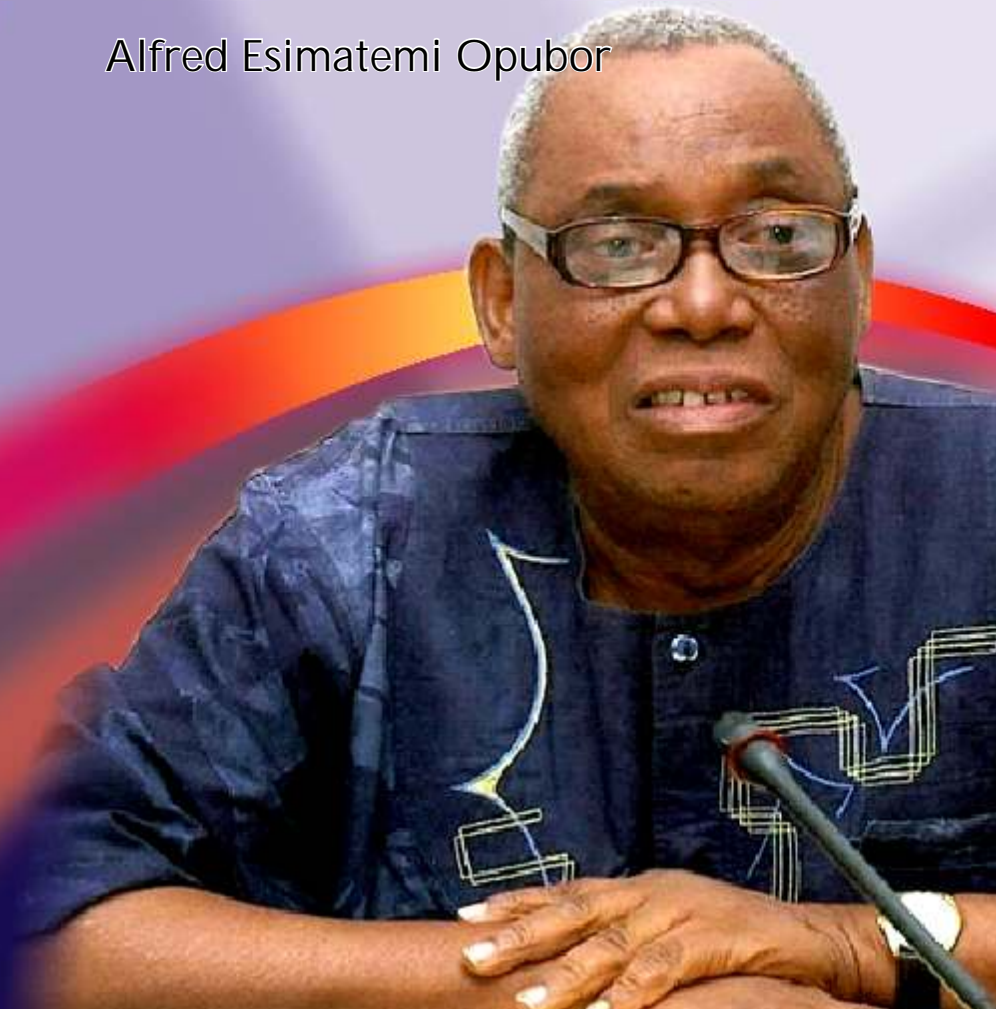# TRUTH
in search of a
VOICE

Alfred Esimatemi Opubor

TRUTH
in search of a
VOICE

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A selection from the works of
Professor Alfred Esimatemi Opubor

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FOREWORD

The title of this compilation, *Truth In Search of a Voice*, aptly captures not only the content of this compilation but also one of the major theses that drove the research career of Professor Alfred Opubor for about five decades. It is Professor Opubor's belief that real truth exists, empowers, equips and delivers. That truth is not the exclusive possession of a race, a sex or a group of experts. Rather, truth is discovered as women, men and children express their opinions in their voices and metaphors in an atmosphere of equality and freedom. Simple as this may be, it has been difficult to realize. Truth has been in chains because women and men have been denied access to the media by which that truth can be expressed. Development experts, academics, government and business people have laid exclusive claims to truth and to the media of its expression, banishing all other women and men, members of the community, to the position of passive receivers of foreign truth, which is no truth at all.

This is a compilation of six publications or presentations of Professor Alfred Opubor spanning a period of eight years. They do not by any means amount to a significant percentage of his publications in those years; rather, they most clearly represent his position, argument and, thus, his contribution, to the quest for a just and equitable communication paradigm. The first of these is probably the most-cited Opubor publication, "If community media is the answer, what is the question?" It is also the theme of the conference at which this compilation is being presented. In it, Professor Opubor takes us back to the meaning of community, reminding us of the marginalization of the community in favour of the nation, and in favour of mega-, or better, pseudo-communities such as the ECOWAS. We cannot proffer answers if we do not understand the question. The author suspects that many who are brandishing community media as the solve-all answer have not taken the time to understand the question. The unfortunate outcome of that is the further marginalization of "community in favour of media". He raised eight such questions to further guide the deployment of community media.

The second deals with the nagging issue of convergence, concentration and control. Going beyond the definitions, the author presents clear guidelines about the kind of control that will ensure that those in the margins of the

society also have access to media not as passive recipients but as content makers. He made the case, again, for "decentralised models of broadcasting [in which] democratic space can be cultivated and expanded, permitting women, children and men in villages and urban communities, to practice self-expression and to participate in building their communities". Put differently, these are models that give truth a voice.

The third publication first appeared in the reputable African Media Review, in 2004 titled "What my Grandmother Taught me about Communication". Central to Grandma's lessons was that truth is the property of the community, not that of an individual; truth is also not monolithic. It is not Western or Eastern but communal. Therefore, "in matters of communication, Africans have a fundamental right, and a responsibility, to make the wisdom of their ancestors known, accepted and adopted".

"Can Radio Build Communities?" That is title of the fourth publication. The author warns that radio can both build and destroy communities and peoples—depending on the users and the prevailing policy atmosphere. This presentation contains stories of daring attempts by two groups of people who wanted to use radio to build communities, attempts that were frustrated by the governments of Nigeria.

In "Broadcasting, Human Development and Global Peace", the author describes his involvement in the efforts to establish an African version of CNN or Al-Jazeera by the African Union, an effort yet to materialize. He then makes specific connections between broadcasting and hunger and poverty; between broadcasting and peace or war. He makes a case for cooperation between scientists and broadcasters. If Africa must come out of its poverty and hunger cycle, it must first find a voice — truth in search of a voice.

The last segment, "Managing a Poisoned Chalice" is probably the least palatable of the segments. In it, the author calls to question the celebrations that greeted the issuance of radio licenses to Nigerian campuses, describing the licenses as poisoned chalices. "Why is it a poisoned chalice? Because, unless you are very careful, you will not be able to fulfill the mandate of community broadcasting. The mandate of community broadcasting is very clear, it is simple, and it is also very difficult to implement. The operative term is not the broadcasting, it is the community. It is the community that is important in community broadcasting".

The Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan; the Nigerian Community Radio Coalition; Institute for Media and

Society, and the African Languages Technology Initiative are happy for making such a fine selection of Opubor thoughts available for wider circulation. We are, of course, sad that Professor Alfred Opubor who was very delighted that we were planning a conference to mark the 75th anniversary of his birth, relocated to the world of worthy ancestors few weeks into the preparations for the conference.

We do not need to commend a book like this to anyone. The author's name and reputation is more than a stamp of authority. Every student and scholar of African media and communication systems, policy and research knows that an Opubor publication is certainly a must-read.

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1

IF COMMUNITY MEDIA IS THE ANSWER,
WHAT IS THE QUESTION?*

The idea of community has been problematic for Africans in the post-colonial period. In the politics and economics of nation building, attempts were made to build societies that were broad-based, with centralised political power and authority and homogenised institutions, so as to emphasise commonalties and to incorporate disparate cultures in an effort to create 'national unity'. In so doing, the goal was to de-emphasise differences, ignore particularities and specificities, and minimise or even proscribe any tendency that was likely to question the political orthodoxy, including the expression of dissent or minority opinion.

Since the 1980s, there have also been attempts to build institutions beyond the nation state, employing the notion of 'community' in an expanded sense. Although the East African Community did not last, the Economic Community of WestAfrican States, ECOWAS, has passed its silver jubilee. And the Southern African Development Community, SADC, is approaching a second decade, and there's talk of an African Economic Community for the 21st Century.

All of these processes of incorporation, of building ever larger political and economic units, have tended to by-pass the ideas, opinions and direct contributionsof the majority of our citizens, even in countries where they were supposedly 'free' to express themselves on such matters.

But these are truly interesting and contradictory times. Most of the time, the 'people' appear to have acquiesced in the decisions made by their

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*Text of the keynote address at the UNESCO International
Seminar on Promoting Community Media in Africa, Kampala,
Uganda, June7, 1999

governments and other leaders on their behalf. But from time to time, they have erupted with clear statements of disagreement or dissent, often with violent reactions to centralised instructions and arrangements. Many of the differences and specificities which nation builders wanted to wish away seem to persist; and they persist just where people find themselves, where they live their daily lives, in their communities.

Many Africans do not feel they live in their nation, they know they live in their Communities. It is there, in their communities, that they seek to find work, to raise their families, to cure their sick, to grow old and die and be buried. Many of them from rural areas have been forced to migrate from their original communities, to seek jobs, education and fortune elsewhere, to try to become part of new urban communities. And even then, they often migrate from neighbourhood to neighbourhood in the cities where they find themselves.

Thus, in linking community and media to discuss community media, it is important that we do not marginalise the 'community' in favour of the 'media'. It is for this reason that this keynote address raises the question: If Community media is the answer, what is the question?

This is probably not the time for definitions. At the dawn of the 21st century, we all think we know what 'community media' are. With the popularisation of community radios, community newspapers, magazines, newsletters and other publications, we do indeed know about 'community media'. Or do we? The bottom line in discussing community media is an understanding of the nature of the community which underlies media practice, access and ownership.

Today the notion of community has a strong non-physical connotation; so that it is possible to speak about 'virtual' reality and virtual communities. But in spite of the new information and communication technologies, 'community' still retains a strong physical reference to people in geographic proximity, with frequent, if not continuous, contact. People who share certain cultural attributes have access to certain resources of social organisation and common institutions, resulting in common basic beliefs.

Among other things, a human community is built on the exchange of initiatives, information and meanings in the process of defining, creating and maintaining a group identity and interests for survival within a specifiable geographical and/or cultural space. A community thus creates, and is also created by, a community communication system, which includes the various

communication roles (and their actors/performers), needs, and resources available to the individuals and subgroups which make up the community.

Community media should be viewed then as elements of a community communication system. They serve as instrumentalities for role performance and resource utilisation, for responding to the communication needs of individuals and institutions within the community. These needs are diverse and often require different modalities of expression and satisfaction. It is within the framework of a community's communication system, therefore, that its media should properly be identified and created. It may then emerge that appropriate media are multiple channelled rather than single; and that community media should, realistically, be multi-media.

Lessons Learned

Twentieth century approaches to community media development have been dominated by exogenous definitions of communities and the imposition of narrow media-based solutions to the cultural, communication and survival problems which communities face. For example, the general objective of this seminar

> falls within the context of several projects and activities initiated by UNESCO and other UN agencies and many international non-governmental organisations and donor agencies in assisting in developing such media which give different social groups, particularly the more isolated and disadvantaged, a chance to participate in development strategies and have access to communication resources at the local level.

Driven by noble intentions to spread the benefits of 'development' and, more recently, to promote indigenous development and enhance local ownership of development outcomes through 'empowerment' and 'participation', these 'activities and initiatives' have often not been based on a conceptual or practical foundation arising from a community communication system view point. Their inadequacies demonstrate the need for interventions based on a community communication strategy. Open suggested a decade ago that community communication:

> is a process of horizontal and vertical social interaction and networking through media regularly produced, managed and controlled by or in close co-operation between people at the community level and at other levels of society who share a socio-political commitment towards a democratic society of countervailing powers. As the people participate in this process as

planners, producers and performers, the media become informing, educating and entertaining tools that would also make non-privileged and marginalised people think and speak for themselves, not an exercise in persuasion or power. In such a process, the entry points for communication interventions have to be sought in the communities' learning methods, cultural expressions and media forms. (Emphasis added)2

The community media created in the 20th Century have generally been single-channel media, responding to technical and instrumental orientations, favouring hardware above software, and emphasising technique over process. Their impact has usually been evaluated in terms of the achievement of standardised 'improvements' in sectoral target areas such as agriculture, health, population, literacy, and poverty alleviation.

However, within these approaches, a number of experiences have provided lessons which should assist the development of a community communication strategy in the future, hopefully one that is more responsive to context-specific strategic communication system needs of the relevant communities, and therefore possibly resulting in the creation of 'community multi-media'. Oepen's list of 'functions' to be ascribed to community media, 'independent of the type of media or the type of people involved', provides a useful basis for the development of such a strategy.

Whose Community, Whose Media?

To move into the future with a new agenda, it is necessary to ask new questions, which may lead to new answers, or to find new answers to old questions. But the old answers are certainly not needed to new questions, as they seem to be somewhat discredited. Rather, a community. communication system approach to community media development should proceed from a basic understanding of the nature and needs of the community, in communication terms. A needs assessment survey of the community should attempt to answer at least the following questions:

1. What information is needed to define the parameters and details of the community's communication system? What components need special attention? Why?

2. How is this determined?

3. What media does the community already have?

4. What media does it want?

5. What media can it afford?

7. What media channels or combinations would meet the community's needs?

8. Who can make what media available to it, at what cost, for what purpose? Undertaking a needs assessment of the community's communication system, through a participatory, 'ethnography of communication' methodology, should provide answers to the first six questions. The last two questions should be the focus of discussions between the community and external partners interested in providing community media resources to meet identified priorities. Whether the community is physically contiguous or whether it reflects a dispersed communal group with common characteristics and interests, these questions are still valid and can yield required information.

In this kind of process, participatory research becomes an important first step in the decision about whether or not additional media are required to meet the needs of the community communication system, and what specific media are required. This could lead to results far different from the usual situation of donors and NGOs proposing a radio station or video facilities or rural printing press or desktop publishing or Internet facilities for the community, because these facilities fit into their community media development programme.

It may well be that the community's view is that it requires more than one, even all of the above facilities, to solve specific communication system and contextual development problems. The community and its external partners may then engage in a prioritisation process to determine how to meet the needs and perhaps involve other partners who are able to contribute some of the media components required.

It may be, for example, that what is required is participatory theatre and the strategic need becomes how to facilitate performances in particular areas of the community. But it may also be that the area of need identified is that theatre performances, already in existence in the community, could more effectively be extended through regular radio drama, which would then be the community media input actually required by the community communications system. These answers are not always obvious without a consultative process and relevant analysis.

The next steps in this process, and a possible result of ethnographic communication research, would be several strategic scenarios for

developing a community's communication system. Sensitive investigation will usually reveal that a community is not necessarily homogenous, in terms of interests and points of view. An important question may then be how to have more inclusive media through providing more diverse opportunities for community communication. This may mean intervening in communication system elements, including media. Non-media considerations could include, for example, the notion of attracting new voices into community communication, involving more active participation of women and the elderly. This may not require creating a new medium or channel, but rather providing access for new sources of information within existing channels. But again it may require acknowledging and using new communication channels more adapted to the interests of the groups whose needs are to be addressed.

In *The Myth of Community*, Gujit and Shah3 have shown how participatory development models have involved flawed processes and inadequate tools from the point of view of gender analysis and the handling of gender issues and differences within communities. Their insistence that participatory methods and inventions often obscure the interests of women is a salutary *caveat* to underline the need for situation-specific research. In fact, the development of community media should be based on a community communication strategy. That strategy should seek to provide answers in support of the communication needs and objectives defined by the community.

Many existing projects for the creation of community media have indeed undertaken research to determine the various aspects and operations of the media to be established. Such studies have been usually long on socio-cultural and economic background, usually related to the development 'problem' to be solved, but generally short on the communication background and profile of the community which should be the basis of the choice of functional media, from an endogenous point of reference.

The argument thus far is that the choice of media is a variable to be determined with the community, rather than pre-determined by exogenous interests and priorities, no matter how well meaning. It may help to clarify whether community media are media in the classic sense or whether they are techniques and technologies for responding to community communication needs.

The establishment and expansion of community media in African countries are stil confronted with a number of problems, which will need to be addressed in the 21st Century. Therefore, several question areas need to be considered, including that of policy, regulation, research, training, and sustainability.

The Policy Question

Community media are governed by the general communication/media policy environment prevailing in each country. While there has been an increase in the number of countries favouring media pluralism, and therefore more receptive to new media initiatives, including establishment of new community level initiatives, there is still ambivalence about the regulatory and legal situation of many of these initiatives, and the technologies which propel them.

In Mozambique, for example, there is on-going discussion about the nature of community radio stations and how they should be established and run, within the liberalised media environment, where the state monopoly has been abolished. Radio stations, established by the Institute of Social Communication with funding from UNICEF and UNFPA, in Xai-Xai and Licunga, are referred to as 'community' radio. But it is not clear if they are more than radio stations that cover a geographical area around these towns. In what sense are these 'community' rather than 'local' stations? Is it because they are non-governmental? In what sense are they 'owned' by the community?

Radio Xai-Xai was founded in 1995. It was the first community radio station established after the government freed the airwaves in 1990, which, in theory, allowed anyone to broadcast. It was therefore the first radio station to be independent of the state monopoly on broadcasting which had existed until then. It has two communitybased committees, one for administration, the other for programming. Some members of the committees work at the station almost daily. The general understanding is that the station is a keeper of information, which is to be transferred to the community, and that the community should be trained to take control of the station. These ideas are to be formulated into operational guidelines. It remains to be seen to what extent such guidelines can be formulated at the national level and to what extent local variations are necessary and possible.

The project is supported by the Institute of Social Communications (ISC)

Delegation based in Quelimane, some two or three hours drive away, with funding from UNFPA. According to a recent report:

> The station participants all had an understanding of the radio station as an instrument of community development and of participation in governance and production as important principles. This vision was not written down and varied from person to person. Through a visualisation process, a mission statement and set of objectives were developed. The station has nine staff members and nine community collaborators who produce programmes. Three staff are paid by the state. The remaining staff are paid when funds are available.Everyone accepts that when there are no funds they cannot be paid.

Other countries in the Southern African region will also need to grapple with these definitional and policy questions while in some countries, such as South Africa and Namibia, the realities on the ground have confirmed the mission and character of community radio stations. But even there, there are various definition and operational procedures. David Lush, quoting Guy Berger[5], presents some of the definitional issues posed in the South African experience including questions related to target audiences, ownership and programme orientation.

In the context of examining the scope of community media, several attempts at organised theatre performances have been labelled 'community theatre'. For example, in Zimbabwe, over 200 member organisations have bonded together to form the Zimbabwe Association for Community Theatre (ZACT) which recently celebrated 10 years of existence. Its main objective is to promote and encourage indigenous culture through theatre. ZACT seeks to create employment for school leavers in the rural and urban areas. It also aims to promote indigenous culture through the electronic media. A community theatre process which involves planning, problem identification, research analysis, story, scripting, rehearsals, workshop, performance, community action and evaluation guides ZACT's work. In this process, members of the community are expected to participate. According to ZACT, community theatre groups have staged productions on conscientisation, community health, AIDS, the impact of the economic structural adjustment program and gender issues.

One common feature of community theatre is that it is participatory. It is unlike conventional theatre where people act on stage and do not talk with the audience. In community theatre, the artists talk, laugh and ask the audience questions. There is a lot of interaction between the audience and

the artists. During the pre-testing and evaluation stages of the production artists involve the communities.

Does community theatre fall within the definition of community media? How can the development of community media include community theatre in a systematic and forward-looking manner?

Community publishing may be another example of a community media initiative in Zimbabwe. This is defined as a method of development communication which builds up the confidence, analytical skills and creative capacities of grassroots development workers and community leaders, by involving them in the planning, writing, evaluation and distribution of books. The community-publishing programme is countrywide. It has community publishing teams in each district, with teams at village level in some districts. So far the programme's impact in the urban areas has been minimal since it has been a rural-based initiative. For eight years, the community publishing programme was housed in the Ministry of National Affairs. It is only recently, in 1995, that a new organisation has been formed called Africa Community Publishing and Development Trust, which was started with money raised by the staff of the former Community Publishing Programme.

