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Media Practice and the Failures of Development in Africa:
Nigeria in Perspective

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Abstract

Realities on the continent of Africa have shown that the mass media, considered as an integral part of development, have failed in so many fronts. This study examined the failures of mass media of communication in Nigeria, and by extension, Africa with regard to developmental purposes and initiatives. This paper used a qualitative descriptive approach to conduct an in-depth review of available literature with a view to examining the elements involved in under-development, and the implications of media practice for the development of Nigerian and African societies. Development media and social responsibility media theories were used to explain the study. The study concluded that efforts should not be spared to re-focus and beam journalistic searchlights on newsworthy events in the rural areas of Nigeria. Community radio stations, owned and managed by the members of a community, should be established to cater to the culture and language of the locals for all-round developments in Nigeria, and by extension, Africa.

Keywords: *Media Practice, Failures, Development, Perspective*

1. Introduction

The fate of rural dwellers, who constitute a larger population of African societies, hangs in the balance in the face of urban-centric media practice in most African cities. (James, 2015). Information is essential to the development of a society. The lack of information triggers under-development (James, 2015). Development, in the words of Soola (2003) as cited by Ojebode (2010), is a change towards patterns of society that allow a better realisation of human values, a greater control over its environment, its political destiny, and that enables its citizens to gain an increased control over themselves. Ojebode (2010) citing Soola (2003) further asserts that the development in general is a process of economic and social advancement, which enables people to realise their potentials, build self-confidence and live the life of dignity and fulfillment. It is a process that is aimed at freeing people from evils of want, ignorance, social injustices and economic exploitations. Alozie (2012) avers that African governments have long been aware of the importance of mass media in national development. Since the use of mass communication as a means of promoting development and modernisation in developing nations, there have been conflicting views on development communication, and on the

applications and contributions of mass media to the process of societal development (Alozie, 2012). Research, as Gambo (2013) avers, has long established a close relationship between the mass media and social change. Media of communication are indispensable in developing countries like Nigeria, due to developmental challenges such as the pervasive illiteracy, poverty and human rights abuses. Nigeria and other developing nations of Africa have been most hit by issues of underdevelopment, and several factors such as the issues corruption, illiteracy, poverty, violent ethnic rivalries, ignorance and undue patriotic loyalty to the state account for their underdevelopment in the comity of nations. The idea of development has been wrongly defined to mean erecting skyscrapers, airports, roads and building bridges in major cities and towns across the states of Nigerian federation. However, the concept of development means taking people out of poverty, empowering the masses by dint of quality education, improved quality of life, getting them gainfully engaged and provision of adequate access to health care delivery system.

The media of mass communication are of two kinds: the broadcast and the print. The broadcast media represent the television, radio, films, internet and lately electronic billboard, while the print media are the newspaper, magazines and books. The major responsibilities of the Nigerian media are to educate, inform, entertain and mobilise people to embrace certain government programmes, activities or policies. Before the independence, the media of mass communication in Nigeria and other African countries installed democratic rules without the booming of guns. Nigerian media were known to stand for the fundamental human rights of the masses and serve as the voice of the voiceless poor. Pre-independent period witnessed a media system, in Nigeria and most of African countries, that effectively played the role of watchdog on Nigerian government and its officials. Anegbode, Alonge and Omeregbe (2015) aver that media act as facilitators to check dictators, arrogant leaders and political elites that think they can get away with their actions. They further assert that through investigative journalism many politicians have been held to account. However, post-independent media practice in Nigeria has witnessed a transition from the watchdog to the lapdog (James, 2015). Half-truths, unconfirmed reports, sensationalisation of news, and commercialisation of news reports have taken over objectivity and balanced reportage in Nigerian media practice (Aina, 2003). Many radio and television stations survive on money realised from advertisements. Gate-keeping decisions are taken in favour of media owners, rich advertisers and other sponsors (Aina, 2003). The media contents are often dictated by the multinationals

and other corporations working behind the scenes. The media contents in Africa are centred on the profit-making process and the social responsibilities of the media to the citizens have not only been jettisoned, but have also been consigned to the dustbin. Sowunmi et al. (2010) cited in Anegbode, Alonge and Omoregie (2015) observe that owners of the media houses, most especially the privately owned media often interfere with the free reporting of corruption cases where such involve corruption cases their highly placed friends in public or private sector.

