

Greetings from Kampala, Uganda!

March was a significant month for the Consortium for Human Rights and Media (CHARM) as we celebrated the International Women's Month. We honor the incredible women across the continent who are breaking barriers and leading with resilience, determination, and unwavering dedication. This edition shines a spotlight on their remarkable achievements, particularly in the face of adversity.

This month, we reflect on the inaugural Green Media Accelerator Bootcamp, held at Aga Khan University, Kenya, from 25 - 28 March 2025. This event brought together young content creators, journalists, civic rights defenders, and environmental experts to explore the role of media in addressing climate change. We discuss key takeaways and the bootcamp's expected impact on narratives about climate change.

Fojo Media Institute continues to advance investigative journalism in Francophone West Africa through its impactful partnership with the Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN), established in 2020. We proudly highlight one such success story: Elza Sandrine Sawadogo, who recently made history as the first-ever member from Francophone Africa appointed to the GIJN Board of Directors. As the editor-in-chief of L'Economiste du Faso and a steadfast advocate for press freedom, Elza is a shining example of Fojo's impact in empowering journalists, particularly women, in the region.

In addition, we sat down with our coordinator, Maria Kaddu, to discuss the evolving legal protections for women and the challenges of gender disparities. Maria shares her thoughts on safeguarding Women Human Rights Defenders in the region and ensuring women's voices are heard in decision-making spaces that matter.

As CHARM, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to our partners for their unwavering support of women in various spheres—whether as environmental human rights defenders, sexual and gender minorities, advocates, women journalists, or women lawyers. Your efforts to elevate women's voices and dismantle stereotypes at all levels are invaluable. This collective commitment is helping create a world where women's contributions are recognized and respected, truly making the world a better place for all of humanity.

Enjoy your read,
The Coordination Team



The five startups who secured a cash grant from the Green Media Accelerator (GMA) to run climate change initiative projects. Their ideas range from stop motion films, deep investigative and 2D animation series. They will implement their projects from Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Nigeria.

— “

"The Green Media Accelerator showed that young Africans are willing to fight for the climate - with their imagination and their stories"

**Farai Monro
Creative Director, Magamba Network**

” —

Green Media Accelerator Conference Champions Just Energy Transition and Community Empowerment

Five pioneering media startups from across Africa have been awarded cash grants to spearhead green media projects following the inaugural Green Media Accelerator (GMA) bootcamp in Nairobi, Kenya. This groundbreaking initiative, which took place on the 26- 28 March 2025, at the Aga Khan University, was backed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and organized by the Consortium for Human Rights and Media (CHARM) through three of its partners Magamba network, Wits Centre for Journalism and Fojo Media Institute. It aims to bridge the gap between media, grassroots movements, and policy advocacy in the fight against climate change.

It provided an interactive platform for civil rights defenders, young content creators, policymakers, journalists, and environmental experts to discuss the role of media in addressing climate change and promoting sustainable solutions.

The event was a convergence of thought leaders and changemakers dedicated to amplifying community voices and fostering impactful storytelling. The five selected startups, hailing from Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Uganda, presented their innovative storytelling approaches, which include animation, stop-motion films, long-form documentaries, and public theatre. These creative formats aim to engage diverse audiences and drive conversations around climate action and environmental justice.

Additionally, two influential media institutions, Media Challenge Institute and Buni Media, joined the accelerator program. These organizations play a crucial role in developing media talent and ensuring environmental reporting resonates with audiences across the region.

Participants examined the role of alternative media in shaping climate narratives, exploring actionable solutions to promote social and environmental change.

By equipping journalists and media innovators with the resources and knowledge to report on environmental issues effectively, the Green Media Accelerator is set to transform climate change reporting in the continent. The initiative enhances the capacity of local media to produce investigative and solutions-driven journalism that holds policymakers and corporations accountable for environmental actions. Furthermore, by incorporating storytelling formats that resonate with diverse audiences, such efforts can drive public engagement, influence policy discussions, and inspire community-led climate action. Ultimately, the accelerator fosters a media landscape where environmental reporting is not only informative but also a catalyst for real change.

The Green Media Accelerator Conference underscores the power of collaboration between media practitioners, grassroots movements, and policy leaders. By fostering community-driven journalism and evidence-based storytelling, the initiative sets a strong foundation for an informed and engaged public, ready to champion sustainability and climate justice.

Key Discussions at the GMA



Poor Waste Management: Highlighting the environmental consequences of inadequate waste management systems and promoting sustainable waste disposal and recycling practices.



