

Challenges and Prospects of Information Service Delivery to Rural People of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria federation has a population of over 150 million people out of which 80% are living in the rural areas. It has 36 states with 774 local government council areas spread across the country. The large rural population is a direct consequence of poor living standards, shelter, infrastructure and issues of physical and social environment. The wild spread of illiteracy, poverty, hunger, and disease, absence of basic infrastructure such as water, roads, schools, electricity and health services are by no means having negative impact on rural development. The characteristics of rural people are identified and the information needs, sources and types of information desired are highlighted. Also the challenges and benefits of information services delivery and the value of information and communication technologies (ICT) is mentioned.

Keywords: Information, service delivery, rural people, information and communication technology.

INTRODUCTION

Information service delivery is critical issue in any human setting. The process is vast and very important because it indicates clearly the basic of how a people in such a setting be it rural or urban reach out to other parts of their immediate environment and beyond. In the case of a rural scenario, a lot of effort is needed to be able to communicate effectively and efficiently because such an environment is most times dominated by people whose standard of living is usually very challenging as a result of poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance, illiteracy and the absence of social amenities such as good roads, power and schools.

As noted by Phillips (2006), the rural people contend with so many issues among which are housing, infrastructure, access to amenities, income, living standards and issues of physical and social environment.

As observed by Elumilade and Asaolu (2006), Nigeria is one of the countries of the world that has greater number of poor people. As we revealed by Human Development and social provision statistics, the population of Nigeria is increasingly becoming one of the poorest in the world and this places her in very vulnerable position in all ramifications. To further support

this position, they also noted that as at 1999 when democracy took the centre stage of Nigeria governance, the report of the World Bank indicated that Nigeria's Human Development Index (HDI) was only 0.46 and that about 70% of the population was vegetating below the breadline.

As revealed in the Nigeria Humanitarian profile (UNDP 2010) Nigeria has a population of about 158 million people and it is Africa's most populous country and the world's ninth largest. Nigeria as one of the countries in Sub Saharan Africa is a federation of thirty six states with its capital in Abuja. It is made up of 774 Local Government Areas. There are so many challenges that affect its human and security development. Among these is food, insecurity, epidemics, poor access to water, sanitation and education services.

In their contribution, Saleh and Lasisi (2011) remarked that Nigeria as a third world country has certain features of rural population which include illiteracy, poverty, hunger, disease and general absence of basic infrastructure such as roads, schools, electricity and so on. For us to be able to x-ray the prospects and challenges of information service delivery to rural people of Nigeria, it is appropriate to appreciate what information is all about. Information is a major

resource for the socio-political and economic development of any people. Information must be reliable, correct, valid and verifiable. Information forms the bedrock of development or executing any meaningful project. It is the basis for which major decisions are made and its adequacy helps to achieve sustainable development in all spheres of human endeavours. Information in every sense of the word has more meaning and interpretation today than it previously had. This stems from the fact that for the successful execution and implementation of any programme, there must be adequate and relevant information to meet set goals.

As described by Harande (2009) “information is the life blood of any society and vital to the activities of both the government and private sectors”. He also viewed information as a raw materials for the development of urban and rural arrears and that the well-being and development of the any nation depends largely on information. As expressed by Aiyepoku (1986) the term information refers to a man’s cumulative knowledge in various subjects, forms and from various sources that could assist users to make rational decision. Similarly, Meadow and Yuan (1997) posited that information is a message that changes the recipient’s knowledge base.

In a similar platform, Reneken (1993) noted that information is very vital for the well being of any man. This means that because of its importance man cannot be meaningful in his activities without adequate information. The view of Stanley (1990) cited in Kari (2007) is worthy of note here. He pointed out that:

Information is one of the basic human needs after air, water, food and shelter. Man requires information to be able to manipulate the factors of production as land, labor and capital resources into meaningful and productive use.

The implication of this development is that vital information is not by any means cheap and its importance cannot be overemphasized. It is basis or platform on which vibrant and meaningful and authoritative decision are made. The premium placed on information of high quality was the basis Burch and Gery (1988) identified quality information to mean relevant and adequate information.

Quality information is necessary for functional development at all levels of governance.

It is important for information to be reliable, correct, verifiable and useful. This is further supported when Tiemo (2006) pointed out that

information is important at all times and it is needed by people as they strategize and execute decision.

Information can be a good resource when it is able to satisfy a genuine need. In this regard, Oдини (1993) posited that information should satisfy the information needs of a user group. The emphasis is therefore that accessible information system and services must take into cognizance the characteristics and needs of a particular group.

The fact of the matter is that information is critical whether at urban or rural levels. In the case of Nigeria settings, the availability of information has been skewed in favour of the urban populace. It deserves mention here that whether people are, there are basic fundamental. One of these is that they need information. The rural people are not in any way inferior to urban settlers. This is because urban settings were once rural but due to advancement, technology information and government intervention, their status changed over time.