Methodology

Until recent times, the research attention of media and communication scholars has not shifted to the issues of human development in Africa vis-à-vis the roles of the media on the march of the continent to development. Media, as an important component of development in a developing or developed society, are crucial in the rebirth and regeneration of a nation on her way to development. This paper uses a qualitative descriptive approach to conduct an in-depth review of available literature to examine the elements involved in development, socio-cultural and economic issues which are tantamount to underdevelopment in Nigeria. It further highlights ways by which mass media of communication have failed the integrity and social responsibility tests in the schemes of development. The paper conducts empirical studies on mass media and development based on the findings from the literature review, while also suggesting a theory to guide the study. The reviewed sources include reference books, journals, and other written materials linked to the issues.

Development Media Theory

This study is anchored on development media theory because it has to do with how government mobilises the media to serve national economic and social development goals. A major relevance of development media theory to this study is the importance of access to and use of media resources and its contributions to national integration and development tasks and issues. Moemeka (1985) cited in James (2015) explains that the theory stands for positive uses of the mass media in national development and for the autonomy and development cultural identity of individual nations. It accepts economic development and nation-building as overriding objectives. This is why it supports the subordination of certain freedom of

media organisations and media personnel to their responsibility for helping in national development. It also upholds the rights of the government of the day to call media personnel and institutions to order in the interest of national development. Folarin (2002) outlines the basic principles of the theory as follows:

1. The media should accept to carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policies.
2. That freedom of the media should be open to economic priorities and development needs of the society
3. That media should give priority attention to national culture and language in their contents,
4. The media should give priority in the news and information link with other developing countries, which are close geographically, culturally and socially
5. The journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination tasks
6. That in the interest of development, the state has the rights to intervene in, or restrict media operation, and the devices of censorship, subsidy and direct control can also be justified in the principle of this theory. It is important to note that Nigerian media should be in the forefront in the promotion of environmental protection campaigns and sustainable development.

Social Responsibility Theory

This study is also hinged on social responsibility theory. Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2012) aver that the major premise of the social responsibility theory is that the freedom of information carries concomitant obligations, and the press, which enjoys a privileged position under the government, is obliged to be responsible to the society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication. They further submit that socially responsible and acceptable press behaviour should be anchored on self-regulation, but if the press would not voluntarily give them, then there must be certain social structures to ensure that it behaves in compliance with recognised social standards. The social responsibility theory, according to Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2012), postulates five specific functions for the press, and they are:

1. To serve the political system by making information, discussion and consideration of public affairs generally accessible,
2. To inform the public to enable it take self-determined actions,
3. To protect the rights of the individuals by acting as watchdog over the government,
4. To serve the economic system, for instance by bringing together buyers and sellers through the medium of advertising, and
5. To preserve financial autonomy in order not to become dependent on special interests and influences.

Free expression is a moral right and the media operators are duty-bound and obligated to ensure viewpoints of citizens are presented and reported by the press. All ideas are not deserving of publications or broadcasting, but all ideas deserving of a public hearing should have a public hearing. The public, editors and media owners should decide which and what ideas deserve a hearing. However, Folarin (1998) is of the view that the preponderant 'service mode' of communication, which obliges the press to worship at the altar of profit and consumerism, often tends to vitiate the ideals of social responsibility. The profit motive places the media at the mercy of big businesses (advertisers and media conglomerates), while consumerism obliges the media to pander to low public taste, under the pretext that they are giving the public what it wants. Besides, an inordinate concern for professionalism tends to make the media slavish to technology at the expense of pressing social concerns, such as the rights of women, children and minority groups (Folarin, 1998).

Failures of Mass Media in Africa

Development-oriented messages are conspicuously lacking in rural areas of Nigeria. The mass media of communication are urban-centric. The fate of rural dwellers, who constitute a larger population of African societies, still hangs in the balance in the face of urban-centric media practice (James, 2015).

Muted voices of the public

Section 22 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 provides that:

The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people.

