

**THE ROLES OF RADIO CALLER ASSOCIATION IN CAUSING GOVERNMENT TO DELIVER ON  
ITS DIVIDENDS OF DEMOCRACY: THE PROSPECT AND CHALLENGES**

**By**

**Theresa Ifiok Linus Ph.D.**

**Comfort Williams**  
**Mass Communication Department**  
**Topfaith University Mkpatak Nigeria**

**And**

**Benedette Archibong**  
**Mass Communication Department**  
**Akwa Ibom State polytechnic**

**ABSTRACT**

*This study explored the roles of radio caller associations in causing the government to deliver its democratic dividend, assessing the prospects and challenges. The dividends of democracy, which encompass equitable access to quality education, healthcare, infrastructure, and security, remain a focal point of citizens' expectations from their governments. In carrying out this research, numerous subheads were taken into consideration, some of which included the concept of radio calls, the concept of radio callers, the concept of radio caller associations, and the concept of democratic dividends, among many others. The study mentioned the roles of radio caller associations to include advocating for public policy reform, facilitating civic engagement/political participation, and promoting social accountability/transparency. Improved public accountability, strengthened citizens' participation in governance, and enhanced transparency/trust in government were mentioned as the effects of radio calls on government delivery of the democratic dividend. The prospect of radio caller associations as mentioned in the study included enhancing grassroots participation in governance and amplifying civic awareness and political education. The challenges of radio caller association were mentioned to include media censorship and political interference, misinformation/propaganda, harassment, and intimidation of members. The study further provided mitigations to the challenges that inhibit radio caller associations to include promoting media freedom/legal protection and combating misinformation with fact-checking mechanisms. The study concluded that radio caller associations (RCAs) play a vital role in participatory democracy by providing platforms for citizens to voice concerns, demand accountability, and influence governance. One of the recommendations made was that the governments should establish and enforce laws that protect the freedom of speech and the press to enable Radio Caller Associations (RCAs) to operate without fear of censorship or intimidation.*

**KEYWORDS: Radio, Radio Caller, Radio Caller Association, Government, and Dividends of Democracy**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The dividends of democracy, which encompass equitable access to quality education, healthcare, infrastructure, and security, remain a focal point of citizens' expectations from their governments. However, the gap between policy formulation and its actual implementation often leads to discontent among the populace. Amid this dynamic, Radio Caller Associations (RCAs) have emerged as critical stakeholders in ensuring that governments fulfil their democratic mandates. These associations, comprised of ordinary citizens who actively participate in radio discussions, serve as vibrant platforms for public discourse, fostering transparency, accountability, and grassroots engagement in governance (Adeniyi and Kent, 2016).

In Nigeria, where radio is the most accessible and widely consumed medium of communication, RCAs have become a powerful voice for the marginalized and underserved populations. These groups amplify public concerns, challenge government policies, and demand transparency in the management of public resources. Through their persistent engagement, RCAs influence political discourse, mobilize community action, and serve as catalysts for societal transformation. Their contributions have made them indispensable in the quest for responsive governance, bridging the communication gap between citizens and policymakers (Bello & Kaufhold, 2023).

The unique power of RCAs lies in their ability to provide real-time feedback to decision-makers and foster civic participation in democratic processes. By airing pressing community concerns and holding public officials accountable on live programs, these associations create a participatory democracy where the governed actively contribute to governance. However, this influential role is not without challenges. Issues such as media censorship, political interference, and the risk of misinformation pose significant threats to their effectiveness, highlighting the need for a supportive and enabling environment (Muhammed & Mathew, 2022).

Despite these obstacles, the prospects for RCAs in enhancing democratic dividends remain promising. The growing penetration of digital technology and increasing political awareness among the Nigerian populace present opportunities for these associations to expand their reach and influence. By leveraging digital platforms, RCAs can amplify their advocacy efforts, ensuring that their voices resonate beyond traditional radio audiences. Such advancements can empower RCAs to engage more stakeholders and address the challenges of governance more effectively.

## **CONCEPT OF RADIO CALLS**

A "radio call" is a two-way radio communication technique in which one person uses radio waves to send a message to another person who has a receiver, thereby starting a conversation over the radio frequency. This technique involves speaking into a radio microphone and listening to the response through the speaker. It is frequently used in emergency services, military operations, or professional settings where people need to stay connected while on the go.

In FM radio broadcasting, radio calls refer to interactions between the radio audience and a station's program through telephone communication. These calls serve as a feedback mechanism, allowing listeners to voice their opinions, share experiences, or participate in

discussions related to the program. Radio stations often use these live or recorded calls to enhance audience engagement and provide a sense of inclusivity in the broadcast (Pilitsidou, Tsigilis, and Kalliris, 2019).

