

## INFLUENCE OF AIT'S “FOCUS NIGERIA” PROGRAMME ON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN ORLU LOCAL GOVERNMENT, IMO STATE

ONYIRIUKA, Maurice A.<sup>1</sup>  
ORJI, Uchenna Franklin<sup>2</sup>

Department of Mass Communication<sup>1</sup>  
Imo State University, Owerri<sup>1</sup>  
Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo<sup>2</sup>

**Correspondence Email:** [orjifranklin@yahoo.com](mailto:orjifranklin@yahoo.com), [mauriuka@yahoo.com](mailto:mauriuka@yahoo.com)

### Abstract

*This study was on the influence of African Independent Television “Focus Nigeria” programme on youth development. The objectives of this study were to: ascertain Orlu youths' level of exposure to AIT “Focus Nigeria” programme; examine the perception of Orlu youths about AIT “Focus Nigeria” programme; and determine if AIT “Focus Nigeria” programme influence Orlu youths' engagement in the development activities. The survey research method was used for this study. Australian online calculator was used to derive a sample size of 385 from the population of 210,165. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Cluster and simple random sampling techniques were adopted in the selection of the various youths in selected communities in Orlu, Imo State. The finding showed that the level of exposure to AIT “Focus Nigeria” programme among youths in Orlu is moderate at 44.5%; the perception of the youths in Orlu were that AIT “Focus Nigeria” programme is educative and discusses issues of public interest; most of their discussion center on politics and gives them opportunity to contribute on burning issues that concern their development at 72%. Also, it was found that AIT “Focus Nigeria” programme has influenced youths' development positively at 56.5%, by re-awakening their political consciousness, socio-economic among others. It was therefore, recommended that Government and other stakeholders on development communication should continue to use current affairs programmes to educate, inform, empower and encourage the youths on the need to accept and participate fully on projects, policies and programmes geared towards their development.*

**Keywords:** Development, Influence, Television, programme, Youth

### Introduction

The field of youth development sits at the frontier of new opportunities for research and practice. Also, sustainability of development has remained a key area of interest for discussions and debates among researchers. In advanced economies, development has been successfully sustained for long but difficult to actualize in developing economies like Nigeria (Jegade, Irewole & Dada, 2019). They maintained that though government and non-governmental agencies and well-meaning individuals have employed different strategies to empower the youths, yet the resultant effects are not sustainable as evident in the high level

of poverty and unemployment. This is because the wheel of development of any country depends on how productive and creative the youthful populations are. The youth in any society are the oxygen of growth and development. For instance, they provide the labour force for production of goods and service to take effect. And also, are the critical masses of people, whose action and inaction can develop or destroy the hegemonies/fabrics of their society. The youthful population constituted over 70% of the 2006 census figure (Odoh & Eme, 2014). According to them, this quantum of population is a great asset for the Nigerian state if they are harnessed and utilized in the right direction. Interestingly, the transition of society from one generation to another is critical to the formative and developmental aspiration of such society. That, is why society that prepare their youth for the sake of future aspiration will not only secure her future development; but, will prepare her next set of leaders with the challenges of national reconciliation and development. So, therefore, the role of youth on national development is sacrosanct to the whole developmental aspiration of any society. The youth are the cornerstone to societal rejuvenation. Societies are not only recreated through the youthful population, but, youth are often referring to as leaders of tomorrow (Odoh, & Eme, 2014).

Therefore, communication is vital for harnessing human capital for development. It plays a crucial role in the transmission of knowledge, skills, ideas and information that sharpens and re-orders the perceptions of the readers and viewers on a particular event or happening in the society and serves as a reservoir of knowledge of the past and current events (Edim, Odok & Osaji, 2016). They maintained that the critical role of the media is encapsulated in its impulsive tendency to direct and redirect the course of attitudinal change and building public perception towards societal affairs. The mass media set agenda for public discourse. It is the media that sensitize Nigerians on the need to be active participants in the development programmes and policies of the government (Sambe, 2008).

