



AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION 2nd MEDIA TRAINING ON SENSITIVE REPORTING ON HARMFUL PRACTICES FOR WEST, CENTRAL & NORTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

1-3RD August 2023 | AU International Conference Center, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Meeting Report

Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development:
Ending Harmful Practices Unit

ACTIVITY REPORT ON THE AUC SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE FUNDED SECOND TRAINING ON SENSITIVE REPORTING ON HARMFUL PRACTICES FOR FIFTY-SEVEN MEDIA PRACTITIONERS FROM 19 WEST, CENTRAL AND NORTH AFRICAN COUNTRIES

1st -3rd August 2023 | African Union International Conference Center, Addis Ababa,
Ethiopia

Context

While more than 33 Member States of the African Union Commission have adopted the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage, 55 Member States have adopted the Campaign to End Female Genital Mutilation. Many countries have implemented legislative frameworks and local interventions to support the campaigns. Still, much slower progress has been made at the Member State level in reducing the number of female victims vulnerable to these unacceptable human rights violations. One of the main obstacles to the elimination of these harmful practices is the lack of knowledge, information and communication on the effects of these practices, especially in the most rural, remote and underserved areas, where they occur most often but also the lack of accountability and implementation of policies agreed at the national level by key stakeholders at the local level, including village chiefs, traditional and religious leaders, and educational institutions.

In view of current projections of more than 50 million girls at risk of female genital mutilation [UNFPA-UNICEF JP on FGM] and more than 120 million girls who will be forced into marriage by 2030, as well as the critical role, coverage and heavy reliance of Africans on the media for social and development information, the African Union, as part of its mandate to accelerate the implementation of Africa's development strategy, should strive to improve the quality of information and communication; the African Union in its order to expedite an end to harmful practices, conducted the second media capacity building sessions on Sensitive Reporting on [Harmful Practices for 57 Media professionals](#) (gender reporters, gender media scholars and university journalism faculty members-) from 19 West, Central and Northern African Countries: (**Nigeria, Mali, Liberia, Benin, Cameroon, DRC, Chad, Ghana, Senegal, Mauritania, Western Sahara, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Djibouti, Algeria, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Gambia**) .

The 3-day training was held from 1-3rd August 2023 at the African Union International Conference Center in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with leadership from the AUC Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development Division- Ending Harmful Practices Unit and support from The Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Program through UNFPA. The Global Media Campaign to End FGM led the technical capacity-building sessions.

The training is a follow-up to the 1st session held in Nairobi, Kenya, in July 2022 with support from the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Program through UNICEF. The session brought together 37 media practitioners from 10 countries in the East and Southern Africa Region (Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia).

Objectives of the AUC Media training on Sensitive Reporting on Harmful Practices for West, Central and Northern African Countries (1-3rd August at AUC International Conference Center, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)

The training aimed at achieving the following specific objectives:

- To engage, orient and build the capacity of at least 50 national-level journalists and grassroots media activists from members from 20-member states on the AU ECM and FGM campaigns and their critical role in human rights-based reporting, communication, information dissemination, and advocacy for the protection of girls from harmful practices.
- Action media: To engage at least 50 journalists and university journalism faculty from 20-West, Central and Northern Africa member states in brainstorming and developing tailored media advocacy and social behaviour change messages that will be used at the member state level to raise awareness and increase accountability of each category of stakeholders in protecting girls against harmful practices.
- Through the media contacts established from the training, create a network of Africa-wide Harmful Practice media representatives who are coordinated, engaged, and exchanging experiences, lessons learned, and best practices in human rights focussed reporting against Harmful practices that affect African girls and in line with the FGM and ECM campaigns.

The selection process of the Media trainees

From September 2022 to May 2023, working with the AUC Division of Communications and the partner's Technical Working Group, the AUC EHPU issued a call for applications for Media professionals to the WCN countries, which covered the basic skills and experiences required by applicants, particularly experience in reporting on gender and child protection issues. Up to 195 applications were received from the 20 countries and AU EHPU together with partner representatives from UNFPA and the Global Media Campaign to End FGM, constituted a selection committee that came up with a list of highly qualified and experienced media finalists from the 20 countries who were subsequently informed of their selection for the training.