Much of the fair available within the national communication systems of most African countries could best be described as communication for the elite class. What our diverse national systems provide is anything but communication for the masses (Wilson, 2005). There is no doubt that mass communication is not the same thing as communication for the masses. The former represents a critical industry-driven system of systems in which the media and messages are available because of media availability. The latter represents a broad system of media channels and systems, both modern and traditional, which make messages available to all in the audience, who also make themselves available for the message (Wilson, 2005). Udoakah (2014) posits that as an institution, the media are expected to play an important part in the democratic process by monitoring government actions and those of its officials as they affect the nation and reporting same to the people. Such information about the government and its agents would enable the people to know which direction they are being led, and influence their choice of leaders (Udoakah, 2014). Information is essential to the development of a society. The lack of information triggers under-development (James, 2015). Mass media are a system of domination and a means of keeping it. Media spaces and airtimes are reserved for the rich advertisers, business men and women. Events that border on the lives and development of the citizenry are hardly covered and reported by the media of mass communication in Nigeria and by extension, Africa. Bassey (2020) citing Udoakah (1998) opines that the press in Nigeria has become structured along partisan and ethnic lines to fight the cause of the groups. He observes that newspapers are set up to protect the interest of political parties and politicians, and that they advocate fiercely, the partisan views of their owners. Ownership influence or control is about setting organisational priorities. Owners and publishers of newspapers influence management policies and strategies, merger and acquisitions decisions, profit distributions, shareholders communication and labour allocations (Bassey, 2013). In all ownership forms, the main drive for establishing a newspaper organisation is usually more for political gains than financial reasons. Media contents always reflect the interest of those who finance it as they have the ultimate power to ask for what they intend to be included or left out (Bassey, 2013). Eze and Mgboji (2020) citing Olayiwola (1991)

aver that ownership influence affected the coverage of national issues such as the census, elections and regional crises. Most people featured on live radio and television discussions, news and interviews are officials of government, captains of industries, politicians and other societal powerful interests. One of the important social responsibilities of the media to the citizenry is education. Media have shirked their responsibilities with regard to educating citizens in the rural sector of the society as regards diseases, illiteracy, government programmes and activities, information about latest health care delivery system and many more. In the words of Gambo (2013) the ownership structure of Nigerian and African media imposes serious limitations on journalistic practice on the continent, and the urban-centric nature of mass media in Africa have not only muted the voices of those in the rural areas of African communities, but have also deprived them of access to political and economic choices. Newsworthy events in the rural areas are reported at periphery or not reported at all. The only time Nigerian media and by extension African media cover events in the rural areas is when the national elections approach or the members of the opposition decamp to the ruling party or local politicians commend the government of the day about fictitious projects it has been able to complete (James, 2015). This gets the rural African people deformed, and gets them disconnected from national grid of information and education. Since the inception of democratic rule in the country, mass media have failed to live up to the minimum ethical standards required in a democracy (Gambo, 2013). James (2015) says that the media in Africa have witnessed a transition from the watchdog to the lapdog, the vibrant to the lulled and the vociferous to the quiet. He further asserts that the media, especially the electronic media have become government megaphones. They have become the willing tools in the hand of government-owner in Africa. The media have long ceased to serve as the voice of the voiceless and the oppressed, rather, they serve as the voice of the ruling government, its officials and the elite. Nothing is public about the public ownership of the media in Africa when events and activities of the ruling government, of its officials and of the elite dominate the airwaves of the broadcast media and the pages of the newspapers and magazines in Africa. Citizens and events that concern them should take the centre stage of the public ownership of the media in Africa (James, 2015). As Anegbode, Alonge and Omeregbe (2015) say “most public office holders, in Nigeria and on the continent of Africa use the media to advance their particularised narrow interest while clothing that interest with the label of the public interest”.

