

**THE ROLE OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT
ETCHE AND EMEOHA IN FOCUS.**

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ABSTRACT

In every society, the most difficult problem facing every government is how to reach its rural dwellers to be acquainted with its programmes. For over the years the rural has been totally been neglected in terms of developmental planning's. Most of the developing countries like Nigeria concentrated within the urban centers. But today after government has realized the important of rural areas, the problem now facing the government is how they can inculcate the rural areas into developmental plans and also how to make them understand governmental policies. It is important for government to recognize the role of electronic media in information dissemination in message to be sent to the rural people because electronic media is an effective means of influencing the lives of rural dwellers. It is based on this fact that the project tries to review and analyze its role in rural development. This study also will streamline the need of developing rural areas, since communication is an instrument of development and any inadequate communication renders an area to be aback in development process. In other words this study is another contribution on the role of electronic media in terms of rural development. As a result it is divided into five chapters. Chapter one deals with the introduction, an over-view of the problems and consequences of neglecting rural areas. Chapter two tries to review the literature written or contribution of some scholars on the study, while chapter three and four deals with the method of study and the data presentation and analysis respectively. Finally, chapter five gives general discussion of the findings and also makes recommendations and finally concludes on the project.

KEYWORDS; Rural Dwellers, Government, Development, Communication and Country

INTRODUCTION

Electronic media as channels of mass-communication first made their entrance in the united state, Radio came into being in 1920 and television, in 1928. Here in Nigeria, radio was founded in 1935 while television was also founded in 1959, 26 years after radio, in fact, with the establishment of Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) Ibadan, Nigeria became the first African nation to own television station. Since the introduction of radio and television as media of communication, they have become indispensable in the lives of many Nigeria particularly those living in the rural areas.

In third world countries, majority of their population are illiterate, poor and lived in rural areas where the basic needs of life are lacking. The absence of social amenities like water supply, electricity etc. make life crummy and the main problem facing every government is how to reach these citizens with information on vital issues that have to do with improvement of their general life style. Rural area is an area or community of not more than 2,500 inhabitants, which are mostly illiterate, who gets a large part of their income through agriculture. Udoakah (1998:49) says that "the word rural brings to mind a geographic location in African with population of hungry, wretched looking people who suffer in the farms from morning till evening but whose harvest does not commensurate with the effort and time spent; it also conjures the image of people who are starving, eating at best, once a day after returning from the market".

Development has shifted from the earlier definition to a more broad based conceptualization as a multi dimensional process which involves changes in structures, attitude and institutions as well as acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty.

In this regard, development has economic component, a modernization or human development component, equality or social justice component and a social - economic transformation component. As in the development process component enumerated above, it is graphic that before an area is development; all the sectoral need of the society should be taken care of. Aka (1991:12) notes that "it is the duty of the press to cover all segments of the society in information dissemination" He believed that if this is not done, then broadcasting media has failed its responsibility since the society depends more on electronic media than the print media.

The importance of rural area to the development of the country cannot be overestimated, since it is focused on the rural people who lack all the amenities of modern life. There can be no meaningful and effective development in the country. If these retaliate do not come into proper perspective and their problems adequately addressed. According to Gang (1990:7) highlighted the importance of communication to the process of mental liberation

Of the masses is the issue of effective communication there is need for people to know exactly what is happening or to have information and for government to also know the wish of the people. People are the agent of development; they must therefore be part of the process. Communication is a vital instrument for improving the people capacity to participate in the political process.

The role of television and radio are very vital to the successful implementation of most government programme and also to improve the living standards of the society message through electronic media does not require an individual to be literate before its message contents can be understood, unlike the print media where all the audience must be literate. Sometimes broadcast houses use special language and telecast at the right time to help the majority of rural people who are illiterate to understand the polices and programme of the government.