Participation in the training

The training had a total attendance of 75 physical participants and up to 20 virtual participants who included:

- Media trainees (57 participants), including five from Sierra Leone, four from Liberia, five from Egypt and one from Algeria, Western Sahara, Egypt, Libya, Benin and Chad.
- 6 UNFPA staff, including the new Representative of the Office to the AU & ECA, **Dr Esther Muia**.
- 4 Global Media Campaign to End FGM trainees
- 4 UNICEF staff, including **Dr Laila Gad**, the Representative to the AU and ECA, who gave virtual opening remarks. The UNICEF communications Officer, Derrick Ochout was also part of the trainees.

Mr. Sandy McCleery, the Development Counsellor for the UK Office to the Africa Union, delivered the inaugural and concluding statements during the training session. Madam Angela Martins, the Acting Director of Social Affairs, Culture, and Sports officially ended the event.

Modality of the training

The AUC EHPU collaborated with the UNFPA-supported Global Media Campaign to End FGM and delivered tailored training sessions on effective interventions to end harmful practices. Partner representatives and critical stakeholders shared their experiences.

Exposure to field best practices, including a panel discussion that engaged key stakeholders in sharing experiences on how they are engaging the media to lead actions against harmful practices, including **Ms Catherine Muller, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF WCARO** and **Ms Agnes Bangali, UNFPA WCARO**, who both provided an overview of the regional prevalence of Child Marriage and FGM and ongoing interventions. **Natanim Masresha**, a girl activist from Ethiopia nominated by Plan International, provided insights on why girls need to be empowered to tell their stories of harm as a driver for change. At the same time, **Meltem Agduk** from UNFPA gave a resounding rationale on why the Spotlight Initiative believed strongly in investing in African media practitioners' capacities and voices for an accelerated end to harmful practices. **Chimwemwe Simpito**, a media practitioner trained in July 2022, narrated how he utilised his skills to advocate for the government's recent policy mandating a minimum marriage age of 18 years.

Country presentations: To allow for a better understanding of the country's contexts and effectively guide the necessary training support, the media professionals made joint presentations on the existing reporting practices on harmful practices within their lands, their strengths, weaknesses and areas of much-needed improvement.

Human rights-based reporting case studies and technical exercises: These formed the main fabric of the training and saw participants take on individual and group activities and presentations that were initiated by exposure and criticising of real live and print media stories that either followed or negated the critical principles of protecting the victims, exposing the perpetrators and impactfully advocating for justice for children affected by harmful practices. Trainees were tasked to reflect on their own stories and identify elements and areas of improvement to widen the reach and engagement of their ending harmful practices narratives.

Training on empowering children as media activists: Ms. Jennifer Kaberi, the CEO of Mtoto News, and Bryan King, an 18-year-old who volunteers with this unique Kenyan organization that empowers children to tell their stories for impactful change, delivered a session to journalists. During their talk, they explored how journalists can help children safely and effectively report on harmful practices.

Work planning: This session concluded the training. Each trainee committed to developing impactful stories on critical topics and persons related to harmful practices. They also created key messages for stakeholders at the helm of influencing these practices. Finally, each trainee was awarded a certificate of attendance to confirm their participation and learning.

Outputs from the training

- Up to 57 media practitioners were skilled in human rights-based reporting in line with the African Union Campaigns on Ending Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation
- Key messages for different stakeholders were generated by the media professionals, which will guide country-based advocacy and engagement through media in reference to the two AUHPU campaigns.
- A network of West, Central and Northern media practitioners and faculty members was formed, including a WhatsApp group to facilitate the media practitioners' continued engagement, experience and best practice sharing on Ending Harmful Practices.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

