Article

Building Media Capacity for Children Sustainability in Africa: Educational and Partnership Imperatives

Olusola Oyero[1] (ID) and Abiodun Salawu[2]

Abstract

The "African common position" during the Special Session of United Nations (UN) General Assembly on children was that "Today's investment in children is tomorrow's peace, stability, security, democracy and sustainable development." However, the African child remains the most neglected species in the continent as millions of them are still living in poverty, deprived of education, suffer from malnourishment and discrimination, abandoned and vulnerable to abuses including being used as child soldiers in warfare. This situation demands a revisitation of the world union's call to care for the interest of the child as specified in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this regard, the media is fingered as having a role to play in ensuring the realization of children's many unfulfilled dreams, a responsibility that requires greater capacity. Unfortunately, the current African media capacity for children is very low, a situation traceable to lack of skills and inadequate knowledge base. It is in this direction that this article argues that African media requires an educational framework purposely devoted to children and instituted within the media training purview, as well as partnership to effectively cater for the interest of the child in ensuring sustainable generation for the Continent.

Keywords

media capacity, sustainability, children, education, partnership, Africa

Introduction

The plight of children has been of global concern in recent times. Although children all over the world are threatened, African children are in more precarious situation. The political environment, economic situation, and social conditions in Africa have not favored children on the Continent. Although efforts at making children's issues a priority have been yielding results, with Africa becoming a better place for children in recent times than before, greater challenges still lie un-confronted. Africa remains a continent where many children die of avertable causes. It is in this regard that stakeholders have been tasked to carry out certain responsibility toward making the rights of the child achievable. As a crucial stakeholder, the media is saddled with some responsibilities in favor of children. To accomplish this tasks spelt out in United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Oslo challenge and other documents, this article argues for specialism in journalism and media education that focuses on children and children alone. This is what we named as Children Journalism and Media Studies (CJMS) or Children Journalism and Media Education (CJME), and can simply be put as Children Media Studies (CMS) and these nomenclatures can be used interchangeably.

CJMS refers to "the kind of education that trains individuals as experts to meet the media needs of children" (Oyero, 2011a, p. 100). The education, as envisioned will train individuals as journalists to set agenda for children in the media, as well as train persons as producers of children programs to fully meet children's media needs and fulfill their rights educationally, culturally, and socially. This type of education would involve "research on children and the media for the purpose of enhancing better practice in this specialised area" (Oyero, 2011a, p. 100). Strictly speaking, it will involve teaching of news and editorial courses, production techniques in broadcast media and publishing techniques on online platforms, and will be domiciled in higher institutions of learning such as a university. It will also teach research methodologies in journalism and communication in relation to all aspects of children and the media. To drive this point home, this article shows that generational sustainability for
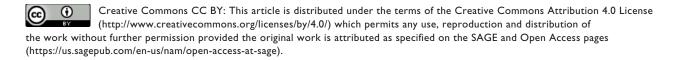
[1]Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria
[2]North-West University, Mafikeng, South Africa

Corresponding Author:
Olusola Oyero, Covenant University, KM 10, Idiroko Road, Ota 112242, Nigeria.
Email: olusola.oyero@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

Africa is anchored on children. It discusses some of the challenges confronting children in the continent, and argues for children-focused journalism and media studies as well as partnership in fulfilling the role assigned to the media toward fulfilling children's rights and building better future for the African continent.

Generational Sustainability

The idea of generational sustainability has been at the center of global discussions with challenges to drive processes that will enhance its achievement. It is also obvious that any mention of generational sustainability refers to the preservation of future generation. As put in Beijing Declaration ". . . Today's children are tomorrow's future generation, who must be enabled and equipped to achieve their full human potential and enjoy the full range of human rights in a globalizing world" (UNICEF, 2001). While addressing the issue of sustainable development, the concern for children is mentioned by its very definition, the idea of development "that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland & World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED], 1987, p. 45). This is in recognition that the future belongs to children and indeed they are the next generation. It follows then that if the future generation is going to be sustainable, caring for the needs of children must be a priority. UNICEF (2013a) notes that "sustainable development starts with safe, healthy and well-educated children. Societies can only develop in a sustainable manner if the basic needs and rights of children, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable, are met" (p. 7).

