Challenges of Information Dissemination to Rural Communities: A Case of Niger-Delta Communities, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
This paper focuses on information needs and information dissemination in the rural communities. It discusses the channels of information dissemination among rural dwellers that in rural settings, channels used to disseminate rural development information faster and effectively, included face to face communication, town criers, social-political meetings, market place and churches etc. It highlights the role of rural library in information dissemination that the library takes into consideration the nature of rural communities, its information needs and dissemination. It also examines challenges facing rural dwellers in information dissemination. The paper further concludes with recommendations to enhance information dissemination among rural dwellers in Niger Delta communicates.

Keywords: Challenges, Information needs, information dissemination, rural communities.

1. INTRODUCTION
Rural Communities are devoid of basic social amenities such as lack of power supply, good and inaccessible roads, pipe born water, health care facilities etc. The rural communities unlike the urban counterparts are associated with agricultural, sparsely populated, mostly of illiterates, mostly old and few youths. Iwe (2003) describes rural communities on areas in Nigeria context as any area that is far from urban city, a village, a hinterland with good access roads, no pipe-borne water, no electricity and no factories and industries. She went further to state that rural communities differ from one another in demographic composition, general characteristics, and area of land etc. And that in spite of these differences, researchers believe that about 70 percent of the population of every rural community in Nigeria suffers illiteracy (Iwe, 2003). According to Encyclopedia Britannica Macro peda, knowledge (2007) defined rural society as a place where there is low population, high level of illiteracy and lack of commercial institutions. Information is an indispensable commodity in the functioning of every society. It is a fact that human being, whether at home or in their places of work use information for survival within the environmental in which they work or live. More specifically, there is a widespread believe that information is vital for rural development (Wishart, 1995).

Munyuua (2000), regarded information as the least expensive impute for rural development and it can also be viewed as a basic necessity ingredient for bringing about social and economic change in rural areas. Rural communities, where agriculture is common, the main activities, requires information on the supply of agricultural inputs (seed, fertilizer, new technologies and innovations, early warning mechanizing (per pest, drought, and disease) and credit facilities, markets amongst others (Munyu 2000). Adimorah (1984) noted that a good rural information services should be able to:

- Let the citizen know their rights.
- To provide opportunities for the use of information to set community goals and priorities.
- Analyse and isolate rural needs and find ways to satisfy them.
- Engage in readership campaigns through adult education.
- Encourage interest groups in community development efforts.
- Let the rural poor appreciate the power of information, especially as a powerful tool of societal change and return.

Rural dwellers who are mainly farmers face widening information gap and thus, without better information, find it difficult to compete as the world becomes more globalized. The paper discusses the challenges of the information dissemination to the rural communities.

2. IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AMONG RURAL DWELLERS
Information is regarded as one of the most valuable resources in agriculture and rural development programme (Carter, 1999; Meyer, 2003; Marrow, et al, 2002). Abayode (1985) proved a refreshing and exciting perspective to the burning issue of information provision for mass mobilization from the rural grassroots upwards and stresses that its implementation will address problems linked with present efforts in Nigeria and developing countries towards economic reconstruction, which now shifts emphasis from urban to rural development. The rural communities are mostly inhabited by people with low economic potentials mainly illiterates, semi-literate, school drop-out etc. with little or no access to social amenities including agencies for information dissemination.
According to Camble (1994), Sturges and Neill (1990), lack of adequate and relevant information has impacted negatively on any development process.

Aboyede (1987) identified the following information needs of rural dwellers that will enable them function effectively. Education, government awareness, new methods of farming, health related matters, improved implement, information on storage facilities, information on trading, marketing, supply of drinking water, how to obtain loan and credit facilities, electricity and good roads etc. Okiy (2003) observed the role of information as a force for rural development.

