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# **NEW MEDIA, BUSINESS REPORTING AND THE CHALLENGE OF POVERTY AMONG NIGERIAN WOMEN**

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CHAPTER  
TEN

**NEW MEDIA, BUSINESS REPORTING  
AND THE CHALLENGE OF POVERTY  
AMONG NIGERIAN WOMEN**

*Toyosi Olugbenga Samson Owolabi*

**Introduction**

The problems of poverty and under- development have constituted a major global worry among the governments of the developed and developing nations of which Nigeria is one. This is because these nations are unable to provide basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, health care delivery, potable water and qualitative education. Poverty like an elephant is better seen than defined as all the conflicts around the world (economic, inter-tribal, regional, religious and gender) have their roots deep in it. Over the years, both local and international media have drawn international attention to this pitiable condition and called for global financial aids and development assistance so as to lift up the affected nations from the cesspit of poverty and improve their development status. In response to the media build-up the United Nations Summit in 2000 t gave birth to the eight interdependent development goals otherwise referred to as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of which poverty eradication and promotion of gender equality and women empowerment respectively were of note (Ibrahim, 2007, p.1).

Business and economic reporting through dedicated business channels has been defined as the process of tracking, recording, analysing and interpreting business and economic issues for dissemination to intended audience. Beyond the four traditional functions of the press (information, education, entertainment, and surveillance), the mass media have had thrust upon them new responsibilities of increasing understanding of development issues; building

up solidarity in a common effort; and enlarging the capacity of the people to take charge of their own development needs (Lanihun, 2008). Reporters are expected to offer reasons why women are always the most vulnerable in times of economic recessions given that this important segment of the society works two-thirds of the total work hours in the world but gets paid for only one-tenth. The UNDFW (2001) also notes that women constitute two-thirds of the adults world-wide who cannot read or write; similarly, 60 percent of the 77 million children that are dropouts or not attending school are girls. Although women are strong and capable of making significant contributions to national development unfortunately, the process of development has in-turn marginalized them; thus, making them the most vulnerable in the event of socio-economic crises.

Within the last decade, there have also been press reports on heightened social problems resulting from years of inequality and disproportionate distribution of national resources among the different ethnic groups and gender categories that constitute Nigeria. These have confirmed the fact that the media are vested with the responsibility and the power to bring to the public domain issues relevant to the wellbeing and development of the nation and its population. The conventional mass media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television) are believed to constitute indispensable mediators between the government and the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual public by moulding and directing public opinion while mobilising the people to acknowledge and accept new knowledge and techniques that promote national development. However, it has been observed that the traditional media have been found to be limited carrying out these roles due to factors such as low literacy level, concentration of the media in a few privileged hands to the exclusion of the larger majority, contents that are largely elitist, and coverage that is urban-centred to the exclusion of the rural communities where more than 75 percent of the populace are resident. It is no wonder therefore that the new media are being analysed as alternative democratised platforms for not only disseminating development information but also countering the powerful propaganda and overwhelming influence of the traditional media.

### **Theoretical Underpinning**

To examine the role of new media in business and economic reporting in relation to the women population in Nigeria, this paper is anchored on the democratic participant media theory (McQuail, 1987) and media richness theory (Daft and Lengel, 1984). The primary focus of the democratic participant media theory is its insistence that the age long monopoly, bureaucracy and commercial control of the media by a few power brokers in the society must be discontinued. The theory according to McQuail is against the commercialisation and monopolisation of private and government owned media and therefore stipulates among others that individual citizens and minority groups regardless of their social status should have control over the operations and access to the content of the media. Under this theory, every individual has the right to information as well as right to share his opinion and view with others.

Media richness according to Daft and Lengel (1984) has two main assumptions which include people's desire to overcome ambiguity and uncertainty in organizational management and communication; the understanding of the fact that a variety of media commonly used in organizations work better for certain tasks than others. This means that certain medium can be richer by way of facilitating effective and intelligible communication than others. They identified four criteria for assessing media richness which include (a) the availability of instant feedback; (b) the capacity of the medium to transmit multiple cues such as body language, voice tone, and inflection; (c) the use of natural language; and (d) the personal focus of the medium. Besides, the media under media richness theory take into consideration the potential of modern communication technologies to carry information simultaneously to multiple users and get immediate feedback yet providing opportunities to electronically store, organise and manage varieties of information among them. These theories possess the principle and customised experience which explains the application of new media to business and economic reporting by using graphics, animation and multimedia better than the conventional media.

