

*Full Length Research*

# Provision of Library and Information Services in Rural Communities in Delta State for Sustainable Development

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The study examined the provision of library and information services by rural communities in Delta State for sustainable development. The study made it clear that rural communities in Delta State are in dire need of library and information services. Particularly in the fields of agriculture, markets and pricing, health information, mining, and precious resources for sustainable development. Library and information services opened up new prospects for development. The study emphasised the information needs of rural areas to include information about neighbourhoods, health, agriculture, education, housing, and so on. The study pointed out that library and information services may be obtained by rural communities through library and information centres and mobile library services. The study outlined that lack of or unstable power supply, poor network or bandwidth, lack of information infrastructure, such as a functioning public library, a mobile library service, information centres, and a lack of information and ICT skills, are some obstacles that rural communities must overcome in order to access effective library and information services in Delta State. The study recommended that the government should establish libraries or make them operational where they already exist, as well as other types of information centres, since this will significantly speed up the development process.

**Keywords:** Provision, Library, Information, Services, Rural Communities, Delta state

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## INTRODUCTION

Both urban and rural residents can benefit from information as a raw ingredient for growth. Any country's capacity to generate, obtain, and utilise important information is essential to its prosperity, development, and growth. Access to knowledge and guidance is a crucial resource for locals in sustain active and independent lifestyles, according to Abissat (2008) in a report on ageing rural residents. For people to understand their rights to welfare benefits and the resources that are available to help them overcome social disadvantage, they must have access to

information. A community's growth is greatly influenced by information officers. Information is necessary in every sphere of human activity in order to effect change. If a nation wishes to be considered developed, it must start from scratch. Nigeria is a developing country where the bulk of the population lives in rural areas (Okiy, 2003). She emphasised that it is essential to include them in the process of national development. This may be accomplished by identifying the information needs of rural residents, providing cutting-edge rural public library services, raising their literacy and educational levels, and enhancing their capacity to use relevant, useful information in their everyday lives.

Rural populations have a wide range of information demands, from agriculture to health. This is because farmers predominate in rural areas. Rural residents, who make up 70% of the population in countries like Nigeria, are one of the main indicators of a nation's level of development (Nwafor 1986). Both subsistence farmers and severely illiterate small traders can be found in Nigeria's rural areas (Muhammed, 1996). Low population, primary production, and a dearth of social and basic infrastructure are other traits (Yusuf, 2010). Rural residents' participation in the development process is essential since their progress is a sign of progress for the country as a whole. Identifying their information requirements and offering creative rural public library services are two ways to do this (Obinyan, Obinyan, and Aidenojie, n.d.). Services from rural public libraries are offered to meet the requirements of the local community, taking into account their surroundings and with an emphasis on fostering an informed and democratic society.

According to Abolaji (2009), public libraries' collections are designed to promote moral and cultural enrichment as opposed to other libraries, which hold research resources. According to Issa (n.d.), their resources include tools required for routine information, such as television, sporadic video watching, radio, and gramophones, as well as posters and other handbills that might improve public awareness. The requirements of the local populace are also served through newspapers and periodicals (Hossain, 2012). Therefore, distinct problems arise while providing library services in rural regions compared to those that do so when providing library services in other settings. These problems include a dispersed population, inadequate transport and communication networks, insufficient financial resources, language hurdles, poverty, a lack of physical infrastructure, improper library collections and services, and low patronage (Posigha 2010). Rural villages in Delta state have an urgent need for library and information services. In these areas, library and information services will open up new possibilities for growth in the fields of agriculture, education, and health as well as for boosting production. Investments in the human, physical, financial, and technical infrastructure are necessary for a library and information services to be effective and efficient. Resources for information cannot be used in isolation or separately from other resources. Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone includes the state of Delta State (McNamara, 2003).