Prevalent Child labour Practice

Child labour remains a persistent problem in the world today, especially on the continents of Africa and Asia. As ILO and UNICEF (2021) maintain, African continent has seen an increase in both the number and percentage of children in child labour since 2012. There are now more children in child labour in sub-Saharan Africa than in the rest of the countries combined. Seventy per cent of all children in child labour, 112 million children in total, are in agriculture. Many are younger children, underscoring agriculture as an entry point to child labour. Over three quarters of all children aged between 5 and 11 in child labour work in agriculture (ILO and UNICEF, 2021). There are 122.7 million rural children in child labour compared to 37.3 million urban children. James (2015) observes that media of communication have shirked their responsibilities of enlightenment campaigns and education aimed at putting an end to the monster of child labour and other anti-social practices such as female genital mutilation, open defecation and discrimination against women in rural areas of Nigeria and on the continent of Africa. The prevalence of child labour in rural areas (13.9 per cent) is close to three times higher than in urban areas (4.7 per cent) (ILO and UNICEF, 2021). A large number of younger children in child labour are excluded from school despite falling within the age range for compulsory education. More than a quarter of children aged between 5 and 11 and over a third of children aged between 12 and 14 who are in child labour are out of school. This severely constrains their prospects for decent work in youth and adulthood as well as their overall life potentials. Many more children in child labour struggle to balance the demands of school and child labour at the same time, which compromise their education and their right to leisure (ILO and UNICEF, 2021). The latest global estimates indicate that 160 million children – 63 million girls and 97 million boys – were in child labour globally at the beginning of 2020, accounting for almost 1 in 10 of all children worldwide. Seventy-nine million children – nearly half of all those in child labour – were in hazardous work that directly endangers their health, safety and moral development (ILO and UNICEF, 2021). Child labour is a leading threat on the way of African continent to achieving sustainable development goals. Parents, especially those without formal education compel their wards to engage in menial jobs to supplement family income. Many of those children are used for farming, bricklaying jobs, itinerant trading and other energy-sapping jobs at the time they are old enough for formal education. The children are exposed to

kidnapping, sexual predators, bad influences, and dangers of being initiated into armed-robbery and cultism at their impressionable age. What are the roles of the media in all these? Studies have shown that a larger percentage of child labour practice is committed in rural areas of Africa (ILO and UNICEF, 2021). The conventional media of mass communication have, however, failed in their primary functions of education, information and enlightenment campaigns in the rural areas of Africa because the media of mass communication are urban-centric (James, 2015). Events that border on the socio-economic issues, women and children as well as political processes in the rural areas of Africa are reported at periphery or not reported at all.

The rights of women and children

The right to democratic rule is an entitlement conferred on all citizens of Nigeria of eligible age by law (Adebowale, 2015). The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (as amended) spells this out clearly in section 40:

Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons, and in particular, he may form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of his interests: provided that that the provisions of this section shall not derogate from the powers conferred by this constitution on the Independent National Electoral Commission with respect to political parties to which that commission does not accord recognition.

Also, Section 42(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria states that:

...a citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person be subjected to any form of discrimination.

Going by the two sections of the Constitution, Nigerian Constitution recognises the rights of men and women in the political, economic and social affairs of the country. However, Nigeria women have been relegated politically for years and this has brought about a consciousness of women under-representation in public life (Adebowale, 2015). Women are created to multiply the world through the birth of offspring. However, the place of women in African society has been restricted. In the words of Adebimpe

(2012) traditions in most African cultural and religious practices and other factors have continued to widen disparity between African men and women by keeping women in subordinate position to men. She further observes that society and male subculture still see women and their aspirations as subordinate, resulting in a situation in which marginalisation, trivialisation and stereotyping of women are glaring aspects of African life. In many societies in Africa, women cannot be heard and even seen. Nwabueze (2013) observes that a woman is expected to obey her husband irrespective of her career pursuit. In most cultural settings, the perception of female gender roles translates to lack of respect for women's rights. These culture-based perceptions and expectations influence the choice of profession for women who would not want to be seen as going against societal norms and values (Nwabueze, 2013). Religious and cultural practices have also limited the rights of women in many African communities. A religious sect constrains the movement of women and prescribes the kind of clothes women are to wear. Women cannot be seen or heard in some religious and cultural practices. Adebowale (2015) maintains that most societies in Nigeria, just like in many other African states, prohibit women from taking part in active politics based on religious beliefs. Politics in Nigeria and other parts of Africa has always been seen as dangerous, dirty, bloody and therefore should be the exclusive preserve of men. Adebowale (2015) is of the opinion that human rights violations are prevalent in Nigeria with women's rights being violated much more than those of men in both public and private spheres. Okpalaobi (2011) as cited by Adebowale (2015) observes that the most pervasive and severe violations of women's rights are frequently those associated with the unwritten traditional norms and practices of Nigeria's numerous and diverse ethnic groups. These practices concern widowhood rites, inheritance rights, the land tenure system, female genital mutilation and early marriage. Poverty, which has been feminised in most developing countries, including Nigeria is a major obstacle to women's active political participation (Adebowale, 2015). These evil cultural practices prevent women from active participation in the governance of their country, and also restrict them from reaching their full potentials. James (2020) maintains that female genital mutilation is a cruel practice against minors and young female adults. FGM practice is a naked discrimination against women and reflects the ingrained culture of violence against minors. The FGM practice is not only an infringement on the rights of women and minors, but also portray them as sex objects and inferior to their male counterparts and also constitutes a great violation to their health, security

