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Media Career Check-Up 2025

Lessons, Gaps and Growth Paths for Nigerian Journalists

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Designed by Daniel Otufodunrin

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Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the interest of all journalists whose interest in participating in the career check-up made it possible to compile this report.

We particularly appreciate those who spared time to complete the form with necessary information and submitted their curriculum vitae/profile for review.

The coordinating and review role of our programme officer, Eunice Ayobami for the project along with the Executive Director, Lekan Otufodunrin ensured the publication of this report.

Foreword

Journalism is a demanding profession where daily deadlines often leave little room for reflection on personal growth and career direction. Many journalists are deeply committed to their work but rarely pause to assess how their professional journeys align with their aspirations.

Recognising this gap, the Media Career Development Network (MCDN) introduced the **Media Career Check-Up** as part of our commitment to supporting Nigerian journalists in building purposeful and sustainable careers.
The initiative, launched in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), offered a free opportunity for journalists to step back, evaluate their career paths, and receive personalised feedback.

The check-up process involved completing a comprehensive form designed to capture both achievements and areas needing improvement. Though some participants initially found the process rigorous, the detail provided a strong basis for constructive feedback. The assessment revealed recurring themes: the need for clearer career planning, the importance of professional branding, gaps in training and exposure, and the value of structured mentoring. It also confirmed that while many journalists are passionate and hardworking, they often lack the support systems and resources required to fully thrive in today's dynamic media environment.

By documenting the findings in this report, MCDN aims to extend the value of the check-up beyond the participants. The insights are intended to guide journalists who may not have taken part in the exercise and to help media support organisations better understand the areas where interventions are most needed.

Lekan Otufodunrin
Executive Director MCD.

Executive Summary

Seventy-five journalists indicated interest in participating in the Check-Up, but only 15 completed the detailed form that served as the foundation for the review in addition with the CVs of other young and older journalists sent to us by those seeking media jobs, mentoring, and counselling.

While the length of the form was seen by some as demanding, the comprehensiveness allowed MCDN to generate tailored feedback that validated participants' efforts and pointed to areas of improvement.
The feedback covered core issues such as the need for clear short- and long-term career goals, more deliberate professional branding through detailed CVs and digital profiles, upgrading of academic qualifications and certifications, and greater use of digital tools. In addition, the exercise highlighted the importance of mentoring, coaching, and membership of professional associations as part of sustained career growth.

Overall, the check-up revealed both the strengths and the gaps in the career paths of Nigerian journalists. While many are committed professionals with strong aspirations, several lack structured career planning and often have limited exposure to resources and opportunities that could accelerate their growth.

This report shares the lessons from the exercise—not only for the participating journalists but also for the wider community of Nigerian journalists and the media support organisations that seek to empower them. The insights provide a roadmap for individual growth and institutional support, underscoring the fact that just as regular medical check-ups are vital for physical health, intentional career check-ups are critical for professional well-being.

Editor, Weekend Titles, The Punch, Mr Samson Folarin addressing participants at the Journalism Clinic with the support of the United States Consulate ,Lagos.

Introduction

The check-up was designed to provide among others the following:

- Review of completed forms by interested persons detailing their career journeys and aspirations.
- Suggestions and recommendations on how to enhance their careers.
- Two-month free membership of MCDN covering mentoring and coaching.
- Links to national and global resources and opportunities.

Interested members of the NUJ were asked to complete a form to be contacted about the details of the Check-Up. Over 70 journalists indicated interest and were sent a detailed form asking for the following information after which they would receive comprehensive feedback:

- Personal and career background.
- Current career stage and professional achievements.
- Short- and long-term career aspirations.
- Training, certifications, and skills acquired.
- CV and professional profile.
- Digital footprint and online presence.

- Membership of professional associations.

