
THE STRUGGLE FOR COMMUNITY BROADCASTING IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 and its successive democratic transitions have opened up the space for freedom of expression for the country's population of over 163 million people; 60.9 percent of whom live in absolute poverty conditions and overwhelming basic socioeconomic challenges of: high maternal and infant mortality, unemployment, illiteracy, poor healthcare services, youth restiveness and fatal insurgencies, weak physical infrastructure, among others. Yet, political aspirations for inclusive participation of the majority and contextualisation of development remained elusive due to non-democratisation of access and use of information for freedom of expression. This imperative to positively and qualitatively hasten progress has eluded the citizenry due to unfavourable policies, legal and regulatory frameworks. This paper charts a way for the success of community broadcasting in Nigeria, from legal provision in holistic practice in consonance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The African Charter on Broadcasting and the Windhoek Declaration to establish, maintain and foster independent, pluralistic and free press; all of which are essential to guaranteeing the fundamental human rights of Nigerians in line with the provisions of Sections 22 and 39 of the country's constitution.

Keywords: *democracy, human rights, inclusive participation, plural and free press*

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has been going through a process of democratisation with efforts to strengthen institutional structures that promote the system and firmly place the country among the league of democratic states in the world for the past decade. Democracy is a function of many factors like a guarantee of human rights and the fundamental freedoms, expanded

choices for the citizens and independent institutional capacity, among others. These are the minimum requirements that will guarantee social, political and economic development sustainability (Pate 2006, 2003).

Nigeria is a federating nation, comprising 36 states and one federal capital. It operates a three-arm and tier of governments—the executive, legislature and the judiciary as well as the federal, state and local governments. An elected president is the head of the executive arm while each of the 36 states, are equally headed by a democratically elected governor. In a country like Nigeria, with over 163 million people (NBS 2010), over 250 ethnic groups speaking 450 dialects, spread across 774 local government areas within 923,768sq.km expansive land mass, sub-divided into six geopolitical zones; the success of democracy in such a diversified entity, will undoubtedly depend on the expressive capacity in the people, both vertically and horizontally because freedom of information and of expression are the live wire of the democratic process. These include the rights to communicate and the rights to access means of communication that guarantee citizens utilize information within the bounds of democratic norms (Pate 2012).

Broadcasting specifically radio, came to Nigeria in 1932 with the colonial administration's establishment of a re-broadcaster station of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in Lagos, primarily to keep the expatriates abreast of events in Britain (Akingbulu & Bussiek 2010: 11; Ojebode & Akingbulu 2009: 204). The colonial administration's radio broadcast was a rediffusion of content on issues and events in Britain; and Olorunnisola (1997 in Ojebode and Akingbulu 2009: 205) noted that "the content of the programs had no direct relevance to the basic needs and lifestyles of the indigenous audiences, because the re-broadcasts were meant to fulfil the listening needs of the colonial masters" (Mabogunje 1991: 2) This was to later, in 1951/1952, transformed into the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) and later renamed in 1956 as the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC).

The passage of a new colonial constitution in 1954 led to the emergence of regional broadcast stations. The then regional governments; first, the West in 1959, then East in 1960 and lastly, North in 1962, established regional broadcast stations (television and radio), to champion the course of their regions (Akingbulu & Bussiek 2010: 11). Thereafter, the federal government also set up a TV station in 1962. Later, the NBC began to expand in 1967 and built a station in each state. This was reversed by a policy change in the 1970s, and government ordered the transfer of most NBC stations in the states, except for those in Lagos, Ibadan and Enugu, and added the Kaduna station of the Broadcasting Corporation of Northern Nigeria. The NBC later became the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) to control all federal radio stations. The Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), a new body was formed, to centralise all federal and state TV stations in the 70s. The broadcast media landscape continued under government control until the promulgation of Decree 38 of 1992 by the military regime of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida, which liberalised the sector and allowed for the establishment of private commercial broadcasting, even "though the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Section 36, 2) made express provision for the establishment of private radio stations, successive governments refused to put this provision into effect" (Ojebode & Akingbulu 2009: 206).

The country's return to democracy in 1999 and the successive democratic transitions have opened up the space for freedom of expression. It is in pursuance of the objective to comprehensively democratise the access and use of information to extend the boundaries

of freedom of expression in the country that the process for more liberalisation of the airwaves was initiated in 2003. The aim of the process was to expand the existing plurality in the broadcasting landscape in the country, with the hope that it incorporates community broadcasting to complete the liberalisation and opening up of the airwaves as enshrined in the National Broadcasting Law.