- **Media practitioners who develop and publish content on gender and child protection require support to translate these stories, which often involve victims, into legal action. It is therefore crucial that CSOs and government agencies work closely with trained media to follow up on reported cases.**
- **The media training only lasted three days, which was not enough time for trainees to fully internalize and effectively report harmful practices. It is recommended that the next training be scheduled for five days.**
- **It is crucial to engage trained media professionals in ongoing activities led by partner organizations, the African Union Commission (AUC), and the government to achieve training objectives. The AUC will provide a list of these professionals to member states and partners for their use in existing and future interventions related to Ending Harmful Practices.**
- **During the training period, the West, Central, and Northern Africa Cohort of trainees utilised social media to call for immediate affirmative collective action by local leaders against child marriage and FGM. This was made clear by disseminating over 100 tweets on the subject matter throughout the duration of the training.**
- **The Northern African participants provided a unique perspective on harmful practices, such as child marriage and FGM, within their contexts. They highlighted the low education levels of girls and the lack of legal frameworks for protection. We extend our sincerest apologies to the participants from Nigeria and Egypt who encountered delays in arriving on time for the training due to a sudden change in visa requirements. We acknowledge that this situation could have been avoided had the training been held within the region.**

Next Steps

- The AUC is working closely with the UNICEF Office to the AU and ECA to set up an online knowledge network for all the media practitioners from West, Central, East, South and Northern Africa. This network will enhance peer-to-peer learning, knowledge and best practice sharing and foster a more potent force of African media practitioners trained and empowered to end harmful practices. This Knowledge network will host the 97 practitioners trained with support from the Spotlight Initiative from across the region.



Spotlight Initiative
To eliminate violence
against women and girls



- AU in collaboration with UNFPA, will follow up in the next three months with the trained Media practitioners and provide the necessary support to produce impactful stories that shed light on existing harmful practices within their localities.

APPRECIATION

AUC's Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development Division, through the leadership of Her Excellency Ambassador Minata Cessouma Samate, extends its greatest compliments and appreciation to the following partners for their generous support to the Media training on Sensitive Reporting on Harmful Practices for West, Central and Northern Africa:

- **The government of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia,**
- **The Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Program (SIARP)**
- **UNFPA: Country Offices in the 19 Countries, Representation office to the AU & ECA, ESARO, WCARO, HQ.**
- **UNICEF HQ, WCARO and the Office of the Representative to the AU & ECA.**
- **Plan International AU Liaison Office**
- **The Global Media Campaign to End FGM,**

Annex 3: Training Agenda

Day 1: Monday 31st July 2023

7:00-9:00 PM UNICEF Movie Screening: Valliante

Day 2: Tuesday 1st August 2023

Time		Facilitator/Moderator
09:00– 09:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening remarks and official opening: • Opening statement by AUC: Acting Director Social Affairs, Madam Angela Martins • Brief Opening Remarks from the AUC CIEFFA • Brief Remarks by the Head of the UNFPA Representation Office to the AU UNECA: Dr Esther Muia • Brief remarks by UNICEF Representative to AUC and ECA: Dr Laila Gad. • Brief Opening Remarks from UN Women Special Representative to the AUC and UNECA: Mrs Awa Ndiaye Seck • Brief Remarks from the Development Counsellor, UK Office to the Africa Union: Mr Sandy McCleery 	AUC- Ms Nena Thundu
09:30 – 10:00	<p>01. African Union Commission: Brief presentations of the AU campaigns on Ending Child Marriage, Saleema Initiative and the Accountability Framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Campaign to End Child Marriage & the Accountability Framework - Saleema Initiative to Eliminate FGM 	AUC: Ms Nena Thundu, Mr Robert Kasenene
10:00 – 10:30	Tea Break	
10:30 – 11:00	03 Overview of the Media Training on Sensitive Reporting on Harmful Practices for West, Central and Northern African Media Practitioners: Background, Objectives, Composition, Expected Outputs, Next steps	AUC: Bryan Tumusiime
11:00 - 12:30 pm	<p>04 Scene Setting and Contextualization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Field Video on FGM and ECM across Africa- Short Video (10 minutes) - Key Interventions led by UNFPA ESARO on Ending Child Marriage: - Experiences from UNFPA WCARO on Implementing Interventions to End FGM: Agnes Bangali,: Presentation and Short video (10 minutes) - Experience from a UNICEF WCARO on crucial child protection interventions that engage Media practitioners in Ending FGM, ECM and OCSEA: Catherine Muller, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF WCARO: Presentation and Short video (10 minutes) 	GMC AUC: Mr Richard Wamimbi
12: 30- 1: 15pm	Q&A session	AUC: Nena Thundu
1: 15 pm- 2: 15pm	LUNCH	

