Editor's Note

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This issue is special, beyond the fact that it is long overdue. It was inspired by the African Women in Media conference held in June 2018, which, in its attention to the cause of African women, focused on the theme of Visibility. Four of the papers in the issue were first presented at the conference and have since been reworked for publication. Much has happened since embarking on that process which makes the issues raised here most timely. The Coronavirus pandemic which has kept people around the world locked down, and threatens to cripple several economies has since happened. It has exposed chinks in the armour of existing safeguards to public health, mental well-being, and the means to engage audiences effectively in many nations. The yawning gaps in these regards have confounded various publics, scholars, and leaders in advanced and developing economies. The issues raised by our authors are therefore timely, coming at a time when there should be heightened attention to required improvements and novel ways to address issues of health and well-being.

With the exception of one, all the authors are women speaking up for women folk. As media researchers, the authors' primary concern has been on the performance of the media—traditional media, social media and film. The grand concern is situated within traditional academic discourse that sees media as change agents and central to the maintenance of society. Regardless of the mission—to inform, educate or entertain—the agenda set by the media is consequential. The themes covered, and how these are covered, make a difference to audiences and subjects of media

coverage. Mindful that women and children are often the most vulnerable in society, especially in the contexts discussed, the concern of the authors for development, review of cultural practices (including media cultures), and, ultimately, more equitable society, is clear. In different ways, each author seems to be asking the same question. How efficiently have media been deployed?

The paper by Adama Adamu is a study that takes us off the beaten path into rural communities in Northern Nigeria. It explains a range of cultural practices and social situations to which mothers are subjected. The anachronism of their channels of communication constitute a challenge for health workers and advocates for behaviour change. Besides the primary data, Adamu's study draws supporting evidence from the National Demographic Health Survey (2018). This data makes stark the realities which the researcher writes of. The disparities in the different regions of Nigeria are reminiscent of the situations across the African continent. Similarly, distinctions in the living experiences of urban and rural dwellers in Nigeria makes one consider other contrasts globally.   The paper certainly highlights the need to sift through the beliefs and practices that are prevalent in the rural areas. In the face of inadequate infrastructure, education and health promotion need to be foregrounded. Maternal health issues are unlike diseases; they are standard happenings that women encounter on daily basis. As pregnant women are encouraged to be stoic, to get on with routine chores, mothers and their children may be left in harm's way. Adama vivifies this in her paper and challenges the media to address this.

Raheemat Adeniran's paper approaches the same subject from a perspective that brings journalism practice under scrutiny. Her research confirms that maternal and child healthcare is a major challenge in Nigeria as it is elsewhere. The World Health Organisation shows that it is an issue for all developing countries (Asia, North & sub Saharan Africa) and ranks it highest amongst issues subsumed within the Sustainable Development Goal 3: Target 3.1. Going by progress made on the key indicators over the years, the peril of poor maternal and child healthcare still seems gravest in sub-Saharan countries. Undoubtedly, this is newsworthy. While this subject gets some attention, it requires expert and delicate handling. It is reasonable to expect this from the Nigerian press which is reputed for being vibrant, especially with regard to elections and politics. An appraisal of the Nigerian and South African press concludes that they have not been found wanting in their watchdog roles (Salawu and Eesuola, 2018: 400). Yet, the author is right to direct attention to coverage of health issues— particularly those pertaining exclusively to women. This is premised on the assumption that women may be better advocates for issues that affect them.

The paper raises a familiar concern— the (in)visibility of women in news processes. As Hodkinson notes, "Women also tend to be under-represented within key decision-

making roles in media institutions." (2017, 245). How does this augur for the coverage of sensitive feminine health issues? The findings in the paper cause one to wonder if it matters whose voice is heard. It offered an opportunity to revisit old concerns regarding the newsroom politics—gender role assignments as evident in ownership, editorial status and reportorial responsibilities (McQuail, 2010). Linking these to newsroom cultures—engagement with sources of news, and patterns of attribution to news sources—the argument for increased women's involvement is made. We must attend to these, mindful of debates about organizational and ideological influences of the news.