Adomi, Ogbomo and Inoni (2003) have also observed that rural dwellers required information to enable them to enhance their agricultural practices and yields. Stepheno, Hendrik, Stillwell and Morris (2005) went further to say that information for rural or agricultural development can be delivered in a number of reforms including oral or verbal means and, or printed literature and electronic communication technologies.

Thorpe (1980) agreed that dissemination of information is an essentials part of agricultural development in order for recipient to make the right decisions. Rural dweller suffers social and economic retrogression due to lack and economic or inadequate or absence of relevant information dissemination. Rural information dissemination should emphasis for change and be dynamic. They need prototype information support system for the development projects, research worker, policy makers of the rural communities.

Mabogunje (1985) writing on information needs and dissemination of rural dwellers that range from interest to know more about farming issues to concern with cultural matters, public affairs and literacy entertainment. Rural people need information that will tend to increase the productivity, all that need to meet specific supplies on their farms produces as well as knowing where and how to obtain fertilizers pesticides, deeds or mechanical equipment (Ampitan, 1987). Besides the rural dwellers needs other information such as non-farming but other economic activities that form parts of their home engagement like food processing, baking, sewing wood and metal works like church, social activities, political meetings etc. and other information to update them in their areas of interest in the communities they belong and live.

3. CHANNELS OF RURAL INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

Channels of information dissemination refer to the means of which information is transfer or the exchange of information from one person or source to another. In information dissemination, there is a process which involves exchange of ideas, facts opinion between persons that sends the idea which is the sender and the person that receives which is the receiver of the message that was transmitted. Fayose (2002) noted that many cultures survived without the written wards and effective communicating can take place without reading or writing.

3.1 Face To Face Communication

Information dissemination in rural settings takes in the home through the extended family members in many channels; these included: face to face communication which is the exchange of idea and information between sender and receiver, it is regarded as interpersonal communication that involves two parties relationship when generates favorable actions. Aderibigbe (1990) viewed that interpersonal communication is the major means of linking the rural farmers since a majority of them are illiterate.

3.2 Town Criers

This is another channel of information dissemination in rural environment. It is regarded as traditional messengers who moved from place to place delivering messages by beating drums or ringing of bell to attract the attention of the villagers. Town criers are refers to as traditional media. Ngwaim (1995) noted that the traditional media is the live theatre of rural people.

3.3 Social/Political Meetings

In the rural communities, social and political meetings are part of the rural lives of the people. They are the major channels of information dissemination. Yazidu (1973) identifies social and political meetings such as town meetings, weddings, naming, funeral ceremonies, political meetings, harvest festivals as occasions for interpersonal communication. Information is easily disseminated during social gathering, ceremonies, political parties where people engaged in information dissemination.

3.4 Market Places and Churches

Awa (1980) observed that many issues, persons and villages events are discussed in market places more than elsewhere. He suggested that market sites could be used to disseminate rural development information to women faster and effusively since most village women go there. Aboyade (1987) said that churches and mosque are center of information dissemination among rural dwellers.

Opeke and Ifukor (2000) identifies that socio-political information at times comes from the pulpits in churches. Some government agencies also pass vital information through the churches. An example was the announcement of the immunization programme to be launched, and the church as channel of information use mainly the local language both for worship service and announcement.

3.5 Other Channels

There are other channels of information dissemination in the rural dwellers. Opeke and Ifukor (2000) viewed that information for rural development should not be disseminated through indigenous channels alone; but government and non-government agencies working in the rural areas must make available external
information in formats which can be easily understood by the rural dwellers. Others like community television viewing center, mobile library and rural press conference are introduced into the rural communities etc.

4. THE ROLE OF RURAL LIBRARY IN INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

The role of library services in rural communities cannot be overemphasized in dissemination of recorded information, the library acts as the store-house with the acquisition, processing, storage and dissemination of recorded information for the purpose of reading, study and consultation. Aboyade (1985) sees library as an essential organs in provision of information development programmes. Today, the common knowledge of the establishment and operation of the public library takes into consideration the nature of rural communities and its information needs and dissemination.