## HISTORY OF DELTA STATE

The state, which was created on August 27, 1991, from the previous Bendel State, is named after the Niger Delta, which occupies a sizeable portion of its territory. The state is bordered on the north by Edo State, the east

by Anambra and Rivers States, the south by Bayelsa State, and the west by the Bight of Benin, which spans roughly 160 km of the state's coastline. The State had 12 local government areas when it was first established in 1991; they were later increased to 19, and there are currently 25 local government areas in total. The twin cities of Warri and Uvwie serve as the state's economic hub, while Asaba, the state capital, is situated along the Niger River at the state's northernmost tip. With an estimated population of more than 5.6 million as of 2016, Delta is the 36th most populated state and the 23rd biggest in terms of area. Geographically, the state is divided between the mangroves of Central Africa in the coastal south-west and the lowland forests of Nigeria in the majority of the remaining state, with a tiny area of the swamp forests of the Niger Delta in the extreme south.

The River Niger and its tributary, the Forçados River, flow along the Niger Delta's eastern and southern boundaries, respectively. Another Niger tributary, the Escravos River, flows through Warri, and the coastal regions are criss-crossed with dozens of smaller Niger tributaries that make up much of the western Niger Delta. A large portion of the state's natural areas support populations of vulnerable species such as the dwarf crocodile, Grey parrot, African fish eagle, mona monkey, and African manatee, as well as possibly extinct ones like the African leopard and Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzee (Lameed, 2009; Ijeomah, 2015).

Before the region was annexed by the British Oil Rivers Protectorate in 1884, what is now Delta State was separated into a number of monarchial nations including the Kingdom of Warri and the Agbor Kingdom during the pre-colonial era. The protectorate was added by the British to the Southern Nigeria Protectorate in the early 1900s, which ultimately merged into British Nigeria. It is currently known as the Niger Coast Protectorate. But because of the upheavals of the Ekumeku Movement, colonial soldiers would not finally take over modern-day Delta State until the 1910s. Notably, Delta contains one of the few regions of what is now Nigeria that were governed by France, since the UK leased the Forçados enclave to France from 1903 to 1930. The territory of present-day Delta was a part of the Western Region upon independence in 1960 until the region was split in 1963, at which point it became a member of the Mid-Western Region. In an effort to quickly end the war, the Igbor-majority of the former Eastern Region attempted to secede as the state of Biafra in 1967 and invaded the Mid-Western Region.

Biafran forces were eventually stopped and pushed back, but for a short period of time they briefly proclaimed the captured Mid-Western Region (including now-Delta State) as the Republic of Benin. Widespread conflicts occurred during the occupation between the Biafran army and the majority non-Igbo residents of what is now Delta State. Nigerian army carried out the Asaba massacre on Igbos in Asaba after liberating the Mid-West. The Mid-

Western Region was reconstituted following the conclusion of the war and the unity of Nigeria until 1976, when Bendel State was given its current name. Bendel State was divided in 1991; the northern half became Edo State and the southern half became Delta State. As one of the major oil-producing states in the nation, the economy of Delta State is centred on the extraction of crude oil and natural gas (Nigeria Information & Gulde, 2022). Agriculture is one of the state's major minor businesses since it produces a lot of cassava, oil palm, and yam, in addition to fishing and heli-culture. Although Delta has the fourth highest Human Development Index in the nation, in large part because of its enormous oil revenues, conflicts between oil companies and local communities and years of systemic corruption have caused hostilities that are frequently associated with the underdevelopment of host communities. Over 60% of the State's landmass—18,050 km<sup>2</sup> (6,970 sq mi)—is made up of land (Akanbi, 2021).

Approximately, the state is located between 5°00' and 6°45' east and 5°00' and 6°30' north. It is physically situated in the middle of Nigeria, bordered by the states of Edo to the north and west, Anambra, Imo, and Rivers to the east, Bayelsa to the south-east, and the Bight of Benin, which makes up roughly 160 km of the state's coastline, on the southernmost point. The majority of Delta State is flat with few noteworthy hills. The state includes a long stretch of coastline that is lined with streams and rivulets that are a part of the Niger Delta (Ebewore, 2020).