Service delivery essentially explains how a particular message is being package and offered to a target audience, in this case, it is an arrangement of how policies and programmes are communicated to meet the needs and yearnings of the rural people. Appropriate information is package by authorities and relevant government organs and bodies are used in the dissemination process. It is also through this media a feedback is communicated also. In the present dispensation, information is packaged and communicated with the aid of information and technology (ICTs). These channels are newspapers, radio, television and mobile telephone which are gaining popularity among the population. The strength of modern ICT devices has brought interactive audience participation programmes where feedback is received with minimum delays. In the entire exercise, the role of personnel cannot be overemphasized.

At both ends of the communication process, it is the human beings are the senders and recipients of messages which lead to a change in behavior.

While defending the critical role of the rural dwellers in contribution to national growth, Momodu (2002) revealed the followings:

The rural dwellers in Nigeria are not inherently poor nor are they doomed to ignorance and disease, rather they are blessed with massive fertile land and mineral resources and also huge

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and virile labor force can be transformed into goods and services.

However, it is not easily attained because of the challenges besetting the rural at the country side. The fact of the matter is that rural people like their counterparts in urban areas need social amenities. The rural can be motivated and challenged with adequate and quality information in appropriate and required format. The provision of this resource will close the gap and dichotomy that separates the people of these classes (rural and urban). This paper will Endeavour to dwell on how to close the dearth of information delivery and the necessary services for them to function appropriately to meet their daily and occupational needs.

The basis of this paper is that there is disconnected between rural and urban dwellers in terms of information dissemination. The implication is that one group is at an advantage over the other. Communication is critical in human existence. Khupe (2000) pointed out that the right to communicate is fundamentally human enshrined in Article 19 of the Declaration of Human Rights. He also noted that about 80% of Nigeria's population live in rural setting and is denied this right by non-provision and lack of access to modern information dissemination systems. This ugly situation has impacted negatively on rural people despite their potentials. There is need to ensure that information services are fully delivered to them.

The rural communities are in majority in terms of population but because of neglect, illiteracy, abject poverty and lack of basic infrastructure like healthcare, schools, roads, pipe borne water, provision of print and electronic media has placed them at a disadvantaged position with urban counterparts. However, the emergence of GSM technology is valuable and helping to better their access to information.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The study is meant to look at the information needs, sources, delivery process, the challenges and prospects of rural dwellers.

- Identify the information needs of the rural people in Nigeria.
- Mention the information sources available to the people in rural areas.
- Mention the type of information accessible to the through the identified sources.
- Highlight the challenges usually encountered in the information delivery process.

- Identify the benefits of information delivery to the rural dwellers.
- State the role of information and communication technology in information delivery to the rural areas.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

Rural dwellers in Nigeria are known to be facing many challenges including being able to access information resources. Their inability to access information may not be unconnected with the ways this information is packed but also their poor literacy level and other social-economic problems.

Across Nigeria, the rural population is not able to get appropriate information to leverage them in their daily living and thus faced with basic necessities of life which include food, clothing, employment and shelter. Due to these socioeconomic inadequacies, their access to socioeconomic infrastructure for instance portable water, health care, and skillful employment has always eluded them and their quality of life most times is at its lowest ebb.

The rural people across Nigeria have not benefited adequately from the various governments policies and programmes aimed at improving their lots. This might not be unconnected with the level of poverty, education, illiteracy, ignorance, poor access to some of these areas due to bad roads as a direct consequence of poor communication arising from not using the appropriate methodology and style to sensitize them. Other reasons that can be adduced is that various government agencies are not able to appreciate their challenges and sensitize them enough on how to maximize what government has made available to them. It is on this premise it becomes imperative to take a look at the challenges and prospects of information service delivery to rural people of Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Available literatures on information service delivery to rural people were reviewed. Deliberate effort was made to examine the various efforts or studies carried out that dwells specifically on the information needs, the mode of information dissemination, information sources, agents of information delivery to rural people and problems and issues usually encountered in the course of acquiring, processing and transmitting information to the people of the rural areas. In course of study, the

contributions of Aboyade (1986), Alegbeleye and Aina (1985); Momodu (2002), Oduwole and Ikhizama (2003), Harande (2009), Saleh and Lasisi (2011), were examined.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information Needs of Rural People of Nigeria

Nigeria is a country that is so diverse both in terms of human and material resources ranging from its peoples to environment, ecology, culture, traditions, values, and ways of life. The implication of this diversity is that the needs of its people varies from place to place particularly in the rural communities where much of natural essence has not been completely tampered with. The diversity of its rural settings implies that the information needs of these people will certainly vary from place to place. It should be noted that information is a necessary resource sought by both rural and urban people; however the degree of its desire and use may vary from place to place and user to user. However, it is pertinent to state that there is adequate literature that has covered in totality the information needs of the people inhabiting the entire landscaping of Nigeria. What we have is a review of each geographical area that is covered from time to time in the course of research effort.

For this paper, focus is on rural areas and we should highlight clearly those characteristics of a rural setting. As noted by Idike (1997), this refers to a place or a settlement of 20,000 people or below. In such a location the inhabitants are closed to nature and an indication that much of natural essence has not been completely distorted as a result of man's interference in the course of seeking to provide modern living pattern that has characteristics of western civilization. In a similar manner, Abolaji (2009) identified certain challenges affecting library services in rural areas which are typical traits of this setting to include scattered population and low population density, poor transportation and communication systems, lack of financial resources and lower educational level.

