

***Integrated
Rural
Development
in Nigeria
and
Women's Role***

Edited
by

F I A Omu

P K Makinwa

INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN BENDEL STATE: THE ROLE OF AND STRATEGY FOR MASS MEDIA COMMUNICATION

Andrew A. Moemeka

Development, whether Rural or Urban, is a multi-faceted concept. This is why it is generally seen as meaning different things to different people. For example, it is held that to the economist, development means increase in the gross national product; to the politician it means economic growth and social change; to the socialist, it means creating opportunities for society to realise its potentials, and to the social worker, development means raising the creative potentials of the individuals within the community with a view to raising their social well-being and consequently the social well-being of society. All these viewpoints cannot be safely mutually exclusive; they are interwoven in such a way that any undue emphasis on one to the neglect of the other aspects would accentuate the problems of these other aspects thus making wholesome development impossible. Hence the need for an integrated approach to development in general and to rural development in particular.

In the past, most governments in the developing world had laid complete emphasis on the economic aspect of development, claiming that development is a matter basically of increasing productivity and output. This has led to a situation which one can rightly describe as "development without the people" with all its attendant social and human problems. Now the advice of social workers that no wholesome development can occur without due regard to the human and social aspects of development is gaining attention. And governments are beginning to see the need for taking a holistic view of development and to listen to the communicators who have all along insisted that true and complete development must include the intangible, mental and attitudinal changes that ensure painless transition from one economic stage to another and provide a solid socio-cultural base for meaningful and relevant development.

The role of the communicator in this holistic or integrated approach to

development is to smoothen the path to arrive at increased production by creating and enhancing atmosphere for the exchange of ideas that will produce a nappy balance between physical output and human inter-relationships. And the agent for stimulating and sustaining this all-important human/social communication which ensures conducive societal base for physical development are the media of mass communication. Although they cannot directly create change, they can create a conducive atmosphere in which change can occur by making development messages and feeding the inter-personal communication channels that exist in the community.

This mediating role is so important to popular participation which is a key factor in rural development that we are strongly recommending it to the Bendel State Government. In order to put our recommendation on a sound footing, we must examine the mass media situation in the State and suggest the ways by which these media can be efficiently and effectively utilised in the services of rural development. Before doing these, however, it is necessary to take a general look at the media, their characteristics and their strengths and weaknesses. In doing this, we intend to concentrate on the three most popular media—Radio, Television and Newspaper.

Mainly because of the problems of wide scale illiteracy, scattered rural villages involving, in many cases, long distances, and the shortage of qualified personnel, the employment of only the face-to-face methods in the task of rural development has met with little success. These problems are, however, those which the mass media can help to eliminate. Hence the use of these media has become necessary. The media approach¹ enables literacy barriers to be crossed and distances to be eliminated; it makes the services of the few experts around available to the whole nation; it ensures motivation and general mobilisation; it helps to enlist the sympathy and empathy of the urban and literate population. In addition, it reduces the occurrence of the usual high-flown method used by experts, for the writing down of materials and their editing by communication personnel enables such materials to be brought down to the level of target audiences.

However, contrary to popular and sometimes professional opinion, these media are not, by their nature, channels of mass communication. They are merely channels of mass information distributions and transmission. And information is only a first step towards communication. Even so these media can be manipulated to serve as channels of mass communication. Unfortunately, this is rarely done because of the erroneous belief of producer, editors, and government officials that whatever comes out of the media is communication. This view is so strong that it is hardly remembered that these media are one-way channels, which means that they provide a means only for talking to others. In order words, they are channels for making news, facts and figures available to the public. This is not communication; it is information. Communication occurs only when there is exchange of ideas;

when those who have received the news, figures and facts give their own views; when those who are being asked to change from one behaviour pattern to another have had the opportunity to react.

