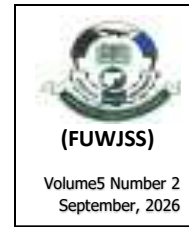


ENGAGING ADVOCACY JOURNALISM TO PROMOTE RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

While conventional journalism prioritizes impartial reporting, advocacy journalism intentionally rejects neutrality to champion specific social causes, making it a potent tool for driving rural development initiatives in Nigeria. Development is a visible characteristic of developed nations of the world; but seems to be invisible in Nigeria and other parts of the “Third World”. This study examines the engagement of advocacy journalism to promote rural development initiatives in Nigeria. The study is anchored on the development media theory of the press; and it relied on secondary sources of data. The study’s findings recognized the value of advocacy journalism in promoting rural development initiatives in especially rural Nigeria. The findings identified strategic domains that advocacy journalism hold potentials to influence which include: education, community development and agricultural extension strategies. The study concludes that advocacy journalism is useful for the purpose of promoting rural development in Nigeria giving its strategic use by media practitioners to advance public policy initiatives, education and information among rural dwellers. The study recommends that advocacy journalists should promote and propagate the principle of economic development through self-sufficiency by encouraging the production and consumption of goods and services by Nigerians. The media should also focus on reporting issues that affect the rural populace for enhanced development and the media should draw government attention to the developmental needs of the rural people.

Keywords: Advocacy, rural development, Nigeria, poverty, agricultural extension

Introduction

Across the developing world, a quiet revolution is taking place. It is not fueled by dams, roads, or foreign aid alone, but by something more fundamental; the power of stories to demand accountability and drive change (Willow, 2022). From the sun-scorched farmlands of Sudan to the bustling informal settlements of Lagos and the energy-starved markets of Zambia, a new model of advocacy journalism is proving that when rural voices are amplified, and policy follows (Egbuchulam, 2026). This shift comes at a critical moment. Globally, the media is waking up to a stark reality that the most urgent crises of our time are land degradation, food insecurity, and climate displacement. Regrettably, these crises are drastically underreported by the media (UNO, 2023). As the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) notes, the world loses the equivalent of four football fields of fertile soil every second, yet these slow-moving catastrophes rarely command sustained media attention (UNO, 2023; World Bank, 2023:21). In response, initiatives such as the UNCCD conference of the parties (COP17) Land and Drought Media Reporting Fellowship are mobilizing journalists from affected nations to tell stories that highlight practical responses, ensuring that solutions for restoring land and strengthening drought resilience reach a global audience (UNO, 2023; World Bank, 2023).

This global movement is gaining tangible traction. In Eastern Sudan, a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Radio 4 appeal highlighting a farmer's transition to solar irrigation raised over £140,000, demonstrating how media storytelling can directly mobilize resources for rural communities facing conflict and climate shocks (Atkinson, 2018). In Zambia, a Pulitzer Center-supported project empowered young entrepreneurs facing a crippling power crisis (Asicus et al., 2025). By shifting from digital campaigns to in-person workshops and public poetry contests, journalists facilitated a direct dialogue with the Mayor of Chipata, who responded with a concrete commitment to build a 100MW solar power plant, a commitment now monitored by newly appointed Youth Ambassadors (Research Department LUSAKA, 2021).

The African continent is increasingly leading this charge. In November 2025, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2025) convened journalists and editors from across Africa in Addis Ababa for a Media Clinic, explicitly calling for a shift from reactive engagement to sustained, transparent and strategic media partnerships to address the growing visibility gap in development reporting. This sentiment is echoed by organizations like Farm Radio International and AGRA, who are partnering to put farmers, youth, and women at the center of Africa's food systems transformation through trusted media platforms, recognizing that no

transformation is sustainable unless it is understood, embraced, and owned by the people, (Dalhatu, 2007).