Broadcasting eliminates geographical barrier of delivery of message to the rural people who could have find it difficult to have access to print media. In fact, the role of electronic media in rural development cannot be over looked because experiences are influenced by what they see and hear. Television itself has usually be known to be the most powerful, for molding public opinions because it added both visual and audio in it's message. Picture appearing on the screen of television, helps to influence to a large extent, the opinion of audience concerning government programme. While radio in its own way have a very far reaching, In terms of locale and can easily be managed by rural people with the purchase of highlife or tiger batteries which is not much costly. So with the combination of television and radio as channel of communication, electronic media have the capacity to influence its audience through dissemination of information.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Most rural areas are devoid of social infrastructure, which¹ could have made life more comfortable to the rural dwellers. And the situation may be traceable to the failure of development programme of the government to adequately integrate the rural population.

Teheran Ian (1977:22) opines that: although the technology of mass communication provides unparallel opportunities for economic, political, educational and cultural development it's potential for national development will remain unrealized unless it performs it's role effectively. The problem of this study from the above statement is that though the over whelming proportion of national population reside in rural areas, the rural areas are characterized by depressingly meager annual income, pervasive endemic, poverty and penury manifested by widespread of hunger, malnutrition, poor health, general lack of access to formal education and other forms of social and political isolation compared with their urban counter -parts. So for that reason, there is the compelling need to integrate the rural areas of the country into the main stream of natural development politically, socially and economically.

Cohen (1963:13) was of the view that "The press may not be particularly successful in telling people what to think but it is stunningly successful in telling its audience what to think about".

The power of telling people what to think about is the power that makes mass-communication an infrastructure of development. If the electronic media plays its role effectively, there will be no doubt that, there will be confidence and it can constantly generate and mobilize energy which is capable of

running independent and democratic government and inducing a productive and distributive economy which is both self generating and self perpetuating".

In other words communication experts have that 'enlightened opinion on development advocates the involvement of rural people them in development programme". He maintained that developmental efforts would not be successful unless the media inculcate the rural people into the effort by adequately informing them on the activities of the government. In fact, there is need to involve or adequately educate the rural dweller as it will accelerate and enhance their living standard.

THE IMPORTANCE OF UTILIZING ELETRONIC MEDIA FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

It is very pertinent to stress that communication is a vital approach to human existence and also considering the geographical nature of areas, they need to be informed and mobilized.

Hence, Babatope (1997:3) calls on the press to serve the rural areas by giving them adequate information, which will accelerate development thus:

Rural Communities now present a pleasant challenge to the media, as they remain largely unimagined territory begging to be highlighted and exploited and in this regard, the mass-media particularly should spare themselves the regular ordeal of reporting murder, arson, looting, rape and other such issues, which are inimical to our values and ethos, they should take up the gauntlet and the challenge of conquering the mystique that the rural areas largely remain.

The electronic media comes into light when the rural folks are well mobilized. According to Nwosu (1990:17-18) "There lies the need for us to develop well the rural press and utilize them properly as part and parcel of the rural communication network". Nwosu tries to stress the importance of the role of electronic media in rural development. When the people are adequately informed and educated about their environment they will participate in governmental policies. This is why Gana, stressed that "Effective communication is very vital to the development of the rural dwellers, the rural dwellers must be mobilized, inform and recognized as part of the nation".

Never et al (1981:2) also sees a link between communication and rural development they said "Communication enhances the contribution of the rural dwellers to the national economy as the means by which rural development can be achieved" They advocated for the utilization of the media informing people concerning government activities. The important role of electronic media cannot be overestimated in the development of rural communities. The rural folks must be mobilized, inform and recognized as part of the nation.

Adding to the important role of electronic media. Teheran Ian (1971:4) says that "The fundamental political function of the media is to act as responsible channels of communication between government and audience, that is, to maximize it's feedback Participation effect". Therefore, a political system characterized by communication gap between the government and the governed is most found when the rural people are in their society.