Radio calls create a platform for listeners to contribute directly to on-air content, fostering a dynamic interaction between the broadcaster and the audience. Through call-ins, listeners can request songs, ask questions, or share views on topics under discussion. This interactive feature personalizes the listening experience, making the audience feel more connected to the station and its presenters. For broadcasters, such calls also offer real-time insights into audience preferences and reactions, helping to shape future programming.

The inclusion of radio calls enriches FM programs by introducing diverse perspectives and voices from the audience. This feedback loop not only validates the relevance of the content being aired but also allows the station to address audience concerns or interests promptly (Antwi-Boateng, Musa, and Mu-azu, 2023). Whether in talk shows, music programs, or news analysis, radio calls amplify the interactive aspect of FM broadcasting, turning it into a collaborative medium that values the audience's participation and fosters community engagement.

### **CONCEPT OF RADIO CALLER**

A radio caller is a listener who phones in to a live program to voice their opinions, ask questions, or offer comments. The radio station and its listeners are dynamically connected through this interaction, which promotes participation and a feeling of community. Callers enhance the programme's content and add to its vitality by interacting in real time, which makes the broadcast more engaging and relatable.

Radio callers are essential to FM broadcasting as they provide immediate feedback on the topics being discussed, ensuring that the program resonates with its target audience. They often participate in talk shows, music request programs, and discussions on social issues, offering personal opinions or experiences. This exchange not only enhances the relevance of the program but also allows the station to gauge audience preferences and adapt its content accordingly. Callers also serve as a representation of the broader listener base, ensuring diverse voices are heard.

The inclusion of radio callers in FM programs significantly boosts listener engagement and loyalty. By allowing audiences to contribute to the conversation, stations create a two-way communication channel that strengthens the bond between the broadcaster and its listeners (Antwi-Boateng et al., 2023). This interactive element makes programs more appealing, as listeners feel valued and involved. It also provides an opportunity for stations to address audience concerns, clarify misinformation, or simply entertain, underscoring the caller's pivotal role in shaping the listener experience.

### **CONCEPT OF RADIO CALLERS' ASSOCIATION**

Radio Callers Association (RCA) refers to an organized group of individuals who frequently participate in radio programs by calling in to contribute opinions, ask questions, or engage in discussions. These associations have gained prominence in various regions, particularly in Nigeria, where they play a significant role in shaping public discourse and influencing community engagement.

RCAs are typically formed by regular contributors to radio shows who recognize the impact of collective action. The primary objectives of these associations include: Advocacy: Representing the interests and concerns of the public on various socio-political issues. Community Engagement: Facilitating dialogue between the public and policymakers or organizations. Information Dissemination: Ensuring accurate information reaches the broader community through active participation in radio discussions.

RCAs serve as platforms for political mobilization and advocacy, often influencing public opinion and policy decisions. By providing a structured forum for discussion, RCAs promote social cohesion and collective problem-solving within communities. Radio callers' active participation holds media outlets accountable for content quality and relevance, ensuring that programming reflects the interests and concerns of the audience. According to Dori-Hacohen (2024), radio phone-in programs have different types of callers, which include anonymous, regular, returning, first-time, and standard callers. Regulars and returning callers are part of the programs' community. First-time callers are preferred over regular callers. Radio Callers Associations represent a unique facet of participatory media, empowering individuals to collectively influence public discourse and community development. Their evolution reflects the dynamic interplay between media platforms and active audience engagement, underscoring the importance of inclusive communication channels in societal progress.

## **CONCEPT OF DIVIDENDS OF DEMOCRACY**

The dividends of democracy are the advantages and the benefits of democracy. According to Obro and Nwalado (2020), the dividend of democracy is commonly used to include every effort or determination towards the advancement and development of social interest. The benefits, gains, and constructive actions or gestures that a country and society have experienced as a result of the new democratic environment are implied by the term "democracy dividend." This mostly denotes a setting of better living conditions, safety, human rights respect and observance, and tranquilly.

Eke and Ekhosuehi (2019) defined the dividend of democracy to mean "the gains or profits realised from democracy." By offering basic facilities, such as social and welfare packages for the populace, and welfare packages for the masses, democracy's dividend translates into a better life for rural residents. Olusegun, Eke, Akinsanmi, Joseph, Aniobi, Wakeel, and Sunday (2024) discuss the dividend of democracy; it is supposed to mean a situation where the masses are getting some benefits as a result of the system. This benefit, which occurs or brings development, happens in the area of good roads, electricity, provision of housing, good portable water, free education, etc.