According to the Institute for Media and Society (IMS), a Nigerian advocacy-Non Governmental Organisation at the fore-front of the struggle for community broadcasting across the country, and seeking to build and improve communication capacity and environment of the media, civil society and governance institutions for popular participation in democracy and development; community broadcasting system is transforming rural development, giving meaning to participatory governance, and helping to foster local accountability in Africa. The Institute decried a non-existence of a single community radio in Nigeria, while there are over 1,000 community radios in Africa (www.imesoimeso.org). Akingbulu (2007) added further that, in the whole of West Africa, Nigeria was the only country without community radio. However, in less endowed countries like Niger, there are 98 community radio stations as in 2006; Mali has 88; Ghana 15; Senegal 14 and Burkina Faso 33, among others. And some of them like Ghana has more than a decade's experience of community radio broadcasting (Akingbulu 2007; Diedong & Naaikuur 2012: 124-126).

Thus, the major reason for the struggle to actualise community broadcasting in Nigeria is mainly to further democratise access to information, provide a voice for the voiceless, increase participation in affairs of state and open up the rural areas for faster development. With Nigeria's mammoth population, expansive land and the quest to develop and fully democratise, community broadcasting can be an important resource to positively and qualitatively hasten progress. The existing broadcasting system is undoubtedly deficient in effectively satisfying the yearnings of the people for obvious reasons of costs, access, elitism and urban centeredness. Thus, the need to reform the policy, legal and regulatory frameworks to reflect the modern trend as obtained in, at least, other West African nations like Niger, Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ghana. Experiences from some of those countries have shown that community radio is an important facilitator and driver for increased participation of the majority of the people in the process of governance and a remarkable indicator of the quality of their individual brands of democracies in practice.

COMMUNITY RADIO BROADCASTING

The African Charter on Broadcasting recognises and advocates for a three tier radio regime in individual African countries: public service, commercial/private and community. According to Fraser and Estrada (2001: 3):

Public service broadcasting is generally conducted by a statutory entity, usually but not necessarily state-supported or state-owned corporation with broadcasting policies and programming often controlled by a public body, such as a council or a legally constituted authority... and community broadcasting is that non-profit service that is owned and managed by a particular community, usually through a trust, foundation, or association. Its aim is to serve and benefit that community; relying on the resources of the community.

The Nigeria Broadcasting Code (2012: 97) defines a community as “a group of people residing in a particular geographical location or sharing a strong interest, which the community desires to develop through broadcasting. Such communities include: a local, non profit organisation, an educational institution (campus), a cultural association, a co-operative society, and a partnership of associations.”

The radio broadcast landscape in Nigeria is predominantly public owned operated by both federal and state governments, though there is also a handful of privately owned stations. At the federal level, there are the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) and the Voice of Nigeria (VON). At the state level, there are radio stations like Bauchi Radio, Eko FM Lagos, Confluence Radio Lokoja, Living Spring FM Osun, Radio Kano, Radio Ogun, Rima Radio Sokoto, Capital Sound Kaduna, and so on. There are also numerous commercial radio stations like the Brilla FM (Sports), Independent Radio, Minaj Systems Radio, Freedom Radio, Ray Power Radio, Radio Gotel, Cool FM, among others.

From a simplistic perspective, community radio is the radio station established and operated by the people of a specific community to advance, promote and protect the community’s common interest and objectives. In a broader sense, the African Charter on Broadcasting defines community radio as the “broadcasting which is for, by and about the community, whose ownership and management is representative of the community, which pursues a social development agenda, and which is non-profit” (portal.unesco.org).

The word community could be defined by a territorial space or social interest that may be cultural, political, economic, professional, etc. The important thing about a community is that it consists of people who share common interests, values, characteristics and goals. They may be physically domiciled in one geographical entity or physically separated but socially united in their goals.

Also, Opubor (2006) defined community radio as:

When radio fosters the participation of citizens and defends their interests; when it reflects the tastes of the majority and makes good humour and hope its main purpose; when it truly informs; when it helps resolve the thousand of one problems of daily life; when all ideas are debated in its programmes and all opinions are respected; when cultural diversity is stimulated over commercial homogeneity; when women are main players in communication and not simply a petty voice or 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.

The fundamental factor about community radio according to the Association Mondiale Des Radiodiffuseurs Communautaires (AMARC), that is, the World Association of Community Broadcasters, is that it responds to the “needs of the community it serves, contributing to its development within progressive perspectives in favour of social change; and striving to democratise communication through community participation in different forms in accordance with each specific social context” (Estrada 2001: 3).

Therefore, community radio must be built on popular ownership and non profit orientation as distinct from the government or commercial radio station. Community radio ownership must be rooted in the community and its local institutions; and ownership must

be justifiably plural and diversified to reflect and represent multiple interests in society. Equally, community radios are not profit oriented and not meant to compete with the conventional radio stations. Rather, they are expected to complement them because of their obvious advantage of flexibility and specific-orientation nature of individual communities. Little wonder that community radio is often described as the voice of the voiceless and the radio of the poor (Pate 2010: 154).