### **Business Reporting in the Nigerian Mass Media: A Critical Analysis**

Globally, it has been observed that next to life, the most important goal that engages the time and energy of man is how to meet man's basic needs which include food, clothing and accommodation. The inability of most developing nations and their people to achieve this goal is why they are regarded as poor and underdeveloped. It is against the above backgrounds that poverty according to the UNDP (2008), is seen as denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity, lack of minimum capacity to participate effectively in the society and not having enough to feed, to cloth a family, not having access to school and health services, lack of land to farm or job to earn a living and not having access to credit facility. It also means gender discrimination, financial powerlessness and social exclusion of individuals, households and communities, susceptibility to violence and living on marginal or fragile environments without access to clean water or good sanitation.

Nigeria incidentally falls into the category. Although for more than three decades it is adjudged to be the sixth largest oil producing nation in the world and is recently classified as one of the largest economies in Africa yet, the poverty rating index shows that it is the third of the five nations with the largest number of poor in the world (World bank, 2014), while the level of unemployment was pegged at 24.2percent in the first quarter of 2015 (NBS 2015). The reasons advanced for Nigeria's intolerably high poverty profile according to Igbatayo and Igbinedion (2008) include lack of good governance that is open and accountable to the people and, according to Owolabi and O'Neill (2014), dearth of relevant information and adequate knowledge about the abundant opportunities existing around the people that can guide them to make informed decisions on how to conquer poverty and want. It is therefore the responsibility of the media in general and economic reporter in particular to devote a considerable proportion of time and space to the coverage of business and economic

activities. The efficient business and economic reporter owes Nigerians an explanation on the reasons for Nigeria's consistent poverty level despite her abundant human and natural resources. Business reporters are expected to provide relevant and current information to investors, workers, managers and the general public about what is happening to the economy. People want to know whether or not the economy is growing, the rate of inflation, and volume of currency in circulation and the effect on citizens' purchasing power, the exchange rate and the nation's debt profile. It is the reporters' responsibility to make business forecast based on expert opinion. Besides, they must regularly analyse and interpret various political and economic policies of the government and the implication for national development in general and poverty reduction in particular.

It is also important to mention that good decisions are taken based on the quality of information at the disposal of policy makers, entrepreneurs and employees. Knowledge and information are the basic ingredients required by any person who wants to respond to opportunities and challenges in any socio-economic climate. It is the task of business and economic reporters to identify and advertise the raw material potentials of every geographic location and mobilise various communities for self-development initiatives such as construction of bridges and feeder roads, building of water project, rural health centres and local industries which could open up the local areas for development. It makes economic sense when industries, based on accessible information are located in the rural communities where there is constant availability of raw materials and labour force needed for their operation. Such decision will not only bring accelerated development to the rural areas but will also checkmate rural-urban movement, depopulate the cities and reduce the perennial social problems often experienced in most urban centres.

The media can also stimulate the interest of the rural populace towards participating in economic activities that can easily lift them up from the cesspool of poverty. Development is a product of applied knowledge (Soola, 2008). Large chunks of rural dwellers in Nigeria are by tradition subsistent farmers but due to lack of information about modern farming methods they still remain at the subsistence level. The mass media can use its persuasive power to mobilize the people to participate in animal husbandry such as poultry, piggery, snailry and fishery on micro and small-scale levels. In the area of agricultural innovations and techniques needed by modern farmers, the media can easily propagate this information which normally would have required large capital outlay at no cost to farmers. There are current training and skills on crop rotation, correct application of harvest yielding fertilizer, crossbreeding, weed control, pesticides and product processing and preservation. Most farmers are not aware of the enormous opportunities available in the globalised market to sell farm products such as yam, cassava, vegetables, okro and melon among others. The business reporters are expected to educate them on how to package the products for exportation to European and American markets at profitable rate.

Besides, lack of funding has also been identified as impediment to most people venturing into such businesses; thus, through business reporting potential farmers can be encouraged and mobilized to organize themselves into cooperative societies in order to pull their resources together and provide soft loans for members of the group. As a group, it will be easier to approach government micro-finance banks for agricultural loan as well as sharing skills and experiences among the cooperative members.