According to Omotola (2007), cited in Okeshola and Igba (2012), dividends of democracy mean the benefits and positive gestures that the new environment of democracy has brought to bear on the state and society. Ideally, it would involve increasing the state's legitimacy, raising the majority of the population's standard of living, improving the environment for human rights in all of its manifestations, and ultimately resulting in increased public participation, empowerment, and a more peaceful and stable environment as a precondition for development.

## **ROLES OF RADIO CALLER ASSOCIATION**

The following are the roles of the Radio Callers Association in causing the government to deliver on its dividends of democracy:

- **Advocating for Public Policy Reform:** Radio caller associations often mobilise to raise awareness about specific public issues and advocate for policy reform. Through collective calls, these associations can apply pressure on the government to implement changes in public policies, especially in areas like healthcare, education, infrastructure, and governance (Kiarie, 2019).
- **Facilitating Civic Engagement and Political Participation:** Radio caller associations promote civic engagement by encouraging their members to participate in political discourse. By organising collective radio calls and discussions, these groups contribute to democratic participation and ensure that marginalised voices are heard in national conversations, especially during election cycles (Adu, 2020).
- **Promoting Social Accountability and Transparency:** These associations play a key role in holding public officials accountable. By regularly calling into programs, members of radio caller associations can ask questions about government activities, budget allocations, and the status of public projects, thereby demanding transparency and social accountability (Chikulo, 2021).
- **Promoting Grassroots Communication and Mobilization:** Radio caller associations often serve as grassroots mobilization tools, enabling ordinary citizens to raise their concerns and advocate for issues that matter most to them. These groups often function as collective voices for local communities, advocating for better services or highlighting urgent problems that may be overlooked by the mainstream media (Kiwanuka, 2019).
- **Fostering Community Solidarity and Empowerment:** Radio caller associations create a sense of community solidarity by bringing together people with common interests, challenges, or goals. Through repeated engagement in radio programs, callers become more informed, politically active, and able to advocate for collective action on various social issues. Banda, 2020).
- **Shaping Public Discourse and National Conversations:** Radio caller associations significantly shape public discourse by actively participating in national debates on critical issues. Their repeated engagement ensures that issues raised by the community are part of the public conversation, influencing how these issues are covered by other media outlets and discussed in the public sphere (Olusola, 2021).
- **Providing a Voice for Marginalized Groups:** Radio caller associations ensure that marginalized groups, such as women, youth, and indigenous populations, have a platform to voice their concerns and advocate for their rights. These groups often lack other avenues for political participation, and radio caller associations give them a powerful tool for social inclusion and empowerment (Falcao, 2020).
- **Enhancing Crisis Communication and Advocacy:** During times of crisis such as natural disasters, political unrest, or economic shocks, radio caller associations can play a role in disseminating information and advocating for immediate government action.



Through coordinated call-ins, these associations help ensure that public officials address urgent concerns and provide appropriate responses (Ramaroson, 2021).

- **Promoting Media Literacy and Critical Thinking:** Through regular radio engagement, members of caller associations often become more media literate and better able to analyze political issues. These callers can educate their communities, help counter misinformation, and encourage a more informed public dialogue (Mwangi, 2020).

## **EFFECT OF RADIO CALLS ON GOVERNMENT DELIVERY OF DEMOCRATIC DIVIDEND**

The following are the effects of radio calls on government delivery of the democratic dividend:

- **Improved Public Accountability:** Radio call-ins provide citizens with a platform to directly engage with government officials, ask questions, and demand explanations. This fosters public accountability, as government representatives are compelled to respond to public queries and concerns, making it harder to neglect pressing issues (Asante, 2018).
- **Strengthened Citizens' Participation in Governance:** Radio calls democratize the space for public discourse, allowing ordinary citizens to voice their opinions, concerns, and suggestions for better governance. This contributes to greater citizen participation, especially in communities where people may not have access to formal political processes (Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2020).
- **Enhanced Transparency and Trust in Government:** When governments appear transparent and willing to answer questions from the public on air, it can build trust among citizens. The use of radio as a medium to explain government policies or respond to public queries helps demystify policy actions, reducing perceptions of corruption or inefficiency (Olusola, 2021).
- **Citizens as Informants for Governance Improvement:** Radio calls often function as feedback mechanisms, allowing citizens to report local issues like poor infrastructure, healthcare, or education services. When government agencies listen to these calls and act upon them, it can directly improve service delivery and the overall democratic dividend for the population (Kiwanuka, 2019).
- **Promoting Social and Cultural Inclusion:** Radio calls also promote social inclusion by providing marginalized or less vocal groups (such as women, rural populations, and minorities) with a platform to raise their concerns. This can lead to a more equitable distribution of democratic dividends, especially in societies with high levels of inequality (Kassa, 2022).
- **Crisis Management and Public Awareness:** Radio calls are particularly effective in times of political crisis, conflict, or disaster recovery, as they serve as a channel for direct communication between the government and the public. This is important for spreading critical information and managing responses to emergencies (Awuor, 2021).
- **Encouraging Policy Reform through Public Pressure:** When a large number of citizens call in with the same issues or concerns, it can exert public pressure on governments to adopt policy reforms. These radio calls act as a form of direct advocacy, which can