Opubor (2006) and Dagron (2001) identify structural features of community radio that make it participatory to include:

- Community ownership, instead of access mitigated by social, political or religious contingencies;
- Horizontal organisation, rather than a vertical organisation that treats community members as passive receivers;
- Dialogic, long term process not top down campaigns more concerned with producing 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 initiative determined by a community dialogue rather than external built consciousness raising to build a rooted understanding of social problems and solutions, instead of depending on propaganda or political persuasion;
- Some communities are defined by interest not by geography.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Community Radio Handbook recommend key necessary features of community radio as follows:

Community radio is a form of public-service broadcasting, but different from conventional broadcasting. Its specific focus is to make its audience the main protagonists, by their involvement in all aspects of management and programme production, and by providing them with programming that will help them in the development and social advancement of their community. News on community station, unlike that on the mainstream media, is not an isolated story or event alone: rather, it is part of an ongoing and future process which supports change and development in the community. Entertainment is provided in a form that is a collective cultural expression, rather than a featuring of refined performers. It is more like singing Karaoke than listening to a professional artist. Education is sharing of experiences and learning from others in the community than listening to an expert or teacher talking. There is also the principle of public access and participation where citizens have a democratic right to reliable, accurate and timely information. Access implies the availability of broadcasting services to all citizens; participation implies that the public (community) is actively involved in planning and management and providing producers and performers. Facilities are almost invariably owned by the community through a trust, foundation, cooperative, or some similar vehicle. The station's policies, management and programming must be the responsibility of the community for its independent and exclusive use. Funding may be from a diversity of sources, to include: donations, grants, membership fees, sponsorships or advertisements. But a combination of all is the most desirable to ensure independence. It must also be editorially independent of central and local government, of political parties and of commercial and religious institutions in

determining its policies and programming. It must be representative of different groups and interests in the community, including those of minority and marginalised groups (Fraser & Estrada 2001: 15-16).

The above features clearly show that community radio is built on the understanding of the community and its characteristics. In the words of Opubor (2006), 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 built on what holds people together, across different families, religions, sexes, economic situations and political persuasions.

WHY COMMUNITY BROADCASTING?

Radio is the most pervasive broadcast media in Nigeria and the most patronised means of mass communication. Akingbulu and Bussiek (2010: 10) quoting the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), state that 88 percent of Nigerian households have access to radio with 72.9 percent ownership while a much recent survey by the NBS showed that 80 percent of Nigerians have access to radio, with at least a radio set or two in every household (NAN Report, Dec 19, 2011). In practice, those that do not have personal radio sets, listen from those owned by friends, colleagues or others. Indeed, Nigerians are great radio listeners.

But the current structure of radio station ownership, operations and distribution in the country is still undemocratic and none participatory to reflect the ongoing reforms, decentralisation and democratisation in the country. As observed earlier, apart from the fact that the sector is heavily dominated by governments and some commercial interests, most radio stations are concentrated in the urban areas focusing mainly on the elites and their affairs. Hence most radio stations are located in Lagos, Abuja, Kano, Kaduna, Enugu and Port Harcourt cities. In Nigeria's commercial capital Lagos alone, in the South West, there are six commercial radio stations while in Abuja, the nation's capital, in the North Central, there are eight and Kano, there are six (See www.nbc.gov.ng). This indicates that the poor, the weak and the disadvantaged especially those reside in the remote area are in most cases marginalised and at best treated as passive stakeholders. In fact, there are parts of the country that are hardly covered by local broadcast signals.

The distribution of broadcast media channels is generally uneven, with some parts of the country far more endowed than others. For example, in Nigeria's North East with over 18million people (2006 Census), there is only one commercial radio station, *Radio Gotel*, which is located in Yola, Adamawa State. This is in a region where the public-owned radio and television stations run by government have no statewide coverage. The signal hardly reaches the entire state capitals.

The uneven radio station distribution is not unconnected to the obvious challenges of material and financial resources. This according to stakeholders is another reason why many of the existing ones can hardly effectively broadcast across or beyond the local governments in which they are situated. There are many more communities, particularly those in the interior or far from the state capitals that are not covered by local radio or television signals from their state radio or television stations. Many of them rely on external radio stations like the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Voice of America (VOA), Radio France International (RFI) and *DeutscheWelle* or in fewer cases, FRCN Kaduna, for information about issues in their states or country. The question, then, is who fills the gap as the source of regular information about

the immediate environment for the people? The natural answer lies in the community radio. It can act as a voice as well as a bridge between the communities and the rest of the world.

Nigeria combines plurality in different aspects—over 250 ethnic groups; multiple religious affiliations of Christianity, Islam and traditional African religion; diverse linguistic variations with over 450 dialects, cultural diversities, amongst others. Naturally, every ethnic group would prefer to have access to the radio and broadcast in its language or dialect. But such needs cannot be realised on existing media channels because of limited capacities. In many cases, English and some few major languages dominate the airwaves with the noticeable exclusion of smaller groups, thus, sometimes promoting alienation and acrimony among communities. Programmes are disproportionately tilted in favour of the urban areas and elite tastes, just as the commercialisation in the system helps to restrict access for the majority of the people. Hence, the needs to further democratise and decentralise the broadcast system by accommodating community radio to enlarge the space for many more languages and interests groups to participate (Pate 2012).