Media influence is complex. Researchers must persevere in exploring how best to ensure the vulnerable are heard and issues affecting them receive appropriate action. Social media offer much hope of a democratised media-scape that facilitates a bottom-up pattern of communication. They could break the stranglehold that patriarchal influences have had over mainstream media. Social media, varied and flexible enough to reach diverse groups are able to give a voice to the marginalised. If properly harnessed, these media could help women to break their silence as is the premise of Akoja and Anjorin. Yet, more than this, social media help to redistribute power by making public audience consumption, and by so doing exhibiting where consensus occur. Taken further, the power of social media to promote local causes till they snowball into formidable global movements has been demonstrated. Also demonstrated is the feminisation of the internet in an African context. This trend had been reported in the UK by the media regulator OFCOM since 2007 (Allen, 2007).

With a study of glocalised university undergraduates, Akoja and Anjorin document these trends in their paper. Being students of a private university, it can be assumed that the study population are fairly privileged. This is an assurance of their access to social media; their responses could be indicative of the wider youth subcultures. Perceptions of social media coverage of sexual violence reported reveal changing attitudes towards public engagement on what had hitherto been a taboo subject in this cultural context. The paper is instructive in raising the need to appraise patterns of engagement, the effectiveness of messages aimed at creating awareness of different social media platforms; in creating awareness, mobilising support and prompting action within this group. From the specific concerns of the paper, readers may draw inferences regarding social media and citizenship within this habitus. As Yates & Lockley (2018) have demonstrated, there is merit in seeking closer understanding of social media use within certain contexts. With more personal configurations of social media use, exploring links between this, social status and context of particular groups is to be encouraged. Akoja and Anjorin have begun with baby steps, but the road ahead for such studies is long.

The other papers in this issue have focused on Nollywood and attest to the gutsy women trying to shape practices within the industry. Ajala's paper is a brave initiative, as she seeks to explore how best to harness potentials of the emerging media convergence cultures. Transmedia storytelling is presented as a technique that could be applied to improve audience engagement. This is important for social and behaviour change communication which is much needed world over, though it appears to be more glaring in the African context. Postpartum depression was in the frame in this instance. With increased awareness to mental health issues worldwide, it is heartening to see such taboo subjects being brought to the fore in scholarship on African media and films.

Samantha Iwowo's paper is a brave engagement with the Nigerian film industry. Hers is a critical reflection of her practice as a filmmaker that challenges her colleagues. Like Ajala, she also seeks to refine how film audiences are engaged. There is an acute awareness of the audio-visual nature of films and an insistence that the storytelling must explore this fully. It stems from high regard for the filmmaking canon, rather than the insistence by some within the Nigerian industry for exceptions to the rules— their desire to tell their own story in their own way. The concern is about professionalism in the industry but really it is about the audiences. I have argued repeatedly (2008, 2011, 2018) that audiences merely tolerated such modes of filmmaking as Iwowo seeks to correct in her paper.

With increasing modes of entertainment, no film industry can afford to be complacent, particularly, not Nollywood, with its aspirations to be truly transnational. This view was central to the rationale submitted by Iwowo and Abutsa for the roundtable event reviewed by Odutola and Esan. It is heartening to see more women behind the camera in Nollywood (Adedokun, 2017). It is delightful to see them initiating such hard talk as occurred in the roundtable. This is fitting since women dominate consumption of Nollywood, determining what to buy (Haynes, 2016). They are going beyond rectifying negative portrayals of women and lending their voices to decisions that shape the industry. As anticipated in wider academy (Bisschoff and Van de Peer, 2020) it is exhilarating to see women in Nollywood reviewing ways to redeem the industry from self-imposed limitations.

It is striking that this issue is coming roughly forty years after the signing of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Beijing platform for action signed in 1995 offered a roadmap which should have yielded results by now, its 25th anniversary. The papers thus serve as a barometer of the progress that had been expected to happen by 2020. The world should have become a more equitable place by the existing International Human Rights Legal Framework. Yet having missed the attainment of Millennium

Development Goals (MDGs) we are now pursuing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with Action Plan for 2030. Recent global occurrences make the burdens stark; so does some evidence from the authors.

Notwithstanding, the papers in this volume are encouraging. They attest to progress at least in the participation of women in seeking solutions to social issues. In their dual role, the authors deepen our understanding of media and film practices, and foster our appreciation of the situation of women (and people on the margins of society). Though the subjects that we grapple with should have been tackled by now, it is encouraging that more women are facing up to these squarely. From this issue, our knowledge of production cultures in newsrooms, social media, campaign planning and filmmaking is enriched by the insight of amazing amazons. Enjoy the read.

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