lead to the introduction of new policies or the improvement of existing ones (Banda, 2022).

## **THE PROSPECT OF RADIO CALLER ASSOCIATIONS**

Radio Caller Associations (RCAs) hold significant potential in fostering participatory democracy by amplifying grassroots voices and promoting accountability in governance. The following are the prospects of radio caller associations:

- **Enhancing Grassroots Participation in Governance:** Radio Caller Associations (RCAs) provide platforms for individuals, especially those in marginalized and rural areas, to voice their opinions and contribute to public discourse (Ijah, 2013). By engaging directly with policymakers on radio programs, citizens can raise issues affecting their communities, ensuring that grassroots concerns are included in governance decisions. This fosters inclusivity and strengthens participatory democracy.
- **Amplifying Civic Awareness and Political Education:** RCAs play a critical role in educating the public about governance processes, citizens' rights, and government policies. Through discussions on radio platforms, they help bridge the information gap, empowering listeners to make informed decisions (Onwe, Ngwu, Amarachi, Chinedu & Nworie, 2020). This prospect is particularly valuable in countries where political education is limited or where access to formal communication channels is restricted.
- **Promoting Accountability and Transparency:** By creating direct communication channels between the government and the public, RCAs encourage accountability. Government officials who participate in these radio programs are often required to explain policies and address complaints. This transparency can lead to improved service delivery and the fulfilment of democratic dividends, such as better healthcare, education, and infrastructure.
- **Leveraging Digital Technology for Broader Reach:** With the integration of digital tools like social media and internet-based radio platforms, RCAs have the potential to reach a larger audience. This technological advancement allows them to engage with listeners in real time, regardless of geographic location, thereby broadening their influence and ensuring that a diverse range of voices is heard and ensuring adequate reportage of events and disasters that affect the entire world (Arisekola, 2023).
- **Fostering Social Mobilization and Advocacy:** RCAs can unite communities around common causes, mobilizing citizens to demand change or address pressing societal challenges. Through coordinated efforts, these associations can influence policy changes, promote social reforms, and rally support for developmental initiatives. Their role as advocacy groups strengthens their potential as agents of societal transformation.
- **Empowering Marginalized Voices:** RCAs empower under-represented groups, including women, youth, and individuals in remote areas, by providing them with platforms to express their concerns (Ezra and Isabirye, 2024). This inclusivity promotes equity and ensures that diverse perspectives are considered in governance, enhancing the quality of democratic engagement.

## **THE CHALLENGES OF RADIO CALLER ASSOCIATION**

Radio Caller Associations (RCAs) face several challenges in their efforts to promote government accountability and democratic dividends. As mentioned by Arisekola and Rufus (2022) every organization faces significant challenges as a result of the ever-changing. The following are some of the challenges:

- **Media Censorship and Political Interference:** Radio Caller Associations (RCAs) often operate in environments where freedom of expression is restricted. Governments may impose censorship or use regulatory bodies to limit the scope of discussions, especially on politically sensitive issues. This interference undermines the ability of RCAs to hold public officials accountable and weakens their impact on governance.
- **Misinformation and Propaganda:** The potential for the spread of misinformation during live radio programs poses a significant challenge. Malicious actors may exploit RCAs to disseminate falsehoods or propaganda, diverting public attention from critical issues (Ephraim, 2020). This undermines the credibility of RCAs and hampers their ability to foster informed public discourse.
- **Harassment and Intimidation of Members:** RCA members often face threats, harassment, or retaliation for challenging powerful political actors or exposing governance failures. Such risks discourage active participation and limit the scope of discussions, especially in politically unstable or authoritarian environments.
- **Limited Reach and Access to Marginalised Groups:** While radio is widely accessible, some regions, particularly remote and underdeveloped areas, may still lack adequate infrastructure to support RCA activities. Additionally, language barriers and illiteracy may prevent some individuals from participating effectively in these platforms, reducing their inclusivity and impact.
- **Resource Constraints:** RCAs often lack adequate funding and organisational support, which limits their capacity to operate effectively. The absence of training programs, technological tools, and administrative resources hinders their ability to expand their reach and sustain meaningful engagements.
- **Public Apathy and Lack of Awareness:** Citizens' lack of interest or awareness about the role of RCAs can be a significant barrier. Without active public participation, the ability of RCAs to influence governance diminishes. Efforts to educate the public about the importance of civic engagement are often met with resistance or indifference.
- **Resistance from Government Officials:** Many government officials view RCAs as adversaries rather than partners in governance. This perception leads to resistance, including refusal to engage in discussions or dismissing the concerns raised during radio programs. Such attitudes undermine the collaborative potential of RCAs in enhancing democratic dividends.

