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Advocacy Communication as a Tool for Curbing Flooding in Osogbo Local Government

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Abstract

Flooding in Osogbo Local Government has evolved into a recurring environmental and socio-political crisis, exacerbated by poor urban planning, inadequate drainage infrastructure, and weak institutional response. While physical mitigation measures remain essential, this conceptual paper explores the critical yet underutilised role of advocacy communication in curbing flooding and promoting public resilience. Drawing insights from 18 reviewed national and international studies, the paper demonstrates how strategic communication when participatory, culturally relevant, and media-driven can influence public behaviour, mobilise communities, and hold authorities accountable. Case studies across Nigeria, South Africa, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Australia provide evidence that the integration of traditional media, digital tools, storytelling, and coalition-building can transform environmental risk communication into an effective policy and community intervention tool. Using Participatory Communication Theory, the study positions advocacy communication as a transformative force in flood risk governance. The findings revealed the urgent need for a multidimensional advocacy framework that bridges public engagement, policy reform, and technological innovation to effectively address the flooding challenge in Osogbo and similar urban contexts.

Keywords: Advocacy Communication, Flooding, Flood Risk Management, Participatory Engagement, Environmental Governance, Media Advocacy, Policy Influence



Introduction

Flooding in Osogbo Local Government remains one of the most persistent and devastating environmental challenges in South-West Nigeria. Alimi et al. (2022) and Adegboyega et al. (2018) posed that situation is aggravated by a combination of natural and human-induced factors, including climate change, poor urban planning, ineffective waste disposal, and inadequate drainage systems. As Nwosu (2025) explains, flooding is no longer simply a weather-related issue; it is increasingly governance and communication challenge that disrupts livelihoods, damages infrastructure, and endangers public health. While physical responses to flooding such as improved drainage systems and structural barriers are crucial, they are often reactive, expensive, and limited in scope. What is frequently overlooked is the potential of strategic communication, particularly advocacy communication, to influence public attitudes, mobilise collective action, and compel government accountability in curbing flooding.

Wachinger et al. (2013) opines that research increasingly supports the notion that advocacy communication can serve as an effective intervention in managing environmental risks, including floods. Dolk and Penning-Rowsell (2021) demonstrate how advocacy coalitions, when effectively organised and well-resourced, can shape flood-related insurance and policy decisions in Australia. This model underscores the importance of coordinated, sustained messaging and stakeholder lobbying in addressing localised environmental risks. Similarly, HairiSaad et al. (2024) analyse Malaysia's implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and conclude that poor communication and stakeholder fragmentation continue to hinder flood risk planning. These international experiences mirror the gaps identified in Osogbo, where public institutions, residents, and advocacy groups often operate in silos, failing to collaboratively address the recurrent flood threats.

Adelekan and Asiyambi (2016) and Nwafor (2006) have identified the underutilisation of mass communication tools in disseminating vital information about flood preparedness and mitigation. Idowu and Lawrence (2022) conducted a study assessing the communicative effectiveness of radio stations in Ibadan and Osogbo and found that radio remains an accessible and trusted platform for disaster awareness. However, the study also pointed out that the coverage often lacks urgency, consistency, and actionable content. On a broader note, the study by Mugari et al. (2025) in South Africa illustrates the success of co-design approaches, where flood-prone communities, traditional leaders, government actors, and media professionals co-created flood risk communication strategies. These participatory models highlight the need to decentralise communication and empower local voices in building more resilient communities, a lesson that can be directly applied in Osogbo.

