

Full Length Research

Information as Tool for Rural Development: Roles of Information Professionals.

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This paper discusses information; its usefulness, channels and roles in the development of the rural communities, and the need for it to be adequately and widely disseminated to all segments of the rural society. In other words, the universality of the need for information and hence, its dissemination, regardless of whether one is an illiterate, semi-illiterate or stack illiterate person is stressed. The role of the popular channels of information dissemination such as the Radio, Television, GSM, and other traditional outlets are critically examined against the backdrop of the peculiarities that constitute the lots of the rural persons. The role of librarians as information professionals that could greatly complement those of the other mass-media in the task of proper and adequate dissemination of appropriately needed information to this undeniably indispensable but often neglected segment of our society receives its due attention in the paper. Also mention is the position/part the government is supposed to play. The study recommends that in-order to improve the access to information services in rural areas, it is imperative to deal with both individual and institutional factors such as library/media centers, lack of communication facilities/channels, poor educational facilities, lack of electricity, poor funding, lack of good road network, lack of hospital facilities, lack pipe born water etc, which limit access to information. It is also imperative to conduct audience research often so that appropriate information can be delivered to the right people.

Keywords: Information, channels, tool, rural development, roles, information professionals.

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INTRODUCTION

Information is difficult to describe because it means different things to different people. But then, information is a processed data capable of solving human's problems. Every human being needs information for advancement and awareness of what is happening around him. Information as a critical resource is indispensable for rural development without which they will stagnate. It plays important role in decision making thus making it the lifeblood of any society and vital for successful developmental activities. The type of

information needed for decision making may vary from one person to another. Scholars identify that the type of information needed relate much to the day to day activities a person is involved in, the geographical location of the information seeker, level of education, age, sex, field of study, profession, career stage, and size of business operation an individual has. Individual information needs determine the types of information services to be provided and the sources to be consulted (Anunobi, Ogbonna, & Osuchukwu, 2014). They maintained that in rural areas, information needs arise from the day to day activities rural people involve

themselves in. Information needs of rural communities can be categorized into health; agricultural; educational; housing; employment; transportation; religion, welfare, family; and legal information. Other information needed may relate to crime and safety, policies/ government, land and human rights. Moreover, rural people need information on markets, health, civics, agricultural and rural development etc. Rural development aims at promoting, maintaining and supporting community actions/activates with the aids of viable information deliveries. Successful community development involves redistribution and mobilizing layers of resources already present in the community. Thus, sustainable rural development is attributed to the extent in which a given community has access to information. Information plays a vital role in the development of any nation whether developed or undeveloped.

Sadly, major setbacks of undeveloped community in developing country such as Nigeria range from lack of information communication, communication gaps, poor infrastructures (bad road, no telecommunication network , poor water supply, epileptic electricity supply etc) poor health facilities, poor educational facilities, and inadequate access to information (Obidike,2011). She laments that many rural communities the world over including Nigeria lack access to basic needs of life, starting from good accommodation, sanitary environment, information about government functions, security etc, which culminate in poor development and poor community life. One of the solutions she proffers to alleviate rural development is the need for easy access to information.

Dutta (2013) depicts that easy and unlimited access to information will ensure that knowledge, awareness on topical issues such as innovations on technologies (ICTs) are brought to the door steps of the rural communities for improved life and development. Obidike (2011) is of the opinion that the least expensive input for rural development is knowledge. Knowledge comes from information and one cannot get adequate knowledge without proper information. Information as a critical resource is indispensable for national development without which a nation will stagnate, remains unproductive or even resort to poor living standard (Reitz, 2014). Okpa-Iroha (1999) in his wisdom, refers to information as the fourth estate of the realm, a critical resource for development which in the highly processed form, called knowledge is on equal footing with manpower and natural resources such as coal, gas, oil and gold etc. Information is now used to measure the wealth of nations and her GPA. Today information rich nations are economically wealthy, while reverse is the case for developing nations. Harrande (2013) states that the prosperity, progress or development of any nation depends upon its ability to acquire, produce, access and use pertinent information because today, information is a change agent, a reinforcement of ideas and transformer

of societies. Information is the lifeblood of any society and vital to the activities of both the government and rural sectors.

