

# **MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA, TRAJECTORIES AND SUPPOSITIONS**

Jenkeri Zakari Okwori,  
Centre for Development Communication,  
Department of Theatre and Performing Arts,  
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria

# Map of Africa, map of Nigeria



# Profile

- Land: 923,768 square kilometers
- Population: 150 million current estimate
- Official Language: English
- Religion: Islam, Christianity, Traditional/others
- Languages: over 500
- Ethnic groups: over 370
- Main Ethnic groups: Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo
- Structure: 36 states and Capital territory

# Access to Information

- Constitution: Chapter IV, Section 39- provides from freedom of expression
- Subsection 3 of section 39-impose limitations on the right to receive information
- 2001: submission of freedom of information bill-still not passed by national assembly.

# Media Regulation

- Media Regulatory bodies: National Broadcasting Commission; Nigerian Press Council
- No provisions for the independence of Nigeria's two main media regulatory bodies

# Community or alternative media

- No specific provisions to support community or alternative media
- Only University of Lagos FM until 2007 additional 8 licences signed by out going president
- Public-service broadcasting provisions and institutions do not exist
- Non-government media outfits –must work in the public interest-interpreted and enforced by government through the regulatory bodies

# Journalism in Nigeria

- Estimated 35,000 journalists practising in Nigeria
- Many are untrained, so lack of professionalism
- Journalist Pay: €119-150 per month (€1,428-1,800 per year)
- Brown envelope syndrom

# Radio

- Huge radio listening culture in the North
- About 108 radio stations, only 25 are not government owned
- Most of the private stations are FM serving virtually the same programme menus
- New stations have digital technology but older stations are still analogue
- Foreign stations dominate
- Many programmes try to copy foreign ones

# Television

- About 130 stations, Government own 98
- TV is largely urban
- Government is the main source of advertising revenue
- Political expediency responsible for the dominance of government
- Foreign channels dominate-CNN, BBC etc via satellite broadcasting
- Poor technical quality; imitation programmes

# Newspapers

- Unlike radio and TV most newspapers are owned by individuals-government has stake in only 1 or 2 newspapers currently
- Shrinking readership
- Dependence on government for advertising revenue
- Poor research by reporters
- Replication of foreign news

# **COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT**

- Development efforts have not reduce poverty and improve poor people's lives
- A major reason for development failure lies in the lack of recognition of the role of information and communication in development
- Sustainable development requires people's active participation
- Culture and tradition and the status of women acts against the success of development efforts

- Development requires inclusive political processes, through which citizens can shape political agendas and hold their governments to account.
- These inclusive political processes are communication processes – not just in the context of formal elections, but also in context of requisite ongoing dialogue between people and their governments and the shaping of public agendas

- Development communication provides avenue to break free from these restrictions, to liberate muted voices because of its dependence on visualization, picturization and demonstration, and enabling of democracy of the ground.
- Healthy political processes need open communication environments, which development communication engenders.

- Communication is a necessity in good governance, because through it governments can be made responsive, accountable and capable of fulfilling their functions with the active engagement of civil society
- ***Using mobile phones to monitor local elections***

- *The International Center for Accelerated Development (ICAD) in Nigeria used text messages to mobilise their supporters when they found that a local election was being rigged. The Plateau state in Nigeria held elections in March 2008.*
- *Sensitive election materials are kept at the premises of the electoral body where they are sorted out for each local government in the state and escorted by party officials, electoral commission staff, and security agents to the 17 local offices where they would be used for polls.*

- *ICAD used SMS messages to alert their members when they discovered that there was rigging taking place by means of ballot papers being thumb-printed.*
- *These viral messages were so effective that the elections were cancelled. ICAD followed this with high-level advocacy which resulted in the removal of the former electoral boss.*

- Behaviour and attitude change are critical prerequisites for development success. This is because most of the impedances to development success are attitudes accumulated over time and expressed in behaviours. For example, the denial of rights and entitlements to women in many instances find justification in socio-cultural constructions that has neither a relationship with biological composition nor justifiable empirical validity.

- *The Women of Uganda Network in collaboration with Womensnet, conducted an SMS-based campaign. They sent text messages on each of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, encouraging individuals and organisations to Speak Out, Stand Out, and Commit to Preventing Violence against Women. There were over 170 participants drawn from 13 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America. Individuals could contribute a short message or slogan on the theme of the campaign.*

- *The chosen slogan was sent out via SMS with the individual/organisation that created it credited as the source of the message. People could also send news of the activities and events they organised in support of the 16 Days of Activism. People could register their mobile phone numbers and receive the text messages that were sent out during the 16 Days of Activism. The daily text messages were posted on a blog on the **Take Back the Tech** campaign website.*

- When governments create an environment marked by open and transparent information and communication flows or when people acquire the capacity to produce and disseminate their own information they help to establish the conditions for economic growth and by implication enhanced livelihoods.

- The revolution in information and communication technologies (ICTs, such as telephones and the Internet) also offers exciting new opportunities for small- as well as large-scale economic activity. “The mobile phone can catalyse development and help eradicate rural poverty. Seventy-five per cent of the world’s poorest people- 1.05 billion women, children and men- live in rural areas and depend on agriculture and related activities for their livelihoods.

- We may think that for them a mobile phone is a luxury. But guess what? We are wrong!...Observations in the field are that mobile phone accessibility is helping to facilitate previously marginalized groups to take a more active part in economic and social spheres of their communities and beyond, such as women, landless workers, herders, fishers, small-scale farmers, indigenous peoples and illiterates with no access to basic services” (PLA Notes59).

# Theatre For Development

- This theatre as a communication strategy is done by the people or in collaboration with them. It addresses the problems of the community and is vested in their social and cultural practices. This theatre, therefore, emphasizes dialogue and the participation of the community as central aspects of its methodology.

# Postscript: Media & Migration

- Our perception and understanding of the world whether we like it or not is largely created by the way the media has shaped that understanding and particularly the way media has consistently packaged the information of others. In the case of Africa, the consistent image that Western media constructs both for the western audience and for the African is a land of perpetual crisis, a land ridden with hunger, disease, famine, strife, corruption and failed or failing states.

- European societies are where things work, the trains run on time, electricity never hiccups, water runs everywhere, all the streets are paved, workers are well paid, life is luxurious, there is democracy, there is adequate care for everyone. In this two contrasting pictures, one beckons and the other repels.

# Revenge of the Colony?

- First supposition: Going by the above could we then not safely say, that the colony is taking its pound of flesh and that it is about time it does? Why would any young man or woman continue to live in hell? Why would they condemn themselves to perpetual misery and suffering in a continent that offers them only war, conflict and failure, that offers them unfulfilled potentials, that offers them failed states?

- Second supposition: or could it be that having been apprised of the history of Africa and the role Europe played and continue to play in it that a realisation has occurred that Europe also needs to be revenged with colonisation via migration? After all if Europe came to Africa, why should Africa not come to Europe? As we say in Nigeria, “do me, I do you, God no go vex” (if I do unto you as you have done unto me, God won’t be angry).

# Conclusion?

- From the three perspectives through which this presentation is anchored, it is abundantly clear, that Media Communication has a telling impact in the way African society has been constructed and continues to be constructed, and, that indeed, what we know of Africa today, what it does and its relations with the world can well be a function of the way media and communication has shaped the world