Children are also pivotal to the challenge of development in Africa. Africa's development is anchored on the development of its human capital, which is a process that begins with children. When children are given proper childhood, and their all-round development catered for, and when they are protected from circumstances that can endanger their well-being, they will grow into robust and rich resources for their continent and be in a position to in turn work for the development of their own people and nations. Thus,

> . . . development . . . is only possible by taking a path that builds the capacities and transforms the productivity of Africa's human resources. These Africans will then build and improve their institutions and the systems with which they operate. The place to start is with priority to children . . . and with children's rights, which encompass their survival, growth, development, protection and participation. (African Union [AU], UN Economic Commission for Africa [UNECA], Network Path and Application Diagnostics [NPAD], & UNICEF, 2003, p. 9)

It is then not surprising that global development goals address issues that affect children as spelt out in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as the current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNICEF (2003) states the best way to meet six of the eight MDGs is to ensure that the "rights of children to health, education, protection and equality are protected" (p. 2). The SDGs focus on the issues of eradication of poverty and hunger through food security and improved nutrition, ensure "availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all," provision of "inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities," and as well as combating climate change and its impacts, including "making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable," among others (United Nations, 2015, p. 14). These are issues that directly affect more on children than adults. Hence, UNICEF (2013a) maintains that "goals addressing children' rights, equity and the MDGs 'unfinished and continuing business' must remain at the core of the development agenda, for it to be truly sustainable and sustained" (p. 7).

It has also been pointed out that "the rights and well-being of Africa's children are public goods" (AU, UNECA, NPAD, & UNICEF, 2003, p. 13). A "public good" is something that is beneficial to the generality of people in a society, a continent or across the world. This implies that the profits of protection and realization of children's rights will have rippling effects not just for Africa, but also for the rest of the world. Conversely, precarious condition of African children will also affect the rest of the world. This is because the globalized and interdependent nature of our current world system exposes the rest of the world to whatever happens in one place. As the Ebola virus was ravaging some parts of West Africa, the rest of the world was jittery over the possibility of its spread. Already, the effects of conflicts in some parts of the world, Africa especially, are very visible as nations have to cope with burdens of refugees, cost of military intervention, and safekeeping and pressure for financial aids on humanitarian grounds. When children grow up without appropriate childhood, they turn out to be a huge burden on the rest of the world. They are easily predisposed to involvement in crime, liable to being brainwashed, and recruited to terrorists groups.

The Many Plights of the African Child

The African child remains the most neglected species in the continent as millions of them are still living in poverty, deprived of education, suffer from malnourishment and discrimination, and abandoned and vulnerable to abuses including being used as child soldiers in warfare (Corry, 2017; Listverse, 2009). The issue of education remains problematic. Although there has been significant improvement in access to primary education, completion rates have remained abysmal. For example, World Bank (2012) reports that completion rate at primary level in Central African Republic and

Chad in 2009 was less than 40%. "Access to secondary school remains a greater challenge in Africa" (African Child Policy Forum [ACPF], 2013, p. 16). There is a huge deficit of secondary education with a significant gender dimension. A substantial number of children in many countries are still left out of secondary education with exception of a few countries such as "South Africa that has achieved near universal access to secondary education for girls (97 per cent), and only a slightly lower level for boys at 93 per cent" (UNICEF, 2012, p. 106).

Access to education is poor at both primary and secondary levels. For example, net enrollment for primary education for boys/girls is as low as 39%/37% in Liberia, 43%/38% in Eritrea, 47%/34% South Sudan, and 53%/56% in Sudan (ACPF, 2016). "More than half of the 59 million out-of-school children live in sub-Saharan Africa" and these children have limited prospects for re-entering school (UNICEF, 2016, p. 44). There are also problems with quality of education in form of unqualified teachers, overcrowded class rooms, and unacceptably high teacher–pupil ratio. The situation is worsen by low pay for teachers with its attendant consequences of low morale, absenteeism, and teachers seeking for extra means of income generation to make ends meet at the expense of teaching the pupils. Some even completely abandon the teaching professions in favor of more rewarding businesses. "Out of 53 African countries, 20 have pupil-teacher ratios at primary level that are far below the recommended ratio of 1:40. In some countries, teachers are compelled to cater for 80 pupils or more" (ACPF, 2013, p. 17). Millions of children are also caught up in emergencies as case is with the Central African Republic, Nigeria, and South Sudan, with their education decimated or jeopardized. "Many are drawn into fighting as soldiers or forced to support armed groups" (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

