

TITLE OF THE INAUGURAL LECTURE: IN SEARCH OF MUTED VOICES FOR THE MIRAGE NAMED DEVELOPMENT

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OVERVIEW OF THE LECTURE

Since independence, Nigeria has developed and adopted at least five long-term development plans and numerous short- to medium-term development policies and visions. It has also been a signatory to many global development efforts such as the Sustainable Development Goals. However, Nigeria's development indices and assessments attest to its poor performances at different levels and aspects. At the conceptual, practical and experiential levels, accelerating development appears to be like chasing a mirage. Development in Nigeria would take a concrete shape when the people for whom it is meant are at the centre of defining, planning, executing and evaluating it. This would require that the citizens themselves in their communities have both voice and agency. A basic necessity for voice and agency is a media system that bears allegiance to the people in their communities rather than to government or commercial owners and media entrepreneurs. Only such a media system can amplify the authentic voices of the people. My studies show that the conventional mass media in their present configuration and structure do not and cannot perform this role. Rather than empowering citizens to be active agents in the development process, mass media rather mute their voices. Social media as well are not the ultimate liberators of the muted voices of citizens. My advocacy for community radio, in partnership with like-minded people, show that community radio holds the answer to empowering communities to be active in accelerating development in many ways. It is, therefore, important to promote the development of this new entrant into the Nigerian media system.