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## **Pan-African Media Conference on Debt and Development 2021**

**Theme: Raising Media Champions for Prudent Debt Management during and post Covid 19**

Date: 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> May in Uganda  
9<sup>th</sup>- 11<sup>th</sup> June in Kenya

### **1. Introduction**

The African Forum and Network on Debt and Development ([AFRODAD](#)) was founded 25 years ago, as a Pan African platform and organisation for lobbying and advocating for debt cancellation and addressing other debt related issues in Africa. Currently, AFRODAD remains committed to contributing to the long-term development of the continent, through its contribution to finding sustainable solutions to Africa's challenges related to public debt, resources management and financial development.

AFRODAD believes in the power of media to positively influence society when issues are effectively reported to contribute to decision making processes and improving citizens' wellbeing. Journalists play a very critical role in taking information beyond shelves to various stakeholders. A considerable number of citizens lack access to information despite this being a constitutional right. Journalists' increased awareness and prioritisation of public debt management would translate to increased quality and quantity reporting thus adequately informing citizens and challenging power holders on any decisions that do not prioritise people. They have the potential to play an outstanding role in creating and shaping public opinion and strengthening society. They are the sword-arm of democracy that acts as watchdog to protect public interest against malpractice as it creates public awareness on it and must challenge the same.

This year, AFRODAD is launching the annual Pan African Media Forum on Debt and Development as one of its flagship events with the main purpose of building media's capacity to understand issues of debt and development and actively and boldly engaging and influencing decision towards prudent debt management. This Pan African Media conference presents exciting opportunities for journalists because:

- They will gain new knowledge and improved understanding on issues of debt and development;



- They will be sensitised to increasingly prioritise issues on debt and sustainable development thus adequately reporting on them on a regular basis.
- Journalists, as the 4th estate will be empowered to boldly hold their governments to account to act responsibly when borrowing and spending.
- They will be able to clearly and creatively link the public debt situation to citizens lives and rights.

## 2. What is the Context?

The Covid 19 pandemic has brought devastating human and social impact, and has also highlighted the need to call various stakeholders from the national, regional and international front, including the media fraternity, to unite and fight the spread of the coronavirus; which is the common enemy during this season. With this, we must also work together to either create or promote processes, towards equitable economic recovery post Covid-19 and to prevent future economic crises. Concerted efforts from media beyond the national level, has also become crucial, as socio-economic challenges that countries are struggling with, have roots that can be better understood and tackled from a clear understanding of the debt ecosystem at various levels.

Journalists who have the mandate to set the public agenda, can prioritise stories on how the most [vulnerable](#) have been harshly hit by the pandemic and driven to worse poverty levels, and inequality which is [expected to worsen](#). Other stories include that [The World Bank](#) projected that Covid-19 will drive many as 150million into poverty by 2021, with 8 out of 10 being in middle income countries. Also, they can report on how [over 100 million Africans](#) were facing crisis, emergency, or catastrophic levels of food insecurity in 2020 which is an increase of 60% from 2019. But journalists can, and should take a step further to expound on some root causes of these issues, which were rampant within African countries well before the pandemic. As the [African Borrowing Charter](#) emphasises, governments have been borrowing from the new sources that are specifically risky for them, mostly because they are still fragile: they have weak infrastructure, narrow production bases and they are mostly still highly dependent on commodities, have shallow financial markets, weak institutions (including project and debt management). They also have limited administrative capacity, less efficient tax systems as well as weak legal frameworks. Worse still, during recent years, a number of African countries have increasingly turned to issuing international sovereign bonds. What does this mean? It means that the pandemic only exposed an underbelly of governance deficits. Members of the media have a very key role to play in holding governments to account and becoming champions of a radical movement towards [prudent debt management](#).



### **3. Specific Objectives**

This Pan African media conference organised by AFRODAD in collaboration with regional and national partners will aim at:

- Contributing to journalists' existing knowledge and understanding of debt management and related issues and to increase media participation in the campaign for prudent debt management in Africa.
- Exchanging innovative and effective techniques for monitoring and reporting on public debt and related issues in Africa, that will help journalists captivate their audience and influence it towards action.
- Building a network of journalists who can adequately report on debt management and related issues and promoting collaboration on investigative journalism on issues of public debt at the national, regional and continental levels.

### **4. What we will talk about?**

- Africa, regional and national debt ecosystem. Where does Africa stand in terms of debt? Does the level of debt translate to achieved development progress? Development expert
- Understanding Public debt and its centrality in macroeconomic performance (Development expert)
- The role of the Media in debt and public finance management.
- The Nexus between Debt, Poverty and Inequality and how to report on it through a citizens' lens. (Should be a journalist doing a very good job in this area)
- Public Private Partnership infrastructure as drivers of debt and inequality
- Towards Debt democratisation (debate: journalists, MPs, CSOs, government representatives. At least 7 panellists during the meeting on 10-11 June in Nairobi).
- Suggested solutions referencing the African Borrowing Charter. (By AFRODAD with comments from journalists)
- Lessons learnt on remaining a relevant journalist during Covid 19 and beyond (journalists) and how to write stories that cross borders.
- A call to becoming a journalist- champion for economic justice.



## 5. How will the message be delivered?

### **Presentations**

- Traditional formats such as PowerPoint will be used for sharing information on the debt and related issues such as illicit financial flows, progressive tax systems among others.

### **Animations**

- Animations illustrating the African Borrowing Charter, Special Drawing Rights, the debt ecosystem and others will be used to illustrate the debt situation, its impact and suggested solutions with a simplified approach.

### **Edutainment**

- Which is a combination of education and entertainment aimed at creatively winning the mind and touching emotions towards action. Some artistic products that show the linkage between unsustainable debt levels and drastically under-spending on key [sectors especially health](#) will be showcased and discussed.

**Case studies and Transformation Stories as practical lessons.**

## 6. Deliverables

- The conference will gather journalists from than 10 countries or more; deliberately including countries in debt crisis or at risk of the same.
- The message will be delivered in a language that participants understand (Options for English, French, Portuguese and sign language).
- Recorded statements by various participants on the relevance of the forum and their commitment to champion prudent debt management.
- A platform for peer exchange and for sharing news items to broadcast.



## **7. Who will be part of the Media Forum?**

- Practicing journalists from various media houses (ensuring the attendance of senior editors and senior reporters);
- Students focusing on journalism;
- Communication officers from partner organisations;
- Government officials that can potentially become our allies;
- Facilitators: Ideally topics will be presented by 2 facilitators: a development expert who will tackle the technical side of the topic and a communication expert who will share how the topic at hand can be made newsworthy/relevant and attractive to citizens at all levels while strongly speaking to policy makers too.

## **8. Partners**

- Oxfam Pan Africa
- Action Aid International
- AFRODAD's national partners

## **9. When & How will we host the Forum?**

The conference will be held from 09<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> June 2021 in a hybrid session with a physical meeting in Nairobi, Kenya. Other participants will virtually join the conference from various African countries.

## **10. In case of any query, reach out to:**

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