

**COMMUNICATING CHANGE IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF INSURGENCY
THROUGH RADIO DRAMA: AN APPRAISAL OF 'MADUBI LIVE' BY BBC
MEDIA ACTION NIGERIA**

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Abstract

In Northern Nigeria, radio has, over the years, proven to be an effective medium of communication because of the wide listenership it enjoys in the region. This also makes radio a readily available communication medium in the hands of national and international non-governmental organizations, targeting northern Nigeria as the focus of their development interventions. For example, organizations like BBC Media Action Nigeria, Population Media Centre (PMC), and United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), among others, have at various points in time deployed radio drama to communicate behaviour change in Northern Nigeria. In a bid to expand the frontier of participation in radio drama process, BBC Media Action Nigeria recently devised a creative way of reaching out to some target communities in North-Eastern Nigeria on polio immunization through a creative way of doing radio drama called 'Madubi Live'. In Madubi Live, radio drama is taken away from the radio stations and performed (recorded) live in community arenas, thereby giving the local people the opportunity to participate in the discussion of key issues on polio disease and immunization. Anchored on participatory communication theory. This paper interrogates the level and nature of local people's participation in this process, considering the volatile security atmosphere in North- Eastern Nigeria, a region that has been plagued by Boko Haram insurgency since 2009 and the ongoing Fulani herdsmen/cattle rustlers' attacks on communities. One major finding herein is that despite the security challenges in the region, the initiators of Madubi Live and community respondents have found the risk of the initiative worth taking. The paper concludes by arguing that the lingering shortcomings of 'Madubi Live' and atmospheric challenges notwithstanding, it is a noble strategy that has redefined the scope of people's participation in radio drama process.

Keywords: Development Intervention, Radio Drama, Behaviour Change, Participation, Community Respondents, Madubi Live.

Introduction

All through human history, communication has been recognised as a key vehicle for heralding change in societies. This is because communication serves as a vital cord that connects human beings in a complex web of relationships. In development parlance, the role of communication cannot be overemphasized. The success, or otherwise, of many a development intervention is arguably a resultant effect of how communication was deployed. This means that communication plays a vital role in every development intervention. Some of the questions always being asked by development interventionists, critics and experts when probing the role of communication in development are: What kind of communication is appropriate for this intervention? Whose interest is the communication serving? What communication strategy undergirds this development intervention? And what media of communication are being deployed? among others. These questions are often raised in a bid to interrogate the connectedness of a given development intervention to the target beneficiaries which, most times, hinges on the kind of communication deployed.

Current discourses on sustainable development have continued to underscore the importance of involving target beneficiaries of a given intervention in the entire process of the intervention. The rationale behind this call is that, for an intervention to result in desired individual and collective change, the people who are targeted by such an intervention must first identify with it and, subsequently, take ownership. It is in genuinely identifying with a given development intervention by target beneficiaries that its sustainability can be much guaranteed.

In keeping with the demands of sustainable development, communication media are viewed critically against the backdrop of their ability to elicit greater involvement of the people in development processes. The conventional media (radio, television and newspapers) in their traditional forms have at various points in development communication history been criticized for their inability to effectively galvanize local people towards achieving sustainable development. This necessitated strategic retooling of these media to better accommodate local people's participation in development interventions. Of the three conventional media, radio has proven to be more effective in reaching out to people, especially in rural areas, thereby making it a veritable tool for social change and participatory communication.

Radio has several comparative advantages over the other media. First, it is cost-efficient in terms of investment—for those that run the stations and the audience, respectively. Second, it is pertinent in terms of language and content—ideal for the huge non-literate population that still remains marginalized, especially in rural areas of the third world. Third, it is relevant to local practices, traditions and cultures. Fourth, once the initial investment in equipment is made, sustainability is feasible, though independent in the level of community participation. Fifth, in terms of outreach and geographic coverage, radio has a strong advantage over other media. Last, but not least, the convergence

between radio and the internet is providing new strength to community radio and has enormously increased networking opportunities. (Dagron, 2001:19).

As a universal and versatile medium of communication that can be used for the benefit of society, radio has been used throughout the world to encourage positive individual behaviour change and constructive social change through formal lessons or didactic lectures delivered by renowned scholars and authorities. Moreover, radio has been able to bring exciting, entertaining dramas into the homes and lives of millions of listeners, dramas that engage their emotions while informing them of new ideas and behaviours that improve their lives and communities. The strategy of using radio to entertain, and at the same time educate target listeners, has been known as “enter-educate” or “edutainment” in the development parlance.