Based on an extensive study in selected African countries, Alumuku (2006) found that community radio is an instrument in the hand of communities seeking their own solutions to problems which for centuries have held them captive and rendered them incapacitated. It is an instrument which renews hope for the democratisation process blowing across Africa. He notes further that, community radio programmes seek to underpin the role of communication in addressing societal issues at a community level such as poverty and social exclusion, empowerment of the marginalised rural groups and acting as a catalyst for the development efforts of the underprivileged.

Alumuku concluded that community radio in individual African countries: serve community needs, are a powerful tool for democratisation, promote conflict resolution, promote democracy, enhance girl-child education, promote healthcare education, combat crime and corruption, as well as promote human rights and good governance. These positive developments can be reaped in different segments of the Nigerian society in view of the country's multi-sectoral deplorable conditions. For example, in the education sector where The ActionAid Nigeria Deputy Country Director, Akinola Tolulope, in a recent article published in the online version of the Leadership newspaper on July 17, 2012 titled "The Girl-child and Education in Nigeria" noted that, Nigeria accounts for over six million of the 36 million school-age girls who were not in school.

NIGERIA'S COMMUNITY BROADCASTING GOVERNANCE REGIME: THE JOURNEY SO FAR

Visible and coordinated effort to initiate community radio broadcasting in Nigeria dates back to November 2003 when the Steering Committee on the Initiative for Building of Community Radio was formed. Members were drawn from diverse background across the six geopolitical zones, as well as stakeholders from the international community. There were representatives from the media and civil society, academia, women's groups, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) experts, government officials, the World Bank, AMARC, and the PANOS Institute, among others.

The Committee desired pluralistic sources of information in Nigeria's emerging democracy, especially at the community level, sought the review of existing legal frameworks

for broadcasting to provide licensing for and establishment of community radios by adopting a road map of engagement and inclusiveness at the zonal, national and international levels to:

- Create awareness and enlightenment through workshops and conferences in all the geopolitical zones.
- Embark on advocacy campaigns for decision makers in the legislative and executive arms of the Nigerian government and other stakeholders for change in government policy.
- Research and publications to document the process and struggle.
- Local and international advocacy tours.

A public consultative mechanism was adopted in 2006 when the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Minister of Information, constituted a 17-member multi-sectoral committee to draft a policy to guide government in the community radio establishment. The committee headed by distinguished late Professor Alfred Opubor submitted a draft document to establish guidelines governing the licensing regime of community radio stations in December 2006. The then Minister, Mr. Frank Nweke, Jnr acknowledged radio as an important tool in addressing critical issues like poverty alleviation, education, health care, peace building and other aspects of development; but expressed worry that very few people participated in the dissemination of information with the majority simply acting as passive receivers and assured that the government would initiate the process. The Minister's comments corroborate the purpose of community broadcasting "as a key agent of democratisation for socio-cultural, educational, and economic development" (NBC 2012: 97).

Lack of continuity and government bureaucracy stalled progress despite several advocacy visits to lobby governments at federal and state levels, NBC officials and media campaigns to ensure the subject remained in the public domain and debates. There were also submissions of memorandum to government committees on the Review of the National Mass Communication Policy and that for drafting the Community Radio Policy. This eventually led to Nigerian tertiary education curriculum reforms and community radio courses were introduced and taught to equip communication and journalism students with the prerequisite skills for participation in community broadcasting operations.

Thus, for several years, there were contestations on community radio in the context of existing broadcast governance regime in Nigeria. The First, second, third and fourth editions of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) Code made no explicit provisions on the operations of community radio broadcasting in the country. Bidding for broadcasting license gave community radio stations little chance to compete with wealthy commercial media organisations because radio licenses, as stipulated in the Code, were only to emanate from registered companies whose majority shares were held by Nigerians. Thus, the licenses could only be obtained by limited liability companies and not organisations registered under trusteeship such as Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs), who are not-for-profit organisations. This automatically foreclosed any room for the community radio establishment and flourishing. Yet, these were community advocacy groups that champion the visions and aspirations of various communities.

CHALLENGES

The struggle for community broadcasting in Nigeria should now regenerate from legal provision to practice. Before now, the greatest impediment to the emergence and development of community broadcasting in Nigeria was the absence of appropriate legal, regulatory and administrative framework. However, the fifth edition of the Nigeria Broadcasting Code (2012) provides frameworks for community broadcasting.

