**Humanizing Sustainable Development Goals Through Radio Drama Story Telling**

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**Abstract**

This paper examines how story telling through radio drama is being used to humanise sustainable development goals SDGs, and its role in accelerating critical engagement and implementation. It argues that narratives, which drama is, can break the human and cultural barriers and bridge the gap between the technicality of SDGs and the aloofness of citizens about them in the arena of entertainment where the popular emerges. Using Bandura’s social learning theory and mimesis in Aristotle’s seminal work, *Poetics*, the paper argues for increasing use of radio drama as an effective and engaging tool in communicating SDGs to citizens. The theoretical underpinnings of the paper are co-located within media studies as drama is a genre in media content. The paper concludes that if properly annexed, storytelling as a form of entertainment is a potential tool for disseminating health-related messages especially maternal health and menstrual health issues.

**Key words:** SDGs, Menstrual Health, Radio Drama, Development Communication, Narratives.

**Introduction**

Storytelling as a concept has provoked renewed interest in different fields of research and practice. Storytelling, otherwise known as narrative, is anticipated to communicate information, explain problems and evoke emotions. This explains why teachers and knowledge communicators attempting to convey development messages, especially to reach the grassroots, often consider the benefits of storytelling as a potential option (Fischer, Selm, Sundermann & Storksdieck, 2020). An attempt to define the concept of storytelling has lent itself to diverse interpretations, leading to a series of ambiguities, especially when compared with other pedagogical approaches to explaining sustainability. Although there are several pedagogical approaches to imparting development messages, many development scholars have advocated for narrative forms of communication, a potentially effective approach to achieving multifaceted development goals (Reinermann, Lubjuhn, Bouman & Singhal, 2014).

From time immemorial, storytelling has evolved as a narrative strategy for addressing issues related to sustainability where storytelling can provide concrete examples of otherwise abstract and inaccessible facts, and evoke emotions by tapping into archetypical patterns for the transmission of knowledge and orientation (Wilson, 2005). Storytelling functions in a way that influences listeners by conveying contents not only in an interesting, attractive, comprehensible and motivating manner (Dahlstrom, 2014), but also by giving interpretative patterns through the narrative framework that can facilitate reframing and engendering shared understanding of issues (Black, 2013). Storytelling can be understood as a practice in which information, ideas or facts are transmitted in a narrative and entertaining format following a chronological pattern. Storytelling can also be understood as a narrative way of presenting information by either representing reality or by creating reality and helping audiences to understand the world by translating ideas into the concrete experiences of story characters. Over the years, developmental matters such as agriculture, health, peace and conflict, education, and social change across developed and developing societies have formed a significant part of storytelling. The development issue has received significant attention from governments, academics, and development experts in recent years, especially among peripheral nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Modern scholars and researchers have dismissed the classical perception of development as mainly gross domestic product GDP, technological breakthrough, infrastructural advancement and widespread industrialisation without a human element. This is the reason sustainable development, according to the Brundtland Commission Report cited in Owolabi (2014, p.85), is perceived as “development that meets the needs of the present era without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs.” Against the above background, Batta & Ashong (2008) identify the essential needs of the people as follows: self-reliance in food production, education and elimination of illiteracy, improved health and well-being, shelter, eradication of poverty, mass participation in economic, political and social activities, human rights, social justice and peace. The above ideas are what the United Nations Children Emergency Fund cited by Owolabi summed up in its definition of Sustainable Human development as:

Development that not only generates economic growth but distributes its benefits equitably, that regenerates the environment rather than destroying it; that empowers the people rather than maginalising them. It gives priority to the poor, enlarging their choices and opportunities, and providing for their participation in decisions affecting them. It is a development that is pro-poor, pro-nature, pro-jobs, pro-democracy, pro-women and pro-children (UNICEF 1995, cited by Owolabi, 2023).

What is striking about the paper’s take on the SDG is encapsulated in their statement that “the art and science of change is fraught with human and cultural barriers than with technical or knowledge barriers”. This foregrounds this paper’s views on the SDGs, particularly goal three, which borders on good health and well-being of all and falls into the people stratification of the five areas of critical importance specified in the UN resolution on the SDG. The human and cultural barriers are what radio drama in this article is set to address through a combination of entertainment, information and education, which form parts of the traditional functions of mass media.