In another dimension Allen (1992) posited that rural settings are those parts of the country that is very close to nature. In a way it brings to the fore that the people here are very much in tune with nature in its closest form. Most time such setting is deprived of so to speak the good things of life like portable water, access roads, schools and health facilities and thus regarded as unattractive. A vivid picture of rural area is painted by Oduwole (1986) cited by Utor and

Utor (2006) when its characteristics are highlighted as follows:

- Low level of literacy or high level of illiteracy;
- Limited educational and economic (including jobs opportunities);
- Strong cultural, tribal and religious adherence;
- Absence of large business and commercial institutions;
- And limited social facilities e.g. electricity supply, educational institutions and communication system among others.

As a matter of fact, the rural population in Nigeria needs adequate information to leverage them from ignorance and poverty which has become a major challenge that has prevented them from reaching their full potentials. Some of the peculiarities of the rural areas add to the problems of information services delivery. As observed by Abolaji (2009), poor transportation and communication system, poor financial resources and educational attainments as well as scattered population and low population density are some of these unique problems confronting their desires to benefits from government's intervention. As pointed by Accascina (2000) was of the view that information communication technology has a positive impact in reducing poverty alleviation in relation to rural development and food security. For instance the delivery of market or employment information and the creation of well-paid job can mitigate the sufferings of the rural people. In Adimorah's (1990) view "our information services are still elitist, serving only 20% of the educated elite group while the 80% illiterate rural dwellers wallow in information deprivation".

This situation can however be changed because Okeh (2002) expressed optimism that the living standards of rural people could be better when genuine effort is made to provide relevant information to these people in the rural communities.

The information needs of the rural people of Nigeria are varied and diverse because of their location, environment and indigenous preoccupation.

For instance Oduwole and Ikhizama (2003) while examining the agricultural information needs to rural communities in Nigeria identified the needed information as high yield crops, availability and access of fertilizers, storage

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facilities and processing, new farming techniques, pest control, weed control and disease resistant crops as well as opportunities to market their products.

On a similar note, Momodu (2002) identified information needs of the rural dwellers of Nigeria as follows:

- Agricultural information needs. Nigeria's major preoccupation is agriculture and for these farmers their information needs would be about how to improve productivity from subsistence level. They will also need information about fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, improved varieties of seedlings and farming implements like tractors which could be gotten free or at subsidized rate and also new techniques and innovations in farming to boost yields. Outside crops, information about improved animal husbandry management, various breeds, diseases and good market opportunities to maximize profit.
- Health information needs. They include maternal care (pre and post natal care), childhood killer diseases, prevention and management of the vascular vaginal fistula (VVF) and epidemics and how to get good health care services and first aids when needed.
- Educational information needs. At the rural level they are becoming concern about the educational well being of their children of school age having come to terms that the world is changing and believing that education resource can add value to lives of wards in the future. Information about approved school calendar and when examinations to secondary school, higher institutions are conducted by approved bodies and opportunities available for scholarship to remove financial burden whenever possible. In today's world, educational pursuit is not limited by age, gender, race or religion.
- Economic information needs. In today's world, families are in search of how to grow more than one stream of income to improve the living standard of the family. In rural communities, people particularly women engage in small business such as tailoring, petty trading, animal husbandry, weaving and soap making among others. Also sought are opportunities for interest free loan business and organizing themselves into Association where is contributed on a regular basis and shared at agreed time to solve personal financial needs.
- Political and community development needs. Every human society no matter its size is usually interested in knowing and participating in how they are governed. In whatever government type that is in place people wish to know indigenous leadership, rights and privileges, duties of government and the benefits of the governed. Also, no community can actually grow without some measure of self help projects. Also, the way agencies of government and nongovernmental organizations can be of assistance to support the needs of the community are the information the rural people want to know.
- Similarly, the effort of Ogunshye cited by Alegbeleye and Aina (1985) highlighted by Harande (2009) deserves mention. In Nigeria there is no comprehensive literature of records of the information needs of the rural people. However, their needs are as diverse as the people. Even at this, there is some measure of commonality because the rural people are generally farmers of sort with focus in the type suitable to their environment. These needs include the followings:
 - Agriculture and allied occupation. The information needed borders on seedlings, soil conservation, prevention of plants and animal diseases, fertilizer acquisition and use, farm equipments, post harvest storage facilities, marketing opportunities and techniques, cooperative and agro allied activities.
 - Employment opportunities. The rural people need information on how they can get job opportunities to earn additional stream of income outside their major preoccupation which is agriculture. Information on financial, banking and investment opportunities will assist greatly.
 - Health information focuses on health care delivery, maternal care and prevention of epidemics and its implications for the population.
 - Information needs in relation to the well-being of their neighbourhood with emphasis on water supply, electricity, environmental sanitation and waste management as well as access and road maintenance and drought related issues.
 - Education is important to them. Many are willing to achieve education through continuous education and extra moral classes. They also need information about existing rural schools that will in turn advance the education of their wards to tertiary level.