Television as medium of communication has contributed to overall development of the nation in no small measure. When any developing country opts for television, it definitely must be because, among other things, TV has an important role to play in advancing the process of national development. It has and is still making a lot of import; social, cultural and educational advancement of the nation (Akpan, 2012). The television is regarded as one of the most powerful media of mass communication. According to him, the enormous power from its audio-visual properties, which command instant modern means of mass communication, its effectiveness following attributes: TV can present things as they really are; (realism); events can be shown as they are happening; it can address the whole person, since its range of subjects is both comprehensive and flexible; it can also address both the literate and non-literate; it can speak to the individual (intimate); and it has both intellectual and emotional appeal. As a development agent, television has done much and can do much to activate human intention had cultural development through serious educational programmes which happily are now a feature of Nigerian television. Learning by television is not limited to schools broadcast; other socio-cultural programmes such as drama pass information across to viewers (Akpan, 2012).

Apuke and Dogari (2017) in a study concluded that exposure to television had influenced young men and women attitude and behaviours especially in their dressing style. Therefore, it becomes necessary to ascertain how African Independent Television programmes “*Focus Nigeria*”, has been useful in discussing issues, events and happenings that concern the youth in Orlu. Focus Nigeria is a one-hour News and Current Affairs

Discussion programmes on weekdays. It runs between 10 and 11a.m. it was introduced in January 2006 and anchored by Gbenga Mike Aruleba. Hence, it is our desire in this study to ascertain the influence of this TV programmes in the attainment of youth development in Orlu Local Government Council.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Obviously, a key issue in enhancing youth development after the provision of necessary developmental projects and programmes to improve the living standard of the youths is information. Though, it appears that most of the youths in Orlu lack basic knowledge about developmental programmes, projects and policies going on in the state as well as in their localities that are meant to foster their socio-economic wellbeing. It is also, not clear if AIT's "Focus Nigeria" programme provides the information required by the youth to participate in the development programmes and projects, given the fact that most information reaching them are not organized in such a way as to achieve defined development objectives. The question is: Does exposure to "Focus Nigeria" influence the participation of the youth towards embracing development programmes and projects meant for them?

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided this study:

1. What is the level of exposure to AIT "Focus Nigeria" programme among Orlu youth?
2. What is the perception of Orlu youths about AIT "Focus Nigeria" programme?
3. What is the influence of AIT "Focus Nigeria" programme on Orlu youths' engagement in the development activities?

### **Background of Focus Nigeria**

Focus Nigeria is a one-hour News and Current Affairs Discussion programmes on weekdays. It runs between 10 and 11a.m. it was introduced in January 2006 and anchored by Gbenga Mike Aruleba. It is a public affairs programme which features public officers, civil society activists, experts, professionals, private and ordinary people, to discuss issues especially current and burning ones which are of public or national interest. It is divided into 2 or 3 segments where the first 5 to 10 minutes are used to recap major public and political developments in the country since the last edition and take a prologue to set the agenda from the issue or topic of the day. The rest of the time is used for discussion moderated by the presenter. The third segment is occasional when there is a sponsored spotlight or documentary. The discussion segment can also be sponsored by an interested party or stakeholder, but if allegations are made against other people or institutions, such are invited and given the right to reply. Moreover, viewers are encouraged to call certain numbers or sent text messages in reaction to issues discussed.

### **Effectiveness of Television in Promoting Youth Development**

Nsikan-Abasi, and Miriam (2016) examined "audience participation and perception of AITs current Affairs programmes "Focus Nigeria". The findings revealed that majority of the respondents watch the programme "focus Nigeria" on daily basis but they rarely participate

in the programme.

Similarly, Akoja (2016) revealed 71.4% had access to development programmes through radio and television. Radio remained a popular medium for disseminating development messages in Nigeria. It also showed that majority of the respondents indicated that media programmes encourage participation in national development. It was therefore, concluded that the media have been effective in supporting the national objectives.

In corroborating this, Gever and Nwabuzor (2014) in study on “security USA through the airwaves: analysis of the influence of broadcast media security awareness campaigns on security Awareness among Enugu State residents” indicated that there is significant relationship between broadcast media campaigns and audience security alertness. It also revealed that the relationship through significant, is weak, while factors that enhance audience understanding of broadcast security awareness campaigns are; frequency, simplicity of language richness of content and persuasiveness. The researchers conclude that following the perceived ineffectiveness of security intelligence among security agencies in Nigeria, the broadcast media should deploy its immediacy strength with a view to implanting a sense of security alertness among Nigerians as a deliberate way of addressing the security intelligence.