The effectiveness of radio drama in encoding development messages is intriguing. It is also fascinating to see how stories with affinity to our cultures can be used to connect with the people in creating a hunger for development and a people agency that can drive cooperation and buy-in. Many scholars and development experts have noted the interrelatedness between sustainable development goals such that one is connected to another and yet another. In this vein, therefore, choosing SDG goal 3 is not in isolation but in tandem with goals 1, 4, 5 and 6, on quality education, gender equality and clean water and sanitation, respectively. This paper focuses on these concerning communication.

**Theoretical Underpinning**

This article is anchored on two theories: social learning theory by Albert Bandura in 1965 and the Narrative theory by Walter Fisher in 1970. These two theories are believed to serve to explain the issue under discussion in this work. Bandura's (1965) social learning theory prioritizes observation, imitation and modelling in learning, without a concomitant change in behaviour. The theory affirms the pivotal role of reinforcement and the critical role of observation, modelling and imitation in “emotional reactions, attitudes and behaviours of others’’ in the process of learning. In a landmark upgrade, the theory developed into the social cognitive theory, with an additional notion that learning occurs in ‘social contexts’ incorporated. This time, there must be reciprocity in the interaction between the person, the environment, and their behaviour. LaMorte, 2019 cited in Sutton (2022) explains further that, the additional cognitive context considers even past experiences that ultimately ‘shape engagement in behaviour’ (Sutton,2022).

Cherry (2022) expatiates that reinforcement is not always externally influenced; it could be intrinsic. One’s mental state and internal motivation determine whether ‘a behaviour is learned or not”. Listing emotional reactions such as pride, satisfaction, and a sense of accomplishment as forms of internal rewards that can accrue as a result of intrinsic reinforcement, the scholar then argues that those internal thoughts and cognitions help connect learning theories to cognitive developmental theories.

There are three basic models of observational learning, as postulated by Banduras cited in Owolabi (2021) and Cherry (2022) They are:

1. Live model - which involves an actual individual demonstrating or acting out a behavior.
2. Symbolic model, which involves real or fictional characters displaying behaviors in books, films, television programs, or online media.
3. Verbal Instructional model, which involves descriptions and explanations of a behavior.

Mimesis, which means imitation, Aristotle’s conception of what constitutes drama becomes handy. In *Poetics* written by Aristotle, which was originally a text intended for philosophy students, Aristotle explains the poetical process, he considers imitation of real situations as more notable than invention. He describes it as a mental abstraction derived from many single instances. He submits that drama is dynamic and plot is important in it because of its centrality in governing the whole. A plot, then, essentially, should have a beginning, middle and end. It must have unity of theme which consists connections and actions, not random items. More consequentially, it must be graspable by the mind and memory, in its parts and as a whole (Adams,2020).

In this article, Aristotle explains that the purpose of drama is to ‘arouse in the audience feelings of PITY and FEAR, and to purge these emotions (catharsis), thereby making people stronger emotionally. He then pinpoints the elements of drama as follows:

1. The scenery and costume which make up the spectacle.
2. The musical score which is organized sound.
3. Libretto which is the combination of text and diction.
4. Characterization which is the assignment of roles to actors.
5. Thought content which has to do with themes and ideas embedded in the play.
6. Plot which consists of the totality of action in the play. It is also known as metabole.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines mimesis as "the deliberate imitation of the behaviour of one group of people by another, as a factor in social change". Puetz (2002) explains that mimesis has two fundamental meanings. The first is imitating nature as an object, a phenomenon, or process; and the second is artistic representation. Michael Taussig, cited in Puetz (2002) sees the mimetic faculty as "the nature that culture uses to create second nature, the faculty to copy, imitate, make models, explore difference, yield into and become Other” (Taussig, 1993). What is most poignant about Puetz’s take is that mimesis does not only function in the re-creation of existing objects or elements of nature, but that at the heart of it, it ‘beautifies, improves upon, and universalizes them’. She particularly declares that mimesis creates a fictional world of representation in which there is no capacity for a non-mediated relationship to reality. More so, she spectacularly connects mimesis to the media by stating that “mimesis is conceived as something that is natural to man, the arts and media are natural expressions of human faculties.” It is noteworthy, however, that one can link mimesis to two models of Bandura’s Social learning theory (SLT), particularly the symbolic and live models. Meanwhile, resistance is possible; if it occurs, it can lead to zero behavioural change (Cherry, 2022).