Regulation

With the introduction of the new information and communication technologies, especially e-mail and Internet services, opportunities for physical and virtual communities to communicate are enhanced. In addition to internal transactions the community and its members can reach and be reached by the outside world. These opportunities also raise question of regulation; but perhaps also transcend regulation.

Regulation is however very relevant to the promotion of community media precisely because it deals squarely with basic principles and issues concerning ownership, control and operation of broadcasting and other media. The following issues thus need to be addressed:

1. *Ownership*: who owns the airwaves? Do they belong to government through the people? Can individuals have private rights? If government regulates the licensing of broadcasting stations and the use of telecommunications, what considerations should be applied? How can private stations guarantee 'the public interest'? Should owners of broadcast facilities be allowed to own other media as well? Can diversity be guaranteed in the ownership of broadcasting? Will

commercialisation/privatisation of telecommunications permit affordable services in impoverished rural areas?

2. *Control*: who should control what in broadcasting and telecommunications? Does control involve only the power to issue and withdraw licenses? Who controls the content of broadcasting? What guidelines need to be established at the state level? Do local governments have a say? What is the possible role of citizen groups or civil society in the allocation of frequencies and in the operation of media institutions?

3. *Operation*: are broadcasting stations and other community media operations to be run as purely commercial organisations? What guidelines should be provided about commercial or non-commercial approaches, and the position of advertising? What technical specifications should be applied to the range of community broadcast signals? What editorial guidelines or general principles for guiding access and accountability should be established?

4. *Content*: what balance is desirable among various content categories? What percentage of programming should be entertainment, and what should be educational and developmental? What proportion of community broadcast airtime should be devoted to commercials and advertising messages? How much time should news and current affairs programmes occupy on what kinds of stations? How should special interests be catered for, e.g. those of children, women, rural dwellers? Should broadcasting stations editorialise? What categories of programme content should be proscribed?

Research

Community media operations should be sustained by continuous research about the larger social environment for defining new issues, new actors, and new voices.

It should also address the evolving needs of communities for new or different information about technical matters (health, jobs, politics, etc.) and enquire about the feelings of community members regarding media performance. And it should assess the effect of media on the community. This is the goal of classic impact assessment; and it might be directed towards assessing:

1. the flow of communications in the community (who says what to whom, how often);

2. community participation (what different individuals and groups are represented in media content production);

3. expression (what are people saying through the media through a sensitive qualitative content analysis of the feelings, moods, images, etc. conveyed through media and how they relate to community goals, etc);

4. knowledge (what information and ideas do the media convey and what do people gain as a result of paying attention to the media);

5. attitudes (what changes, if any, can be attributed to media and communication in the way people feel about themselves, their neighbours, their communities and the world 'out there').

The research relating to these questions should be participatory and need not be quantitative. But the extent to which it is continuous and involves different segments of the community as enquirers and suppliers of information, is the extent to which research as a cultural product can be demystified and indigenised for the community. It can also provide a basis for reorienting the operational content of 'community' media to make them more truly community based and owned.

Training

Consideration needs to be given to who should be trained, and in what aspects. Most community media do not have, and probably cannot afford, people trained professionally in communications, journalism, marketing or other necessary skills. Often community volunteers have little more than enthusiasm and a willingness to learn.

Training in basic writing and production skills to enable the preparation of messages that are audible, legible and communicative will be required, preferably in the short term, e.g. in weekend sessions, and on-the-job. People already professionally trained will need help as to how to work with communities and with non-professionals people, without being condescending or permissive to the abandonment of professional standards.

A skills profiles of community media needs should be developed by communications trainers to see how new initiatives at the local level can be assisted. What information and skills are needed to be able to successfully run a community radio, a newspaper or theatre? Case studies of on-going community media (successful or not) are crucial for developing such profiles which should be the joint product of community media practitioners, researchers and communications/journalism trainers. Appropriate training

modules can then be developed around these case studies. Training should also involve 'media literacy' for community volunteers and other community members so that the media can be truly internalised and indigenised.

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Sustainability

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The cost of installing and operating community media is a basic problem for consideration. Disadvantaged and marginalised groups are defined largely by their lack of resources, and thus their inability to pay for and sustain services. Opoku-Mensah has observed: "We are all aware of the fact that 'the people' have no money, and are often the poorest of the poor. So why are projects which are designed to alleviate their isolation, marginalisation and voicelessness expected to become sustainable in an unrealistic time?".

Several reasons for funding community media as a social good have been advanced, with suggestions as to how various resources could be made available to Sustain them. The bottom line of these suggestions is the need for communication and information policies, at the national level, which are sensitive to the plight of poorer communities, based on an understanding of the ways in which access to information can help them bridge the development gap and achieve better lives.

Whether government provides the resources, or international donors and NGOs support them, community media are not likely to be sustainable from the point of view of the hosting/owning community. Is this inevitable? At the production as well as at the reception end, new technologies are beginning to introduce cost reductions which may make community communication and the media which service them more accessible and affordable.

A community communication centre might be an appropriate venue for combining the advantages of the various services with reduced costs. In this connection, Koning proposed that community media centres could serve the community by providing public education in media hardware, software, networking; public access to media tools (cameras, microphones, and computers); and public access to media transmission systems (local television FM radio).

He further suggests that the local community should own the centre and that priority be given to establishing them in rural areas as these are the main areas where human needs still need to be identified. Although Koning also suggests that donor funding, a public interest fund, and an enabling

environment from government, would be necessary to support the capital intensive community media he has in mind, he reports also on the fund-raising activities of South African community media centres, suggesting that these could be a method of providing additional resources for centres.

Community broadcast receivers, telephones and reading rooms have been in operatio in many countries for nearly two decades. They can now be joined by communal terminals for electronic mail. Some of the services provided by these facilities operate on a commercial basis, for people are glad to pay for a phone call and for contact with relatives through e-mail or other means. Such services can and are carried by media -related infrastructure. Might it not be possible to support 'classic' media operations through them? Within the media themselves, short personal announcements by individuals and social groups, advertising of community-level services by businesses and others, could provide modest but regular income for community media, without distorting their purpose, and in fact encouraging community members to see media as sources of locally relevant vital information. Perhaps such contributions may not guarantee sustainability to community media, but they may introduce an important ingredient in concretising the notion of ownership of the media by the community.

Conclusion

The notion of community, which is central to the definition and development of 'community media', is still not generally agreed upon. However, an approach to community identification from an endogenous perspective, especially through an 'ethnographic' methodology, is a useful start to defining the communication profile and needs of the community, and thus identifying its communication system needs. This then becomes the basis for decisions concerning the kinds of media to be established, and their place within a community communication strategy. Questions related to policy, ownership, control, technical operations and technology, as well as the possibility of sustainability can then be evaluated in the light of the understanding of the community, and its relationship to various media forms and modalities.

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BROADCAST TECHNOLOGY AND DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA: CONVERGENCE, CONCENTRATION AND CONTROL*

I had a memorable experience on the way to this event. I don't mean something that happened this morning; not even anything that happened yesterday. My memory takes me back several decades; in fact to the year 1959.

I was a student at the University College, Ibadan, UCI, as it was called in those days. One of my hobbies, and a profitable source of additional income to augment my scholarship allowance, was writing short stories for publication. I found out very early that the stories could also be broadcast, so I timidly sent a few to the BBC, and soon earned a princely sum of one pound and one shilling (one guinea) per broadcast minute. Encouraged, I decided to submit one of my stories to Broadcasting House, Ikoyi,Lagos. It was entitled "Uncle Talata's Bride"; part folklore, part mystery, part romance, it was quite a gripping little love story linking a hippopotamus, and a bricklayer who was one of the workers that built the bridge over the River Benue in the middle of Nigeria.

Three weeks later, I got an acceptance note with the usual contract form, inviting me to broadcast on a given date, two days ahead. I promptly cut my lectures for the day and rushed to Lagos. Arriving breathless at the Broadcasting House, I asked to see the Director of Programmes and was ushered into his office. The gentleman behind the desk received me warmly, and I stated my mission. He seemed genuinely interested in my writing experience and encouraged me to continue with it. His name was Chinua Achebe, and he had recently published (in 1958) "Things Fall Apart", which

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*Text of the keynote address at the
AFRICAST International Conference, Abuja, Nigeria.
October, 2004.

was to become world classic, one of the best novels of the twentieth century.

As for the business that brought me to Broadcasting House, he directed me to the Controller, National Programmes. The Reverend Yinka Olumide also received me warmly, and congratulated me on my story. But regretted that I had made the journey from Ibadan for nothing. My invitation to broadcast was a contractual formality, just to inform me my work had been accepted. In fact, my short story had already been pre-recorded for broadcast. He gave me the date and time, so I could listen. He also informed me that I would be paid the contract fee of three pounds after the twelve-minute broadcast.

I returned to the university campus, somewhat disappointed. But my ambition had been fired. I was determined to broadcast, one day. So you can imagine how pleased I was to receive a letter, several weeks afterwards, informing me that the Controller, National Programmes would be in Ibadan to recruit students to work in Lagos during the long vacation. I noted the time and place, and promptly presented myself for the interview. There were probably seventy other students there, as the information had been posted on faculty notice boards. Working in broadcasting during the long three-month vacation was seen as a plum job by undergraduates. It paid twenty-five pounds a month, compared with the other alternatives, teaching, fifteen pounds, or civil service, twelve pounds ten shillings.

At the interview, the Reverend Yinka Olumide was pleased to see me again, and asked a few question about my interest in a career in broadcasting. At the end of a long day of waiting, three students were offered vacation employment, and I was one of them! That was the beginning of my romance with broadcasting, which has lasted till this day.

I spent the next long vacation at Broadcasting House, and after graduating from the university in 1961, I went directly to the training post of Programme Assistant, General Duties in Lagos serving first in the Talks Department under the late Ralph Opara. I then undertook many assignments in radio drama with Yemi Lijadu, and in features, with Cyprian Ekwensi and Bisi Lawrence and some radio newsreel with Emmanuel Omatsola. In many of these assignments, I also was called to work with the late Maria Tabiowo, later Maria Irikefe, and Enoh Etuk, later Eno Irukwu.
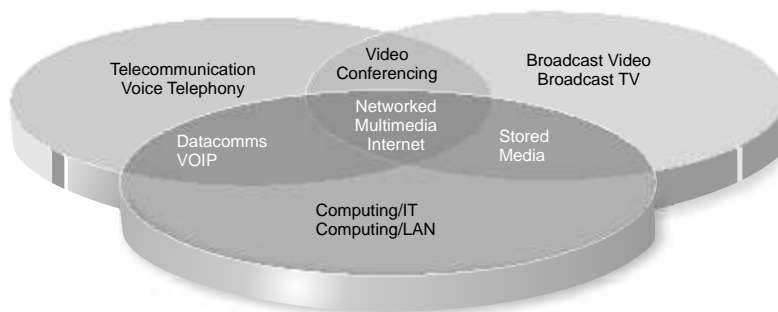
I particularly remember my stints with Outside Broadcasts, covering ceremonial events, including the installation of the late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as Chancellor of the University of Nigeria in December 1961. Perched on the top of a broadcast van in the middle of the university stadium, there I was , a

young graduate apprentice, reporting in English, with a team of veteran broadcasters depending on me: the late Alhaji Ahmed Metteden commenting in Hausa, Oladipo Yemitan in Yoruba, and Philip Chiazor In Igbo, all of them icons of Nigeria broadcasting in that generation.

But I left broadcasting soon afterwards. The next month, in January, 1962, I returned to the University College, Ibadan, having been awarded a post-graduate Ford Foundation fellowship that eventually took me to the United States and further studies. But although academics broke my engagement to broadcasting, it could not terminate the romance. My studies led on to the field of communication, and inevitably, to research on media systems and policies including, naturally, those connected with broadcasting.

It is a long story, with many memorable deviations and pleasurable experiences, and very few regrets. If I invoke those personal memories on this occasion, it is really not to speak about myself, it is to allow me pay tribute publicly, to the many talented men and women broadcast professionals whose generosity and guidance helped me to shape my life. Many of them are no longer with us. But I remember them with reverence. That is what and who have brought me, in one way or another, to this point, to this time and to this place, today.

Media Convergence

Our discussion of the theme of this conference: Broadcast Media and Democracy in Africa will examine three basic challenges: Convergence, Concentration and Control. Between them, these three areas cover major

technological, economic, cultural and political issues that demand serious attention and policy-related actions from regional and national authorities, broadcasters, other professional groups and civil society. Although the situations to be presented may not pose the same problems for different African countries at the present time, it is clear that even those who do not feel concerned today, will have to deal with them, if not tomorrow, then the day after. For what we are witnessing are profound changes in the way media are defined, how they relate to one another, how they deliver services to their audience. The paradigm shift is the consequence of the maturing of the conjuncture between telecommunication informatics, the Internet and media. And we have only just begun!

Convergence was emerging issue only a few years ago. Now it is an inescapable fact. High speed broadband connectivity, based on the adoption of digital technologies, enabling the transmission of vast quantities or qualities of information and data, including sound and visual signals, has created immeasurable opportunities for distributing audio visual signals, services quickly, and widely, including those that are generally broadcast.

According to one source: "Computer technology now plays a key role in content creation and production in both cinema and broadcasting worlds. The ways in which audio-visual material is produced, delivered and consumed are evolving. Content is becoming 'scalable' so that it can be used in different environment and delivered on different network infrastructure. The basic building block is digital encoding of moving images. Once encoded in this format, images may be modified, manipulated, or transmitted in the same way as any other digital information. The systems and networks handling such information are, of course, indifferent to the nature of the source material, be it image, sound or text. Digital source encoding thus forms the basis of technological convergence." (European Commission 1997).

Television and radio on the Internet are one of the consequences of this development, on the delivery side. The digitalisation of the receiving system is the other major development, with far-reaching consequences for broadcasting. This means basically that the television receiver can be linked to a computing device with a hard disc that searches available broadcast programmes and records, as instructed, appropriately designated material, within a much expanded virtual space. This liberates the potential viewer who is no longer constrained to real-time consumption of broadcast programmes. Digitalising the television receiver itself is a growing reality.

Digital television sets with hard drives can save over 40 hours of programming for delayed viewing.

A young Nigerian banker, based in New York, recently declared to me: "I don't watch television anymore." What about news I queried. "I see the news; but when I want to, when I am able to. In any case, anything really urgent I can catch on radio, in the office or in the car. And the news I see is mercifully without advertising; I just spool forward, if I see ads. His remote control has become a potent symbol of viewer/consumer empowerment. More on this later.

Digitalisation is also driving down production costs. Good, broadcast quality material can be achieved with quality with equipment that requires an investment of less than five thousand Euros. This means that more and more individuals or small interest groups can produce their own programmes, without depending on major funding or sponsorship, and can compete in originality and increasingly, technical quality, with much bigger and better established production companies. This should be good news to African content producers, as it challenges them to dig deep into their creative potential and produce unique material for domestic and foreign consumption.

An important characteristic of the Internet as a platform is that it is essentially user-driven, with users themselves generating a substantial portion of the content, in a decentralised system. "Unlike traditional media, the Internet simultaneously supports a variety of communication modes, both transactional and broadcast in nature: one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-many. An Internet user may 'speak' or 'listen' interchangeably, interweaving public communication (the content of which is at least in the case of broadcast content-traditionally regulated with private communication traditionally unregulated). This constant shift from publishing to private communication modes, each regulated through very different principles, constitutes one of the main challenges of Internet regulation." (European Union 2004).

Essentially a free distribution channel, the Internet is also manifestly driving down costs for distribution, almost to zero; while at the same time increasing the reach of the signals, enabling almost anyone who wants to do so, to tell history to the whole world, with minimum investment, and in spite of any restrictions by governments. What the terrorists do on the web can be done by anyone in this room, hopefully for more constructive purposes!

An interesting development is contained in the following dispatch from Cannes by AFP earlier this year:

The launch of TV's first-ever soap (opera) for the tiny mobile phone screen might not suit everyone's taste, but it is living proof that the TV and digital worlds are merging. The first soap-drama specifically made for mobile phones, called "Hotel Franklin," has just been launched by media giant, News Corporation. The episodes last just one-minute because, said News Corp's Lucy Hood, this "seems to us to be the natural length" for phone viewers. That time frame allows for enough character development and plot before leaving a hook at the end to get viewers to look at the next episode".

So, if you can watch television on your mobile telephone, why watch television on your television? The same AFP dispatch contains other interesting information: Hit TV game shows such as "Who wants To Be A Millionaire?" are also transferring to telephones.

Movie lovers are also in for a treat. There has been a huge rise in the number of homes with broadband connections opening the way for video-on-demand services and on-demand television (IPTV).

Viewers appear to appreciate the ease of the system, which enables calling up a movie directly on the TV set, without having to leave home. The cost of the "rental" is either included in a subscription or automatically put onto the phone bill.

The more optimistic market watchers believe it might not be long now before "all digital devices in the home, including the DVD, mobile phones, digital cameras and the brand-new digital video recorders are hooked up together."

For some of us in Africa, it may seem that the time is not now for these innovations to catch up with us and become living reality; but as we know from many other experiences, the future is now. We may argue about the fragility and unreliability of our infrastructure, including epileptic electricity, unpredictable telephones, and impossibly meagre bandwidth. But these are not insurmountable problems any longer. In Malaysia, in Singapore, in Mauritius, solutions compatible with our circumstance are being put in place.

But there is another sense in which convergence is being used and experienced: 'media convergence'. The underlying basic idea, is that "The messages delivered to previous generations through newspapers, magazines, books, radio, television and film will come to future generations

through a single delivery system – and it will – be digital." In the short term, media entrepreneurs are exploiting the concept through combining operations from newspapers, radio and television station platforms owned by the same companies. News, advertising and marketing have been the most involved; with integrated editorial services, using the same news items, but angling and preparing them slightly differently to suit each medium. We also see this concept in international news reporting where the same journalist may shoot their own video footage, do a radio piece and send a story to a wire service. An example of media convergence is this from Uganda: The publishing house of Uganda's leading independent English language daily, Monitor Publications, is currently drawing up plans for the "convergence" of its three media platforms to make better use of editorial content.

In addition to the 10-year-old *The Monitor* (28,000 circulation), the publishing house also includes the vernacular daily Ngoma (7,000 copies) and the Monitor FM radio station. According to David Ouma Balikowa, the multimedia editor for Monitor Publications and former Editor of *The Monitor* "The idea of radio as a media platform was not alien to me. Actually while working as the editor of *The Monitor* newspaper, I drew up the initial plan to start a radio" and was part of its implementation. Media convergence has always been on mind".

Mr. Balikowa says that media convergence is not just a matter of duplicating content across different platforms; it is a question of "synergies between the newspaper and the radio (both news and advertising) "It is about cross-breeding content and skills to arrive at your kind of multimedia mix that works for the multiple platforms," he says.

The challenges of convergence are technological. Its promises are far-reaching gains for viewers and listeners' and will probably impact social relations around media-related lifestyles.

Concentration

Media convergence is made possible by another major issue and challenge we intend to focus on, that is, concentration. In his classic and seminal book, The *New Media Monopoly*, Ben Bagdikian examines how giant media conglomerates control American media. The Big Five: "Time Warner, Disney, Murdoch's News Corporation, Bertelsmann of Germany, and Viacom (formerly CBS) own most of the newspapers, magazines, books, radio and TV stations, and movie studios of the United States. …. Though today's media reach more Americans than ever before, they are controlled by

the smallest owners than ever before. In 1983 there were 50 dominant media corporations; today there are five. These five corporations decide what most citizens will – or will not – learn."