2: 15pm- 3:15pm	06. Panel Discussion & Q&A session (30 minutes): From the partners' experience, how can we harness the power of media to accelerate an End to Harmful Practices? - Presentations (10 minutes each) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Girl Activist from Ethiopia: Natanim Masresha (Plan International) o UNFPA: Meltem Agduk o Media Practitioner trained in the first session – Chimwemwe Simpito, Zambia o Mtoto News Kenya-Jennifer Kaberi o UNESCO – Ms Lydia Gachungi 	ACERWC
3.15-3.45	07. Country group work (<i>country teams will produce 2 slides summarizing their individual experiences in response to the following questions</i>): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the current media activities you are leading on reporting on harmful practices in your country? • What are the existing barriers you face in reporting on harmful practices? 	
3.45- 4.40	08. Country group presentations: (10 minutes each) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country 1 • Country 2 • Country 3 • Country 4 • Country 5 	
4:40	Closing of Day	

Day 3: Wednesday 2nd August, 2023

		Facilitator/Moderator
09:00 – 09:30	09. Recap of day 1 10. The African Children’s Charter- a child friendly version: Plan International and World Vision	AUC
09:30 – 10:30	11. Country Group Presentations (10 minutes each) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Country 6 o Country 7 o Country 8 o Country 9 o Country 10 - Plenary Discussion	AUC
10:30-11:00	TEA BREAK	
10:15 – 1:00 PM	12. Technical Training on Sensitive Reporting on Harmful Practices. Classifications of Harmful Practices and Why they need to be reported on	AUC and GMC
LUNCH		
2:00 – 3:00pm	13. Technical Training on Sensitive Reporting on Harmful Practices: Audience mapping, tailoring messages to suit audiences, and choosing the right channels for impact.	GMC

3:00– 4:00pm	14. Technical training on Sensitive Reporting on Harmful Practices: <i>The do's and don'ts in storytelling on harmful practices, protecting the reporter, protecting the victim and their family, projecting the perpetrators, country laws in place against child marriage (a reference to country profiles)</i>	GMC
4: 00- 5:00 pm	15. Technical training on Sensitive Reporting on Harmful Practices: Empowering Children to Tell Stories against Harmful Practices: The Mtoto News Training session child journalism.	GMC & Mtoto News

Day 4: Thursday, 3rd August, 2022

Day 4: Thursday, 3rd August, 2022

Time		Facilitator/Moderator
09:00 – 09:30	16. Recap of day 2	GMC
09:30 – 11:00	17. Technical Training on Sensitive Reporting on Harmful Practices: <i>Examples of market best practices in Impact Journalism against Best practices</i> - Plenary Discussion	GMC
10:30-11:00	TEA BREAK	
11:00 – 1:00 PM	18. Technical Training on Sensitive Reporting on Harmful Practices. Next Steps, Activating your Media Reporting to Impact Harmful Practices.	GMC
1:00– 2:00pm	LUNCH	
2:00 – 3:00pm	19. Technical Training on Sensitive Reporting on Harmful Practices: Development of Country workplans: Each participant will commit to publish or produce a Harmful Practices Media piece in the next 3 months.	GMC
3:00– 3:30pm	20. Technical training on Sensitive Reporting on Harmful Practices: <i>Each participant will present a proposed title of a knowledge product that they will produce in the next three months and the expected impact of this media piece</i>	AUC and GMC
3: 30- 4:30pm	21. Formation of the Knowledge Network of Media Practitioners against Harmful practices: - Nomination of leaders - Objective setting (3 objectives) - Agreement and set up of platform, activities and frequency of engagement, follow on of commitments to products - Next steps: leadership draft Network rules of engagement	GMC
6: 30- 9:30pm	22. Gala Dinner & Official Launch of Knowledge Network for Media Practitioners on Harmful Practices in West, Central, and North Africa and closure of Meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:30- 7:15 pm: Arrival of Guests and Traditional Entertainment • 7:15-7:25 pm: Welcome Remarks & Vote of Appreciation from the AUC: Madam Angela Martins, AUC Ag Director of Social Affairs • 7;25-7:50 PM: Call to Action Speeches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The UK office to the AU- Mr. Sandy McCleery ○ The Head of the UNFPA Representation Office to the AU UNECA: Dr Esther Muia • 7:50-8:15 PM: Certificate Award Ceremony- AUC, UNICEF, UNFPA, 	AUC