**Seriality in Narrative Theory**

Narrative theory developed by Walter Fisher is a theory that suggests that human beings are natural story tellers and that a good story is more convincing than a good argument. The theory also posits that all meaningful communication occurs via storytelling or reporting an event. More importantly, narrative theory assists us to explain how human beings are able to comprehend complex information through storytelling. There are different definitions of a narrative, the one relevant to this paper is by Merriam Webster Dictionary (2023) which says a narrative is a way of presenting or understanding a situation or series of events that reflects and promotes a particular point of view or set of values. Series and serials are situated within narrative theory which developed from the work of Propp (1968) about the narrative structure in Russian folktales. There are variations to the basic plot in different genres as well as other narrative differences. Television series is different from a television serial, using the narrative theory. A series is a set of stories which end with each episode, while a serial is a story that continues without end from one episode to another. In both of them, continuity is achieved by maintaining the principal characters. That is where the similarity ends (McQuail,2010).

There are two basic narrative formulae, a series and a serial. They are the elemental structures of seriality. All television drama can be traced back to these two basic narrative formulae (Buonanno 2008, p.121 cited in Keinonan,2016). They both have their origins in radio, before they found their ways into television in its early days till now (Cantor 1980: 29 cited in Keinonan,2016). Keinonen (2011) suggests that seriality can be studied ‘as a programming strategy, a mode of production, a narrative form and a viewing experience’. Here is a delineation of the differences between both narrative formulae by McQuail (2010:325)

**Linear Processing - Series**

The series organise stories according to a principle of linearity. The same characters go through different narrative sequences in the same settings. There is a metastory about the permanent characters with several different story lines as they encounter their new adventures weekly. The hero and heroines are constant while the villains change, they are different from one episode to another.

**Parallel Processing – Serials**

The same cast of characters appear each time. An illusion is created that they continue living their lives actively between episodes. There is a transition from one storyline to the next, a network of concurrent storylines involving different subgroups of the permanent cast, interacting and interweaving on different time scales. The appeal of serialisation lies in its ability to construct ‘open’ rather than ‘closed’ narratives (McQuail, 2010).

**Methodology:** The data for this study were obtained through desk research. Researchers used qualitative textual analysis to examine data gathered from books, journals, and other media contents through secondary sources.

**Drama and Media Studies**

In understanding drama as a media text within the milieu of cultural studies, Fiske (1987) cited in McQuail (2010) explains it in two basic senses. One, the physical message itself, such as a documentary film, television, radio programme or musical. One could include photos, images, cartoons, etc. Two, the meaningful encounter between content and reader. He explains further that the moment a TV programme interacts with an individual, it activates the meanings or pleasures. Entertainment, therefore, has the capacity to ‘provoke’. In other words, Fiske’s argument is that a programme is produced by the industry, while the text is produced by its readers. This means that production here applies to what the communicators i.e programme producers encode while the audiences, i.e the listeners decode. For the purpose of this paper, radio programme is substituted with TV programme.

Furthermore, Fiske cited in McQuail (2010) explains that texts have multiple meanings for the various audiences they are exposed to. This is known as the polysemic characteristic of ‘popular media culture’. Newcomb (1991) cited in McQuail (2010) significantly elucidates further that, texts are constituted out of many languages and a system of meaning. He particularly emphasized that “any words in a spoken language or interactions in a drama can have different meanings in relation to any or several of these other languages”. McQuail discusses concept of encoding/decoding (Hall,1974/1980), inscribed reader (Sparks&Campbell,1987), implied audience (Deming,1991) and Althusser (1971)’s notion of interpellation to further make a convincing statement that media content is ‘often designed to control, confine or direct the taking of meaning.