After about a month, only 15 persons out of those who initially indicated interest eventually completed the form. The most common feedback we received for this drop-off was that the questions were **“too many and required time to think through”**. Someone even remarked: *“Why does the form seem like that of an application for Harvard University? Why ask about a Mission Statement?”*

Our response was that the form was designed for young, mid-career, and experienced journalists who genuinely wanted to reflect on their career journeys. Like medical check-ups, which require detailed information to diagnose a patient’s state of health, we explained that we needed enough background information to provide useful and tailored feedback. We emphasized that:

- For senior journalists, the feedback would validate their efforts and suggest new possibilities.
- For younger journalists, the exercise would serve as a guide for growth.
- For all, the check-up would highlight the “basic things” every journalist should pay attention to building a fulfilling career.

Taking time to fill such a comprehensive form, we explained, was itself an indication of how interested a journalist is in their own career development.

We are grateful to all those who spared time to fill the form and provided their profile/CV for our review. While some acknowledged and appreciated the feedback — even asking for follow-up support — others seemed overwhelmed by the volume of suggestions and did not get back.

Findings

From the review of completed forms, CVs, and online presence of participants, as well as their career aspirations, some common themes emerged:

CV/Professional Profile:
Many journalists had CVs that were not properly formatted, lacked details of achievements, and did not adequately market their skills.

Career Clarity:
While some journalists had clear career goals, others struggled to articulate short- and long-term aspirations.

Academic Qualifications/Certifications:
Some participants had acquired additional qualifications (some even outside journalism), but others need to acquire higher qualifications and update their skills with new certifications in digital journalism, multimedia, and specialized reporting.

Digital Footprint:
Across the board, there was a weak online presence. Websites were not updated, LinkedIn profiles were skeletal, and social media activity often did not reflect professional expertise.

Professional Networking:
Most participants limited their memberships to NUJ, and the Nigeria Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) with little connection to other professional or thematic groups that could provide opportunities, exposure, and resources.

Adaptation to Emerging Tools:
There was low awareness and limited use of new digital

tools — particularly **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** — which are already reshaping journalism practice globally.
Mentoring and Support Needs:
Many expressed the need for structured mentoring, peer learning, and guidance to navigate career transitions or move beyond routine reporting.

Recommendations

Based on the issues observed, MCDN made the following recommendations to participating journalists (and by extension, all Nigerian journalists who may benefit from this report):

CV Revamp: Update CVs to highlight achievements, use modern formatting, and reflect relevant skills.
Define Career Goals: Clearly state short- and long-term goals to guide decisions and training priorities.
Pursue Further Training: Enroll for post-graduate courses and online/offline certifications in digital skills, multimedia reporting, solutions journalism, and thematic beats like health, environment, or justice.
Strengthen Online Presence: Update LinkedIn profiles, maintain professional activity on X/Facebook, and regularly publish on personal blogs or community websites.
Join More Professional Networks: Beyond NUJ and NAWOJ join specialized networks (e.g., climate reporting groups, health journalism associations, or global journalism forums).

Embrace Artificial Intelligence: Take advantage of available AI tools and training to stay competitive in the rapidly evolving media landscape.
Leverage Mentorship: Use platforms like MCDN membership to access mentoring, resources, and career counselling.
Renew Links with Media Support Organisations: Stay connected to media NGOs and training bodies for resources and opportunities.
Aim to Become Experts, Not Just Reporters: Journalists should deliberately build expertise in their chosen beats, positioning themselves as thought leaders and consultants.

Responses of Participants

Here's what some participants said about the feedback we sent them:

This is a super guide, well-detailed and quite inspiring. Thanks sincerely to your esteemed organisation for embarking on this initiative.
-Ann Godwin
South-South Bureau Chief, The Guardian

Going through your observations and recommendations, I felt deeply that someone or a group really wants me to be fully developed and have a good voice in the journalism profession.
-Blessing Ibunge
THISDAY Rivers State Correspondent

Your observations and tailored recommendations for my career growth are well noted.
-Nchetachi Chukwuajah
Senior Reporter, Nigerian Tribune

Opportunities for Media Support Organisations

Training by the Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (R) and the Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism (L)

The findings from the Check-Up reveal not only individual career gaps but also systemic issues that require the attention of media Non-Governmental Organisations and other support organisations in Nigeria and beyond.
While many support organisations have invested in skills training and newsroom strengthening, the responses from journalists highlight the need for more personalised, sustained, and holistic interventions.

