

POLICY BRIEF

NIGERIA: Tackling Social Injustice Requires Investigative-Driven Social Justice Journalism

Executive Summary

Because of the time-consuming nature of investigative journalism, the journalism practice that represents the voices of the oppressed (social justice journalism) was found to generate more positive responses from either the authorities or the institutions alleged of anti-social behaviours. Whenever the accused authorities were found to represent public institutions such as security agencies and the academia, they either brought back justice to the victims or promised to listen to them. But any of these positive reactions only came up after the anti-social justice acts of the authorities were reported.

Introduction

All over the world, journalism has been used to reveal secrets prominent people and institutions preferred to hide from the public. It has also been used to expose societal decays with a view to calling the relevant people and institutions to accountability. In Nigeria, very few mass media embark on these journalistic roles, although many always educate, inform and entertain the masses. Our research at *Infoprations Limited* compared two forms of journalism- investigative journalism (that takes a long time to conclude) and social justice journalism (that aims to enshrine social justice)- within the lenses of 'Fisayo Soyombo's style of journalism. We were interested in which of his journalism practices got more attention and reactions from his targets, and which one Nigeria needs to fight social injustice. To achieve these, we

studied 66 of his social justice journalism stories and 8 of his undercover reports very critically so as to understand his journalistic goals and performance.

Our Findings

- Mastery of investigative journalism skills helps social justice journalists to authenticate the claims of victims of social abuse.
- Fisayo Soyombo's social justice journalism got more positive attention of and reactions from public institutions because he focused more on injustice related to business, security, corruption and governance.
- Injustice related to police extortion, illegal detention, misconducts from the academia, banks and organisations received the most positive responses from the authorities concerned.
- Most of the positive responses received from the injustice-related stories occurred because the authorities exposed are organisations that are statutorily accountable to the public.
- Majority of the victims of injustice were powerless who relied on the voice of Foundation for Investigative Journalism (FIJ).
- Fisayo Soyombo's social justice journalism recorded more positive responses from the targeted authorities than his undercover stories- investigative journalism consumes time; social justice journalism is quicker.

Recommendations

- Nigeria needs more social justice journalists to always expose anti-social behaviours of powerful people and institutions.
- Nigeria needs a strong criminal and social justice system every Nigerian can trust.
- Periodically, FIJ should reshare stories that are yet to receive the expected positive response from the targeted authorities.
- Nigerian institutions (public and private) should strengthen their crisis/public communications unit so that their handlers can fully understand how to respond to media stories against them.
- Nigerian institutions (public and public) should always act promptly on media investigations about their workers, and come up with resolutions the public can trust.

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