In relation to this, Ajaero, Okoro, and Ajaero (2016) investigated the perception of and attitude toward mass media reportage of the 2012 flood in Rural Nigeria. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents at 75% received information about the flood from either radio or television, and there significant spatial variations in perceptions of flood reportage. Also, the finding indicated that generally, mass media reportage of the flood was not too effective in influencing people's attitude.

Again, Omolade (2013) in a study on the influence of broadcast economic programmes on rural community development in Lagos and Oyo States, Nigeria. The findings showed that broadcast media do perform effectively within the rural communities as far as matters of economic programmes are designed and disseminated to their respective homes; broadcast media perform effectively within the rural community, and the rural communities receive the broadcast message which enables them to have exposure to economic programmes disseminated by the broadcast media specifically radio and television. It was also found that the dissemination of economic programme has brought about development within the community.

In the same vein, Usadolo and Gwanya (2012) examined television violence: a reflection of the views of children in South Africa. Findings revealed about younger participants in the study shows that they believe television violence is real as opposed to older ones. The children's view about the wrestling is real as opposed to mainly young girls of older ages. Regarding their favourite characters, the female participants prefer characters who are funny, nice and with good personality. Boys on the other hand prefer characters with actions and full of energy finally, the finding revealed that the children would imitate their favourite characters based on their discernment of what is good. The researchers concluded that children are able to make critical judgment of television character behaviours.

In relation to this, Kakembo (2012) in a study revealed that televised HIV/AIDS educational messages are occasionally detached from the experiences and world views of the youths. On the other hand, it was evident that youths benefited more from HIV/AIDS concepts conveyed through commercial television soaps. It was therefore, concluded that

some of the propagated values in televised education programmes clash with the symbolism and subcultures of the urban youths.

Also, Aririguzoh (2011) in a study on "television influence on political knowledge of the 2007 Nigeria Presidential Elections among Residents of Ado-Odalota, Ogun State", concluded that Television made voters in Ado-Odo-Local government to know about the last Nigerian presidential election; the information offered through television broadcasts increased the knowledge base of the respondents by making them to know about this particular election, the contesting candidates and the various political parties and television broadcasts also improved voters' awareness of specific contents names, their political parties, their different party Logos or distinguishing marks and where to thumbprint in the election.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored on development media theory. The development media theory was formulated by McQuail in 1987. This theory seeks to explain the normative behaviours of the press in countries that are conventionally classified together as developing countries. The theory owes its origin to the UNESCO's MacBride Commission set up in 1979. This theory is opposed to dependency and foreign domination and to arbitrary authoritarianism. It accepts economic development and nation building as overriding objectives. Press freedom should be opened to restriction according to economic priorities and the development needs of the society. In the interest of development ends, the state has the ultimate control (Ndolo, 2005).

The theory holds that the media have a role to play in facilitating the process of development in the developing countries. The basic tenets of the theory are that the media are to be used to serve the general good of the nation. The media are seen as agents of development and social change in any community thus, the theory says that the media should be used to complement government's efforts by carrying out programmes that will lead to positive behavioural change among the people (Asemah, Anum & Edegoh, 2013, p. 19).

The theory is relevant to the study because it lays emphasis on using the media to promote develop in the society especially as concern the youths. This implies that the media have the capacity to positively foster youth development. Thus, the media need to be employed to bring about social, political and economic development among youths.

### **Research Method**

Survey was used for this study. The survey research method is apt and suitable for this study, given that opinion, views, feelings and thought of youths in the select area of the study was sought. From the official records of the 2016 projection of the population of Orlu Local Government Area is 196, 600 (NPC, 2016). However, the population has grown since the last projection by NPC. In such a situation the research was expected to use the United Nations projected index of 2.28% to extrapolate and predict the new population from the last known figure. It shows that an addition of 13,565 persons was added to the actual population (196,600) to obtain projected population of 210,165; which is an estimated population. The sample size for this study is 384. This was determined using Australian calculator cluster sampling technique was used for this study. This is because Orlu Local Government Area has



13 districts or clusters. It is from these clusters or wards/districts that 4 wards/districts were selected purposively selected. The wards/districts selected were as follows: Amaifeke; Owerri-Ebiri; Ihioma; and Umuna ward. The researchers allotted 96 persons to each of the selected wards. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

**Research Question One: What is the level of exposure to AIT “Focus Nigeria” programme among Orlu youth?**

**Table 1: Respondents' ownership of TV sets**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	299	79.7%
No	76	20.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2019.