**Understanding Development Communication**

Communication is critically important in the process of development. Odoom (2020) notes that, “socio-economic development cannot occur in the absence of effective communication”. At the very basic level, Odoom posits that while communication is about the process of communicating in its dialogic and analytic functions, communications focus on the activities, products, the technologies and services about communication. Despite the symbiotic relationship between these two concepts, there is a growing controversy among communication and development scholars and professionals especially in developing nations. The concept of ‘communication’ means different things to various scholars. Generally, communication can be explained as the dynamic process of sharing information and idea about any issue of concern to the society. The above definition perhaps, is the basis of Adedokun (2019, p.10) perception of development communication as “an interactive process by which information, knowledge and skills relevant for development are shared among members of the rural communities and the information providers either personally through indigenous media, social media or through mass media”.

The World Bank cited in (Odoom 2020) offers a practical definition in which it captures the domain of development communication as one that promotes ‘the integration of strategic communication in development processes and programmes based on a strong understanding of indigenous realities. It is important to note that scholars and development workers are united in their views that only effective communication can drive meaningful action towards continued implementation of the SDG goals and the attainment/achieving them (Vikas,2018).

**Transition from MDG to SDG: An Overview**

Nigeria and many other nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America have been described as the countries of the world where over 65% of their population live below poverty line. In order to wriggle herself from the shackle of poverty, each succeeding government in Nigeria (Federal, state and local) had attempted series of development programmes. The programmes' failure to address poverty and underdevelopment could be seen in the eroded quality of citizens’ lives vividly illustrated through infrastructural deficit, bad road network, epileptic power supplies, hunger and inadequate health facilities (Owolabi, 2018). The pitiable situation some of these countries found themselves in prompted the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) during the year 2000 United Nations Summit.

The global body came up with eight interdependent development goals, three of which bordered on health and wellness. The member states were mandated to achieve the goals within 15years. However, during the 2015 summit, the success of the goals was reviewed and this led to its extension from eight to 17goals while the goals were rechristened as sustainable development goals SDGs. The 17 SDGs with 169 targets have been hailed for being broader in scope, more collective in action, and more detailed in content than the MDGs (UN SDG Report 2023).

**Menstrual Health and Wellness in Perspective**

In situating menstrual health within the concept of health and wellness, the submissions of Malami (2009) cited in Aliyu (2016) is instructive. He sheds light on women's reproductive role in society and sub-divides the reproductive responsibilities of women into three parts: biological reproduction, reproduction of object of labour, and social reproduction. This paper focuses on biological reproduction that also concerns menstrual health within the health and well-being. Menstrual health, is fundamental to fulfilling biological reproduction role of women. Presently, not everyone in the world has access to health care services. According to the United Nations (2023), Universal health coverage (UHC) aims to ensure that everyone has access to quality health services without facing financial hardship. Inequalities continue to be a fundamental challenge for UHC. In the same vein, coverage of reproductive, maternal, child and adolescent health services tend to be higher among those who are richer, more educated, and living in urban areas, especially in low-income countries (UN SDG Report, 2023).

There are four cardinal calls to action for health and wellness, two of them are important for this paper. One is to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national health policies and programmes. The other is to strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular, developing countries for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks.

There are three communication needs expected from everyone by the UN regarding health and wellness. Firstly, to promote and protect one’s personal health and the health of those around one, by making well-informed choices, practicing safe sex and vaccinating one’s children.

Secondly, to raise awareness in the community about the importance of good health, healthy lifestyles, as well as people’s right to quality health care services, especially for the most vulnerable such as women and children. Thirdly, to hold government, local leaders and other decision-makers accountable to their commitments to improve people’s access to health and health care (UN SDG Report 2023). With this agenda in place, the media are especially expected to be able to create contents that would help raise awareness for these three-pronged needs.