“Enter-Educate” is a term coined by the Johns Hopkins University Centre for Communication Programmes. The programme was designed to bring down birth rates in developing nations by sensitizing mass audiences on the benefits of birth control and family planning. It is a contraction of the words “entertainment” and “education”. Every Enter-Educate product consists of two equally important parts: the format (entertainment) and the message (education). The purpose of entertainment-education programmes is to first attract and hold the attention of the audience by engaging their emotions (entertainment), and then enhance the knowledge and skills of the learners so that they can reach their potential (education).

Singhal and Rogers (2002) offer a succinct definition of entertainment-education as the “process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members’ knowledge about an educational issue, create favourable attitude, shift social norms, and change overt behaviours”. They argue that the purpose of entertainment-education interventions is to contribute to the process of directed social change, which can occur at the level of an individual, community, or society. It is, however, important to note that entertainment-education is not a theory, rather, it is a communication strategy targeting changing audience members’ behaviours (Nariman, 1993, Singhal and Rogers, 1999). Hence, the deployment of radio drama in communicating change is anchored on edutainment strategy.

In Nigeria, many national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have had to use radio drama at one point in time or another to communicate change in wide ranging areas that include health, agriculture, governance, climate change, and human rights, among others. Some examples of celebrated radio drama serials worth citing here are: *Story-Story* and *Gatanan-Gatananku* by BBC Media Action Nigeria, and *Ruwan-Dare* by Population Media Centre (PMC) Abuja, Nigeria. These radio drama serials address issues in governance, health, and human rights, among others, with the chief aim of heralding desired social change in those areas. Northern Nigeria has, over the years, been a target of several radio drama serials that seek to elicit one social change or another in the region. One of such dramas is *Madubi*, a UNICEF-sponsored drama produced by BBC Media Action Nigeria aimed at ensuring that Nigeria bids final farewell to polio

disease. The drama was launched in 2015 and has continued to run till date. In 2016, Nigeria had already spent two years without recording a new case of polio disease, and was looking forward to July 2017 when it would finally be certified polio-free, having spent three years. This hope was dashed in August 2016 when a new case of polio virus was detected in Gwoza, Borno State, in Northeastern Nigeria—a region that is plagued by Boko Haram insurgency.

With this new challenge, a question emerged on how the radio drama Madubi could continue to reach out to these people in Northeastern Nigeria who, given the volatile nature of security in that region, may sometimes not be able to listen to radio. This led to a strategic retooling of the drama to what is today known as Madubi Live. Madubi Live, as it were, was conceived as a counter-insurgency approach to communicating change through radio drama. In Madubi Live, radio drama is taken to local communities where a live recording session takes place, with community members present. This is aimed at ensuring a greater participation of community people in the discussion of issues relating to polio and polio immunization. This paper interrogates the efficacy of this strategy in communicating change, with particular focus on the extent and nature of local people's participation in the entire process.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of participatory communication has, over the years, defied a monolithic and accurate definition that could contribute to a better understanding of the notion. That is, it may not be defined easily because it cannot be considered a unified model of communication. Paradoxically, however, herein lies the beauty of the concept. Dagon (2001:19) avers that “the beauty of participatory communication is that it can adopt different forms according to need, and that no blueprint model can impose itself over the richness of views and cultural interactions”. Be that as it may, this paper subscribes to Paulo Freire's principles of participatory education.

Paulo Freire (1970) is the most influential scholar to apply participatory approaches to education and communication practice in development contexts. Freire's ideas drew mostly from the Christian liberation theology of Latin America and from the teachings of liberation leaders from other traditions such as Ghandi (Melkote and Steeves: 2002). Paulo Freire's literary work in Brazil, which empowered landless peasants to formulate their demands for a better life and liberate themselves from oppressive conditions, grew into participatory theory and practice (Tufté and Mephalopulos: 2009). Freire called for the replacement of the educational system, especially in Brazil and Chile with a more liberating type of education that contained more dialogue and was both more receiver-centred and more conscious in social structure. The dialogic process Freire talks about requires communication that involves a process of shared meaning between people. For Freire (2005:35),

...communication should be practised not as a message communication but rather as emancipatory dialogue, a particular form of non-exploitative, egalitarian dialogue which is carried out in the atmosphere

of profound love and humility...and the focus should be face-to-face emancipatory dialogue.