According to the table above majority of the respondents had TV sets at 79.7% had TV sets. This implies that a good number of the respondents had access to watch TV programmes. Even those who do not own TV sets are likely to watch it from their neighbours, friends and relatives.

**Table 2: Respondents' viewership of AIT programmes**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	290	77.3%
No	85	22.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field survey, 2019.

The table above shows that majority of the respondents at 77.3% watch AIT programmes. This indicated that the AIT programmes are such popular among respondents in the study area. People who do not have TV sets can equally watch the programmes from others.

**Table 3: Respondents' viewership of AIT's “Focus Nigeria” programme**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	220	58.7%
No	155	41.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field survey, 2019.

From the table above reveals that majority of the respondents admitted that they watch AIT

Focus Nigeria programme at 58.7%. The implication is that on the average, most of the respondents that have TV sets and who enjoy watching AIT programmes choose to watch "Focus Nigeria" outside other programmes that are being aired on the station.

**Table 4: Respondents' level of exposure to AIT Focus Nigeria programme**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Large extent	43	11.5%
Moderate extent	167	44.5%
Little extent	38	10.1%
Can't say	127	33.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field survey, 2019.

From the table above, indicates that the level of exposure to AIT "Focus Nigeria" programme among the respondents is moderate at 44.5%. It means that the respondents have not fully being exposed to AIT Focus Nigeria programme.

**Research Question Two: What is the perception of Orlu youths about AIT "Focus Nigeria" programme?**

**Table 5: Respondents' perception of AIT "Focus Nigeria" programme**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
It provides opportunity for them to contribute on burning issues	25	6.6%
It is educative and discusses issues of public interest	157	42%
It focuses more on political issues than other issues	88	23.4%
Not sure	105	28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field survey, 2019.

The table above indicates that majority or 42% of the respondents agreed that the programme is educative and discusses issues of public interest, followed by it focuses more on political issues than other issues. It means that the programme mostly gives adequate attention to political issues. This is important because other developmental issues revolve around politics.

**Research Question Three: Respondents' view on whether exposure to AIT "Focus Nigeria" programme influence their engagement in the development activities?**

**Table 6: Respondents' view on whether AIT “Focus Nigeria” programme influence youth engagement in the development activities**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	59	15.7%
Agree	153	40.8%
Not sure	47	12.5%
Disagree	67	17.9%
Strongly disagree	49	13.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field survey, 2019.

From the table above, majority of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that AIT “Focus Nigeria” programme influenced their participation towards development activities. The implication is that through this programme the respondents were induced to take decisions and actions that would enhanced their wellbeing.

**Table 7: Respondents view on the areas the programme has influenced their lives**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Political life	129	34.4%
Cultural/religious life	14	3.7%
Economic life	52	13.9%
Educational life	22	5.9%
All of the above	59	15.7%
Can't say	99	26.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field survey, 2019.

From the table above reveals that majority of the respondents at 75.6% agreed that exposure to AIT “Focus Nigeria” programme has influenced their political, economic, educational, cultural lives. However, the programme impacted mostly on the political life of the youths.

### **Discussion of Findings**

#### **Level of exposure to AIT “Focus Nigeria” programme among Orlu youth**

The finding indicated that majority of the residents at 44.5% believed that they got exposed to AIT “Focus Nigeria” programme to a moderate extent. This is justified were majority or 58.7% admitted that they watch AIT “Focus Nigeria” programme. It is obvious that the majority or 79.7% have TV sets and which most of them use to watch AIT programmes at 77.3%. This means that people that own TV sets, watch AIT programmes. Although, the level to which they got exposed to AIT “Focus Nigeria” programme is moderate. The implication is that the respondents are yet to fully expose themselves to the programme. This could because as result of the uninterrupted power supply as associated with nation.