The Code now meets some requirements of the African Charter on Broadcasting, as demanded by proponents and stakeholders. It provides community broadcasting as the third tier, after public and commercial broadcasting. Licensing will be approved as terrestrial free-to-air, for both radio and TV. Grant or renewal of license shall be considered based on ownership, funding, constitution of the Board of Trustees, as well as nature and content of programming, with particular reference to the treatment of political and religious matters throughout lifespan of license. Religious organisations, political parties, individuals or corporate profit making organisations shall not be granted licenses. Funding shall be from: resources of the community raised through levies, contributions and membership fees; donations, gifts or grants; and local spot announcements. The nature of operations is to be decided by members of the community with participation of entrusted professionals and the language spoken within community shall be given prominence. It shall be owned and controlled by the community through a trusteeship or a foundation with a Board of Trustees and all its broadcast equipment shall not be sited outside the community. It shall also not use the broadcast equipment to transmit beyond its assigned coverage area (NBC 2012: 33-99).

But “the intent of good laws can be subverted by uneven and inconsistent enforcement or cumbersome and overly bureaucratic regulation” (Kuttab, Duer and Coyer 2007, 17). One major hurdle here, to licensing and success of community radio in Nigeria is the suspicion and fear surrounding the practicability of the system. Decision makers are still unconvinced on its workability in our fragile but complex setting where issues of diversity like religion, ethnicity, and politics can easily lead to explosive conflicts with devastating consequences. To allay such genuine fears, the Community Radio Coalition must continue to advocate at the right places to reassure that with the appropriate Code and other proper operational frameworks, community radio stations would, instead of being sources or promoters of conflict, become a great instrument for national cohesion, harmony and development as in other parts of the world where it is practiced.

Closely related to the above are bureaucratic bottlenecks observed at several levels in the system. Nigeria still has no legal National Mass Communication Policy. In July 2011, the new Federal Ministry of Communication Technology, carved from the old Federal Ministry of Information and Communications (now Federal Ministry of Information), inaugurated a committee to draft a National Information Communication Technology (ICT) Policy (National ICT Policy Draft 2012: 2-3). The committee was to review, among others, the unlegislated and abandoned National Mass Communication Policy. There is yet to be a National ICT Policy too. It is still at the draft and review stage.

The fees and charges for licenses are still too high. The NBC has no official publication on license fees schedule for community radio, even in the new Code. But it was reliably gathered that the first campus radio license (which is categorised under community broadcasting in the Code) granted to the University of Lagos, UnilagFM station in 2002 was granted for one million Naira (now roughly \$6,368.017. The Commission has now granted 27 campus radio broadcast licenses to tertiary institutions in the country, with the most recent granted in 2009

(See Table 1 in Appendix). But considering that 60.9 percent of Nigerians presently live in absolute poverty conditions (NBS, 2010), most of the poor communities cannot afford such fees; and this will no doubt put applicants and licensees of small powered community radio stations in severe disadvantage, particularly compared to their commercial counterparts, who can afford to pay huge fees, that can later be ripped-off from advertisements. This is why Kuttab, Duer and Coyer (2007: 16) advised that community radio station should not be subject to the same licensing fees required for commercial broadcasters.

There are also allegations that the forces of commercialism in the broadcast industry are heavily influencing the emergence of a successful community broadcasting structure and regime. The private interests in the broadcast industry consider community broadcasting as unwanted rivals, and hence intensify their lobby at the appropriate quarters in government to discourage its implementation or create overlapping conceptualizations to create legislative confusions. This is probably why there have been conflicting signals and confusing messages from some of the agencies. Other challenges relate to issues of costs, appropriate technology, human resources, electricity supply and sustainability. These are issues that can be conveniently addressed through development initiatives, now that the legal and governance regime have been initiated. According to Kuttab, Duer and Coyer (2007: 16), these should be conducted with transparency and independence of procedures regulating community broadcasting, as well as transparency and clarity of licensing regimes and eligibility criteria.

However, the Code lists campus broadcasting as a form of community broadcasting, despite the fact that it clearly stipulates that it is principally to train students in broadcasting and other related fields and to provide opportunities for practical experience (p.100). It is important to emphasise that there are arguments on whether campus radio qualifies as community radio or not. It should also be clarified that, no where, was it pre-categorised under a community radio by the African Charter on Broadcasting, as well as other relevant global and African legal documents championing freedom of information and expression. Campus radio is already in operation in some Nigerian tertiary institutions, but that does not mean it professionally and sufficiently qualifies to be categorised as a form of community radio. There is therefore, the need to engage regulatory agencies to understand and clarify concepts to conform to international applications. After all, the definition and application of community radio in Nigeria cannot deviate from global concepts and application.