Mugari et al. (2025) emphasised the importance of participatory co-design in flood risk communication, noting that when communities are engaged as stakeholder's not just recipients they are more likely to respond proactively. Unfortunately, in Osogbo, most advocacy communication efforts are top-down and episodic, lacking consistency, grassroots involvement, and cultural relevance. Nwosu (2025) and Nasrullah et al. (2025) argue for the strategic use of localised languages, storytelling, and culturally rooted communication methods to improve message penetration and community buy-in, especially in vulnerable urban areas. Moreover, there is a notable disconnect between legal frameworks and communication efforts. While legal advocacy and environmental policy exist at the national level, they rarely translate into effective grassroots mobilisation. As highlighted by Dolk and Penning-Rowsell (2021), advocacy coalitions and public policy reforms can only succeed where communication strategies bridge legal discourse and community realities. In Osogbo, institutional silos between government agencies, media practitioners, and NGOs have weakened the potential of integrated advocacy.

This gap is worsened by the absence of data-driven, technology-enhanced communication strategies. The study on AI in public affairs communication (2024) reveals that innovative tools like predictive analytics



and automated messaging can improve message targeting, yet these remain largely untapped in Osun State's flood risk communication strategies. Furthermore, the lack of political will, weak inter-agency collaboration, and absence of inclusive governance structures further entrench the problem. Permana (2025) documents how political and business collusion in Indonesia undermines flood risk management despite technical knowledge being available a reality not far removed from the Osogbo experience. Similar governance gaps are evident in Malaysia (HairiSaad et al., 2024) and New Zealand (Afsari et al., 2024), where fragmented policies and insufficient public engagement lead to suboptimal disaster preparedness. Without deliberate efforts to mobilise communities, hold authorities accountable, and institutionalise communication as a core component of environmental management, flooding in Osogbo will continue to escalate in frequency, intensity, and impact.

Beyond the use of traditional media, recent advancements in artificial intelligence and digital communication tools offer exciting possibilities for environmental advocacy. The Public Affairs Communication study (2024) reveals that AI-powered tools such as chatbots, predictive analytics, and automated content generators enhance audience targeting and message personalisation in climate change campaigns. These tools have the potential to transform flood communication in Osogbo, enabling real-time alerts, interactive community engagement, and data-driven decision-making. However, as the study cautions, the adoption of such technology must be accompanied by ethical considerations and inclusive access. In a culturally diverse and infrastructurally uneven setting like Osogbo, combining digital innovation with traditional storytelling and local languages as advocated by Nasrullah et al. (2025) can ensure greater reach and relevance of flood advocacy messages.

Political and economic context within which flooding occurs must not be ignored. Permana (2025), in his analysis of flood risk management in Indonesia, shows how political corruption and private-sector collusion can undermine flood control policies, even where technical solutions exist. In the Nigerian context, weak institutional transparency and inconsistent government responses to environmental crises mirror these findings. Hence, advocacy communication must go beyond awareness creation it must also challenge the status quo, expose institutional failures, and push for structural reform. As shown by Wang and Coren (2024), storytelling that humanises the flood experience can mobilise empathy and urgency in ways that data alone cannot achieve. This underscores the transformative power of communication not just as an educational tool, but as a catalyst for environmental justice, community resilience, and sustainable governance.

Theoretical Framework

Participatory Communication Theory was primarily developed by Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and Philosopher in the 1970s and 1980s, with significant contributions from various scholars. Participatory Communication Theory serves as a fundamental framework for understanding how advocacy communication can effectively engage local communities in flood mitigation efforts, particularly in vulnerable areas like Osogbo. This theory emphasises the importance of inclusive dialogue, where community members are not merely recipients of information but active participants in the communication process. By fostering a two-way exchange of ideas, Participatory Communication Theory empowers local populations to contribute their knowledge and experiences, which are crucial for developing contextually relevant flood management strategies.

For instance, Mugari et al. (2025) illustrate how co-design approaches in South Africa enabled communities to collaboratively construct early warning systems tailored to their specific needs. This participatory model not only enhances the ownership of flood solutions but also ensures that interventions are grounded in local realities, thereby increasing their effectiveness. Furthermore, Paauw et al. (2025) argue that recognizing diverse local knowledge and social vulnerabilities is essential for creating fair and



effective flood interventions. By integrating community insights into the planning and implementation of flood mitigation strategies, Participatory Communication Theory highlights the potential for more resilient and adaptive responses to environmental challenges (Servaes, 1999).