Menstrual health and hygiene are not explicitly stated in the sustainable development goals. However, it is important to note that anything that impairs on the health profiles of the nation and its citizens automatically stands to halt the development process of that nation since health is wealth. Menstrual health is important in achieving this, because poor menstrual hygiene can lead to infections, reproductive health problems, and other health complications with serious implications on the health budgets for individuals, family and the nations (World Health Organisation, 2022).

**Power of Storytelling for Social Change**

Danyal (2023) also add that storytelling is a timeless method that brings data to life, making complex ideas easier to understand and remember. Vikas (2018) makes the connection between humans and storytelling in her article titled. She states that human beings are perpetually intrigued by stories and narratives because story telling is vital to communities’ reception of information, understanding of issues and their responses. She further says that the use of stories for creating awareness about SDGs can enable individuals and communities to identify closely with local developmental issues. A good story pulls an audience in, to demand participation, after which it rallies them for action. She supports her assertion by claiming that “56% of individuals that support non-profits and their work on the social web, attribute ‘compelling’ storytelling as the motivating factor behind taking action” (Vikas, 2018, p.26). The instructive word in her quote is ‘compelling’, true to Vikas’ thoughts and submissions, media producers are increasingly turning to multiple forms and genres in media to tell stories and convey messages of social changes that are relatable to younger generations. These include books, cartoons, comics, games, animations, and comics.

Vikas offers insight into the fact that nowadays, the social sector is combining the power of stories and digital media to ‘expand the reach and impact of their work’. This is a good development, it, however, throws up the challenge of the digital divide and the debate about digital access for rural populations of the world, and the urban poor. The slogan for the sustainable development goals is leaving no one behind, therefore traditional media in the form of radio, television and films offer the best penetration in storytelling. However, convergence of radio and telephone in mobile phone devices makes such stories accessible to traders and artisans, this makes it a potent tool for development communication in the informal sectors. Meanwhile, it is pertinent to note that story telling for sustainable development can also be done with data and maps. ArcGIS (2023) reveals that ArcGIS StoryMaps empowers storytellers to integrate maps, data, and other multimedia content with text to narrate a story about the world's greatest challenges and highlight or inspire solutions (ArcGIS,2023). Esri has done data-driven stories on the SDGs in what is known as the *Storytelling for a Sustainable World collection,* which has 17 stories, one for each Sustainable Development Goal. They include sample stories, learning resources, and geospatial work (Esri,2023).

**Accelerating Sustainable Development through Story telling: Radio Drama**

BBC Media Action through storytelling, used radio drama to educate, inform and entertain Nigerians about democratic governance. It’s soar away success was ‘Story, Story: Voices from the Market’, a radio drama series that aired weekly for more than thirteen years, with over 500 episodes, from twenty to one hundred and sixty-four Nigeria radio stations. Statistics show that an estimated 21.2 million adult Nigerians tuned to the drama in 2016, more than 80% of listeners said their knowledge of key governance issues increased as a result of the programme. BBC Media Action’s Country Director, Seamus Gallagher, says drama helps people to see how different choices, attitudes and decisions play out for good and for bad. It also supports them to make more thoughtful decisions for their own lives. This is evident in Bandura’s symbolic and verbal instructional models of observational learning. The character of Fati, who was HIV positive was the mirror through which listeners learnt more about living with HIV and caring for such people. Seamus offers also that if drama is “not entertaining, funny, sexy and thought provoking, the message won’t work. If the emphasis is only on message without the audience cultivating love for the characters, people won’t listen, and won’t identify with the characters.” (Arosho,2017; The Communication Initiative Network, 2017, p.23).

According to Ekwuazi (2016), radio drama is a blind man’s theatre that any other content platform cannot rival because its very stage is the human mind. He adds that “whatever the heart of man can imagine, radio can (re)create and once it has (re)created it, it breathes life into it: it becomes a slice of life”. This quote foregrounds my discussion about the use of storytelling as a potent tool in promoting sustainable development. The ‘slice of life’ is both allegorical and instructive in story telling because drama mirrors real life. It re-enacts our lives experience in a way that no other programme format can. In other words, radio drama has an overwhelming effect when resources, technique and skill combine in the right proportion in the coding of messages for the benefit of the public (Ariba,2016).