- Housing which provides shelter is also a concern need to the rural people. They need necessary information on how they can access loan facilities and how they can source for necessary materials to execute this need.
- Land is a major resource on which their means of livelihood is built. Information on land tenure, acquisitions and transfer is appropriate to them.
- Political participation. These people want information about their political rights, values, their dues and how their views can be heard in the political process.
- Legal information. Such information is needed to help them know when marriage and land right are trampled upon or violated.
- Welfare and family matter: Information will enable rural dwellers appreciate the issues involved in marriage, childcare, juvenile issues, discipline and other socialization challenges.
- Transportation. The rural people are not island unto themselves. The implication is that they need to reach out to their immediate neighbours. To be able to do this, it is important to know in details the possible means of transportation. Information about purchase of bicycle, motorcycles and vehicles for the movement of goods and services is important to them. Information on road construction and maintenance is vital also to them.
- Religion. From creation man has always wish to commune with his maker. For the rural people, there is need for information about places of worships as well as recreation centers and cultural promotion to keep them perpetually in touch with their cherished beliefs and values they hold so dear.
- Crime and safety. In today's world, criminality is fast becoming very rampant. The rural people are not exempted from this threat. The security of life and property is also critical to them like those in the urban centres. They therefore need information on crime prevention and the appropriate ways to report and collaborate with law enforcement agencies to bring culprits to book.

Abolaji (2009) while examining how libraries contribute to communities and societies also pointed out that information need of rural people are many and diverse. He revealed that they

need information about farming, cultural affairs, public matters and entertainment. Also, the library can assist the inhabitants to accomplish their aspirations particularly when it is tailored to meet their information demands.

Information Sources

Information is very crucial in the information service delivery process. Without properly packaged information, the rural people may not benefit adequately even when it is available. Little wonder therefore that Kaye (1995) pointed out that good information improves decision making and that it enhances efficiency and provide a competitive edge. For the rural people, information is provided by information providers such as village heads, chiefs, community leaders, librarians and agricultural extension workers as well as health officials from their respective government agencies and organization. The channels of communication with the people as revealed by Atinmo et al (1996) and Wagacha (2007) are through the electronic media-radio and television; print media-newspapers, journals, magazines and other sources of information like bulletins, brochures, flyers and posters. As a result of current trend in information and communication technology, service is also deployed for communication where its infrastructure has been established.

Information sources for the rural people from earlier studies are varied. For instance, sources of information used mostly by farmers in developing countries as identified by Kaniki (1994), Razavanfer and Mandape (2000) are friends, neighbours, colleagues, family members and relatives. Similarly, professional and modern media are identified by Shilaja and Jayaramual (1992). Also, Barton and Beer (1999) identified sources like business contracts and personal network. The use of information communication technology (ICTs) is a welcome development in information delivery process to the rural areas. Previously the communication process was slow and with challenges. With ICT facilities like computers, internet emails and new trends in radio and television communication has dramatically improved a great deal.

This development has transformed information delivery process with positive implications which are quality service, efficiency and effectiveness. The benefit of ICT is that there are programmes on radio, television which support audience participation while being aired.

For instance, the presidential media chart, and radio link are some of these programmes among others where viewers and listeners can contribute even from the comfort of their homes and offices. The joy is that even in rural areas where these facilities like mobile phones, internet and radio infrastructure are working, a lot of derivable benefits and opportunities are bound and should therefore be explored. All of these help the masses to appreciate the happenings in the environment around them.

To fully pursue information services delivery to rural dwellers, the other viable channels of information include talk shops, workshops, tours, class visits, tutorials, guides and publications. Film shows, pamphlets, bulletins, seminars, conferences.

Ict Information Service Delivery to Rural Areas

Today, new innovation in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has become a viable way to achieve meaningful progress in societal development particularly when directed for the well-being of humanity (Ahsanullah, 2002). For a society like Nigeria with vast population, ICT will be of tremendous benefits by providing opportunities to better the lives of its citizenry. The ability to survive in the information era depends on access to national and global information networks. ICTs form the bedrock for the survival and development of any nation in a fast changing global environment, and it challenges us to address a host of issues such as reliable infrastructure, skilled human resources, open government, and other essential issues of capacity building (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2001).

As exemplified in the case of China (Donghong and Hepeng, 2010), investing in ICT infrastructure in rural areas will no doubt certainly generate little profit at first, but in course of time it can bring about greater financial returns on the long run than imagined. A deliberate effort to better the pace of information service delivery in rural Nigeria will bring about its transformation from an obscured and not viable environment in terms of potential benefits to one that can be better connected, informed and consequently bring about long-lasting financial returns.

In addition, quality ICT infrastructure will be a stable template for providing valuable and relevant information on agricultural technologies and markets, the operators have secured growth in the use of their services and created

sustainable returns (Doughong and Hepeng, 2010).

ICT in information service delivery will in no small measure assist people daily through marketing, job creation and economic empowerment. It is a major source of wealth creation and reduction of poverty in a sustainable manner. ICTs and all its features are dependable to the rural population because information available through its usage will be of benefits in transforming lives and also providing access to relevant information to execute their daily activities and employment opportunities.