A perceived undertone from Freire's position is the value placed on human relationships. The most striking feature about Freire's engagement with the people was the non-violence employed while they sought to assert themselves. Perhaps, transferring the "dialogue of love and humility" to a conflict situation is likely to bring about transformation in relationships—from a chaotic one to an integrative one. It is against this backdrop that Madubi Live is examined in this paper with a view to finding out the nature and extent of local people's participation in the process, and how this contributes in advancing the fight against polio in Northeastern Nigeria as pointed out above.

Strategies for Utilizing Radio in Development Interventions

Open-Broadcasting: The Unorganized Audience

Open broadcasting is a strategy of reaching out to a broad spectrum of unorganized audience with a pro-social message aimed at either informing them about a particular social issue, or persuading them to adopt a particular behaviour change. A typical example of open-broadcasting strategy worth citing here is the radio programme: *Dr. Massikita*, produced and broadcast by Radio Star in Zaire. In the programme, Dr. Massikita carries a message about feeding a new-born child or getting a vaccination for older children or choosing good kinds of vegetables for family dinner. For 15 minutes a week in five languages, he speaks to Zaire's people. He speaks to basic medical and health needs in the person of a country doctor with a down home approach adapted to each cultural group. The programme drew hundreds of letters a year from its audience, asking advice, thanking Dr. Massikita, and even inviting him for a visit. Most of his listeners did not know that their favourite doctor was only a creation of a group at a small production centre in Kinshasa called Radio-Star. Occasionally, when an enthusiastic listener came into Kinshasa from a village, the station used to get a call requesting to see the famous doctor. These kinds of request were politely turned down with the excuse that the "doctor" was out on trip to the villages. This example, although, shows a successful open-broadcasting programme by Radio-Star, yet it illustrates both the advantages and the limits of the strategy.

Instructional Radio: The Organized Learning Group

Instructional radio is a second strategy for using the broadcast medium for social change and development. Schmelks (1973) and Spain (1973) give notable evaluations that will help to illustrate the assumptions, operations and problems that exist for instructional radio in rural areas. The first assumption about instructional radio is that it is part of a formal school system. Experience indicates that although this is generally true, it may be outside the classroom and even of the formal certifying system. For example, in Australia, instruction by radio was used to reach out to individual children in isolated rural homes (Kinane, 1967), while in Tanzania, it was used to teach practical skills by correspondence and radio to rural villagers. In People's Republic of China, Shanghai's population was getting instruction in English outside a formal system.

A second assumption frequently stated for using instructional radio is that it reduces costs by substituting for teachers. For example, in Tanzania, when the government could not afford to send book-keeping teachers to her rural villages, radio and correspondence brought instruction to audiences at a considerable saving and overcame the poor communication links between city and county (Dodds 1972).

Another assumption is that students will be able to do necessary drills under the supervision of someone who can give feedback (either immediate or at a distance). Organization of listening and learning practice demands a structure, support materials, monitors or teachers and some feedback or assessments. Effectiveness of radio instruction, therefore, is the result of more than simply broadcasting programmes. Whether the burden and cost of the reception infrastructure is assumed by the broadcasting unit or by a local population, it forms an integral part of the instructional radio process. An area of special importance for instructional radio seems to be teaching second languages where radio or TV can hire teachers with good pronunciation so that poorly trained teachers can learn in the classroom along with students. A number of countries in Africa use radio to teach the major languages of English and French. Senegal apparently had such a successful French programme by radio that it was to be transferred to television. Quiz competitions broadcast in radio stations across Nigeria is another dimension of using radio for instructional purposes.

Radio Rural Forums: The Decision Group

The strategy for using radio with discussion and decision for rural groups was first begun in Canada before World War 2 and later adopted and spread in India in 1956, and in Africa, especially Togo, Malawi, Ghana and Dahomey in the 1960s and 70s. The basic strategy for the forum is the one developed in Canada. It was a regular weekly radio programme with segments devoted to rural news, to answers for listeners' questions, and to the presentation of a discussion, a dramatization or a lecture on a topic of interest to rural groups. The 15 to 30-minute programme is listened to by a volunteer group of villagers and then discussed. A discussion leader maintains order and encourages dialogue about the subject. Sometimes, this results in some action decisions by the group for village or personal improvement in agriculture, health, home care or whatever topic was treated by the programme. Forums send back written reports and messages to create the often-missing feedback loop for the mass media. In many ways, the forums sum up a number of important communication principles that give the concept a great promise.