The respected media critic believes that the restricted ownership of the media is not 'in the public interest' because it interferes with the media's responsibility to "provide diversity in news, opinion and commentary that serves all Americans, right, left, and independent, as well as access to their local stations as well as true choices in their national programs". Concentration of media ownership is both an economic and cultural issue. The emergence of private broadcasting in many African countries, including Nigeria, has enabled some diversity in both ownership and content. There are now credible and competitive alternatives to the government monopoly media and to public broadcasters in most content areas including news. While slim public budgets may often inhibit infrastructure development of public media, some of the better endowed private media have been able to benefit from adopting newer, more flexible, and cheaper digital-oriented technologies to give the government stations feisty competition, if not surpass them.

Such competition has undoubtedly led to improvements in the overall quality of local productions. But the issue of alternative points of view, of consistent diversity is one that needs to be revised. We should also bear in mind that for every private television station in countries like Nigeria, there are two or more government/public ones, operated under the supervision of state or federal governments; so privatisation is not necessarily a guarantee of far-reaching diversity.

To what extent can either the private or public broadcast media in Africa be said to provide independent perspectives, free from the control of the political or financial/economic elite? Bagdikian's critique of media monopoly in America is instructive for us in Africa. Even if vast amounts of money are not involved, in terms of advertising incomes, the creative and content areas of broadcasting are inevitably impacted by vested interests.

More and more, broadcast content in Africa as elsewhere is created through sponsorship funding in both public and private media. Where the sponsors no longer insist on advertising inserts, more insidious forms of content manipulation are employed, within the programme content itself. Because of restrictions in ownership, whether through continuing government monopoly or non-inclusive private ownership, the effect of concentration is to restrict   the range of media offerings and thus constrict access and choice.

This is a continuing area of struggle that has to be constantly watched and debated, for in the midst of freedom there may still be chains.

Privatisation and deregulation of broadcasting in Africa are considered major progressive steps towards media pluralism and democratisation, at one level. But we should perhaps begin to consider and worry about the possible emergence of media concentration. This will take two major forms: ownership of private broadcast media by a few selected individuals and groups chosen for their affiliations to government or acceptable to the licensing authority, and therefore expected to promote the interests of their cronies through the media they own. The ownership of broadcast media in different markets by the same commercial interests is another form of media concentration. Either of these situations can be disquieting; and certainly constitutes an area for policy dialogue among broadcasters and civil society. There is, of course, the other possibility of cross media ownership, where the same enterprises are active in newspapers and broadcasting at the same time, in the same or different markets within the national space.

The media regulatory frames in some African countries are supportive of these forms of concentration, while in others the issue is yet to be thoroughly debated and clarified. Having been involved in recent months as a member of the Working Group reviewing Nigeria's mass communication policy, I am aware that this is an area of tension that requires policy action based on the emerging democratic environment of this country.

Perhaps the flip side of concentration is active de-concentration. This means creating opportunities for diversification of media ownership through creating new environment and encouraging new actors. For example, broadening the base of broadcasting to include genuinely community stations, and approving licences for universities, women's groups and non-political parties to operate stations, with clearly-defined guidelines to ensure that they add value in specific ways to the cultural and broad educational and democratising services that broadcasting can contribute to society.

In that frame of reference, a university radio or television station, for example, would reflect in its general programming and management, the unique contributions that an institution of higher learning can make to national discourse on development issues, rather than struggle to compete with commercial stations through mimicking their programming and profit-oriented values.

A station that seeks to reflect womens' interests or environment concerns, or

any such social agenda should be required to create content that reflects its mission. There should be policy and monitoring tools to assist in maintain the contracted orientation. The point needs to be made that the alternative to government broadcasting is not necessarily commercial broadcasting. Non-commercial alternatives need to be designed and encouraged. How to ensure that such de-concentrated diversity is sustainable becomes a matter for public discussion and regulatory action.

Control

Convergence and concentration are related to the third major issue of our discussion: control. What is the nature of control in broadcasting, in the era of converging technologies and growing ownership concentration? Is control even possible? Who controls what, how, with what effect? Who can control what?

Content is central to broadcasting. So control of content is an obvious place to start. We have shown earlier that with convergence, and especially because of Internet-based operations, content control can become more decentralised, more democratic. The individual and small producer can become more prominent in generating content, because production costs are lower, with more accessible technological facilities and solutions. But to what extent can the smaller players produce effectively in all the content categories? Especially in international news and entertainment, to what extent can they compete with the larger production machines?

The issue here goes beyond national boundaries and touches on "Flows of Cultural Goods" within international trade and negotiations in the wake of globalisation. (Human Development Report, 2004). There is contention about the fact that broadcast content in news and entertainment is dominated by products from United States. Such domination is seen not only in market terms, where American products are the top grossing films at the international box office, but in terms of impact on culture and lifestyles and identity. The need for countries to protect their own content production industries through subventions has thus been seen as imperative, even in places like France where the extreme protectionist solution of banning foreign content is not acceptable. Other countries, including Canada, have chosen to impose local content quotas, to protect national industries.

Underlying all these actions is argument about the nature of cultural products: whether they are commodities like other offerings on the market, or whether they represent something special. Those who argue that cultural

products should be exempted from the usual treatment of commodities are concerned that 'their national cultures will be swept away by the economic forces of the global market threatening their cultural identity'. The most extreme advocates of the cultural exception fear that foreign films and television programmes will spread foreign culture and eventually obliterate local cultures and traditional values'. (ibid). This has led therefore led to suggestions for policy interventions. At the consumption level, these fears have been expressed increasingly about internet-derived broadcast entertainment, especially whether young people watch foreign pornography on the web. Measures to control indecent content through self-censorship and accountability by content distributors on the web are constantly evolving, and will continue to be reviewed, including the possibility of legislation.

Broadcast Technology: The Democratic Imperative

Another extension of local content protection argument is to encourage local ownership of broadcasting facilities. Community radio, for example is seen as way of ensuring content that reflects the needs and aspirations and culturally acceptable values of listeners. In a truly 'community-driven' station, content production is the responsibility of the community and its representatives who manage the programmes which provide continuous opportunities for the affirmation and negotiation of their values.

Many exciting examples exist of the way in which community radios have continued to build local capacity for dialogue and community renewal and cultural development. Radio Ada in Ghana is a much cited and worthy pioneer in this field. Radio Xai-Xai in Mozambique, Radio Mbissao in Senegal, Lumbobo Radio in Swaziland. Democracy Radio (KC) in South Africa, Mama FM in Uganda, a women's community radio, and many other broadcasting initiatives are demonstrating the potential of community broadcasting to contribute to development and to democratic dialogue. They may be a viable alternative to the profit-oriented commercial media, through focussing on issues of justice, equality and social participation.

And even where truly community broadcasting has not yet taken root, for policy or other reasons, programming that is sensitive to giving voice to those hitherto voiceless or marginalised individuals and groups, on national, state, or even commercial stations, can continue to point the way to more democratic use of the airwaves. An on-going COMED project in Burkina Faso, Guinea and Senegal, produces and airs programs where parents engage other parents on education issues, including increasing enrolments, especially for girls, parents' involvement in school and community, nutrition

in school, sexual harassment and other local priority issues. The Association of Parents in the countries supports the programmes through their members and encourages listening groups of parents who discuss the programmes and provide feedback, as well as commit to necessary follow-up action.

The way forward?

It is perhaps in these decentralised models of broadcasting that democratic space can be cultivated and expanded, permitting women, children and men in villages and urban communities, to practice self-expression and to participate in building their communities. In these stations, local political representatives and traditional leaders can be included in programmes that enable their functions and actions to be explained and interrogated. Digital technology can make this happen at the local level more easily and more inexpensively; it can also facilitate connecting the local with the international through Internet distribution. In these and similar experiences that will emerge in the future, we can begin to see the practice of 'communication for development' in action.

The challenge for broadcasting professionals in Africa is to continue to press forward by showing concrete examples of how increased technological possibilities can be used to social advantage; so that progress in hardware can be matched by progress in software, and in 'people ware'. That challenge includes partnering with civil society to guarantee the policy and regulatory environment that enables broadcasting in Africa to fulfil its development potential. By critically evaluating new policy initiatives, by seeking to develop new tools and training methodologies for increasing citizen participation in broadcasting, they can contribute to strengthening the feeble democratic structures that are being built in various parts of the continent.

These actions may start at the national level; but they will need to move to the regional and Pan-African levels. AFRICAST is well-placed as a platform for promotion a new agenda: democratising communication in Africa through community broadcasting. Imagine what would happen if we set ourselves a target over the next five years to commit African broadcasters to such an agenda, and to develop partnerships at local, regional and continental levels that will enable us to move the agenda forward.

This is not a call to business as usual. It will require deep reflection and good reflexes. It will require dialogue across communities and across professions. It will undoubtedly require resources, human, technical, financial. Above all, it will require vision and passion and lots of energy.

Let us put our money where our mouth is; let us show that African

3

WHAT MY GRANDMOTHER TAUGHT ME ABOUT COMMUNICATION: PERSPECTIVES FROM AFRICAN CULTURAL VALUES*

Abstract

In this essay, the author examines the roots of African patrimony and its relevance in developing and implementing an Afrocentric theory of communication, culture and social change.

Résumé

Dans cet essai, l'auteur se penche sur les racines du patrimoine africain, et rôle important que jouerait ce dernier dans la mise au point et l'application d'une théorie afro centriste de communication, de culture et de changements sociaux.

Introduction: The African imperative

Since the human being is 'the communicating animal', all human societies are endowed with a legacy of communication theory and practice. And because communication is the social mechanism for building society, all communication is rule-governed, providing the basis for expectations and predictions of what others will say and do. The rules of communication in society also provide a basis for evaluating what is correct or right or good, i.e., for making ethical and moral judgements about communication practice and communication acts.

The underlying basis for such judgements, i.e. the underlying 'theory' is often dormant, unexpressed, and yet very much active in regulating the

behaviour of individuals and groups. Cultures outside Africa have developed, codified and articulated these underlying ideas, based on the experience of their societies over the centuries, and are therefore able now to propose them as organised bodies of thought, through appropriate meta-languages. In matters of communication, Africans have a fundamental right, and a responsibility, to make the wisdom of their ancestors known, accepted and adopted.

What is the African patrimony in this area?

What my grandmother taught me

More than twenty years ago, I was invited by a group of media professionals to give a talk in Benin City. I flew up from Lagos, and first stopped at the family house to see my mother. My grandmother was also there. I spoke to them briefly and went on to give my lecture. Among other ideas, I spoke about freedom of expression and the ethics of journalism.

Mission accomplished, I returned to the family to spend the night. As always, my grandmother was curious about what I did for a living. She had got used to the idea that although I was referred to as 'Doctor', I couldn't do a thing about her cough, since I was only a doctor of books! But exactly what did I do?

I started to tell her about the talk I had just given that afternoon. I was doing quite well in my explanation. I explained about freedom of speech, and how everyone should be allowed to say what was on their mind, in the interest of the family and community, and reminded her, that she, and our elders often said: 'Ron ofo e tse udaju', meaning, 'speaking the truth should not be regarded as insolence', a way of encouraging the young to speak fearlessly without the usual reserve that their blunt speech might offend elders. Then as I tried to explain ethics, and professionalism in journalism, I found myself stammering; the words did not flow so readily; I could not quite find the expressions in my mother tongue to clearly explain what I had said earlier that day in English, with considerable eloquence. I spoke about truth-telling, about bribery and the need to be good and honest. My grandmother listened intently and greeted me warmly, invoking my praise names and those of my paternal and maternal forebears, thanking them for sparing her life so she could witness my progress and success.

But that encounter set me thinking. The next time I had a chance to see my

grandmother again, I had some questions for her; and I got some answers. I have been ruminating over them for a long time.

I share them with you now, because I consider that African communication scholars and practitioners need to be inspired by the wisdom of our ancestors, especially our grandmothers, mothers and aunts, as we seek to anchor our discipline in those cultural foundations that will provide the validity and efficacity that we must produce in our focus on communication for social change, including communication to sustain a culture of peace in Africa.

African communication ethics?

What follows is an attempt to sketch an approach to discussing communication and media ethics through looking at the meta-language of a few African cultures. First, the intention is to see whether these African cultures distinguish different types of communication events and products, and how and whether such differentiation provides unique perspectives on communication practice, in terms of ethical considerations.

Second, I will attempt to draw implications from the findings for the international discourse on media ethics, and especially for training of communicators and the development of communication policies in Africa that would help promote a culture of peace and social change.

What is truth?

When I asked my grandmother:' Nene, what is 'truth'?, she burst forth into a song, by way of response, as often elderly women in our cultures do. The following folk song (translated) in Itsekiri, my mother tongue, spoken by a minority ethnic group in the Niger Delta area of southern Nigeria, is her answer:

> That which I have seen, that is what I say;
> I will not say it with fear.
> That which I have seen, that is what I say;
> I will not say it with fear.
> When a piece of yam is planted in the ground,
> The rains come, the season comes; and it grows;
> When a human being is planted in the ground,

> The rains come, the season comes; and he doesn't grow.
> That which I have seen, that is what I say;
> I will not say it with fear.

According to this song, certain facts and events are incontrovertible. Everyone agrees with statements about these facts, because everyone has experienced them. You can plant seeds or cuttings and expect them to grow, and to harvest the fruits; but human corpses 'planted' in the earth do no grow; they just rot away.

Therefore statements, based on experienced (or 'lived') and verifiable facts, are accepted as true. In this sense, truth is based on inter-subjective validation. It is therefore not normally subject to controversy and refutation.

Furthermore, such truth is the product of the community, rather than the individual. The Itsekiri word for 'truth' is 'oron fo', which means 'good word', or 'genuine word'. Truth has a value dimension; it is good and reliable. Therefore it is desirable. The song says 'I will say what I know without fear'; in other words, since what I know is an incontrovertible fact, and everyone can attest to that, I have the courage to proclaim it without fear that it would be refuted, or that it would cause offence.

The Itsekiri idea of truth finds an echo in other languages of Nigeria. Among the Yoruba of southwest Nigeria, truth is 'otito', which etymologically comes from 'oro t'o to', which means 'straight word'; straight in the way that an arrow, or a spear is straight, direct, not crooked. In Igbo, the majority language of the southeast of the country, 'ezi okwu', which is the expression for 'truth' means literally 'a good or real word.'Opata (1998) has dealt extensively with this in his essay, "Truth in Igbo Thought and Life". In all three languages, Igbo, Itsekiri and Yoruba, truth is seen as representing genuineness and goodness.

What is news?

The Itsekiri recognise 'iyen', as a report of an event by someone else.

The hearer did not witness or experience the event; and the teller may or may not have witnessed or experienced it. But the point of view for defining something as 'iyen', is the receiver's viewpoint; 'someone told me.'

It is not expected that 'iyen' would be necessarily true. All that seems

important is that the hearer takes no responsibility for its veracity. He can relay it to others, so long as he identifies it as something he heard from someone else, not something that he himself is originating. The subject matter of 'iyen' is usually factual, rather than fictitious. It can relate to a person, or a situation.

In terms of believability, 'irohin', news, among the Yoruba, is rated less than 'af'ojuba', that is 'what was seen with (one's own) eyes'. So while we say in English, 'seeing is believing', the Yoruba say 'being told is not as valuable as witnessing'; in other words, an eyewitness personal experience is more believable than a reported account, presumably, because it is more true.

Opata (1998) refers to a similar point of view, in the validation of truth among the Igbo:

> Because truth is seen as 'ihe mere eme', testimony is one way that the Igbo validate the truth of statements. Thus the Igbo prioritize 'seeing' to 'hearing', as in the Igbo proverb: 'afuru n'anya ka anuru na-nti'; meaning: what I witnessed with my eyes is greater than what I heard with my ears.'

Thus in deciding on the truth of statements, especially in cases of conflict resolution, the Igbo depend a lot on oral testimony from those who witnessed the event first hand.

Itsekiri faction: 'ita'

Folklore is an important area of Itsekiri oral tradition and cultural expression,as it is for many traditional or transitional societies, especially those still with significant proportions of illiterates. Folk tales, myths, and legends are categories of the oral tradition that are regarded as 'ita'. They differ from 'iyen', news, by not being true or factual in the literal sense. Theyare accepted as things that may have happened, or that may have been possible, in the dim, distant past, or as things which were handed down from parents and ancestors; therefore, while not literally true, they are culturally acceptable, even as fiction, meaning they never existed, and may have been made up.

'Ita' may be told about human beings, sometimes identified with names that symbolise a significant aspect of their character, (Ajogri 'one who burns quickly, like a raging fire', meaning a hot-tempered person), or about human beings from legendary history, whose names are well known, though not usually from the living memory of anyone alive at the telling. Berry (1960)

makes a distinction between fictional and non-fictional narrative. Explaining, he says:

> 'Under the latter heading I would subsume what has been variously considered as myths, legends and chronicles. They are distinguished from tales proper, that is, from fictional narrative, by the fact that they are regarded in context as true. Ethnographically at least, they are history. Myths, chiefly stories of the deities and the origins of natural phenomena, are especially important throughout West Africa....' Berry also speaks about 'Legends which recount the origins of families and clans and explain the ritual and taboos of the ancestral code...told only for instruction within the group, and rarely to outsiders...

'What seems to be important for 'ita', is their moral validity, based on the moral lesson they are expected to teach. Therefore at the end of every 'ita', there is usually a didactic formulaic statement: 'that is why our people say that... (it does not pay to be greedy). In such versions, 'ita' belongs to Berry's 'fictional' category, which includes 'serious explanatory and moralizing tales, humorous trickster, and tales developed wholly oressentially in human society'. We may also call them 'editorialising' stories

'Ita', like 'pure fiction' tales, usually take place in the animal kingdom, involving folkloric characters, e.g. the tortoise, who in Itsekiri tales is the protagonist/trickster. (The equivalents are 'ijapa', the tortoise, among the Yoruba, 'mbeku', the tortoise also, among the Igbo, 'kere', the dog, among the Hausa, or 'anansi', the spider, among the Akan of Ghana.)

This brief excursion into various forms of discourse helps to provide the cultural canvas against which it is possible to make valid distinctions among genres that are considered real and those for which fiction is a more appropriate label.

Truth and accuracy

Questions of truth do not concern 'ita'; though there might be challenges about accuracy in transmission of a well-known story. The teller may have a limited repertoire, and may tend to forget the main characters in a story, or may forget the sequence of events or story line; or he may forget the punch line or moral at the end of the story.

Since 'ita' is 'performed' 'live', or face-to-face, the audience would interject with corrections, or someone might offer to retell the story, providing what they consider the 'correct' version.

Here accuracy is a function either of what is remembered, or how it compares with what others who are present remember, or of what version each person was exposed to. The arguments that arise are therefore not of an ethical or moral nature; true they have to do with 'fidelity'; but it is 'fidelity of recollection', rather than 'fidelity to reality.'

But even here, the teller of the story is allowed, even expected, to deviate from the 'original' tale as he was told it, imposing his own verbal virtuosity and creativity in the telling; so long as such deviation does not destroy the essential elements and moral vision of the story. Different story-tellers are evaluated according to their verbal skills in relating stories that everyone may know. In the retelling, parts of the story may be dramatised, or 'illustrated', or, even 'performed', with music, dance and costumes, in the manner of what Ezeokoli (1974) has called 'story theatre'.

Sources in/of communication

We have already seen that 'iyen', news, is the report of an event. The receiver is not required to identify who told him the 'iyen'; but he could choose to do so, especially in cases where the veracity of the source is challenged. Someone may ask: 'Who reported this news to you? To which the response may be: 'It is some human being/person or some people who told me'. Or: 'I was told by some people/someone I met in the market yesterday.'

Usually, such an answer would be enough for the questioner, and no further source identification would be required. There is no intention here of protecting the source; though confidentiality is recognised and cherished in another context.

However, there are statements which are attributed to unidentified sources: 'they say/said....' These types of statement seem to be suspect in many people's view; and if a person is perceived as fond of making such vaguely attributed statements, especially if they concern uncomplimentary information or news about other persons and their character or situation, that reporter/speaker may become guilty of what the Yoruba call 'nwon ni nwon ni', which means, 'they said, they said'.