The media advertising ability have been discovered to possess the power that can influence and hasten quick marketing of products and services at minimal cost. It is heartrending to note that farming which is the largest employer of labour in Nigeria has not developed beyond its present primordial level apparently because of its inability to make use of the opportunities available in research and training (R&T) due to information gap between the farmers and the relevant research centres. This gap can easily be bridged if the appropriate government agency and ministry network their development and training plans and research outputs through dedicated business and economic channels accessible to the rural communities where they will be of productive use.

An economic reporter should also be smart enough to evaluate the level of success or failure Nigeria has recorded in her efforts to achieve Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) without a vibrant SMEs subsector. Nigerians deserve updates through comprehensive news analysis, insightful editorial and in-depth feature stories on the American-led economic liberalization program, African Growth and Opportunity Acts (AGOA) which was recently extended for another 10years. Reporters should be able to offer valuable economic information and trade statistics on why Nigerian SMEs operators have not benefitted maximally from globalisation like other developing nations of Asia and some other African countries such as Ghana and Kenya.

For journalists to efficiently carry out the above responsibilities, they need to transcend the level of generalist reporting. Apart from journalistic training, as a matter of fact, reporters must also possess good knowledge of business and economics, good command of the language of publication and be familiar with the register of their beats. Besides, they must be analytic, information and communication technology savvy, able to open up and maintain contacts with professionals in the field; keep diary of events and above all, write intelligibly with his reading or listening audience in view.

### **Challenges of Business and Economy Reporting**

Although Omu (1978) alludes to the significant roles that traditional media had played in Nigeria's political emancipation it is however worrisome the little time and space the media devote to the coverage of business and economic issues. One of the reasons is the economic melt-down of the last ten years coupled with the threat posed by the new media which forced many media houses to close shop even in developed nations. For instance, The State of the



News Media (2009) and Paper Cuts (2009) confirm the continuous drop in newspaper distribution rate thus leading to mass retrenchment of about 15,000 workers in year 2008. The Detroit Free Press and New York Times, two most prominent media outfits in the USA have also been affected seriously to the extent of pruning down home delivery services to thrice a week and closing down some of the subsidiaries that are considered unviable (Lendon, 2008; Pena, 2009; Sanders-Ware, 2009). In the United Kingdom also, newspapers such as Guardian and The Times were reported to have recorded about 5 and 1.57 percent drop respectively of their circulation run in one year (World Press Trend, 2008). The picture in the United States and Europe suitably captures the media industry's experiences across the globe. In Nigeria especially, the harsh reality of economic melt-down has considerably changed the general outlook of media industry thus reflecting high debt profile in unpaid workers' salaries, downsizing and significant drop in circulation and in some severe cases, complete closure have resulted. Under this condition, each outfit adopts various methods to bail itself out of this economic predicament. Some media proprietors became card carrying members of political parties and therefore turned their media outfits to party megaphones; while some others changed the editorial focus by concentrating more on entertainment, human interest stories, reporting of show business and celebrities, thus constricting the coverage of hard news about important business and economic matters.

Another possible explanation for low prominence given to business and economy is what authorities of mass media referred to as error of news judgment due to lack of professional competence (Akinfeleye, 2011). According to Scruton (1982) cited in Owolabi and Okafo (2011), acquisition of learning or training is a precondition for entry into any profession, journalism inclusive. However, it is a common practice in Nigeria as in some other nations to find a large number of people working in the media industry who did not train as journalist. Unlike other professions where they have pre-requisite qualification before anybody can practice, journalism allows everybody who has flare for writing to answer the name journalist.

It becomes a matter made worse when those who were supposed to be experienced due to long years of training on the job abandoned the profession in search of greener pastures in other ancillary fields such as advertising, public relations and marketing communication. It is therefore not surprising to see young people becoming Editor after two years of reportorial experience. The concern is how such editors perform in grading news into very important, important and less important. The fear is confirmed when important economic and business stories like SMEs development, power and energy crises that affect more than 70% of the nation's population are either dropped for birthday photo splash of a political stalwart or are hidden in obscure corners of the newspaper or magazine. Surprisingly, this development is not peculiar to the print media; broadcast media also experience such unprofessional practices. There was an occasion when an enlightenment program intended to educate farmers on the use of crop rotation as a way of replenishing the used soil fertility was wrongly

aired in Kaduna State radio station. The question of many who listened to the program was which Director of program authorized the airing of such informative program at 10a.m when most farmers would have gone to the farm. Professional competence should have dictated that such program was better aired in the evening when farmers would have returned from farm and be at home to listen.