Radio Schools: The Non-Formal Learning Group

One of the widespread strategies for using radio in rural development was begun in the small town of Sutetanza, Colombia. The idea began with a parish priest who saw radio as a better means of reaching his rural people with both an educational and a spiritual message that might improve their lives. That effort led to the establishment of a national organization called *Accion Cultural Popular* (ACPO), which served thousands of rural Colombians with its various programmes. Apart from its grand success in Colombia, this idea also had direct and indirect influence in many similar projects in Latin America that had formal relations with ACPO's international division (OSAL). Some of the features of

ACPO that were shared widely among the off-shoot projects in Latin America include: the audience were primarily rural adults; efforts were mostly directed to literacy and basic education (reading, writing and some figuring). Although advanced forms of instruction up to primary equivalency were available in some places, “schools” were small organized listening/learning groups meeting in homes, churches, etc., under the charge of a local volunteer or monitor. Field organization usually existed in the form of supervisor (sometimes paid) who tried to coordinate activities, distribute materials and “animate” (visit and encourage) groups from time to time. The basic approach was multi-media, employing at least radio and printed booklets almost everywhere, but frequently adding newspapers, charts, film strips, etc., plus, in some projects, pedagogical methods, sometimes identified with the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. All the projects (usually called Radio Schools) were run by private groups, affiliated to the Catholic Church. Also, each project usually had one or several transmitters of its own which broadcast general educational entertainment programmes for rural listeners besides formal instructional programmes. This was the Sutetanza model as it grew and spread to most other Latin American countries.

Although this model was largely successful in Latin America, this was without some noticeable challenges. One of the problems with the radio schools (ACPO pattern) is that they placed an exclusive emphasis on their work in education and avoided any “political” action as a means of rural and social change. The disavowal of many radio schools to engage in mobilization of rural people toward community action because it is considered political means that radio students must seek to work for change outside the radio school structure. Also, the radio schools, in trying to remain independent of government influence, failed to collaborate with rural change programmes of a more developmental nature and, thus, worked in isolation of any action/change. There was the issue of poor planning and organization that even the relatively low financing often put into the radio schools by international agencies was not well-spent.

Radio and Animation: The Participating Group

The animation strategy is a method that is promoted among local communities with a trained cadre of discussion leaders (animators) whose role is to promote, in a non-directive way, a dialogue which community members participate in for the purpose of defining their development problems, putting them in a larger social context and working out ways of mobilizing people to take common action to overcome these problems. The technique grew out of a French tradition of group dynamics that was applied to development strategies in the early 1960s, especially in Africa (Colin, 1965). This strategy worked on the assumptions that: There are no solutions to problems that are imposed on local communities from outside; local communities must first arrive at the problem definition and then its solution on their own. The social animator is to be as closely identified with the local community as possible. He is to be nondirective in his approach. Information’s chief role in this approach is to help define the problem, not to give the solutions. Community participation and social action as the feedback from the community is an essential means.

Examples abound where animation principles have been applied to the use of radio, often in conjunction with some form of rural radio forum or radio school principles. One of such examples is the 'Radio Clubs du Niger' in Niger Republic. At first glance, we may take the radio clubs as another African version of the rural radio forums as they existed in Ghana, Togo and Dohomey. On a closer inspection, however, there were some unique features in the Niger Project. First, the primary objective of the radio broadcasts and discussions were to foster awareness of "national development plans in terms of local problems" and not to provide information on a problem defined by experts. Second, in Niger feedback was not an "extra" as it seemed in some other forums but an essential ingredient in the broadcast. Programmes consisted of taped responses of a variety of people among the listening audience about a problem. These opinions of people about a theme (e.g. paying taxes) formed the programme "content". The discussion of the group then followed and deepened what was already begun by the audience in interviews.