and physical well-being, as well as a form of torture and inhuman treatment (James, 2020). The roles of women are not seen beyond regular giving birth to children. Public communication, which is a vital means of gaining public support for certain political or social issues is the exclusive rights of men in many African societies. The Affirmative Action initiated by the Federal Government of Nigeria to encourage Nigerian women to seek the elective and appointive positions have not achieved a substantial success due to the fact that Nigeria's politics has the character of violence, gender discrimination and religious bias. Issues that concern women are hardly reported in Nigerian media. Advocacy for women and children's rights have long been a forgone issue in the Nigerian media. James (2015) observes that events that border on the activities and actions of men receive more media attentions than events that concern women and their welfare in Africa.

The rights of minority groups or minority ethnic nationalities

Various ethnic groups in Nigeria and elsewhere on the continent of Africa have started to ventilated their pent-up anger against the state for perceived injustice and marginalisation (Oku, Okpala and Isonah, 2015). According to them, the resultant effects of this was the proliferation of various ethnic militias championing ethnic agitations for a better deal in the Nigerian political system. In Yoruba land, there is Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC), Arewa Peoples' Congress (APC) in the North, Movement for the Actualisation of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the South-East. Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC) and Bakassi Boys. Movement for the Emancipation of Niger-Delta (MEND) in the South-South. These ethnic militias engage in agitations for the development of their various areas, but they become violent and actually threaten the political stability of Nigeria and African continent, with many recorded cases of violence orchestrated by these groups in various parts of Nigeria and Africa. (Oku, Okpala and Isonah, 2015). Minority groups in most societies of Africa have been relegated to the background. They have been forced out of the political and economic equations of their respective countries. Resources and political offices are shared based on the population and performance support to the ruling government during elections. Minority ethnic nationalities have always produced the resources for economic development of a country, but they also have always been marginalised in the economic and political scheme of things of a country. Communities in

Niger-Delta, which are minority ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, are the geese that lay the golden eggs. Most of the communities in Niger-Delta are oil-producing and they have always been marginalised in spite of the huge petroleum resources derived from their communities. Media in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa have failed to present issues ravaging these communities to the world for assessment. For instances, the farmland, stream and wells in these communities are regularly destroyed by the oil spillage, but the media look the other way in the reportage of the anti-human and life-threatening issues that happen in those communities on a daily basis. Ojo and Adebayo (2013) cited in Anegbode, Alonge and Omoregie (2015) observe that the more the media are used to serve the narrow self-serving interests of the powerful people in a society, the less they can be used to serve the public interest of the other group. They further assert that if those who control the media use them to champion ethnic and party interests, then the capacity of the media to promote national interest goals will suffer.

Media and human rights in Africa

Describing human rights situations in Nigeria, Ojebode (2010) states that government continues to place limits on freedom of assembly and association citing security concerns. Some state governments place limits on religious rights. Ojebode (2010) citing the US Department of States (2004) states:

The government human rights remained poor, and the government continued to commit serious abuses. Elections held during the year were not generally judged free and fair and therefore abridged citizens' rights to change their government. Security forces committed extra-judicial killings and used excessive force to apprehend criminal suspects, and to quell some protests. There were several politically-motivated killings by unknown persons during the year. Security forces regularly beat the protesters, criminal suspects, detainees, and convicted prisoners; however, there fewer reported cases of torture by security than in previous years. Impunity was a problem. Shari'a court sentenced persons to harsh punishments including amputations and death by stoning...but no death has been carried out.