Tailored Professional Development
Journalists are at different stages in their careers, yet many support programmes still apply a one-size-fits-all approach. Support organisations should design modular and flexible training, mentorship, and fellowship programmes that address specific needs of entry-level, mid-career, and senior professionals.

Strengthening Digital Competence and Visibility
A recurring gap identified was the weak online presence and under-utilisation of digital tools for reporting and personal branding. Support can play a key role in equipping more journalists with digital skills, including AI-assisted reporting, online safety, and strategies for building professional visibility in a crowded media space.

Institutional and Peer Support

Support organisations should invest in creating and facilitating professional communities of practice, peer-to-peer mentoring, and platforms that connect Nigerian journalists to global media networks.

Bridging the Career–Welfare Gap

Career development is closely tied to welfare. Journalists who feel stagnated, undervalued, or poorly remunerated may struggle to invest in personal growth. Support organisations in partnership with newsrooms and unions, can help ensure that training opportunities translate into real career progression, recognition, and improved working conditions.

Holistic Development Beyond Technical Skills

The assessment showed that career gaps were not only about technical reporting skills but also about personal development — such as crafting a mission statement, building confidence, and long-term vision setting. Support organisations can add value by integrating coaching, career counselling, and psychosocial support alongside technical training.

Scaling Career Check-Up Models

With the initial positive reception of MCDN's pilot check-up, though only a few eventually completed the comprehensive form demonstrates that journalists welcome structured and personalised feedback. Support organisations could replicate or adapt this model into career review clinics, annual assessments, or dedicated advisory hubs, ensuring ongoing career reflection and growth support.

Global Lessons
For international support organisations and donors, this Nigerian experience underscores the value of localised, personalised support over generic interventions. Replicating the check-up model in other countries could help journalists take ownership of their professional growth while giving funders evidence of real, on-the-ground needs.

Conclusion

Our Media Career Check-up revealed both the strengths and gaps in the career journeys of participating NUJ members. While many journalists have made significant progress through years of reporting and editorial responsibilities, more work still needs to be done in personal branding, digital visibility, continuous training, and adaptation to emerging media trends. The inability of the majority of those who initially showed interest in taking the check-up to fill out the form is an indication that many journalists are not ready to make the necessary commitment to enhance their career goals.

They should be willing to filling forms and respond to requests that help them reflect on their practice to get necessary feedback that can guide them to become the journalists they want to become.

MCDN remains committed to supporting journalists through mentoring, coaching, training, and networking opportunities. We encourage every journalist — whether a beginner, mid-career, or senior professional — to take their career development as seriously as they take their reporting responsibilities.

About MCDN

Reception for journalists by the United States Consulate, Lagos organised by MCDN

The **Media Career Development Network (MCDN)** is a non-governmental organisation committed to the professional and personal growth of journalists in Nigeria and beyond.
Established to fill critical gaps in mentoring, coaching, training, and counselling for media professionals, MCDN provides a platform for journalists at all stages of their careers to thrive in a rapidly evolving media landscape.
Our work focuses on four pillars:

- **Mentoring and Coaching** – providing one-on-one and group mentoring to guide journalists in shaping fulfilling and sustainable careers.
- **Capacity Building** – organising workshops, seminars, and training sessions on emerging skills and industry trends.
- **Career Support Services** – offering career check-ups, CV reviews, and advisory sessions to help

journalists make informed decisions about their career paths.

- **Media Innovation and Networking** – creating opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, collaborations, and access to national and global resources.

Through our initiatives, we aim to nurture ethical, skilled, and resilient journalists who contribute to strengthening media practice and society.

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