



Greetings from Kampala, Uganda.

Enhancing the capacity of media houses and journalists, through knowledge sharing, across the region remains crucial for the expansion of the civic space. The Consortium for Human Rights and Media (CHARM), believes that a free and independent media is important for any democracy to thrive. Considering this, our partners endeavor to ensure that journalists across the region are empowered and trained in various aspects, including how to monitor and report on compliance with key human rights instruments.

In line with this, we kicked off July with a training program for over 20 journalists from across seven countries in West Africa. The three-day training was held in Benin's capital, Porto Novo in partnership with the Network of Women Leaders for Development (RFLD).

Additionally, the coordination team travelled to Lokossa, Benin for an engagement with RFLD and the Coalition of Human Rights Defenders (CDDH), for a Trainer of Trainers (TOT) workshop which focused on existing legal frameworks for protecting women against Gender Based Violence (GBV). Participants were mainly women human rights defenders (WHRDs) drawn from grassroots initiatives combating GBV and promoting women's rights. We believe that the ripple effect, where participants will train the women at the grassroots on these legal instruments, will be key in combating GBV cases across the region.

Be sure to check out other upcoming events in this newsletter.

Enjoy your read.

The Coordination Team



Investigative journalists pose for a photo during the training in Porto Novo, Benin.





A capacity building training to empower Journalists on defending the civic space.

On 1- 3 July 2024, the West African regional journalists' training on reporting and engagement with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) was held in Porto-Novo, Benin. Organized by RFLD under CHARM support, the training aimed to bolster the capacity of journalists to resist restrictions on civic space and advocate for human rights. 30 journalists discussed the escalating threats faced by civil society actors and the media, including legal restrictions, harassment, violence, and censorship. They learned how to effectively report on these issues, emphasizing ethical standards and rigorous information gathering.

The training also focused on advocacy strategies, leveraging international and regional instruments, and the strategic use of social media to defend civic space. A key highlight was the detailed exploration of the ACHPR and its crucial role in promoting and protecting human rights across the continent. The journalists gained insights into the procedures for referring cases to the ACHPR and the Commission's responsibilities in documenting violations of civic space. With this knowledge, journalists can hold authorities accountable and ensure justice for victims of rights abuses.

This training marked a significant milestone in empowering media professionals to safeguard civic space in West and Central Africa. Further, this transformative experience underscores the vital role of journalists in defending civic space and advancing human rights. CHARM and its partners continue to advocate for continuous training and collaboration as essential elements to sustaining the momentum and achieving lasting impact in West and Central Africa



Some of the investigative journalist who took part in the RFLD training share their insights during different sessions





RFLD and its partners hold a VAGW training in Benin.

On 5 July 2024, 30 WHRDs gathered for a training in Lokossa, in southwestern Benin, to spearhead a conversation on ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) across the region.

The training, organized RFLD through their subgrantee the CDDH Benin, sought to raise awareness and understanding of VAWG laws and the Maputo Protocol, a landmark legal instrument adopted by the African Union that guarantees comprehensive rights to women, including the right to be free from violence and discrimination.

The training was facilitated by Mr. Prince Agbodjan, Commissioner of the Commission Béninoise des Droits de l'Homme (CBDH), and Mrs. Sidikatou Adamon Houédété, Vice President of the CBDH. It provided a platform for exchanging ideas, sharing best practices, and strengthening the network of organisations working to end VAWG in Benin and beyond. This event highlighted the importance of investing in grassroots organisations, which are often best positioned to reach and empower marginalized communities.

“The law is a powerful tool for social change, but it is only effective when people know their rights and are willing to exercise them. Our goal is to empower women with this knowledge so they can challenge discrimination, seek justice, and create a safer and more equitable society for all,” Mr. Agbodjan emphasized, underscoring the importance of knowing and claiming one’s rights.

The joint efforts of these organisations are making a tangible difference in the lives of countless women and girls.



Participants at the VAGW training being awarded their certificates by CHARM and RFLD leadership team.





RFLD Empowers Togolese University Students in Human Rights Defense

From 25 – 28 July 2024, a capacity building training of 30 university students was held in Lome, Togo through a new initiative that seeks to empower university students on understanding human rights. The training was organized by RFLD's partner, the Réseau Ouest Africain des Défenseurs des Droits Humains (ROADDH).

The training, facilitated by CHARM, covered a wide range of topics, including international human rights frameworks like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Students learned effective advocacy strategies at both grassroots and international levels and received practical guidance on security, risk management, and self-care.

The program fostered connections between students and experienced human rights defenders, supporting intergenerational dialogue which is essential for the movement's sustainability in Togo. Participants reported increased knowledge and confidence, applying their skills to projects on gender equality, environmental protection, and access to justice.

To ensure long-term impact, RFLD and ROADDH are developing follow-up activities such as mentorships, internships, and additional training. They are also working to establish a network of young human rights defenders in Togo for ongoing support and collaboration.



University students who were trained by RFLD in Togo during the sessions.





Save the date

In partnership with Bellingcat and Association for Critical and Investigative Press in Norway, the Africa Investigative Journalism Conference (#AIJC2024) will host an intensive training course on the latest investigative journalism techniques, in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 27 – 29 October 2024. Masterclass fellows will also be able to attend the AIJC conference and training sessions. Click [here](#) for more information.



The Annual Open Data Summit, known as the Level Up Hub conference, will be held in Harare, Zimbabwe, on 24 and 25 September at Moto Republik. This event will gather digital media experts, civic technologists, and creative economy professionals, and is anticipated to attract participants from across the continent. For more details, see the attached poster.





About CHARM

CONSORTIUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND MEDIA IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA (CHARM) aims to promote and protect human rights, civic space and media freedoms in Sub-Saharan Africa.

CHARM is a partnership of CIVICUS, Civil Rights Defenders, DefendDefenders, Fojo Media Institute, The Wits Centre for Journalism, Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement, and Magamba Network.

The partnership acknowledges the role that a free and active media and civil society have in the protection of robust democracies and the promotion of national development.

CHARM is funded by:



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