Nwosu (1990:18-19) reiterated that the neglect of rural folk is one of the factors hindering Nigeria's development efforts. It K quite obvious that no meaningful achievement can be seen in rural areas without the use of electronic media, since it is considered to be the most suitable of the dissemination of information to the rural dwellers because of its nature.

Finally, the role of electronic media in rural development, Is to inform the needs of rural people and also encourage them to participate and practice changes in attitude and in behaviour. In the sense that electronic media has resulted in rural transformation and environmental changes, an individual cannot respond to changes within and outside his environment without been enlightened. For that, the electronic media now prove to be the most important tool for influencing the direction of public opinion in any modern society.

Uma Lele was emphasizing here that the life of the rural dweller can only improve through mobilization and creation of awareness. In development societies such as ours development cannot be attained if the populace are not mobilized or educated to understand the activities of the government

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

A survey research design according to Bobbie (1975) as cited in Nnayelugo (2001:37) "is useful in the measurement of public opinion, attitude and orientations which are dominant among a large population at a particular period". Ohaja (2003:11) also maintained that a survey is a study of the characteristic of a sample through questioning that enable a researcher to make generalization concerning his population of interest. The researcher is unique in the sense that it reduced a large research population to a manageable size without the risk of losing or not acquiring data as they exist in the large population.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The researcher used a combination of different sampling techniques.

First, cluster sampling was used to divide the local government areas into communities namely Dema, Greans, Bamgo, Jellymay for Etche and Joh Jumbo, William Jumbo, Peter side for Emeoha. Secondly the stratified sampling techniques are used to further stratify the communities into households or about one hundred in number.

Lastly, is a purposive sampling technique, which is used in packaging two people from the household purposive sampling - Ohaja (2003:82) explained, "purposive sampling is used when a researcher seeks certain characteristic in his sampling elements and he wants to ensure that those chosen have those characteristic. He therefore, eliminates other members of the population and work with those that meets his requirement.

INSTRUMENT OF DATA COLLECTION

A well-structured questionnaire containing close-ended question is used as the instrument for data collection. Respondents are requested to express their opinion on a three alphabetical order ticking "V" in the appropriate box or to complete the blank space with suitable answers if necessary. According to Ohaja (2003:99) the questionnaire is another instrument used to collect data for a survey and sometimes for experiments, it is meant primarily for literate respondent and can be self-administered (i.e. administered by the research / or mailed.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Data obtained from interviewers and questionnaires conducted by the researcher were presented and analyzed. Responses were given to all questions by the respondents who participated in the questionnaire distributed.

Code No	Characteristics	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1	Sex	Male	70	58.3
		Female	48	40.67
		Total	118	98.3
2	Age	20-36	48	40.67
		36-50	30	25.42
		51-above	40	33.3
		Total	118	98.3
3	Occupation	Students	48	40
		Lecturer	40	33.3
		Civil Servant	30	25
		Total	118	98.3
4	Qualification	FSLC	40	33.3
		SSC	20	16.6
		BA/BSC	30	25
		MA/Ph.D	18	15
		TOTAL	118	98.3

QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTED

NO	Questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage
	Distributed	120	100
	Returned	118	98.3
	Rejected	2	1.7
	Total	240	200

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this section of the analysis, answers will be provided for all the research questions asked in the course of this study.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1:

What exactly do we mean by rural development? In the table below question 10 and 11 as contained in the questionnaire were used to determine the first research question.

TABLE I

NO	L.G.A	Responds	Frequency	Percentage
A		Yes	70	58.3
B	Etche	No	48	40
C		Some what	2	8.7
		Total	120	100

NO	L.G.A	Responds	Frequency	Percentage
A		Yes	80	66.7
B	Emeoha	No	30	25
C		Some what	10	8.3
		Total	120	100

Contributions, on what rural development means: -

'A'. From the responded given above in Etche L.G.A, out of 120 respondents (100%) 70 respondents (58.3%) accepted that they are familiar with the concept, rural Development and can define the term. 48 respondents (40%) were of the view that they are not familiar with the concept, While 2 respondents (1.7%) said of not having any idea on the question asked.

