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Journalists and writers from Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal are invited to apply for a specialised program that aims to examine and expose under-reported topics of violence against women.

The [Africa Women Journalism Project](#), an initiative supported by the [International Centre for Journalists](#) in partnership with the Ford Foundation West Africa, has opened a call in Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal to increase the capacity of women journalists to understand the complexity of gender-based violence and exploitation and empower them to cover gender-related issues. Through its programme, the AWJP is looking for 60 women journalists interested in revealing the scale of gender-based violence in the target countries.

We are particularly interested in stories that cover under-reported topics of violence against women in the region with a specific focus on three countries—Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal. The applications will be evaluated based on the following

- relevance of the presented story,
- feasibility, originality of the piece,
- motivation expressed in the application and journalistic approach.

Based on participants meeting all the requirements such as attending and actively engaging in all the information sessions, pitching, writing and publishing an in-depth article on the subject matter within the stipulated deadline, 12 of the participants will then be shortlisted for a 9-month fellowship that will include:

- on-the-job mentoring and editorial sessions to produce high-quality journalism;
- training sessions focused on gender-based violence;
- financial support and assistance

The 12 selected fellows will receive a stipend of USD\$150 per month (dependent on producing a story a month) to support their reporting over the duration of the fellowship. Story projects on an issue that transcends one or more countries in the region will be an advantage. Solutions-oriented story projects will also be favoured.

Applicants may propose single stories, multi-part series, long-form narratives or investigative reports in print, online or broadcast formats. Freelancers, contract and staff journalists are welcome to apply.

All program activities will be conducted in English and French so applicants should be fluent in these languages.

## **WHY is this important now?**

West Africa has a long history of gender-based violence, perpetuating a culture of impunity and the underrepresentation of women in positions of influence and power. The crisis is exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has resulted in a surge in cases of domestic and sexual violence as the victims are isolated with their aggressors. Women in the region today are facing “two pandemics,<sup>1</sup>” while at the same time carrying the burden of caring for their families.

Civil society and advocacy groups across the region have mobilized to call for change and public officials have made commitments to strengthen the role of women in society. However, the converging crises of the pandemic and gender-based violence highlight the ineffectiveness of one-off, short-term solutions in combating a problem rooted in harmful social and cultural norms.

Ending gender-based violence and discrimination requires deeper and broader cultural, societal, and political buy-in. The underrepresentation of women in public spaces, combined with their continued objectification in the media undermines any effort to address the deeply entrenched and damaging culture of discrimination. As the “gatekeepers of culture,” the media play a critical and essential role in righting this long-term wrong.

## **WHO CAN APPLY?**

The programme is open to women journalists and writers who believe they have a good story on an under-reported topic concerning gender-based violence in Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal. We also welcome applications from staff reporters in local, national and regional media as well as freelancers.

Other requirements are :

- Applicants must be working journalists with at least three years of full-time, professional journalism experience.
- Applicants may be affiliated or freelance journalists.
- Applicants must speak, read and write English or French fluently in order to fully participate in and benefit from the Fellowship.
- All applicants must submit one story about under-explored issues concerning or intersecting with gender-based violence.
- Applicants will commit to publishing at least one story which they will produce within a month of completing the information and training sessions.
- Applicants must attend all webinars/information/training sessions scheduled during the program.
- Applicants who are successful in the Fellows' selection process will commit to participating in monthly conversations with their assigned mentor.
- Successful applicants will be required to submit a blog of a minimum of 250 words about their experience and learnings from the programme for publication on the partners' and the AWJP websites.

## STORY REQUIREMENTS

- The story must deal with gender-based violence in either of the targeted countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal).
- The story must be relevant to these countries and to the West African region.
- Must be well-written and compelling
- Must abide by the highest journalistic standards, eg multi-sourced
- Utilise data to effectively tell the story
- Include images/videos/graphics
- In-depth, investigative stories that provide new information or have a unique angle on the issue will be an advantage.
- Each story must be published within a month of receipt of the story grant and at the end of the information sessions.

## WHY YOU SHOULD APPLY:

- Successful participants will be able to apply for a 9-month Fellowship which will begin from **January 2022 to September 2022**
- Fellows will receive microgrants to produce data-driven and collaborative reporting projects.
- Successful Fellows will also be eligible to apply for larger grants to support the production of more complex, data-driven and investigative reporting projects.

- Fellows will also be eligible to apply for grants to lead peer-to-peer training sessions in their own newsrooms where they can share their skills and knowledge thereby establishing themselves as experts in the field.
- Fellows will be assigned an experienced story mentor and will convene for regular webinars featuring experts in different fields to enable them to examine gender-related issues of relevance to their communities and how the pandemic is impacting development policies.
- Fellows' stories will be shared on partner newsroom websites, with links on the Africa Women's Journalism Project's site as well.
- Successful Fellows and their newsroom affiliates will commit to publishing the stories on a monthly basis

## **HOW TO APPLY:**

Please complete this [application form](#) in full **no later than November 5, 2021**