THE WAY FORWARD

Nigeria needs a more effective, legally binding community broadcasting regime for true democracy, media pluralism and diversity of information sources. The current structure of broadcasting in the country is deficient to effectively cover the whole country and provide the critical voice for the people. The country's current imbroglio causing debilitating poverty and unemployment for the multitudes, and the realities of inadequate basic infrastructure, among others; as well as the tumultuous state of insecurity characterised by bloody insurrection and kidnappings across the country, with huge fatalities, among others can be surmounted with good governance through transparency and accountability championed by inclusive participation and collective responsibility. Now that a legal framework has emerged, community broadcasting provides such an opportunity. This paper therefore recommends the following options as the way forward for the development of community broadcasting in Nigeria.

1. **Community broadcast for peace and development:** Community radio, for example, have been used to foster dialogue and peace in communities prone to ethnic and boundary related conflicts. According to Frampton *et al.* (2007: 8), the first independence radio production studio in Burundi, *Studio Ijambo* prevented the spill over of violence from Rwanda to Burundi during the 1994 Genocide. Professionals and community members from bordering ethnic groups were brought together to develop new standards of balanced reporting, to represent all the voices of the community, after which attention shifted to capacity-building through skills training. This strategy was later emulated by numerous other radio stations. The community broadcast station also helped to re-define the public's media literacy because people could easily identify what real media should look like. Listening and discussion clubs were also formed to engage the community beyond radio, in discussion and mediation forums.

Peaceful coexistence engenders development initiatives. So do transparency, accountability, justice to all, inclusive participation of the citizenry in governance and decision-making processes. They all engender the culture of collective duties and responsibilities. The strategy adopted in the Burundi-Rwanda case above can be adopted with specific-context modifications to engender development initiatives, dialogue and peaceful dispute resolution in Nigeria where armed insurrections and insurgency against constituted authorities is now a daily affair. It is also applicable to areas with perennial ethnic rivalries and boundary disputes that have led to the destruction of lives as well as sources of livelihoods in communities across Nigeria's geopolitical zones.

However, "community radio developers must have a clear strategy and vision of what they want to achieve. With community radio, the focus is on dialogue, on finding solutions, on the future rather than who did what to whom..., on bringing all the stakeholders together and through the radio trying to calm situations down and move the society toward peace and democracy" (Frampton *et al.* 2007: 8).

2. **Inclusive participation:** Starting a community radio or TV for example, requires "... a sense of internal cohesion and community consciousness. There must be a willingness for cooperative work and to pool resources and enthusiastic consensus that the people want their own radio in order to advance their community... the community must analyse its communication needs and determine how radio could help to resolve them. The traditional approach to development is to provide support to agriculture, health and education..." (Fraser and Estrada, 2001: 1).

The argument is that development can only succeed if it is centred on the people concerned. And it can only be sustained if the people are carried along in the decision about what will affect their lives, albeit positively or negatively. Either way, they are the beneficiaries and must therefore be at the forefront of making decisions about their present and future. This is not to say that, they should be left on their own without any guidance.

For instance, a way is sought for an agricultural, health, educational or unemployment problem of a community, the people should form the fulcrum of the solution. Ideally, when they are engaged in the process, they generate brilliant solutions. This means involving members of the community to contribute and "... for people to participate actively, their contributions must be respected, and that opportunity must be provided

for their voices to be heard” (Gerace and Lazaro, 2006: 66-67). Inclusive participation also ensures transparency and accountability. These automatically establish trust among members of the community, and provide an atmosphere for development to thrive rather than an atmosphere of mistrust, speculations and deception.

3. **Supportive legislation and proper implementation:** Stakeholders of the community radio project in Nigeria must continue to strive for the right supportive legislative frameworks and proper implementation of existing ones. Kuttab, Duer and Coyer (2007: 15) and Tacchi (2002) note that there have been problems with implementing legislation for community radio either due to lack of supportive legislation for free operation, or due to improper implementation of existing laws. This is important in the Nigerian context because sustainability, among other challenges for the functionality of community radio becomes relevant only when the legal and political environments allow community radio to exist.

Presently, the legislative environment for community broadcasting in Nigeria supports the existence of both radio and television broadcasting. But the NBC Act 38 of 1992 establishing the regulatory agency needs some amendments by the National Assembly to get rid of the overbearing political influence of the Executive arm of government, now hindering its free operation. Currently, only the President is empowered to grant approvals for license applications as provided in the Nigerian Constitution and not the Commission. There is thus the need to amend this provision as well as the Act establishes the Commission to give it the powers of legislation and regulation to grant license approvals as required and prescribed by the Code.

More provisions in the NBC Act to empower the Commission to establish and supervise six community regional radio stations in the six geopolitical zones are also required. Already the Code has provisions for terrestrial radio and TV coverage at the national, regional, zonal, state and city territorial levels (NBC, 2012: 33). These established regional community broadcast stations (radio or TV), can be partly funded from the resources of a National Community Broadcast Fund, which can be instituted upon the amendment of the NBC Act to make provisions for its creation. Additional funding to complement the funding from the Fund can be sourced as prescribed for in the section for establishing community broadcasting in the Code.

