is not perfect, but — if implemented properly — can have positive effects, said Anton Harber, of CFE.

Joseph Ailonga of SAEF said: "We welcome these amendments and would want to encourage our colleagues in Botswana to now focus on the implementation of this bill once passed."

Tabani Moyo, Misa regional director, said: "We welcome the government's decision to water down the bill, although needs to be done to balance citizens' right to privacy and national security. We will continue to engage with the government and citizens to ensure that rights are protected."



By Sanef

THE South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) is saddened by the dismissal of Phathiswa Magopeni, SABC's group executive: news and editor-in-chief.

Magopeni's abrupt dismissal comes before a panel had adjudicated her very serious grievances against CEO, Madoda Mxakwe, and chairperson Bongumusa Makhathini, alleging that they had interfered in the editorial independence of the Sabc by forcing her to set up interviews with African National Congress (ANC) president, Cyril Ramaphosa, during last year's municipal elections campaign.

Magopeni confidently contends

Sanef condemns dismissal of Sabc editor

that her sacking is directly linked to her refusal to take instructions from her bosses.

This pattern needs to be condemned because it makes a mockery of labour laws and associated processes.

It also leads to a mistrust of our public institutions and denies the public broadcaster their constitutionally protected freedom of media.

An environment where people can be fired following political interference by the ANC-influenced elections campaign leads to self-censorship and restrains journalists and media workers from the freedom they need to do their job.

Magopeni has been treated unfairly by the Sabc as they continued to ignore her submissions to their various nefarious intents, such as calling her to give reasons for mitigation against her dismissal, which she wrote back to, yet they ignored that and released an ill-informed state-

ment regarding her dismissal.

The Sabc management and board, since making the announcement to charge Magopeni, has carried itself in a questionable manner that has not only been disheartening, but has also put a negative dent on the reputation of the public broadcaster.

It's unfortunate that the gains made in recent years since Magopeni assumed the leadership of the news team are now being taken backward, by a management team that wants to see the news division led asunder with clear political influence from the ANC.

Sanef remains committed to media freedom and believe that the news division of the Sabc should continue pushing back against intentional ANC propaganda, in whatever shape or form it takes.

We will continue to support editors at a key institution such as the Sabc, who continue to fight back against any undue editorial interference.

The Sabc plays a key role in our constitutional democracy, editors espousing independence who work for it must be given the freedom and independence to do their jobs and make decisions even when they are politically unpopular, as long as they are for the good of public interest.

The Sabc cannot be a place for serving any political party's agendas, factionalism or serving any narrow political interests.

We are resolute that this outrageous decision by the Sabc will be challenged by all endeavouring to see an independent Sabc newsroom.

The public, the main stakeholder in the institution, envisage no such political interference at the public broadcaster.



**Phathiswa
Magopeni**



By Juliet Nanfuka

Data privacy still a neglected digital right in Africa

In recent years, the threats to data privacy have evolved at a quicker pace than the development of regulatory frameworks dedicated to safeguarding the right to privacy, especially in the digital era.

Currently, just over half of African countries have enacted privacy laws and policies.

Still, the right to privacy is repeatedly under threat through the introduction of new laws that facilitate surveillance and the collection of biometric data and limit the use of encryption.

There are growing concerns that in several African countries, government agencies and private entities are collecting and processing personal data without adequate data protection frameworks, amid weak oversight mechanisms and inadequate remedies.

Most African countries are parties to international human rights instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which provide for the right to privacy.

However, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights does not provide for the right to privacy, although its article 9 has been interpreted to encompass the right to privacy.

Meanwhile, the continent's model instrument on privacy and data pro-

tection, the African Union Convention on Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection has been signed by 14 countries and only eight countries had ratified it by June 2020.

Indeed, adherence to these instruments remains low.

"In recent years, various African countries have enacted laws and policies to regulate the right to privacy. Many of the laws enacted do not measure up to international human rights standards and fail to establish clear and appropriate oversight, redress and remedy mechanisms." — CIPESA Mapping and Analysis of Privacy Laws in Africa

Increased digitalisation, which was accelerated by Covid-19, has seen rising use of technology in health, business, education, and civic participation and engagement, necessitating greater need for progressive personal data privacy policies and practices.

However, as many positive developments emerged in the region so did gaps in the respect for data protection and privacy in the numerous state responses.

For example, Ethiopia has em-

barked on a national digital identification (ID) biometric-based project which it argues will support access to services for citizens and hasten trade relations with other nations on the continent.

However, the country has no comprehensive data protection law. In 2020, the government published the draft Personal Data Protection Proclamation, which is yet to come into force.

In Kenya, the Data Protection Act, 2019 which establishes the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner also prohibits the sharing of data with third parties without consent of the data subjects and requires that individuals are informed when their data is being shared and for what purposes.

In December, an amendment to the Central Bank of Kenya Act addresses digital lenders that share personal data of loan defaulters with third parties could have their licenses revoked.

Tactics used by lenders reportedly included calling friends and family, to shame and compel their borrowers to repay the loans.

In South Africa, the data privacy debate recently surged when the Department of Basic Education stated that high school leaving exam (National Senior Certificate) results would no longer be published on media platforms, in line with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA).

However, a court ruled against the department and instructed that the results be published publicly on media platforms and newspapers.

Historically, the results have been made available with students identified through their ID numbers or exam numbers.

The Department argued that in order to publish the results, it would have to seek consent from every pupil per the POPIA.

Private entities in South Africa have also come under scrutiny for their surveillance systems' compliance with privacy regulations and their data privacy practices.

Among these entities is Vumacam, which in 2021 announced that it was gearing up to instal additional "hundreds of thousands of cameras" in the country.