### **Information Needs of Rural Communities in Delta state**

According to Abolaji (2009), Ogunrombi & Amadasu (2005), Saleh & Lasisi (2011), the information needs of rural dwellers are based on their activities and include those that assist them in attending to health, agriculture, social, political, trading (petty trading), food processing, textile, pottery, and other crafts, entertainment, as well as other public affairs, aesthetic, and cultural matters. Unique information services, such as telephone, advisory, extension/outreach, social-political, current awareness, children, selective information dissemination, book mobile, and referral services, are required to meet the contextual information needs (Udofia & Posigha 2010). Each service has a unique content and packaging depending on the context. In spite of acknowledged demands and the availability of information resources and services, usage is not guaranteed. However, Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) revealed that availability and accessibility alone do not predict use of library and information resources, but Iyoro (2004) emphasised that usage is a result of accessibility. Additionally required for assuring usage are conceptual, linguistics, critical, bibliographic, and physical difficulties as advised by

Kuhlthau in 1991. The promotion of information products and services is one strategy to guarantee the usage of rural information centres. Given the environmental and population features of rural regions, awareness-building is required to provide effective rural library services. According to Aina (2004), farming is the primary industry in rural areas in Africa. Communities in the Delta State are not an exception. According to Kiplang'at (1999), quoted in Oni, Nomuoje, and Oshiotse (2014), the successful adoption of agricultural inputs, market decision-making, and the acceptance of scientific methodologies may all be facilitated by providing pertinent information to rural populations. Communities in Delta State are varied, which suggests that a variety of information is needed by them. It is crucial to ascertain their complete information demands. The information demands of rural areas in Delta State are similar to those of other rural communities and include: 1. Neighbourhood information: Delta State's rural residents want information on the availability of water, power, environmental cleanliness, garbage disposal, road maintenance, security, and drought. In especially on the subjects that interest them, libraries assist in giving people and groups accurate and current information. Information on the socio-economic demands of society is now included in the scope of information services. A library must act as a hub for specialised information sources or as a point of referral. Information on career prospects, utility services, and social awareness campaigns run by various departments is seen as crucial. For the purpose of disseminating information on these topics to the wider public, libraries gather and retain information.

**Religion:** Rural communities in Delta State require knowledge about religion

**Culture:** Delta State rural communities require cultural activities and knowledge. Libraries serve as one of the main hubs of culture and encourage involvement, pleasure, and admiration of the arts. The first part of promoting culture is reading and thinking, which broadens people's perspectives and fosters their creative potential. Second, the library must arrange educational events including lectures, seminars, symposia, book displays, and social gatherings to further the cultural development of the community.

**Crime and Safety:** Information on crime prevention is needed in Delta state's rural villages.

**Health information:** Residents of Delta State rural areas require knowledge of the availability and location of healthcare delivery services as well as information on how diseases can be prevented.

**Agricultural knowledge:** Delta state rural communities require knowledge on agricultural best practice. These topics may include, but are not limited to, the use of fertiliser, preservation of the soil, avoidance of plant and animal illness, the newest seedlings, farm equipment, methods for storing agricultural goods, marketing, lending services, and cooperative activities.

**Education:** Rural communities in Delta State require pertinent information to grow their interest in and support of teaching and learning processes. Libraries give means for self-development of the individuals and groups at all stages of education. This bridges the knowledge gap between the individual and the written record. Obinyan et al. (n.d.) stressed the need of providing newspapers and periodicals, particularly for retirees who may require such materials to stay up to date with social trends. Due to the traditional oral communication method, the majority of rural dwellers obtain their information from local sources such as town criers, churches or mosques, non-conventional sources like friends and close associates, organised groups like agricultural extension workers, political groups, and co-operative societies, as well as friends and close associates (Ogunrombi & Amadasu, 2005). The hiring of the relevant staff, who must be certified library professionals skilled in rural information collection and dissemination techniques, is necessary for the supply of the suitable resources through the appropriate channel (medium) (Issa, n.d.). Analysis of rural information requirements is the first step in providing useful rural information.

This is because, their needs are relative to a specific rural dweller (Ogunombi & Oladokun, 1993). Contrarily, the information provisions in Nigerian rural areas are modelled along the western libraries without consideration to the rural or African context (Uheghu 1997). As such, the information needs are not met (UNESCO 1997).