The conditions for renewal of licences are equally stringent and subject to multiple interpretations and manipulations, depending on the interests to be served. The Code stipulates that renewal of a license is “subject to the renewal process and fulfilment of the conditions as may be prescribed by the Commission” (NBC 2012: 37). This may be interpreted differently, including or excluding certain conditions as deemed fit by the Commission in order to make it impossible for the applicant to fulfil according to the whims and caprices of the political elites. The conditions for consideration are also rigid and tedious, among others, to include: evidences of regular submission of annual audited accounts, evidences of compliance with levies and fines and evidences of regular payment of staff remuneration and allowances (NBC 2012: 38).

The Nigeria Community Radio Coalition adds that details of the conditions for the renewal of licenses include:

(a) a station must clear all its outstanding financial and administrative obligations to the NBC, which includes 2.5 per cent of their gross turnover as annual charges (b) demonstration of compliance with the provisions of the National Broadcasting Code, which contains strict rules on what may be broadcast (c) a station seeking licence renewal must submit to the NBC its Statement of Account for the period covered by the previous licence, accompanied by 15 copies of the licence renewal application form and a fresh feasibility report for the period for which renewal is being sought (d) submission of a detailed report on the station's compliance with its statement of intent in the original application for licence (e) submission of a report on its compliance with relevant provisions of the third schedule to NBC Act No 38. This schedule requires stations to submit to the NBC in advance quarterly programme schedules along with a synopsis of the listed programmes (nigeriacommunityradio.org/nbc.php)

These conditions, the Coalition note, are difficult to fulfil, even by existing private/commercial radio operators because the conditions require expertise in the areas of accounting and auditing, feasibility and management, as well as financial buoyancy, which most community broadcast stations may find difficult to comply with too.

Similarly, the current situation, where, all public funded media organisations are controlled by the Ministry of Information at the federal and state levels, makes them vulnerable to all sorts of political manipulations, censorship, as well as unnecessary meddling. There are also fears that, when community broadcast licenses are granted, they would be subjected to the similar restrictions and thus defeat the struggle for a free and independent plural media for sustainable development in Nigeria. Presently, the Ministry controls and directs the activities of the various public-funded media organisations to inform, enlighten, and educate Nigerians on activities, actions, policies and programmes of government. These are hindrances to democratic independence of media institutions, as well as the attainment of the full development aspirations of the people. These media organisations, if granted autonomy as independent public institutions, with budgetary provisions and mandate of revenue generation, can efficiently undertake the Ministry's current mandate independently, under the watchful eyes of the NBC without the Ministry's meddlesomeness. However, this cannot be, without the political will to amend the various existing censorship laws.

The success of the global news media *Al-Jazeera* is today partly due to a wave of media law reforms that swept through the oil-rich state of Qatar, prompting the abolition of previous censorship laws. "In March 1998 the Emir abolished the Ministry of Information, ending press, radio, and television censorship. Overnight the government-owned Qatar Radio and Television Corporation, the Qatari Press Agency and the Department of Printing and Publications became independent public institutions. All the media in Qatar, including *Al-Jazeera*, found their horizons dramatically broadened in terms of whom they could employ and what they could broadcast or publish" (Miles, 2005: 29).

4. **Infrastructure and operational support:** In countries where community broadcasting exists, there has also been problems of sustaining funding, uninterrupted electricity supply and maintaining equipment (Clark 2007: 12). Again, Tacchi (2002) emphatically adds that "funding is a clear problem, especially where the stations are serving communities

that are unable to support the station because of serious economic underdevelopment. Community participation is another major issue, simply understanding what community radio [and TV] is and can be for communities, and how they can be managed transparently is recognised as an issue by people on all sides of the community radio [and TV] debate....”

Freedom of expression is the right of every Nigerian as provided in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Section 39 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Chapter II, section 22 of the country’s Constitution also ascribes to the mass media the freedom to uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people. This is where the media derives its watchdog role. Thus, all arms of government are therefore bound by law to utilise state resources to ensure that Nigerians are guaranteed their rights of freedom to hold opinions without interference; and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through the mass media. They are also to without prejudice guarantee the citizenry’s entitlement to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions. This further clarifies the recommendation earlier for the establishment of a National Community Broadcast Fund, to be sourced from tiers of government on the scales to be proposed in the amendments in order to provide financial support to community broadcast stations with regular modest allocations.

However, operators and communities within which community broadcast stations are operated must understand the burden and responsibilities attached to their rights to free information. They should therefore abide by the concept of editorial independence and social responsibility, as enshrined in the journalistic ethical code of conducts, such that a community broadcaster takes responsibility for its broadcasts and not abdicate its editorial and scheduling responsibilities to internal sectional interests or external political, social, cultural or economic interests. There is also the need to further improve community understanding, participation and management skills in community broadcasting.