Radio Drama Listening Clubs

This strategy has some semblance of the radio schools discussed above in the Sutetanza model. It involves producing a radio drama targeted at behaviour change, and setting up listening clubs to listen and discuss issues raised in the drama. The use of drama to communicate change is anchored on the effectiveness of entertainment-education approach. This position is corroborated by Akaer and Ikwokwaghe (2001:04) who succinctly put it thus:

By radio drama, reference is made to dramatic arts, performances or presentations consummated through the aural medium of mass communication for which theatrical elements are engaged for the purpose of educating, entertaining, conscientizing and interpreting social reality for public consumption. The product of this process is the achievement of a positive social order or change.

Commenting on the potency of drama in development communication, Phido Allison and Khadijah Tuggar assert that "dramas were particularly effective in motivating behaviour change. After all, in African tradition, entertainment is a key element of educational activities. Folktales, music, dance and dramas always serve didactic purposes, but have the added advantage of capturing, engaging and motivating awareness. Dagon (1994: 314) also gives more insight on how drama helps stimulate people towards the desired change:

Drama is nourished by reality, and returns an interpretation of it which immediately has an effect on individuals. It provokes reflection and, in that way, stimulates the analytical potential of individuals. Therefore, this makes drama a potent facilitator of development since it can re-awaken people's consciousness.

Besides, it has been realized that development entails more than mere provision of social services and the introduction of new technologies. There is a conception that "development involves changes in awareness, motivation and behaviour of individuals"

(Burkey, 1998:48). Radio drama can facilitate these changes in awareness, motivation and behavioural pattern in individuals when it is made relevant to the people by speaking their language and idioms and dealing with issues of direct relevance to them.

Despite the laudable applause for radio drama as an effective tool for development, there is a mounting argument against its functionality as a truly effective tool for development. The argument brings to question the possibility of radio to elicit sustainable behaviour change since the audience is physically separated from the makers of the drama, thereby jeopardizing the chances for meaningful feedback which is essential for engendering sustainable development. In other words, for radio drama to be truly participatory and relevant to sustainable development, the gap between the audience and the medium must be re-negotiated. It is to bridge what is a perceived gap between radio drama and its audience, that radio listening clubs have been created to facilitate the discussion of radio messages, thus making it possible to provide feedback. Such clubs and forums are made up of listeners from all walks of life and they function by meeting during broadcast to listen to the episodes, which are then discussed and analyzed. Based on such discussions and analyses, the possibility is to raise issues of communal concern for deliberation and debates and appropriate actions considered. This strategy was deployed in Nigeria by African Radio Drama Association's (ARDA) serial drama *Rainbow City*, which came on air in mid-1998. The drama was aimed at inviting listeners to examine seeming real-life situations and to come to their own conclusion regarding democracy.

Although radio drama listening clubs are a good effort towards renegotiating the gap between the audience and the medium, more needs to be done to engender greater inclusiveness of the audience in radio drama making process. A closer look at the radio listening club strategy, one will understand that the audience is only brought in as listeners or consumers of already packaged product. Whatever issues they may raise after listening, the drama as a feedback might not necessarily lead to any substantial change in the content of the drama. Hence, for radio drama to elicit more sustainable change, the audience needs to be involved in all the processes of the drama production. It is in response to this lingering gap that BBC Media Action Nigeria has stepped up the level of audience participation in Mabubi, a radio drama launched in 2015 to promote compliance to polio immunization in some states (Sokoto, Kano, Katsina and Zamfara) in Northern Nigeria.

'Madubi' and Polio Campaign in Northern Nigeria

The polio eradication campaign was first launched in Nigeria in 1996 and, since then, over a hundred campaigns have been conducted targeting children 0-59 months. Polio was once pervasive in almost all parts of the country, but through the concerted efforts of the government of Nigeria, especially since 1999, with support from World Health Organization (WHO), giant steps have been made.

However, the gains of the earlier campaign were almost wiped out by the politicization and misunderstanding of the content of the vaccine, which was erroneously believed to contain family planning elements and was, therefore, seen as a ploy to control the population of the north. A number of northern states suspended polio immunization

campaigns in August 2003, following concerns by some public figures about its safety. Several years later, the seeds of misconception and suspicion sown in the minds of the Nigerian populace began to bear fruit as a number of families, especially in the northern states, began to reject polio vaccination (Onuekwe, 2015: 34).

