



ADVOCACY FOR MINORITIES IN AFRICA: ISSUES AND LESSONS IN ADVANCING THE RIGHTS OF ALBINOS IN TANZANIA AND OSUS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Based on its instrumental role, advocacy is recognised as a strategy for influencing policies, programmes, strategies and social practices in development programming. This is why several advocacy campaigns are organised to influence key individuals or institutions in order to effect changes in instruments of social and political governance. However, questions have been raised on its effectiveness in ensuring continual public attention to minority populations and for achieving enduring social change for peripheral issues outside of the mainstream of policy and social discourse. Using a case study methodology, the study identifies a host of direct and indirect advocacy tactics implemented to influence public discourse and broader social change towards two minority groups; Albinos in Tanzania and Osus in Nigeria. The study demonstrates that the utilization of multiple advocacy techniques contributed to influencing public opinion and symbolic actions of specific decision makers in the two countries. Nevertheless, both minority groups are confronted with a combination of deep-seated social beliefs, superstitions and public misconceptions which fuel the violation of their rights. The paper argues that sustainable promotion of their rights would require a coordinated social change response, not just episodic actions and sporadic outcry to incidence of their rights violation.

Key words: Advocacy, Social Influence, Human Rights, Osus, Albinos

Introduction

Africa is home to a multiplicity of minority groups with different historical and political origins. While there is no consensus on the definition of minorities, several perspectives have been offered which provide a conceptual understanding of their profile. The Minority Rights Group International (2010: p.5) opines that minorities are an ethnic, religious or linguistic group, fewer in number than the rest of the population and whose members share a common identity. This is consistent with the view of specialists in human rights who agree that minorities are a numerically limited number of people within a community or country and who possess peculiar characteristics (such as gender, race, political affiliation, religion, language, physical or genetic features, or sexual orientation) that predispose them to unequal

treatment or necessitate special attention (Kane 2008). Based on these characterizations, the two population group which form the basis of our case study, people with albinism in Tanzania (pejoratively called albinos) and Osus in Nigeria, qualify as minority populations.

Universal human rights principles underline the need for the rights of all populations to be promoted, respected and protected (Kane, 2008, United Nations, 2010). Some of the human rights instruments that enshrine the respect and protection of the rights of all populations, including minorities from violation are the Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1948, the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, the Africa Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights 1986, and United Nations Minorities Declaration, 1992.

In the reality however, there is abundant evidence that the rights of minority populations are violated in many countries and in different settings. Such violations include stigma and discrimination, outright abuse, neglect and exploitation, targeted attacks and murder. Examining the ramification of the violation of minority rights in Africa, a special report by UN humanitarian news agency, (IRIN 2006, p.10) stated that indigenous people and minorities are facing a 'global and historic assault'. The report maintains that minority populations in Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, and DRC are either discriminated against or unable to be fully integrated into the political process of the countries. In another study, Kane (2008, p.20) characterises some of the violations as marginalisation, social exclusion, persistent discrimination, or being in a state of subordination, which justify the need for special protection.

The United Nations Minorities Declaration adopted over 20 years stipulates that rights of minorities need to be protected and promoted, but as already demonstrated these populations are still subject to a variety of rights violation. It is recognised that issues affecting minority population require a higher level of public attention (United Nations, 2012, 2010), but evidence from issue attention dynamics suggest that most social issues suffer from neglect and lack of public attention (Down, 1972, Schindlamayr, 2001, Hilgatrtner and Bosk, 1988). Therefore, attracting public and media attention to the problems of minorities needs to be situated in a wider context of issue attention framework because of the wavering nature of public attention to social problems. Among others, Fayoyin (2014, p. 10) and Shiffman (2007, p. 769) have argued that the likelihood that social issues will elicit public and political response depends on a combination of factors which involve coordinated advocacy strategies by committed individuals and institutions.

From the foregoing, the study explores the advocacy strategies deployed by activists to advance minority rights in Africa. Using Albinos in Tanzania and Osus in Nigeria as case studies, the study raises questions on the effectiveness of advocacy in positioning minority rights and changing the predisposing norms and cultural practices which fuel some of the rights violations that the populations suffer in the society. Our analysis shows that advocacy is central to achieving social justice and cultural change, however, the extent to which it is able to push, press and persuade various publics to achieve necessary systemic and institutional change to ensure the rights of such minority populations is still a major challenge. The study discusses major cross cutting propositions with potential implications for improving the practice of advocacy campaigns.