To communicate business and economy messages in a nation like Nigeria, it has been argued that the traditional mass media, print (newspapers and magazines) and electronic (radio and television) may not achieve much because of Nigeria's multi-ethnic and multi-lingual make-up (Owolabi & O'Neill, 2013b, 2014). For example, the print media is elitist in culture and content and as such may not make as much impact among the illiterate rural audiences that constitute about 57% of the populations unless they are printed in the indigenous language. The pertinent question is how many of Nigeria's 250+ languages are the media able to publish in. The same goes for television and radio which experience the limitation of non-existent or erratic electricity supply in the rural community where about 70% of the people live. It must be said that radio appears to be the most efficient in carrying development news than other media because it is more affordable and accessible to the masses and there are cheap mobile communication devices with in-built transistor radio through which listeners can receive and communicate messages at minimal cost. But radio also has its shortcoming in that it cannot broadcast in all the languages and dialects. This is why Lanahun (2003) and Akinleye (2003) argue that when disseminating development messages, communicators may have to use a combination of both mass media and other media to achieve considerable effects.

### **Between New and Conventional Media: Recurring Issues in Business Reporting**

The media world has experienced a paradigm shift as the pace and the ease with which the neglected populace access information, express their opinion, share ideas and receive feedback are fast changing with the advent of internet and satellite technologies. The new media such as internet, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Orkut, Ohm News, Ted.com, blog among others combine the features of immediacy, interactivity, adaptability, portability and convergence that make possible on-demand access to information anytime and anywhere on any digital device (Morah and Uzochukwu, 2012).

New media open up the opportunity to connect, inform and mobilize the citizens for active participation in productive economic activities that can foster community development. New media with its wide network allows the grassroots activists and the civil societies to interact with development agencies across the globe on how to proffer practical solutions to issues of poverty and underdevelopment. Conventional mass media today have become big multinational business and most times they behave like other businesses with profit making as the prime consideration at the expense of their social responsibility to the society. The new media do not only play watchdog roles on the government and the business class



but also on the traditional media whenever they behave unprofessionally.

Despite the ubiquitous nature of the new media, their news and information oftentimes are less reliable than the traditional media for what Oboh (2012) describes as deficit in depth of investigation and interpretation of issues while the style of reporting also falls short of known ethical standard of journalism such as objectivity, accuracy and fairness, respect for privacy of individuals, eschewal of abusive language and blackmail of perceived enemies. This unprofessional display is widespread in the new media because unlike in the traditional media where journalists are expected to have received formal training and obtained certification from a recognised school of communication or journalism before being employed to practice, social media users need no special training and no ethical principles to follow in communicating through the new media.

Besides, the advent of the new media has also reduced the unprofessional interference of different interest groups (proprietors and advertisers) in the editorial contents and focus of the media. This is because any unworthy news material forced on the reporters and editors can be countered using the social media platform. In the same way newsworthy materials that are suppressed as a result of ownership interference can find a place in the social media.

The issue of news beat associations has for some time constituted a subject of controversy among media professionals. The reporters and those who believe in the charter of the group are of the opinion that the association engenders professionalism by allowing members to exchange ideas, socialise and assist needy members. However, those who think otherwise perceive the group as “mafia” in journalism regalia. According to Alake (1996), members of news beat association are rebels who easily conspire together to kill important story on the basis of cash and carry. A reporter who belongs to the association and attempts to play solo by disagreeing with the groups' opinion stands to be persecuted by others. In the new media age, apart from the civil society groups that collaborate to fight a common cause using the social media platform, individuals also enjoy unrestricted rights to communicate and receive information through any personal electronic device without being coerced into any professional association.

Germane to the above is the discovery that the traditional mass media appear to be concentrated in the hands of the ruling elites and boardroom governors to the exclusion of the less privileged who constitute a significant percentage of Nigeria's population (Akinleye and Ojebode, 2004). The advent of new media therefore provides alternative channels of communication to democratize information distribution and consumption among the neglected rural populace.