Of course, when there is , between the communicator and his target audience, a basis for mutual understanding arising from identical socio-cultural background or knowledge and opinion about the society thus providing conditions for identical meanings in content, context and intention, communication can occur without the audience necessarily sending back its reaction but such understanding bases hardly ever obtain between our urban-oriented media men and the culture-bound rural inhabitants. They live in two different socio-cultural worlds with views and opinions about the world and society almost diametrically opposed. Such a situation does not favour communication through the one-way channel which the mass media are. But through the processes of Availability, Accessibility and Participation,² these media can become very potent channels of communication. When the media is easily available and made accessible to target audiences, when these audiences are given the opportunity to take part in the decision-making processes about what goes into the media, how they are produced and at what level of presentation, when they are given the chance to participate and make direct contribution to programme content a communication climate is created which facilitates not only learning but also acceptability and compliance.

Individually, each of the three media under discussion has its own strengths and weaknesses. The Television has the advantage of the Sight and Sound characteristics. Not only can the teacher or animator be seen and heard while using the television, but also his demonstrations and examples can be followed to advantage. It has spontaneous and real life effect. Literacy and distances are now barriers to its use and virtually anything can be taught, demonstrated and propagated on television. The one big handicap is its high cost. The overhead and recurrent expenditure for a television station is staggering. The cost of sets is also so high that only the well-to-do members of society can afford it. Hence it has been sarcastically referred to as the medium of the elite. The restricted ownership means that it is only within the the group of the well-to-do that television programmes can be directly utilized. It also means that the cost per unit of or cost per person reached by this very high cost medium is very high indeed for the cost of a programme remains the same whether one is producing for 80 people or for 80 million.

This cost factor is one of those that gives Radio some advantage over the television. Radio is cheap; it is widely owned. Thus cost per person reached is generally low. Radio also beats distances and thus has an immediacy effect. It beats literacy barriers, for one does not need to know how to read and write before one can learn from the radio. It is individualistic and so has

that personal touch which lends urgency to chance. On the other hand, radio is populist medium thus it enhances the chances of getting messages across to a very wide segment of the population. More importantly, radio is the only medium of mass communication with which the rural population is very familiar. The suitability of radio for rural emancipation has been underlined by UNESCO when it said:

In the developing countries, the greater part of the people live on the land, are frequently isolated by illiteracy and lack of transport. Effective communication with these rural people and their active participation in the life of their country are essential for developing societies. Radio broadcasting, when skillfully used, has proved to be the most effective medium of communication with these far-flung population.³

These advantages of radio all too often make one forget that the radio, too, has its weakness, chief among which is the fact that it is a Sound-only medium. One cannot for example, effectively teach reading and writing on radio; expression can only be conjectured from tone variations, and demonstrations are merely verbal and long-drawn. To be successful, there has to be an agent at the reception end to provide the missing link.

The Newspaper is neither a visual nor an audio medium, but has something of each. Although newspaper materials can be seen yet they remain meaningless until they can be read and understood. Therefore the ability to read intelligibly is a sine-qua-non in the use of newspaper. This means that the greater percentage of the rural population who are invariably illiterate cannot directly learn from newspapers. It also cannot directly contribute to the construction of newspaper messages. In addition, unlike radio and television messages which travel through waves, newspaper messages have to be carried physically to the receiver. This involves transportation and distance problems. However, the newspaper has one big advantage. It has an enduring characteristic. Printed materials can be read and re-read at convenience. They can be stored for future reference. They can be read at a convenient pace without loss of meaning. Because of this, the newspaper would appear to be best suited for mass education of illiterate and semi-literate populations which are generally slow in learning. In addition, the newspaper is capable of carrying literacy materials and of serving as reading materials for new literates, thus ensuring that the people do not only *learn to read* but also *need to learn*.

The question that should naturally follow from the above analysis is: Which medium/media should be employed to ensure effective and fruitful communication of Integrated Rural Development? Choice of medium or media is usually not as easy a task as it may appear on first sight because of prejudices and the tendency to stick with the known. But such a choice is very important because on it depends whether or not the target audiences in the rural areas are, in the first instance, reached. On it too, depends, to a large extent, whether the individual members of the rural population will

make the initial effort of granting their attention.⁴ Choice of media also affects what people learn and how quickly and well they learn. However, recent thinking on the use of the mass media for education and public enlightenment strongly favours a multi-media approach. This is because some media are best suited for certain activities than others. In rural development campaign therefore, the concern should be, not determining how to choose the right medium or media, but rather ascertaining which medium is best suited to what assignment, at what level of the operation and for which audience. To be able to do this properly, the characteristics of each medium (which we have already enumerated) should be ascertained. It is also necessary to study and analyse the ownership and distribution pattern of receiving sets and newspaper copies.

The three most popular media—the Television, the Radio and the Newspaper—are available in the State, but the extent of their availability, usability and accessibility differs greatly between the urban and the rural areas. Some marked differences also do exist in these respects between the urban and the sub-urban areas. The use to which each of these media can be put in integrated rural development cannot but be affected by these three factors of availability, usability and accessibility of each of them within the different socio-economic groups in the State. Appropriate and fruitful utilisation can only be assured if these factors are carefully studied.

Television

Because of its sight and sound qualities, the television has great potentials for education and public enlightenment. But a look at the present situation of television in the state would tend to make one doubt that it can be used to support communication for integrated rural development. The State has one television station whose coverage is not completely state-wide. Some parts of the State do not receive this one station, but have to depend on stations in neighbouring states for television viewing. Nor is that all. Even though the total number of television sets in the State has reached the 80,000 mark, only about .5% of this number is in the rural areas, and about 2.5% in the sub-urban areas. This means that there is an almost complete concentration of television sets in the urban area. If therefore the television is a very rare medium in the rural areas, its use in support communication for integrated rural development looks questionable

Rural development does not concern only the rural population. Rural underdevelopment is a national problem affecting both the urban and rural areas, both the educated and the uneducated, both the rich and the poor. In order to accomplish a successful rural development campaigns, the willingness of the rural inhabitants to submit themselves and to participate conscientiously is not terribly more important than the sympathy, the support and understanding of the urban dwellers and the elite in society. The television is an invaluable medium for eliciting this sympathy, this empathy,

this understanding, and the moral and financial support which are necessary to reassure both the rural population and the extension agents, and also to physically see the development programme through to a successful end.

Apart from personal set-viewing which is possible with the elite and the urban inhabitants, community viewing is also possible. This has been found very useful in a number of developing countries like Columbia, India and Brazil. Even here in Nigeria, three State governments—Kano, Kaduna and Bendel—experimented with the idea. Both the *village-set for public enlightenment* programme of the Bendel State government in the 1960s and the *community-set for literacy* of the Kano and Kaduna State governments in the 1970s were abandoned soon after take-off not because they were found unproductive but because of what was described as financial and technical problems. This means that if adequate financial and technical arrangements are made, viewing centres would prove a viable tool in rural development. The government should show concerted effort by voting sufficient funds both for programming and for maintenance. Adequate arrangements should be made for supervision and for competent itinerant operational and technical staff stationed at Local Government headquarters.

The Newspaper

Newspapers are generally regular in supply and to carry current and varied information on cultural, social, economic and political activities. And because of the enduring characteristic of the printed word, these materials can be read, re-read and preserved for further study to ensure fuller understanding and for reference. This permanence which the printed word guarantees development messages gives the newspaper a pride of place as a suitable medium for development communication. However, strong arguments have also been adduced against this medium. Perhaps the strongest of these is the fact that the newspaper is a literate medium. If the rural population is basically illiterate (and we know that it is) then it cannot directly make use of a literate medium. It has also been argued that even if the rural population was literate enough to read and understand newspaper content, the problems of cost and distribution as well as the urban-elite orientation of the papers would not make the newspaper a satisfactory medium for rural development communication.

One cannot help pointing out, however, that these points, strong as they be, do not take cognisance of the fact that rural development is not just a rural area problem but a national problem. Therefore urban and educated-elite support is imperative for a successful rural development campaign. And like the television, the newspaper is a necessary medium for eliciting this urban and educated-elite support. For the rural population, the newspaper is also an important medium for development support communication. But it is not the newspaper as we generally know it. It has to be a type of news-

paper amenable to rural conditions. Such newspapers come under what is known as the Rural Press, which is dedicated to the production of rural mimeographs and/or newspapers basically for the rural population. Such mimeographs and newspapers, produced and printed by the rural people themselves have proved very successful in literacy campaigns, agricultural improvements techniques and adoptions of new improved health practices in a number of African countries chief among which is Tanzania. They are cheap to produce and do not suffer distribution problems because they are produced in the community. They highlight the problems of the rural areas as they affect these areas and in relation to the nation, and carry materials relevant to the solutions of problems affecting the community. More importantly, they help to sustain literacy for they serve as cheap and readily available reading materials for new literates.

The Rural Press whose basic equipment—the Silk-Screen Duplicator—would cost about ₦25 to produce, should have the village school as the centre of production, and the Local Government headquarters as the overall centre for support and co-ordination. Apart from circulating within its village of origin, each paper should also circulate among adjoining villages to ensure comparative analysis of development activities and encourage healthy competition. For efficiency and effectiveness, there should be a Rural Press Committee in each village and in each Local Government area, and a State-Level Committee on Rural Press.

Radio

The one medium of mass communication which almost all experts agree is best suited for rural emancipation is the Radio. This near total confidence in the medium does not, of course, lose sight of the fact that the radio is a sound-only medium. The advantages which the radio has—low cost, familiarity, availability and so on—far outweigh the lack of sight disadvantage. In addition, this disadvantage has been circumvented by the introduction of organised listening with an agent at the reception end to provide the missing link. It is precisely because of this fact that the Radio Farm Forums of Canada, India and Ghana, as well as the Radio Schools of Colombia and the Radio Study Group of Tanzania were organised.⁷ It has been recognised that to be effective in education, public enlightenment and in communication generally as opposed to mere information, the radio needs an intermediary between it and its target audience.

To ensure effective use of this medium in support communication for rural development it is important to begin right from the initial stages of planning to think seriously of what type of arrangement to make for the reception end in order to assure effectiveness of whatever is sent to the people through the radio. There has to be an organisational structure to foster participation

and discussion. Allied to this issue of organised listening and discussion is the issue of access to radio stations and participation in programme planning and production. It is strongly argued that the effectiveness of radio when people have access to stations and participate in programming will be by far greater, especially in rural areas, than it is when the audience just sits and listens to programmes planned and produced by distant 'experts'.

The State has two broadcasting stations—one full-fledged, the other provincial. The coverage of the provincial station at Warri is local, that is, serves Warri and its surrounding sub-urban areas. The state station in Benin is supposed to cover the whole state, and can be said to be doing so, only that reception in certain parts of the state is, most of the time, very poor. Even so, Bendel is one of the most radio-conscious states in the country. With an estimated total set of 800,000⁸ spread almost evenly between the urban and the rural areas, it has a very good set-ownership climate for the use of radio in support communication. But ownership of radio set only assures accessibility of messages, that is, that a message from a source has been received. This is a first step to, and almost a far cry from *effectiveness* of the message, that is, that the message from the source has been received, understood, accepted and is to be complied with. The condition obtains only when the source takes the receiver and his situation into consideration that is, when the social, economic, political, cultural and environmental conditions of the receiver are taken into consideration in the construction of the message; when the message is relevant to and has value for the receiver; when the source is seen not as a distant teacher but as an understanding animator who has entered into the cultural context of the receiver. It is usually possible to meet these criteria from urban centres. Therefore radio stations have to be taken down to the rural areas and producers who are culturally conscious and can establish rapport with the rural population, employed to handle materials from the different professional personnel engaged in the development campaign, and to personally plan and produce confidence-reassuring and moral-boosting programmes.

Because of the constraints of space, we will only give broad outlines of what we mean. It is recommended that small radio stations—one for each Local Government Area—be built all over the State. This is to enable Radio to be near enough to the people to make participation in programme planning and production possible; to provide a familiar channel for the leaders of the communities to talk to their people in their own language and dialect in support of government plans and to make it possible for producers to live among the people, learn from them, and generally enter into their cultural environment. Each of these stations—Local Radio Stations—should have an Advisory Committee made up of the Chief Station Officer and representatives of the different groups—farmers, teachers, market women etc.—in the community as well as representatives of the different development agencies

working in the community. In Benin, Radio Bendel should create a section to advise on and monitor the activities of the Local Radio Stations. To advise this section should be a State Advisory Committee on Local Radio the membership of which must among others include representatives of the Ministries of Education, Health, Agriculture, Local Government and Rural Development. This is to ensure co-ordination and co-operation between Radio and the different arms of government. The co-operation and interaction between the different development agencies should be such that the Local Station is taken as a melting pot, where differences in professional requirements which could confuse the rural population melts into compromise or better still, agreement.

It is necessary here to forestall two of the issues that could be raised. These are the cost to be involved in establishing nineteen local radio stations, and the need for state cohesion and unity. A number of countries including Canada, Sweden and Britain have elaborate local radio systems. In terms of our own conditions, the Canadian system called Community Radio which caters for the education of the Eskimos of the Arctic Northwestern Territories is most appropriate. While the Swedish and the British systems cost millions of Naira to set up, the Canadian system which, so far, has been most successful in terms of rural emancipation, cost only a few hundred thousand. As by 1978 prices, the equipment for each of the Canadian stations was valued at \$8,000, that is about ₦4,000. This type of cheap but efficient local radio system is most suitable for us in terms of both utility and cost. The nineteen stations being proposed here will cost about ₦200,000 (making allowance for price increases). This is about one-twentieth of the overhead cost of a standard State television which would serve only about 20% of the population. Would it be right to say that spending ₦200,000 to set up a radio broadcasting system that can serve 80% of the population is a more unwise expenditure than spending ten million Naira for a television system which will serve only 20% of the population?

The other point at issue is what some critics have referred to as "the possible disintegrating effect of too many radio stations". It is a fact that the radio can be used for good or for bad. But this applies to any radio system whether urban or local. And there is nothing peculiar about local radio that particularly will make it a disintegrating force. All the stations proposed would be under the same government, financed by the government and supervised by it for the benefit of its rural population. Would such stations have more disintegrating tendencies than the state station owned, financed and controlled by State government? If local governments can be created in order to help the State government in the art of governing, there is no reason why the local radio station cannot be used to facilitate the work of the local government, the crux of which is the emancipation of the rural man in the process of rural development. We have nothing to gain from re-

straining the innate desire of man to express himself and his feelings. If people do not articulate themselves and their place in the scheme of things, it is doubtful that they will be in a position to play a constructive political role in nation building, and in state development. For political, social and economic policies and values to be meaningful, there must be the consequence of *understanding acceptance* and not result of *reluctant obedience* to imposed regulations and political manipulation from above.⁹ It is a psychological fact that apathy or ignorance is no guarantee for acceptance or conformity! Local radio stations broadcasting in local languages can contribute to the understanding and solution of local problems and also provide a voice for their audiences through an appropriate feedback system and participation procedure, provided the stations adopt a marketing approach rather than a selling one. This means finding out the needs of the people, not prescribing what producers think the people's needs ought to be. It also means determining what the people's circumstances are, what they can afford and what they are capable of assimilating and accepting. These factors will help instil confidence in the people and so elicit positive attitudes towards state cohesion and unity and induce mutual contribution to development.

We recommend the use of all three popular media—Radio, Television and Newspaper—as channels for the support communication required in the rural development programme. Our contention is that they are all necessary for the successful execution of the programme. Each has the potential for playing specific role or roles that are important in mass campaigns. One or the other of these media provides a channel for direct teaching, magazine programmes (mixed-grill of materials—short talks, riddles, music, questions and answers, jokes and discussion), spot announcements, drama, features, playlets and documentaries. A decision as to which medium is likely to be most effective at the different stages of the campaign—Mobilization, Implementation, Sustenance and Reinforcement—should be taken after careful study of the characteristics of the rural population and after determining the resources available to each medium.

Conclusion

The variety and extent of rural development programmes which the mass media can support—creating awareness and inducing human understanding and initiative, literacy, agriculture, health, sanitation, trade, etc.—obviously point to the need for co-ordination between the authorities and the media, co-operation between the media and the different agents for rural emancipation, and dynamic interaction among all three on the one hand and the target audience on the other.

Furthermore, attention needs to be drawn to the fact that whatever medium is employed at whatever stage of the project, and whatever the

type of programme used, a very clear distinction must be made between *at* and *to* the people, and talking *with* the people. The former is mere information whose success in rural education has been very minimal. The latter is communication which involves discussion and exchange of ideas between the source and the receiver and which is the key to understanding and therefore to learning. While dumping of news, facts and figures (information) on the uneducated and impoverished rural population creates a dominance-submission atmosphere which is belittling to the rural man and therefore resentful, discussion and exchange of ideas (communication) creates rapport, restores confidence, engenders an atmosphere of trust, respect and goodwill, all of which enhance acceptance of ideas and compliance with decisions.

These two factors—acceptance and compliance— are basic to any action directed towards the emancipation of the underprivileged among us. To be able to assure these two factors, we must first of all learn about the people, determine their problems and their views of life about themselves and about the state, and be conversant with their ways of life. We must understand them in order to be able to guard and guide them. Without these, we cannot hope to communicate effectively with them. But unless we communicate and win their confidence, we cannot gain their co-operation. Here wise words of the Chinese saying becomes very apt.

Let us—

Go to the people

Live among them

Learn from them

Love them

Plan with them

Start with what they know, and

Build on what they have.

This is development in Action¹⁰

In the struggle for general development, the underprivileged in our overwhelmingly populous rural areas cannot be left out without devastating repercussions. In the race to enlist the co-operation and positive contribution of this impoverished and uneducated rural population, the mass media cannot be ignored to advantage; and in the attempt to use the media to liberate, enlighten and educate the men, women and children who make up the rural population, the strategy should be one which gives priority to the aims of not mere information, distribution and transmission, but the *Participation, Expression and Communication.*

Footnotes

1. T. Dodds, *Multi-Media Approach to Rural Education: Case Studies*, International Extension College, (Broadsheet on Distance Learning No.1) London 1972.

2. A.A. Moemeka, "The Rural Population: Access to and Participation in Broadcast Communication", a paper presented at UNESCO Experts Meeting on the Right to Communicate, Stockholm, Sweden 1978.
3. UNESCO, *Reports and Papers on Mass Communication No. 48*
4. A.A. Moemeka, "The Mass Media in Mass Literacy Campaign", a paper presented at the Annual Conference of Heads of Adult Education in Nigeria, University of Ibadan, 1960.
5. Ogliv, Benson & Mattar, "Radio/TV statistic in Nigeria", p.14, 1980.
6. C.T. Hein and K.K. Kanyagonya, *Rural Press for Village Post-Literacy Literature*, Afrolit Society Paper No.5, Kenya, 1979.
7. T. Dodds, *Multi-Media Approach to Rural Education*.
8. A.A. Moemeka, *Local Radio: Community Education for Development* (In Press Ahmadu Bello University Press, Zaria.)
9. Ogliv, Benson & Mattar, "Radio/TV statistic in Nigeria"
10. A.A. Moemeka, *Local Radio: Community Education for Development*.