

# Communique

**Two-Day Training for Sports Journalist on  
“Tackling Corruption and Underdevelopment of Sports in Nigeria:  
Investigative Reporting for the Common Good and Sports Development”  
organised by HEDA Resource Centre and PLAY!YA Nigeria  
with support from “Upright for Nigeria” and UKaid  
Tuesday, March 10th and Wednesday, March 11th 2020  
at Ibeto Hotels, Abuja, Nigeria**

## Background

The training brought together over 30 sports journalists and officials from across Nigeria and Ghana including reporters from broadcast, online and print media with the purpose of training them on approaches and methods of investigative reporting in the sports sector.

Six seminal presentations from Mr Kayode Thomas, Mr Godwin Enakhena, Mr Anas Aremeyaw Anas, Mr Eze Alloysius, Mr Idris Akinbajo, and Mr Mahmud Aminu respectively as well as the screening of the documentary “Betraying the Game” formed part of the training.

The training also featured two panel discussions. The first included Mr Godwin Enakhena, Mr Kayode Thomas, Mr Patrick Okeke, Mr Anas Aremeyaw Anas and Mr Habib Oladipupo. The second panellist were: Mr Kayode Thomas, Mr Tunde Eludini, Mr Solomon Ajuziogu and Mr Austin Orji. These were in addition to goodwill messages from Mr Okeke Patrick, Deputy Director of Grassroots Sports Development at the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, and Mr Godwin Enakhena in his position as Director of Sports at the Nigeria Premier League club MFM.

At the end of the training, the participants adopted the following communique:

## Observations

Participants observed that:

1. Corruption is the major factor responsible for the underdevelopment and crippling of sports and youth development in Nigeria.
2. The corruption in sports goes beyond financial corruption and includes nepotism, undue interference of state politics in sports, match-fixing, illegal betting, leaking of information, poor sport governance, conflicts of interests, use of clubs for fraudulent activities or money laundering, doping, fraud, bribery, age falsification and sexual harassment, all of which kill sports.

3. The corruption in sports has continued with impunity due to the long decades of lack of investigation into sporting activities and administration.
4. The grassroots athletes and players are worst hit by the widespread corruption and maladministration in sports as many teams are without any spaces or facilities for practice or qualified coaches to train them.
5. Many sports administrators are either incompetent or lack interest in sports, thereby deepening the corrupt practices in the system.
6. Many sports journalists often do not go beyond reporting activities that happened on the field rather than digging deeper into the general sports administration.
7. The existing anti-corruption legal frameworks are not robust enough to address some of the underhand dealings that undermine the integrity of sports and sports administration in Nigeria.
8. Media scrutiny could ensure sanity and discipline in the industry and sustainability of the sector through investigative reports and illustrative information.
9. If only willing to do so, Nigerian journalists have the capacity and professionalism to sanitise the sports sector in their country.
10. The general fear of victimisation and the risk of blackmailing as possible results of reporting or providing information has deepened the corruption in sports.
11. There is a lack of institutional support by most media houses for sports journalists to carry out investigative reporting.

### **Recommendations:**

Participants recommended that:

1. Sports journalists should go beyond reporting activities on the field alone and shine the spotlight on the administration of sports generally.
2. There is need for periodic audit of the sports sector including the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) as well as the federations, associations and clubs.
3. The Nigerian government should stop funding competitions such as the Olympics and the likes which are usually fully sponsored or funded by other bodies.
4. Sports MDAs should concern themselves with the development of grassroots sports, e.g. in school sports, rather than concerning themselves with the activities of sports federations and associations which are supposed to be non-governmental.

5. The frequent appropriation of foreign-grown athletes and players with dual citizenship should be discouraged and radical efforts should be devoted to growing and enabling more local talents.
6. The media should set the agenda for sports development by promoting local sports activities through illustrative information and investigative reporting.
7. The Nigerian government should let its responsibility start and end with providing an enabling environment for sports development including building infrastructure and providing grants among others; and avoid running sports associations, federations or clubs, all of which ought to be independent and non-governmental.
8. The leadership and administration of sports associations or federations should be made very unattractive to minimize unpatriotic competition for the offices and reduce corruption.
9. Journalists should also focus on speaking to the players and athletes and not just the sports administrators.
10. Journalists should avoid getting themselves into controversies and stand for the truth so that their reports and investigations can deliver the desired result.
11. There should be a coordinated and effective collaboration between the media, civil society organisations and anti-graft agencies to rid the sports system of corruption.

Signed on behalf of the participants

Abuja, 11 March 2020

**Olanrewaju Suraju**

Chairman, HEDA Resource Centre

**Eze Alloysius**

Director, PLAY!YA Nigeria