### **Access to Library Services in Rural Communities in Delta state**

Kizilaslan (2006) argues that proper dissemination of information for rural communities is a crucial tool in the fight against poverty and deprivation. Information helps the poor to avail of the opportunities and also reduce their vulnerability. Aina (1986) cited in Oni, Nomuoje and Oshiotse (2014), librarians should be in position to contribute positively towards disseminating information to rural communities. Librarians are expected to repackage information materials which have been tailored to meet the information needs of rural inhabitants in a language and format that they would understand (Aboyade, 1987 cited Nomuoje & Oshiotse, 2014). Library services can be accessed by communities in Delta state through the following means:

#### **Mobile library**

A huge truck created to be used as a library is known as a book mobile or mobile library. They are made to hold books on shelves so that readers may reach them when the car is parked. They often offer enough room for

individuals to sit inside and read books. In villages and city suburbs lacking library facilities, mobile libraries are frequently employed to provide library services. They provide assistance to folks who have trouble visiting libraries as well, with retirement communities being frequent destinations. They could also have additional books or computer equipment like what you might find at a library. Some libraries now distribute items, such as audio books and novels in big print, to users who are confined to their homes using book mobiles.

#### **Library/information centre**

A library is a collection of thinking recordings. These documents are tangible representations of human concepts, such as usable manuscripts, books, magazines, audio-visual materials, microfilms, graphs, and charts. These are organised, saved, and maintained in a physically sound structure for future usage by possible users. Libraries and information centres now play a new function in the modern information society. This is a result of people using on-line information sources and electronic services more often. Due to flexible communication systems and effective work structure, libraries are also operated in a more democratic manner. The users of their services come first.

#### **The functions of Rural library**

1. Collect and supply books and other information resources.
2. Foster and encourage the spread of information, education, and culture.
3. Provide a space for community members to engage in both formal and informal lifelong self-education. □
4. Preserve the literary and cultural legacy of humankind for future generations to use as research and cultural tools.
5. Provide trustworthy information to all users, regardless of their age, caste, creed, colour, religion, sex, or other characteristics.
6. Gather resources to improve enlightened citizenship, enrich one's own life, and facilitate cultural advancement in the neighbourhood.

#### **Challenges militating against Access to Library Services in Delta state Communities**

Most people, including some information professionals, reside and work in rural locations. Effective library services are required. The upshot of this is that in rural places, the facilities required to access library services

are either not there or, in some situations, are not operating, which presents several difficulties for librarians in providing effective and efficient information services. According to Aina (1986), who was referenced by Oni, Nomuoje, and Oshiotse (2014), the degree of illiteracy among rural residents is the biggest challenge encountered by librarians. Since they have limited resources, it is difficult for librarians to repackage information products in a way that they can understand. Other challenges are Lack/unreliable power in rural communities, poor network/ bandwidth and lack of information infrastructure such as functional public library, mobile library service, information centres and so on.

## CONCLUSION

Any community's growth requires information as a key component. It is common knowledge that knowledge is power and that information leads to knowledge. Traditional media, in particular rural radio, has been particularly effective in disseminating agricultural messages in emerging nations as a result of the expansion and development of rural regions. The delivery of library and information services in rural areas has also been accelerated through the use of print, video, television, films, slides, images, theatre, dance, folklore, group discussions, meetings, exhibition, and demonstrations (Oni, Nomuoje, & Oshiotse, 2014). To meet their information needs and help with information distribution, librarians should be accessible in rural areas. The importance of libraries in rural communities cannot be overstated; the lack of library and information services in any community would be disastrous to the long-term development of the nation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The government should establish libraries or make them operational where they already exist, as well as other types of information centres, for rural areas in Delta State since this will significantly speed up the development process.
2. In order to improve library services in rural regions and ensure that rural residents receive appropriate information from librarians for long-term national development, the government should embark on the establishment of functional libraries and information centres.
3. To facilitate the delivery of library and information services for sustainable national development, the government, non-governmental organisations, and esteemed sons and daughters of communities in Delta state should establish adult education centres.

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