Child's health also largely remains at low ebb. The percentage of children under the age of five dying during the neonatal period is increasing. In 2015, neonatal deaths accounted for 45% of total deaths, 5% more than in 2000. High numbers of children are still dying before the age of 5 years with worst cases in Angola (157), Chad (139), Somalia (137), Central Africa Republic (130), Sierra Leone (120), Nigeria (109), and Benin (100) (UNICEF, 2016). Besides, opportunity for treatment and utilization of health services is low. For example; "only about a quarter (26 per cent) of all HIV-positive children in sub-Saharan Africa had access to antiretroviral treatment (ART) in 2009" (UNICEF, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS [UNAIDS], World Health Organization [WHO], & United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2010, p. 5), though this increased to 40% in Eastern and Southern Africa (UNICEF, 2013b, p. 11). However, the number of children living with HIV is still very high with countries such as Nigeria, South Africa, Ethiopia, and Democratic Republic of Congo topping the list (UNICEF, 2016).

Moreover, chronic malnutrition determined by stunting is a more challenging difficulty in Africa. About 38% of children in Africa could not grow properly due to malnourishment and this situation has not witnessed any significant improvement over the past 20 years. A lot children in Africa also lack basic micronutrients such as iron, vitamin A, and zinc, which are essential for growth and development—a situation known as "hidden hunger." Many children born are stunt with Madagascar having 49%, Niger 43%, Malawi 42%, Rwanda 38%, and Nigeria 33% (UNICEF, 2016).

Similarly, not much has been achieved of the children's right to freedom of expression and their right to be heard. Child rights to free expression and to be listened to is globally recognized and well-articulated in Article 12 of the UNCRC, Article 7 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and other documents. According to these provisions, children should be listened to, and their views given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity (Lansdown, 2011), but the current situation is far from the case. Although there have been establishment of children parliaments in many countries, these parliaments are too elitist and the members, taken from the better-off urban schools, are not informed of the challenges faced by their poorer counterparts (McIvor, 2002). In many other places, children are not consulted even on issues that affect them. For example, more than 46% in West and Central Africa and 35% in East and Southern Africa maintained that decision-makers in their locality never consulted them whereas others were oblivious of existence of any consultative structure within local authorities. The highest number of children who said they were not consulted at all was found in Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, and Malawi (ACPF, 2009). This predicament undermines the potential of children and their position as future generation. Failure to cater for children and their critical needs is a compromise of the generation to come because they are the future generation.

Global Efforts in Favor of Children

Since 1989, when the most profound statement about children was made through the UNCRC, greater consciousness has been given to children's rights and the space for child's interest has been broadened. That space, ever since, has witnessed several other gatherings and deliberations such as the World Summit on children (1990), Asia Summit on Child Rights and the Media (1996), the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (1996), the First All African Summit (1997), the Second World Summit on Television for Children (1998), the Oslo Challenge (1999), the West African Regional Summit on Media for Children (2000), the Africa Charter on Children's Broadcasting (2000), the African Common Position on Children (the declaration and Plan of Action Toward an Africa fit for Children) at a Special Session of the UN General Assembly (2001), and so on . Central to all these

assemblies is the concern for the interest, development, and welfare of children.

Another peculiar feature of summits on children is the adoption of statements and instruments that foreground the commitments made by stakeholders at such gatherings. For example, at the 1990 World Summit on children, commitment was made by world leaders to take determined action on the well-being of children having realized that it requires political action to give priority to children's rights, survival, protection, and development. World leaders also promised to be involved in international cooperation and identified a 10-point program toward the well-being of all societies. Some of these commitments include implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children's health enhancement, working for "optimal growth and development of children in childhood," working to strengthen the role and status of women, and "supporting the efforts of parents, other care-givers and communities to nurture and care for children," as well as catering to reduce illiteracy, poverty, and ameliorate the plight of children in difficult circumstances (UNICEF, 1990).

In many of the assemblies, the media's roles in boasting the interests of the child are clearly highlighted, placing demands on the media to play active role in supporting the rights of the child. The UNCRC calls on the States to "recognize the important function performed by the mass media and ensure that the child has access to information towards the promotion of child's social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health" (Art.17, CRC). At the 1996 Asian Summit on Child Rights and the Media held in Manila, the Philippines (HURIGHTS, 1996), the media is charged to adopt policies that are consistent with the principles of nondiscrimination and the best interests of all children, by raising awareness of every sector of the society to support children's interests and protect them from every form of abuse, be it economic, commercial, or sexual exploitation as well as from materials that promote sex, violence, conflict, and horror. The Oslo Challenge also affirms that

