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Perspective

The power of radio advocacy: Advancing gender equality and justice

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ABSTRACT

As the global movement for gender parity and social justice gains momentum, radio emerges as a crucial tool for advocacy, empowerment, and social transformation. This paper explores how radio serves as an agent of change in advancing gender justice, particularly in communities with limited digital access and deeply entrenched social norms. By examining case studies, best practices, and emerging trends, this paper highlights the role of radio in bridging information gaps, fostering dialogue, and sustaining advocacy efforts. Given its accessibility and ability to engage diverse audiences, radio remains a uniquely effective platform for driving meaningful change in the pursuit of gender equality.

Keywords: Gender equality, Social justice, Radio advocacy, Empowerment, Community engagement

INTRODUCTION

In an era dominated by digital media, the influence of traditional platforms like radio must not be overlooked. In Nigeria and other regions with limited internet access, radio continues to serve as a powerful medium for advocacy, awareness, and social change. As a widely accessible form of communication, radio plays a significant role in addressing gender justice and equality, particularly within the framework of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5 (gender equality) and 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions). Despite progress in promoting gender equality, women and girls in Nigeria continue to face systemic challenges, including Gender-Based Violence (GBV), discrimination, and limited access to justice. Radio advocacy provides a viable means of confronting these issues, offering a platform for discussion, education, and mobilization of communities toward sustainable change.

DESCRIPTION

The context of gender-based violence in Nigeria

Gender-based violence remains a pervasive human rights violation in Nigeria, deeply embedded in cultural norms and societal structures (Macharia, 2023). Social stigma, inadequate legal protections, and limited awareness of rights prevent many survivors from seeking justice. In numerous communities, domestic violence is regarded as a private matter rather than a public concern, reinforcing cycles of silence and impunity (Friedman, 2005).

Radio can serve as a vital instrument in breaking this silence. Unlike other forms of media that require literacy or internet access, radio reaches remote and underserved communities, making it an effective tool for raising awareness about gender-based violence and women's rights. Through structured programming, radio can educate audiences on the legal and social implications of GBV while fostering a sense of collective responsibility in addressing these issues.

Radio advocacy: Bridging the information gap

Radio has the potential to bridge the gap between awareness and action on gender-related issues. Programmes focused on GBV can

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provide essential information about victims' rights, available support services, and legal recourse. Survivor testimonies and expert interviews offer a platform for changing societal attitudes and challenging harmful gender norms (Okello-Orlale, 2006).

Furthermore, radio's interactive nature allows for greater audience participation. Call-in programs enable listeners to share experiences, ask questions, and receive support in real time. These discussions foster community solidarity, helping to reduce stigma and encourage victims to seek help. By providing a safe space for dialogue, radio can transform public perception and promote a culture of accountability.

Shaping public opinion and policy through media advocacy

Beyond individual awareness, radio advocacy can influence public perception and drive policy change. By consistently highlighting issues related to gender-based violence, radio can reshape how society views domestic abuse, shifting the narrative from a private concern to a human rights violation (Pate and Idris, 2017).

Strategic framing of discussions on radio can mobilize public support for legal reforms. For example, radio programs can present domestic violence as a barrier to national development, thereby encouraging policymakers to enact and enforce stronger protections for women and girls. Additionally, investigative radio journalism can serve as a watchdog, holding local authorities accountable for addressing GBV cases and ensuring justice for survivors.

Challenges and the way forward

Despite its potential, radio advocacy in Nigeria faces several challenges. Cultural resistance remains a significant barrier, as deeply ingrained patriarchal beliefs may limit the effectiveness of gender equality messaging. Some communities continue to uphold discriminatory traditions that undermine women's rights, making it difficult for advocacy efforts to gain traction (Eze-Anaba, 2006).

Institutional challenges also hinder the impact of radio advocacy. Corruption, weak law enforcement, and lack of funding restrict media organizations from fully engaging in gender justice campaigns. Without adequate support, community radio stations may struggle to produce high-quality, impactful content (Wilkins, 2016).

To maximize radio's potential, collaborative efforts are needed. Government agencies, civil society organizations, and media practitioners must work together to strengthen community radio networks, invest in journalist training, and develop sustainable funding models. Integrating radio advocacy with digital platforms can further enhance reach and impact, ensuring messages resonate with both urban and rural audiences.

Partnerships between radio stations and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that provide legal aid and support services can enhance advocacy efforts. By connecting victims with the necessary resources, radio can move beyond awareness-raising to facilitating real change in survivors' lives.

CONCLUSION

Radio remains an invaluable tool in the fight for gender equality and justice. Its accessibility, reach, and ability to foster dialogue make it an essential platform for raising awareness, challenging social norms, and influencing policy. As Nigeria continues its journey toward achieving the SDGs, the role of radio in advocating for gender justice must be fully harnessed.

To achieve lasting change, commitment from all stakeholders including governments, media professionals, and grassroots organizations is necessary. By investing in radio advocacy, strengthening legal frameworks, and promoting community participation, Nigeria can create a society where gender equality is not just an aspiration but a reality. Now is the time to act. Let radio be the amplifier of voices that challenge narratives and drive sustainable transformation.

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