Conceptual context

Advocacy is as a strategy for raising the profile of social issues, influencing policies and promoting social change. There is considerable consensus among scholars and development agencies on its instrumental and utilitarian role in social development. For example, McKee, Betrand, & Becker-Benton (2004) posit that advocacy entails the organization of information into argument to be communicated through various interpersonal and media channels to gain political support and social leadership for a particular social issue. Calisle (2000) and Hudson (2002) argue that advocacy is expected

to achieve results relating to social justice, reducing inequities and entrenching social transformation. The conclusions are in agreement with the analysis from multiple case studies carried out by Cohen, de la Vega & Watson (2001) on how international NGOs have used advocacy to address service provision, structural determinants of rights violation and ultimately social influence. Other writers, Samuel (2011), Klugman (2011), and Kingma & Sweetman (2005) have established the overarching function of advocacy as involving social justice and social change for ultimate public good.

Likewise, aid agencies such as UNAIDS, UNICEF, and Save the Children agree that advocacy is central to realizing diverse development outcomes including influencing policies, changing beliefs, modifying attitudes and motivating public support of different decision makers. This is their premise for designing and implementing a fleet of advocacy campaigns and mobilisation programmes to influence key individuals or institutions to elicit changes in policies, programmes, positions, decisions, strategies, and other instruments of governance.

Within the context of human rights, writers, such as Bhandari (2005) and Keck & Sikkink, (1998) have argued that human rights advocacy can contribute to positioning the special protection of different population groups in national discourse, mobilizing coalitions and networks for collective change and influencing decision makers towards fulfilling government obligations to international human rights instruments. Specifically on the issue of minority population, Kane (2008, p.46) maintains that human rights advocacy has great potential for achieving the following results:

1. Highlight a particular problem as coming under the scope of human rights;
2. Encourage State Parties to adopt a particular regime of promotion and protection of these rights;
3. Engage State Parties to give effect to the undertakings made under a treaty;
4. Cast light on specific or systematic breaches of human rights;
5. Sensitise public opinion on the realities of human rights violation(s);
6. Educate and inform the population on the content of these treaties and the legal obligations of State Parties; and
7. Obtain reparation for damages caused by any violation(s).

However, questions have been raised on the effectiveness of advocacy in achieving desired social and political outcomes. For example, Fayoyin (2013, p.184) noted that the practice of advocacy is fraught with several weaknesses that affect its effectiveness in realising development goals and objectives. The author identifies ten weaknesses of advocacy interventions as: lack of strategic approach, difficulty of development contexts, weak evidence-base for advocacy programmes, ineffective communication/positioning of issues, lack of focus, clarity and clear direction on what to achieve, inadequate strategic engagement, poor resourcing of advocacy function, weak leadership from advocates at individual and institutional levels, poor advocacy skills, and lack of creativity in advocacy programmes. These weaknesses are compatible with those earlier identified by Rugendyke (2007) who investigated international advocacy function in relation to global development of policies and practices for poverty reduction and concluded that many advocacy programmes are ineffective and suffered from misguided development strategies, among others weaknesses. In another study, Edward (1993) characterised the performance of NGO advocacy as disappointing due to lack of a clear strategy, failure to build alliances, failure to develop alternatives to current orthodoxies and funding emasculation by donors.

Despite the weaknesses of advocacy in social development and human rights, we argue that when designed and implemented strategically, advocacy is pivotal to advancing minority rights. Without intense advocacy and social mobilisation, it would be difficult to assure the fundamental rights of minority groups.