Problems Confronting Information Service Delivery to Rural People

In our quest for appropriate information service delivery in the 21st century, there is need to step up effort to improve science and technology. In the case of Nigeria, this led to deliberate formulation of national ICT policy. The Nigeria's National IT policy is the bedrock for national survival and development in a rapidly changing global environment and this challenges us to take rational steps and initiative to critically examine socio-economic issues such as reliable infrastructure, competent human resources, transparency in government and other issues of capacity building. (IT Policy) The policy is set out to ensure poverty eradication, global competitiveness, wealth creation, job opportunities and promotion of functional education. In a nutshell, the objectives among others are to build viable human capital to support knowledge based society that can support institutions strong enough to meet global competitiveness. It is also to stimulate government and private partnership built to achieve a stable and egalitarian society for all. Furthermore, it emphasizes consolidation of food production and security that is able to support health care delivery capable of sustaining a healthy population that is eager to acquire viable IT to better their lots.

The realization of the ICT Policy is not without challenges. Anie (2011) remarked that ICT is the backbone of business activity, productivity, trade and social development. For Nigeria, effective implementation of ICT policies is a prerequisite for the emergence of a strong economy.

Similarly, the growth of industries and enhancement of social activities is dependent not only on adequate skilled labour but also

effective implementation of ICT policies. The issue here is that earlier studies of Browery (1995), Williamson (1991) and Anie (2007) have shown that developing countries with Nigeria as a reference point is yet to embrace completely the application of ICT in its socio-political and economic life of its people. This is largely due to government's inability to take investment driven steps in the field of information and communication technologies. For a successful outing in this direction, there must be a template for infrastructural development that will be a basis for this laudable option. Taking positive step in this direction will help to provide quality information service delivery to its entire people.

It is necessary to state here clearly that Nigeria's access to computers and its accessories in the rural areas is still very low. Most people in the rural areas are poor and as a result are not able to acquire computers to launch them into the World Wide Web. The implication of this is that the rural areas where most of the nation's population is based cannot easily access the world global offerings in terms of information and in the process may not be able to benefit as it should have been. If the potentials of information technology are properly harnessed, it would attract many benefits form Nigeria in the social, political, economic, educational, scientific, technological and other aspects of our national life (Adomi, 2005).

In Nigeria today, electricity power generation is still a major challenge. Successive administrations for the past decades have been battling with how to generate electricity for both domestic and industrial uses without success. The sad story is that there is no serious business concern that has not made adequate provision for electricity if it intends to be an active player in its area of business. The power generating capacity is never stable, rather the gains earlier made are being eroded as a result of corruption, ineptitude and related sharp practices arising from little or no commitment for its success by various stakeholders. Even when the National Electricity Power Authority (NEPA) changed its name to Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) the situation is not any better. To arrest this situation successive democratic governments have gone into Independent Power projects with some level of partnership. How successful this effort will be is yet to be seen. Due to this ugly trend, much information related businesses are difficult to thrive in the rural areas. The matter is made worse because many organizations that

have resorted to use private power generating sets buy their fuels i.e. petrol or diesel at exorbitant prices.

Internet access to rural areas is still very low compared to urban centres. This is largely due to government's inability to take a giant stride in this direction. As pointed out by Lee (1993), governments of developing countries often times fail to appreciate the derivable benefits from putting huge investments in the telecommunication industry. Most times, they fail to realize that appropriate investment deserves to be made before return on investments can be meaningful. Lack of sensitization and desire to carry along all relevant agencies to pursue the realization of this has caused the nation great pain and loss of revenue.

Over the years, telecommunication services have been one of the major issues affecting information services delivery particularly to rural areas. The very first telecom service in Nigeria was that provided by the Nigeria Postal Services through postage of letters and telegram services. Then it was the only means of communications between the rural and urban centres. The challenge then was that mails were delayed often times without getting to recipients on time and sometimes undelivered due to incomplete address or got missing in transit. Even when communication via telegrams became the fastest means, it still has its shortcomings as a result of cost and not being able to give comprehensive details of message being sent. The situation became better following the emergence of land telephone lines and later other modern information technologies in mini, personal computers, internet, e-mail, mobile phones, fax machines satellite networks, video, hypertext and machine translation and mobile GSM technology. Even at this, the cost implications have been a problem which everyone in the rural areas cannot afford. There is need for government to step up the rural telephony project to check this problem. Even in recent times when GSM took the centre stage, user still experience poor communication networks while calling on some network and other service providers using different platforms.

Nigeria is a multiethnic nation with so many diverse languages. To be able to disseminate government policies and programmes at the grass root, much is needed to be done to translate these policies to indigenous languages and dialects. The mode of presentation of new trend in information technology is in English

language which has become our official language. In his discussion on the Ghanaian situation, Alemna (1999) pointed out that most information resources from the web are in English. For all to benefit fully particularly those in the rural areas, it is important to develop local languages to make them meet the requirements suitable for current trends in information and communication technology. Across Nigeria there have been efforts on how to make local languages a medium of instruction and sometimes there is also the problem of not being able to get equivalent words in our vocabulary to match certain English and technical words. This dilemma can also be a challenge in information service delivery to rural people.

For the rural people to benefit maximally from information service delivery, it should be understood that our local languages have vowels and consonants that fit our local languages. That being so, it is appropriate to develop media that takes cognizance of these challenges and ensure they are taken care of. Alemna and Sam (2006) examining the Ghanaian situation called for effort to ensure indigenous languages are opened up and taught with modern techniques and technology which will be of great help to the rural people. With low literacy level particularly at rural areas, internet services could be developed to remove the inadequacies as presently is. If this is done there will be much penetration of information delivery process to the rural people. Speaking in similar vein, Gyamfi (2005) remarked that the content of internet should be produced taking into account the needs of the rural people with reference to low literacy including streaming media, audiovisual and web-casting format.