Northern Nigeria resumed the vaccination campaign about a year later, after intense lobbying and repeated tests to confirm the safety of the polio vaccine. Large numbers of families still refused polio vaccination for their children and as such, the virus still raged out of control. A 2009 report showed that in five states of northwestern Nigeria, the immunization campaigns missed 40 percent of eligible children due to refusals and the incidence was four times higher than in 2006 (17th ERC Report, March 2009). This necessitated the adoption of alternative strategies to ensure compliance. Hence, a number of communication strategies were adopted by the polio programme implementers to increase awareness, improve knowledge, combat noncompliance, and correct misconceptions regarding polio immunization.

In 2010, the Nigerian folk musician, Dan Maraya Jos, who has stirred the hearts of Nigerians with songs on a range of social issues for over four decades, was named a Rotary Goodwill Ambassador for polio eradication in Nigeria. A custodian of Hausa culture and tradition, Jos has recorded three radio public service announcements on polio in Hausa, which has a popular refrain as follows:

We are this close to ending polio. President Yar'adua is calling, the Sultan of Sokoto is calling, traditional and religious leaders are calling, and Rotary International is calling all families to take children under five years for polio immunization.

Dan Maraya Jos mobilized and sensitized communities about the importance of polio vaccination through his music. Prior to the implementation of the campaigns, Dan Maraya travelled around the northern states to campaign through his music for the acceptance of polio vaccination. Anecdotal facts evidenced by the large crowds that Dan Maraya attracted indicated that his music was impactful. It was evident that it created awareness and, at least, got people talking about polio vaccination, thereby increasing their individual and collective efficacy. It is in a bid to consolidate the progress made by the likes of Dan Maraya that BBC Media Action Nigeria, with support from UNICEF Nigeria, launched the radio drama serial *Madubi* in 2015 which has continued to run till date.

In January 2015, BBC Media Action Nigeria, with funding from UNICEF Nigeria, set out to create a radio drama that would address lingering misconceptions, suspicion, and other cultural factors that still stood as barriers to full compliance to polio immunization by parents and caregivers in Northern Nigeria. The primary focus was the northwestern states of Kaduna, Zamfara, Kano, Katsina, and Sokoto. In order to make the drama address real situations on ground, a team of BBC Media Action researchers, with some freelance script writers, toured the target states and interacted with the people in local communities concerning the issue of polio. Some of the issues that came up were: contrary to scientific fact, some of the people believed that polio was caused by a jinx known as "Inna"; they

questioned the sincerity of vaccinators following them house-to-house to give them polio vaccination free of charge; but in cases of common sicknesses like headache or malaria fever, they would have to buy drugs with their money. Some people still believed that the vaccine contained some anti-fertility elements aimed at controlling the rising population of northern Muslims. Some people also raised concern about the many rounds of the vaccination administered on their children, fearing that it could be too much for them.

Polio survivors were also engaged during the field research, and they recounted their stories. Some of the women survivors revealed how they were sexually molested when they were younger, while many of them complained about discrimination by people without disability. All these issues were, subsequently, harnessed by a team of script writers and developed into an engaging radio soap opera entitled: *Madubi*. Before *Madubi* was released to the general audience, a pilot version of three episodes was produced and taken to local communities visited during the field research. The essence was to verify whether the local people would identify with the characters and issues raised in the drama. This exercise availed the local people an opportunity to make insightful comments on the new drama. Their comments were later reflected in the remaining ten episodes before Series One was released to the general audience. Since inception of the drama in 2015 till date, the drama team has continued to ensure a constant interaction with the local people in the target states through evaluation research exercises. This has helped in providing feedback to BBC Media Action and has also exposed them to emerging issues surrounding polio and routine immunization within target communities. It is this mutual and continuous engagement with the people that makes *Madubi* endearing to its audience.

Findings from a qualitative impact survey carried out by BBC Media Action Nigeria in 2018 reveals that *Madubi* has been appealing to audience across the target states. One of the key appeals for audiences is that *Madubi* is seen as a specifically northern Nigerian programme. Most of the people feel that the drama is set somewhere close to them in Kaduna, Kano, or Borno. "When I heard his voice, I knew he is from Kano," says a grandmother who is also a regular *Madubi* listener (BBC Media Action, 2018). The use of local music in the introduction of every episode also marks *Madubi* as a drama that is anchored on Hausa culture and tradition.