This finding is in tandem with the earlier study conducted by Nsikan-Abasi and Mirriam (2016) revealed that majority of the respondents watch the programme "focus Nigeria", but their level of participation and contribution is not encouraging. Also, to support this finding, Akoja (2016) revealed 71.4% had access to development programmes through radio and television. Radio remained a popular medium for disseminating development messages in Nigeria. In relations to this Ajaero, Okoro, and Ajaero (2016) revealed that majority of the respondents at 75% received information about the flood from either radio or television,

### **The perception of Orlu youths about AIT "Focus Nigeria" programme**

The finding showed that majority or 42% of the respondents agreed that the programme is educative and discusses issues of public interest, followed by the fact that it focuses more on political issues than other issues at 23.4% while 6.6% agreed it offered them the opportunity to make meaningful contributions on issues that concern them. It means that the programme mostly give adequate attention to political issues. It means that majority of the respondents perceived the programme to be educative in discussing issues of public interest which entail politics, socio-economic issues among others. Therefore, the educated ones among the youths get the best of information that affect their wellbeing from this programme.

This finding is in agreement with the finding of Nsikan-Abasi, et al. (2016). In their study they found that the audience perceives the programme as being highly political. It was supported by the finding of Omoera (2010), which revealed that radio and television through certain programmes, have helped in the dissemination of relevant information on family planning in rural settings just as they have purportedly done in urban centers in Nigeria. Similarly, Omolade (2013) findings showed that broadcast media do perform effectively within the rural communities as far as matters of economic programmes are designed and disseminated to their respective homes; broadcast media perform effectively within the rural community.

### **Orlu youths influence through exposure to AIT "Focus Nigeria" programme and their engagement towards development activities**

Finding indicated that majority or 56.5% believed that AIT "Focus Nigeria" programme influenced youth development and 75.6%% agreed that their political, economic, educational, and cultural lives have been bettered as a result of their exposure to the programme. It means that TV programmes have significantly influenced their behaviour positively. The programme has raised the political consciousness of the people. The youth now participate actively on the political activities going in the state.

In-line with the above finding, Nsikan-Abasi et al (2016) concurs that the respondents participation is influenced by their need and willingness to contribute to national discourse. Akoja (2016) revealed 71.4% had access to development programmes through radio and television. Radio remained a popular medium for disseminating development messages in Nigeria. It also showed that majority of the respondents indicated that media programmes encourage participation in national development. It was therefore, concluded that the media have been effective in supporting the national objectives. In relation to the finding, Apuke and Dogari (2017) concluded that television do influence young people's behaviour. This is because exposure within youths increases the likelihood of physically and verbally aggressive behaviour, aggressive thoughts and aggressive dress patterns which may not go

well with our norms and culture. Similarly, Omolade (2013) concluded that the rural communities receive the broadcast message which enables them to have exposure to economic programmes disseminated by the broadcast media specifically radio and television.

### Conclusion

Television significantly play important roles in educating, empowering and encouraging youth participation in development activities like political participation, economic empowerment, cultural re-awakening among others. Exposure to AIT “Focus Nigeria” programme had influenced youths' participation in the development activities. This is because the programme dwells on critical issues that concern youth development. It is believed that the programme will go a long way to boost youth participation towards developmental programmes and projects meant for them if prudently utilized. However, the contributions of AIT “Focus Nigeria” programme on youths' participation in the developmental programmes and policies have not been fully utilised as the level of exposure to the programme among youths is minimal.

### Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Programmes meant for youths' participation and consumption should be presented during the early hours of the day and late evening, so as to attract high level of exposure to the programme from them. This is because youth who are mostly traders and workers are always busy in the day time and are barely at home in the day time.
2. Network providers and owners of TV stations, should endeavour to make network services and signals available to the youth in order to encourage their participation and contributions on issues of national interest extensively.
3. Government and other stakeholders on development communication should continue to use current affairs programmes to educate, inform, empower and encourage the youth on the need to accept and participate fully on projects, policies and programmes geared towards their development.

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