For Nigeria, these global lessons are not just instructive; they are imperative. As ActionAid Nigeria recently stated, the nation's food system stands at a pivotal crossroads, with journalists needed to act as agents of accountability who can amplify the voices of smallholder farmers and ensure the agricultural transformation is inclusive (Anaeto, 2023). Yet, Nigerian journalists face unique challenges. A recent academic study on the farmer-herder crisis warns that media discourse, if not carefully managed, can escalate tensions and undermine trust in state institutions, highlighting the critical need for inclusive and neutral discourse (Anyanwu & Oparaugo, 2024). However, there is also immense potential. A groundbreaking 2025 study from the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) on grassroots "civic media labs" in Lagos demonstrates how community-based media training can build the capacity of residents to effectively advocate for their right to housing in the face of state-sanctioned violations; a model that could be replicated for rural land rights and agricultural policy (Egbuchulam, 2026, p. 22 - 48).

As Nigeria develops, the question is no longer if journalism can drive development, but *how* to harness this proven global model. By moving beyond passive reporting to strategic advocacy, Nigerian media can bridge the gap between the billions budgeted for agriculture and the lived realities of the rural majority. They can ensure that the voices of women farmers, youth agripreneurs, and displaced communities are not just heard, but heeded.

In a country where agriculture employs nearly 70% of the labour force and contributes over 24% to the GDP, it is a paradox that the very engine of the nation's economy, the rural farmer, often remains the most unheard. While the Federal Government projects a 4.7% economic growth for 2026 driven largely by the agricultural sector, the reality on the ground tells a different story (UNO, 2023; World Bank, 2023). From the N3.4 trillion credit scheme that reached less than 4% of the sector's value, to a proposed N1.45 trillion budget that civil society groups warn is plagued by fragmented, delayed or poorly prioritized funding, the gap between policy and practice is widening. Yet, amidst these challenges lies a powerful catalyst for change: advocacy journalism. This is not merely reporting; it is the strategic use of storytelling to influence policy, hold power accountable, and amplify the voices of the marginalized (Mathew, 2019). Recent events highlight this potential. When the UK-funded Propcom+ programme trained journalists on Climate-Smart Agriculture, it explicitly recognized them as partners in resilience and key agenda setters capable of shaping public discourse. Similarly, the Nigerian Guild of Editors recently

declared that the time for passive reporting is over, urging journalists to prioritize investigative, solutions-driven reporting to protect vulnerable children and rural communities (Ndoma & Olajide, 2017).

Advocacy journalism is already proving its transformative power. Through rigorous reporting, Naija Feminists Media mobilized over ₦3 million in 24 hours to save a young rural survivor of gender-based violence in Ebonyi State, demonstrating that media can directly intervene in crises where systems fail (cite source). In Niger State, partnerships between the Smallholder Women Farmers Organization of Nigeria (SWOFON) and the media are crafting a Charter of Demands to ensure that women farmers; who are the backbone of food security, are included in budgetary frameworks (Ndoma & Olajide, 2017).

However, the path forward is obstructed by a stark reality; the allocation to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture has dropped sharply from N2.22 trillion in 2025 to N1.45 trillion in the 2026 proposal, a trend that lawmakers warn could deepen food insecurity. To reverse this, journalism must move beyond reporting statistics to actively advocating for structural solutions, such as the proposed Rural Areas Development Agency Bill, which seeks to create sustainable economic initiatives for rapid rural development. As ActionAid Nigeria aptly puts it, the media is needed to shift the narrative and ensure that the agricultural transformation is not just sustainable but inclusive; especially for women, youth, and the vulnerable. By utilizing advocacy journalism, we can ensure that the billions of naira budgeted and the policies designed do not get lost in bureaucracy but instead translate into tangible outcomes: secure settlements, climate-resilient farms, and dignified livelihoods for Nigeria's rural majority.

Development is a visible characteristic of developed nations across the globe. Development is a process that ensures good quality of life to all the people in terms of happiness, harmony and satisfaction of essential needs. Development is related to improvement, progress and aspirations of people in the society. The aim of development is to improve the level and quality of life of the population, and the creation or expansion of local regional income and employment opportunities, without damaging the resources of the environment (Ndoma & Olajide, 2017).