**Narrativising Menstrual Health - My Period, My Pride Radio Drama**

This is a radio serial, a ‘slice of life’, currently running on radio stations in Nigeria. It was created to mirror the issues relating to menstrual health, which include period poverty, teenage pregnancy, menstrual pain, sexual and reproductive rights, the unavailability of water, and by extension sanitation in both urban and rural areas. It also primarily includes menstrual hygiene awareness sessions. The synopsis shows that the thematic focus is on the affordability of pads, options in the adoption of sanitary pads and implications for the entire family, the effects on our young school girls and the family budget, how the cycle of poverty is perpetuated by wrong choices including but not limited to lack of education. Through actors in the serial, it highlights how all these issues which represents how different development goals inter- relate to perpetuate inequalities and poverty.

The 13-week drama series captures the first menstruation, menstrual cramps, anxiety over continued education due to period poverty, menstrual hygiene talk, the effects of corporate and government intervention on schooling through the donation of menstrual items to school girls, the empowerment of women, child abuse and exploitation, the significance of scholarship to indigent students. In season one, titled Efe, we follow the struggles of Efe and her mother to surmount period poverty and get an education. Efe is the heroine of the serial. We see her in all the episodes, struggling, winning, failing, and ultimately triumphing. While contributing to the discourse on menstrual hygiene, Dr. Amina Salihu cited by Egbejule , (2023) describes period poverty as an equity, human rights, and socio-economic problem; and a form of gender-based violence.

Both the society and the state lose because we cannot understand the socio-economic dimensions. Until our policymakers recognise period poverty in this perspective, they won’t be able to evolve the right policies and laws” (Ejifoma, 2023).

**Evaluating the Prospects and Challenges of Radio Use for communicating Development**

According to Gunner et al (2011), across Africa, radio continues to “focus on the everyday”, it also “engages with moments of high national and cultural drama”. The unique ability of radio to merge these two makes it a powerful and dangerous broadcast medium. In Nigeria, as it is globally, radio converges with new technologies such as the internet and mobile phones to produce online streaming and podcasting, which keep radio alive as a dialogical and participatory medium (Durodola, 2018). Ojebode & Adegbola (2010) say that people are alienated from radio as a result of government and commercial control, as well as the siting of radio stations in the cities. They state that the deregulation of the airwaves did not bridge the gap between the people and radio because although there were many stations, they mainly peddled ‘merchandise’ to them through product advertisements. They argue further that the environment of radio broadcasting in Nigeria is not conducive to meaningful engagements of developmental due to the neo-liberal environment “which predisposes stations to jettison development programmes and hanker after fiscally profitable ones” (Ojebode & Adegbola, 2010).

In part, this is the bane of sustainable developments in broadcasting generally in Nigeria. There is no specific funding support for broadcasters who want to promote developmental programmes. Government-owned stations are not financially supported by governments to produce development-focused programmes. Development organisation and NGOs do not get grants easily to fund their interventions on media platforms while privately owned media organisations need money to remain in business as such, their preoccupation is commercial viability as opposed to being development-oriented. In terms of plurality of content in broadcasting, the scholars were right therefore to note that “development issues are in the minority and in stations where commercials programmes are many, development programmes are few” (Akingbulu, 2010, p.6). The challenges in mainstreaming development programmes on radio also include the choice of language. Ojebode & Adegbola (2010) note that privileging English language is the preserve of the minority of urban elite in Nigeria, over and above indigenous languages. This has not helped the understanding of development issues to permeate or percolate as they should, resulting in loss of audience by 75%.