## **MITIGATION OF THE CHALLENGES THAT INHIBIT RADIO CALLER ASSOCIATION**

Radio Caller Associations (RCAs) play a key role in promoting democratic engagement but face challenges like media censorship, misinformation, and limited access. Overcoming these barriers is essential for their effectiveness in holding governments



accountable. As mentioned by numerous scholars, including La'aro, Omoloso, and Adisa (2022), the following are the mitigation strategies that can cause the government to deliver on its dividends of democracy:

- **Promoting Media Freedom and Legal Protection:** One of the most effective ways to mitigate challenges faced by Radio Caller Associations (RCAs) is through robust legal frameworks that protect free speech and media freedom. Governments must create and enforce laws that safeguard RCAs from censorship, political interference, and intimidation. Ensuring that members can express themselves without fear of retaliation is essential for maintaining the integrity of the platform. Legal protections should also include measures against harassment, offering RCA members safe avenues to participate without facing personal or professional threats.
- **Combating Misinformation with Fact-Checking Mechanisms:** To address the issue of misinformation, RCAs can establish partnerships with fact-checking organizations and journalists to verify information shared during live programs. Radio stations could set up dedicated fact-checking segments or ensure that callers are guided by credible sources when raising issues. Training RCA members on the importance of responsible communication and factual accuracy can also help reduce the spread of rumours and falsehoods, improving the trustworthiness of the platform.
- **Expanding Access and Inclusivity:** To overcome challenges related to limited reach and access, efforts should be made to ensure that RCAs are accessible to all demographics, particularly marginalized and rural communities. Radio stations can expand their coverage to underserved areas, use local languages, and ensure that technical infrastructure is available in remote regions. Additionally, promoting digital radio platforms or mobile phone apps can help bridge the accessibility gap and engage a wider audience, including young people who are more digitally connected.
- **Capacity Building and Resource Mobilization:** RCAs can benefit from capacity-building programs that enhance the skills of their members in media production, communication, and organizational management. Securing funding or establishing partnerships with civil society organizations, international bodies, or philanthropic entities can help address resource constraints. By ensuring that RCAs are adequately resourced, they can enhance their operations, improve the quality of their contributions, and reach a broader audience.
- **Public Awareness and Civic Education:** Increasing public awareness about the role and significance of RCAs in democratic governance is crucial. Governments, NGOs, and media houses can collaborate on civic education campaigns to inform citizens about the importance of participating in democratic processes, particularly through platforms like RCAs. Training citizens on the effective use of radio for raising concerns and engaging with government representatives will help overcome public apathy and encourage active participation.
- **Building Collaborative Relationships with Government and Stakeholders:** Building a more cooperative relationship between RCAs and government officials can help mitigate resistance from the authorities. This can be achieved through dialogue, advocacy, and demonstrating how RCAs contribute to improving governance by voicing public concerns. By emphasising their role in holding governments

accountable and promoting transparency, RCAs can work towards creating a more receptive environment for collaboration.

## **CONCLUSION**

Radio Caller Associations (RCAs) play a vital role in participatory democracy by providing platforms for citizens to voice concerns, demand accountability, and influence governance. Through their engagement in popular radio programs, RCAs bridge the gap between governments and grassroots communities, driving awareness of public needs. While challenges such as censorship and political interference persist, the growth of digital technologies and increasing citizen awareness offer significant prospects for RCAs. By addressing obstacles and supporting their operations, RCAs can enhance democratic processes, ensuring governments deliver essential services and meet the expectations of their constituents effectively.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Governments should establish and enforce laws that protect the freedom of speech and the press to enable Radio Caller Associations (RCAs) to operate without fear of censorship or intimidation.
- Training programs should be organized for RCA members to improve their communication skills, enhance their understanding of governance processes, and ensure responsible participation.
- To maximize their impact, RCAs should adopt digital platforms, such as internet-based radio and social media, to reach more diverse audiences.

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