Journalists and media operatives are not exempted from inhuman and debasing treatment by the security forces and police orderlies of Nigerian politicians. Many journalists, in the course of official duties, have been

brutalized and dehumanize by the security agents in Nigeria and elsewhere on the continent of Africa. Wilson (2005) notes that the need to protect the rights of individuals has gone beyond the confines of a geo-political territory. It is now a global concern. Every human being anywhere in the world is now seen as a citizen of the world and his problems are the world's problems (Wilson, 2005). In the words of Ibadin (2015) democratic rule is threatened where human rights and the rule of law are thrown in the dustbin and where there are no restraints on the exercise of political power. A host of human rights abuses are ignored by the media, which are empowered to serve as the advocate against the evils. In the clime where there is absence of justice, human rights abuses take over. Police brutality, judges trade justice for pecuniary gains, enforced disappearance, maiming and brutalising media men and women, political assassination of defenceless citizens, political assassination of vocal and dissenting voices, extra-judicial killings, killing of young harmless and unarmed protesters have become the order of the day and take centre stage in the affairs of Nigeria and many other countries in Africa. Ojeifo (2015) notes that Nigeria is among the countries where human rights abuses are recorded almost on a daily basis and in virtually all human endeavours. Abuse of right of religion- contrary to provisions of secularity in Nigeria's constitution. There are reported cases of cleric fundamentalists. Adeniyi (2008) as cited by Ojeifo (2015) observes that over 1000 reported cases of clash between Christian and Muslim adherents were recorded in Nigeria between 2001 and 2008.

Media indifference to reporting rape cases and official corruption

Ibadin (2015) observes that democracy cannot thrive in a corrupt society. He further asserts that corruption has become so pervasive in Nigeria that certain acts such as bribery have now become a norm. Corruption is one of those issues triggering governance crisis and democratic problems in the country. Former president Obasanjo decried the effects of corruption on governance. According to him, "no society can grow and develop when corruption is allowed to progress unfettered as it has grown to become a cancer in Nigeria. Government and its agencies have become thoroughly corrupt and reckless. Members of the public have to bribe their way through ministries and parastatals to get attention and one agency of government has to bribe another agency to secure the release of their statutory allocations of funds (Oku, Okpala and Isonah, 2015). Corruption

has become ubiquitous in Nigeria as a result of inability of political leadership not only to fight corruption but also encourage its virulent growth. When political leadership is inept and incompetent, it breeds bad governance and bad governance promotes and sustain corruption, whereas competent and upright political leadership brings about good governance that tackles and eliminates corruption (Ezekiel, 2015). Media practitioners are accessories to corruption in high places in Nigeria (James, 2015). Media men and women are in the habit of inviting the corrupt politicians for media interviews or discussions on national issues of public interest. The media appearances serve as image-laundry procedures to launch the acceptability of the politicians and their political parties in the market of the electorates. Igwe (2012) cited in James (2015) avers that “in countries where corruption is systemic, political repression and oppression, particularly of political opposition and regime critics, becomes the most characteristic feature of political life, and domination and subordination of the main political relationship”. Corruption also affects political stability because it always leads to the military intervention in government. Corruption is the most cited by the military for coup d’etat. The impairment of political development and stability is directly related to socio-economic development. National development is handicapped in an atmosphere of political instability and uncertainty, with the result that effective long-term planning is jeopardised (Hope, 2000 as cited by Igwe, 2012).

Failure of media to advocate girl-child education in Nigeria

Nigeria accounts for 45 per cent of out-of-school children in West Africa (Ogunode and Adanna, 2022). Over the years, the number of out-of-school children in Nigeria has increased from 10.5 to 13.2 million and 69 per cent of these numbers are from the North. UNICEF (2001) as cited by Ogunode and Adanna (2022) observe that over 18.5 million children are out of school, majority of whom are girls, and do not have access to education in Nigeria. The figure rose sharply compared with 2021, the U.N children's fund says about estimated 10.5 million children were out of school in Africa's most populous country. "Currently in Nigeria, there are 18.5 million out-of-school children, 60% of whom are girls," (Voannews 2022; UNICEF 2022) as cited by Ogunode and Adanna (2022). Walter and Omoregie (2015) maintain that over seventy million people above age fifteen are illiterate in Nigeria, that is, this category of persons cannot read and write. World Health Organisation (2017) maintains that the poor are