> the child/media relationship is an entry point into the wide and multifaceted world of children and their rights to education, freedom of expression, play, identity, health, dignity and self-respect, protection; and that in every aspect of child rights, in any element of the life of a child, the relationship between children and the media plays a role. (Onumah, 2004, p. 65; The MediaWise Trust, 2003)

In 2000, the Commonwealth Broadcasters met to ratify the African Charter on Children's Broadcasting (ACCB). The thrust of the Charter is that broadcast programming should serve the best interest of the child both in quantity and quality. It states that

> . . . children's programmes should be of high quality, made specifically for them, for development of their physical, mental

and social potentials to the fullest and that they should be involved in the production process. They should also be protected from commercial exploitation, guaranteed right to freedom of expression, thought, conscience and religion and must be ensured equitable access to programmes. In addition to the afore-mentioned is the affirmation of the sense of self by children through their culture and language and creation of opportunities for learning and empowerment to promote and support the child's right to education and development. The Charter further stipulates that children's programmes should be wide ranging in genre and content, but should not include gratuitous scenes and contents that encourage violence, sex and drug abuse. The Charter also requires regular and appropriate timing for broadcasting children's programmes, provision of sufficient resources for qualitative children's programmes and compliance with internationally agreed policies with particular reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. (Omotosho, Oyero, & Salawu, 2014, p. 136)

At the 3rd World Summit on Media for Children, the participants reaffirmed that the right to communicate, participate, and be informed, is an essential human right of the children, as identified in the UNCRC. Hence, the respect for dignity of man and the right to democratic participation in media for children demand holistic policies at all levels form global to local levels. To ensure the rights of children, communication process should be "pluralistic, multicultural and should guarantee freedom and diversity of opinion and expression." In this regard, it was agreed that consideration should be given to existing national regulations, regional and international conventions, charters, declarations, and recommendations, which address the question of children and audiovisual media, especially the International Charter on Media for Children. Besides, it is important to engage the media who have the social responsibility on issues such as this and make it clear that their participation is essential in addressing children's needs and support them for their overall development. Furthermore, attention should be paid to the growing expressions of concern on the impact of media programs containing violence, consumerism, gender, and ethnic stereotyping on children and the need to "preserve cultural diversity in a rapidly globalised world, as well as the need for urgent and coordinated action among the media actors, in view of the rapid evolutions of technology" (Rajcevic, 2001).

Despite all the aforementioned efforts and many others at improving the lots of children, the progress has been very slow and the outputs are not commensurate with the investment. Children are still in critical situation and their rights still trampled upon in many developing nations. The media responsibility in galvanizing the rights of the child is also far from being realized and a lot still remains undone in protecting the rights of the child. This is what informed a rethinking of the pathways to enabling the media to be actively involved in result-oriented deliveries in favor of children. A diagnostic look at the African media in the light of the demands placed

on it for children's purposes shows a lack of capacity to deliver the expected. Hence, the call for educational framework and partnership to serve as the basis of lasting media capacity engineering to meet the demands placed on it.

Imperatives of Children Journalism and Media Education

The media performance in attending to issues that affect children has been very poor. Oyero's (2011b) study on Nigerian and Ghanaian newspapers on the coverage of children shows "a gross under-reportage. In a study that examined five years of newspaper content, reports on children accounted for less than one percent of the total stories reported" (p. 102). The situation is similar with studies conducted by McManus and Dorfman (2002), Moss (2001), and McNamara (2004) in which all show underrepresentation of children and young people. The result of another study on South African and Zambian media is not too different. Children continue to be underrepresented in mainstream news media in both South Africa and Zambia. It was reported that "only 10% of 68 687 news content in South Africa focused on children, while of the total of 9,859 news stories which appeared in the monitored media in Zambia, children only made up 530 (5%) of the content" (Rikhotso, Morwe, Namumba, Kalu, & Singh, 2014, p. 6).

This problem is not far from the ignorance of most journalists about children's issues and their rights, as well as the expectations of the society from them. Many journalists are not informed of the contents of declarations and conventions such as the UNCRC, the Oslo Challenge, the West African Regional Summit on Media for Children, the Africa Charter on Children's Broadcasting, and so on, where children's issues are declared as priority as Africans delegates at such meetings are often limited, and the spread of resolutions at such meetings are so ineffective in their reach to get others informed. Most journalists in Africa are trained in linear direction of journalism practice based on the orientations of founders of the institutes who received their own education from the West without consideration for emerging needs of the current times. The journalism practice of the early times in Africa was political in nature (Salawu, Oyero, Moyo, & Moyo, 2016), and such was the direction of journalism education received. Nationalism struggles and other political interests formed the basis of early journalism practice in Africa, and so developmental issues such as child rights were not envisaged. This journalism orientation can best be changed from educational perspective with inculcation of new values for developmental areas of the society like the children's rights into journalism and media curricula.