Development is not visible in developing nations of the world Nigeria inclusive. This is because 75% of the population in Nigeria lives in rural areas. The rural population is cut off from development programmes. The World Bank Development Indicators (2023) reported that the rural population in Nigeria was reported at 47.25 % in 2021, Nigeria - Rural population - actual values, historical data, forecasts and projections were sourced from the World Bank on June of 2023. Nigeria rural population for 2021 was 100,840,661, a 0.76% increase from 2020. Nigeria rural

population for 2020 was 100,084,652, a 0.79% increase from 2019. Nigeria rural population for 2019 was 99,300,013, a 0.8% increase from 2018. Nigeria rural population for 2018 was 98,511,358, a 0.85% increase from 2017 (Asicus et al., 2025).

The media is critical to the development of any nation. Development refers to putting in place all the component parts a society needs to progress harmoniously. Development is a widely participatory process of social change in a society, intended to bring about both social and material advancement (including greater equity, freedom and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through their gaining greater control over their environment (Rogers 2003). Development in this aspect focus on news reportage in a way that fosters national development, and should provide in-depth reports to the benefit of the masses. Certain types of news and issues, though because of their negative nature, have become stereotyped as developmental issues, while many others get ignored. Some examples of the former are suicides, rural poverty, while those of the latter are urban housing problems, sanitation, education and literacy levels or children in urban slums and the likes (Ndoma & Olajide, 2017).

The growing population of Nigeria has witnessed wide gap in the aspect of development. Although rural areas in Nigeria harbour over eighty percent of the national population, they can only boast of about ten percent of the infrastructure and other indices of development. This is contrary to Kombol (2007) position that the 75% of the Nigerian population lives in the rural areas. The billions of dollars, which the three tiers of government and international agencies budget for the development of rural areas are often frittered away. Otherwise, with the level of attention and the amount of money expended on efforts at developing the rural communities in Nigeria the disparity and lopsidedness between the rural and urban areas of the country with regard to the level of poverty and socio-economic infrastructure should have been a thing of the past. It appears that the more money is spent on the rural areas the greater the disparity in the level of development between the urban and rural areas.

Rural development is important not only for the majority of the population residing in rural areas, but also for the overall economic expansion of the nation. Rural development is considered to be of noticeable importance in the country today than in the olden days in the process of the evolution of the nation. It is a strategy that tries to obtain an improved and productivity, higher socio-economic equality and ambition, and stability in social and economic development (Kombol, 2017). The problem this study investigate is how can advocacy journalism be utilized to promote rural development in Nigeria?

The rural areas in Nigeria are home to over 70 percent of the population yet are far removed from development as they suffer abject poverty, lack of basic amenities such as good roads, potable water, good schools and functional hospitals. The people in those areas are predominantly illiterate with most depending on subsistence agriculture as their main stay. Kombol (2017) laments the level of disparity and lopsidedness between the rural and urban areas of the country with regard to the level of poverty and socio-economic infrastructure.

Furthermore, Ndoma and Olajide (2017) assert that the rural population in Nigeria is cut off from development programmes. This accounts for why Nigeria is referred to as the poverty capital of the world. Though concerted efforts by all tiers of government, international organisations and non-governmental agencies to improve the lot of the rural areas, little or nothing has been achieved in that direction. Accusing fingers have been pointed in the direction of faulty strategies adopted in enhancing rural development in the country. Hence, this study is designed to examine the potency of utilizing advocacy journalism to promote rural development in Nigeria.

