

MAPPING THE STATE OF THE NEWSROOM IN EAST AFRICA

Terms of Reference for Country Researcher

BACKGROUND

The African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME) is a Kampala-based independent, non-profit media support organisation that is committed to excellence in journalism and mass communication in Africa. ACME's main goal is to support the media to become more effective platforms for the provision of information on public affairs, tools for monitoring official power, and forums for vibrant public debate.

ACME received funding from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to implement a project titled Enhancing Media Capacity for Inclusive Development, which, among others, focuses on expanding the knowledge base on journalism and media in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. One of the activities under in this project is research that maps the state of the newsroom in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. ACME finalised the Uganda research at the end of 2021 and is now rolling out the same in Kenya and Tanzania.

As elsewhere in the world, the media landscape in East Africa has gone through a lot of change in the past decade or so. In general, the change is a response to the growth of the internet and digital technologies. Internet usage has grown almost tenfold in the past ten years, driven by mobile broadband subscriptions. The internet and social networks are, increasingly, the main sources of information for many, pushing traditional news media companies to embrace online content production and distribution models. At the same time, digital native news outlets have proliferated, offering alternatives to readers while competing with old media. Business pressures have forced some traditional news media companies to reorient their operations to a digital-first structure.

This study is therefore important considering the several changes in the industry, driven by technological developments, that have transformed the news media business, operational structures, and the practice of journalism. These changes were particularly intensified by the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, forcing media companies to cut pay, lay off workers, and close some business segments.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- To provide a situational analysis of the current news media landscape.
- To engage journalists and media policy makers on the state of journalism in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda and compile an in-depth analysis that will foster stakeholder discussions, shape debate, and help develop better interventions.
- To understand the policies and strategies the news media industry has adopted to deal with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

SCOPE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The country researcher will undertake the following activities:

- i. Hire research assistants to assist in data collection.
- ii. Adapt Uganda's methodology to suit your country's context.
- iii. Train the research assistants.
- iv. Conduct desk research.
- v. Write a news release announcing the research to media and the public.
- vi. Conduct the nationwide study of the state of the newsroom in your country (this includes (data collection, entry, and analysis).
- vii. Produce a draft country report on the state of the newsroom in your country.
- viii. Work with ACME to organise a public validation meeting to discuss the project report findings in the country. The purpose of the meeting is to share the research findings and collect feedback which will be incorporated in the final report.
- ix. Disseminate the final report.

DURATION OF RESEARCH

The research report should be completed and ready for dissemination within 60 days from the date of signing the contract.

COMPENSATION

We have estimated that the national researcher will spend a maximum 10 person days on the project working with a team of research assistants that he or she will compensate.

QUALIFICATION OF THE COUNTRY RESEARCHER

- ✓ Must have an advanced degree in journalism and/or mass communication.
- ✓ Must be familiar with the media landscape in the country, and eastern Africa in general.
- ✓ Must be conversant with social science research methods, and must have conducted research on the media before.
- ✓ Must be ready to work with minimum supervision.

REQUIREMENTS

Interested national researchers should submit a short expression of interest and a proposed work plan for the research to mwesige@acme-ug.org not later than Monday, 13 June. They should also indicate their daily rate and expected person days to be spent on the project.