'B'. In Emeoha L.G.A out of 120 respondents (100%), 80% respondents (66.7%) said that they are familiar with the concept of rural development and can define the concept. While 30 respondents (25%) disagreed or not having the idea about the concept and 10 respondents (8.3%) made no contribution to the question.

Now it is proper to ascertain which of the variable that have the highest frequency and percentage. The two Local Government selected will be combined together in the table below.

NO	L.G.A	Responds	Frequency	Percentage
A	Etche	Yes	150	125.0
B	Emeoha	No	78	65
C		Some what	12	10.0
		Total	240	200

Contribution on what Rural Development means from the two L.G.A.

It is quite understandable that the data collected from Etche and Emeoha L.G.A of River State. Majority of the Respondents were aware or familiar with the concept of rural development, which are 150 respondents (125%) out of 240 respondents (200%) while 12 respondents (10%) said of not having any knowledge toward the questions.

Generally from the result of the data analyzed above, the first research question has been answered with an overwhelming support that they are very familiar with the concept of rural Development and can define as the concept.

TABLE 3
RESEARCH QUESTION 2:

Can the electronic media be used to enhance Rural Development?

In this table question 14 and 15 were used to answer the second research questions.

No	L.G.A	Question	Responds	Frequency	Percentage
A		Can the electronic media be used to enhance rural development?	Yes	100	83.3
B	Etche		No	18	15
C			Some what	2	1.7
			Total	120	100

No	L.G.A	Question	Responds	Frequency	Percentage
A		Can the electronic media be used to enhance rural development?	Yes	80	68.7

B	Etche		No	30	25
C			Some what	10	8.3
			Total	120	100

Contributions of electronic media to Rural Development.

Based on the data collected from Etche Local Government areas of Rivers State, out of 120 respondents (100%) 100 respondents were of the view that electronic media can enhance rural development and 18 respondents (18%) responded negative to the second research question while 2 respondents (17%) did not make any contributions.

Also in Emeoha 80 respondents (68.7%), out of 120 respondents (100%) were the majority here. They agreed that electronic media can enhance rural development and 30 respondents (25%) responded negatively to the research questions while 10 respondents (8.3%) said they did not have any knowledge concerning the question asked.

To ascertain the general view of the respondents the two L.G.A in the table above will be combined for graphic viewing of their differences.

	L.G.A	Question	Responds	Frequency	Percentage
A		Can the electronic media be used to enhance rural development?	Yes	80	152.0
B	Etche		No	48	40
C	and Emeoha		Some what	240	202
			Total	120	100

Contribution that determine the differences of the two selected L.G.A

RESEARCH QUESTION 3:

In what ways can the media be used to assist in rural Development? In this table below, question 12 and 13 are been used to answer the third research question.

No	L.G.A	Question	Responds	Frequency	Percentage
A		In what ways can the media be used to be assist in rural development?	Awareness developmental programs	80	66.7
B	Etche	Through creating programs like.	Human resources developmental program.	30	25
C			No idea at all	10	8.3
			Total	120	100

Contributions on ways through which the media can assist in rural development.

Through the data collected from Etche LG.A, out of 120 respondents (100%) 80 respondents were on the positive side that media can assist in rural development through organizing programmes like the awareness development programme where rural dweller are invited to participate in the programme or atleast get involved in the programme, eg debate, Quiz Competitions etc 30 respondents (25%) disagreed with that fact, believing that it'll be through organizing programme like the human resources development programme, where non- governmental organization will be invited to participate

in the treating or discussion of issues that affect the rural dweller and contributes in solving them, while 10 respondents (8.3%) never contributed on the question at all unfortunately, in Emeoha I got the same number as in Etche Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

The table below will show the exact response from the two Local Government areas of Rivers State.