Advocacy Journalism and Rural Development in Africa

Advocacy journalism is the first and the oldest tradition of journalism in which the writer or publication expresses a subjective view or promotes a particular cause (Kperogi, 2023). This is the most common view of advocacy journalism – the subjective coverage of an issue. The definition expresses the most extreme view of advocacy journalism and does not acknowledge the more common values of good journalism (e.g. fairness, accuracy, balanced reporting). Similarly, Jensen (1996) describes it as the use of journalism techniques to promote a specific political or social cause. Unlike propaganda, advocacy journalism is fact-based, but supports a specific point of view on an issue. Mathew (2019) on the other hand described advocacy journalism as a particular style of reporting, one which promotes a specific political or social cause. Advocacy journalists are expected to focus on stories dealing with corporate business practices, government policies, political corruption, and social issues. It is arguable that advocacy journalists serve the public interest in a way similar to muckrakers or whistle-blowers. Most advocacy journalists reject the supposed objectivity of the mainstream press as a practical impossibility, and some others take the position that the economic censorship exerted by corporate sponsors is no different than political censorship.

Advocacy is the promotion of a position on an issue or cause in a single-minded manner, or tackling an issue by highlighting reporter's position in relation to it. It is therefore, easy to see how the idea of advocacy journalism as the subjective coverage of an issue came about. Advocacy, although

promoting a certain position, does so with the aim of achieving certain goals, usually influencing 'public policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions - that directly affect people's lives' (Advocacy Institute, 2001). In many cases, the aim is to provide a voice for those without one and to highlight certain issues to create social change and bring about improvement to people's lives.

Advocacy journalism is undertaken for a cause, often one involved with human rights and social change. A journalist usually applies excellence of craft in fulfilling a societal mandate to tell the community about significant issues so people can make important decisions in their lives - important decisions about their children's schooling, about their personal safety, about the people they choose to hold office, about the choices their government makes, and on and on' (Steele, 1996). By highlighting an issue in a responsible and fair manner, advocacy journalists hope to bring about social change. They are often explicit in their pursuit of an issue, and use the values of good journalism to explore issues affecting their community or audience. The goal and objective advocacy journalism is to increase the capacity of groups within society through in-depth and contextualized reporting, and in doing so to bring about social change.

Rural development focus on improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in rural areas, often relatively isolated populated areas. Rural development has traditionally centered on the exploitation of land-intensive natural resources such as agriculture and forest. It also refers to the method of enhancing the quality of life and financial well-being of individuals, specifically living in populated and remote areas.

Also, Atkinson (2018) defined rural development involves efforts that are economic and social in nature intended to encourage concepts of retention, growth, and expansion in areas outside cities, including improving quality of life for rural residents through such activity. Rural development is a term that concentrates on the actions taken for the development of rural areas to improve the economy. Generally speaking, rural areas have a rich history and identity of their own, even while they share some aspects in common with urban areas (Woods, 2011). Rural development encompasses efforts that are economic and social in nature, intended to encourage growth or expansion in areas such as economic aspects, infrastructure and service considerations, sociocultural factors, and the role of stakeholders. to improve productivity and wages of rural people, to guarantee increased and quick employment possibilities, to demolish unemployment and bring a notable decline in under employment to guarantee an increase in the standard of living of the underprivileged population, to provide the basic needs: elementary education, healthcare, clean drinking water, rural roads.

Theoretical Framework

The developmental media theory forms the theoretical base for this study. The origin of this theory is credited to McQuail (1987). The development media theory, which sees the media as pivots for national development states that the media function as the engine of national development. The basic assumption of the theory is that the mass media in developing nations should be used for the primacy of the national development as (economic, social, cultural and political); the pursuit of cultural and informational autonomy; support for democracy; and solidarity with other developing countries. Similarly, Kadijat (2009) explained that development media theory advocates media support for an existing political regime and its efforts to bring about national economic development. By supporting government development efforts, media aid society at large. This theory argues that until a nation is well established and its economic development well underway, media must be supportive rather than critical of government. Advocacy Journalists must not pick apart government efforts to promote development but rather, assist government in implementing such policies. In the same vein, Folarin (2002) explains that the development media theory was put forward because the other normative theories of the press could not be easily applied to Developing countries due to certain characteristics that are peculiar to them like the absence or inadequate supply of requisite communication infrastructure; relatively limited supply of requisite professional skills; relative lack of cultural production resources; relatively limited availability of media-literate audiences; relative dependency on the developed world for technology, skill and cultural products.