Moreover, audiences are endeared to the drama because the themes resonate with their individual and collective concerns. The central themes of the drama: polio, immunization, child health, hygiene, maternal mortality, peaceful coexistence in the community, and in a polygamous family setting resonate powerfully with listeners in northern Nigeria. Other elements of the drama the audience identify with include the accents and names of the actors, and the credibility of the information passed across in the drama which usually corroborates similar information from doctors, nurses, health workers and other credible internet sources.

By July 2015, Nigeria was exactly one year without recording any new case of wild polio virus. This is called 'interruption' in polio campaign. For the first time, Nigeria had successfully 'interrupted' polio prevalence. Interruption is a positive step towards total

eradication of polio disease. If the country would sustain the status quo to July 2017, Nigeria would be certified polio-free by the World Health Organization (WHO), having met the requirement of spending three years without recording a single case of polio. This hope was dashed in August 2016 when a new case of polio virus was detected in Gwoza, Borno State in northeastern Nigeria, a region that is plagued by Boko Haram insurgency. With this development, it became clear that in responding to the case of polio in the northeast, *Madubi*, as it were, may not be effective unless it is re-strategized. This is because the people who were now the target audience may not have the luxury of listening to radio as often as possible due to the volatile security atmosphere. This led to the emergence of *Madubi Live* as a complementary strategy aimed at stepping up the effectiveness of radio drama in communicating change in an atmosphere of insurgency.

Madubi Live: A Counter Insurgency Approach to Communicating Change in Northeastern Nigeria

Madubi Live was conceived immediately after the recorded case of polio in Borno, northeastern Nigeria. Given the volatile nature of the region, UNICEF Nigeria wanted a more direct approach of reaching the local audience, including those who might have been plunged into media darkness by the insurgency. A typical *Madubi Live* session is divided into two parts. The first part consists of a 15-minute stage drama (and recording), while the second part is a discussion session with local audience that include fathers and mothers, caregivers, traditional and religious leaders, and nursing mothers, among others. At the end of the drama, the audience is given an opportunity to ask and answer questions from the actors. For example, an actor caught up in a major dilemma in the drama may ask a question like: “what would you do in my position of Hudu?” this question then triggers responses and contributions from the audience. Technical questions arising from the audience are usually tackled by medical personnel from National Primary Healthcare Development Agency (NPHCDA) or UNICEF staff present. Commenting on the uniqueness of *Madubi Live* from the radio drama version, Mr. Nasiru Mu’azuIsah, the Producer of *Madubi Live*, submits:

The development of *Madubi Live* is a marked improvement from the initial *Madubi* drama. This is because, whereas one is strictly radio drama, the other is stage performance. Also, the initial one was strictly radio drama without a discussion, but *Madubi Live* has a discussion element with live audience. The radio drama is produced and distributed to partner stations for broadcast, while *Madubi Live* is adapted to suit the issues of the location with regards to polio and routine immunization.

Across the locations where *Madubi Live* was performed, participants expressed high level of excitement with the strategy for bringing live actors and health experts to their communities. This gave the community people a sense of pride: that their communities had been selected. For many, it was the first time they saw an actor within their neighbourhood, so the novelty of the experience was very high.

“I had the opportunity of seeing her (referring to Rukayya, a Kannywood star) face to face, not on screen or on papers. I’ve seen her and I’ve talked with her. She is down to

earth; she's lively and friendly. Those children snapped pictures with her as if they knew her from onset." Mother, Madubi Live Participant, Ngomari, Borno (BBC Media Action, 2018).

For those that had initially listened to Madubi on radio, the live performance further crystalized the reality of the drama to them. It also created more demand for the radio version as participants began to look forward to listening to the drama with the expectation of hearing the versions acted in their community which have their own voices or those of people they know. Cultural sensitivity displayed by visiting Madubi Live team through their dressing and behaviours was lauded by the community members. This helped in eliciting the trust and adequate participation of the people in the performance. Participants also trust Madubi Live because it draws the presence of respected doctors, community and religious leaders, as well as actors who integrate so well into the community. *"We accept/trust it of course. We are convinced that is why we willingly handed over our children to be vaccinated,"* Mother, Madubi Live Participant, Ngomari, Borno (BBC Media Action, 2018). The novelty of the approach is also one of the reasons that endears it to the participants.