No	L.G.A	Response	Frequency	Percentage
A	Etche	Organizing programmes like the awareness development	160	133.3
B	and Emeoha	Human development	60	50
C		No idea at all	20	16.6
		Total	240	199.9

Contributions from both L.G.A to determine the third research question.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4:

To what extent has the media be used in this regard?

Answering question number 17 in the questionnaire will provide the answer to the above research question.

No	L.G.A	Question	Responds	Frequency	Percentage
A		To what extent have the media been used in this regard?	Very much	70	58.3
B	Etche		Much	48	40
C			Little	2	1.7
			Total	120	100

No	L.G.A	Question	Responds	Frequency	Percentage
A		To what extent have the media been used in this regard?	Very much	100	83.3
B	Etche		Much	18	15
C			Little	8	1.7
			Total	120	100

From the responds given in Etche L.G.A out of 120 respondents (100%) 70 respondents (58.3%) accepted with the research question and 48 respondents (40%) did not believed of having an idea towards the question asked while 2 respondents (1.7%) made no contribution at all to the question asked.

Then in Emeoha L.G.A out of 120 respondents (100%) were of the view that media can go a long way in developing rural areas while 18 respondents (15%) responded negatively to the research question and respondents (1.7%) made no contribution.

To ascertain the general view, both of the L.G.A will be combined and analyzed together.

No	L.G.A	Question	Responds	Frequency	Percentage
A		To what extent have the media been used in this regard?	Very much	180	75
B	Etche		Much	48	20
C			Little	20	5
			Total	120	100

The table above shows the contribution of responds from the two Local Government under study.

It shows that 180 (75%) respondents answered very much, 48 (20%) answered much, while 12 (5%) answered little, from the above data we can conclude safely that the media have been used very much in this regard.

SUMMARY OF FINDING

It is graphic from the frequency and percentage differences those respondents who responded positive that electronic media enhance rural development. Got a greater support by 152% against 55% of those who aid "No" to the research question, while 10% said they do not have any idea on the question asked. The various result of this study shows that electronic media is a vital factor in rural development.

My findings also from the interview method also revealed the role electronic media play in rural development. Majority of respondents interviewed were of the view that electronic media have assisted in bringing awareness programme to the rural areas.

CONCLUSION

After a thorough investigation concerning the role of electronic media in rural development it was discovered that, If the government actually wishes to be successful in popularizing it's programmes in the rural areas electronic media should be employed since its message does not require it's audience to be literate before comprehending its contents. It is one of the most powerful media, which is capable of influencing the direction of public opinion in rural areas.

Finally the traditional means of communication should not be forgotten rather there should be an alignment of traditional means of communication and electronic media in executing this campaign. This combination will also reach the rural people, since the traditional means of communication uses traditional form of communication like, the drum, Ogene, Ekwe and others to spread message across the various communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the fact that broadcast media perform functions- which engender development of progress and encourage social change in the society. It will be necessary to note that any information disseminated to the public by the media must be created to meet certain standard that is if they are to be grasped by the people.

In the view of the above ascertain, we make the following recommendations.

1. The use of appropriate media - No matter how well programme package are prepared for the rural folks, they will fail to achieve their goal if the wrong media are used. Therefore, electronic media particularly radio should be used in sending message the rural dwellers.
2. Electricity should be extended to all the rural area; Efforts should also be made to ensure regular supply of electricity in these rural areas.
3. Use of acceptable language, Electronic media should use the language that is best understood by the rural dwellers including vernacular to accommodate illiterate rural dwellers.
4. Social amenities found in the urban areas should also be extended to the rural areas these include: well equipped hospital, good road, school etc.

5. There should be adequate coverage of events in rural areas especially problem affecting the rural dwellers like issues of diseases, poverty, education etc partly it's expected that if the above recommendation are implemented illiteracy level among our communities will reduce and there will be mass participation in government activities.

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