usually associated with high environmental hazards, malnutrition, less access to information and low productivity. There are false cultural beliefs and ideologies in many African societies that educating a girl-child is synonymous with wasting family resources. According to UNICEF and UBEC accounts, 80 per cent of out-of-school children are from the northern part of Nigeria, and this is largely due to their belief system. Female children are worst hit by the effects of this religious and cultural belief system and has become a major causal factor of the out-of-school population in Nigeria. The marginalisation of female population especially in education is a major challenge in northern part of Nigeria (Mohammed, Quadri and Yoshifumi, 2021). States in the North-East and North-West have primary net attendance rates of 47.7% and 47.3% respectively. In other words, more than half of the girls not in school are driven by socio-cultural norms and practices that discourage attendance from formal education (Mohammed, Quadri and Yoshifumi, 2021). Girl-child education has not been taken seriously, especially in the northern part of Nigeria. A girl-child is seen as a commodity to be betrothed to a man at her infancy. The necessary skills and education programmed by the government to make every child a productive and useful citizen are rebuffed as unimportant by the parents, especially the unschooled ones. Of course, women are the builders of a nation. However, when a girl-child, who is expected to take over from the ageing women population, is not trained, what becomes of her future children? The circle continues to roll. The media of mass communication, especially the radio, which has the tongue of all ethnic nationalities in Africa, has failed with regard to its educational functions of enlightening and mobilising parents for the enrollment of their wards in schools. Instead, personality interview programmes, which are more or less image-making interview programmes, rend the airwaves of many broadcast media.

Challenges of infrastructure and physical development in Nigeria

Africa and Nigeria particularly experience a retardation in physical development. Infrastructures and social amenities are largely lacking in most rural areas of Africa. Access roads, potable water and stable power supply have been a mirage in most societies of Africa. A heap of waste welcome first time visitors to major cities in Nigeria. People defecate in the open as a result of lack of public toilet and conveniences. The unpleasant stench emanating from the waste constitutes a threat to the health of the

people (James, 2015). Unstable government also contributes to underdevelopment of African continent. The recent example is the civil unrest in Sudan where many unarmed citizens have been sent to their early graves. Nigerian media have not done enough in terms of reporting positive image of the country to the global audience, which culminates in direct investment. As a matter of fact, local media are complicit with the foreign media in the portrayals of Nigeria and her people in bad light. New inventions and innovations by the people go unreported or underreported by Nigerian media.

Way Forward

1. Many development partners and socio-economic groups and academic organisations have been in the fore front of advocacy for the establishment of community media. Rural-based newspapers, community radio stations and culture-based media should be strengthened.
2. Regulators of media in Nigeria should mandate all stations in Nigeria to have a local-language of all their programmes in a bid to inform educate and entertain the illiterate and the unschooled members of the society.
3. Media should exist primarily to serve the interest of the people, not the government alone. Media should give priority attention to national culture and language to move Africa and Nigeria forward
4. Both Federal and State governments should hands-off the appointment of Directors-General of public-owned media organisations in Africa. Allocation of licenses to establish and manage private media organisations should be ceded to civil society organisations in Africa.
5. Ethical Journalism, as a full-fledged course, should be introduced into the curricula of tertiary institutions offering mass communication, communication arts, communication and media technology, and communication-related disciplines.

Conclusion

Studies have shown that media of developing countries have not done much with regard to partnership with government and development partners to bring about the desired development to the African people. Not only that, mass media have failed in their traditional hallmarks to educate, inform and entertain people as a result of some factors among

which are influences of advertisers, hostile operational environment, ownership factors and corruption.

The rural areas, the media dread to tread, have been too neglected with regard to information on health system, education and information on new agricultural practices that could improve their living conditions. Consequently, efforts should not be spared to re-focus and beam journalistic searchlights on newsworthy events that happen in the rural areas of Nigeria and by extension Africa.

Rural Africa communities are in dire need of development journalism. Community radio stations, owned and managed by the members of a community, should be established to cater for the information, education and entertainment needs of the rural populace. This form of radio station will definitely give priority attention to the local culture and language of the locals for the all-round developments in the rural areas of Nigeria, and by extension, African communities.

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