The major tenets of development media theory according to McQuail (1987) in Folarin (2002) are as follows:

- (i) media must accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy;
- (ii) freedom of the media should be open to economic priorities and development needs of the society;
- (iii) media should give priority in their content to the national culture and languages;
- (iv) media should give priority in news and information that links with other developing countries, which are close geographically, culturally or politically.

Journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination tasks. In the interest of development ends, the state has a right to intervene in, or restrict, media

operation; and devices of censorship, subsidy and direct control can be justified. The development media theory thus deals with the structure and performance of the media in developing countries and” encompasses a great variety of socio-cultural, economic and political conditions which, however, tends to converge in a primary concern to use the media for development purposes (Folarin, 2002). The use of advocacy journalism would thus enhance rural development in line with the principles of the development media theory.

Research Methodology

Library research was adopted to generate secondary data for the study through books, academic journal articles and online sources. The study employs library research methodology, drawing on secondary sources to examine the relationship between advocacy journalism and rural development in Nigeria. The data presented can be categorized into several thematic areas such as demographic and statistical data. The article presents significant statistical evidence regarding Nigeria's rural population. According to World Bank Development Indicators (2023), Nigeria's rural population stood at 100,840,661 in 2021, representing 47.25% of the national population, with a consistent annual growth rate of approximately 0.76-0.85% between 2017 and 2021. This data confirms that nearly half of Nigerians reside in rural areas, contradicting earlier claims by Kombol (2007) that suggested 75% rural habitation.

Next is the economic context. The agricultural sector employs nearly 70% of Nigeria's labour force and contributes over 24% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, the article highlights a critical paradox: despite this economic significance, there exists a substantial gap between policy formulation and implementation. The federal government's N3.4 trillion credit scheme reportedly reached less than 4% of the agricultural sector's value, while the agricultural budget allocation dropped from N2.22 trillion in 2025 to N1.45 trillion in 2026. Furthermore, there is the evidence of advocacy journalism impact. The article presents compelling case studies demonstrating advocacy journalism's effectiveness. Naija Feminists Media mobilized over ₦3 million within 24 hours to assist a gender-based violence survivor in Ebonyi State. SWOFON (Smallholder Women Farmers Organisation of Nigeria) partnerships with media are developing a Charter of Demands for women farmers' budgetary inclusion. Zuma 88.5 FM has successfully hosted nine consecutive agricultural harvest festivals, serving as a bridge between farmers, policymakers, and financial institutions.

Discussion of Findings

Advocacy Journalism as a Catalyst for Rural Development

The study establishes that advocacy journalism serves multiple strategic functions in promoting rural development. Drawing on Kperogi's (2023) definition of advocacy journalism as the oldest tradition of journalism in which the writer or publication expresses a subjective view or promotes a particular cause or ideology, the research demonstrates that this approach is particularly well-suited to Nigeria's development challenges. The findings align with the Development Media Theory (McQuail, 1987), which posits that media in developing nations should function as engines of national development. This theoretical framework proves particularly relevant given Folarin's (2002) observation that normative Western press theories cannot be easily applied to developing countries due to inadequate communication infrastructure, limited professional skills, and dependency on developed nations for technology and cultural products.

The study's findings are corroborated by contemporary research. A 2025 study published in Springer Nature's *Media and Communication Systems for Sustainability in Nigeria* confirms that development agencies and partners utilize diverse communication strategies for health development and poverty alleviation in Nigerian communities, explicitly referencing Development Media Theory as an analytical framework.

The research identifies education as a paramount role of advocacy journalism in rural development. Given the high illiteracy rates in rural communities, mass media, particularly radio emerges as the most effective channel for reaching both literate and illiterate populations. This finding is reinforced by recent evidence from the Federal Government's launch of the National Electronic Extension Platform (NEEP) and ARCN TV and Radio in 2021, specifically designed to digitally educate target audiences on modern agricultural practices.