Methodology

The study adopted the case study approach. Essentially, a case study is detailed investigation of a complex issue with the aim of getting a comprehensive insight into the ramification of the issues in its context for broader lesson learning for the larger environment. Yin (2007, p. 13) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident”. However, case studies are not without their limitations, associated with issues reliability of tools, objectivity of approach, difficulty of summarising data and generalizability of findings. The study undertook secondary data analysis as the main source of information. Several documents including national reports, project documents, media analysis, government’s statements, and NGO reports were analysed to identify the advocacy tactics used to promote the two issues. Most of the documents were accessed from the open internet and the websites of various agencies working on the issues and from archival documents. The use of one technique of data gathering may be considered as a limitation of this design. Therefore, further studies that adopt a more robust research design based on the principle of data triangulation will be needed.

Case study: Advocacy for Albinos in Tanzania

Albinism is the organic and congenital deficiency in skin pigmentation which results in milky or translucent skin colouring. It is an inherited genetic condition that reduces the amount of melanin pigment formed in the skin, hair and or eyes. The population of albinos in Tanzania is estimated at 170,000 people. However, they are subjected to manifold rights violation, prejudice and stigma. From 2006 to 2008, the national and international media reported several incidents of killings, hacking, and maiming of albinos in the country. The killings of albinos are rooted in myths and witchcraft practices that albinos could bring success for traders or business people. In general the problem faced by people with albinism is both medical and psycho-social and advocacy is fundamental to the agenda for change. As a result, several social influence approaches have been implemented to promote their rights.

Documentation and use of evidence

The International Federation of Red Cross/Red Crescent in Tanzania published an advocacy report “*Through Albino Eyes*” which provided a qualitative perspective on the plight of albinos in East Africa. The report stated that at least 10,000 people with albinism were unable to trade, study, and cultivate their land for fear of hunters hired by witch doctors and big money traders to look for body parts for witchcraft. Reports from other NGOs contained stories of specific issues, cases, events, or situations that affect albinos in the country. In 2006 there were 25 reported cases, in 2007 there were 20 cases and in 2008 there were 35 cases. Aid agencies report that in 2008, 60 children with albinism were abandoned by their parents in their schools following reports of resurgence of attacks on the albino community. While there was a lull in the attacks between 2009 and 2012, albinos experienced a new wave of attacks in 2013 in various communities. The UN Commission for Human Rights also documented cases of rights violation of people with albinism and submitted to the UN. The documentations of cases of rights violation has been asource of public information, media sensitization and community mobilization. The reports were also used as tools for policy dialogue and public discourse. In addition,they were used by advocates for garnering international support.

Public awareness campaigns

Several agencies carried out public awareness campaigns on the need to promote the rights of albinos in the country. The Tanzania Albino Society (TAS) coordinated initiatives to highlight the plight of albinos and called for public support for their protection in national and international discourse. The Tanzania Red

Cross Society also initiated public enlightenment programmes targeting key influentials to plead for public attention to the plight of albinos. Public outreaches for awareness raising including football matches between MPs and Albinos helped to highlight their key messages. A soccer team of albinos (called Albino Magic) played with the team from the Parliament which provided an opportunity for public discussion on the challenge of protecting the rights of albinos. Local affiliates of a global NGO, *Albinism Worldwide* also mounted public campaigns including community discussions and distribution of information materials.

Organised protests by albino community

Protests marches were organised by different advocacy groups and the albino community. Organizations working for the protection of people with albinism in the country supported the “protests by albinos for albinos” to galvanise public outcries and action for their cause. For example, following incidents of killings of albinos, public demonstrations were carried out at the national and provincial levels. Written statements containing their protest messages were circulated to decision makers, including the President and Members of Parliaments. Individuals with albinism were used as advocates of their rights. Albinos occupying influential positions in the country, such as nominated and elected MPs, highlighted the predicament of their group. Testimonials from people with albinism were intended to enhance the voice of the affected population in national discourse of the issue.

Media coverage of incidents of albino killing

Through series of media advocacy efforts by aid agencies and civil society organisations, incidence of rights violation against albinos in Tanzania and the entire sub-region attracted national and international media coverage. Foreign media such as AFP, BBC, New York Times, and Reuters covered the story of the murder of albinos in the country with gory and gruesome details. Furthermore, both national and international media undertook some investigative reports of human rights abuses against albinos through a “telling the story” genre. Human interest stories were used to accentuate the impact of the rights violation and the need for protective action. Coverage by international media assisted in generating international pressure on the government and other decision makers. Social media became a tool of public engagement, particularly for connecting albinos worldwide. A number of influential bloggers also featured stories on the killings of albino on their blogs. Overall, media advocacy assisted in highlighting and attracting attention to the issue of rights violations of albinos at the national and international levels.