Information and communication is taking a new dimension slightly different from what it has been over the ages. In pre-colonial times, information was disseminated through the town criers, village heads and social institutions like the age groups, association, guilds, colleagues, friends and neighbors. From this end, it was seen as a cultural thing to inform members of a community what was going on. Today mode of information spread is now via ICTs such as electronic and print formats like radio, television, newspapers, flyers, bulletins and so on. Not too long ago, telephone and internet has become faster medium of information spread. The point being made here is that even though ICT mode of information delivery is spreading across the length and breath of most rural areas, it is sad to

note that not everywhere has the basic infrastructure for successful hoisting and utilization of these telecommunication facilities. Rural dwellers should be adequately exposed to these modern facilities in order to increase pace of information service delivery to them. To support this position the view of Camble (1994) is relevant here. In his opinion, people in rural areas need adequate, useful, correct and up to date information. In the past, the inability of various agencies and organizations to provide adequate information has brought about failure of rural development programmes. The successful implementation of rural programmes depends greatly on the quality of information provided as a basis for project implementation.

Across Nigeria today, almost every rural community owns a school. Even at that, not every school owns library and even the ones that own libraries find it very difficult to equip and maintain those libraries. The situation is even worse because not every village or rural community can boast of a public library or the services it can provide. This has been largely due to the library not being actively involved with information transfer activities in rural communities (Aboyade, 1987). The ugly situation no doubt impedes free flow of information service to the rural people. Government policies and programmes are not cascaded down the grass root because of mass illiteracy which pervades the rural communities. Illiteracy, poverty and disease are common problems besetting our people. As a result, it is difficult to access and appreciate the value of information delivered to them and in the progress fail to achieve set goals. As noted by Issa (1998) the rural people suffer socio-economic deprivation as well as poor productivity arising from ignorance due to inadequate or non provision of the information the actually need.

Benefits of Information Service Delivery to Rural Population in Nigeria

Information service to rural population of Nigeria is a viable project which will accelerate the pace of development of all parts of the country. Information dissemination is a critical aspect of human existence and it is necessary to state that no man is an island and it therefore means there has to be some relationship. For this to reach an appreciable level there has to be effective, useful, viable and reliable information. As noted by Harande (2009), information services are multidimensional and serve and

serve socially as a binding thread among different groups of rural dwellers.

One of the benefits of information services delivery to the rural population is the promotion of indigenous knowledge and culture. Culture deals with the way of life of a people in term of language, dressing, human activities, arts, traditions, values, customs and so on which is transmitted from one generation to another. Nigeria on daily basis experiences much of rural urban migration of local people for the pursuit of viable means of livelihood. The implication of this development is that indigenous knowledge which is unique heritage of each community is abandoned for western civilization and those values so cherished are left to die and never appreciated. However, a sustainable means of information service delivery will promote these cultural values and those attributes that have kept communities together over ages. Affective information delivery will no doubt promote the socio-cultural, political and economic ties of the people over time which deserves to be sustained for the future generations.

Information service delivery to the people at the grass root can be achieved when adequate attention is paid to how information is received, processed, communicated and use positively for the benefits of all. The libraries can serve as agents of information dissemination for the people and this will in turn bring about change. Libraries as store house of knowledge encouraged readership culture which in turn promotes literacy and thus keep society informed. The libraries as a veritable tool for information dissemination should be a good platform where enabling environment is created to establish information and communication technology utilization. Provision of ICT information centers in libraries, schools and archives helps to promote public access points to large gamut of information across the globe via the World Wide Web. Sculer (2007) highlighted that universal access to global information through ICT support provide enormous opportunities in business, advancement in science and technology, new jobs openings, educated public as well as creativity. Accessible information through the public domain helps to build an informed society where ignorance and illiteracy is drastically reduced. To this end, public service institutions such as libraries, archives, cultural collections, museums and community based access points deserves to be strengthened with a view to promote preservation of material

records dependable and accessible in order to promote information service delivery to all.

Education in all ramifications is one of the gains of a quality information service delivery to the rural areas. Education as a resource is an instrument par excellence for development. It develops the consciousness of a people. The promotion of a functional education is a platform to actualize information deliveries that can fast track communication for the government at higher level to all the nook and cranny. Education is one of the avenues through which the government reaches out to its people. As noted by Olanrewaju (2009), the government of Nigeria like other developing countries, in Africa has clear cut objectives to pursue education growth and development to the grass root. These include pursuing education to achieve lifelong learning for its people, pursue the use and improvement of modern educational techniques at all levels of education, structuring of education system to develop the practice of self learning and making people to become literate and well informed and introduction of universal basic education for all. It is worthy to remark that quality education that is accessible to all will bring about positive development of the individual which translates to better quality of life. When education is given prominence, illiteracy rate will improve and this will add value to their various vocations. The provision of ICT with its infrastructure at the rural areas will boost educations which will in turn benefits the citizenry.