Spotlight Initiative
To eliminate violence
against women and girls



FCDO, Plan International

- **8:15-9:30 PM:** Dinner, Entertainment and Departure at Leisure

End of the Media Training

Annex 1: Pictorial



Dr Esther Muia, representative UNFPA representation office to the AU & ECA gives opening remarks



Natanim Masresha, a youth activist from Ethiopia shares her experience in leading change against harmful practices



Dr Laila Gad, the UNICEF Representative to the AU and ECA (on the screen) gives virtual remarks during the training



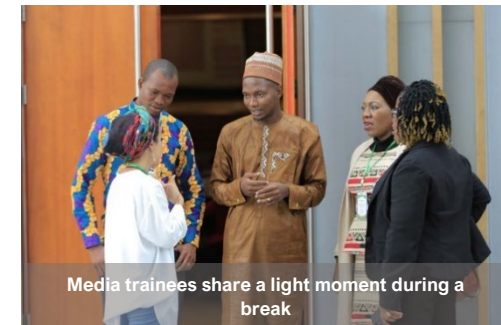
Mr. Alpha Kamara (on the microphone), a Sierra Leonean activist living in the diaspora, makes a firm point



The Francophone break-out group tackled a joint country presentation task.



A cross-section of GMC training consultants delivering a session



Media trainees share a light moment during a break



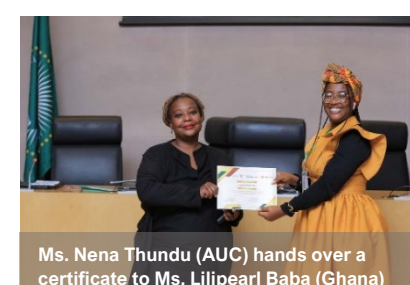
Trainees from Libya, Egypt and Morocco



Ms Fatima Jallow from the Gambia shares a game she uses to empower girls on their rights against FGM & Child Marriage



Participants experience the Ethiopian coffee ceremony



Ms. Nena Thundu (AUC) hands over a certificate to Ms. Lilipearl Baba (Ghana)



Mrs. Angela Martins, Acting Director AUC Social Affairs Department, delivers high level closing remarks

Annex 2: Links to Social Media Activation by the Media trainees during the training

Media Activists' Name & Country	
Alpha Kamara Sierra Leone	https://twitter.com/alphakamara4/status/1688630412732432384?s=48&t=dHmDQVYDomRmDloFM7GTGg
Anthony Apubeo- Ghana	https://gna.org.gh/2023/08/african-union-trains-journalists-to-help-eliminate-harmful-practices/ https://gna.org.gh/2023/08/journalists-have-crucial-role-in-eliminating-cultural-harmful-practices-unfpa/
Omar Ruth Esther- DRC	https://twitter.com/omarruth9/status/1687109446726758401?s=48&t=csu8NI-liJv8s3JaHwDwlg https://twitter.com/omarruth9/status/1687096155581157376?s=48&t=csu8NI-liJv8s3JaHwDwlg
Soulo Boureima- Mali	https://twitter.com/soulob/status/1687008428491730944?s=46&t=oY1ISzrKNOF8z4E1subzzQ
Innocent Buchu- DRC	https://twitter.com/innobuchu/status/1687012776437268480?t=Afvrs843ZEtiXOgflUBDOg&s=19
Geoffrey Buta- Ghana	https://butaphoto.exposure.co/campaign-to-eradicate-female-genital-mutilation-and-child-marriage-nbsp
Hawa Mamadou Ba- Mauritania	https://twitter.com/hwab/status/1686413197312442368?s=46&t=U9Jr-umZL_paKbDrBOI9fg https://www.linkedin.com/posts/ba-hawa-196264180_stopmgf-activity-7092180079656456192-yNIR/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_android

Annex 3: Report Livery and Visual Products

Product Type	Links
Photos	Day 1: Day 1 Morning a sm - Google Drive & Afternoon Day 2: Photos for day 2 Day 3: Day three Jpeg - Google Drive
Videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day 1 2-minute summary • Day 2 2-minute summary • Day 3 2-minute summary • 6 minutes overview video