In the context of Osogbo, where flooding poses significant risks yet remains underreported, the application of Participatory Communication Theory can lead to more informed and proactive community engagement. This approach encourages local stakeholders to voice their concerns and participate in decision-making processes, thereby fostering a sense of agency and responsibility towards flood management. As Ojo (2023) notes, strategic media advocacy can play a pivotal role in amplifying these community voices, ensuring that their experiences and needs are recognized in broader political and public agendas. By prioritizing local knowledge and facilitating collaboration among stakeholders, Participatory Communication Theory not only addresses the immediate challenges posed by flooding but also promotes long-term resilience. This multidimensional engagement can lead to more sustainable flood mitigation efforts, as communities become empowered to take charge of their safety and well-being. Ultimately, the integration of participatory approaches in advocacy communication is essential for developing effective strategies that resonate with local populations and address the unique challenges they face in managing environmental risks like urban flooding (Freire, 1970).

Method

This paper employed the desk research approach, also referred to as the library research method. Jumbo et al. (2022) asserts that this process entails seeking and locating pertinent secondary data, assessing it in relation to the subject under inquiry, and subsequently formulating and articulating one's ideas.

Literature Review

Advocacy communication refers to the strategic use of communication tools to influence public opinion, shape policy, mobilise stakeholders, and drive social or environmental change. It goes beyond mere dissemination of information by combining persuasive messaging with participatory engagement to trigger collective action. Dolk and Penning-Rowsell (2021) noted that effective advocacy often involves coalition's alliances among NGOs, legal actors, media, and civil society to amplify voices and challenge institutional inertia. In their analysis of flood insurance policy reform in Australia, they underscore how communication is not peripheral but central to the success of advocacy interventions. Similarly, Nishat and Tahir (2024) revealed how communication serves as both a mobilising force and an educational tool in campaigns promoting sustainable development and environmental justice.

Advocacy communication also thrives on storytelling, emotional appeal, and targeted messaging. Wang and Coren (2024) emphasised that storytelling has the unique power to make abstract threats like climate change and flooding personal and urgent. When flood victims share lived experiences, they humanize the issue, fostering empathy and action. This narrative approach complements data-driven communication and is particularly effective in culturally diverse societies. Furthermore, Nasrullah et al. (2025) argued for the contextual adaptation of language and symbolism in advocacy efforts. In regions like Osogbo, where local dialects and cultural beliefs shape perception, localised advocacy communication is vital for reaching marginalised or rural populations. Therefore, advocacy communication must be contextually grounded, multi-platform, and strategically inclusive to be effective in curbing flooding.

Flood Risk Management (FRM)

Flood Risk Management (FRM) encompasses the systematic planning, implementation, and evaluation of policies and strategies aimed at minimising the adverse effects of floods. It includes both structural



interventions such as dams and drainage systems and non-structural approaches like policy reform, environmental education, and early warning systems. Liu et al. (2024) highlighted the increasing complexity of flood resilience in inland cities in China, where climate variability, urban expansion, and social vulnerability intersect. Their study proposes a multidimensional risk management framework that integrates human responses with infrastructural planning a perspective highly relevant for Osogbo, where floods often exceed the capacity of the existing urban infrastructure. Similarly, Hairisaad et al. (2024) recommend aligning local development projects with national frameworks like the Sendai Framework to enhance disaster preparedness and flood risk mitigation.

Non-structural FRM approaches especially communication-centered strategies are gaining prominence. The co-design methodology used by Mugari et al. (2025) in South Africa illustrates how participatory engagement with flood-prone communities can reveal local knowledge, improve trust, and create tailored responses. This inclusive model helps bridge the gap between policy and practice, promoting community-based early warning systems and resilience building. Additionally, Paauw et al. (2025) emphasise the importance of recognising social vulnerability and justice in flood prevention. They note that effective flood risk management must address inequalities in exposure and preparedness, which requires inclusive communication and participatory governance. In essence, FRM in the Osogbo context must go beyond engineering solutions to include institutional reform, public education, and stakeholder collaboration.

