COMMUNIQÉ

The Center for Research on Development of African Media, Governance, and Society (CEREDEMS) held an international webinar with the theme: 'Narratives around Information Disorder Ecosystem in Africa" on Saturday 14th November 2020. The virtual event consisted of speakers and panelists from five African countries including Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, Namibia and South Africa to discuss and advance conversations around Protests and Information management in the region.

The webinar had a keynote, goodwill messages, panel discussion, open and workshop sessions.

The keynote address was delivered by Prof. Ayobami Ojebode from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

The goodwill messages were presented by Professor Victor Barabash, the head, faculty of Philology, RUDN university of Russia; and Professor Ibraheem Gbajabiamila, the Vice-Chancellor Crescent University, Abeokuta, Nigeria.

The panel discussion was chaired by Dr Lambe Kayode Mustapha, Head, Department of Mass Communication, University of Ilorin, Nigeria. Panelists drawn from the media, academia and civil societies included Mr Ogochukwu Nweke (Ghana); Dr Kola Adesina (Nigeria); SP Muyiwa Adejobi (Police Public Relations Officer, Lagos, Nigeria); Gordon Joseph (Namibia) Mr Kassoum Coulibaly (Mali); Dramane Souare (Mali); Dr Dele Odunlami (Nigeria); Lekan Otufodunrin (Nigeria); Ify Onyegbule (Nigeria) and Sulaiman Alede (Nigeria).

The workshop on Fact-Checking was facilitated by Mr Adekunle Adedeji from Dubawa of Premium Times Times Center for Investigative Journalism, Nigeria.

At the end of the webinar which attracted over 200 participants from around the world, observed and recommended as follows:

1.   Protest is a fundamental part of the democratic process all over the world, and most especially in Africa, where the practice of democracy is still experiencing challenges.

2.   Good Governance is a required ingredient to limit the rate of protest on the African continent as changing demographics and massive penetration of the internet on the continent aid mobilization for protests.

3.   Information flow is a critical aspect of protests which involves the generation of narratives from the protesters and the constituted authorities. The two sides involved are usually eager to win the narrative war with the two sides attempting to pollute the information highway with information disorder

4. It noted that information disorder during protests become sophisticated as it moves from physical to virtual arena, leading to confusing narratives and thereby violating the sanctity of information flow.

5.   A credibility gap has been observed in the mainstream media making social media an alternative means of getting information for people in Africa. Unfortunately, most information shared on these social pages cannot be said to be credible.

6. There is a need for media organisations in Africa to be sensitive to conflict reporting, how protests are presented and reported. And journalists should refrain from being willing collaborators in the promotion of wrong narratives during protests.

7.   There is a need to incorporate information disorder into the media/communication curriculum in Africa. This is important as it was observed that information disorder cannot stop because it is beneficial for those that employ it.

8. There is a need to establish a train-the-trainer programme for media/communication teachers in African universities. This would strengthen their capacities to train future journalists in fact-checking and other preventive measures against information disorder.

9.   There is a need to institute media/ information literacy programmes for citizens in African countries so as to increase awareness of information disorder and improve citizens' abilities to verify the information.

10.   Constant training for journalists and media workers is also a desirable step in checking the menace of information disorder in Africa, especially during the crisis period.

11.   Existing legal frameworks for combating information disorder have to be improved on, in order to capture recent development within the ICT on the African continent.

The centre is founded by young African communication scholars from around the world: Mustapha Muhamed Jamiu, a lecturer and a PhD researcher at the RUDN university of Russia; Folarin, Jamiu is a 2020 Dubawa Research Fellow on Fact-Checking, a lecturer at Crescent University, and PhD researcher at Olabisi Onabanjo University, Nigeria; Stephen Obiri who is from Ghana is a PhD researcher at RUDN university of Russia; and Adebiyi, Rasheed Ademola, a lecturer and PhD researcher at the University of Ibadan. The centre also consists of renowned scholars as governing council from reputable universities within Africa and around the world; Professor Victor Barabash (RUDN University of Russia), Dr Lambe Kayode Mustapha (University of Ilorin, Nigeria), Professor, Ayobami Ojebode (University of Ibadan, Nigeria) and Dr Dele Odunlami of (Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria).

CEREDEMS Africa appreciates all the partners, panelists, and attendees for their active engagements.

Signed:-
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