The thinking here is that the needed attention that children deserve in the media can be obtained by a process of media education that is rooted in children ideals and orientation. Oyero (2011a) notes that "it is obligatory for the media to give deliberate attention to children in news coverage, no matter how unimportant or unworthy children may be for news production" (p. 106). Hence, journalism and media education that is informed of this ideal will not only keep journalists abreast of this responsibility but also persuades them to give prominent place to children in media coverage. Education does not only transmit culture, but it also builds and sustain cultural heritage; when media education that caters for children is well developed and implemented, a crop of journalists with understanding of children's needs and societal expectation from media will soon develop, and children will be properly and better catered for in the media.

Every form of education should be designed to solve problems. It is thus appropriate that journalism and media education is designed to respond to the problems facing children who constitute the future generation. There is dire need of media professionals who are equipped with necessary skills to cater for children's needs. These needs are multiple and diverse. Popularizing child rights among the African populace is one very central. People need to be informed and educated about human rights of children, so that such rights could be preserved and ensured. This is necessary to change people's orientation about unfavorable ideas they hitherto held about children. Similarly, children themselves need to be educated about their own rights, not only for them to ask for such rights where possible, but also for them to embrace the culture to practice the same for their own children.

Another is the advocacy aspect of children's rights. Journalism and media for children is different from mainstream journalism because it sets out to promote a cause—the cause of children. The claim by mainstream journalism and journalists is that they are impartial and free of external influence, which is usually untrue. The process of news coverage itself—news selection, angle of coverage, prominence given to it, and presentation style—often results in bias. In this regard, advocacy journalists are different from traditional journalists because of their readiness to stand by their position and pursue it until they see desirable change. They are usually unequivocal in the pursuit of their goal, and use the values of good journalism to explore issues affecting their community or audience (Advocacy Institute, cited in Highway Africa, n.d.). Child rights issues need to be constantly brought to the fore to remind stakeholders and government of their necessary obligations to children. This is achievable through dissemination of quality information through the media who set agenda for such issues and frame the issue to shape public dialogue. "The aim of media advocacy and 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" (Advocacy Institute cited in Salameh, 2005, p. 25). All of these require media persons who are properly schooled in the art of children journalism and media to deliver.

Understanding that children issues are development-centered further underscores the need for media education that cares for

them. Child rights have become a development issue, and every development effort that does not incorporate children will hit the rock. It is as a result, as earlier noted, that UNICEF emphasizes that MDGs can only be realized if specific children's needs are met. In the same vein, the idea of sustainable development compels ensuring that the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs is not compromised. Development journalism should be people-centered, by focusing on ideas, programs, activities, projects, and events that are related to improving people's living standards. Development journalism defends the interests of the people and motivates the audience to actively cooperate in development ventures (Okorie, Oyesomi, Oyero, Olatunji, & Soola, 2013; Wimmer & Wolf, 2005). From this perspective, CJMS draws from development journalism, and as such should be taught as a separate educational program with all essential contents.

It is important to know that CJMS deserves this type of specialism considering the significant place of children in the world. One can observe that there are other societal issues that have been accorded similar educational status because of their importance, as obtainable with environmental journalism, health journalism, science journalism, financial reporting, and so on. It is therefore not out of place to ensure that journalism education for children issues is entrenched in our journalism training centers in Africa. While recognizing some efforts being made in this direction in places like Ghana and South Africa, much is still required to be done beyond short-term courses and modules, to instituting a full blown program both at undergraduate and graduate levels. It is thus the right step in the right direction for UNICEF, Rwanda partnering with the National Commission for Children and Media High Commission to have launched a Child Rights Media Module, a guide to ethical reporting and communicating of children's rights and issues in Rwanda in September, 2017. Siddartha Shrestha, the chief of communication, advocacy, and partnerships at UNICEF Rwanda notes that "Children are the future of any nation and effective reporting about them would increase and maintain children being at the heart of the development agenda," emphasizing the need to train more journalists and journalism students to ensure that child rights promotion and advocacy is adequately and effectively featured in the present and future media environment. Shrestha affirms that the training of both private and public university lecturers as well as media practitioners, reaffirms the commitment to advocate for children's rights (Bizimungu, 2017).