Environmental Policy Advocacy

Environmental policy advocacy refers to organised efforts aimed at influencing government actions and regulations to promote sustainable environmental practices and safeguard ecological well-being. This form of advocacy often operates at the intersection of law, science, and public opinion. According to the paper Legal Communication in Environmental Policy Advocacy (2023), environmental advocacy must incorporate legal arguments, evidence-based narratives, and mass mobilisation to drive policy change. Such advocacy is especially important in disaster-prone areas like Osogbo, where environmental mismanagement and regulatory failures contribute to recurring floods. By using legal communication tools such as litigation, public hearings, and rights-based claims advocates can challenge harmful development practices and push for sustainable zoning and land-use laws.

However, for environmental policy advocacy to be effective, it must include strategic media engagement and stakeholder education. Sjökvist (2024) highlighted how the integration of digital media, litigation framing, and coalition building enhances advocacy success across different socio-political contexts. It is not enough to push for legislative change; the public must understand the implications of such policies and support their implementation. This insight is echoed in the Indonesian case study by Permana (2025), which shows how political-business collusion undermines flood policies despite the presence of formal regulations. Hence, advocacy efforts must also focus on transparency, anti-corruption reforms, and the strengthening of community oversight, particularly in cities like Osogbo where governance gaps exist.

Participatory Engagement

Participatory engagement is the process of involving community members, stakeholders, and affected populations in the identification, planning, and implementation of solutions to public issues. In flood risk contexts, participatory engagement ensures that those most affected by flooding have a say in the strategies meant to protect them. Mugari et al. (2025) demonstrated the effectiveness of participatory co-design in flood-prone districts of South Africa, where diverse stakeholders including local leaders, government officials, and residents collaborated to design early warning systems. Their findings confirm



that community ownership of flood interventions increases compliance, response speed, and social resilience. Similarly, the storytelling approach by Wang and Coren (2024) can be viewed as a participatory model, empowering communities to shape the narrative around their lived experiences of environmental change.

Participatory engagement is also a form of communication justice it ensures that marginalised groups are not only heard but also integrated into policy-making. Paauw et al. (2025) argue that expertise alone cannot determine effective flood strategies; it must be combined with lived experiences and local knowledge. Their study across England, France, and Flanders reveals that flood prevention policies are more effective when they include insights from non-technical stakeholders such as local residents, women, and youth. This bottom-up engagement is especially crucial in a place like Osogbo, where the disconnection between government agencies and the local population often leads to failed interventions. Therefore, flood communication strategies must be participatory by design, ensuring that communities are active partners in disaster risk reduction.

Advocacy Communication as the Tool for Curbing Flooding

Advocacy communication offers a transformative approach to flood risk mitigation by linking public awareness with institutional accountability and policy influence. In Osogbo, where infrastructural limitations and urban planning failures have intensified flood occurrences, communication must serve not only to inform but to engage and activate communities. Ojo (2023) revealed that radio was one of the most accessible and influential channels for disseminating flood-related information, especially in local languages that resonate with grassroots audiences. Despite its potential, the communication remains largely underutilised, with messages often lacking consistency, urgency, or actionable content. To address this, Nwosu (2025) advocated for campus and community radio initiatives that involve youth and local voices in ongoing flood education campaigns. These platforms can personalise messages and foster community-led dialogues on flood preparedness, risk perception, and behavioral change.