Bello (2009) holds the view that "the dependence upon information to create innovation and change, places a high premium on the ability of nations to access and use information to create advances in society". It is a fact that development of countries globally cannot be achieved without the development of the rural community. To Bello, rural development can be said to be a key prerequisite for measuring a country's development. This underscores the reason why rural communities should be adequately informed to move with their counterpart in urban center. He conclude that 75 to 80% of the people in developing countries of Africa who live in the rural areas need positive, relevant and prompt attention in their daily activities which relevant information can address. In conformity white the above assertion, Dangodhyay et. al. (2012) discussing Indians experience, maintains that information has great significance for a country like India where majority of the population, about 65% of the people, live in rural areas. He concludes that the present strategy of rural development in India mainly focuses on poverty alleviation, better livelihood opportunities, provision of basic amenities and infrastructure facilities through innovative programmes of wage and self-employment. His article titled "Overviews the role and function of the Government and its' programmes for rural development in India", stresses that the Indian government realizes the importance of information which made them to build public libraries in the rural areas.

Nyangani (n. d.) in his contribution on the African nations, depicts that the pattern in African countries such as Botswana, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Zimbabwe is that population is mostly in rural areas. He emphasizes that since great number of people reside in rural areas, information services must, therefore, be placed on rural areas where the people can access them. Although, he complained that population dispersion is a problem in supplying information, but suggested that every community should have, a point where people converge for various economic or social activities, where information and media/literacy centre should be erected with radio and television in accordance with the settlement and movement patterns of the people.

It is an established fact that prosperity, progress, and development of any nation depend upon the nation's ability to acquire, produce, access, and use pertinent information. In view of the above assertion, Yahaya (2009) agrees that access to information is also critical to letting people know their entire rights from government, its policies, rules and regulations, developments, entitlements, welfare benefits and sources of support to overcome social exclusion from government both states and federal.

The fact remains that any nation that neglects the development and empowerment of the rural communities

should not expect meaningful development. Rural neglects brings negative consequences such as exodus of rural dwellers to urban areas, with resulting problems of unemployment, crimes, prostitution, child labour, insecurity, poverty, proliferation of shanty living areas, spread of diseases, and overstretching of facilities and infrastructures in the urban areas. Queuing into the discourse Alegbeleye and Aina (1999) state that the third world countries have recently come to realize that unless the rural areas are well developed, hardly would any meaningful development occur in the urban cities. This is reiterated by Okiy (2009) thus:

"Rural development is a basis for agricultural economic development and information is an important ingredient that will inform farmers that fertilizer, agric- seeds etc are on sale. Development can only be effective if rural dwellers have timely access to the relevant, diverse information for farming activities. People in rural areas whether literate or not should have access to any kind of information which will help them to become capable and productive in their social and political obligations, to become better informed citizens generally."

Similarly, Diso (2011) asserts that "information must as a matter of policy, be seen as a basic resource for development if durable structures are to be provided for effective access and utilization, which entails information capturing, coordination, processing, and dissemination". For instance Nigeria has been an independent nation for the past 56 years with policies, rules and regulations on development of rural communities. But rural areas are still under-developed and the quality of life of people in the rural areas continues to deteriorate throughout all tiers of democratic government and the military regimes. He adduces that "Nigerian people are still dominantly peasant farmers, petty traders, middle men or commission agents". Nigeria as a nation has the potentials to develop all sectors of the economy through the exploitation of abundant human and natural/material resources that are in abundance but are dormant and untapped.