As Oyero (2011a) notes that this idea is a welcome one going by opinions of some scholars and therefore should be nurtured to fruition. Professor Chris Goddard, director of Child Abuse Prevention Research Australia, Monash University, lent his support to the idea of specialized journalism education on children. According to him, he had "long thought that ALL journalists should have training on writing ABOUT children." He confirmed that findings from his center's research have shown how pattern of language use by

journalists disrespects children and lessens the gravity of child abuse. This occurs because journalists use language that minimizes the emotional impact of abuse. To him, therefore, "specialism in writing FOR children" is excellent idea and in fact the training should be compulsory for all journalists' (C. Goddard, email personal communication, September 6, 2011). In the same vein, Professor Norma Pecora of the School of Media Arts and Studies, Scripps College of Communication, Ohio University, believed "the idea as worthwhile in helping media practitioners understand the particular needs of the child" (N. Pecora, email personal communication, May 19, 2011). Dean, school of communication, Lagos State University, Nigeria, Professor Rotimi Oltunji, corroborated the need for this specialization:

> Yes a specialized training on children journalism will both be necessary and timely. Children constitute a critical mass in every society and attention to their peculiar needs and not sufficiently addressed in mainstream media, Moreover, for the purpose of niche marketing, it is needful to devote attention to children's journalism. Thirdly, such a medium will provide needed avenue for children themselves to get involved in news creation, dissemination and consumption as they relate to the plights of children. (Interview, September 2017)

The imperatives of CJMS are further justified by children's right to media entertainment. African children have not got right doses of good entertainment from their own media. Television programs are generally skewed in favor of politics whereas children's needs are neglected. Most of the children's programs are foreign whereas local contents are limited to children's parties organized by schools and monthly birthday parties organized by media houses (Omotosho et al., 2014). It appears that African broadcast organizations lack the wherewithal, both in skills and commitment to produce quality children's program. Africa's airwaves are bombarded with children's programs from foreign countries like the United States and Britain. Nickelodeon, Disney, and Celebrity Big Brother have taken over the African's children media world because Africa has not lived up to expectations to provide viable local alternatives. Incidentally, the quality of production, the narratives, and other elements of these foreign productions are far better than the locally produced programs; hence, children have greater preference for them. The few local programs for children have not met the expectations of the receivers as they often complain of them as being uninteresting, unexciting, and boring.

This, unfortunately, is a dangerous trend that children and young people find pleasure in these foreign programs which come to create their culture and define their reality in opposition to their cultural systems and demands. This, of course, breeds conflict as children try to express themselves from the cultural background that has been created for them by the foreign entertainment, contrary to their cultural systems and expectations. The African youth culture is now driven by the

characters, stories, and values of the global network of imported children's programming. The Nickelodeon television channel is available in at least 171 world markets (Hendershort, 2004; Pecora, 1997) and the popular Nickelodeon character, SpongeBob, is available to children in many African countries including Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa; but where are the African locally produced programs for children? Omotosho et al. (2014) lament about Nigerian children that they are now "more familiar with Ben10, Dora the explorer and Barney than they were with *Tales by Moonlight*." They note that TV programs in the 1990s had better contents in form of educational materials, moral, and value-based issues, but the opposite is the situation today with foreign TV programs and cartoons. This automatically translates, not only to loss of African value system, but also loss of identity. This poses a challenge to media education in Africa. There is need to train producers of good media stories that will attract and sustain the interests of African child; hence, the importance of CJMS.

Preservation of African values, culture, and ideals for future generation is another compelling reason for CJMS. The experience of African child should capture both past and the present; this will be possible when children, from their childhood, are made to understand African histories, proverbs, stories, and so on through creative productions in forms of video, films, and literatures. The Nigerian Television Authority's children's program, *Tales by Moonlight* is a good reference point to this. The program features children gathering around an elderly person to listen to well-dramatized African stories. The program is an adaptation of part of cultural life of the traditional Yoruba society in Nigeria where children were made to sit with the elders at moon-times to listen to stories. The program educates children about their traditional cultural life; it imparts wisdom and educates children about good values and morals in the society. Pattern of such a program and other similar ones need to be sustained by being incorporated into CJMS and taught as part of indigenous communication system in media institutes.