Engagement with community leaders and traditional healers

To influence the attitude of community leaders and leverage supportive community action for albinos, development agencies conducted targeted community-level advocacy and social mobilisation to elevate the protection and public support of people with albinism. This was based on the premise that community and cultural leaders set norms and social standards at the community level. The various community advocacy initiatives included community outreaches, action-oriented dialogue, community education and consultations, aimed at addressing the myths and misinformation around albinos. The engagement with traditional healers also focussed on exploring alternative sources of livelihood intended to divert their attention from actions that could endanger the lives of albinos.

International pressure

International institutions, groups and networks applied pressure on the Tanzanian government and other countries in East Africa to condemn the incidence of rights violation and to accelerate response for the special protection of people living albinism. Examples of international pressure on the country between 2008 and 2013 comprise the following:

- Recommendation by Human Rights Council that States should adopt measures to protect and preserve the rights of people with albinism and ensure access to adequate programmatic response for their wellbeing.
- Call by the UN panel of independent experts for Tanzania to address incidence of discrimination against persons with albinism.
- Plea by UN experts' panel on African countries to protect hundreds of minority groups on the continent.
- Condemnation of attacks against albinos in the country and appeal by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights for protection of people with albinism.
- The US Congress passed a bill (Albinism and East Africa Atrocities) which called on governments in East Africa to do more for the protection of albinos.
- Condemnation of attacks by the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon and call on the Tanzania government to protect the rights of people with albinism.
- The European Union passed a Resolution on the killing of albinos in Tanzania. The resolution considered the killing as a violation of human rights and urged the Tanzania government to take more actions to protect the safety of albinos.
- Plea by UNICEF urging special protection for children with albinism.

The various advocacy and social influence interventions resulted in the following outcomes:

- Public condemnation of incidence of rights violation by the President and other government decision makers.
- Action by the Police to arrest perpetrators of rights violation.
- Provision of special services including skin cancer care by NGOs.
- Promotion of indoor employment for some albinos; and
- Legislation which criminalised killing of people with albinism as a capital offence.

Case study: Advocacy for Osus in Nigeria

Osu is a caste system in south eastern Nigeria, primarily in Igboland. It is estimated that 2 million out of the nearly 16 million population of the region are affected. According to Nwosu (2002), the practice has religious underpinnings within the Igbo culture and pre-dates the advent of Christianity in the country. From a historical viewpoint, Osus are individuals dedicated to gods and deities and therefore "should not be touched". They are believed to be 'owned by the Gods' and only live around the shrines and market areas. Initially, their roles as 'servants' of deities accorded them "respect and dignity" but this changed to de facto ostracism from which escape is extremely or impossible" (Nwosu 2002. p. 4).

There are ample records of rights violation suffered by the Osus. Dike (2008, p.3) argues that the practice is a discriminatory caste system, which hinders free association between the Osus and non-osus and creates a class distinction in which osus are regarded as second-class citizens. Osus also suffer stereotypes and racial discrimination and are exposed to public ridicule, treated with contempt and entire community subjected to perpetual social misery. Inter-marriage between Osus and the "free born" is considered as taboo. Therefore, Osus are expected to marry within themselves and when they die, they are to be buried in separate cemeteries. The government of eastern Nigeria outlawed the practice through the Osu Abolition Act of 1956, but the practice is still prevalent in the region as no individual has been prosecuted despite the continuous practice.