He laments that rural populace is in majority in terms of population, compare to the urban dwellers, large geographical environment, yet the amount of neglect and sufferings they encounter is unimaginable with reference to infrastructural developmental and other amenities. Despite these conditions in rural areas, one may ask; in what ways can information harnessing contribute to the development of the rural communities especially in information age? The above constraint informs this paper. It is expedient at juncture to understand who the rural dwellers are.

WHO IS THE RURAL DWELLER?

Situating the context in the light of this discourse, the questions are, 'What does it mean to be in a 'rural area' and within a 'rural community'? New English Dictionary and Thesaurus (2000) defines rural as "relating to, or characteristic of the countryside rather than the town". This connotes landscapes and geographies that have not yet been absolutely shaped by human development and significantly overlap with and connect to the natural environment. Accordingly, rural spaces and communities act as the interface between human societies and the natural world, which positions them in a significant societal role, serving as the nexus between human populations and natural places (Camara, 1990). They have vital functions in harvesting and gathering the natural resources that are distributed to and used by communities of all sizes and urbanity. Hence, cities across the globe are interdependent with rural communities for fundamental needs such as food, energy and building materials for shelter etc. In addition, rural spaces serve as 'gateways' to natural environment, meaning they provide important opportunities for people to experience, recreate in, and connect with nature. They are producers of agricultural resources of the nations, and leave within given communities that are distinct from the urban cities.

Encyclopedia Britannica of Knowledge (1768) defines rural society as a place where there is high population, high level of illiteracy, poor environment, lack of good roads, poor school facilities, poor hospital equipment, inadequate development/infrastructure and no recreational facilities etc. Against this backdrop therefore, rural communities in Africa, Nigeria inclusive can be said to constitute the larger percentage of the population whose information and developmental needs are not adequately met and consequently they have not been able to productively participate in development process and enjoy the benefits thereof (Chester & Neelameghan, 2016). As important as rural places are to human societies, they can also be incredibly economically, socially and culturally vulnerable. The economies and identities of rural communities often develop around single-resource (agriculture) (Keller, 2010). In fact the general purpose of community development is to improve agriculture/horticulture and standard of living of the inhabitants. There is great need for libraries to disseminate information to the rural communities to enhance their development and overall sustainability.

INFORMATION SERVICE TO RURAL DWELLERS

Information services are multidimensional and serve as a binding thread among different groups of rural dwellers. Scientifically information is a processed data. It can be loosely defined as that which aids decision making and

serves as a nest where human development can be hinged. Gilbert and deWatteville (2010) opine that information is whatever is capable of causing a human mind to change its opinion about the current state of real world. Information services empower people as they provide knowledge which is needed for solving practical problems being faced. Information services to rural dweller can be provided through various models which include service station, farmer's home, market square, town hall meeting, village square and the association model. Service station refers to an information service centre providing information services to rural communities. To access information services from service station, people must physically pay visit to information centers. Tele-centers and rural information resource centers are examples of information service stations. Moreover, farmers may access information as they enquire about agricultural inputs as well as from farmers' associations etc.

For information services to be delivered, reliable information services infrastructure are needed. This may be physical or electronic in nature. It must enhance the accessibility of speech, transfer of information, images and mails/multimedia document retrieval, includes radio, television and data. For them to attain full potential of rural information services, communities must perceive the usefulness of the information that is communicated. Thus, existence of services centers does not necessarily justify the success of rural information services. It is important for the librarian to assess the perceived usefulness and benefits associated with the usage of these services centers being offered with the aid of infrastructures. Such rural information infrastructure may include the road network and vehicles needed for transporting print resources to rural information centers; radio, television, and mobile phone infrastructure for transmitting data and audio-visuals for practical demonstration of the development programmes. Success of rural development programmes depends on effective use of information in their daily activities.

