



## Fourth Edition of the AFRODAD Media Initiative

### EMPOWERING MEDIA TOWARDS AN IMPACTFUL AFRICAN DEBT CAMPAIGN

#### 1. Introduction

The [African Forum and Network on Debt and Development](#) (AFRODAD) and the [Union Nationale des Journalistes de Côte d'Ivoire](#) (UNJCI), member of the [Fédération Internationale des Journalistes](#) will be hosting the fourth edition of the AFRODAD Media Initiative (AFROMEDI IV) themed “Empowering Media towards an Impactful Africa Debt Campaign,” from 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024 in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire.

In AFRODAD’s context, equipping members of the fourth estate enables them to use their mandate and platform to push for a prosperous Africa based on sustainable and equitable development. More specifically, they take part in promoting accountability, transparency, sustainable management of public debt or funds, as well as inclusive development. Hence AFROMEDI, one of AFRODAD’s flagships, seeks to enhance media’s capacity towards impactful reporting on public debt.

#### Problem Statement

Complex debt dynamics and inefficient resource allocation, compounded by deficiencies in transparency and accountability, impede the continent’s inclusive progress. Moreover, influential agenda-setters and government watchdogs such as the African media possess an underutilised capacity to enforce accountability, catalyse reforms, and foster the inclusive discourse needed to sustainably finance development. Also, at times they face challenges related to limited technical literacy on debt issues such as the political economy of public debt, debt treatment under the common framework, implications of bailout programmes by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), or the nexus between debt, the increasing cost of living, illicit financial flows (IFFs) or climate finance.

The other issue they find themselves faced with is the restrictive press environments in some countries which undermine the media's ability to play the reporting role effectively. [The 2023 Press Freedom Index](#) in Africa has slightly increased in recent years, but it still faces many challenges and threats. The index shows that some African countries, such as Namibia, South Africa, Cape Verde, Seychelles, and Gambia, have achieved high scores and a satisfactory situation regarding press freedom. However, other countries, such as Eritrea, Egypt, Djibouti, Sudan, Libya, and Somalia, have very low scores and a very serious situation, where journalists face harassment, intimidation, violence, imprisonment, and even death for doing their work. [Some of the factors that affect press freedom in Africa](#) include political instability, armed conflicts, corruption, authoritarian regimes, lack of resources, digital surveillance, and internet shutdowns.

Targeted efforts to build media skills, improve information access, and offer alternatives to limitations are imperative to facilitate media reporting for better development outcomes. More vibrant, solutions-focused coverage can help drive transparency, responsibility, and reforms needed to overcome systemic constraints to prudent debt policies and equitable resource allocation. An empowered press corps that

fosters informed public debate will prove critical towards [The Africa We Want](#) the [Africa that is a rule maker and not a rule taker](#). But realising this requires addressing complex, interlinked challenges inhibiting media across the continent.

The above can therefore be summarised in 3 challenges: (i) Struggle to access pertinent information for well-grounded reporting on debt and related issues; (ii) challenges to humanise technical information in a way that makes sense and is appealing to the people; and (iii) those who have sufficient capacity struggle with limitations to free reporting.

### **AFROMEDI Background**

AFROMEDI was launched in 2021, as one of AFRODAD's initiatives that focuses on promoting factual, effective, and consistent reporting on debt and development issues. The initiative seeks to: (i) build media's reporting capacity on debt issues; and in turn they gain increased capacity to (ii) shape the public debate and putting pressure on policymakers to answer to the call of transparency, accountability, and good governance. One of AFROMEDI's outcomes is the Media Debt Network Africa (M-DNA), which was launched during AFROMEDI II in March 2022. It comprises of journalists who focus on debt and related development finance issues. It currently has 105 members from 35 African countries.

### **2. AFROMEDI IV Objectives**

- i. Support journalists with skills to access public debt information for their reporting.
- ii. Enhance participating journalists' capacity to humanise technical information on debt.
- iii. Facilitate exchanges on ways of airing information in places with limited freedom to report.

### **3. AFROMEDI IV Modules**

- i. Africa's current poly-crisis, its causes and impact on the African people.
- ii. Alternative solutions to piece-meals interventions to Africa's rising debt.
- iii. Accessing and understanding crucial data on debt.
- iv. Humanised reporting on debt.
- v. How can the African media community promote transparency, accountability, and good governance in development finance\_ Insights from the African Borrowing Charter and Harare Declaration for media practitioners.
- vi. Getting the story out of Shut Reporting Doors
- vii. The place of media in the African debt campaign - Stop the Bleeding.

### **4. Expected Outcomes**

- i. Increased media knowledge and reporting on debt and development.
- ii. Launch of the media Debt Toolkit.
- iii. Increased membership of M-DNA

### **5. Scope**

This year, participants will be drawn from 36 African countries including Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

## 6. Date, Format & Venue

Sessions will be held from 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024 in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire and they will only be open for physical participation.

## 7. Contacts

For more information, please contact Fidélité Nshimiyimana [fidelite@afrodad.org](mailto:fidelite@afrodad.org), Campaigns & Communication Manager for AFRODAD and Jean-Claude Coulibaly | [oualamian.jcc@gmail.com](mailto:oualamian.jcc@gmail.com), Président of UNJCI, and copy Sephora Zegui [sephora.zegui@gmail.com](mailto:sephora.zegui@gmail.com) the national coordinator.

### Pre- AFROMEDI Activities

1. As per the request from the AFROMEDI III cohort, a Media Debt Toolkit (MDT) will be commissioned and validated ahead of AFROMEDI IV. It will then be finalised and launched during the event. The MDT will contain aspects of understanding and reporting informed by the political economy of debt, gender sensitive reporting on development finance, approaching climate finance reporting, issues to consider when reporting on debt and trade, the place of artificial intelligence in reporting on development finance, etc. The MDT will be used by members of the Media Debt Network Africa (M-DNA), as well as other journalists across the continent.
2. Confirmed participants of AFROMEDI IV will be placed in a learning group and start familiarising themselves with AFRODAD's advocacy and other knowledge materials ahead of AFROMEDI IV.

\*\*\*

AFRODAD is a Pan-African organisation committed to assisting the long-term development of the continent by promoting prudent debt and resource management, while also supporting the development of solutions to multiple intersecting crises.

-

The National Union of Journalists of Côte d'Ivoire is a member of the International Federation of Journalist which is the world's largest organisation of journalists with 600,000 media professionals from 187 trade unions and associations in more than 140 countries.