Ajibero (1985) defined public library as the traditional and basic community information center whose reason for existence is to fulfill social ends by accumulating inform and storing knowledge, and by dissemination same. Rural library are small public libraries which provide a variety of critical services and information resources to meet the needs of rural residents.

A rural library is needed in the rural communities in order to facilitate information dissemination amongst rural dwellers in written form. Rural dwellers need information on modern farming techniques or methods materials on health, cookery, child care, arts and craft, daily news on news papers to be translated in local language as collecting in rural library.

Aina (2006) adopted a model in his study on library Extension Services Model, the library plays a significant role in the formation dissemination process to user in a non-literate settings by setting up community information resources center or departments within the public libraries located in various communities. In the resource centers, all kinds of information are collected, well packaged and tailored to meet the information needs of the rural dwellers. The repackaged information would be in a format accessible to residents in local language they understood. According to Aina (2006), the adoption of the model to suit the rural populace involves triangular linkage between the rural dwellers, extension agencies and libraries as depicted in Figure 1 below.

![Figure 1: Conceptual Framework](http://www.cisjournal.org)

It is expected that the community resource center within the public library system would be utilized to make information available directly to rural dwellers and extension agents who in turn disseminate information directly to rural dwellers and libraries. Also the rural dwellers especially the literates could bring information related problems to the library and the extension agencies.

The library provides all kinds of information materials such as audio and video cassettes, record players, film, projectors, posters and leaflets on agricultural information which could be repackaged and then made available to farmers in a viable form. These are disseminated through the library and extension agents to identified information gate keepers among the rural farmers. The gate keepers could be those retired civil servants who are farmers among the rural dwellers. The libraries through their community information resources centers would make the various types of agricultural information available to farmers either through the gate keepers. Thus, the libraries would serve as a linkage between the extension agents and farmers in the rural communities.

5. THE CHALLENGES OF INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AMONG RURAL DWELLERS

Information users in rural communities comprise of farmers, literate, young school leavers, school dropout, etc. Nwafor (1986) in Oggunrombi and Amadasun (2009) stated that rural are mostly illiterates and they constitute about 70% of the Nigerian people and also form the economy mainstay of the country. Apart from the problems of little or no education, no good access roads, no electricity, no pipe borne water, industries and other social amenities common in the rural communities, the
rural communities are faced with a lot of challenges that hindered information dissemination.

The economic commission of African as Zijp (1994) showed that lack of data was a significant constraint in the planning and management of rural development. The following challenges were identified:

- Rural population have differences in getting important information in a timely and an appropriate format such as current market price, news on modern methods of pests control.
- Most information dissemination to rural communities is in written form, which makes it difficult to access by those with low or no literacy skills.
- Rural communities and organization s have difficulties sharing information and experience among themselves beyond face to face contact.
- Extension agents have little access to information about the population they are to serve and like or no access to current information from research findings, while researchers have poor access to up-to-date information from the extension agents.
- Government officials make plan and decision on the basis of inadequate information and have inadequate financial control and monitoring capabilities.
- Rural dwellers are also faced with inadequate provision of quality communication services which is a major barrier to rural development.
- Lack of public libraries in rural communities. Chu and Collins (2008) noted that rural public libraries are vital to rural community and economic development, just as public libraries have been vital to the education of masses.

6. PROSPECTS FOR INFORMATION DISSEMINATION CHALLENGES

In light of all the numerous challenges of information dissemination, the following recommendations are made:

a. Government should ensure that every rural community in Niger Delta is provided with community library well stocked with relevant information carrier for the use of rural farmers.

b. More extension workers should be employed and be sent to rural communities to train and retain rural farmers on the use of agricultural information.

c. These should be provision of information communication gadgets to facilitate information dissemination in rural communities.

d. There should be literacy campaign programmes to encourage and educate rural dwellers to enable them access information in the community library.

REFERENCES