Flooding and Climate Change: Addressing the increasing threat of floods in many regions due to climate change, and discussing measures to enhance climate resilience.



E-Mobility: Exploring the role of electric mobility solutions in reducing carbon emissions and transitioning toward sustainable transportation alternatives.



Just Energy System Transition: Advocating for fair and inclusive energy solutions that empower local communities and mitigate climate change.



Community Empowerment: Equipping communities with the tools to lead advocacy efforts for alternative energy solutions and environmental justice.



Environmental Justice: Ensuring marginalized communities are not disproportionately affected by ecological degradation and climate-related crises.



Reparations from Oil Companies: Highlighting the responsibility of oil corporations in remedying the environmental harm caused, particularly in the Niger Delta



In Pictures: Green Media Accelerator Bootcamp



Maria Kaddu is an Advocate of the High Court of Uganda with over 12 years' experience championing human rights, access to justice, and gender equality. Passionate about empowering marginalized communities, she has led impactful legal and advocacy initiatives with organizations like LASPNET and FHRI. Maria currently serves as the Coordinator for CHARM (Consortium for Human Rights and Media). She holds a Master's in Human Rights and a Law degree from Makerere University, with a strong background in litigation, legal aid, and justice sector reform. We recently had a conversation with her on the laws and policies that have shaped—and challenged—the rights of women in Africa.



Q1: Why are laws important in advancing the rights of women in Sub-Saharan Africa?

Laws serve as foundational tools in promoting and safeguarding women's rights in Sub-Saharan Africa and worldwide. They establish standards for equality, protect against discrimination, and provide mechanisms for redress. For instance, constitutions in many African countries enshrine gender equality principles, ensuring women's rights are legally recognized and upheld. Effective legal frameworks empower women to participate fully in social, economic, and political spheres, fostering inclusive development.

Q2: What are some key legal advancements that have improved women's rights in the region?

Several significant legal strides have been made to enhance women's rights in Sub-Saharan Africa: Some include;

- The Maputo Protocol (2003): This African Union protocol guarantees comprehensive rights to women, including political participation, social and political equality, reproductive health rights, and an end to female genital mutilation.
- Land and Property Rights: Countries like Rwanda have reformed land laws to grant women equal rights to own and inherit property, promoting economic empowerment.
- Gender-Based Violence Legislation: Additionally, countries such as South Africa and Uganda have enacted laws specifically addressing domestic violence and sexual offenses, providing better protection and legal recourse for women.



Q3: How do international laws and conventions impact national laws in Sub-Saharan Africa?

International laws and conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), influence national legislation by setting global standards for women's rights. Countries that ratify these conventions are obligated to align their domestic laws accordingly. This alignment fosters legal reforms that promote gender equality and protect women's rights, ensuring national laws reflect international commitments.



Q4: How has the Consortium for Human Rights and Media (CHARM) and its partners contributed to enhancing the rights of women in Sub-Saharan Africa, and what more can they do?

CHARM and its partners have played pivotal roles in advancing women's rights by:

- Advocacy and Awareness: Conducting campaigns to raise awareness about women's rights and gender equality, influencing policy changes.
- Capacity Building: Providing training and resources to women human rights defenders, enhancing their ability to advocate effectively.
- Research and Documentation: Documenting violations against women to inform policy and legal reforms.

To further this mission, CHARM can:

- Strengthen Networks: Enhance collaboration among women's rights organizations to create a unified advocacy front.
- Policy Engagement: Engage more deeply with policymakers to ensure the implementation of gender-sensitive laws.
- Support Grassroots Movements: Empower local communities to challenge discriminatory practices and promote women's rights.

Q5: What are the challenges in enforcing laws designed to protect women's rights in Sub-Saharan Africa?

Despite progressive laws, enforcement faces challenges such as:

- Cultural Norms: Deep-seated patriarchal beliefs can hinder the application of laws promoting gender equality.
- Resource Constraints: Limited resources for law enforcement and judiciary systems impede effective implementation.
- Lack of Awareness: Both women and law enforcers may be unaware of existing rights and protections, leading to underutilization of legal remedies.



Q6: What role can women themselves play in advancing their own rights through the legal system?



Women can actively promote their rights by:

- Legal Literacy: Educating themselves and others about legal rights and available protections.
- Participation: Engaging in legal professions and decision-making processes to influence policy from within.
- Advocacy: Mobilizing communities to demand enforcement of existing laws and accountability from authorities.