In every settlement, be it urban or rural, the women population always requires attention. Essentially the female gender is a force to be reckoned with in growing the population. The women folk form a large proportion of the workforce and most times the bulk of the illiterates group. While being mindful of their size, information delivery should focus on them much more because of the adage that “if you educate a woman you educate a nation” lends credence here. Effective information delivery to such a group in a very proactive and organized manner will greatly affect and impact on the society greatly. Through their various women associations in their various businesses and vocations, information disseminated to them will increase their awareness and in turn contribute positively to the growth and development of their families and communities.

Appropriate information service delivery will help to promote distance education. Before

democratic era in Nigeria, distance learning was not a common place in Nigeria. However, since the advent of democracy, and government's desire to make life more meaningful to its people, infrastructural developments of the rural areas are being undertaken by federal, states and local councils. This development is opening the interior in terms of information accessibility and usage, education, ICT, agriculture, road construction, power, business opportunities, transportation and the likes. Education which is a key to individual uplift is gaining inroad to the rural areas via distance learning. Although the expectations to fully integrate this education type to meet global standard have not been met, the tertiary institutions are giving opportunities to workers to engage in quest for higher educational pursuit without having to abandon their jobs. For instance study centres have been created whereby public and private workers enroll and are given lectures and study packs to facilitate their educational upgrade in the pursuit of qualifications like National Teachers Institute in Kaduna for Teacher's Grade Two certificate programme and Nigeria Certificate in Education as well as Bachelor's Degree in Education which in most time done during the summer. Presently, study centers are located across the country for professional courses in Accounting, Banking, Taxation, Insurance, Business and so on. The implication of this is that those workers in the rural areas particularly those pursuing professional certificates in education are availing themselves of this opportunity. On graduation they add value to their respective communities in terms of dissemination and providing useful support services though on ad-hoc basis during population census, elections and other programmes the government might introduce from time to time.

Information service delivery is expected to promote grass root development in Nigeria. However, the effectiveness of local councils in providing this requires urgent attention. People are already asking the local government councils why information offering from them is not cascaded properly to make life meaning to all and sundry. If this is effectively being done information flow to the grass root is expected to bring about desired changes in the system. In a system where devolution of power is being adhered to and various organs of government are doing their bit, information delivery at the local administration level is expected to position the local people to benefit adequately from government policies and programmes. The local

councils is expected to work with various communities in their domains to assist in ensuring that opportunities expected to reach them by the government from the top achieve the desired results. Self help projects are supposed to be thought of at community levels and the government is expected to support these laudable projects to enable the rural people benefits and enjoy social amenities like pipe borne water, good roads, health facilities, schools, adequate information to support their vacations and occupations.

The rural areas in all ramifications are still dominated by oral culture at the expense of written culture. As a result, the history, culture, values, traditions and thoughts are transmitted from generation to another orally. The indigenous language spoken is still very much in oral form which makes it difficult to develop. There is need for adequate research studies carried out to support indigenous culture. The implication is that what would have been a treasure and assets to them is being handed down orally and the essence is being altered. While supporting western education, genuine effort is desirable to encourage research in our indigenous culture and language which if properly done could add value to the information delivery process in rural areas. The sustenance of the cultural values and tradition by means of western education will indeed promote literacy. Literacy at whatever level should be promoted and such project will impact position in the information delivery to the grass root population. While seeking the promotion and sustenance of democracy in our country, we must not lose site of the fact that human rights promotion is necessary to make the people closer to the various organs of government. It is necessary to respect the rights of every citizen. This will in turn promote good governance and facilitate the gains and dividends of democracy. Where people's rights are freely respected, there is better interaction at all levels and the growth of mutual respect will bring about harmony which will enrich the information consciousness of the people for the growth and development of their society.

Quality information delivery is a right step towards the growth of agriculture, infrastructure such as health care, transportation, water and small scale industries. Good communication with the rural population will enable them access relevant information that can nurture their business desires supported with adequate skills acquisitions. As people communicate

through government and non-governmental agencies people tend to borrow a leaf from the experiences and knowledge of professionals through seminar, workshops, talk shop and sensitization campaigns. Life in the rural areas could be better but there should be synergy between the stakeholders along this direction to leverage government intervention efforts to make a living in such environments better and encouraging.

It is the responsibility of government and its agencies to educate the people in their domains about its policies and programmes. To this end, communications between the various segments have been promoted through regular television, radio, campaigns and other awareness talks. For instance in Nigeria, there have been presidential media chats, broadcast, and radio links where policies and happenings in various government ministries, departments and agencies are disseminated to the public. It is also a common sight to point out that the communication process in most cases through these various media is interactive. This has been very instructive in delivery to the people adequate information on how they are governed and what to extent from these organs of government.