Vumacam currently has over 5,000 cameras that have been installed in Johannesburg suburbs since 2019.

The concerns raised about private surveillance actors in South Africa echo those that have emerged about state actors in Botswana, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe who have heavily invested in state-run video surveillance systems commonly referred to as "Safe Cities" — which in the absence of sufficient safeguards, present risks through their collection and processing of personal data.

Indeed, there are concerns on the true extent to which governments are committed to ensuring citizens' data privacy rights.

In 2019, Clément Voule, the United Nations special rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, stated that a surge in legislation and policies aimed at combating cybercrime had also opened the door to punishing and surveilling activists and protesters in many countries around the world.

Among the ways in which data privacy is being undermined through legislation and policy is by increasing restrictions to the use of anonymity and encryption both of which are fundamental to upholding other rights including press freedom, access to information and freedom of expression. States fear the use of anonymisation and encryption tools will hamper their capacity to fight terrorism and crime.

****See this Policy Brief on How African States Are Undermining the Use of Encryption***

Anonymity and encryption protect privacy, and without effective protection of the right to privacy, the right of individuals to communicate anonymously and without fear of their communications being unlawfully detected cannot be guaranteed.

Whether used to protect sensitive information or to verify identities, individuals and corporations alike benefit from cryptographic software in a world that is becoming increasingly networked.

In the absence of robust oversight, legal and practical safeguards, and the selective application of data protection laws, data privacy remains a primary concern for digital users in several African countries.

This is compounded by governments who continue to encourage and support an enabling environment that facilitates efforts by state and non-state actors to undermine privacy-related rights at the cost of numerous digital rights in Africa.



**Clement
Nyaletsossi
Voule**



By Win Africa

Africa: One in two media women have faced verbal or physical sexual abuse

NEW research from Women in News on sexual harassment in African media organisations highlights the scale of the problem – and the numbers make for worrying reading.

Conducted in eight countries in the continent and with 584 respondents, the research found women stay silent because of a fear of retaliation and a lack of faith that their organisations will do anything about their reports.

And the numbers support this thinking.

The research found that of the cases reported, organisations took action only 42 percent of the time.

And even then, the most common response was to warn the perpetrator, followed by emotional support for the victim, dismissal of cases after review, and providing training for staff on sexual harassment.

Stamping out the vice is further complicated by the fact that two out of five times, the perpetrator is a person in authority.

And to illustrate just how pervasive sexual harassment is, 46.12 percent of respondents said they had witnessed at least one incident, while nearly one in five (16 per cent) said they had witnessed five or more incidents.

Nelly, who works in a newsroom in Zimbabwe — one of the countries surveyed, alongside Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia — termed the sexual harassment situation “disheartening as it remains unresolved almost 20 years since I joined the media industry”.

“Universities and colleges are churning out graduates who are talented and conversant with the technology the media needs to survive, but six months after their being hired, they leave their organisations.

“They are leaving because the ‘boys’ club’ that rules the media has refused to change,” she said.

Nelly said the stories of how toxic the newsroom can be has led to young graduates shunning journalism.

“There was a graduate trainee, who was at an evening assignment that ended at about 10pm.

“When she called the office for transport home, she was told the company drivers had all left.

“Her boss, however, offered to pick her up and since she didn’t have any other options, she agreed.

“When the boss came to pick her up, he arrived with his girlfriend.

“The trainee sat in the back seat and was subjected to her boss and his girlfriend kissing each other the entire 30 minutes it took to get to her house.

“Days later, her boss brought up the incident, telling her he could treat her in a similar fashion and give her even more so she would never have to worry about transport.

“Three months later, the trainee quit,” recalled Nelly, who asked that her full name not be used as she was not authorised to speak on the matter.

It is, unfortunately, an all-too-common narrative across the region’s newsrooms — and it does not affect only women.

The research found that 43 percent of gender non-conforming individ-



uals and 19,5 percent of men had faced unwanted sexual attention.

Further, 56 percent of women said they had been verbally harassed, with 38 percent reporting physical harassment.

For gender non-conforming individuals, one in two had been verbally harassed, and 36 percent physically harassed.

Among men, one in five had experienced verbal sexual harassment and about one in 10 had faced physical harassment.

“We have a long way to go before staff are convinced and comfortable that if there are incidents of harassment, they can report them and action will be taken without their further victimisation,” said WIN Africa director Jane Godia.

Respondents said fear of losing their jobs, of being negatively labelled and of facing some form of retaliation from the perpetrator and their peers stops them from filing formal complaints.

The research, which is the first

phase of a multi-region study, found that nearly half of those surveyed (46,7 percent) worked for organisations with no sexual harassment policy in place.

Yet, in supplementary interviews with 32 media managers, 46 percent said the industry no longer has a sexual harassment problem — but this was despite more than half of them reporting that they had been victims of the vice.

While change may be slow in coming, however, there are small wins being recorded across the

region.

Women in News, for instance, through its advisory partnerships in Africa, is working with 30 member organisations across eight countries to institute sexual harassment policies that provide clear reporting mechanisms to make newsrooms safer.

“Newsrooms need as much information and support as possible to ameliorate the challenges posed by sexual harassment within the work-

place by colleagues and in the field by sources,” said WIN advisory manager Susan Makore.

The research provides evidence of the need for media organisations to recognise how widespread sexual harassment is, and to put in place plans and policies that create a safer working environment that allows for talent retention and industry growth.

“It all starts with a conversation on what is and isn’t acceptable behaviour in your media organisation — being explicit about sexual harassment — sharing definitions, what behaviours are unacceptable and communicating the right of every employee to be treated equally.

It is far better to be proactive and prepared than pushed into a crisis management position when a case emerges,” said Women in News executive director Melanie Walker.



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