Furthermore, digital innovation has opened new frontiers for advocacy communication. The Public Affairs Communication study (2024) demonstrates how artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as automated messaging, predictive analytics, and chatbot scan personalise communication, counter misinformation, and improve community engagement in climate risk advocacy. Applying this to Osogbo, where rapid population growth and informal settlements compound the flood risk, digital tools can be leveraged for early warning systems, real-time updates, and behavioural nudges. However, Nasrullah et al. (2025) caution that for such technologies to be effective in low-literacy or low-income areas, they must be linguistically and culturally adapted. Integrating storytelling, local idioms, and traditional knowledge into digital campaigns can enhance comprehension and trust. Advocacy communication, therefore, becomes a hybrid effort bridging traditional and digital channels, top-down policy messaging and bottom-up community voices, science and culture.

In addition to tools and platforms, advocacy communication must be grounded in coalition-building and inclusive governance. Dolk and Penning-Rowsell (2021) emphasise the power of advocacy coalitions groups of aligned stakeholders such as media, NGOs, legal experts, and academics to challenge policy inertia and advocate for more equitable flood risk frameworks. In Osogbo, these coalitions can pressure local authorities to enforce zoning laws, fund drainage projects, and provide compensation to displaced residents. Similarly, Permana's (2025) analysis of flood policy failures in Indonesia attributes poor outcomes to political-business collusion and weak public accountability conditions also observed in Nigerian urban governance. Advocacy communication that mobilises civil society, exposes governance failures, and pushes for transparency can transform flood risk from a technical issue into a socio-political movement for justice and sustainability.



Finally, participatory communication is essential for long-term behaviour change and resilience. Mugari et al. (2025) illustrate how co-designing communication strategies with communities leads to greater ownership and sustained engagement. Their approach, which brings together policymakers and flood-prone residents to create joint solutions, offers a model for Osogbo where communication is often unidirectional. Engaging communities in the design of early warning systems, public signage, and disaster drills enhances both the relevance and effectiveness of flood messages. Wang and Coren (2024) further support this by emphasising the emotional power of personal narratives in advocacy. Flood survivors sharing their stories on radio, social media, or community forums can shift public perception from indifference to urgency. In sum, advocacy communication, when participatory, localised, and multi-modal, serves not just as a channel for information, but as a strategic tool for curbing flooding through public empowerment, policy engagement, and systemic change.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Flooding in Osogbo Local Government is a complex and persistent environmental challenge that demands more than infrastructural interventions it requires a deliberate, inclusive, and sustained communication strategy that can mobilise public action, influence policy, and foster long-term resilience. The reviewed literature overwhelmingly supports the view that advocacy communication, when designed with cultural sensitivity, participatory principles, and technological innovation, can serve as a powerful non-structural tool for curbing the devastating impacts of floods. From traditional media like radio to emerging tools like AI-powered messaging, communication platforms can raise awareness, personalise risk, and catalyse behavioural and institutional change. However, for advocacy communication to achieve its full potential in Osogbo, it must be rooted in collaboration between government agencies, media, civil society, and local communities and grounded in a framework that recognises the importance of local knowledge, social justice, and public accountability. As seen in case studies from Nigeria, South Africa, Indonesia, and beyond, the most effective flood interventions are those that not only inform but also empower; those that do not just transmit warnings but build dialogue; and those that go beyond emergency response to foster adaptive, preventive, and community-centered solutions. Therefore, embracing advocacy communication as a central pillar of flood risk management is not optional it is imperative for achieving sustainable urban resilience in the face of climate change and rapid urbanization.

Recommendations

At the end of the review the following recommendations were made;

1. Establish community-based communication centres that coordinate flood alerts and preparedness campaigns using local dialects.
2. Integrate AI and Predictive Analytics into early warning systems to enhance responsiveness and customisation of messages.
3. Leverage radio and campus media to build consistent, credible narratives around flood prevention, especially during pre- and post-disaster phases.
4. Promote legal literacy and advocacy on zoning, environmental protection, and government accountability through workshops and civic education.
5. Strengthen stakeholder collaboration among government, media, traditional leaders, and civil society for co-designing local flood mitigation strategies.
6. Encourage cultural storytelling and visual campaigns in schools and religious institutions to normalise flood-resilient behavior.



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