Information service delivery that is premised on network with the various stakeholders like government agencies at various level and community interest groups in rural areas will help to reduce crimes great deal. This is so because in rural areas people actually know who is who and whenever unfamiliar faces are within their means their identity could be brought to question. No wonder over time, crimes in the urban has higher and more sophisticated dimension and intensity and that is why security agencies have great challenges solving crime puzzles. Information delivery requires a synergy to be able to nip them on the bud. Adequate media of communication helps to alert the country people information wise on what is needed to be done to check the menace of social nuisance which is a recurring decimal.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, we can see that the development and growth of any nation lies much with how the country has been able to transform the lives of its citizenry. Most times, particularly in developing countries, the majority of its population is usually in the rural areas. For a country to have a success story in the socio cultural, political and economic development, much is needed to be done in the

rural areas which will in turn impact positively on the people. For Nigeria, our focus, there is need for a greater interaction among the various tiers of government. Good governance is about adding value and meaning to peoples' lives through sustained leadership. Government policies and programmes can only be disseminated to the grass root through effective information service delivery. This can only be realized when information needs, sources are properly articulated and packaged in a manner that can be understood with minimum difficulties by the rural illiterates people who are already challenged with so many difficulties in their daily lives. The benefits of effective information delivery can reduce rural urban drift in population. The government should therefore build basic infrastructures that would support sustainable development and growth in rural areas through the provision of roads, electricity, water, education, healthcare services, cottage industries and telephone services which will empower them to achieve better living conditions. For an effective service delivery, the rural dwellers need a lot of information to support their occupation which is mainly agriculture and allied services. Over time, there has been gap between the rural people and urban centres. The implication is that the country side people have been at the receiving ends which make their inhabitants to move in droves to seek greener pastures in cities. However, with a direct focus on how they can access the benefits of government policies through proper implementation, there is the likelihood of better information flow. The implication is that life will become more meaningful and attractive at the rural areas through education, health care, transportation, agriculture, small and medium enterprise support by information and communication technology.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For a successful implementation of information service delivery to the rural areas of Nigeria, deliberate effort should be made by various stakeholders to implement all inclusive recommendations proposed bellow.

There is need to ensure that library is provided for the various rural communities to easily access current and appropriate information in various formats such as in print and electronic. As noted by Oduwole and Okorie (2010), libraries serve as a bridge between the government's goals by developing, acquiring and providing information (in book format,

electronic format, e.g. CD ROMs and computers) and access them centrally to communities. Libraries as engines for rural development provide information on issues affecting the community for instance agriculture, education, lifelong learning and the very topical issue of HIV/AIDS. Through this medium, libraries helps to accelerate economic development of immediate communities and in the process reduce poverty and better the living standards and creation of wealth for the citizenry. The libraries as a public social service to communities is a veritable instrument for promoting professional and public awareness of information service delivery to the grass root. Visible presence of libraries and information related facilities with internet connectivity will also help to reduce the lack of awareness and knowledge which are the hall mark of ignorance, poverty and illiteracy.

In today's world, communities should not rest on their oars and hope government will provide all their needs for them. The government is ever faced with so many challenges. It is therefore appropriate for association, groups and non-organizations to begin to identify where they can contribute meaningfully to the development of their communities through self help projects. Community oriented projects should be people driven and it should reflects the actual needs of the people. Whoever is called upon to serve should make transparency, accountability, honesty, dedication and commitment their watch words.

There have been attempts in the past where communities through self help have carried out laudable projects which have impacted positively on the lives of common man on the streets. Through this channel public spirited individuals' philanthropists can assist in no small measures. The various problems of illiteracy, poverty and lack of knowledge and skills are challenges we should all tackle.

The emergence of information and communication technology has transformed the world greatly. In the case of ICT, it will be inappropriate for anyone to expect the rural people of Nigeria to be able to use it successfully in the first instance, rather a s pointed out by Das (1993), globalization does not in any mean imposing homogenous solutions in a pluralistic world. For Nigeria to benefit fairly from this globalization there is need to adequately upgrade the rural areas by providing basic infrastructure such as electricity,

access roads, good medical care, pragmatic education and vocational skills training and all the hard and software accessories to be able to access current trends in ICT. Adequate training, conferences, seminars, workshops, talk shops, interactive sessions should be offered while encouraging people to learn. We should work hard to brake away from the past and be resolute to face the future with all seriousness and determination.

The rural people generally have regard for their traditional rulers, politicians and elites who should be encouraged to sensitize them and inculcate in them information consciousness to enable them appreciate policies and programmes from government authorities. If possible such information should be repackaged for the understanding of the people. Information centers like libraries, archives, schools and television viewing centers should be accessible to all without discrimination in terms of age, sex, education, ethnicity, tribe and religion. Efforts should be made to ensure programmes and policies delivery through radio and television is translated in local languages for meaningful import.

Continuing education should be encouraged for the benefits of all and sundry particularly the adult population for a better appreciation of the world around them. Funds should be made available and appropriate training through seminars, conferences, workshops, talk shops and film shows should be a regular affair to make the rural people have a sense of belonging. Education is never too late and in whichever way it will benefit the people should be so provided. Emphasis on sensitization and awareness is also important to make them understand the essence of education and what they and their future generations is expected to benefit.

The rural people need a lot of assistance to make life more meaningful by providing basic infrastructures like electricity, schools, healthcare facilities, water and empowerment programmes.

This should be supported by access roads to ease transportation of goods and services to better their lots. It will make it easier to repackage information and acquaint them with government policies and programmes through radio and television broadcast preferably in their local languages. This will even attract people from urban to the rural for better cross fertilization of ideas.

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