CJMS will expand the media world of children as professionals who can cater for the best interest of the child and are trained to meet children's media needs. The current imperialism of African children media airwaves by the foreign media would only be tackled if professionals who can provide viable alternatives are trained to do so. It thus follows then that the training of children media professionals will provide the much-needed alternative that will meet the children's cultural, social, and educational needs. This is the only thing that will ensure that the cultural rights of the African child are met. There is no way that the global media network will meet the children's cultural needs. It is against this background that the CRC requires the media to disseminate material of social and cultural benefit to the child and, in particular, give consideration to "the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or who is indigenous" (The United Nations, 1989, art 17).

Again, one critical aspect of children and media experience that is lacking in Africa is research. African children's media experiences are neglected in research activities. This gap exists due to the absence of children media education system where scholars focus on researching about children. Pecora, Murray, and Wartella (2007) cited by Pecora and Osei-Hwere (2008, p. 15) observe that for a period of "20 years of analysing the research done on children and television, there was no discussion on African children published in US academic journals." A lot of issues regarding children and media in Africa require serious research. African children as media audiences need to be investigated to understand their pattern of media reception, choices, consumption pattern, and preferences. Making the media content more appropriate to different categories of African children also requires further learning in which research is a priority. The aspects of children rights is still very much in place and largely un-researched. How the media can effectively accomplish the tasks assigned to it by the world body in respect of child rights in Africa in particular requires rigorous research. This can only be done by academics in African institutions whose interests lie in children and media.

The aims of CJMS therefore will be to provide "to equip students with knowledge of children journalism/media practice in Africa and the world through the study of concepts, theories and methods that provide such knowledge" (Oyero, 2011a, p. 108). It will teach students about modern developments and technology for production of children's programs, as well as information processing for and of children through the mass media, with emphasis on online journalism. Furthermore, it will aim at engineering efficient and effective communication support services for various human and national development projects aimed at the fulfillment of the rights of the child. The program will also gear toward research activities on a continuous basis into the state of African child "communication media, and make the findings available to policy makers towards formulation of appropriate policies for the operation and management of the Africa's communication industry for the benefit of children" (Oyero, 2011a).

The core contents of the program will include the following:

Theories of children media: This course introduces students to mass communication theory as it relates to practical applications in today's society. To assist in the use of mass media, students need to better understand how theories can explain the role of media in the lives of children as individuals and as members of social group. This knowledge is important to help guide and critique today's changing media industries as it affects children in contemporary Africa.

Children media research: This course provides an overview of qualitative and quantitative research methods used in the investigation of topics related to studying the

children media. Methods covered include textual analysis, ethnographic methods, qualitative approaches to historical research, and feminist approaches to media research as well as survey and content analysis. The course should examine the important steps, tools, and techniques used in these methods. Particular attention is paid to the application of these methods in doing research on children and media, including impact assessment of media content on children and determining the suitability of programs for children.

Legal and ethical aspect of children journalism: Within the broad scope of journalism ethics, the specific ethical consideration for reporting about children and media production for children. It discusses ethical and moral standards for the Mass Media in the coverage of children and ethical responsibilities of individuals, groups, and media organizations on children. It will examine how mass communication law works in this country with an emphasis on the Convention of the Rights of the Child and its domestication in the form of Child Rights Act in the country.

Communication for children development: This course deals with the role of communication–mass media, multimedia, indigenous, and other communication channels in the overall development of children. It targets various methods of appropriate communication for stakeholders in respect of fulfillment of children's rights.

Educational broadcasting for children: This course deals with various methods and techniques involved in producing programs for radio and television that will serve educational purposes for children.

News writing and reporting: A course focusing on news reporting and writing techniques used in both traditional print media and Internet publishing and broadcast media. Students will be introduced to the basics of accuracy, clarity, word choice, journalistic style, story structure, and deadlines. It will teach style and structure of news stories, news sources, newsroom practices, and procedures with reporting assignments for both print and broadcast media on children issues.

Children television production: The course deals with theory and practice of TV production. Supervised direction in all aspects of media presentation meant for children of different ages.

Children TV cartoon production: The course will involve theory and practice of TV cartoon production for African children, bringing African cultural values to bear on the content of the production.

Child audiences: The course examines the way children of different categories experience media news and entertainment in the context of social influences and expectations. It examines children's attitudes and behaviors to different media, and the influence of new media on children's consumption of media content.