Considering the non existence of those facilities, overall conditions of rural dwellers in Nigeria and indeed the entire developing nations is pathetic, it does not project favourable environment for information service delivery; bad roads, insecurity, unfriendliness, traces of abject poverty and discomfort can be seen conspicuously. In such a condition of acute shortage or absence of social amenities and essential commodities, rural dwellers adopt "rural-urban drift" as an alternative and solution to this terrible condition. Nigeria has policies and plans for developments which include rural people, but the condition of the rural communities is degenerating instead of advancing. What could be the reason for this unwanted, unhealthy, uncomfortable, and unbearable situation? The answer is not hard to determine. A high rate of illiteracy and absence of government presence in the rural community is the major contributing factor.

Abdulwahab (2009) observes that the rural populace suffers from acute social amenities, low productivity, social and economic retrogression due mainly to ignorance which is also a direct consequence of either inadequate or total lack of government presence and neglect from government representatives. Despite the fact that Nigeria is endowed with both human and natural resources our rural communities are still suffering due to absence of indices of development.

In line with the above, Diso (2011) comments that "the structural and infrastructural problems, official corruption, unstable political and economic policies, growing insecurity, and unstable power supply hamper this development". Rural inhabitants in the present day Nigeria and indeed other developing nations are not reaping from the fruits of the enormous wealth the country has. So in the light of the foregoing, it is only information services that will greatly enhance their productivity, transform their community into a lively and enlightened one, and empower their economic base. Generally, our rural populace needs information in order to articulate their desire.

INFORMATION NEEDS OF RURAL POPULACE /COMMUNITIES

The diverse nature of rural communities indicates that their information needs are many and multidimensional. It is very important for the librarian to determine the totality of their information needs from onset. In Nigeria, for instance there is no comprehensive documentation on the information needs of rural inhabitants. The case of neglect affects both the giver and the receiver. In the past, attempts have been made to explore the needs of individual rural communities for the purpose of research. Alegbeleye and Aina (1999) enumerate information needs categories of Nigerian rural communities to include:

- **Agriculture and allied occupations:** the greatest area of information need by rural Nigerians is in agriculture, which includes planting treated seeds, soil conservation, prevention of plants and animal disease, fertilizer application, farm machineries, recommended thinning practices, proper storage of farm products, marketing techniques, cooperative activities and other agro-cultural activities;
- **Education:** information needs of the existing rural schools, needs of the illiterate's and semi-illiterates. They need to have relevant information that will develop their interest and support teaching and learning processes;
- **Housing:** rural public need information about where they can obtain lands and loans to build houses and

the type of materials to be used and where they can be easily obtained.

- **Employment:** rural communities need information on employment opportunities, taxation, investment opportunities, banking and other financial activities and empowerment.
- **Transportation:** they need information on the cost of bicycles, motorcycles and vehicles and where to obtain them.
- **Religion:** recreation and cultural activities.
- **Crime and safety:** how to prevent crimes, report crimes, role of the law and enforcement agents etc.
- **The neighborhood:** information needs in the neighborhood include problems of water supply, electricity supply, environmental sanitation, refuse disposal, road maintenance and drought.
- **Health information:** on how individuals can prevent different diseases such as malaria, missals, HIV, polio, chicken pox, mumps, weeping cough, corona virus and awareness of available healthcare delivery and its cost;
- **Welfare and Family matters:** information is required on problems of marriage, marriage disputes, childcare, juvenile delinquency etc;
- **Legal matters:** information is needed on laws that affect the rural dwellers. Such law ranges from customary law, land law, family and marriage law etc;
- **Policies and Government:** information is needed on political rights of the people and how they can exercise such rights;
- **Land:** information is needed on land tenure systems, family inheritance, community land acquisition and transfer of land.

However, as listed above, development and transformation can only be possible, effective and relevant when information needs of the rural dwellers are met positively. Access to information is a strong pillar that cannot be ignored by both individual and group of people, communities etc. Information is very essential to the rural communities for optimum development. Confirming the above, Webreck (2013) states that information is a stock of knowledge which the people should strive to uphold to avert poverty, poor living conditions, sickness, illiteracy, and maintain sustainable development.

Borcherdt (2011), complimenting the need for rural information needs, remarks that "none of the thousand of

projects in the developing countries can be executed without the fundamental conditions of the establishment of a literate and numerate (rural) society, and a system for continuous provision of exchange of ideas, thought and knowledge on which the (rural) society, can feed and use with suitable modifications to constructions of our own cultural and industrial destiny". Camble (2009) comments that "the success of rural information programmes rest squarely on the availability and use of quality information by rural development workers and rural people and that many rural development programmes have failed in developing countries because they were planned with insufficient and inaccurate data about rural dwellers' needs". The development of the rural populace should not be carried out on assumption, there must be sufficient information about their needs, and the type of developmental information they require.

INFORMATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural community development encompasses a range of approaches and activities, aims at improving the welfare and livelihood of people living in rural areas. As a branch of community development, these approaches pay attention to social issues particularly community organizing, farming, community fishing/hunting etc. This is in contrast to other forms of rural development that focus on public works (e.g. rural roads and electrification) and technology (e.g. tools and techniques for improving agricultural production). Rural community development is important because it is where large part of the population engage in agriculture. These types of developments are enhanced through effective participation of rural people in rural communities. It also entails the management of their own socio economic and environmental objectives by empowering people, particularly their men through organizations such as local farmer's cooperatives. Having witnessed the slow pace of African development, Nyerere (1967) states thus: "while other countries in the world aim to reach the moon, the African nations must aim for the time being at any rate to reach the villages by providing them with necessary information for development" that will wipe illiteracy and backwardness and move them forward. Nyerere's assertion 53 years ago is still relevance because villagers are still in the same position, without hope of moving forward.

For long, history has shown that rural communities in Africa have suffered from government neglect, no meaningful development largely because of poor policy implementation and corruptions that leads to artificially gaps created by the governments to effect development and economic growth. Hougdo (2014) in analyzing these issues argues that economic growth remains robust in African urban cities, but the region has seen a steady rise in the number of extremely poor people. He concludes that two-third of Africa's population live and

work in rural areas, which offer huge land surfaces, and agriculture that represents 65 per cent of jobs in Sub-Saharan. Yet, rural areas have been undervalued by governments, international development leaders and policy advisers. As a result, per capita food production has barely grown over the last 50 years, agriculture only represents 17 percent of Sub-Saharan's GDP, and its productivity is low and even declining. These conditions, considered harsh by the majority of the rural dwellers, result in massive migration into urban areas to look for greener pasture, and often in search of formal employment, as the only option for survival. In trying to alleviate this problem, UNESCO has since established an institution that aids information services in some developing countries to serve as a catalyst for meaningful development.

Empowering rural people to be among global players in the knowledge-based economy can only be achieved if government—both federal, state and local government—plays its roles by putting all necessary structures on ground, also rural people must be made to be aware of the importance and role of information for development. Thus, it can be said that, information, if well articulated could eradicate ignorance and give enlightenment on how to achieve economic, educational, social, political and cultural objectives towards the development of the entire community.

In addition to this, utilization of information in a coherent form can raise aspiration, through arousing people from fatalism, fear of change and desire for a better life and zeal/determination to work for it. This can create an intellectual climate, which stimulates people to take another look at their own current practices and future perspectives. Ideally, information brings about knowledge, and a knowledgeable community is also an informed community. This signifies that no community can develop without knowledge, and a community can only become knowledgeable if they recognize and use information as their tool for development.

Access to the right information can address major problems that hinder rural community development and also improve chances for livelihood. A researcher like Alex-Pox (2013) has reported that an increase in income was received because farmers' cooperatives that are well informed were able to respond appropriately to changes in the market. This has made them to compete with other commercial farmers' through communal viewing of agricultural programs on television and telephone conversation with distant friends and relatives. It also strengthened their social networks that such people today continue to develop themselves with information they acquired. Societal needs are satisfied through various kinds of activities, each of which requires information as an input.

That is why Panos (1998) stresses that access to information is an essential condition for development. From this juncture, it could be said that information if well

uttered and packaged for rural communities will exterminate poverty, ignorance and give knowledge/enlightenment on how to achieve economic, social, educational, political and cultural objectives towards the development of the entire society. The relevance of this revolution is supported by Balit (2010) who asserts that the least expensive input for rural development is knowledge. Knowledge and information are basic ingredients of making one to be self-reliant and are essential for facilitating rural development including industrial and social facilities that bring economic change.

In Munyua's (2013) view, rural communities require information inter alia on supply of inputs, new technologies, early warning systems (drought, pests, and diseases), credit, market prices and their competitors. For this reason, information can be regarded as a basic resource by rural communities which the populace may use to improve their conditions of living and is essential for developmental processes. Not only does information expand the possibilities of social, political, educational and economic development of any country, it also facilitates awareness and empowerment. Information is an asset and a resource for overall community development. In context to the foregoing, Aguolu (2010) views information as embodying interrelated or structured data which are required to enable one to act knowledgeably as well as to take appropriate decisions. Thus, information managers naturally play the role of contributing to the speedy development of community, implant ideas, open up minds, fire imagination, release the brake of ignorance and dynamics of progress, inspire younger minds to see vision and contribute to the growth of the nation through the channels of information acquisitions for the rural dwellers.

CHANNELS OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS

Channels of information acquisition and dissemination refer to transfer or exchange of information from person to person or from one place to another. It is an action that produces reaction, whether positive or negative, communication has taken place. James (2012) states that information delivery is not a one-way affair, there must be a sender to transmit the message, and a receiver to make appropriate decisions on how the rest of the exchange should be. This involves exchange of ideas, facts, opinion, attitudes and beliefs between people. The ability to communicate and pass information is a key factor in all cultures whether literate or not. Fayose and Dike (2012) depict that many cultures survived today without the written word, so effective communication can take place without reading or writing. Thus, the following are channels through which information is passed to the rural communities:

Age Groups: Age Groups are old institutions that

comprise mostly males within the same age-brackets-usually those born within one to five years age range. The Age Groups helps in getting things in order in the society in which they belong. The name of age groups are derived either from the name of their patron or father. The Age groups carry out community development projects which include the cleaning of the source of water supply, the building and maintenance of roads and bridges, village squares, assembly houses and deity shrine; the execution of laws and decision of the council of elders and the lineage or village assembly, including the collection of dues and fines, the punishment of crime and the burial of the dead. The age groups also help in educating the young groups about the traditions and needs for the maintenance of their culture.

Ivory Horns and Long Brass: These produce notes that can vary in length and tone. These are used to communicate long messages and herald important events. The long brass horn are mainly found in Northern states of Nigeria while the Ivory horns are found in the Southern and Eastern States of the country where they have also become state symbols of titled men.

Inter-Personal: This is simply referred to as face-to-face communication. It is the exchange of ideas and information between sender and receiver. The mode of interaction is usually of a conversational nature and involves the exchange of either verbal or non-verbal information between two or more people, in a face-to-face or voice-to-voice setting. Interpersonal communication dominates our activities at home, office, market and elsewhere. It helps to break the barrier of formal relationships, generates warmth and creates harmony that is necessary for socio-economic development. In this kind of communication, it is necessary for the participants to be close enough to enable them to conversationally interact. The personal mannerism of either the sender or the receiver should be apparently clear enough for effective communication. The parties involved in interpersonal communication are all active. The major advantage is immediate response, which may provide signal for the encoder to modify his subsequent message to achieve a determined objective. Aderibigbe (2012) believes that interpersonal communication is the major means of linking the rural farmers since majority of them are illiterate.

The Talking Drum: The talking drum is another traditional media of communication which helps in developing the rural communities. The talking drum is an extension of oral tradition. This talking drum is also regarded as the "Ekwe or Ikoro" in the Igbo communities. It reproduces the tonal pattern of a sentence in the proper sequence and can be heard over a very long distance. The talking drum serves for two-pronged communicative functions: Official and social functions.

Town crier: Traditional mass media serve both utilitarian and aesthetic purposes. They form the vehicle for acquisition and dissemination of information to rural people. Ngwaimbi (2014) notes that traditional media is the live theatre of rural people. Town criers are popular among African rural people in terms of their longevity of use and their effectiveness in transmitting messages. He explains that in many rural areas town criers are village messengers who go from village to village delivering messages. Occasional striking a bell or drum, they report the news to attendant villagers. This village messengers "give the news headlines thereby arousing the villagers' interest. There are different methods used by town criers to communicate information. They include talking drum, gung, bell, trumpeters etc. The choice and method depends on the type of information he has to deliver. For effective communication, librarian must involve the town criers for him to succeed in his mission.

In Market places: There are various societal activities that take place in the rural environment and the rural people use the market environment to disseminate such information from one society to another. Awa (2012) observes that many issues and events are discussed in market places more than elsewhere. He suggests that market sites could be used to disseminate rural development information to farmers to make it faster and effective since most villages go there. African markets have been successfully used for advertising new food products and drugs. For example, pseudo-pharmacists sell non-prescribed and prescribed medicines to hundreds of people in the market places. Moreover, information on better nutrition and inter-village relationship are spread by local agents trained by African-centric technicians. This mode of communication is development oriented and messages are self-evident.

Lectures, demonstrations and film shows: Lectures, demonstrations, and shows are also methods of information dissemination to both the elites and rural people. To support this, Ladipo (1999) emphasizes that lectures and demonstrations are effective means of passing new information to people. For instance, lecture on oral rehydration therapy (ORT) may be combined with the demonstration of how to prepare the sugar/salt solution for the treatment of diarrhea. Ajakaiye (2010) suggest that agricultural shows and exhibitions should be used to educate farmers on improved methods of farming. It offers opportunity to farmers to see and consider for adoption, results of materials used in research institutes and agro-allied concerns; and it helps farmers in assessing the success of previous efforts and in formulating policies that would help farming population of rapid agricultural development.

Modern channels: Communication and entertainment are important for rural living. Bame (2015) noted that

access to modern communication media makes rural lives more productive and comfortable. Today, rural projects, businesses, schools and growing number of households make daily use of audio-visual equipments like radio, television, video, mobile phone etc. The services are wide, and they could be as crucial as a 2-way radio link between a remote clinic and an urban hospital. The modern communication equipment for rural people such as radio, telephone, video and video-player and public address system, GSM (Global System for Mobile) are very important channels of information acquisition and dissemination to rural people. The use of GSM by the rural dwellers enables them to communicate timely and accurately with people outside their environment. Munyua (2013) observes that traditional and modern Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) could be used concurrently to speed up the circulation of information.

In many African countries, ICTs are used in drama, dance, folklore, group discussion, meetings, exhibitions, demonstrations, agricultural shows, and many others. Audio-visual media are popular with illiterate rural people. It gives them opportunity to see and discuss complete agricultural techniques before using them. Audiovisual technology also improves mental retention, and for these reasons educators are making use of videos, television programmes, films, slides and pictures in training sessions for farmers. Morgan (2014) in his study of villagers who use radio in Kenya, discovered that rural radio listening in the Meru, Nithi and Tharaka Districts of Kenya indicated a penetration of 69% among rural households. He proffers that the possession of radio sets, access to newspapers, and television sets in the rural area are positive indicators of information development. These media programmes are meant for demonstration and educate the communities on modern agricultural and health practices. In Gambia and Ghana, the radio soap operas, according to Babalola (2011) have motivated men and women to seek and use family planning services. And in Nigeria the Anambra State Ministry of Health used radio programmes titled "Dibia ezi na ulo" (Family Doctor) and "Ezi-na ulo" (our family) to influence the health habits of the people. Access to information is a strong pillar that cannot be ignored by either the individual, groups of people, community or local governments because of its numerous benefits. Deducing from above, achievement can be made if the local government chairmen, ward councilors and all stake holders in the communities should liaise with information professionals in their areas to provide responsive community support services for better community development.

CHALLENGES OF INFORMATION DESSIMINATION TO RURAL DEWELLERS

One of the greatest challenges that affect information

services to rural dweller is the inability of most rural people to read, write and understand information. The reason could be the environmental factors, which include lack of learning environment, backwardness and majority of them are illiterate. This means that the information manager must either understand their language or ask for an interpreter who will serve as an intermediary between them. In Nigeria and indeed the entire Africa continent illiteracy is a serious problem which the government, educational and development authorities cannot afford to ignore. It is an established fact that an illiterate person cannot play a full part in the social and economic development of his country. Another predicament is that communication must be oral or most often dramatized for them to understand the message. For instance, oral communication has been used by authorities carrying out political, health, agricultural, religious, and community education in rural areas. But this method is not as effective as the printed word. The ability to read and write is a *sine qua non* of full citizenship and the right to education is one of the fundamental rights of man. It is believed that the level of a country's socio-economic development depends very much on the reading ability of its people. 'A reading nation is a well-informed nation; it cannot be easily cheated or exploited'.

One of the disadvantages that the rural populace experience compared to their urban counterpart is the lack of information facilities. Hence he is less informed while his urban counterpart, through the use of information facilities, is able to qualify for better jobs, attain higher academic and professional qualifications and is generally better informed. Government must ensure that proper environment such as good roads, house, schools, libraries and other necessities of life should not be status symbols for only the privileged few. The rural dweller thus desperately needs educational institutions and libraries/media centers to improve their lot. Culture is also another challenge: there are some cultures that exclude female in discussion even in their families. In most town/villages in African settings including Nigeria females are barred from taking part in some cultural gatherings, discussions and cultural dances. For instance, in Igbo land there are some gathering a woman cannot address, like a gathering of the 'red cap chiefs'.

CONCLUSION

Sustainability and progress in rural communities is tied to information harnessing which enhances development of the rural areas. Effective information service delivery and coordination is the essential ingredient for development. Information service for rural communities must be recognized and empowered. The paper concludes that information service has never been effective and useful to the rural inhabitants of the country since independence in 1960. The information service

policy of the country was never implemented in favor of rural dwellers. The emphasis is on government activities and propaganda, which do not have any positive impact on the rural dwellers.

RECOMMENDATION

A literate society is a developed community. Any community whose populace does not have access to adequate information cannot achieve sustainable development, especially in this era of information age. A developing or rural community should be able to have easy and unlimited access to desired information for continuity and better community life. Information professionals should always strive to find new and innovative means to serve the communities with adequate support and leadership role of local chief, elders in the community, local government chairmen etc. It will not be out of context to state that, there are communities - rural and marginalized communities - in developing as well as in developed countries whose information needs are not adequately met and consequently they have not been able to productively participate in the development process and enjoy the benefits thereof. Equity and justice requires that any program for socio-economic development, whether general or in a specific sector, should cover and benefit all sections of the society, irrespective of race, caste, colour, religion, culture and other social, economic or political differences. Members of these communities, as they live close to nature and have a stake in the preservation and nurturing of nature and its offerings, acquire a wealth of knowledge about their environment that could be of value to the greater good to all. The paper is of the opinion that if all the stake holders can play their parts in providing developmental facilities, the information professionals will on their own offer professional guideline and serve as a link between the rural communities and the government.

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