Speaking up through literary arts

One of the foremost indirect public advocacy tools to stimulate social discourse and awareness raising on Osus is the use of literature and literary arts. In several literary works by Igbo writers, themes around the

plight and challenges of Osus are raised. For example, a novel **No Longer at Ease** by Chinua Achebe, provides a powerful insight on the bedrock of Osu as based on 'ignorance' of the forefathers who created the practice. Another prominent novel, **Echoes from Igbo Culture** contains similar themes on the predicament of Osus. The novels highlight some of the discriminatory practices against Osus, such as not able to marry non-osus, not able to hold chieftaincy titles in their area, and not able to hold political office. The use of literary arts has served as a platform for a philosophical inquiry and intellectual dialogue on the practice. In more recent times, the home entertainment video industry has become a platform for articulating the plight and rights of Osus. According to key informants in the industry, as many as 10 Nollywood full length stories have focused on challenges faced by the groups in the society. Based on the entertainment and education approach, the movies confront the stereotypes against Osus and advocate for the protection of their rights. One of movies **Fear of the Unknown** promotes marriage between an Osu and a free born contrary to established practice which forbids marriage between the two.

Media mobilization

The mass media have also been used to disseminate information on the challenges faced by osus in the country. Several stories which focus on the history, impact on specific individuals and the larger population in support of Osus have been published in the media. In more recent times, the new media has become a platform for discussing the rights of osus. Blogs and websites of NGOs working on the subject have also featured a variety of information on the practice. Osus have used the opportunity of anonymity provided by internet to speak out on the practice. All these have contributed to episodic promotion of the rights of osus in public and private discourse.

Targeted NGO advocacy

Several local and national civil society organisations implemented activities to influence decision makers and the public to abandon the practice. The National Humanist Movement (NHM) is one of the NGOs in the forefront of the anti-osu advocacy campaign. The NHM organized a national conference on "Osu Caste System and Untouchability in Nigeria". The main objectives were to identify contemporary manifestations of caste discrimination, identify concrete measure for addressing them, and galvanizing caste victim into action in order to fight for their rights. The activities included anti-Osu protest march which focused on stopping the practice and distribution of information materials on the scope and impact in the society. The NGO also engaged the intellectual community in Igboland to rethink the underpinnings of osu system and re-strategize how to stop the practice. Local NGOs, such as the Constitutional Rights Project and Civil Liberties Organisations have carried out advocacy efforts to influence the public. Advocacy tactics adopted by NGOs include targeted information dissemination and grassroots mobilisation. The Shadow Report on the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, (CERD) by NGOs also underscored the need for action by the Nigerian government to address the weak legal and constitutional framework of protecting the human rights of osus, as well as the social and political consequences of the practice.

International pressure

One of the obligations of Nigeria to international conventions is regular reporting on human rights treaties. Based on advocacy and pressure from national and international institutions, the Concluding Observations from the Committee expressed concerns about the persistent allegations that members of the Osu are still subjected to social exclusion, segregation and mistreatment, as well as discrimination in employment and marriage. At the World Conference on Racism in Durban, a case study on the practice of Osus was presented which examined the impact and implications of the practice. The various transnational advocacy mechanisms have served as an avenue for international discussion on the practice, thus providing additional international pressure on Nigeria towards its eradication.

Results

Based on the advocacy efforts outlined above, the campaign to advance the rights osus has achieved the following results:

- Some communities and traditional rulers have abolished the practice in their domains. In 2010 The Igbo-Ukwu Town of Aguata local government Area in Anambra State abolished the osu caste system and the marriage probation in the town. Also in 2006, Igwe Orizu III abolished Osu practice in Nnewi.
- The rights of Osu have been raised through social media and mainstream media. The entertainment industry (Nollywood) has also mounted campaign against the practice.
- The issue has received international attention, with pressure being put on the Nigerian authorities for protective action for the group.

Discussion

Several issues and lessons may be highlighted from the two case studies for human rights advocacy. However, five cross cutting propositions, which have wider implications for the practice of advocacy are discussed.

- Advocacy to promote minority rights requires the deployment of multiple tactics, however their effectiveness depends on the application of coordinated change approach.*

The cases have shown that a fleet of advocacy tactics can be deployed to influence public and policy outcomes for minority rights. Table 1 below summarises the main advocacy tactics, the target audience and results achieved.