Q7: How can laws better advance the rights of women in Sub-Saharan Africa moving forward?

To further women's rights, laws should:

- Ensure Comprehensive Coverage: Address all forms of discrimination and violence against women.
- Facilitate Access to Justice: Simplify legal procedures and provide support systems for women seeking redress.
- Promote Economic Empowerment: Enact and enforce laws that guarantee equal opportunities in employment, education, and property ownership.



Elza Sandrine Sawadogo Makes History as First Francophone African on GIJN Board

The Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN) has appointed Elza Sandrine Sawadogo to its Board of Directors, marking a historic milestone as the first member from Francophone Africa to join the governing body. An accomplished investigative journalist, Sawadogo serves as the editor-in-chief and director of publication for L'Economiste du Faso, Burkina Faso's leading economic weekly newspaper.

Sawadogo's journey in investigative journalism began in 2016 when she became an active member of the Norbert Zongo Cell for Investigative Journalism in West Africa (CENOZO). A pioneer in cross-border data-driven investigations in the region, she took on the role of secretary general of CENOZO in 2023. Her influence extends beyond her newsroom, as she is also a member of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and a correspondent for Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF), advocating for press freedom.

The appointment of Sawadogo highlights the impact of a long-term partnership between GIJN and the Fojo Media Institute, which has supported investigative journalism in Francophone West Africa since 2020. Her success aligns with Fojo's collaboration with African Women in Media (AWIM), an initiative researching barriers that hinder women's advancement in journalism across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Her path to investigative journalism was far from easy. Born and raised in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, Sawadogo initially faced resistance from her family, who did not view journalism as a suitable profession for a woman. Despite failing her first attempt to enroll in journalism studies, she pursued English at the University of Ouagadougou before eventually joining the Université Libre du Burkina, where she obtained her degree in Communication and Journalism. Her first internship in 2009 at L'Observateur Paalga ignited her passion for the field, setting the foundation for a distinguished career.



Elza Sandrine Sawadogo during one of the events organized by Fojo Media Institute. She made history as First Francophone African to be elected on GIJN Board

“

“Long nights spent with my husband were replaced by hours reading documents. Weekend outings gave way to meetings with sources, and I have virtually no African social life. Many of my male colleagues ignored me, belittled me, or mocked my husband, calling him weak for allowing me to pursue my career.”

”

Elza Sandrine Sawadogo Makes History as First Francophone African on GIJN Board

Sawadogo's rise in journalism has not been without challenges. She has faced social stigma, professional exclusion, and even threats due to her investigative work.

Despite these hurdles, Sawadogo has continued to break barriers, winning awards and gaining international recognition for her investigative work, including a third-place PAJI-NZ prize in 2021 for an investigation into financial transactions flagged by the U.S. Treasury.

Sawadogo's relationship with GIJN began in 2015 when she attended the Global Investigative Journalism Conference in Norway. Since then, GIJN has played a crucial role in her professional development, providing her with training, contacts, and opportunities for collaboration. Through GIJN, she has attended multiple African Investigative Journalism Conferences (AIJC), first as a participant and later as a trainer, organizing workshops in French for fellow journalists.

Her involvement in international journalism networks has allowed her to contribute significantly to investigative projects, including the ICIJ-led Fincen Files investigation. Determined to find relevant data on Burkina Faso despite initial setbacks, she persisted and uncovered key information, leading to a major exposé that won critical acclaim.

As the first Francophone African member of GIJN's Board of Directors, Sawadogo sees her appointment as both a personal achievement and a strategic opportunity to bridge the gap between French-speaking and English-speaking investigative journalists.

Looking ahead, Sawadogo remains committed to advancing press freedom, mentoring the next generation of investigative reporters, and strengthening economic journalism in Burkina Faso. Her historic appointment signals a promising future for investigative journalism in Francophone Africa, paving the way for more inclusivity and collaboration in the field.



Elza Sandrine Sawadogo showcases one of her certificates in Journalism. She is the first member from francophone Africa to be elected at the GIJN board.

“

It was thanks to GIJN that I attended an African Investigative Journalism Conference (AIJC) for the first time. It was in 2017, being from Burkina Faso I got a scholarship from GIJN to attend the African conference. Since then, GIJN has allowed me to attend almost every year. Last year, I organized one on “Decrypting company figures”, a session entirely in French and translated into English for the public.

”



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:



CHARM PARTNERS



Talk to us:

