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Rural Community Development: Bedrock for National Development

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Abstract

This paper advocates that community development is the bedrock for national development. For any meaningful development to take place, whether national or global development must have its building blocks or firm-root in rural development. However, the rural communities are characterized by isolation from ideas and information, illiteracy, poverty, lack of social amenities among other challenges which must be addressed. The paper also calls for the need to inject rural broadcasting strategies to bring about desirables ideas, information, and services. These include five radio strategies and other factors that aid rural broadcasting for development. Furthermore, the paper emphasizes the development Media theory as a new communication initiative by New World Information order that indicates the need for a propound restructuring of community patters and strategies that

should involve the grass root in the communication flow. The Press should be placed on fore-front of the country's economic development in order to achieve meaningful rural and national development.

Introduction

Olisa and Obuikwu [1992] pine that rural development is concerned with thus: The improvement as well as the transformation of the social, mental economic, institutional and environmental condition of the low income rural dwellers through the mobilization of their human, natural and institution resources. So as to enhance their capacities to cope with their task of life and the demands of modern times...enhance their economic self reliance through the provision of appropriate infrastructure such as pope-borne water, electricity, good road and small scale industries, increase their political consciousness and participation and promote their moral and social well-being which will result in tolerance, good discipline, justice, fairness, kindness, love and peace. Hence, community development can also be seen as a process through which government or non governmental agencies set forth to make out possibilities of changing and improving the original primitive life of dwellers in a reality. This only means that authorized agents can embark on programmes and projects that will gradually turn around the high level of illiteracy and poverty dominant in our communities.

Since the rural populace constitutes about 70% of Nigeria's total population as reported by Mabogunju Akin [1981], the need to bring development to the area is a sine-qua-non for community and national development. Larry [1997] asserts that "rural development is the foundation for national development and therefore, there should be no aspect of national development that should not have a building blocks or firm-root in rural development.

World Bank [1975] asserts that rural development is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people –the rural poor. Scramm[1964] sees rural development "as a mobilization involving effective communication to provide

information about national development and focusing the people's attention on the need for change and aspiration for themselves and their country”

Mabogunje- Akin [1981], pines that rural development involves a broad based re-organization and mobilization of the rural masses, so as to enhance their capacity to cope effectively with the daily task of their lives and with changes consequent upon this” Thus, in broadcasting for rural development, it is important that the broadcast media takes into cognizance the meaning of rural development so as to articulate, design and implement broadcast programmes that will reflect development efforts in the rural communities.

Akeredolu-Ale [1993], also said that “rural development is aimed at the entire rural sector” It is intended to correct not just the poverty of selected target groups but rural poverty as a structural phenomenon. It also aims at rural transformation and the transformation of the relationships between the rural and urban sectors of the economy”

Onobajo [2002], holds the view that “the goal of rural development include; improved productivity, higher incomes for target groups, acceptable level of food, shelter, education and health services. Any programme of rural development should cover a wide range of activities, including projects designed to raise agricultural output and improve the standard of living.

Thus, in the light of the above submissions by the various scholars and institution, it is evident that the need to bring meaningful development to the emerging rural area is important for the national development.

Statement of the Problem

Onabajo [2002], pines that the rural areas are characterized with high level of sickness and mortality, physical and mental lethargy, inability to sustain hard work on a regular basis, illiteracy, poverty, lack of social amenities and infrastructures, lack of attitudinal change, social change and self-reliance. He further, to say that rural communities are

characterized by isolation from ideas and information as well as services.

Advocates of rural development strategies often point out that “the need of rural people is for more practical information”, information that will help them upgrade the production for their land, improve the quality of their diet, and allow them to reduce the incidents of diseases, by adopting better health practices in the home”. Most people live in rural areas where transportation of people and commodities is slow and difficult, cutting off access to markets, social and cultural centres. The pattern of development often means that essential services and improvement such as education and health services reach the rural communities first. It takes a long time for these to be extended to the country side where the bulk of the population lives.

Without information to areas, development will be slow, and a sure way of preventing this is through rural programming on radio and television in order to bring about rural development.

Onabajo [2002], Further to say that “because the broadcast Media can reach isolated communities swiftest and at a comparatively cheaper rate, that the emphasis has been on its use in disseminating information messages from capital cities to the periphery in one way communication flow without a recourse to the necessary feedback”

This calls for the need to inject rural broadcasting strategies to bring about desirable ideas, information and services and to bridge gap of communication flow.

Purpose of the study

- To ascertain whether rural broadcasting can bring about community development
- To find out which areas of development in the rural area should receive the most attention.

- To know if the broadcast programmes is packaged with the rural social realities of the community

Research questions

- Can rural broadcasting bring about community development?
- Are the broadcast programmes packages with the rural social realities of your community?
- Which areas of development in the rural area that needed the most attention.

Methodology

The population studied was represented workers in Ikenne Local Government Headquarters which amounted to a total of [483 staff]. Out of the total 483 staff, 275 are junior staff while 208 were senior staff. The L.G. Headquarter is comprises of nine [9] departments that are headed by nine [9] directors, but irrespective of staff or organizational hierarchy the sample size is drawn. The sample size of the study is on 100 workers. The quantitative data analysis was employed for this work. The raw data collected from respondents were presented and analyzed using simple percentages. The data for this study was also collected through two procedures: the primary and secondary sources. The secondary sources included already existing records dealing with various aspects of previous work that made up of published and unpublished works: books, internet, articles and journals etc. The primary sources on the other hand were through questionnaires. The questionnaires were self-administered, to ensure the efficient gathering of data. Purposive random sampling technique was employed to select the workers from which data collection was made. The purposive in the sense that the workers in Ikenne Local Government Headquarter are more knowledgeable and sound to respond to the questions properly

Theoretical framework and relevant literature

Raufu [2003], “Development Media theory is a relative new communication orientation, which arose as a part of the debate on New World Information Order that indicates the need for a profound restructuring of communicating patterns. This theory places emphasis on the involvement of the grassroots in the communication flow and implies that the Press must be placed as a tool on the path of the country’s economic development.

The Media under this theory, is expected to understand the views and aspirations of the masses and transmit them to government, thereby assuming the “voice of the voiceless role”

Mequail [1978], sum up the basic tenets of development theory as follows:

- Media must accept and carry out positive developmental tasks in line with nationally established policies.
- Freedom of the Media should be open to economic priorities and development needed in the society.
- Media should give priority to national culture and languages.
- The theory advocates socialist purposive use of Media towards achieving certain socio-political and economic goals.

Golding [1978], however, enumerates four ways by which African Media can practice development journalism to a successful conclusion

- By stressing the general educative function of the news.
- By producing stories, which display particular social needs holding that this would provoke government to action?
- By giving prominence to self-help projects hoping that others would emulate the step.

- By emphasizing news that could tackle specific and proffer solution problem, example, corruption, lack of social infrastructure, attitudinal change and so.

Further, it is obvious that the theory is biased towards the third World Countries, perhaps; this is because the so-called Third World Countries are the major advocator of this theory. Ironically, Nigeria broadcast Media still restrict itself to the urban centres. Most, if not all the rural villages suffer neglects

Efforts are being made however towards encouraging development communication especially by the academia. Most communication and journalism department of higher institutions like Babcock University is putting in place courses that cater for journalism practice for rural development.

Rural broadcasting should encourage the tenets of this theory. Also, in articulating rural broadcast programmes, efforts should take into cognizance the needs and problems of the people so as to bring out meaningful development. Health, welfare, sickness, lack of social infrastructures and so on should be taken into serious consideration.

Development news, feature articles etc should take the coloration of rural broadcasting for community development.

Uses and Gratification Theory

The Uses and Gratification theory was first identified by Lazarsfeld and Stanton [1940], attempts to explain why the mass media is used and the types of gratification that the media generates. Gratification is a reward or satisfaction obtained by an individual. The theory relies on the belief that the audience is not merely a group of passive media consumers, but that they play an active role in selecting different media to meet their needs. The Uses and Gratification theory originated in 1959 article written by Elihu Katz as a response to a claim by Bernard Berelson that there is no such thing as a field of

communication research. Katz successfully argued that the question in focus should not be “what do the media do to people?” but rather “what do the people do with media?”

The basic assumption of the Uses and Gratification theory is “...to determine the functions that mass communication is serving for audience members. It basically describes how the audience of mass communication uses it to satisfy various media related wants. The theory says that the audience of the media has varying needs to be satisfied. The main assumption of the theory is that the audience of the mass media is not passive but active members and they go to the mass media to satisfy their needs Schramm [1963].

These basic assumptions provide a framework for understanding the exact correlation between the media and the viewers. In addition, it provides a distinction as to how the consequences of their involvement in the media audience are more or less active as a whole. The Uses and Gratification theory says that the audience of the media has varying needs to be satisfied. The main assumption of the theory is that the audience of the mass media is not passive but active members and they go to the mass media to satisfy their needs Schramm [1963]. One of the main needs of the audience is to be informed. Most of the ruralite in developing countries needs information which will help them develop in their ways of life.

The information gotten from developmental programmes will also help the audience make decisions and choices that will be of benefit to them in future.

The developmental programmes contain information that can be used by members of the audience and they [the audience], use the information in satisfying the needs of their society. For example, the ruralite might watch a developmental programme on agriculture, which educates him on the crop rotation system. Whatever the farmer learns from this programme is then added to his knowledge of agricultural practices. When he uses the obtained information, the assumptions of the theory have taken place.

The two-step flow theory

The two step flow of communication hypothesis was first introduced by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet [1944]. This theory asserts that information from the media moves in two distinct stages. First, individuals [opinion leaders] who pay close attention to the mass media and its messages received, and hence, the opinion leaders pass on their own interpretations in addition to the actual media content. The term “personal influence” was coined to refer to the process intervening between the media’s direct message and the audience’s ultimate reaction to that message. Opinion leaders are quite influential in getting people to change their attitudes and behaviors and are quite similar to those they influence. The two-step flow theory has improved our understanding of how the mass media influence decision making. The theory refined the ability to predict the influence of media messages on audience behavior and how it explain why certain media campaigns may have failed to alter audience’s attitudes and behavior.

Local leadership and rural broadcasters

Schramm [1964], there is a two-step flow of mass communication where development message flow from the mass media to the local leaders and then to the people themselves [audience]. Onabajó [2002] asserts that rural broadcasting relies significantly on local leadership to fire the enthusiasm of the people”.

- Local leaders are the change agents in their communities and other change agents must recognize the pattern and structure of leadership in any community they find themselves.
- Local leadership fosters participation in the decisions that affects the lives and welfare of the people in the rural communities and creates faith in a number of activities that may lead to rural development.
- In this regard, scholars in rural development see local leaders as individuals that influence matters, decisions and opinions

in rural communities against formal leadership that characterize authority. Leadership and the community depend on the personal cooperative attitude of individuals within the community and the system of communication in use in a given community.

- Leadership gives common meaning to the aim of a local community effort. It brings vital cohesiveness and infuses consistency into aspects of countless decisions. This makes it paramount for local leaders to be aware continually of rural development as not an end to itself but a means of national development.

Rural development strategies

Scholars of rural development strategies, observes that the crucial need of rural people is for more practical information, information that will help them improve the productivity of their land, improve the quality of their diet, and allow them to reduce the incidence of disease, by adopting better health practices in their homes. Even though, various programmes are at present run on both the NTA, State TV stations and Radio stations. The reality is that the viewer -ship for these programmes does not extend beyond our urban centres. It only splits over to the rural communities, thus, the programmes transmitted usually; do not reflect the rural perspective. Onabajo [2002], mentioned programme areas that needed to be researched, packaged and designed properly if rural development is to be achieved through TV and radio as a contributory factor:

- (a) **Programmes on Management Techniques: Programmes** should be designed to teach the rural populace basic organizational techniques needed for mobilizing communities for self-help projects. Which include programmes that will teach them on how to form and run cooperatives, the accounting system to use, the articulation of the infrastructural needs of the community, how to choose the priorities and how

social and age-groups can be co-opted into the communal development process?

