COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF A ONE-DAY MEDIA TRAINING ON EARLY WARNING AND EARLY RESPONSE REPORTING, ORGANISED BY CIVIL SOCIETY LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY CENTRE (CISLAC)/TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL IN NIGERIA (TI-NIGERIA) WITH SUPPORT FROM OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATION AFRICA (OSF-AFRICA) AT VISA KARENIA HOTEL, RIVERS STATE ON 7TH SEPTEMBER, 2023.

PREAMBLE:

CISLAC/TI-Nigeria with support from Open Society Foundation Africa (OSF-Africa) organised a one-day Training on Early Warning and Early Response Reporting. The Workshop aimed at building capacity of the media on accurate and verifiable Early Warning reporting through enhanced collaboration, communication and coordination that support Early Response mechanisms. It had a technical session with presentation titled: “The Role of Media in Building Effective Early Warning and Early Response Mechanisms for Communities in Nigeria: Conflict Sensitive and Objective Reportage” by David Vareba. It was attended by over 20 participants including journalists from various media outfits in the state. After brainstorming exhaustively on various thematic sessions, the following observations and recommendations were made:

OBSERVATIONS:

1. As media plays a crucial role in crisis communication process, objective, verifiable and accurate reportage of Early Warning signals have become imperative to de-escalate conflict at all levels.

2. Information misrepresentation, sensationalised reporting, politicised and highly commercialised media outfits with profit-oriented tendency escalate potential conflict, impede credibility and professionalism in journalism as well as accuracy in reporting Early Warning signals.

3. While Early Warning system is institutionalised to complement disaster management efforts, well-intended and verifiable media reportage of conflict signals must take into cognisance pre-conflict phase to alert relevant authorities of impending conflict to support timely response at all levels.

4. The advent of social media with the creation of citizen journalism gives rise to factual misrepresentation, unguarded data amplification,
unverifiable information publication that escalates potential conflict at all levels.

5. Fast-eroding operational independence across media outfits and unattended political interference impact negatively on accurate and factual reporting of conflict signals across the country.

6. Inadequate consideration for gender-sensitivity in conflict reporting process results in inherent misrepresentation women’s perceptions and expectations of media reportage.

7.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Enhanced synergy and collaboration among the media, Civil Society and relevant stakeholders on data gathering, information sharing and dissemination to inform factual and verifiable reportage on conflict signals and response efforts.

2. Strict adherence to social justice, ethical standards and equity in early conflict detection and reporting to demonstrate objectivity in analysis and restore public confidence, while facilitating timely response to Early Warning signals.

3. Maintaining objectivity in reporting of Early Warning signals through crisis identification, model building, data identification, data collection, evidence-based analysis and factual evaluation that establishes conflict-sensitive and verifiable patterns.

4. Identifying conflict signals in reporting process from varied phases like onset prevention, escalation management, de-escalation resolution and termination.

5. Embracing peace journalism in reporting process of conflict signals to discourage sentimental presentation of issues and favourism, and de-escalate conflict.
6. Immediate consideration for social media regulation, giving cognisance and recognition to the citizens’ fundamental human rights to mitigate dreaded effects of unguarded misrepresentation and unverifiable public presentation of issues.

7. Adequate consideration for gender sensitivity in conflict reporting for appropriate representation, while avoiding stereotype and bias in information presentation.

8. Proactive training and retraining programmes for journalists on conflict-sensitive reporting to ensure compliance to professionalism and objectivity in news coverage and presentation.

NEXT STEP:

- Business Day sustain accurate reporting on identified areas of conflict
- East-West Reporter will take into cognisance conflict-sensitivity in reporting, while maintaining objectivity
- The Nation Newspaper will leverage learning from the meeting to maintain a balanced-position in reporting process
- Guardian Newspaper to ensure total sensitivity in reporting process, giving cognizance to the context.
- AIT will improve on conflict-sensitivity in news coverage and reporting.
- Radio Nigeria will embrace proper code of conduct, safety, conflict-sensitive and bias-free reportage.

Signed:

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