The study's emphasis on radio as a development tool finds strong support in recent empirical evidence. Zuma 88.5 FM's two decades of broadcasting demonstrate how community radio can function as infrastructure for development, not merely as a channel for entertainment and news dissemination. Similarly, international evidence from Kasambabezi FM in Zimbabwe shows that community radio can facilitate tangible outcomes such as borehole installations and women's economic empowerment through strategic partnerships with conservation authorities.

A significant finding concerns the synergy between advocacy journalism and agricultural extension strategies. The study identifies agricultural extension as essentially the education of the farming community on ways of raising their standard of living, with three basic tasks; disseminating useful

information, applying it to practical problem analysis and helping people use information for self-improvement.

This finding is validated by recent government initiatives. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security has introduced the National Electronic Extension Platform (NEEP), described as a game-changer in knowledge dissemination, real-time farmer support, and evidence-based decision-making. Furthermore, the establishment of Adopted Villages, Agricultural Research Outreach Centers, and Adopted Schools under the West African Agricultural Productivity Programme (WAAPP) demonstrates institutional recognition of the media's role in rural information dissemination.

Challenges to Effective Advocacy Journalism

The study identifies multiple challenges impeding rural development in Nigeria, including, but not limited to; vicious cycle of poverty affecting rural populations, poor infrastructure despite decades of development programmes, high illiteracy levels limiting effective media engagement, corruption and lack of accountability in project implementation, proliferation of development programmes with superficial implementation and armed conflicts (ethnic, religious, communal) disrupting development efforts. The persistence of these challenges is confirmed by recent research. A 2025 study on broadcast messages' effectiveness in achieving poverty eradication in Ebonyi State found that while broadcast media are effective for development goals in rural communities, significant barriers remain. Similarly, IFAD's Country Director Dede Ekoue noted in December 2025 that Nigeria's agrifood system remains constrained by low productivity capacities of small holders, weak integration into value chains, food insecurity, persistent rural poverty, and multidimensional fragility including conflict and climate degradation.

The Information Gap and Media's Bridging Role

A critical finding is the existence of a substantial information gap between policymakers and rural populations. The study argues that without proper information and education, the consciousness of the people will continue to remain at a level that can hardly spur them to action. This observation is supported by recent stakeholder advocacy. The Fulbe Development and Cultural Organisation (FUDECO), in collaboration with SPARK GES and IDRC funding, released research in June 2025 emphasizing that women in pastoralist communities face double marginalization and that with appropriate investment in infrastructure, training, and policy advocacy, media could become a powerful tool for amplifying their voices.

The study's anchoring in Development Media Theory proves appropriate given the Nigerian context. The theory's tenets; that media must accept positive development tasks, that freedom should be balanced with economic priorities, and that the state may legitimately intervene in media operations for development ends, reflect the practical realities of Nigerian journalism. However, this theoretical framework has been critiqued for potentially legitimizing state censorship. A more nuanced approach might incorporate elements of Democratic Participant Theory, which emphasizes media access for marginalized groups, as suggested by recent scholarship on communication for social change.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that advocacy journalism represents a viable and potentially transformative strategy for promoting rural development in Nigeria. The research establishes several key conclusions; first, advocacy journalism can effectively serve multiple development functions including education, information dissemination, entertainment, and audience penetration. The media's ability to deliver messages in local languages and reach both literate and illiterate populations make it uniquely suited to Nigeria's rural development challenges. Second, the strategic use of advocacy journalism can influence public policy and resource allocation. Evidence from the Naija Feminists Media case and Small Scale Women Farmers of Nigeria (SWOFON)'s Charter of Demands demonstrates that media advocacy can directly translate into tangible outcomes for rural communities.