- (b) **Intra-communal documentaries:** Due to the gap among rural areas in terms of development and other important activities that could encourage rural growth. To bridge this gap, there is need for documentaries on that vital information which can stimulate other communities to emulate; such a healthy competition aids development.
- (c) **Agriculture programmes:** Agriculture is the mainstay of our rural populace. TV and radio can contribute through the viewing centre system to the improvement in our agricultural methods, which will include, simple agricultural implements, their mode of construction and usage, development of new crossbreeds and species and storage can be exposed to the people.

Onabajo [2002] noted McAnany [1976], suggested five radio strategies that aids rural development as follow; open broadcasting , radio study groups, radio rural forum, radio schools and radio and animation. Advocates of rural development strategies contend that Radio study groups' technique is used in Tanzania to teach practical skills, co-operative and civic responsibility to rural communities. Using the strategy requires much more than mere broadcasting. It requires a structure for organizing listening and learning practices, support materials, monitors or teachers, and some kind of assessment. And the strategy is integrated as part of a total national plan to develop the people's awareness, their spirit of nationalism and co-operation and to strengthen their sense of integrity, and to bring about defined changes in the people's behavior and attitudes and in their physical environment.

While the Radio schools strategy made use of radio for rural community education in Latin America, Colombia and in Ghana. The audience of these radio 'schools' is primarily illiterate rural adults. The basic aim of this strategy is to offer fundamental, integral

education which goes beyond mere reading, writing and cognitive skills and it tries to change the passive and dependent attitude of the rural man, creating a deepening of his sense of dignity and self worth and turning him into a new man. And also, Radio and Animation strategy known as Radio participating group according to Onabajo [2002], “it aims at promoting among local communities a trained cadre of decision leaders, whose role is to promote, in a non-directive way, a dialogue in which community members participate in defining their development problem, putting them in a wider social context and devising ways to mobilize their people to common action etc.

Key factors that aid rural development

Onabajo [2002], in his study of Communicating Social Development Programmes to Africans, noted certain factors that will aid rural broadcasting for development.

- The use of acceptable language: This consists of the use of the rural local language in packaging programmes for rural broadcasting.
- The use of accessible channels He suggested that in addition to modern media of communication, face to face communication should be used as a complement.
- Information and social reality: The development programmes should reflect the information needs and the socio-economic condition of the rural people.
- Individual participation: The rural people in addition to the awareness of their socio-economic reality should also be involved in the development process.

The elements of rural development

The aims of rural development involve improved productivity and higher incomes for target groups as well as minimum acceptable levels of food, shelter, education and health services. Therefore, any

programme of rural development should cover a wide range of activities including projects designed to raise agricultural output and to improve the standard of living. For instance:

Health-wise, rural areas are noted for high levels of sickness and mortality and inability to sustain handwork on a regular basis due to poor intake of nutritive food and lack of health facilities. The nutritional deficiencies in quantity and quality affect all age groups. It is unfortunate that those who need medical or healthcare most [i.e. the rural poor [are precisely those who are too poor or too remote from any facility to obtain it, and there is general shortage of medical personnel and facilities also.

Education is another element which is a major contributory factor in human productivity. It affords the rural young the opportunity to escape poverty by shifting to other productive areas of activity, and other factors that militate against the rural poor receiving satisfactory education include a relative shortage of schools and teachers etc.

Roads are important elements of rural development but in the absence of roads not only isolate the rural dwellers from the rest of the world, but also hamper their ability to market their produce. The consequence is a reduction in their net income.

Other services that are essentials to life are domestic water supply, electricity and so on. The supply of domestic water is very important as in the absence of it, the rural people are forced to depend on a variety of water sources like rivers and streams, which are quite often contaminated and usually cause frequent illness thereby reduces human productivity, and also provision of electricity which can facilitate rural industrialization and hence raise income and make life more meaningful in the rural setting". If the above variable or elements are put into consideration and provided for, there will be rural development that leads to national development.

Audience of rural development programmes

Onabajo [2002], “audiences of rural development programmes vary in age, occupation, motivation and educational experiences”, for instance, the farmers seeking advice on how to improve the yields of their crops.