Impact of Madubi Live on Participants

People who took part in Madubi Live events agreed that the performances and community discussions changed their attitudes towards polio vaccination. Particularly, they testified that they have been educated on the importance of completing the full dose of polio vaccine and other routine immunization. Fathers (heads of households) who participated in the events also promised to ensure that their wives avail their children who are eligible for polio vaccination. *"Through the programme, we now understand that vaccination is very good,"* Fathers, Madubi Live Participants, Girei, Adamawa (BBC Media Action, 2018).

Also, community leaders who participated in Madubi Live performances were inspired to commit themselves towards ensuring that people comply with polio vaccination and routine immunization. For instance, religious leaders pledged to intensify campaigns in Friday prayers. Beyond polio, decisions were also taken on other crucial issues that came up during the post-performance discussions. In order to address the problem of persistent harassment of women by health workers whenever they lose their hospital cards, the community leaders decided to meet the hospital staff.

Madubi Live performance was also used as a platform by community leaders to reiterate the dangers of non-compliance and also the sanctions that awaits any individual who refuses to make available his or her children who are eligible for polio immunization.

Furthermore, it was discovered that the audience members became more emboldened as individuals after participating in Madubi Live performances to advocate for immunization, or seek to change the minds of their non-compliant neighbours. *"One woman from Borno said her child will not be vaccinated because in Borno if they give you this vaccine, you will die. Then I told her that here is not Borno, but Girei, so we don't do things like that. I told her to accept the vaccination or I will report her to the Hakimi's*

(traditional leader's) palace. Then I ordered her children to be vaccinated," Father, Madubi Live Participant, Girei-Gari, Adamawa (BBC Media Action, 2018).

In all the locations where Madubi Live performances were staged, community leaders testified that community-wide uptake of polio immunizations has increased significantly since their respective communities were brought together to participate in the performance and the post-performance discussions. This, according to them, has made it easy to achieve something that previous efforts had not been able to achieve. At the household level also, there is a general perception that positive behaviours have been adopted as a result of listening to both the radio drama version and participating in the Madubi Live performance. Particularly, there is an improvement in general hygiene practices such as proper waste disposal, appropriate hand-washing, greater care in food preparation and also increase in the level of ante-natal care (ANC) attendance.

These positive impacts notwithstanding, there were complaints by local community members on the number of people invited to participate in the Madubi Live performances. Some audience are of the opinion that given the importance of the performance, more people need to be invited to participate as well. Although this suggestion is a good one, the decision by the performance team to restrict the number of participants might have been a strategy to contend with the volatile security situation in the region. Experiences in the northeast suggest that crowded locations are usually the primary targets of attacks by the insurgents. Hence, it was expedient for the number of local participants to be controlled. On their side, however, the local audience are always ready to defy any security threat in order to participate in Madubi Live performance. This is because they identify the performance as being relevant to them, and have also been thrilled by the novelty of the approach. The physical presence of popular Kannywood actors has also contributed in endearing community members to the performance.

Conclusion

This paper has brought to focus Madubi Live as a novel approach of using radio drama to communicate change in an atmosphere of insurgency. The approach has also attempted to inculcate the principles of participatory communication by availing the target audience an opportunity to interrupt the performance whenever they deem it necessary, and also to engage in post-performance discussions. On a closer look, however, a keen observer will realize that in reality, the local audience have limited power in the performance. For instance, all of them are just invited to participate in a discussion on a predetermined and pre-packaged issue (polio immunization) with little or no recourse to their basic needs. By so doing, their participation is basically restricted to issues of polio and routine immunization. Another challenge that may still be confronting Madubi Live is security. Although risk assessment is usually carried out by the BBC Media Action before performance location is selected, nothing in the performance locations seems to suggest that it can stop or curtail any attack should the insurgents dare to do so. Hence, we argue that the participants of Madubi Live performance are still vulnerable to attacks by the insurgents. Paucity of funds has also limited the number of communities covered by Madubi Live team. Be that as it may, Madubi Live has succeeded in reaching out to many

people in northeastern Nigeria. The boldness and commitment of BBC Media Action is commendable. Lastly, we will like to observe that Madubi Live has, indeed, heralded another era of deploying radio drama creatively to meet existing realities of the target audience. And by so doing, the approach has successfully redefined the scope of audience' participation in radio drama process.

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