The new media are also observed to play ambivalent roles in a modern society in that they have unintended potential to foster and discourage development depending on how and for

what purpose they are used. The geographic positioning system GPS and the global system for mobile communication (GSM) are used by the military, aviation and individuals to communicate and to monitor the movement of land and air fleets. Incidentally, the same are being used by armed robbers, kidnappers and other terrorist gangs to coordinate their nefarious activities in the community and to keep track of police and security personnel movement. . On the whole, this section has revealed that both the new and traditional media have positive and negative sides.

### **Business Reporting and Women Empowerment**

The world population estimated at about 6.9 billion has about 1.3 billion poor people out of which 60 percent are women (UNDP, 2011). Nigeria has an estimated population of about 162.5 million, out of which 80.2 million (49%) are women and girls of whom no fewer than 52.6 million (60%) live in the rural communities where they constitute unskilled labour force in every economic sector (British Council, 2012). In most developing nations particularly Nigeria, women and girl-children experience biting poverty, gross inequality, molestation and injustice which oftentimes run from birth till death. Nigeria's development indicator also shows that women are at the lowest rung of the social and economic ladder and are most susceptible in times of crises; they are deficient in skills that can properly position them to participate in and benefit from the windows of opportunity available in micro, small and medium scale enterprises which are believed to be the engine of economic growth and prosperity. The deficiencies therefore, place them at a disadvantaged position to contribute to sustainable development (Owolabi and O'Neill, 2013b, 2014).

Development information being propagated have marginal benefits to Nigerians because the information is not tailored to Nigerians and the marginalized women groups are not empowered to properly understand and make good use of it. Besides, the feminine gender is few among the reporting crew. Therefore, empowering women for sustainable development entails mainstreaming women empowerment issues through the communication media. This involves educating and enlightening them on the windows of business opportunity available in MSMEs especially in this era of globalisation and liberalised trade.

Lack of funds and land has been discovered to constitute serious obstacles to the participation of Nigerian women in profitable commercial ventures. It is the responsibility of the media to educate them on how to source funds and acquire land to start new business and to recapitalise existing business. There were pseudo entrepreneurs who through connection secured funding for business but diverted the money to an unintended project while legitimate business women were denied; the media owe the public explanation on how the deal was perfected and who aided the dubious transaction. This transcends the level of traditional reporting to the realm of development journalism that makes investigative reporting its working technique. The conventional media in Nigeria appear to

be good at instant reporting of an event but somehow deficient at doing follow up reports to bring out news from news. For instance, the front page of most Nigerian media were awash with different captivating headlines on Tuesday, August 21, 2001 applauding the decisions of the Bankers' Committee in conjunction with the Federal Government of Nigeria to set aside 10 percent of their profits after tax as loans for SME's development in Nigeria. As good as this sounded, the media with eyes of development should have its focus on the long term development process as against one off news reports without a follow up. This is why development journalism is believed to be tied to the agenda-setting theory which demands that journalists should pursue development plan by focusing on critical inquiry and evaluation of development projects.

It has however been argued that because the conventional media are concentrated in the hands of few elites and mostly male gender, they are not used for the benefit of the poor and particularly women. The democratisation of the media through the social media with its large network and wide reach facilitates quick dissemination of business and economic information and instantaneous feedback. Diverse grassroots women organisations now have access to the social media platform to fight every form of cultural and religious discrimination against women, defend the rights of women to education, campaign for maternal health care improvement and provoke women empowerment for active involvement in business and economic activities. The new media, apart from building confidence in women (professional and non-professional) and raising their levels of business and economic awareness also have the responsibility of influencing women behaviours, transforming their attitudes, and changing retrogressive culture and tradition that portray them as inferior to men (FAO, 2006). The new media as community media according to Oboh, (2012) are imbued with immense ability to raise an army of public journalists who play active roles in news gathering, processing and free dissemination through social networking, media-sharing websites and other mobile communication devices.

### **Imperativeness of Business and Economic Reporting for National Development**

With several million acres of arable land, 38.5 billion barrels of oil and gas reserves, a variety of unexploited solid mineral deposit, a wealth of human capital (Oteh, 2009), Nigeria ought to be among the twenty leading economies in the world but surprisingly, statistics showed that it is ranked among the top three countries in the world where the level of poverty is still unreasonably high. Since her independence in 1960, there have been several unsuccessful attempts to reposition the economy through diverse development plans. Within the last one decade, it has also made some failed attempts to achieve the United Nations stipulated MDGs which mandated member nations to halve the poverty level. Some challenges however have been identified as contending with national development efforts. Key among these include corruption and infrastructural deficit ( Mambula, 2002; Ubom, 2006; Ojeka, 2011).