Thirdly, while challenges to rural development in Nigeria are substantial; including corruption, infrastructure deficits, funding gaps, and insecurity, advocacy journalism offers a mechanism for accountability that can potentially address these systemic issues. The media's role in drawing government attention to rural developmental needs, as recommended in this study, aligns with international best practices documented by organizations such as International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Bank. And fourthly, the integration of advocacy journalism with agricultural extension strategies presents a particularly promising pathway for rural transformation. The Federal Government's recent investments in electronic extension platforms and agricultural media (ARCN TV/Radio, NEEP) indicate institutional recognition of this synergy. The study thus affirms that advocacy journalism is not merely a reporting style but a development tool that, when properly utilized, can bridge the gap between policy formulation and grassroots implementation. As ActionAid Nigeria noted (cited in the article), the media is needed to shift the narrative and ensure that agricultural transformation is not just sustainable but inclusive.

Based on the findings and discussion, the following recommendations are proposed: Promote economic self-sufficiency. Advocacy journalists should actively propagate principles of economic development through self-sufficiency by encouraging local production and consumption of goods and services. This aligns with the study's finding that media can shape economic behavior at the grassroots level.

Prioritize rural-focused reporting. Media organizations should dedicate specific beats and resources to covering issues affecting rural populations, including agricultural challenges, infrastructure deficits, healthcare access, and educational needs. The success of Zuma FM's agricultural harvest festival demonstrates the viability of this approach.

Advert solutions-driven journalism. Moving beyond problem identification, journalists should investigate and publicize successful interventions, best practices, and replicable models for rural development. The "Rise & Participate" project at Kasambabezi FM provides a replicable model where community radio facilitated borehole installation through multi-stakeholder dialogue.

Capacity building for rural journalists. Media organizations should invest in training programs that equip journalists with specialized knowledge in agricultural science, climate adaptation, rural economics, and development communication.

Leverage Media for Policy Communication. Governments at all levels should strategically partner with media organizations—particularly community radio stations—to disseminate information about agricultural policies, extension services, and development programmes. The Federal Government's call for media and CSOs to promote agricultural transformation should be operationalized through dedicated funding and institutional support.

Support community media infrastructure. Government should provide funding, equipment, and technical support to community radio stations serving rural areas, recognizing them as critical development infrastructure rather than mere entertainment platforms.

Integrate media advocacy into agricultural policy. The National Electronic Extension Platform (NEEP) and similar initiatives should formally incorporate media partnerships as core components of extension delivery strategies.

Fund media-for-development initiatives. International development organizations should allocate dedicated resources for media capacity building, following the model of IDRC's support for FUDECO's research on pastoralist women's media access. Support documentation and research. Development partners should fund rigorous impact assessments of media

interventions in rural development, generating evidence to guide future programming.

Further research on media impact. Scholars should conduct longitudinal studies measuring the causal impact of advocacy journalism on rural development outcomes, including agricultural productivity, healthcare utilization, and educational attainment. Curriculum development. Journalism schools should integrate development communication and agricultural extension courses into their curricula to prepare practitioners for rural-focused advocacy journalism. Active engagement with media. Rural community members should be trained as citizen journalists and encouraged to actively engage with media platforms to articulate their developmental needs and hold duty-bearers accountable.

This study makes a valuable contribution to understanding the interface between media and development in the Nigerian context. Its strength lies in grounding advocacy journalism within Development Media Theory while providing practical evidence of media's transformative potential. The study successfully demonstrates that advocacy journalism is not merely a theoretical construct but a practical tool that has already generated measurable outcomes, from financial mobilization for crisis intervention to policy advocacy for women farmers.

However, several limitations should be acknowledged. The exclusive reliance on secondary data limits the study's ability to present primary empirical evidence. Future research should incorporate quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with rural populations to measure media impact directly. Additionally, the study's optimistic assessment of advocacy journalism's potential should be balanced against the structural constraints of Nigeria's media environment, including ownership patterns, political economy pressures, and security risks facing journalists covering rural conflicts. Notwithstanding these limitations, the study's recommendations provide actionable pathways for harnessing journalism as a development resource. As Nigeria pursues agricultural transformation and rural development, the strategic integration of advocacy journalism into policy implementation frameworks represents an evidence-based approach worthy of serious consideration by policymakers, development partners, and media practitioners alike.

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