

A Presentation by Waziri Adio, Executive Director of Agora Policy

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Public policies are critical tools for:

Addressing societal needs /problems

Allocating scarce resources

Translating government priorities into actions Shaping social outcomes

Public Policy Process



Challenges of Policy Making

Lack of clarity

Based on whims and fancies

Limited Consultation

Capacity and implementation gaps

Lack of regular reviews

Captured by vested interested

Policy contradictions and discontinuities



Influence of the media on public policies

- Widely known as 4th Estate of the Realm
- Serves as bridge between policy actors and citizens
- Shapes policy priorities, design, implementation and perception

Theoretical Foundation

Agendasetting theory

> Social responsibility theory

Structural transformation of public sphere 66

Two popular quotes "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate to prefer the later." – Thomas Jefferson

"The press may not be successful most of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling them what to think about."

- Bernard Cohen

Constitutional Obligation



Section 22 of 1999 Constitution of Nigeria:

"The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people."

A stocktake of the performance of the press



Press wields enormous power/influence and saddled with enormous responsibilities.



Has done very well given constraints



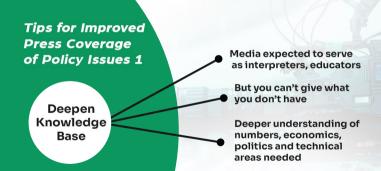
But more effective in fighting colonialism/military dictatorship, uncovering corruption and reporting politics/elections than in covering governance/public policy issues



Policy coverage sometimes one-off, sensational, and superficial



Some of these due to historical and structural issues



Tips for Improved Press Coverage of Policy Issues 2

Be openminded and evidencedriven Rely less on ideologies/ received wisdom

Be obsessed with evidence

Tips for Improved Press Coverage of Policy Issues 3

Stay the course

 Public policy more of a marathon than a sprint

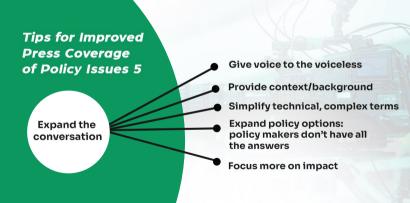
Focus on all stages of the policy process Tips for Improved Press Coverage of Policy Issues 4

Ask questions

Go beyond official lines or fixation on conflicts

Ask tough questions about intended goals, target beneficiaries, trade-offs, unintended consequences, costs/funding etc

 Scrutinise claims by officials and opposition, not just parrot them







In summary:

Do more of great journalism on an oft-neglected but most critical aspect of democracy, governance and human development.