This is the same expression that the Yoruba use for 'rumour'. They regard a rumour as a statement that is attributed to a general, unspecified source, possibly fictitious. Among the Igbo, the expression for 'rumour mongering' is 'igba asili', meaning "circulating 'they said'". Therefore a rumourmonger has

low credibility because his allegations or accusations are not seen as authenticated by possible nameable sources. Often the rumourmonger is challenged. A famous saying in West African pidgin English makes the point: 'Dem say, dem say; who say?' Usually the person asked cannot name anyone; or, to increase their credibility, they may be forced to lie, and to name someone, to accuse someone falsely of being the source of the information whose veracity had been suspected.

Lies, damn lies

A lie is deliberate falsehood; saying something that is not true. In Itsekiri, 'ita ekun' means ' a vain or unjust story'. The liar cannot be trusted; and trust is seen as being at the centre of good social relations. A lie can be the falsification of fact; as the Itsekiri would say, 'presenting something which is black and saying that it is white'. Lying is not making a factual error; it is deliberately misleading others through changing facts, or creating 'facts that do not exist'. The lie cannot be corroborated by the evidence and experience of others; it is not like truth that is common knowledge. In fact, a lie is regarded as contra-factual.

Usually, a lie is directed at another; to undermine them or to gain advantage over them. The notion of injustice is dominant in perceptions of lie telling. There is sympathy for the 'victim' of the lie, as of an injustice; the person lied against is seen as someone who has been wronged, by being 'pasted' with a lie' against his reputation (Slander).

Lying calls forth sanctions; and often recourse is had to the ancestors, praying them to punish the malefactor.

In Itsekiri cosmology it is expected that liars would be punished through ancestral intervention. In traditional jurisprudence, proven liars are punished by being asked to retract their statements, and to make amends if they wronged another or injured someone's reputation. They also are askedto appease the ancestors through rituals, both to cleanse themselves and for the protection of the community or family forced to harbour such an evil-doer; for deliberate falsehood is considered an evil.

So the sanctions for deliberate falsification, 'ita ekun,' are both legal and moral. But there are ethical dimensions to lying as well. People can be induced to lie through promise of reward, or through threat of punishment. Thus professionals such as diviners or traditional healers may be induced, or

whatever considerations, to give untrue predictions or incorrect prescriptions.

The Itsekiri do not approve of people being induced to lie, of taking or 'eating' bribes; and as for lying because of threats, physical or spiritual, they expect courage to repulse evil, as they believe that the courageous are assured of spiritual protection which is always available for the righteous and morally correct, through the force of ancestral and power and 'natural justice'.

So we often hear a principled Itsekiri say:' a ma pa mi ara bo, me wa je se e', meaning 'even if you were to whip me to the point where my skin peels off, I will not agree to do it (what you ask of me)'. Courage is being willing to undergo the most severe physical torture. And why accept torture? Because the individual believes in doing what is right, what the ancestors accept and what they teach as right. There are persons who have a reputation, and are admired for being principled, for refusing to deviate from the truth, when to do so would have brought them obvious and easy personal gain.

Learning to tell the truth

The family and the community are where people learn to tell the truth, or at least, learn 'not to lie', and it is there that sanctions against lying are first applied, usually in the form of corporal punishment for the young liar. It is at tender ages also that people learn to be willing to suffer for refusing to lie, to be willing to be whipped until the skin peels, rather than to say that which the individual knows is not true. The struggle to maintain integrity is thus learnt early as a moral battle for which the individual must be prepared to pay a heavy price. And in that battle, many young people are brutalised into succumbing, learning to lie; and yet there are also others, probably the majority, who learn to refuse to succumb to falsehood.

Statistics: How many have died?

Africans can and do count. Every African language has a numerical system, for expressing quantity, and for undertaking numerical operations. Some systems are based on primary numbers from one to ten; and the multiples of ten. This is somewhat similar to English, for example. Others are based on twenty, and multiples of twenty, with a sub-system based on five. The basic issue is that every language can express numbers fairly exactly, if there is

need to do so. The expression may become clumsy after one thousand, but it can be done.

The interesting communication problem is not only how number/quantity is expressed, but what significance is attached to quantity, psychologically. In Itsekiri culture, there is a reluctance to count human beings. Nevertheless if asked: how many people ate this meal? An Itsekiri would be able to say, "ten persons", or "five men and ten women", or even "fifteen people, ten of them women, and five of them men". But the same person would say: "People were very many at the funeral." If you pressed for an estimate, you would be told either that they were really very, very many persons, or that the people there were just like the sands of the sea; or you may be told that there were so many people, they could not be counted. In this wise, one may say that the Itsekiri ability scale of numbers and estimate of quantity, goes fairly comfortably from one to about fifty; thereafter it jumps to infinity!

A large banner in various parts of the business district of Cotonou, Benin Republic, proclaims: "AIDS IS IN BENIN! 168,000 people are living with AIDS in Benin. 500 Beninese are dying every day". In 1998, 700 people were said to be dying from AIDS- related causes in Zimbabwe every week. Now the figure is 1000+. What difference do these figures make to many Africans, even those who have been to school? Do they serve as a deterrent? When is a number large enough to be alarming? Fifty? Uncountable? Does it matter?

Igbogbo revisited

In 1977–1982, with funding from UNFPA, UNESCO executed a research and training project implemented by the Department of Mass Communication at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. The project dealt with "Communication strategies for family planning in rural and semi-urban areas." As Head of the host department, I was named National Director of the project.

The first activity was a study tour of Asian countries organized for two of my colleagues. One of them, Onuora Nwuneli, visited the Philippines, India and Korea. The other, Frank O. Ugboajah, toured the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia. The findings of the visits were published in our first monograph. Onuora Nwuneli was appointed Research Coordinator of the project to assist in carrying out the work plan over the next five years.

Igbogbo: The people and community

After several months of searching, we finally located a research and action site. Igbogbo, a semi-urban largely Moslem community of about 10,000 farmers and traders, was situated about 36 kilometers north of Lagos, near the town of Ikorodu. There, for over three years, we carried on our research and action programs related to project objectives.

We conducted social surveys designed to provide empirical data on the demographic, socio-economic and cultural realities of the village. We involved various local groups and individuals, men as well as women, in extensive discussions and structured in-depth interviews; and accumulated dozens of hours of audio-tape recordings. In retrospect, we had been conducting 'focus group discussions' FGDS, before they became popular in the literature and practice of population IEC. Our goal was to uncover the value structures, attitudes, knowledge and practices of the people of Igbogbo in areas of interest to planning and implementing communication strategies for promoting family planning services.

At the time, family planning was not a public issue in Nigeria. There was no indication that government was interested in considering a population policy; even though population questions related to census operations and results were already of national importance. The references to family planning tended to be either hostile, and some thought of it as unacceptable and unnecessary in the Nigerian context. It can be said that during that period of affluence, public attitudes were pro-natalist; and family planning was confined to the activities of the Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria, PPFN, the local IPPF affiliate.

Igbogbo: The approach

Our initial surveys in Igbogbo, and our own theoretical orientation suggested to us that targeting 'family planning' as an issue and promoting it directly would not be an effective approach. We were deeply convinced that the question of family size, and the value and meaning of having children, of marriage and family relations, were interrelated ideas connected with development and improvement in the condition of living of individuals and societies, and that family planning and population issues should consequently be examined in a multi-dimensional value context. We therefore, quite early decided to change the focus of our work to include family health, and family welfare in addition to family p lanning.

Reflecting our broad multi-disciplinary approach, our research team was composed of an economic historian (Babatunde Agiri), a public health physician (Larry Hunponu-Wusu), a Nursing Sister, a nutritionist (Remi Adegbenro) an environmental geographer (Jonathan Ekpenyong), in addition to communication researchers (Alfred Opubor and Onuora Nwuneli). Students of the Department of Mass Communication were recruited as research assistants and trainees on the project, since one of the objectives of the project was to institutionalize population communication in the curriculum of the Department of Mass Communication, University of Lagos.

Preliminary steps

As we reviewed relevant literature, and studied the local environment, further reflection led us to a few important conclusions:

(I) the ideas and experiences which we will encounter about family life, and especially, husband-wife relations, child-rearing and family health, exist within a structure of values deeply rooted in the cultural andreligious ideas and practices of the people of Igbogbo;

(ii) traditional practices of family planning/contraception, and attitudes towards family size are part of a structure of ideas within a logical framework, with underlying rationality, as well as contradictions and inconsistencies;

(iii) communication interventions designed to affect the knowledge, attitude and behavior of semi-urban and rural Nigerians should take into account, their cultural dispositions and social activities, and exploit them systematically;

(iv) exposure to modern mass media is selective on the part of villagers; but leisure time use of media is heavy, especially through exposure to ethnic-language entertainment radio programs and sports broadcasts; (v) participation in ethnic group social activities is considerable, occupying much leisure time. Visiting relatives and friends, and engaging in communal socializing are valued, and generally practised;

(vi) consequently the theoretical orientation should focus on how to instigate attitude and behavior change on fertility, contraception and family life issues through exploiting the 'chinks' in the cultural armor. The idea of 'logical inconsistency' lent itself as a potentially useful entry point for such a venture.

Proposed communication strategy: Community festival

As a logical extension of these and related findings, it was decided that we base our communication strategy on the 'community festival' as a culturally appropriate mass medium for social mobilization through participation. We therefore planned, with the collaboration of the people of Igbogbo, a Family Health and Family Welfare Festival that was held in December 1979.

The Festival took place over five days featuring particular events on each day. The fist day was the formal opening of the Festival, involving representatives of the Lagos State government, the local government, and traditional leaders. The activities were well covered by the media. The second day focused on health, especially maternal and child health, with immunization of children and a contest for the healthiest babies, the best three of whom were rewarded with prizes donated by commercial firms The third day highlighted agriculture, food and related technology; coordinated by our nutritionist in collaboration with extension staff from the Lagos State Ministry of Agriculture, and technology inputs from agricultural engineering students. Demonstrations on improved food preparation and new farming implements were much appreciated by the crowds that attended the Festival. On the fourth day, local culture was celebrated, with male and female age-group dance troupes from Igbogbo and surrounding villages. This was a truly participatory event with other villagers joining the dancers at will.

The fifth and final day, was the climax of the Festival, and for us the big event of our strategy. It was the premiere of the dramatic performancethat we had been preparing for close to five months. In our in-depth discussions with the men and women of Igbogbo, we had come to appreciate the intricacies of family life issues. Bode Osanyin, our resident playwright/dramatist from the University's Centre for Cultural Studies, had participated in our research work and discussions. Out of his insights and our briefing, he created a play: "AYITALE, the story of the fruits that crush the trunk."

Ayitale: The play

Briefly, "Ayitale" tells the story of Ibisola, wife of a village bicycle repairer, Agboola. After eight children, in as many years, she is beginning to listen to the advice of the nurse in the health centerthat the time has come to put a halt to child bearing. But her husband would not hear of it. No argument was good enough to convince him that his wife's body was tired; that he could

show he cared for her by agreeing to limit the size of his family, and by taking steps to prevent further births. Ibisola becomes pregnant again. Unable to survive the difficult birth of twins, she dies in childbirth, thus becoming the tree trunk that was crushed by the fruits.

In the final scene of the play, the husband, Agboola, walks onto the stage with the newly-born twins in his arms, ashamed, confused, in tears; a tragic victim of his own cultural rigidity and selfishness.

The actors, students of the local teacher-training college, had rehearsed hard and long for nearly four months straight, with our dramatist and research team, and gave a convincing and professional performance. The play's use of local folklore and history as well as the local dialect of the Yoruba language created an instant bond with the largely indigenous audience of over 800 persons. Right from the opening dance drama, with its invocation of the praise names of the culture heroes and founding leaders of Igbogbo, and the accompanying sounds of talking drums, the audience was drawn into the action, and stayed with it all the way through to the inevitable tragic end.

There were few dry eyes in the open air village square in Igbogbo that December night in 1979 when the play was first performed. Men and women sniffled quietly. Some wept openly for Ibisola, and for Agboola and maybe even for themselves, in a kind of collective catharsis. It was a powerful emotional experience shared by the community, demonstrating the potential of drama as a mass medium; and vindicating our original intention of the festival and cultural performance as effective media of persuasive communication.

In the follow up research, three months and six months afterwards, more than 80 per cent of those interviewed remembered the story line and understood the lesson of the play, that unregulated fertility can bring misery and even death, and that it can and should be prevented.

Ayitale: Theory and practice

The theoretical underpinning of "Ayitale" was "logical inconsistency. Basically, it was argued that the same individual can hold, at the same time, thoughts or ideas which may be in contradiction. So long as the secontradictory thoughts and ideas are not brought into direct confrontation, the individual is quite at ease. But should there be reason for these thoughts to confront one another, the individual will be forced to make a choice. The

choice made implies a change of attitude with reference to one or other or both of the ideas in conflict.

For example, in our focus group discussions, the men of Igbogbo were adamantly opposed to abortions; they considered them evil and contrary to traditional values of responsible family life, attributing induced abortion to immoral women and girls trying to escape the results of their promiscuity or infidelity, both reprehensible.

We then presented the men with the following scenario:

> 'Imagine your twelve year-old daughter on her way from school one afternoon. As she is passing through a secluded farm near the village, the local 'madman' grabs her, forces her down and rapes her. A little while later, she is discovered to be pregnant. What would you do'?

The reactions were immediate, violent and predictable. The men all expressed revulsion at the possibility that their daughters could carry the child of a man who was mentally ill; and that they would be grandfathers of such a child. What would they do? Without hesitation, they all would decide on abortion, which they considered traditionally justifiable under the circumstances.

For us the discussions were enlightening; they demonstrated that evenstrongly held attitudes and beliefs could be 'moved', if the right environment was created for re-evaluating them. We further argued that other issues involving family size and family planning could be approached in the same manner, and that the logical inconsistencies related to these issues could be exploited as a strategy for attitude and behaviour change. It was in that light that "Ayitale" was written and produced.

Conclusion: The way forward

The importance of the excerpts from my work-in-progress, provided above, is that although it shows how communication is perceived within some ethnic communities in Nigeria, it opens up a way of looking at the relationship between communication and culture. It thus provides a basis for understanding how people will view what they hear, what they see, what they are told, including about development problems, including HIV/AIDS, as a function of what communication categories and values they have learnt in their cultural background. It may be that this kind of close analysis is relevant for considering persuasive approaches for attempting culture-

specific behavior and social change programs required for tackling HIV/AIDS.

Are there African theories of communication? Are there African theories of behavior and social change? What would these theories consist of? What would they focus on? Would they stress: individuals or social groups or the individual-in-the-group? What communication strategies would be applicable for creating change, from an Afrocentric perspective? What are the meta-languages of African communication? Should we study them language by language and culture by culture, or their generalizable communication framework related to 'Africanity'? What tools or combination of intellectual skills do we need to accomplish the task of answering such questions? What contribution can African social scientists: anthropologists, socio/psycho-linguists make to creating a knowledge base? Would comparative studies be valuable?

What can the Igbogbo experience teach us? How can we capitalize on it for our research and action programs? Perhaps one of the lessons from Igbogbo is in fact, that long before the current fad, we in Nigeria, at the University of Lagos, had developed a model of behavior and social change communication, based on the African community festival.

I have often advocated an 'ethnography of communication' approach. This would be a good time and place to take this agenda forward and see to what heights it might take us in our effort to understand how African societies view communication and how that knowledge may assist our efforts to place our discipline within our cultural contexts, and by so embedding it, provide us greater explanatory and applied power in our research and teaching as well as our programs of social change.

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4

CAN RADIO BUILD COMMUNITIES?*

INTRODUCTION

L et's begin with a simple question: Can radio build communities? For many people here, that is a rhetorical question. Can radio build communities? The answer is of course, 'Yes'.

Let's take another simple question: Can radio destroy communities? Is that too, a rhetorical question? Is the answer so obviously 'Yes'?

Both questions are of interest in the remarks that I wish to share with you today. I intend to explore the space between the answers to these two questions in my presentation about building community radio in Nigeria.

There are several definitions of community radio; and I am sure you know most of them. Here is one that I appreciate and will use as a peg for this presentation:

When radio fosters the participation of citizens and defends their interests; when it reflects the tastes of the majority and makes good humor and hope its main purpose; when it truly informs; when it helps resolve the thousand and one problems of daily life; when all ideas are debated in its programs and all opinions are respected; when cultural diversity is stimulated over commercial homogeneity; when women are main players in communication and not simply a pretty voice or a publicity gimmick; when no type of dictatorship is tolerated, not even the musical dictatorship of the big recording studios; when everyone's words fly without discrimination or censorship, that is community radio.

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*Text of the keynote address at the
National Validation Seminar on Building Community
Radio in Nigeria Abuja, April 4, 2005

Radio stations that bear this name do not fit the logic of money or advertising. Their purpose is different, their best efforts are put at the disposal of civil society. Of course this service is highly political: it is a question of influencing public opinion, denying conformity, creating consensus, broadcasting democracy. The purpose - whence the name -is to build community life.

"Manual urgente para Radiatistas Apasionaclos". Jose Ignacio Lopez Vigil, 1997

1 ask you: does your vision of community radio for Nigeria correspond to what I've just quoted? There are many questions that can be raised about that definition of community radio, among them I would like to explore the following:

☛ How can radio foster the participation of citizens? What is citizen participation? It seems obvious to me that to have citizen participation you first have to have citizens. What is a citizen? Who is a citizen? Do we have citizens in Nigeria? What makes a person a citizen in/of Nigeria? Can radio make a person a citizen Nigeria? How?

Participation is an active conscious process. It also a voluntary process; people participate in something because they want to, of their own volition or free will. Being forced to participate is an oxymoron; it is a contradiction. Forced participation is *coercion.* Will citizens participate through radio or because radio? How? One writer said in a recent study: 'community radio aims not only to participate in the life of the community, but also to allow the community to participate in the life of the station..." How can such mutual participation be fostered concretely? What policies and operational procedures should be put in place to ensure participation? But is participate in the life of a radio station, however that is achieved, all that citizen participation entails? I think that citizen participation has a larger sense: that of participation in the life of the community, of society, of institutions, of the nation. How can radio, community radio, foster citizen participation in this larger sense?

● How can community radio defend the interests of citizens? Who defines their interests? How are these interests identified and expressed? Are these private, individual interests or collective group interests? What can community radio do, concretely to defend the interests of citizens? Some interests are selfish; others not. Which ones will community radio defend? How to tell the difference? Defending interests is called for

especially when they are likely to be threatened or are actually being threatened. Who are likely to threaten the interests of the citizen? Against whom or what will the community radio be called upon to defend the interests of citizens? By what means will the interests of the citizen be defended? How much will it cost to defend the interest of citizens? Where will the resources come from to defend the interests of citizen?

- If community radio is to <u>reflect the tastes of the majority</u>, how can the majority be identified? What is the demographic profile of that majority? What is its cultural, ethnic, gender, social, educational, religious and occupational profile? How will community radio identify these attributes? What are the components of 'taste'? Are there standard ways of determing taste? Is educational background a useful indicator for measuring or predicting taste? Is ethnicity a sensitive indicator? Perhaps religion? Taste can be viewed judgmentally; we often agree that some things display 'bad' taste. Is the taste of the majority always good taste? What about the taste of the minority, whoever they may be? Will the taste of the minority necessarily offend the majority? Should community radio not also seek to know about that, and reflect it as well? How can community radio respond to such queries?

- Community radio <u>truly informs.. helps resolve the thousand and one problems of daily life.</u> What is it to inform? Who needs to be informed; about what, why, when? Can a community radio truly inform? How will it achieve that? Through news programs or announcements or other programs? Resolving problems of daily life: What problems? Whose problems? How are they identified and expressed? What services or resources would community radio have to put in place to first, identify the problems, and then attempt to resolve them? What do we know about <u>why </u>people listen to radio? Do people come to radio seeking to have their problems resolved? Should people look to community radio to have their problems resolved?

- In community radio, as defined earlier, <u>all ideas are debated.. and all opinions are </u>respected. How can this be guaranteed concretely? What programming strategies and practices can make this happen? How can different ideas and opinions be debated without acrimony and violence? What are the consequences of respecting all opinions? Does that include the opinions of extremists? [Recall Radio Miller Co l h nes in Rwanda]

- Community radio is one in which <u>cultural diversity is stimulated</u>. Where the community is apparently culturally homogenous, how can diversity

be stimulated? What is the value of reflecting the diversities and realities of sub-cultures in community radio? How can these be identified and programmed? What would be the possible effects of doing so? [Recall: Ogun State Radio proposal, 'Radio for cultural development and social integration'.]

- In the community radio envisaged, <u>women are main players in communication and not simply a pretty voice or a publicity gimmick</u>. In reality, how car. this be achieved. Is it through filling all executive and high-level positions with women? Does it mean that the majority of volunteers or staff will be women? That the voices on the air will be those of women? What is wrong with a pretty voice.. whatever that is? Should it be avoided at all costs on community radio? Is a gender policy the solution? If it is, how is it designed; what tools and good practices exist for understanding women's participation in media?

- In an ideal community radio, <u>no type of dictatorship is tolerated, not even the musical dictatorship of the big, recording studios</u>. This probably means that program content, including music, is not homogenized; that there is diversity of types and sources. How can this happen while respecting the taste of the majority? Given the consolidation and globalization of news and music, how can the tyranny of the major news agencies and record labels be confronted successfully by community radio? Is this where local news and music from community groups become strategic? How can they be produced? What values, ethics, tastes will underline this? What training would be needed, for whom?

- <u>When everyone's words fly without discrimination or censorship, that is community radio.</u> Is that so? How indiscriminate can you get? No censorship? Is that desirable, even if possible? What systems should be put in place, by whom, to ensure that censorship is avoided?

- According to the definition we have been examining, community radio institutions <u>do not fit the logic of money or advertising.</u> Does that mean money is not important? How will resources be raised for community radio? Grants from international organizations and NGOs? Will the private sector be involved? What about resources from the community? Will listeners contribute; how? Regulatory provisions for community radio in certain countries proscribe profit-making; but is advertising completely out? Why? In the United Kingdom, community radio is discouraged from advertising in order to protect the interests of

commercial stations operating in the same markets. Is this the way to go? Government has been urged to set up a fund to encourage community radio. How feasible and sustainable is this? But no matter how it is funded, it should be borne in mind that <u>community radio is forged by the listeners.</u>

- If community radio is to be all the things we have said earlier, we must realize that it is <u>highly political</u> because <u>it is a question of influencing public opinion, denying conformity, creating consensus, broadening democracy.</u> In what sense is community radio political? How can it be insulated from partisan and divisive politics? What confidence-building measures need to be put in place to ensure that community radio is not high-hijacked by political opportunists; but that it becomes a vehicle for creating consensus and building democracy? Is this a matter for the regulatory system alone? What should individual station managements do? What is the role of professional associations and other stakeholders? Frankly, the reluctance to move into community broadcasting in Nigeria is linked to anxieties in this area. This country is not only multi-faceted and complex, it is also precariously balanced and deeply divided, along lines that are exploitable for political destabilisation. Will religiously-oriented stations stop at only preaching their faith, or wit[they become aggressively proselytizing, consigning other religions to eternal damnation, and even inciting their own adherents to messianic violence over the airwaves? The climate of intolerance in Nigeria and what is carried by other media help to fuel the uneasiness about the possible political consequences of community radio. Therefore criteria for licencing call for even more vigilance and reflection to prevent obvious abuses. Some of the resistance to starting community radio is also due to genuine fear that giving voice to the voiceless, permitting free speech, putting the airwaves at the disposal of the so-called 'masses', the 'talakawa' or the 'rnekumu is dynamite and it could ignite yearning for more freedom of expression, more demands for political, social and economic participation, that will change the political equation and the context of power relationships in Nigeria, perhaps for ever. So those who feel they have power to lose, will naturally not want community radio to develop in Nigeria. They are suspicious of the motives of those of you who have been championing the cause of community radio. They wonder if you have a hidden political agenda. They speculate about where your funding is coming from; about whether you are fronting for foreign organizations that want to torment trouble in Nigeria, etc. That is

part of Me context which we must try to overcome in the future. We are entering a new era in which the development of community radio must be seen as a necessary in[9]redient in national development.

The purpose of community radio is to build community life. Building a community is more than building an individual or a few families. It is building on what holds people together, across different families, religions, sexes, economic situations, and political persuasions.

Sometimes the people served by a community radio will share the same language and cultural attributes, especially in rural enclaves. Community radio can help build and sustain community through striving to be inclusive and integrative through participatory programming formats.

"If the goal is integral participation, then by what structural model can community radio operators reach their goal? Pointing out Paulo Freire's influence on communication projects for social change, Alfonso Dagron has recently summarized the structural features that make radio participatory:

- Community ownership, instead of access mitigated by social, political , or religious contingencies;

- Horizontal organization, rather than vertical organizing that positions community members as passive receivers;

- Dialogic, long-term processes-not top-down campaigns more concerned with yielding results for external evaluation than with building sustainable community power;

- Collective agency, or power asserted in the interest of the many rather than the few;

- Community specificity in content, language, culture, and resources;

- Need-based initiatives-determined by community dialogue rather than donor influence consciousness-raising-to build a rooted understanding of social problems and solutions, instead of a dependency on propaganda or political persuasion.

- Some communities are defined not by geography but by interest; for example, universities. By definition, such communities are demographically and culturally heterogeneous, and in the case of universities, what supposedly unites them is a search for truth, respect for facts and evidence, dedication to free debate and respect for the other's right to dissent and to be different. Unfortunately the norm in Nigerian

universities today, I am told, is far from this ideal. Perhaps in a perverse reflection of the larger society, our university communities are also deeply divided, and having no common core values,, are in danger of imploding, Linder severe attack from various academic and social malpractices. Can

- Community radio help to restore some of the ideas which build an academic community? I have spent about half of my life in a university environment, as Student, teacher and researcher, in many parts of the world. That is probably the environment where I feet most comfortable. And my thoughts often take me to the university setting. So it is not surprising that when I began to think seriously about the establishment of community radio in Nigeria, some ten years ago, I sought: to apply my ideas to a possible university service.

- But first, a bit of history: I recall that about thirty years ago, the Department of Mass Communication at the University of Lagos, sought permission to install a radio transmitter which was being procured as part of a UNESCO development project. The Federal Government turned down the request. We thought we might have better luck with the Lagos State Government; but they also refused, citing complications at the federal level. In the end we lost the transmitter, and the then princely sum of twenty-five thousand US dollars which had been committed by UNESCO to the manufacturers. What we really wanted was a broadcast facility that would enable the department train its students and provide a voice for the university, for about three hours a day. The powers-that-be in those days of radio-triggered military coups were not at all comfortable with a radio station that could get into the hands of restless students! We agued that it would be an F.M station, and therefore not very accessible to large audiences; that it would cover only a twenty-mile radius; that we would employ a professional station manager to be selected by the federal radio broadcaster; that our transmitter could be deactivated from Ikoyi, when necessary etc. But suspicion was too deeply engrained. We lost our transmitter!!

QUALITY COMMUNITY RADIO FOR A UNIVERSITY SETTING

Back to the ideas of creating a university community radio. I called the project I had *designed KNOWLEDGE fm. It was basically a radio station that would:*

- Provide education and continuing education in citizenship, human rights and governance through the spoken word;

- encourage the highest standards and levels of debate and dialogue through broadcasting major speeches, ideas and opinions (and reactions to them), by experts and lay persons alike, as well as by political figures, international partners of Nigeria, academics, civil society and community-based organizations, so long as what they have to say is constructive and geared to promoting healthy social discourse on national and international issues of public interest.

- be a station of 'record', documenting important policy and seminal statements by national, local and community leaders

- be the electronic equivalent of 'quality newspapers' such as 'The Guardian'

  not seek to be unduly controversial, but attempt to shed light on the basis for controversy through non-partisan issues clarification

As for programming, it would consist of items such as:

- From parliament

- Presidential speeches

- University inaugural and public lectures

- Book launchings

- Social programme launchings

- Station-commissioned lectures/ roundtables/symposia /debates News analyses and current affairs

- Arts and culture (exhibitions, concerts and performances, especially of authentic -traditions; new and experimental works in different media, including music, theatre and film.

- Interviews of scholars, researchers and inventors

  Features on development issues

- Tailored courses of study on civics, human rights and governance given by Nigerian and foreign experts

- Rebroadcasts/ transcriptions by arrangement with local and foreign stations of quality programmes.

The institutional structure proposed was:

- A private not-for-profit Trust
- Independent of government or established private/for-profit institutions
- Board of Trustees representing academia, civil society, especially women and youth groups, and individuals of proven ability and interest in public affairs, governance, civic education and broadcasting;
- Stations with easy access to universities and other higher institutions; and public /government institutions; (based on campus if practicable)
- 'Thinking globally, nationally; acting locally' to stimulate debate
- recording studios/ stations established <u>in phases </u>in Lagos; Abuja; Enugu/Nsukka; Kaduna/Zaria; Benin City; Ibadan/Ife; Kano; Maiduguri; Port Harcourt, Ado Ekiti, all networked electronically so as to broadcast/ rebroadcast same or similar programmes through dividing labour in sourcing materials and sharing programmes.

The operations would be such that "Wherever any event or idea of interest to Nigerian democracy, governance and public enlightenment is happening, anywhere in the nation, the region, and the world, *KNOWLEDGE fm* will be there to cover it and bring it to Nigerian listeners, for their information and comment".

The proposed facilities:

- satellite transmission systems
- mobile recording/ production units
- archival and duplication resources
- desktop publishing
- conference/ lecture space
- ICTs for recording/ transmission
- Internet connections
- Correspondents' international/global access and networking

Those were the ideas that I had several years ago for a university-based radio service for the university community in Nigeria. I never got it funded or operationalised; in any case would not have had a license then! Now I will have to revisit the idea to make it more resonant with current academic realities and technological opportunities.

I realize that universities, including Unilag, are now permitted to broadcast. I am aware that what I have just described is not what they are doing. Apparently the profit motive is the driving force, selling the soul of the university to mammon, and therefore seeking the least common denominator, rather than emphasizing the unique contributions that a university can make.

I hope the regulatory framework will begin to tighten community radio operations to make them respond more closely to the needs of the communities they claim to serve. One way of ensuring this is to include a needs assessment report in the license application procedure, that require applicants to demonstrate deep socio-cultural-economic knowledge of the proposed radio community and its development challenges, and the station's ability to propose content relevant to meeting the needs of its potential audiences.

Recently, I read an article about three students of the University of Nigeria who built a small radio transmitter, and are bent on commencing regular broadcasts. The motives of Lion FM, as they have called their yet-to-be-licensed station, are exciting. Messrs. Henry Emele (final year student), Ifeanyi Mgbodile (second year) and Emmanuel Umeh are members of Lion FM, a socio-academic organization in both campuses of the University of Nigeria (Nsukka and Enugu). Emele said, 'we intend to spread round other universities in the country. Basically, we are into both hard and software communication. By hardware, we mean designing and manufacturing the equipment used in media houses like transmitter, console or mixer and some input devices. Then we look at how we can establish a radio station from what we solely produce". They have also developed software, television and radio programmes that can influence people positively in the society. "You've heard about cult activities, closures and strikes. We have designed programmes to conscientise people saying, 'taking to arms will not solve our problems" The students explained that the project has been on for about five years, "... we have been looking at how we can put a compact radio station together, one that can be on a table and still communicate-get to the people and get the people's response". They started putting the components

together, beginning with an electronic workbench to run most of their designs. "We chose the ones that we saw to be viable and found that the materials we needed were available locally. Then we went into assemblage". According to the students, their transmitter would cover a radius of 10 kilometers with a 120-metre antenna, at the cost of only N60,000.

They recalled that they told visitors at the 'AFRICAST 2004', organized by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), that there is the need for every university to own a radio station. According to them, "a university that has the department of Mass Communication and Theatre/ Dramatic Arts needs a radio station for its practicals. Having the former without the latter is like a Medical School without a Teaching Hospital. With less than N500,000 we can set up a standard radio station, with comfortable coverage and strong signal: a highly digitalized stereo system. "Asked if they had a functional radio station on campus the trio said though their organization is on campus, they are not operating on campus because "we had a problem with the National Broadcasting Commission in 2002. They sent SSS from Abuja to come and pick us up because we were breaking the law by operating without a licence. But we were not really broadcasting. What we were doing then was test-running most of the components we had put together. For example, we did a digital scoreboard, we did not need permission to test it, so we had a 2-watt transmitter to do this. But people were fascinated by what we did and we started transmitting constantly."

The students say that their Vice Chancellor has met with the NBC, and paid the N50,000 fee for the licence application. However the appropriate forms were still to be completed. "We have not met all the requirements because we are supposed to complete our registration with the Corporate Affairs Commission. NBC has been very positive since and has promised to register us". The students believe a lot more still needs to be done. Rural communities need to be educated. "The National Assembly should pass a bill on community broadcasting. Let communities apply for and be given radio licences. Our culture can be enhanced and people can be educated". From that example, it seems that there may yet be a brighter future for university community radio stations!

FINAL WORD

I believe that radio can be a valuable instrument for building a community where there is a foundation of goodwill and determination for development,

with tolerance and readiness to dialogue, even if there are underlying tensions and contradictions. Radio can also help to destroy a community that is already bent on self-destruction. There are many viable models of viable community radios already functioning or being experimented in Africa and other world regions. We do not need to reinvent the wheel, even though our roads may be rougher and more uneven than roads elsewhere. We can learn from other countries and adapt what we discover in them to create a community radio idea that helps to build communities, foster cultural development and support democracy in our country, Nigeria.

I asked many questions at the beginning of this presentation. I know that some of the answers are contained in the discussions already held in your seminars in Bauchi and Kaduna in 2004, as reflected in the communiques from those events. I hope you will take up some of them on this occasion in the various working groups which have been programmed. I hope that some of the questions and ideas will be discussed in the months ahead especially by the National Broadcasting Commission as it seeks to grapple with the important task of managing the new third tier of community broadcasting.

Let me leave you with a rewording of a now famous, and much-quoted question of mine: if community radio is the answer, what is the question?

5

BROADCASTING, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL PEACE*

The theme of our gathering is: "Broadcasting, Human Development and Global Peace". It is a high-minded, lofty, serious, vital and timely theme. Let me congratulate African Independent Television (AIT) for choosing this significant theme. AIT has continued to insist on raising the level of media discourse in our country and beyond, and to set our sights on the possibilities of a better world. I truly appreciate their commitment to excellence, and rejoice at the opportunity to be part of the celebrations of their tenth anniversary.

Broadcasting, Human Development and Global Peace – however we may wish to define them – are linked. Their point of intersection is simple and clear: the human being. The goal of broadcasting is to expand the human capacity and potential for communication through producing and propagating sound and image. The focus of human development is the human being: to ensure the well-being of women, children and men in families and communities. Peace and War: one represents the greatest aspirations of human civilization – and the other – the greatest evil perpetrated by human beings on one another. So our theme is profoundly human, posing human problems and seeking human, and hopefully, humane solutions.

{African Independent Television (AIT) is a pan-African general entertainment channel that also offers news, as well as talk shows, soap operas, culture music and sports. It is based in Nigeria.}

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*Text of the tenth anniversary lecture of Africa Idependent Television, Abuja, Nigeria, December 6, 2006

Backflash: A call from Syrte

As I prepared myself for this assignment, several memories from the past flashed through my mind. One of them was of a telephone call in the middle of 2005. The caller said he was contacting me from Syrte in Libya, the hometown of Colonel Ghadaffi. The African Union was having an extraordinary meeting of Heads of State there and my caller had a message from the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Professor Alpha Omar Konaré. The AU wanted to know if I would be interested in providing advice on a project that was being discussed at the meeting, namely, the creation of a Pan-African Radio and Television Channel?

As I hesitated, trying to mentally size up the caller's intent and his message, he quickly assured me that my name had been favorably mentioned in dispatches and that the AU would be pleased to receive some personal documentation from me. So I sent off a biographical profile in French and English.

That phone call reminded me of one of my continuing professional passions: the search for alternative communication systems and the building of appropriate institutions to enable Africans to explain and proclaim itself to Africa and the rest of the world. I was reminded of the struggle in the 1970s and 1980s – especially at UNESCO – to consider the implications of and practical steps for creating a New World Information and Communication Order, NWICO.

While some of the protagonists were pre-occupied with questions of balance, equity and social justice in the flow of news and cultural products, others supported free and unrestricted information flow and expressed antipathy towards any form of state control of communication – whether at national or international levels. The situation was quickly polarized and soon became a victim of the Cold War jostling between the Soviet Union and the Euro-American axis. The United States eventually withdrew from UNESCO in protest, citing among other reasons, dissatisfaction with the outcomes of the NWICO debates. Britain later followed suit...inevitably!

Out of the ashes of the bitter ideological confrontations, UNESCO decided on a review of the realities on the ground, focusing on the problems and opportunities of information flow in the world. The commission charged with responsibility for the review was chaired by the Irish Nobel laureate, Sean McBride, whose name has been since associated with its work and

influential report entitled: Many Voices, One World.*[1]The report was based on three years of hard work (1977-80) involving investigations and discussions under what was also officially known as the International Commission for the Study of Communications Problems.

In its final submission, the commission said, among other things:

"The contemporary situation demands A BETTER MORE JUST AND MORE DEMOCRATIC SOCIAL ORDER, AND THE REALIZATION OF FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS. These goals can be achieved only through understanding and tolerance, gained in large part by free, open and balanced communications.

"The review has also shown that the utmost importance should be given to eliminating imbalances and disparities in communication and its structures, and particularly in information flows. Developing countries need to reduce their dependence, and claim a new more just and more equitable order in the field of communication. This issue has been fully debated in various settings; the time has now come to move from principles to substantive reforms and concrete action."

The report also advocated for comprehensive national communication policies linked to the overall cultural, social and economic development, stating that: "Communication should not be left to chance but fostered to grow for the development of an inter-dependent world." It also argued for strong national news agencies and viable regional networks to increase news flow.

In concrete terms, this led to the establishment of the International Program for the Development of Communication, IPDC, in 1980 at the UNESCO General Conference in Belgrade, then capital of Yugoslavia. To pilot IPDC, an elected Intergovernmental Council of 35 member states from all world regions was established. Nigeria was elected as a representative from the Africa region. At the inaugural meeting later in Paris, the Intergovernmental Council nominated the Norwegian diplomat and politician, Gunnar Garbo, as its president. The decision was controversial and polarizing and the election took nearly two days of negotiations. Why? Gunnar Garbo, a former journalist, who spoke fluent Russian, was regarded by the Western group as too 'liberal' and third-world friendly. Many of the African, Latin American and Asian delegations insisted that no other person would be acceptable as President of the Intergovernmental Council. Finally, the majority prevailed, and Garbo was duly installed.

The other position on the Bureau that was subject to election in a personal capacity was that of the Rapporteur of the Council. Having been nominated unopposed, I was elected unanimously and left my seat at the head of the Nigerian delegation to join Gunnar Garbo at the head table. Other bureau members represented the various regional groups.

PANA: African News for Africa and the World

Why do I recall all this? Firstly to say that there is a history behind what we are about to discuss today, a history that demonstrates clearly that information and communication have been areas of hegemonic contestation and struggle in the modern era. Although the debate was fuelled and made acrimonious by the exigencies of the Cold War, the basic question of who says what to whom about what, and for what purpose, and the need for individuals, groups and nations to be able to speak autonomously, for themselves, is an on-going struggle. It is this need that is often behind the creation of new media institutions. It is what led in the 1970s and 1980s to the establishment of national news agencies in Africa, and of the Pan-African News Agency, PANA, in 1983, in Dakar, Senegal.

PANA attempted to be a continental network of African national news agencies grouped in four regional pools, exchanging news items within each pool, and – through its headquarters in Dakar – to to member agencies and to partners such as the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool.

As you know, the News Agency of Nigeria, NAN, created by decree in 1976, under the Obasanjo military administration, recently celebrated its thirtieth anniversary[2]. NAN became one of the pillars of PANA.

Both at the News Agency of Nigeria and the Pan-African News Agency, I had the good fortune of trying to provide concrete answers to the question: how can information and communication support African development and integration?[3]

This quest for communication and information justice has been my pre-occupation for more than three decades, and it is in that context that I responded favorably to the AU phone call from Colonel Ghadaffi's home town, Syrte. I went on to prepare a concept paper for the African Union, as requested, to assist in the organization of meetings to push forward the agenda for a "Pan-African Radio and Television Channel".[4]Among the ideas in that paper and subsequent presentations, the following excerpts are relevant to our discussions today:

"Africa has been the victim of other peoples' information domination. Historically, Africa's image in the world has been largely managed by non-African interests and institutions. Those who had the means to create powerful channels to disseminate information widely, had pre-empted the definition of what was good, what was right, what was important and what was civilized. In general, even the achievements in science, in art and culture that were African in origin or inspiration, were often attributed to others, because their provenance was obscured in Africa's inability to proclaim its stake. Through literature, visual arts, the mass media, and popular culture, the agenda of world discourse has been hijacked by other cultures and peoples for a long time.

"A Pan-African Radio and Television Channel or Network is a major contribution to the emergence of the new Africa brand image. Its mandate will be, among other things, to:

• enhance knowledge about Africa, within and outside the continent define and promote African points of view on development project Africa's cultural legacies and success stories

• provide pan-African platforms for debate and cultural exchange

• support and accelerate African integration and solidarity

• promote an authentic and credible 'African voice' on continental and international agendas.*"*

In a footnote to this discussion, I later added..

We are tired of the old pictures of Africa, pictures of:

• naked children with bloated stomachs, running noses and flies in their eyes

• half-naked women with flattened breasts, babies on their backs, small bundles of cloth on their heads, fleeing from one disaster to another…

• images of doom and gloom; of people that are confused, dismayed, victimized

• pictures of wild animals roaming the jungle in all their glory and savagery

Is that all there is to Africa? When last did you see an African child smile on international television? They always look so forlorn, so desperately

unhappy. We need new images of a 'winning' Africa; an Africa that is a motivator of its own progress, an Africa that is confident and competent and optimistic. We need these new images – not because we are running away from the unpleasant or because we want to hide it – we need these new images because we have something new to show. We need these new pictures to provide balance"[5].

Alternate voices in international broadcasting: the Al-Jazzera story

Let me now take you back ten years. The last two months of 1996 were remarkable in the history of broadcasting in the third world. As you know, African Independent Television, AIT, was launched on December 6th, thus becoming the pioneer private television station in Africa's giant nation, Nigeria. That, of course, is the reason we are here today.

But just before that, on November 1st, 1996, another television launching also occurred. In Doha, capital of the Arab Gulf State of Quatar, Al-Jazzeera Television was born. The event was perhaps almost too low-keyed for the station to receive significant attention from the world press. But not anymore. Al-Jazeera is today one of the leading brand names in broadcasting. Some people say it is the third global-impact satellite television station, next to CNN and the BBC. When Gulf politics drove Arabic BBC television out of business in 1996, Sheikh Hamad ben Khalifa Al-Thani, the leader of Qatar, saw an opportunity. He wanted to establish a strong identity for his tiny country and personally funded the start of Al-Jazeera, putting up $140 million to finance the first five years of the channel's operation. Al-Jazeera is Arabic for "the peninsula," a reference to Qatar's location in the Gulf.

Al-Jazeera is now well-known as the all-Arabic TV news channel which burst on to the international scene in the wake of September 11 and the war in Afghanistan, and that gained high-profile prominence through daily exposure on CNN . Because it had easy access to Afghanistan during the war and because of its showing of tapes of Osama bin Laden, Al-jazeera became an automatic force on the world stage.

Al-Jazeera has quickly become the most watched – and most controversial – news channel in the Arab world, winning over viewers with its bold, uncensored news coverage, its unbridled political debates, and its call-in-show formats that tackle a range of sensitive social, political, and cultural issues. The editorial independence that Al-jazeera obtained from its backer, made it stand out in a part of the world where the press is usually government controlled. Al-Jazeera is not afraid to get specific and name names. At one

time or another, it has been criticized or condemned by seemingly every government in the Arab world, for broadcasting things that the government would prefer be kept quiet and not broadcast. Every local editorial of condemnation and every denial of press credentials to Al-Jazeera reporters just increases its audience all over the world by satellite. It recruited virtually the entire staff that formerly worked for the BBC – so the journalists of Al Jazeera aren't newcomers by any means.

One of the things that Al-Jazeera is most known for is its talk shows, especially a nightly, two-hour show called The Opposite Direction. Two guests appear on the show, with totally opposite opinions on a certain issue, and with help from live phone calls, the sparks fly; and things get pretty loud and lively Even though Al-Jazeera is an Arab TV channel, it has tried very hard to be impartial, hosting members of the Bush Administration after September 11 and government officials from Israel.

Even as Al-Jazeera was breaking barriers and offering hard-hitting news, it ran into problems with nearly every Arab regime. From Egypt to Algeria to the Gulf, the channel was either shut down or on the verge of having the plug pulled at one time or another. It is said that the Saudis even used their clout to block much of its advertising market. Governments from Algeria to Yemen have lodged complaints against the station at one time or another. Some, like Tunisia and Libya, have temporarily withdrawn their ambassadors from Qatar's capital, Doha, to protest the appearance of political dissidents on talk shows or slights made against their leaders.

But the network's staff insist on what they call "contextual objectivity" – an attempt "to reflect all sides of any story while retaining the values, beliefs and sentiments of the target audience."

So who is in that audience that watches Al-Jazeera? According to research studies, it is certainly a pervasive group. The network's message reaches Muslims and Christians world-wide. Also, education and income are somewhat negatively related to viewing levels – generally speaking, the less income a household makes, or the lower the income, the more Al Jazeera is viewed.[6]

It is perhaps not surprising that Muslims strongly support the network, but not significantly more than Arabic-reading Christians. It is also expected that more liberal respondents rely more heavily on the network, which is diverse in the opinions it presents. As global communities become more and more interrelated, and Middle Eastern issues become interwoven into world

politics, free Arabic satellite news networks like Al-Jazeera will become more and more important players in the global news business.[7]

There is information that the Latin American region has also created a television station that would speak in its voice. Interestingly it is coming from Venezuela, whose President Hugo Chavez is generally regarded as pro-Latino in an anti-US manner.[8]

Does Africa need an Al-Jazeera? What would it look like? What international issues would bring it international attention, fame or notoriety? Would we need the tragedy of an Afghanistan or Iraq, the religious fervor and commitment of an Osama Bin Laden, or – to use Ali Mazrui's graphic image of some decades ago – the unpredictability of an Idi Amin walking into a cocktail party of international big wigs, with the pin of an explosive device between his teeth? What does African broadcasting have to do to corner global attention? Consider this report about developments in Latin America.

A Latin American voice to counter corporate media

US Congressional leaders are all atwitter over Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez' new satellite television station, Telesur, which has begun broadcasting four hours a day, financed by its host country and also Argentina, Uruguay and Cuba. Telesur hopes to be accepted regionally, and promises news through Latin American eyes, produced by professional journalists from the region.

Telesur, Al Jazeera and other non-Western broadcasters are trying to combat what media researchers call the 'North-South flow' of news and images. South American leaders have long been concerned about accuracy in Us media reports on the region. Now the US Congress is worried about Telesur's accuracy.

'It is simply wrong to believe that only Americans can practice honest journalism and that only corporate-owned media can serve the people. If Telesur turns out to be only a propaganda organ it will fail to penetrate beyond Venezuela, but if it proves to be more than that, it will give the region a new, Latin voice,' says Floyd J. McKay, journalism professor at Western Washington University.

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commitment of an Osama Bin Laden, or – to use Ali Mazrui's graphic image of some decades ago – the unpredictability of an Idi Amin walking into a cocktail party of international big wigs, with the pin of an explosive device between his teeth? What does African broadcasting have to do to corner global attention?

Broadcasting and Human Development: The African Challenge

Human development is a complex and multi-faceted process, with many definitions. One thing is clear; human development is first and foremost about human beings. Development is about men, women and children in families and communities; about their ability to take control of improvements in their living conditions and their sense of personal achievement and efficacy.

There are definitions of development that place emphasis on economic aspects, on rights, on spirituality etc; and they are all valid in their own way, many with indicators for measuring achievement. For the media, and especially for broadcasting, development should involve concrete actions; things that can be seen; words that can be heard and can be felt from people discussing their situation ; images that corroborate change and progress.

For broadcasters, development is more than concept; it is practice; concrete and tangible. Yet since practice is based on concept, even when it is unstated, broadcasting should be interested in the concepts and ideas that drive development practice and seek to analyze, understand and expose them for the benefit of listeners and viewers.

Development in Africa today is an ambiguous and complex idea. Many African countries no longer make any pretence about having national 'development plans'. They may speak of a 'planning framework"; but most seem now to be resigned to programs and projects dictated by the international community.

The development agenda of Africa today – its concept and vocabulary – are based on decisions that were reached at international conferences, and the priority themes and the action plans that are attached to them. Therefore to understand development in Africa today, it is important to understand and follow the ideas, work and programs of regional and international organizations and the fora in which they are elaborated and how consequent actions are decided.

I think the African broadcaster should therefore focus on these ideas, programs, projects and actions, try to understand them, discuss their relevance and applicability to the African situation and monitor their implementation in each country. In so doing, the African broadcaster will be fulfilling an important role: throwing a critical searchlight on conventional wisdom, revealing contradictions, giving voice to opposing views, and providing diverse opinions and material to enable viewers and listeners to become more enlightened citizens who can reach their own conclusions about the performance of their governments and of the international community.

An illustration, is the primacy of the Millenium Development Goals, MDGs, the current international development mantra. The Economic Commission for Africa, ECA, in 2005, in reviewing the MDGs said:

"African leaders have adopted the MDGs as a tool iwithin their wider development planning framework in order to end the tragic conditions in which so many Africans are deprived of theirb basic human rights such as health, education, shelter and security."

Among the claims made for the MDGs, and their relevance to Africa, we are told the following:

"Anchored within the national development strategies in many African countries, the MDGs have also provided a vehicle for broad-based community participation in development, including decision-making at the grass-roots level. Above all, they have provided the basis for global partnership on a broader scale...This is evident with existing programmes such as the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), which incorporates the goals into its framework."

So, wherever you turn in current thinking about development in Africa, you are bound to bump into the Millenium Development Goals. If the MDGs are a tool for tackling some of Africa's major development problems, what can be said about them?

The MDGs are regarded as an ambitious agenda for reducing poverty and improving people's lives. The world's leaders agreed on them at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000. Comprising eight goals, each with one or more targets to be achieved mostly by 2015, the MDGs also include a set of indicators to measure progress against each target.

The goals are:

Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Achieve universal primary education

Promote gender equality and empower women

Reduce child mortality

Improve maternal health

Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Ensure environmental sustainability

Develop a global partnership for development

The MDG debate: who said what to whom?

In its 2005 document, the ECA tried to assess the progress made by African governments and the possibility of their meeting the goals and targets set, ten years before the target date of 2015. According to the Economic Commission for Africa, only a few African countries seemed to be on course to meet some of the targets; most sub-Saharan countries seemed to be making very slow progress, or to be stagnating or even regressing.

The MDGs thus constitute the framework for discussing development and progress in Africa today. What do broadcasters know about the MDGs? What have they told their viewers and audiences about the MDGs? Have they given only the consensus position, the conventional wisdom that the MDGs will quicken and strengthen Africa's development? Have they given voice to the skepticism about the MDGs, by a vocal minority of development activists, whose point of view deserves to be heard? Here is one such:

"With apparent enthusiasm the UN, most development aid donors and agencies, academics, politicians and journalists seem to have embraced the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a prime measure of development progress. But a basic question has never been asked or answered: will the pursuit of the MDGs help or hurt development, particularly in Africa? Although the MDGs have contributed to a constructive global debate about how to make aid more effective, the MDGs are having a negative effect on development efforts."

Why? According to the author "MDGs ... provide a kind of political camouflage that diverts attention from more vital questions.... the MDGs

oversimplify. If countries succeed in getting girl children into primary school, does it mean that they have succeeded in promoting gender equality and empowering women? Such oversimplification can mean declaring victory prematurely. It can also mean misdirection of resources."

For the author, there are some basic questions to be asked, some diagnostic pre-requisites before the cure is prescribed: *"In assessing the appropriateness of the MDGs, it is first necessary to ask what exactly are the development problems holding Africa back? Is the continent less competitive because it lacks money or does it lack money because it lacks products that people want to buy and the technologies needed to make more out of its natural resources? Being underdeveloped leads to maternal mortality, death by preventable childhood disease and other maladies, but curing those symptoms immediately would not give Africa the know-how needed to stand as a developed region".*

In dissecting some of the MDG goals, the author argues robustly: *"Take education. The goal of universal primary education is politically appealing but does it lead to development?"* The author's focus is on growth, in which case, he asks: *"Could Africa not achieve more growth by diverting some primary school funding into technical schools to turn out the bricklayers, carpenters and electricians that are in chronically short supply in the continent? In a world of unlimited resources, more education is better than less. However, when resources are limited it is necessary to balance primary education with secondary, vocational and tertiary. By focusing on gross enrolment, Africa is neglecting a more crucial problem: Its schools have a very poor record in imparting knowledge to students."*

The author comes down heavily, with a categorical assertion:

"The MDGs will fail to develop Africa because they do not focus on growth and productivity. Without growth, Africa will never escape poverty. Instead it will face an eternity of keeping the harsh effects of poverty at bay with aid handouts. That is not a recipe for successful self-reliance. Even if one assumed that the MDGs were all met by the target date of 2015, it is quite possible, indeed probable that Africa would be further behind economically than today. Even if Africa went beyond the MDGs and addressed its conflict, governance and educational problems, it is likely the rest of the world will move ahead at a much faster pace and steadily out-compete Africa in the few markets that it holds. China has the surplus capacity, low wages and stable

infrastructure needed to wipe out Africa's limited manufacturing industry. And the competitive tropical agricultural producers in Latin America and Southeast Asia could steal away all of the coffee, tea, cocoa, sisal and horticulture markets in which Africa has a modest foothold."

What should the broadcaster make of such articulate, almost strident critique? Whether you agree with it or not, it is the stuff for creative and absorbing programming. I can imagine a one-on-one issues debate between the author and a representative of UNDP or UNESCO or the minister of education; or a robust round table with African planners, academics, grassroots activists and politicians chewing into the fundamental challenges of African development and critically evaluating the potential contributions and limitations of the MDGs. Not only will heat be generated; but also light; and it is light that African audiences need to lead them to consciousness and informed and effective participation.[10]The fact is that whether one agrees or not with this and that position, at the end of the day, it is the tension among ideas, the fact of having them in civilized confrontation that is instructive, in demonstrating that public debate in the media is a legitimate instrument for development dialogue, for holding people accountable for their ideas and actions. This is another contribution that effective broadcasting can make.

Hunger and Poverty

There are many issues that the MDGs bring to the fore; some of which have been dormant and disturbing for many African governments and communities. Take hunger. People who are hungry are largely invisible. Many of them just waste away, their bodies shrinking and emaciating outside the glare of public attention, lacking the nutrition that they need to hold on to life. According to a recent review:

" Eight hundred million people go hungry every day. Two billion people suffer from chronic malnutrition. Two billion people suffer from micro-nutrient deficiencies, which lead to chronic health problems. Around half of the deaths of children under five (ten million each year) are associated with malnutrition." Why? Not because food is in short supply in the world. " The world produces enough food each year to feed all its inhabitants; if it were shared out evenly, everyone would have enough to eat. Nutritionists consider that a healthy diet provides 2,500 calories of energy a day. In the USA, the average person consumes 3,600 calories a day. In Somalia, they get 1,500".[11]

Hungry people generally suffer in silence. However, when hunger is fuelled by famine caused by drought, war or other natural and man-made disasters – and becomes generalized – hunger is the news. Then we see the emaciated bodies of women and children on international television, as we saw in Ethiopia in the 1980s, in the infamous cases that brought Bob Geldorf and Band Aid to prominence, a quarter of a century ago, and that still assaults us as we watch images of Darfur currently, and Niger, not too long ago. And before that, the Sahel's thirteen years of drought in the 1980s, when millions of heads of cattle and thousands of people perished for want of food. These stark images are striking on television, and were effective for mobilising pity and money in the past; though viewers in many countries in the West seem now to be weary of disaster footage from Africa. Hunger makes news when it becomes famine.

A recent news flash on the Hunger and Poverty website announced:

Pope Decries Global Hunger

Thursday, November 16th, 2006

Pope Benedict XVI, on Sunday, lamented increasing global hunger saying *"hundreds of millions of people particularly children worldwide are hungry."* The Catholic Pontiff described it as "a scandal, which must be combated by changes in consumption and fairer distribution of resources." But how do we do it, Holy Father?

The role of broadcasting is to show hunger before it becomes famine, before it aggravates from small pockets of individuals to hundreds of thousands of people and does irreversible damage. Broadcasting can probe the causes of hunger, malnutrition and famine, of drought and locust invasions, and blow the whistle to expose and to warn, with facts and figures; but more effectively with voices and images of those who suffer, and also of those whose work, in agronomy or weather forecasting or irrigation or reforestation or community mobilization, help us to see clearly the deep-seated relationships between development and war and peace, hunger, poverty, prosperity and well-being.

Hunger is not caused only by lack of the capacity to produce food. People who have no income will go hungry unless there are policy and other safety-net measures to provide food without money! But hungry people are often also illiterate and poor; they are often unable to insist on citizen rights, for they often live in countries in conflict, in countries whose governments are

able to ignore or suppress the voices of their citizens, in communities that are forced to flee their productive farms or that are dispossessed of them by land grabbers.

Hunger afflicts people who have lost some critical aspects of traditional farming and self-preservation knowledge; people who are no longer able to make the soil fertile and productive, communities whose young people have gone away or have no relevant agricultural skills. Government policies, or the lack thereof, can also aggravate food shortage which eventually will lead to hunger. Broadcasting can interrogate policies and their deciders and implementers to probe and reveal the mechanisms whose presence or absence lead to hunger.

As Jessica Williams reminds us,

"The World Food Summit in 1996 set a target of cutting the world's hunger problem in half by 2015. To do that, the number of hungry people needs to fall by 33 million every year- currently it is only falling by 6 million every year. Progress needs to be accelerated. In October 2003, the World Food Programme noted that contributions to its funds were not keeping pace with the demand for food aid. In 2003, it needed $4.3 billion to feed 110 million people around the world, and contributions fell short by $600 million (or nearly 15%)...Global bodies like WHO are urging the world to recognize that proper nutrition and health are fundamental human rights."[12]

Can you satisfy food rights through food aid? How can food production be made sustainable and more productive for all Africans? The first MDG and its targets and indicators, relate to hunger and poverty:

TARGETS	INDICATORS
1. Halve between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than $1 a day.	• *Proportion of population below $1 (PPP) per day* • *Poverty gap ratio (incidence x depth of poverty)* • *Share of poorest quintile in national consumption*
2. Halve between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.	• *Prevalence of underweight children under five years of age* • *Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption*

What are individual African governments doing about hunger? What is Africa doing collectively about hunger?

There are many national initiatives; some sub- regional plans and at the level of ECOWAS and the African Union, mechanisms in place to discuss drought, famine, hunger, malnutrition and related development issues. There are scientists and research institutes that are working on drought- resistant plant varieties, on quick-yielding fruit, tubers and grain; on cassava and rice and millet and sorghum, and animal husbandry.

The role of broadcasting is to showcase these activities and to provide informed assessments of their progress and constraints. What are those famous researchers doing at IITA, WARDA, FIIRO, ICIPE, CRAT and similar places?[13]What answers are they coming up with to our perennial development problems in the area of food security and nutrition, food preservation and pest control?

African Scientists: Silent and unknown?

African scientists are silent and absent in the media. I think we need a pact between broadcasters and scientists in Africa to focus on some of the slow and steady work that is being undertaken in university laboratories, in research institutes and commercial organizations.

I recall about twenty years ago, suggesting on at least two occasions, to two different Ministers of Science and Technology in Nigeria, a series of broadcast programs on" Nigerian Scientists and their Work". At first it was going to be a radio series, with possible extensions later into television. I felt at the time, and I am still of the same view today, that in their own quiet way, there are scientists in Nigeria whose work is making significant contributions to solving development problems facing the nation.

The Honorable Ministers listened to me very politely in their offices, promised to get back to me; later referred me to their Permanent Secretaries and some other officers; and sad to say, nothing came of the project. I had planned to travel to a few places where researchers were gathered; to undertake interviews of some of the talented men and women who were grinding away, often with little funding and precious little equipment, trying to answer some important questions and provide viable applicable results.

Maybe the Ministers were not sure why a non-science professor at Unilag would want to meddle in such matters. Maybe they were not convinced with the reasons I gave about the importance to their ministries, and the country,

of such a series. I will not name names, to protect the innocent, especially their children!!

I became interested in this matter of broadcasting and scientists for a number of reasons. In the early 70s, while I was living in the United States, there were a series of reports on science and technology carried by National Public Radio. Some of the contributions were about work that I never heard of, that was happening right in my own campus at Michigan State University, which, as you may know, was the first Land Grant University in the United States. It was established in 1855 as the Michigan Agricultural College, to provide research support to the farmers of the State of Michigan.

A little later, I saw some television broadcasts by Professor David Suzuki, the brilliant Canadian science journalist who hosted a series of programs intended to popularize scientific thinking and accomplishments. A distinguished scientist in his own right, Suzuki was able to bring to his broadcasts, a rare ability to bridge the gap between the scientist and the lay public. I found his work absorbing, educative and memorable.

So in 1976 when I was invited by the late Edie Fadairo, a producer at the then Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, NBC, in Lagos, to do some programs, I proposed a series of talks to be called "Searchlights". They were broadcast throughout 1976, and I earned the NBC Artist of the Year prize. I still have a thirty-year old radio set and some fading hand-written radio scripts to show for it!

In 52 prime-time radio talks, broadcast after the one o'clock news on Sunday afternoons, I tried to look at what researchers in Nigeria were doing, in various fields. I read journals and publications in education, public health, zoology, physics, architecture and mathematics. I soon found that the talks format was somewhat limiting, and began to include some interviews in the programs.

I recall my first interview in the series. My guest was Augustine Tajinere Fregene, Professor of Medical Physics at the University of Lagos Teaching Hospital. I discovered that at that time, he was one of the world's leading authorities on something called "dosimetry", the application of radiology in calculated doses to cancer cells. Professor Fregene who graduated in physics from the University College, Ibadan, Nigeria, went on to study at Cambridge University, taking a doctorate in medical applications of physics, especially radiology. I also found out that through his path-breaking work, he became a consultant to the world-famous Karolinska Institute in Sweden, and spent university long vacations away from Lagos in their laboratories outside

Stockholm.

So, here I was in the studio, with this famous scientist whom I had known for years as a friend from our boyhood days in boarding school.[14]I had informed him weeks earlier about the program; and had tried to warm him up with a few questions, two weeks before.

He came into the studio with a file full of papers from which he drew out a neatly-typed manuscript that looked to be about twenty-five pages. Each time I asked him a question, he would bury his head in the manuscript, trying to find the appropriate page, and begin to read, in a stilted magisterial voice, in the manner of a professor giving an inaugural lecture.

I tried gently to suggest that he put away the manuscript and talk to me. Nothing doing; after a few phrases, he would again seek refuge in his papers. Then I had an idea; I said to my recording engineer: " JJ, we're on." Five minutes later, I signaled him to stop. "JJ; please play back". My recorded question came on loud and clear: "Tell me, Professor Fregene, how did you become interested in medical physics?" Then came his answer, also, loud and clear, and pedantic.

I watched with some amusement as he covered his face in anguished embarrassment. Because he could hear for himself how terrible he sounded! We had been recording in the studios of the Department of Mass Communication at the University of Lagos, which at the time, had state-of-the art equipment; so every little cough, every hesitation or misplaced vowel was reproduced loud and clear. We agreed to try again!

So, before I started the interview again, I spoke with Professor Fregene, and said: "Look, Tajin, let's converse. Throw your files away and just let's talk about your life's work, talk to me, as we were doing many weeks ago. Relax, man!" And we went on to have a most engaging and informative 13-minute broadcast!

Suddenly, the nature and importance of the work of this brilliant Nigerian scientist poured out with warmth, and wit and expertise that had a deep resonance with our audience, because he was finally able to explain, in clear and simple phrases, what he did and why he did it, and why it was important.

I think Nigerian scientists need to be better known, as human beings and as intellectuals. When you read the citations of winners of the National Merit Award, you get a feeling of how much relevant and often innovative and significant, development-oriented research is going on in our country. From what I read and know from experience, there is also work of a similar nature

going on through scientists and their organizations in many other African countries.

At the Pan-African News Agency, in 1985, I decided to start a series of feature articles on research on traditional medicine. I hired for the purpose Foussenou Cissoko, a very studious, rather scruffy and taciturn young journalist from Mali. Every week for nearly three months, he delivered the most intriguing features for the PANA Science File. In the days before we had e-mail or the Internet or cell phones, Cissoko managed to track down scientists and traditional healers from various research institutes or working privately in obscure villages; and it was quite a list!

Broadcasting can bring this kind of knowledge to the public in an engaging and informative manner. I have four concrete proposals in this regard:

I think that AIT should partner with the Nigerian Merit Award to bring us a series of profiles of the men and women who have distinguished themselves in their academic fields, and who have been honored publicly for their work.

With the Nigerian Science Association, AIT should focus on the work of young and up-and-coming scientists and technologists to show us how they are trained and what they are accomplishing. Some of them are in the Nigerian diaspora, in Europe and the Americas. The same thing can be done, with respect to other African countries, perhaps through syndicating with broadcasters there. Is this a suitable project for URTNA?

Where will the money come from? Here's a challenge to all those donor agencies, or development partners and foreign and local foundations and private sector moguls out there. Here's your chance to go down in history as innovative and progressive. Sponsor these AIT productions and you will be contributing to development in Africa in a concrete, unusual and significant way.

The programs that will result from the series African Scientists at Work could be put to good use in several ways: as role model motivation for young students considering a career in science and technology; as instructional materials in science courses in secondary and tertiary institutions; as home videos for the education and enjoyment of the general public, and a welcome extension of Nollywood to more edifying purposes.

Back to the MDG agenda: Water everywhere

Another MDG target deals with major development problems that have tended to be obscured – water and potable water. 'The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner', Coleridge's well-known poem, contains the memorable lines:

Water, water every where

And not a drop to drink.

The sailors on that famous literary ship had salt water, a whole ocean full; but it was not fit for human consumption. In Africa, many countries have communities where the source of water is practically inaccessible; and women all over the continent still spend the better part of their days travelling vast distances to find water. Having found it, they may discover that it is muddy, contaminated with human waste or other pollutants, and often not suitable for drinking or cooking.

The water agenda has been on the back burner for years. Then when 2004 was declared an international year to focus on the Water Summit, water moved to the front burner, and is getting better attention. The global water crisis has been graphically captured in this report on the AIDC website:

"We live under a false illusion that there is an infinite supply of water on earth. Available fresh water has continued to be the same for over 2000 years, and it amounts to less than half percent of all water on earth. The rest is seawater or inaccessible in ice caps, groundwater and soil. The population has risen over 33 times during these 2000 years. Consequently, the United Nations estimates that one billion people already lack access to fresh drinking water, and within the next 25 years, the number of countries facing chronic water shortages will swell to 50 with three billion people, about 35 percent of the world's population. World Bank and United Nations estimates predict that by 2025, the demand for fresh water will rise by over 56 percent more than is currently available. While the only renewable source of freshwater is continental rainfall (which generates a more or less constant global supply of 40,000 to 45,000 cubic km per year), the world population keeps increasing by roughly 85 million yearly. Therefore, the availability of fresh water per head is decreasing rapidly."

In 1985, Boutros Boutros Ghali, at that time minister of state for foreign affairs of Egypt, warned that 'the next Middle East war will be fought over water, not politics'.[15] We know that in east Africa, tensions are rising over water ownership among countries through which the River Nile flows, and there are potential problems in southern Africa as well.

Even in countries in Africa where water will not create an international incident, there is still a strong potential for conflict around domestic water issues. In 2002, I was requested to undertake a mission to a certain West African country where discussions had been going on about 'public-private participation" in water provision. This was really shorthand or code for the fact that the government and some of its development partners, especially the World Bank, were considering privatization of water. They had started a communication program to sensitize the general public about the need for privatization and the proposed process and schedule. They needed also to assure the staff of the Water Corporation that they would be treated equitably.

As was to be expected in a fairly open democratizing country, there was vocal opposition to water privatization, from labor, from civil society, some journalists and academics, with support from some international NGOs. The battle lines were being drawn between those who held that water was a god-given right and not to be sold, and those who saw it as a scarce commodity that needed to be managed and distributed economically like other utilities; therefore not to be distributed for free.

Although the government in question had committed itself to privatization, it was reluctant to be seen to be aggressively so, in view of its social policy rhetoric. So care was being taken to provide case studies of successful privatization from other countries, and to show how current facilities and policies were leading to wastage(as much as 40 percent), and how the burden of higher costs was being borne by the poorer people who lived in the newly created neighborhoods with exploding populations.

My task was to evaluate the communication effort and to provide some advice. Listening carefully to the protagonists, I could observe a number of contradictions. For example, although the trade unions were vociferously against water privatization, it was common knowledge that water tankers belonging to certain labor organizations were drawing water from the more affluent neighborhoods and selling it by the bucket full in the slums and outskirts. By a simple calculation, it was shown that the poorest people were paying about seven times as much for their water as the most well off people, and that labor unions were making a handsome bargain![16]

The question was whether privatization would make water more abundant and more affordable. Government was keen to give assurance in that area by saying that the water management companies would be held to a contract that scheduled rate increases over a number of years; but the fact that all the

companies who tendered for the bids and the one which was eventually selected (but yet to commence operations) were foreign companies, made the guaranties difficult to believe by the public, a fact that was pitilessly exploited by the adversaries of privatization. It was not an easy assignment. Since my mission, I understand that steps have been taken, in the country in question, to create a broad consensus on the best solutions for eventual privatization, which appears to be inevitable, from the government's position.

I have heard and viewed some excellent broadcast programs on the issues concerning various aspects of water, including privatization. There is a strong international non-government movement against 'water for sale', that is gaining adherents in Africa. So we can be sure the issue will not go away. Broadcaster be ready!

A flavor of the perspective and argumentation in the anti-privatization camp is the call for citizen groups, as a matter of basic rights to become more involved in decisions concerning all aspects of water, and to base such actions on a "Water Conservation Ethic. Such an Ethic would recognize that:

- Water belongs to the earth and all species

- Water is a finite resource

- Water is a part of an ecosystem connected to land and biomass and it is and best protected in natural watersheds

- Polluted water must be recycled

- An adequate supply of clean water is a basic human right

- Citizens and local communities have rights to decisions concerning water use and must be legally empowered

- Economic globalization policies are not water-sustainable

We found, in the countries that I visited, that people in the rural communities were not really concerned about the water problem on an individual basis. It was for them a communal affair, Water was not in plentiful supply in their communities; but the thought of paying for clean water was not something they were considering or worried about. Also we found that the people who bought water from tankers in buckets and gallons were intrigued by the idea that they could one day obtain water at will, from a tap, and seemed prepared to pay-as-you-use, even at current rates, which as the feasibility studies showed, were inflated.

How does a broadcaster situate within this kind of argumentation? On whose side? Is it sufficient to relay the arguments, for and against? Whose voices need to be heard? A Canadian series of programs on water issues has shown how such matters can be treated with objectivity and passion through deep investigative reporting.[17]

A veteran journalist specialized in water reporting, contributed the following information, which is perhaps, more pertinent to the US situation:

"The water beat is an exciting beat for a reporter. It puts a reporter at the heart of coverage not only of life's perhaps most important resource but also at the crossroads of business, politics and power. It also allows reporters to put journalistic tabs on public officials, uncover and force rectification of violations of regulations by public officials and private companies."

William Marsden, who was part of a global media investigation into water privatization, describes water as "the perfect candidate for a multimedia treatment using the Internet, print, radio and television. Humans possess a deeply natal attraction to water, so documentary film and even radio are natural media for telling stories about water".[18]

In 2006, water concerns have moved to center stage. As you know, the latest UNDP Human Development report is entitled, "Beyond capacity: Power, politics and global water crisis". It warns that "the challenge of accelerating progress takes on a new urgency", as the 2015 MDG deadline is less than 10 years away. Some of the problems that inhibit progress have to do with human capacity and governance. Water to ensure basic sanitation can be obtained to meet targets within the remaining period.

What will African broadcasters do with this UNDP report? Will they do a news story? Will they prepare features? Will they use UNDP generic materials? Will they try to domesticate the report by looking at the situation in their own countries? Or will they ignore the water problem because it is not on the agenda of their governments as a priority? Or will they wait to report the drought and the floods, and the skirmishes, violence and wars that follow a water crisis?

Human Development: Some enduring issues

In addition to the concerns selected for discussion earlier, there are a number of issues derived or implied from the MDGs and their associated target that impact on the possibility and quality of human development in Africa in a significant manner. Among them are:

Disease(including HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis), about which there is much media coverage in a sporadic, events-driven manner

- *Disease*(including HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis), about which there is much media coverage in a sporadic, events-driven manner; (we just observed World AIDS Day last week.)

- *Education - Literacy* (gender equality, equity and parity; and the quality of education and education reform)

- *Knowledge – science and technology*(and the possibility of information-based solutions to issues of growth and development) Governance(accountability and transparency in public and private sector undertakings and the setting up of structures and mechanisms, including the African Peer Review Mechanism)

- *Empowerment*(giving voice to the marginalized and vulnerable through supporting democratic structures, and reducing dependency)

- *Solidarity* (providing safety net and other social protection and security measures)

- *Freedom* (rights- based approaches to freedom of information, expression, association, political choice and communication through support for democratization)

- *Youth – child labour* (creating policy and other instruments to ensure education opportunities and prevent exploitation of children and young people, especially girls; and developing skills for the world of work)

- *Work and employment*(including issues of underemployment, the possibilities of decent work, labour legislation, job creation and engagement with the growing informal structures)

In all of these areas, there are opportunities for broadcasting to provide continuing monitoring of international, African and national provisions and consequent implementation. The work of the International Labour Organization and its tripartite structure for social dialogue and discussions of globalization's impact on employment, job creation and development covers a wide range of critical concerns that are at the heart of confronting the poverty trap at the household level. Focus on strikes and the posturings of the labour unions often obscures these crucial underpinnings of development potential; people who have no jobs, usually have no income, are poor and vulnerable and susceptible to manipulation.The ILO campaign against the exploitation of children in households and factories is often silently resisted

by well-placed people who benefit from such exploitation, employing, underpaying and maltreating underage children in their homes and business. The absence or lack of enforcement of provisions for proscribing child labour is an important development problem.) There is much material here for investigative reporting and media monitoring around labour issues.

Is another development possible?

Is Africa winning the development war? The development debate is increasingly pitching civil society and so-called non-governmental organisations against governments and their development partners and international agencies and organisations. The World Social Forum and its regional affiliates have become the institutionalized vehicles for expressing alternate viewpoints and strategies for development. The emphasis has been on ensuring 'people-centred- and-oriented' policies and actions. Governments and international organizations are often accused of insensitivity to the nefarious impact of their economic and social polices on the so-called masses. At the base, there has been ferocious criticism of the neo-liberal thinking that is alleged to drive international economic policies to which governments are regarded as hostage.

The World Social Forum says of itself that it is "an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and inter-linking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neo-liberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a society centred on the human person."

The African Social Forum, a member of WSF, meets every year. There are also sub-regional meetings, for example, the Southern Africa Social Forum that met in Harare in October, 2005, to discuss the theme: 'Popular and Democratic Alternatives to Neo-Liberalism". These non-government actors, who often refer to governments as non-people organizations, are voices growing in importance within the development dialogue in Africa. Broadcasting has to respond creatively to their ideas and activities, not only their physical insubordination, such as when they disrupt the World Economic Summit or the World Trade Organization. Their leaders in Africa, such as Aminata Traore who was a former Minister in Mali, and a former senior UN program personnel, are well informed from the inside about the weaknesses of the international system and African solutions derived from them, and argue in articulate and persuasive ways that deserve to be brought

to the attention of the public for African broadcasting, to feed the on-going debate on Africa's future.

War and Peace in the Global Village

The link between Development and War and Peace is illustrated in a picture from Liberia that I saw recently. It shows a young man in Monrovia, gazing somewhat forlornly into the camera, in front of an overhead sign in bold capital letters that proclaimed:

THE WAR IS OVER!

IT IS TIME FOR

DEVELOPMENT

Africa cannot and will not develop in a state of war. Peace is not the opposite of war. Even places where there is no war, may not be at peace. Peace is more rigorous, more subtle than war. There is nothing refined about war; it is open, brutal and ugly.

One third of the world is at war. Africa has been and remains a vast theatre of war, both within and across national frontiers. There can be no global peace without peace in Africa. According to one estimate, of the 200 violent conflicts worldwide in 1998, 72 were in Africa.

We in Nigeria know about war and peace. Our country experienced one of the most costly, most divisive and most publicised wars of the twentieth century. The Nigerian civil war, or the so-called Nigeria-Biafra war, is estimated to have cost some one million lives, and led to hundreds of thousands of displaced persons, refugees and exiles. More than thirty-five years later, we are still impacted by some of the fallouts of that experience. So Nigerians know about war; and Mr President knows about trying to build peace after war. For even if war is not in our nature, we need to remember what the late Ajie Dr. Ukpabi Asika told us: in a civil war there is 'no victor, no vanquished'. In war, we are all losers!

By some estimates, the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, over the decades claimed more that three million lives, and dislocated the fortunes of the survivors. It poisoned the social context, because as an eye-witness described the situation:

"This is not a war of troops fighting against troops, it's a war against civil society, where infrastructures are destroyed and looted, all medicines stolen

from health posts, key people like nurses are killed in villages, and agricultural fields are destroyed."[19]

I read recently that in Mandarin Chinese writing, peace is denoted by three word-symbols. The first symbol means 'rice in the mouth' which signifies economic security. The[20]second symbol for peace is a woman under a roof, which signifies social security. The third means two hearts beating in friendship and understanding, representing human security.[21] Where there is no economic, social and human security, there may be no war; but there is no peace either. Let us recall that memorable sentence that was written into UNESCO's founding Charter in 1945:

"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

How can broadcasting touch the minds of men (and women), to build the defences of peace?

One of the greatest threats to peace is violence which is begotten of conflict. Of course not all conflict is violent; but in our experience of the world, conflict which is not speedily resolved, degenerates into violence and even war.

What causes conflict? How can peace be built?

"Effective peace building demands a broader notion of human security. We cannot be secure amidst starvation. We cannot build peace without alleviating poverty. We cannot build freedom on the foundations of injustice."

- Kofi Annan, World Economic Forum 1997)

War and poverty in Nigeria

We in Nigeria know the face and impact of poverty. Let me quote the government document which contains our national development strategy:

"Poverty reduction is the most difficult challenge facing Nigeria and its people and the greatest obstacle to pursuit of sustainable socioeconomic growth. The poverty rate in Nigeria increased from 27 per cent in 1980 to 66 percent in 1990; by 1999 it was estimated that more than 70 percent of Nigerians lived in poverty.[NEEDS, 2004 p.28]

"...Poverty is not only an economic challenge; it is a political and security issue; it is an issue of culture and values; it has religious, moral, and even spiritual dimensions. Our analysis in Nigeria indicates clearly why we must

take poverty seriously…

"The growing incidence and the dynamics of poverty in Nigeria have stratified and polarized Nigerian society between the haves and the have-nots, between the north and the south; between the educated and the uneducated." [NEEDS, 2004 p28].

Poverty in Nigeria could lead to social strife, conflict and violence. Could it lead to war? If not tomorrow, perhaps the day after tomorrow.

Media on War and Peace

Broadcasting has brought us images of people fighting, guns booming, people dying and wounded, people fleeing. Television has for decades been an ubiquitous presence in places where people disagree violently and explosively. African conflicts have been brought to our screen mostly by non-African media. Few African broadcasting organizations have had the wherewithal and organizational robustness to get involved in the expense of war reporting. Does it matter? Will African television crews see African conflicts differently from what we get from CNN and BBC and TV5? Can there be an African alternative to war reporting that is not based on the gladiatorial interpretation of war as entertainment, or war as a football match?

War is not football, where we seek to see who scored how many goals. It is a deadly matter of life and death. To report it otherwise is unethical and unprofessional. In these days of 'embedded journalism', what value is added by the presence of journalists on the front lines and in armored cars beside the combatant troops? Is the role of journalists in war to verify the body count; to glorify the generals, to bemoan the dead? Some courageous journalists have been able by sheer presence of mind to capture the brutality of war, to record the descent into barbarity of otherwise decent young men and women, who, caught up in the rhetoric of winning for the fatherland, commit atrocious crimes on their opponents and prisoners, against all rules and regulations. These journalists show us the ugly face of war; but is that all? In the face of horrible distortions of human culture, should journalists just stand aside and show the situation as it is, and stop there? Can broadcasting make a difference in war and peace?

Media and war: *The Rwanda example.*

It is generally believed that radio helped to fuel the ethnic hatred and violent

conditions that led to genocide in Rwanda. In particular, Radio Milles Collines based in Kigali, was fingered as the culprit. It was said to have broadcast hate speech inciting Hutus through coded phrases to descend on the hapless Tutsis. In that sense, radio can be said to have contributed to violence and genocide.

In a thought-provoking article entitled, 'Neutralising the voices of hate: Broadcasting and genocide' Richard Carver, argues that:'*lack of democratic control over broadcasting in a period of political transition – has been played out in countless countries in Africa and elsewhere. While the consequences have seldom been as disastrous as in Rwanda, the practical lessons should by now be well understood. There needs to be an institutional reform of broadcasting that involves mechanisms for genuine public control over public broadcasting, an open and accountable system for issuing private broadcasting licences and space for the emergence of community media.'* This is because although it may be difficult to establish that the privately-owned but government-affiliated Rwandese station, RTLM, was solely responsible for the genocide, it clearly was involved; for as Carver says *'RTLM was not primarily concerned with convincing ordinary people to participate in genocide; it reinforced the conviction of those who were already part of the conspiracy to commit genocide.'[22]*

Media and conflict resolution

In a paper presented two years ago, I expressed the following conviction:

"I believe that radio can be a valuable instrument for building a community where there is a foundation of goodwill and determination for development, with tolerance and readiness to dialogue, even if there are underlying tensions and contradictions. Radio can also help to destroy a community that is already bent on self-destruction!"

Broadcasting can help build peace; by becoming the instrument of the peace makers, by striving to clarify the basis of conflict, by highlighting common ground, and by linking people of good will in the belligerent communities, so that the process of conflict management can be legitimized. Broadcasting can help provide the insights that come from making the meaning of war clear through focusing on the human dimensions, what war does to human relationships.

Ten years after the Rwanda massacres, a journalist from the American newspaper, Newsday, and his photographer, went looking to see what the

war had done to those still alive in Rwanda. The result was a four-part series, "Rwanda: 10 years of pain," which was described as a fresh, haunting look at Rwanda a decade after rape and genocidal slaughter had ravaged the Tutsi tribe," according to the Pulitzer board of directors.

Among the stories the series told was that ofa young woman and her son. The mother had been the victim of rape during the war. The son was born from the pregnancy. She hated her rapist; but he was the father of her son. Should she hate her son? But he brought her comfort and joy! In the four feature articles, the journalist recreated the Rwanda experience in all its complexity and human dimensions, ten years later, and helped to bring deep understanding.

The series of features and the graphic and sensitive pictures that illustrated the articles won the International Reporting Pulizter Prize in 2005, the equivalent of the Nobel Prize for journalists. The writer was Newsday's foreign editor, Dele Olojede, a Nigerian, who just happened to have studied mass communication at the University of Lagos![23]

The impact of such a story, and others about Catholic nuns who had questioned their faith because of the war and the genocide, told on radio or television would have been even more graphic; telling, not just about the horrors of war, but about reconciliation and resolution; and through the life of one person, providing the metaphor for the possibilities of a whole nation.

Broadcasting can thus be an important part of the search for confidence-building measures, and a vehicle for creating durable peace!

The challenge for African Independent Television in its next ten years is: to tell the story of human development and peace, in Africa, and in the world and to tell it with professionalism, without fear, without favour; to tell it with commitment and with respect for the preciousness of human life!

Refrences

[1]Many Voices, One World,Report of the International Commission for the Study of Communications Problems, Paris, UNESCO, 1980.

[2]Alfred E Opubor, Why a pan-African television channel ?, e-mail to the BBC Network Africa programme, following an interview I granted them in May 2006 on the eve of the AU Conference in Banjul.

[3]]See Alfred E Opubor, "NAN@30: Telling the Nigerian Story (media as

chronicler, oracle, advocate?". The Tenth Anniversary Lecture, Abuja, 8th August, 2006

[4]"Towards a Pan-African Radio and Television Channel: Key Challenges and Opportunities", African Union Presentation, Meeting of experts on radio and television channels for Africa, 21-23 November 2005, Cairo, Egypt

[5]Alfred E Opubor, Why a pan-African television channel ?, e-mail to the BBC Network Africa programme, following an interview I granted them in May 2006 on the eve of the AU Conference in Banjul..

[6]" This could be the result of several factors. First, households with less income - but enough to support satellite TV - may find Al Jazeera to be a relatively "inexpensive" method of keeping up with world events. Second, households where the respondent is of a high school educational level equivalent might rely more heavily on Al Jazeera solely as their news provider while more educated households look to many sources for their news." See reference below.

[7]Who Is Al Jazeera's Audience? Deconstructing the Demographics and Psychographics of an Arab Satellite News Network,Philip Auter, Mohamed M. Arafa, and Khaled Al-Jaber

8]Source:http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/opinion/2002524877_floyd28.html- The Seattle Times

9]See; de Goveis,Philip Finke, " An African Al-Jazeera? Mass media and the African Renaissance", The foreign Policy Centre, London,2005

10] The West African Pilot newspaper, published by the great pan-Africanist, Nnamdi Azikiwe, had as its motto: " Show the Light and the People will find the way". Unfortunately many African governments have misread this, and seem to have adopted as their slogan: "Show the way and the people will find the light". Consequently, they plunged themselves and the People in monumental darkness. But when eventually the people do find the light, they will lead the way to participatory democracy!

[11]Jessica Williams, 50 facts that should change the world, Icon Books,2004, pp130-134

[12]Ibid p

[13]IITA=Institute of Tropical Agriculture; WARDA=(Nigeria) The West African Rice Association(Benin); FIIRO= Federal Institute of Industrial Research (Nigeria);ICIPE=International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (Kenya); CRAT=Centre Regional Africain de Technologie (Senegal)

[14]Government College,,Ughelli, Nigeria, one of the breeding grounds for future Nigerian elite.

[15]Jessica Williams, op. cit. p163l

[20]ibid

[21]Ibid.

[22]Carver, Richard "Hate speech in Rwanda conflict"

[23]The Pulitzer Prizes, 2005-International Reporting, Newsday: Rwanda-The legacy of hate by Dele Olojede. See http://www.pulitzer.org/archives/6915. The stories: Genocide's Child: her son, her Sorrow (part one); http://www.pulitzer.org/archives/69156; History of a Deadly Divide; Born of hate, Raised in Love; Testing their Faith (part two); Ex-Nun's new Life, With god; A people's Court (part three); When words could kill; A killer next door (part four); United by their love.(www.pulitzer.org/workd/2005-International-Reporting-Group2}

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6

MANAGING A POISONED CHALICE*

About 51 years ago, at the end of September 1956, I struggled out of a taxi at the front of the university bookshop at the then University College, Ibadan, dragging along my little suitcase and a carton. I went searching for my hall of residence, as I had just arrived as a freshman at the University. You see it was a long time ago.

In that carton that I was carrying with my suitcase was something that I prized very much. It was a radio. It was a very ugly box made of solid wood, very heavy. But that radio perhaps educated me as much as, if not more than, my lecturers in the University. When I turned it on in the first time in my room in Tedder Hall, the station I stumbled upon was Radio Peking, in English. And then I started becoming adventurous. I got Radio Moscow. Then I got a station whose call signal I could not identify, which, for some hours, was playing the best instrumental highlife music I had ever heard. And then I got the BBC. And I did get the Nigerian Broadcasting Service.

One of the most memorable broadcasts I remember hearing was in March 1957. It was something that called itself the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation. And I remember Ghana became independent on March 6, 1957, about 50 years ago. And it was just absolutely wonderful to tune into GBC and to hear Kwame Nkrumah say, from the Black Star Square in Accra: "Fellow Ghanaians, we are free, free forever!"

In 1958, a friend of mine and I decided that we were going to become entrepreneurs, and we created a campus newspaper. It was called the 'University Observer'. We went round and borrowed money and raised

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*Keynote address at the workshop on "Community Development Principles and Strategy for Campus Radio Stations" in Lokoja, Nigeria, November 26, 2007.

some money from lecturers and from fellow students. My friend was a student of Physics. I was a student of English. And together we were everything in that newspaper: We wrote the articles; we were the reporters; we were the business managers; we were the advertising agents. An old printer in Ibadan agreed to work with us.

At the end of that academic year in 1958, NBS from Lagos came to the University campus. In my generation, you made up for the shortfall between your scholarship and your expenses, by working in the long vacation and one of the most sought-after employers was the Nigerian Broadcasting Service. And so, the Director of Programmes came to the University of Ibadan to interview students. I was surprised to see almost 80 students waiting there to be interviewed. In the end four students were selected to go and work in Broadcasting House, Lagos. I was fortunate to be one of the four. I think the reason I was selected was because I had written a couple of short stories for radio that were broadcast earlier that year. That was the beginning of my affair with broadcasting, and it has lasted decades.

More than half of my life has been spent either as a student, or lecturer, or researcher, in Universities across the world. I rejoice that I come from this marvelous country, Nigeria, which is so full of contradictions and incredible things, good as well as bad. I am pleased to be with you in one of the more incredible things that Nigeria is trying to do, which is opening up the field of community radio.

It is typically Nigerian that we don't go to the solution that is obvious; we go for the more complicated solutions. I still don't understand why community radio licences have been given only to Universities. Because, really, the ultimate goal of community broadcasting is not to develop formal education in higher inatitutions, it is to empower communities: communities of ordinary people living in villages; living in rural areas; living in semi-urban areas; and their associations. That is what community broadcasting is all about- giving them the right, the power to practice democracy and to achieve development themselves. To give a whole set of licences to Universities and higher institutions without a single one given to communities is a uniquely Nigerian solution. It is part of the Nigerian compromise and procrastination.

I think it is appropriate we are meeting here at the Confluence Hotel in Lokoja, because a confluence is a coming together of different influences. What comes out of a confluence is a kind of compromise. The waters that come out of this particular confluence are partly from the Niger and partly from the Benue rivers. That is a typical Nigerian solution.

But let me warn you, the Universities and higher institutions that have been awarded community radio licences. What you have is a poisoned chalice. Why is it a poisoned chalice? Because, unless you are very careful, you will not be able to fulfill the mandate of community broadcasting. The mandate of community broadcasting is very clear, it is simple, and it is also very difficult to implement.

The operative term is not the broadcasting, it is the community. It is the community that is important in community broadcasting. How do you define that community? Who is in the community? How is it organized? How is it structured? How is it composed? What are its resources? What are its aspirations? What is its history? Those are the things that really are important in defining broadcasting, in community broadcasting. But, often, those are the things that we ignore.

Everybody is jumping around talking about transmitters; talking about studios, and digital equipment. But what do you know about your community? What are you really talking about when you are talking about community?

I heard many universities saying 'we need to have radio stations so that we can teach our students who are spread all over the country': teach them English, or French, of Biology, or International Relations. Yes, that is instructional radio. Radio can be used for instruction. But that is not what radio is all about. Community radio is about building community institutions and organizations. It is about permitting women and children to develop their cultural voice, to become better human beings and to live better lives. It is not about giving a few people degrees to become employable. So, this is a poisoned chalice. So be careful. Be careful of the ambitions of your vice chancellors thinking that they have a forum for addressing the whole country. That is not what it is about. You better go back and tell them the community radio in a University does not belong to the vice chancellor. It does not belong to the administration of the University. It belongs to the community.

Who is in your community? Your community is a community of scholars, of researchers, of teachers, of learners, of helpers. That is your core community. That core community is bound to adopt certain values. The first value is respect for freedom- freedom to think; freedom to seek; and freedom to know. That is the value of your community, which is the University. I have often asked: Why should a University be interested in radio? What is the added value that the University can bring to radio, and radio to the

University? If a University cannot express its intellectual and academic vocations through its radio, it has failed.

Radio is not, in a University setting, meant to be a money spinning enterprise. It is not another excuse for income generation. If you do make money out of radio at all, I hope it's put back to promoting the University's academic vocation. In Africa and in Nigeria, a University is not an isolated community walled up by itself somewhere in the hills, or in the valleys, or in caves. Those are monasteries.

A University is a living community that engages with its surroundings. And in the surroundings of our Universities are men and women in villages. In villages there are farmers, there are herdsmen, there are petty traders, and there are unemployed people. In cities like Ibadan or Lagos, there are civil servants, there are politicians. That is your secondary community. But our primary community and our primary resource is the University environment and its surroundings.

Therefore, given the strength of your transmitter, you should be seeking to see who is in your geographical community. Because, in broadcasting, communities are defined both by interest and by geography.

The intellectual and academic community is defined by interests, by its value system. But you also have, in broadcasting, a geographical community which is defined for you by the Regulator, the NBC, through the permitted strength of your transmitter. So the first thing you really need to do as an academic organization is to find out who is in your community. It is a research task. The methodology is there. Some of you call it community mapping. Some of you call it community profiling. The methodology exists for you to find out, in very important social and demographic terms, who is your community, who you are going to involve in community broadcasting.

Any other kind of broadcasting is not obliged to understand the community so clearly. But in community radio you have an obligation. It is an obligation that you know your community. That is why we said sometime ago that NBC should be requiring applicants for community radio licences to demonstrate that they have a thorough understanding of the community to which they will be broadcasting. There should be questions on the application forms that probe this , as well as evidence of expressed need by community groups for a radio station.

I think this is very important.Uuniversity people in our country tend to be very elitist and enjoy the notion that they live in an ivory tower. That notion is

habitually irresponsible, because most of our public universities are funded by public funds. Since most people don't pay taxes in Nigeria, we cannot say that the universities were paid for by the tax payers' money. But they are paid for by public/government money which could have gone to fund other things.. So if you are in University of Ibadan, University of Lagos, University of Abuja, the Open University, Auchi Polytechnic perhaps, in fact anybody here in a university that is not Madonna University, or Babcock University, is being supported by public funds. So you have no right whatsoever to think that you can operate a broadcasting station without reference to the public. And by law and convention, you cannot do that.

So because many of you are researchers, because you belong to an academic environment where research is important, you should go out and do research. Go out with your colleagues and your students, in Psychology, in Sociology, in Anthropology, in Economics, in History. Find out about your community. Find out what the people there think. Find out what they feel. Find out what they want, because that is the responsible thing to do; and it is information that a responsive community radio station will need.

Community broadcasting has certain values. One of them is its participatory philosophy. Therefore, as part of the challenge to build a community based on interaction among the different sectors of society, community radio must be participatory. It must involve the community in decision making. Many of your stations were created without reference to anybody's sanction. You just decided that you wanted a radio station and you applied to NBC, and they complied!

Participatory broadcasting requires that the audience or the community be involved in making decision about the creation, the operations, the programming and the content of broadcasting. In that context, it is expected that a lot of the programming will be development-oriented, because that is what the people need. People need information about health, about the environment, about economy, about agriculture, about new technologies, about opportunities for youths and women. That is what the people are really yearning for; but in addition they want to be able to contribute their own ideas and questions.

And because you are university people you are relatively well placed to respond to those needs. Universities are an intellectual resource pool. I remember several years ago, in 1976, I think. All that year, I had broadcast a regular programme every Sunday afternoon after the one o'clock news on FRCN. It was called 'Searchlights'. In that programme, for the 52 Sundays of

the year, I was interviewing people on research that were being done in our universities, by staff and students in Agriculture, in Architecture, in Medicine, in Sociology, and so on. And it was a wonderful opportunity, because, suddenly, I realized what resources we had in our universities; and I was determined to make those resources available to the public through my broadcasts. The idea of the programme was to try and explain in layman's English what types of research our colleagues were doing, and why it was important.

I remember one of my most interesting interviewees was a Professor of Medical Physics at the University of Lagos. At that time, Professor Tajinere Fregene was one of the world's top specialists in something called 'Docimetry', which is the science of measurement that allows you to determine how much radiation will be projected onto diseased cancer cells to eliminate them without endangering the patient. Radiation is a very delicate technology. Too much of it and you will kill healthy cells. And, in fact, it is said that many patients were killed in Nigeria by people who did not know what they were doing with radiation therapy, and applied inappropriate doses. Professor Fregene, who had studied Physics in Ibadan and Medical Physics at Cambridge University, was a consultant to the Cancer Research Institute in Stockholm, Sweden, which is a top rated cancer research institute in the world. So, here was a Nigerian, at the University of Lagos, who was a top world specialist.

I invited him to my program. I said 'come and speak to Nigerian people; tell them what Medical Physics is about'. Being an expert, he came to the studio with files and research notes. When I posed a question, he would pull out a document, bury his head in it and start reading in a magisterial manner. I let him go on like that for three minutes. We were in studio rehearsing to record. Then I said to the studio technician: 'Jay Jay, cut it off. Play it back to the studio'. And the Professor listened to himself on play back. He was embarrassed. He sounded so stilted and wordy.

Then I said to him: 'Prof., talk to me. Tell me, what is this medical physics? Why is it important? What have you done with it in Nigeria'? The man relaxed and opened up and started speaking normally, as if conversing with me. He was amazing. We got letters from listeners commending the programme.

You have to respond to the needs of your people. If your radio station responds to the needs of the community, the community will come to you, and adopt you. They will come to know who you are. The challenge of

community broadcasting for a university is huge. Don't take it lightly. When you start broadcasting for more than 5 hours a day, you are in trouble unless you are well organized. Imagine broadcasting for 15 hours everyday, every minute, for 15 hours everyday of the year. It is not a joke. That is why some unimaginative and irresponsible stations resort to playing music, because music is easy to programme

But if your university radio station is going to play music, why would you play music like any riff raff station? You should be playing music because your music department has been doing research , maybe experimenting with new technologies, studying traditional groups or contemporary film music. You can share this kind of music with your audience, showing how you are different. That is the business of a University. Your business is not playing reggae 10 hours a day. Any fool can do that. In fact, some fools can do that better than university fools. So be imaginative. Use what you have to make a difference. Be proud of the academic heritage of your institution. For example, when I tune to Lion FM on my radio, I want to jump up for joy because Lion FM is telling me something I need to know, in the Igbo language, because the largest community around you speaks that language and not all of them speak English.

So you have a challenge. Because you know how to talk about Physics in English, do you know how to talk about Physics in Gwari, or Bachama, or Igarra? So, you see, don't think the job you have is an easy job. . If you do it properly you will grow in insight and competence. If you do it poorly, even if you make some money, you have not really contributed to the development of this country. What a waste!!

So what do you need to know? You need to know about development. What really is development? You need to engage yourselves and your partners, and your staff in the radio stations. Try to understand development. What does it really mean in your context? And try and understand broadcasting. Because broadcasting is so many things these days and there are tremendous opportunities. The technology is changing. The environment is changing, and broadcasting can mean many things to us.

Now, one final thing that I want to say before I leave, because I have so many things to say, maybe we can get to them when we start our discussion.

When I started thinking of putting some ideas together for this address, I thought of a title: "Uni-Radio: Sharing Knowledge for Development". Unijos is here; UniAbuja is here; UniIlorin is here; UniIbadan is here and so on.

Now, this is Uni-Radio. What is Uni-Radio? Uni-Radio is the latest addition to the Nigerian academic community. I am sure if you went to ask the National Universities Commission, they will tell you they never heard of Uni-Radio. The fact is that Uni-Radio does not exist yet, publicly. It only exists in my mind at the moment.