Economics of children media: This course deals with the business and financing of children media in a developing world. It deals with the issue of costs and benefits that accompany the production of children media content, as well as the plan, production, and delivery of this content. Emphasis is given to the economic gains of running a course of this nature.

Media Partnership for Generational Sustainability

As earlier noted, from a statement in Oslo challenge, "the child/media relationship is an entry point into the wide and multifaceted world of children and their rights" because media plays a role in every aspect of a child's life. Children need the media to survive and grow. Media generally serve today as one of the most central socializing agents in forming behaviors, attitudes, and worldviews (Kolucki & Lemish, 2011). Comstock and Scharrer (2012) note that "children and adolescents' viewing of television and other screen media account for a substantial portion of their time expenditures, and children between the ages 8 to 18 spend 5 hours daily watching television" (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). TV in particular plays a great role both in the social life and educational life of children. Children learn subjects like maths, English language, chemistry, and so on from TV. Sesame Street is an example of impactful TV program that helps children's scholarly achievement (Fish, 2014; "The Sesame Street Effect," 2015). Television and other media as well are social media that affect every aspect of daily life such as dressing, shopping, eating, talking, and so on. Media also make children conscious of their environment and grow up as active and conscious citizens as opposed to being apathetic (Livingstone, 2008). Thus, media's role in children's lives covers the mental, social, physical, and spiritual well-being. It is therefore important that African media organizations and agencies collaborate to better the lots of children. As obtained in opinions gathered, partnership is required in creation of awareness, training, and in experience on how to report children. Journalists can establish Children's Club of respective organs. This can take place in schools and religious organizations. Media can also organize Summer Schools where the opinions of children will be aggregated, and opportunities will be presented to deepen children's knowledge and skills on human rights–related issues.

Collaboration will boost media efforts at popularizing the rights of the child and enhance their advocacy project. Information available at a region will not be limited to the region alone but reach other parts of Africa. Such partnership could also galvanize the process of helping children when successful experiences in that direction in one part of the continent are shared with others. The aspect of media production for children will also benefit a lot from partnership among African media. There could be joint production of children's programs, thus reducing the burden of financial and human resources for such projects. It will also be easier

to secure necessary funds from donors as a network to pursue children's media contents. Partnership could also facilitate sharing or exchanges of media content among various media organizations in different parts of the continent, thus fulfilling one of the UNCRC guidelines of encouraging "international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of such information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources" (Art 17b).

Partnership will also ensure that common challenges facing the continent, as relates to media concerns, are tackled cooperatively. One can readily think of the quest for peace in Africa and the need for the media to orientate Africans to be peace-minded. One way of accomplishing this is by nurturing children with ideals of peaceful coexistence, tolerance, and altruism. If children from today are inculcated with values of peace, then in 20 years' time with those values imbibed and the process sustained, one can guarantee the continent enjoying a great deal of peace than it currently does.

This partnership then is a project that should be pursued either by exploring existing platforms or initiating new ones. The Network of African Journalists is an existing forum that can be used for this purpose. Those who report for and about children among them could form a subnetwork to fulfill the objectives of reporting for children. The same applies to Commonwealth Broadcasters Association (CBA) who already formulated and adopted the ACCB. African participants among them and other broadcast organizations could initiate this partnership to serve as a veritable means of ensuring the interests of children in their activities. Child Rights International Network (CRIN) could be a rallying point for many other partnerships as desirable for children's overall well-being.

Conclusion

As the world commemorates the 29th anniversary of the adoption of the UNCRC, it is important that Africa brings issues affecting children to the fore and the media which has crucial role to play in this direction be placed on a pedestal to effectively fulfill its obligation to children. Considering the years that have gone since the UN General Assembly adopted the UNCRC, it instructs to see a better and fulfilling future for the children in the next 30 years, and the process cannot be allowed to drag. Children remain the future that Africa waits to see and the necessary investment in children to have a better continent is uncompromisable.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

ORCID iD

Olusola Oyero https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7795-5516

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Author Biographies

Olusola Oyero is an associate professor and coordinator, graduate studies in the Department of Mass Communication, Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria. He teaches communication theories and research, development communication and journalism. His research interests include child rights and the media, media and democratic governance.

Abiodun Salawu is professor of Journalism, Communication and Media Studies and director of the research entity, Indigenous Language Media in Africa (ILMA) at the North-West University, South Africa. He has taught and researched journalism for over two decades in Nigeria and South Africa. He has to his credit, scores of scholarly publications in academic journals and books.