5. **Local enterprise development:** A feasible option for sustainability of community broadcasting is that of local enterprise development. For instance Tacchi (2002: 8) state that The Ford Foundation has funded a three-year project to make 12 community radio stations sustainable through local development of basic agriculture and community-based tourism. Motivational programmes were broadcast to get local people interested in and see the possibilities for starting up micro-businesses. Collaboration with a business support group was seeking to deliver courses and intensive workshops for both the community and the radio stations. Skills such as marketing, networking, financial planning, etc. were used to develop the communities economically, to such an extent that the initiative generates enough financial activities in the communities for the broadcast stations to benefit economically too, through adverts, sale of airtimes and sponsorships.

The first initiative is to seek funding from development agencies. But because the concept of community broadcasting itself emphasises community ownership, funding from external sources can generate external interferences. However, funding can be safely sourced from advertising, air time sale, sponsorship from corporate organisations within the community. It has to be emphasised too, that, advertising revenue from the community may at times be unrealistic, owing to high unemployment and dearth of commercial activities especially in the remote places where the community broadcasting

is most needed to poster their development needs. Huge revenue can be derived from the sale of air time to development agencies, government programmes and policy initiatives, as well as local functional businesses.

6. **Instituting social welfare to support volunteerism:** One community radio broadcasting concept often put forward is that of volunteerism, which requires a lot of efforts and sacrifice to ensure sustainability and excellent operation. But Tacchi (2002: 8) notes that “volunteerism simply doesn’t work”, especially where the volunteers have no other sources of income, or where there is no public social welfare system to support the socioeconomic basic needs of the volunteers. This not workability of volunteerism could be found in many rural communities in Nigeria where community broadcasting would be established.

However, Fraser and Estrada (2001: 51) suggest a solution to surmounting the problem of volunteers. “One good strategy for the start-up period is to broadcast at weekends only. This will make it easier to find volunteers who have weekend time available. However, the audience must be informed and reminded that the station will be on air only each weekend. This should be done through weekly publicity efforts using means such as mobile loudspeaker, announcements by the religious establishments, posters, etc.”

In addition, communities who want to adopt this participatory strategy can also consider instituting social welfare support systems or encourage participants of community broadcasting to engage in economic activities so that their involvement at the broadcast station would be on a part time rotational basis while they use the rest of their time to earn a living. This is possible if broadcasting hours are conveniently scheduled for the operators of the community radio station and all other members of the community to listen and participate as suggested above.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the struggle for community broadcasting in Nigeria should now regenerate from legal provision to holistic practice to ensure that the provisions of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The African Charter on Broadcasting, as well as Sections 22 and 39 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria become realities. All legal instruments guarantee the right of freedom to hold opinions without interference; and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media. Though the first two are international legal instruments, to which Nigeria is a signatory and the Constitution, the country’s superior document, which is legally binding on every Nigerian, they all crave to engender an enabling environment to establish and successfully administer a community broadcast regime in consistence with the Windhoek Declaration of 1991 on establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press; free from monopolies of existence, as well as of governmental, political, economic or material and infrastructure control, which are essential for dissemination of information for development. These are fundamental human rights of every community, and not privileges.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Campus Radio Licensees in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

S/N	Licensee	Year of License
1	UNILAG FM (Academic) University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos	2002
2	University of Nigeria Nsukka, Enugu	2007
3	Nnamdi Azikwe University Awka, Anambra	2007
4	Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, Osun	2007
5	Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Kaduna	2007
6	National Teachers Institute Kaduna	2007
7	Auchi Polytechnic Auchi, Edo	2007
8	Madonna University Okija, Anambra	2007
9	National Open University of Nigeria Lagos	2007
10	Cross River State University of Science and Technology Ogoja, Cross River	2009
11	Federal University of Technology Minna, Niger	2009
12	Igbinedion University, Okada Okada, Edo	2009
13	Bayero University Kano	2009
14	University of Port Harcourt Port Harcourt, Rivers	2009
15	Rivers State University of Science and Technology Port Harcourt, Rivers	2009
16	Usman Danfodio University Sokoto	2009
17	Akwa Ibom Polytechnic Ikot Osurua, Akwa Ibom	2009
18	University of Ibadan Ibadan, Oyo	2009
19	University of Jos Jos, Plateau	2009
20	Babcock University Ilisan-Remo Ilisan Remo, Ogun	2009
21	University of Ilorin Ilorin, Kwara	2009
22	Federal University of Technology Akure, Ondo	2009

23	Lagos State University Lagos	2009
24	University of Abuja Abuja	2009
25	Caritas University Enugu	2009
26	Kaduna Polytechnic Kaduna	2009
27	University of Uyo Uyo, Akwa Ibom	2009

Source: National Broadcasting Commission (NBC); <http://www.nbc.gov.ng>