



ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNICATION SCHOLARS
& PROFESSIONALS OF NIGERIA
BOOK SERIES



CANADA UNIVERSITY PRESS

STRATEGIC POSITIONING OF CHILDRENS' AND YOUTH ISSUES IN MEDIA, PUBLIC AND POLICY DISCOURSE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF DEMOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY: LESSONS FOR ADVOCATES

Adebayo Fayoyin

Abstract

The central question of this study is: how can development agencies and their partners effectively position issues that affect Nigeria's youthful population in media, public and policy discourse? This is against the backdrop of the conceptual complexity of issue-attention dynamics and Nigeria's demographic diversity. The question stems from the challenges faced by advocates for children and youth in their attempt to attract attention, sustain this and strategically position critical social concerns. This study examines (i) the communication and advocacy programmes implemented to position children and youth issues, and (ii) the current state of media and public attention to the issues. Our analysis shows that development agencies have utilised a multitude of tactics to promote awareness of youth and children problems in Nigeria but the level of media and public attention remains inadequate. Findings suggest that while the social problems affecting this population group are continuous and life-long, media and public attention tends to be episodic and ephemeral. The paper advocates for a more effective positioning of these issues in the country through more robust use of data, appropriate framing of issues, creative networking among advocates to coordinate public influence interventions, and constructive response to counter framing by opposition groups. Advocates need to be more politically-savvy in navigating the complexities of domestic politics that shape public and policy response to social development while harnessing the power of transnational obligations, norms and institutions in leveraging political support for children and youth.

Key Words: *issue attention, advocacy, public communication, social change, population education, framing*