Mothers seeking information, on how to safeguard the health of their children and advice on how to plan the size of their families properly, as well as the teachers, extension agents and other professionals working in the field that is in need of continuing guidance and support

The media and rural community relationship

In all fairness the central responsibility of mass media should function as the voice of the voiceless in the rural society. The media should build and sustain with the rural community, and should projects itself as:

- Active participant in the development of the community
- Agent of mobilization
- Projector of self-help development
- Partner in culture –tradition preservation, maintenance and sustenance.

The mass media should realize that in Nigeria and indeed in Africa, the largest population of the people lives in the rural areas. These very large percentages have only been found useful during elections when the elites need their votes to assume leadership positions of power and to exploit them.

In specific terms, the objective of mass media for the community will:

- Aim at creating a climate for change by inducing new values, attitudes and modes of behavior capable of aiding modernization.

- To raise the levels of aspiration on the part of the community dwellers which will serve as incentive for action?
- To liberate and open people's mind thereby making them prove to participating in decision-making process in the society at large.
- Helping in creating a sense of patriotism and nation-ness.
- Helping in making the people realize their importance individually and collectively, which may lead to increased political activity [Rao, 1966].

Analysis of data and discussion of findings

The interpretation and discussion of data gotten from responses to the questionnaires administered to the workers at Ikenne Local Government Areas in Ogun State, which was to give intended audience and future researcher the modus operandi of arriving at results and making generalizations. A total of 100 questionnaires were self-administered and all was returned, therefore, represent 100%.

Discussion is based as:

Research Question One: *Can rural broadcasting bring about community development?*

Eighty respondents representing 80% agree that rural broadcasting is a vital instrument of community development while 20 respondents [20%] are indifferent. This means that rural broadcasting is a tool for development.

Researches Question Two: *Is the broadcast programmes package-with the rural social realities of your community?*

Forty-two respondents representing [42%] agree that the broadcast messages reflects their rural social realities, while fifty-eight respondents representing [58%] disagree that the programmes do not reflect their rural social realities. The research has approved and authenticated that the programmes are more of urban centered and

does not reflect the rural happenings such as environmental issues-degradation , incessant power failure and poor supply of water, roads, health etc.

Research Question Three: *Which areas of development in the rural area that needed the most attention?*

The 35% respondents were of the opinion that the area most needed is the social aspect.30% are on the academic view, while, 20% are on the cultural view and 15% are on economic view. The research has approved that the areas needed most attention are on the social and academic areas of rural development that include provision of infrastructure and social amenities and human capital development.

Conclusion

The purpose of rural broadcasting is to bring solutions to the problems of the rural people by informing the government and viewing and listening public on the condition of the rural people to aid necessary development. Thus, achieving national development is not separated from rural development since the rural areas are more in percentage than the urban areas. The need to focus on meaningful development efforts in the communities is a sine-qua-non for any meaningful national development. Finally, the packaging of rural message should reflect their conditions and well channelled in their local language, as to integrate knowledge and understanding that will aid active participation for national development.

Recommendations

- Every rural area in Nigeria should have a radio and television station within their communities that will reflect their own environmental, social and economic happenings.
- There should be a based community viewing and listening centers for the rural people where they can gather in group to watch and listen to broadcast programmes.

- Development in the rural areas should be wholistic, as to encompass all areas of development so as to achieve uniformity of development.
- Finally, the involvement of the local community leaders will enable the rural implementer to carry the people along.
- The unbalanced attention to the economic aspect of the entire system such as information, education, politics, culture etc will hinder the genuine transformation, growth or industrialization if any set of vital elements in the development equation is neglected or given mere lip service.
- Balance rural and national development cannot be achieved without adequate attention being paid to information and communication.
- It is obvious and unreasonable for us to expect to achieve any realistic community development in Nigeria or any other developing countries without careful and systematic mobilization and participation of the rural community dwellers
- Incorporation of a well-planned adult education and literacy promotion programmes should be encouraged realizing the high illiteracy among rural dwellers constitute barriers to development.
- Finally, recruiting of crop of well- trained and well-motivated editors and reporters that are committed enough to survive the rigors of rural life and rural journalism should be incorporated into the development agenda [Nwosu.E. [1996].

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