There is also the challenge of linguistic diversity of Nigeria, a highly multilingual and multi-ethnic country, complicated by different identifiable dialects. Durodola (2013) notes that given this linguistic diversity, most radio stations give preference to English in their programming By this, about 70 percent of the nation’s population are unable to make meanings from a narrative in English. If the station decides to shift to indigenous language, in how many out of 240 Indigenous languages will they broadcast Oso (2018). This shows the magnitude of Nigerian linguistic complexity. Pidgin English was extensively used in *My Period, My Pride* radio drama serial so that the message in the drama series can be comprehensible across the different indigenous populations in the six different geo-political zones of Nigeria where they aired it. It has also been observed that in some parts of the urban centres across the country, a large chunk of the urban population of a multi-ethnic Nigeria are alienated. Pidgin English therefore remains the neutral language through which development programmes can be packaged and produced in order to reach the diverse urban population in Nigeria (Durodola,2013). This is corroborated by one of *Story Story* listeners who is a stall holder, “drama works because there are those of us who don’t like to read and others that are not so educated. Because *Story Story* uses Pidgin, this gets messages across simply. It offers much more than a newspaper.”

According to Osho (n.d), radio drama is important because it emphasises many essential issues that the girl child should know especially, their physiology as females. It would bring to bear the importance of hygiene in menstruation, emphasizing the evolution of eggs during menstruation to reduce the number of out-of-school children who get pregnant. “It will showcase the role that caregivers and mothers play in explaining more about sex education to their wards, especially for social growth (Oladehinde,2023). The drama series also stimulates policymakers, the private sector, and industries to sponsoring this vision (Oladeinde, 2023). In the absence of a virile educational service from Nigeria’s public broadcasters, radio drama packs a punch in combining three powerful functions of radio and even more in media for development. The significance of radio as a medium of choice is reiterated by Eboigbe (n.d) who points at the gains of convergence for radio being the ability to reach more people, through mobile phones which have FM radios embedded in it and simultaneously allows drivers, owners of cars as well as passengers to listen and get the message while commuting (Oladeinde, 2023). The penetration of radio with the influence of digital technology is thus exponential, making it potentially fit for disseminating development information to diverse listening audience

Adetunji (2022), a radio drama producer shares her experience using *‘Abiye – Saving Mother and Child’*, a radio drama series in Yoruba language to reach communities in Oyo State with messages on maternal and child health. Adetunji notes that accessibility and closeness of media to the community is a powerful tool for social and behavioural change; and that through the media, a behavior is made acceptable or unacceptable (Adetunji 2022). In detailing the success story of ‘Abiye’, she revealed that the drama ultimately became an advocacy channel to support vulnerable women, teenagers, children, families and communities. A catalogue of cases was treated via that singular development-oriented programme. Two community outreaches were organised in two primary health centres, a seminar on reproductive health was organised for select secondary school girls, a cooperative society donated a new generator for a health centre, primary health centres were provided with equipment, some pregnant teenage girls were supported and rescued from dropping out of school.

**Conclusion**

From this paper, three advantages of using stories for social change, by extension the sustainable development goals are obvious. One, storytelling enables individuals and communities to identify closely with local development issues. Two, a good story pulls an audience into a participatory and co-ownership mode. Third, stories have the power to mobilise people into participating in a developmental programme.

The essence of this paper is to demonstrate how performed stories can help to reduce if not almost totally eradicate these barriers. The inherent entertainment embedded in radio drama make them popular. Popularity, in turn, gives visibility and top of mind which catapults the media product or service, in this wise a radio drama, to the desired point at which development is activated by the people themselves. This popularity can also enable a state of receptivity that is beneficial to government to launch its own people-based projects.

The truth is that radio and TV contents not always deliberately framed and targeted at promoting sustainable development in Nigeria because nobody wants to pay for it not even the government. Media content has not been inclusive, there is majorly a lack of variety and compelling narratives in the menu of many privately and government owned radio and TV stations. The popularity of skits on social media would have worked if properly deployed but they are worse, Content Authority (2023) opines rightly that they are farcical, lewd and explicit for entertainment purposes, with no intention of them being used as a tool for social change.

**Recommendation:** As we think of sustainable development and the possibility of ensuring that development messages get to the grassroots, it is imperative to put in perspective the rural-urban information imbalance. There is urgent need to establish true community media that can cater for the development information needs of Nigeria’s sharply divergent urban-rural populace. The national or regional media as are presently structured have been found to concentrate on urban centres to the disadvantage of rural communities. Community media should be located in, owned and managed by the community to give adequate coverage to the development needs of the rural communities both in news coverage and other programs.

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