Corruption has been identified as the underlying factor responsible for infrastructural deficit and other economic problems in Nigeria. It cripples not only businesses and economy but has almost systematically reduced Nigeria to a state which, though it is the sixth largest oil producing nation in the world with exporting capacity of about two million barrel per day, surprisingly imports fuel for its local consumption. Corruption has wrecked the four refineries built by the government; thus, the country is unable to produce enough to meet local consumption requirements, not to talk of having extra to sell to the neighbouring nations that are looking up to her for supply. Infrastructures such as electricity, telecommunication, transport (road, water, rail network) are known catalysts for economic growth; but are moribund due to fraudulent practices among those who are supposed to man them. For more than twenty years, Nigerians and indeed the business communities have had to privately provide needed infrastructure at enormous cost as the government all over the states have tactically abdicated their responsibilities of providing them. The cost of providing these services, apart from other costs to be borne by entrepreneurs is prohibitive and these evidently make running businesses in Nigeria financially burdensome. This is also the reason why manufacturing companies are relocating from Nigeria to neighbouring Ghana where the infrastructures are comparatively efficient (Fatai, 2011). It is no exaggeration that an industry that fuels economic flight and signposts such huge challenges will hardly contribute to development. This, according to Mambula (2002), explains why Nigerian entrepreneurs are unable to take full advantage of the African growth and opportunity act (AGOA) to participate actively in the globalised free market.

Contemporary development experts have however reasoned that poverty, underdevelopment and infrastructural deficit as is the case in Nigeria are the general outcome of bad governance (World Bank, 2003). The British Council (2008) defines governance as a process whereby elements in the society wield power, authority and influence while enacting policies and decisions concerning the public life and socio-economic improvement of the state. The prolonged 28 years of military rule and the intermittent civilian administration characterised by epidemic thievery of public fund, ill-conceived policy and political instability have crippled the government apparatus and reversed all the post-independent economic and development gains (Igbatayo and Igbinedion, 2008).

For a government to exercise its authority and control to foster development and poverty reduction there has to be the means of information sharing between the government and the citizens. This is where the media become relevant as information carrier and watchdog. The media watchdog role involves making the business of government more transparent; stimulating debate on public issues thereby creating understanding of the policies and programs of the government, encouraging the people to participate in the political process; providing surveillance and checkmating corrupt practices, abuse of power and violation of the social contract and most importantly, holding members of the political class more

accountable (Azekome, 2008; Meijer, 2010). This will entail digging out every dirty deal of the government and all devious contracts among the boardroom governors; thus, curtailing the huge financial wastages that usually result and making finances available for development purposes.

According to Omojola (2011), the media can only contribute to socio-economic and political development if among other things it is accessible for use by everybody regardless of social status; if its content is consistent with societal transformation and if it affects the attitudes and dispositions of the public towards accepting modern ideas, methods and products. This presupposes that before the audience can accept the media as performing its statutory functions they must have ease of access to it. This is one downside of the conventional media which the launch of new media seeks to salvage.

In Nigeria, the use of social media has expanded phenomenally within the last decade. For instance, the number of internet users has incredibly increased from less than 150,000 in 2000 to about 48 million, while Facebook users has increased to about 11 million as at 2014 (World Bank 2015). In today's information society, everybody everywhere has become 'public journalist' and is free to receive and transmit information using mobile devices. The new media era thus makes business reporting a lot easier for editors and reporters who attempt to carry out detailed investigation and instantaneous reporting without interference using the social media platform.

## **Conclusion**

Business and economic reporting that will guarantee poverty reduction and national development is a task that could be accomplished using the media. In the perspective of this paper, both traditional and new media are both relevant in carrying development messages. However, both are perceived to be unable to effectively convey development information to the grassroots where majority are women. It is also a fact that due to certain identified constraints, traditional media in particular are concentrated in the hands of few rich power brokers to the disadvantage of the larger population of the poor who need information to make informed decisions and to exercise their freedom of expression, especially on development matters. The advent of new media has thus bridged the gap by democratising media usage. In conclusion, for business and economic information to be effectively and evenly disseminated so as to stimulate development, there must be active collaboration of the media (traditional and new) with the government and the business community

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