| | <i>Issue</i> | <i>Influencers</i> | <i>Tactics/Techniques</i> | <i>Results</i> |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| 1 | Promoting the rights of people with albinism in Tanzania. | The president, Government officials (specifically The Police) MPs, media gate keepers, and traditional healers. | Evidence on the incidence of human rights abuse of albinos; public sensitization; information dissemination to the media; journalists field visits; voice of people with albinism as advocates of their rights; protest march by albinos; international pressure; regional policy engagement; and grassroots mobilisation by NGOs and development partners . | The plight of albinos is positioned on national and international agenda; arrests and prosecution of violators of human rights of albinos; pronouncement from the President in support of people with albinism. |
| 2 | Promoting the rights of Osus in Nigeria. | Community opinion leaders, religious groups, government’s decision makers in eastern Nigeria, the mass media and the intelligentsia in Igbo land. | Use of literary art to speak about osu (through literature and home entertainment video); use of mainstream media to shape public opinion; engagement of influential religious leaders; international pressure through reporting mechanisms on human rights instruments; organized campaigns by NGOs. | Key religious leaders and intelligentsia spoke against Osu practice; issue positioned in national and international agenda; some traditional chiefs in the region abolished the practice in their communities. |

Table 1: Advocacy tactics to position rights of Albinos and Osus

The tactics deployed are illustrative of the range of social influence approaches in advocacy and are part of the traditional methods of advocacy programmes to influence different audience groups (Fayoyin, 2013, Keck and Sikkink, 1998). While the array of tactics for social justice is multifaceted, it is important for advocates to weigh the appropriateness of specific tactics and the potential for achieving intended result. The study has shown that episodes of rights violation are important opportunities for reinforcing advocacy messages on specific issues in question. Nevertheless, achieving sustainable change in relation to the rights of minority populations would require more than events-based advocacy interventions occasioned by instances of rights violation. Insights from the cases demonstrate that broader social and policy change would require multiple levels of influence through coordinated change model.

While the emphasis of this paper has been on advocacy tactics, it has also recognised that other strategies of influencing different audience groups and publics are needed to achieve large-scale social change. This is because systemic change (spanning changes in belief systems, values, political legal system and programmatic response); requires a coordinated approach to change. This observation is consistent with findings from the field. Samuel (2011, p.186) argues that three levels of advocacy (political, managerial and technical) are necessary for social transformation in public and people centred advocacy.

- ii. *Persuasive communication tactics are critical for promoting results-based advocacy of minority rights issues, however the complexity of issue attention dynamics bodes significant challenge for advocates.*

Several communication approaches were adopted in promoting the issue of rights of osus and albinos. These encompass targeted public outreaches, entertainment education approach, use of literature for awareness creation, and distribution of information materials. Through various forms of media advocacy, the mass media played a critical role in positioning minority rights issues in national and international discussions. However, lessons from issue attention dynamics, instruct that the contemporary public sphere is characterised by a competition for attention on decision makers. In addition, Pratkanis and Aronson (2001, p.14) argue that the modern society operates in a message dense environment with an avalanche of attempts to influence different actors. Therefore in an age of persuasion, advocates need to customise communication approaches that would turn complex social issues into sound bites that enhance their stickiness (Heath and Heath, 2008).

Overall, effectively communication of minority issues need to prioritise strategic dialogue with various community groups in order to address beliefs systems which underpin the rights violation of the affected population. Without maximising issue attention through a variety of means, minority rights issues do not have a chance of getting into mainstream public discourse. This implies that advocates for minority rights need to ensure that their messages cut through the labyrinths of social issues that decision makers need to address. It would be important for minority rights advocates to apply lessons of effective communication such as use of human interest stories, deployment of an army of committed spokespersons, and creative use of emotion.

- iii. *Activism by affected minority groups is imperative to accentuating their issues in public discourse, but without the active support of majority populations, sustainable change would be difficult to achieve.*

In the literature on advocacy and social change, the voice of affected population has been recognised as an important element of people-based advocacy and public change (Bhandari, 2005, Fayoyin 2013, Samuel 2010). Such voices (e.g. polio victims, people living with HIV, children affected by abuse, neglect and

exploitation, cancer patients, gay and lesbians etc.) humanise social issues and eliminate the impersonal effect of cold statistics and data. Thus, using the voice of minority populations as advocates of their rights is a relevant advocacy tactic. Besides, the role of majority population in helping minority population achieve their objectives is also fundamental. For example Crano (2012, p. 95) concludes that majority population has a crucial role in achieving social justice for minority population. Therefore, the engagement of supportive coalitions of key influencers in the community is indispensable in advancing minority rights. Furthermore, in light of the influential role of intellectuals and the intelligentsia in the society, it is paramount to engage this group. As Sowell (2011, p. 522) postulates, the influence of intellectuals in policy formulation and implementation has become a major variable. These authors agree with Sowell's position because the force of ideas embodied with intellectuals is essential to shaping policies and public discourse. As the intellectual interrogation of social issues may serve as the starting point for public debate and community dialogue, essential for social change, we reason that changing entrenched social beliefs would require more than the intellectual force of intelligentsia and academics.

- iv. *Effective mobilisation of strategic networks and partners is the bedrock of advocacy for minority populations. Nevertheless, this requires sophisticated knowledge of the audience and participant groups critical to minority rights and how to engage them.*

Several writers have underscored the complexities associated with influencing public discourse and policy change and the need for better appreciation of the role of different stakeholders in the process (Adam and Kriesi 2007, p. 135, Sabatier and Weible 2007, p. 195). Therefore, without a robust strategic mobilisation of different networks, it would be impossible to achieve supportive policy support for the rights of minority population. The Minority Rights Group has over 150 organisations working in 50 countries. This is an important resource for advocates of minority rights. There are also broader organisations that work for the promotion of human rights of all citizens, and specifically for the promotion of minority rights. Thus, advocates for minority rights need to understand the mandate of relevant organisations and be able to leverage their influence. The mobilisation of various strategic networks and coalitions would contribute to advancing minority rights. Nevertheless a practical step towards realising this goal is a mapping of relevant networks to determine their interest and influence levels. Institutional support to strengthen the capacity of such networks in order to engage in a robust coalition building to promote the rights of affected population groups would be critical.

- v. *Advocacy for many local and geographically-specific issues has become global. Thus, advocates should leverage broader transnational advocacy and influence mechanisms in promoting minority rights at the local level.*

Although the challenges faced by albinos and osus are located in specific corners of the world, they have received some level of international attention. This implies that in an age of globalisation, human rights violation in remote communities may have international and global dimensions. The campaign for the protection of Osus has been linked to the larger fight for social justice in over 15 countries where caste system still affects over 250 million people. Incidence of albinos rights abuse and their killing resulted in global action and international pressure for change. It is clear that human rights advocacy transcends local and national borders. While the support of transnational advocacy groups and institutions is cardinal to mobilizing international pressure, the primary locus of change, especially with the rights of albinos and osus, is at the local level. The issue underscores the need for better understanding of the levels of influence in social change. Therefore advocates need to recognise the most important levels at which maximum impact for change is possible for promoting minority rights.

Conclusion

This study affirms that advocacy is central to achieving social justice and cultural change towards promoting the rights of people with albinism in Tanzania and Osus in Nigeria. However, the necessary systemic and institutional change to ensure the rights of such minority populations is still a major challenge. The extent to which advocacy can push, press and persuade various publics when the root causes of rights violations have not been addressed remains uncertain. This is why we support the integration of various influence strategies of which advocacy is a component. Advocacy would be at the core of such integrated framework, but other approaches of social influence such as social mobilisation, public outreaches, political education and collective behaviour change would be important. The foundation of such campaigns will be intense advocacy journalism and strong activism. Finally, advocates for minority rights also need to navigate the complex interplay of social influence dynamics involving people, power, and politics for social, policy and programmatic change in order to achieve the desired outcomes.

Recommendations and Implications for further research

1. Advocacy to promote the rights of minority populations should integrate cutting edge lessons and practices in the process of social change. Social change interventions have been carried out on various issues ranging the campaign to eradicate foot binding, slavery abolition and FGM/C abandonment. Such interventions have generated lessons which contemporary advocates can draw from and integrate into their programmes.
2. Advancing the rights of albinos and Osus requires changes at the social and political levels. Advocates need to understand the political imperative in advocacy and navigate associated elements of people, power and politics in relation to the problems at hand.
3. Continuous research on the effectiveness of advocacy is essential to assist in building an evidence-informed and pragmatic approach necessary to progressively shape its practice. Additional studies that adopt a more robust research design based on the principle of triangulation may be required.

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